Too Close to the Line

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Too Close to the Line

by j_huang

Summary

Shane Hollander is an omega. Ilya Rozanov is an alpha.

One of them has been in love for years, but there's a line that they can't cross to remain friends.

Notes

English is not my main language. Sorry for any grammatical errors.

I guess this is sort of an omegaverse au where they become good friends instead of fuck buddies lol

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"It's amazing to see how well you actually get along with him." Hayden says, his voice almost echoing in the empty locker room.

The air still smells like sweat and sharp cologne. Some of the lockers are already abandoned and there are towels draped carelessly over the benches. Today's practice was long and everyone else had already left for showers and home, leaving only the two of them behind.

"With who?" Shane asks as he packs his stuff into his bag.

"With Rozanov."

"We've known each other since our rookie season, after all." Shane snorts quietly and reaches for his hoodie.

"That was like… almost ten years ago, right? And you two are still close to this day." Hayden shrugs as he zips his bag.

"It's not that weird, isn't it?" Shane puts on his hoodie. "We may be playing against each other every season, but I see him a lot. Our world's pretty small."

"Yeah, I know." Hayden hums, eyes drifting to one flickering light at the corner of the ceiling that maintenance still hasn't fixed. "But he's an alpha."

Shane pauses. His hand stops momentarily on the zipper of his duffel bag before he pulls it closed. "Is it weird for *me* to be good friends with an alpha?"

“Oh, no, no.” Hayden immediately waves his hand. “That’s not what I meant. I’m not talking about your sub-gender at all. Shit, I’m sorry, that came out wrong.”

Shane turns to look at Hayden fully now. He knows Hayden well and he knows Hayden has never looked at him less just because he’s an omega. He just doesn’t understand what Hayden is getting at.

“It’s just… rare, I guess? An alpha and an omega being *that* close like you two.” Hayden rubs the back of his neck, choosing his words carefully. “He never… made a move on you or anything?”

Shane knows why Hayden asks that question. Ilya Rozanov is not only famous on ice, he’s also famous among the omegas. The media not only talks about his goals and records as a hockey player, but also his handsome face and his bad boy charm. Whenever Ilya goes, he’s always surrounded by beautiful omegas who are willing to line up for him, and Ilya is also more than happy to play with them.

So it’s not ridiculous for Hayden to assume that Ilya also treats him like those omegas he plays around with.

“Never.” Shane chuckles and shakes his head. “I’m pretty sure Rozanov doesn’t even see me that way. We’re just good friends.”

“Really? Never at all?” Hayden asks, unconvinced.

“Yeah, never.” Shane scans his locker to make sure he’s not leaving anything. “His type is more like sexy and wild omegas in the club, not a boring guy like me.”

“Aw, you’re not boring. Jackie really likes you. She keeps asking me how you’re doing.” Hayden says reassuringly.

“Give my thanks to her.” Shane smiles appreciatively.

Hayden smiles back, but his smile slowly fades into a look of concern. “Hey, um, how’s your irregular heat cycle? Did the doctors tell you anything?”

Shane doesn’t answer immediately. He looks down at the strap of his bag that he’s holding in his hand.

Hayden is one of the very few people who knows about this, a beta who has been a supportive friend for years now, the one who always stands up for Shane whenever he finds any discrimination or unfairness against the omega. Hayden’s sister is an omega too, dealing with the same problem about her heat cycle, and Shane knows Hayden cares for him like he’s his own brother.

“There’s not much the doctors can do. It’s my hormones. Some omegas are just born unlucky, I guess.” Shane huffs out a dry chuckle.

“You need to be careful.” Hayden presses his lips together.

“Yeah, I know.” Shane nods and glances at the beta. “Thanks.”

“Oh, by the way. I’m also carrying heat suppressants with me, from my sister. If you need one, you have to tell me, okay?” Hayden points a finger up.

“I will.” Shane chuckles lightly. “Thank you.”

“Anytime.” Hayden says and then carries his bag on his shoulder. “I’ll head out.”

“See you.” Shane nods at his friend.

Hayden gives him a small wave before heading out, his footsteps echoing faintly down the hallway. Shane slings his bag over his shoulder before turning around to leave. Just as he steps out of the locker room, his phone buzzes in his hand.

Ilya Rozanov: Any nice bar in Toronto?

The corners of Shane's mouth lift instinctively. He types his reply as he walks.

You: How long will you be in Toronto?

Ilya Rozanov: Flying out Thursday

Ilya Rozanov: I want some drinks

You: I'll take you there.

Shane slips his phone into his pocket and keeps walking, the smile lingering longer than it should.

He had heard about Ilya long before they actually met face to face, back when he was in high school when names circulated faster than faces. There had been talk about a Russian prodigy who was the captain of the Russian junior team, a young alpha with reckless confidence and raw talent. He was Ilya Rozanov. Talented, brilliant, but a real trouble.

They first met in Saskatchewan during the International Prospect Cup, right before the final match between Canada and Russia. Their introduction somehow turned out to be the beginning of their decade-long rivalry turned friendship.

Ilya Rozanov was a typical alpha, Shane had thought at that time. He was confident to the point of arrogance and his presence was strong, almost domineering. Ilya played like he

owned the rink, like the world would simply move aside if he skated through. He was loud, blunt, and unapologetic, but there was something captivating about seeing him on the ice.

He lost to Ilya that day, but once they were both drafted for the league and playing for opposite teams, their rivalry continued. He won on some nights with his quick strategy and controlled movements that shot Boston Raiders down. Other nights, Ilya tore through Montreal Metros' defenses like he was born for chaos.

Somewhere between all of that, between post-game handshakes and press conferences, between trash talk and grudging respect, their rivalry softened at the edges. They started talking about the game and other players at first, and then they started talking about their travels, injuries, interviews, and everything else.

Years passed like that. Their losses stung, yet their wins never felt final. Their rivalry never changed through the years, but when both of them were out of the ice arena, they were friends.

Shane steps out into the evening air and clenches his teeth slightly when the cold wind blows over him. He thinks about the nice bars in Toronto where he can watch Ilya drinking with a pleased smile on his face, where they can talk as much as they want about everything, where they can laugh together as if they're not about to shove each other again the next time they're on ice.

People often ask him how he can stand being friends with such an overbearing and brash alpha like Ilya.

But these people only ever see Ilya Rozanov from the outside, from his interviews and highlight reels, from his cocky grin and his sharp tongue, from the way he acts like the world was built to accommodate him. They only see the arrogant, self-centered, and unapologetic alpha.

They don't see what's underneath.

They don’t see the Ilya who carries his home and his family on his back, who sends his money to his brother without complaint, who never talks about the weight he’s carrying but always bears it. They don’t know the way Ilya’s voice softens when he talks about his late mother, the way Ilya says *I love you* to his teammates at the end of the match, the way Ilya shows his care and empathy beneath his sarcastic words.

They don’t know the Ilya who listens to him. They don’t know the Ilya who lets him ramble about the rabbit hole he falls into while watching YouTube, about the scenes that loop endlessly in his head, about the routines he does to ground himself when the world gets too noisy and overwhelming. They don’t know the Ilya who never mocks him, never makes a joke about his weird fixation and anxiety, never rolls his eyes, and never calls him strange. Ilya only calls him *boring* to tease him.

They don’t see the Ilya who sees him as a person first instead of an omega.

Growing up as an omega in the sports world, Shane has heard enough snide remarks through the years. They said omegas aren’t built for this kind of sport. They said omegas should just stay home, be good wives, and bear children for their husbands. They said omegas should just smile and sit prettily instead of playing hockey.

Honestly, he doesn’t hate the idea of settling down and having a family, but not now. Not when he isn’t given any choice, not when he still has a dream to chase, not when his passion for hockey is still burning brightly, not when Ilya Rozanov is still waiting for him on the ice.

When people told him that he’s wasting his time and that he wouldn’t go far as an athlete, he trained longer and harder. He proved them wrong one game at a time, one season at a time, until his name belonged on the ice as much as any other alpha players, until he was called one of the best hockey players in his generation.

And through all of it, Ilya never treated him differently.

From the very start, Ilya treated him like another man, another player, and another rival who deserved everything he had to give. There was no condescension or assumption, only respect and fair competition. Ilya sees him for who he is.

Sometimes, Shane wishes that other people could see that side of Ilya too.

When Shane climbs into his car, he feels his phone buzzing in his pocket.

Ilya Rozanov: You drink with me. Not only ginger ale.

Shane chuckles lightly. He can somehow hear Ilya's accented voice in his ears and picture the alpha's judging face just from reading the message.

You: Maybe.

He puts his phone on the passenger seat and starts the car before driving it out onto the road.

"So you're flying to Toronto tomorrow?" Rose asks while stirring her sangria.

"Yeah." Shane reaches for his glass of water.

Rose had texted him earlier in the afternoon, saying that she's in Montreal for work and asking if he has free time to grab a quick dinner together. They're sitting at a small restaurant near the corner of a street, one of Shane's hidden gems. Their dinner has been cleared away, leaving them with their drinks and conversations.

“You going to meet with Rozanov there?”

“Of course. We’re playing against each other.” Shane chuckles lightly.

“No, I mean after the game. You going to meet him outside?”

“Probably.” Shane nods, but the smile remains on his face.

Rose doesn’t reply right away. She just watches him, her lips quirking upward into a knowing smile.

Shane notices the look. “What?”

“You know, I’ve been thinking…” Rose smiles and stirs her sangria again. “When are you going to tell that Russian guy that you’re in love with him?”

Shane freezes. He opens his mouth and then closes it again, feeling the heat creeping up his neck and ears.

“I-I’m not— I mean—” Shane stutters, flustered, and then looks at Rose who’s waiting patiently at him with that smile on her face. “…Is it that obvious?”

“Not really.” Rose hums. “But we’re both omegas, so we notice more things compared to those oblivious and self-centered alphas.”

Shane drops his gaze to the table, feeling the blush lingering across his cheeks. He has only known Rose for a short while, but she has become one of his closest friends. She’s the type who’s sensible and quietly supportive, the type of person who never pushes, but always sees and notices things.

“How long have you been in love with him?” Rose asks gently.

“I don’t know.” Shane says honestly. “When I first met him, I thought he was just another typical alpha. The kind that takes up all the space in the room and expects everyone else to accommodate him.”

Rose smiles, encouraging him to continue.

“But the more I got to know him… The more I realized there’s more underneath his bravado.” Shane’s face softens when he thinks about Ilya. “He has his gentle side, he’s loyal to his friends and team, he remembers the things I say, and he cares about others more than what he shows to the world.”

Rose’s smile grows wider as she listens to Shane blabbering about the man he’s in love with.

“I didn’t notice when it started, but by the time I realized it, I was… already in love with him.” Shane swallows after the last words.

Rose nods, absorbing every word. “And you’re not planning to tell him?”

“No. Definitely not.” Shane shakes his head quickly and huffs out a chuckle as if it’s a ridiculous idea.

“Why not?” Rose tilts her head.

“It’s just… He doesn’t even see me as an omega. He treats me like a friend and I treasure that friendship.” He shrugs, a little helpless. “People tell me he’s an asshole, and he is, sometimes. But I still treasure what we have. I don’t want to ruin it by wanting something he’s never offered.”

“But are you satisfied with just being a friend?” Rose asks bluntly.

Shane stills for a while, like he's really thinking about the question, and then he huffs out a humorless chuckle. "I'll take whatever I can have."

Rose's expression softens with sympathy. She slowly reaches across the table and places her hand over his. Shane looks up and smiles faintly as he squeezes her hand back.

Rose's gaze drifts down to Shane's throat, and then she blinks. "You're not wearing a collar?"

Shane's hand comes up instinctively to touch his bare neck.

Unmated omegas usually wear collars when they're out in public places. There's no written rule about it, but it's sort of a social norm. Nape is a very important body part for omegas, perhaps the most vulnerable spot. It's where an alpha would place their mark by sinking their teeth into the skin, deep enough to leave a permanent scar called *claiming mark.*

Claiming mark is a bond that's meant to last a lifetime. It's romantic in love stories, but can be terrifying in reality. A bond formed with the wrong alpha could even be the end of an omega's life. Although modern medicine offers surgeries to remove the scar and break the bonds, most omegas would rather not test those options to begin with. Shane once read an article about how this surgery might even shorten an omega's lifespan as a side effect. Scientists and doctors are still developing it, after all.

Rose wears her collars whenever she's not shooting. She even has a collection of collars that match her outfits like the fashionista she is.

But Shane rarely wears it.

He has been set as an athlete since he was young. He knew how to suppress his pheromones and how to keep his omega traits hidden, especially on the ice where he's expected to stand on the same ground as the betas and alphas who are skating beside him, shoving him against the board, and knocking him down. He knows how to keep himself safe. He knows how to protect himself.

Besides, wearing a collar is the most obvious giveaway of someone being an omega and he doesn't enjoy being pointed at for his sub-gender. When he doesn't wear his collar, he looks just like another beta male on the street and he prefers it that way.

"I wear scent-blocker patches all the time. No one will even smell my pheromones." Shane taps lightly at the little square patch on his nape.

"There's no harm in wearing a collar though." Rose sighs.

"Thank you. I'll keep that in mind." Shane smiles fondly.

Rose smiles back at him, but the concern remains in her eyes.

The bar is filled with the sound of people chattering, bartender shaking drinks, glasses clinking, and upbeat music playing in the background.

Shane and Ilya are sitting next to each other at the bar counter. Shane with his ginger ale and Ilya with a glass of vodka on ice.

"I don't even shoot very hard. Your defenders are fools." Ilya grins as he gloats over his win today.

“Stop bragging, asshole.” Shane gives the alpha a look.

“Is not brag if it’s true.” Ilya says smugly.

Ilya keeps going, talking about the timing and the score at the last second, how the crowd went quiet for a beat and then erupted into cheers. Shane rolls his eyes, but he doesn’t interrupt and just lets Ilya gloat.

Then Ilya stops when his phone buzzes in his pocket. Shane can’t help but to glance over as Ilya pulls his phone out, catching the name on the screen.

Alexei.

Ilya swipes to decline the call and slips his phone back into his pocket as if nothing happened. He lifts his vodka and takes a long drink of it. Shane watches the alpha for a moment, noticing the instant shift in his mood.

“Everything okay at home?” He asks carefully.

“Yeah.” Ilya says flatly.

He knows that look. He knows how Ilya’s mood always shifts so fast whenever he thinks about his home in Russia – or if he can actually call that place *home*. He knows about the pressure and expectation from Ilya’s family. It took a few years of banter and drinks before Ilya opened up about his late mother he loved dearly, the strict father he couldn’t hate, and an older brother who hated him to the bones. Ilya talked about it all like it’s normal because he was taught to bury his grief and keep moving after his mother’s death.

It's the side of Ilya that people don’t know, and it’s the side of Ilya that breaks Shane’s heart a little every time he sees it.

Shane presses his lips and carefully places his hand on Ilya's shoulder. "You can always talk to me about anything."

Ilya looks at him for a moment, his eyes sharp yet unreadable, and Shane slowly drops his hand from the alpha's shoulder. Then Ilya's gaze drops to the ginger ale in front of him.

"You said you drink with me." Ilya says, still staring at the ginger ale.

"I said *maybe*."

"Drink." Ilya says.

"Alright, alright." Shane raises his hand and signals the bartender. "One beer, please."

Ilya waits until Shane gets his beer before lifting his vodka and clinking his glass lightly against Shane's bottle.

They drink in companionable silence for a while after that with the noise of the bar surrounding them. Shane glances over at Ilya once in a while, studying the alpha's expression and trying to read his mood. He can see Ilya taking a look at his phone and slipping it back into his pocket, probably declining another call from his brother.

Shane shifts his gaze to his bottle of beer before turning to Ilya again. "I need to go to the restroom for a second."

Ilya nods and watches as Shane steps off his stool to weave his way through the crowd. Ilya's gaze follows the omega until he disappears down the narrow hallway near the back, and then he turns to the bar.

"Vodka, please." He says to a bartender as he pushes his empty glass forward.

The bartender takes the glass and refills it with vodka and ice before placing it back in front of Ilya. The bartender then glances in the direction where Shane left.

“People always say you and Shane Hollander hate each other, but look at you two.” The bartender says casually.

Ilya hums, neither agreeing nor denying it, and takes a sip of his vodka.

The bartender doesn’t seem discouraged by the lack of response though. He leans an elbow on the counter and then smirks. “I was surprised when I first heard that he’s an omega. But then again, with a face and body like that, guess I shouldn’t be surprised. He has this sexy aura about him, you know.”

Ilya freezes, the rim of the glass still pressed between his lips.

“A pretty omega like him gotta be popular among sportsmen, is he not? Not everybody likes the typical delicate and soft omegas.” The bartender lowers his voice like he’s sharing a secret with Ilya. “Like me. I actually prefer omegas like him. Pretty face, lean body, and must have damn good stamina for *other stuff*.”

Ilya slams his glass down on the bar hard enough that the clear liquid sloshes over the rim. A few heads turn at the noise and the bartender flinches in surprise.

Ilya leans forward slightly, his pheromones scent oozes out of him, sharp and thick with displeasure.

“You say one more word about him, I will break your face.” He says, his voice low and dangerous, almost filled with murderous intent.

The bartender looks visibly terrified. He quickly walks away, putting as much distance from Ilya as possible. Ilya's glare follows after the bartender, and then he lifts his glass again and takes a long drink like he's forcing his anger back down.

A minute later, Shane returns and slips back onto the stool beside Ilya. When he looks at the alpha, however, he notices the tension on Ilya's face.

"You okay?" He asks.

"Yeah."

Shane's gaze flicks to the glass in Ilya's hand. "Did you get another refill?"

"I did."

"You shouldn't drink too much." Shane shakes his head with a chuckle.

"You worry too much." Ilya snorts softly.

They drink again.

Shane tries to finish his beer while Ilya asks for another vodka refill. Shane watches the alpha with mild disbelief. He has heard the jokes about Russians not being able to get drunk no matter how much they drink, and seeing Ilya drink like this, he's starting to think that the joke might be a fact.

Well, they're staying in the same hotel tonight. If Ilya does get drunk, he can get the alpha back to his room without much trouble.

Unlike Ilya, he doesn't handle alcohol well. His tolerance is probably the lowest compared to his teammates. There's a reason why he prefers ginger ale, or maybe a bottle of beer when he's feeling like it.

"You're drinking vodka like it's water." He comments.

Ilya chuckles and opens his mouth to reply, but then he stiffens. He suddely furrows his brows and brings a hand to block his nose.

"What's wrong?" Shane blinks.

"I smell pheromones." Ilya says. "Omega."

Shane's head snaps up immediately. He scans the bar quickly until he sees a table not too far away from them. There's a group of women crowding around one of their friends. The woman in the middle looks flushed and jittery, almost like she's having a panic attack, but Shane knows that's not it.

She's getting into heat.

Alphas like Ilya have sharper senses when it comes to omegas. They're usually the first to notice when an omega's pheromones spike. Shane watches as the other women dig through their purses in panic. When he glances around, he sees some people in the bar turning their heads and sniffing the air, trying to smell the pheromones.

Shane quickly steps off his stool and walks over to the group of women. He reaches into his pocket and pulls out two blistered pills before handing it to the female omega.

"They're pretty strong, but they'll help quickly." He says quietly.

The woman looks at him and quickly takes the pills from his hand. “Thank you. Thank you so much.”

The other women also thank him quickly, one even calling him a savior. Shane waits long enough until the woman swallows both pills. He glances over his shoulder every second, making sure that there are no weirdos who want to bother these ladies. His eyes then linger on Ilya who’s watching the entire exchange.

When the women start gathering their things and help their friend to leave the bar together. Shane excuses himself with a smile and makes his way back to Ilya. Once he slides back onto the stool beside Ilya, the alpha finally lowers his hand from his nose.

“You alright? Want to get some fresh air?” Shane asks, knowing how alphas can get restless after smelling the pheromones of an omega in heat.

Instead of answering the question, Ilya asks. “You always carry that wherever you go?”

“Carry what? Heat suppressants?” Shane blinks.

“Yes. Heat suppressants.”

“Oh, yeah. It’s a habit.” Shane says.

Ilya seems confused. He studies the omega with an assessing look as if he’s trying to understand more of it. “You really need to carry them everywhere?”

Shane looks at Ilya, a bit surprised.

In all the years they’ve known each other, this might be the first time Ilya has ever asked him something related to his identity as an omega. Ilya has never touched this topic before, not

even jokingly or seriously. There are even moments where Shane wonders if Ilya is actually aware of him being an omega.

His heart starts to pound a little harder and his pulse quickens, but then Ilya speaks again.

“Svetlana only carries suppressants when it’s close to her heat.”

Shane’s chest twinges at the name.

He knows who Svetlana is. He has heard Ilya mention her many times, about his childhood friend, his best friend, the one who understands him the most, the one who shares his bed when they both feel like it, and the one who calls him to satiate her heat sometimes. He has even seen Svetlana’s pictures before and he has to admit that she’s a very beautiful omega, perhaps a perfect match for an alpha like Ilya.

Ilya is, after all, a popular alpha. Shane knows Ilya’s reputation and he knows how omegas will happily line up to sleep with him. He has learned how to pretend not to notice the hickeys on Ilya’s neck or the sweet pheromones that seem to linger on the alpha. He has learned how to swallow his pain and jealousy every time.

Shane takes a gulp of his beer before answering. “My heat cycle is irregular, so yeah, I carry them all the time just in case.”

Ilya’s brow furrows immediately. “Irregular how?”

“It just… doesn’t follow the 28-day pattern. Sometimes it comes early. Sometimes late. Sometimes it doesn’t come at all for an entire month.” Shane tries to explain.

Ilya’s frown deepens as he listens, confusion and concern stirring in his eyes. “You go to doctor?”

“Yeah, but there’s not much they can do.” Shane says. “Irregular heat cycles aren’t that rare. There are other omegas like me too. We just have to be more cautious and careful.”

Ilya doesn’t look reassured at all. He’s quiet for a moment, like he’s processing the words, and then he asks. “It never happens during match, right?”

Shane hesitates, suddenly feeling like he’s being examined under a light. He has no idea why Ilya suddenly cares so much about his omega routine, but there’s something genuine in the alpha’s expression. Maybe it’s concern, or maybe it’s just curiosity.

“I make sure it doesn’t happen during a match.” Shane explains carefully. “I start taking suppressants three days before a match and I keep taking them through game day.”

“So you have schedule.” Ilya hums.

“I do.”

Ilya nods slowly and lifts his glass to take a sip of his vodka. He places the glass back down and then turns to Shane. “We will be on the same team for NHL All-Star match. You know that?”

Shane blinks, taken aback by the abrupt change of topic. One second Ilya was interrogating him about heat suppressants and now, the alpha suddenly talks about hockey again.

“Yeah. I heard.” Shane forces out a chuckle, trying to look casual. “Must be exciting, huh?”

Later that night, Shane stumbles down the hallway with Ilya draped against his side with an arm over the omega's shoulders.

"Alright, alright. We're here." Shane groans as he stops in front of a door and then turns to Ilya who's leaning against him. "Where's your key?"

Ilya pulls out a card key from his pocket and then waves it vaguely in front of Shane's face.

Shane snatches it, presses it against the lock, and then pushes the door open once it's unlocked. They stumble inside together before he drags Ilya toward the bed and finally dumps the alpha down onto the mattress. Ilya lands sitting, bouncing slightly on the edge of the bed.

"You are so fucking heavy." Shane finally straightens his back.

"You are weak." Ilya hums as he rubs the bridge of his nose between his fingers.

"Oh, fuck off." Shane rolls his eyes. He studies the alpha quietly before speaking again. "This is the first time I've ever seen you drunk."

"I am not drunk." Ilya says.

"Sure." Shane hums sarcastically.

Ilya drops his hand from his nose, but doesn't say anything back. His gaze is fixed on the carpeted floor like he's lost in thoughts. Shane watches the alpha for a moment, a bit confused, but he doesn't press. Now that Ilya has arrived safely in his room, it's time for him to call the night.

“I’m gonna head back to my room now.” Shane says and makes a move to turn around.

“Wait.”

He stops and turns back to the alpha. “What?”

“Why you never wear collar?” Ilya looks up at him, his eyes seem sharper than a second ago.

Shane is caught off guard by the unexpected question. He opens and closes his mouth before answering. “I don’t really need it.”

“Unmated omegas need collars.” Ilya says as if he’s stating a fact.

“I know, but I wear scent-blocker patches all the time and I always have suppressants with me.” Shane says, a little defensive.

“You cannot even predict your own heat, not wearing collar is dangerous.” Ilya’s voice suddenly drops lower.

Shane feels the sudden change of mood. He doesn’t know why Ilya seems upset, but he can feel it in the air.

“Alphas have sharp nose. They smell omega’s scent easily. Some alphas get very aggressive toward omegas.” Ilya pauses for a second and then looks at Shane right in the eyes. “Omegas like you.”

Shane’s breath hitches. For a split second, he thinks Ilya might have growled those last words.

When he takes a breath, he catches a faint scent in the air. It smells a bit like winter air, sharp and clean, but there's also something warm beneath it. He has caught this scent a few times before, mostly during an intense match when Ilya pushed him against the board or checked him. The rink always smells like a bunch of alphas' pheromones mixed together, yet he always recognizes Ilya's scent from all of them.

He has smelled this scent before, but not this sharp. This is almost like a warning sign.

Shane's omega instinct reacts instantly, telling him to get away.

"I'll keep your advice in mind. Thanks." He says quickly and turns around.

"Wait." Ilya says, almost like a command.

Shane finds himself obeying the words instinctively. He turns back and sees Ilya standing up. His posture is straight and his shoulders are squared, his presence suddenly feels too much for the hotel room.

When Ilya takes a step toward him, he steps back without thinking.

His heart is beating so hard against his ribcage as he keeps his eyes on Ilya, like a prey watching his predator coming closer. When he takes another step backward, his back hits the wall behind him.

Ilya immediately cages him against it. His one arm is braced against the wall beside Shane's head while his other hand is grabbing the omega's shoulder, pinning him in place.

"You're definitely drunk, Rozanov." Shane tries to crack a joke, but his voice comes out breathless.

Ilya doesn't respond. The alpha leans closer, so much closer that Shane's lungs stop working momentarily.

What the hell is happening?

Ilya stops just before their noses touch and then lowers his head, pressing his nose against the curve of Shane's neck. And then he inhales, slow and deep, like he's trying to suck the air straight out of Shane's body.

A shudder runs down Shane's spine as a gasp leaves his throat.

Ilya is scenting him.

That shouldn't be possible. He's wearing his scent-blocker patch and he's not going into heat. His pheromones shouldn't be noticeable at all. But Ilya presses in harder until his face is buried against Shane's neck, his lips pressing against the skin.

When Ilya takes another deep breath, Shane lets out another gasp. He can feel his body reacting to Ilya, warmth pooling low in his belly and spreading down to his loins.

Then Ilya pulls back, just enough for their eyes to meet.

Shane's heart is pounding so hard he's sure Ilya can hear it too. Ilya's gaze is dark with hunger, intent, and something else Shane doesn't dare to name. He slowly lifts his hand and brushes his fingers over Ilya's cheek, touching the alpha so carefully.

But Ilya jerks back like he's been burned.

Shane freezes, his hand suspended in midair as he watches Ilya pinching his own nose as if trying to block out a scent.

“Leave.” Ilya turns away.

“W-What?” Shane blinks, still slightly disoriented.

“Leave. Now.” Ilya grits his teeth.

Something in Ilya’s strained voice snaps Shane back to reality. He swallows thickly before quickly making his way to the door.

“Good night.” He mutters quickly before slipping out of the room.

Ilya stares at the closed door for a few seconds before finally dropping his hand from his nose. His chest rises and falls heavily as he drags a hand through his curls, his fingers trembling slightly from how much he was restraining himself.

“Fuck.” He mutters to the empty room.

Meanwhile, Shane slams the door shut as soon as he gets into his hotel room. His heart is still pounding erratically and his chest is still heaving, though he isn’t sure if it’s from walking too fast down the hallway or from what just happened in Ilya’s room. Probably both.

“What the fuck was that?” He whispers to himself.

His hand slowly moves to the side of his neck. The spot where Ilya had pressed his face earlier is still tingling, as if the alpha is still here with him. When his fingers brush over it, a shiver runs down his spine.

He remembers the way Ilya caged him against the wall and pinned him there. He remembers the feeling of that large hand on his shoulder. He remembers the feeling of Ilya’s hot lips

pressing against his neck. He remembers the way Ilya stared at him with those eyes, dark and burning with something close to desire.

Ilya was intimidating, dominant, overwhelming, and so fucking hot.

Shane groans quietly to himself. He shouldn't be thinking like this, he shouldn't be replaying the scene, but he can't help it.

He remembers Ilya's scent too, how it seemed to surround him when Ilya leaned in. He remembers the smell of cold winter air, layered with something smoky and earthy, but also something slightly warm and sweet, like pine needles and a bit of cinnamon. It's *so* Ilya.

He takes a deep breath to calm himself, but then freezes.

Ilya's scent is still here. It's faint, but it's unmistakable.

Confused, he sniffs the air before looking down at the T-shirt he's wearing. Slowly, he pulls the collar up to his nose and takes a careful breath.

There it is. Ilya's scent is lingering on his shirt. Perhaps from the time he stumbled down the hallway with Ilya draped against him.

"Oh, fuck." Shane whispers to himself, yet can't help but to take a longer breath.

Still with his chest heaving, he drags his feet toward the bed and climbs onto it. He lays down on his back and stares at the ceiling, but his body feels too warm and his nerves are tingling. It's impossible to stay still, not with all the thoughts about Ilya running in his head.

His hand slowly moves on its own as it slides down his torso. There's a small fire burning inside him right now, the one that he always tries to ignore and bury away whenever he thinks about Ilya.

As if he's moving on autopilot, he pulls his shirt over his head and pulls his pants down, stripping himself naked on the hotel bed. He then presses the shirt to his face and takes a deep breath, inhaling the faint trace of Ilya's scent.

"Ilya…" He whispers quietly as he moves his hand lower. He curls his fist around his hardened length and tugs it to full hardness, and then he starts stroking himself.

He imagines the way Ilya loomed over him in his hotel room earlier, how his eyes were dark like a predator ready to pounce, how Ilya pressed his face against his neck and inhaled like the alpha needed his scent to breathe. He imagines what could have happened if Ilya didn't pull back. He imagines Ilya murmuring his name in that deep and accented voice of his. He imagines Ilya's hand tracing the lines of his body and grabbing possessively.

Shane moans at the images, his mouth dropping open as soft pants leave his lips. His grip around his cock tightens with every stroke while his other hand moves up to his chest. With a sharp breath, he brings his fingers to play with his nipples, finding them already perked from arousal.

Precome is leaking from the tip of his cock and his stomach begins to stir, but it's not enough.

He flips his body on all fours, his knees spread wide and his hips pointed up. His nose is still pressing into his shirt, inhaling Ilya's scent with every breath. He removes his hand from his chest and reaches behind, finding his hole unsurprisingly wet already.

Shane sucks in a quick breath before pushing his finger in, feeling it sliding past his rim. He chokes out a moan and pushes the finger knuckle deep, reaching as deep as he can. He curls his finger a few times to open himself up before pulling and pushing it back into himself. He shuts his eyes and bites onto the shirt as he repeats the movement over and over again.

When he thinks he is loose enough for another finger, he holds his breath and pushes three fingers into himself.

“Fuck… Ilya…” He gasps out and starts thrusting his fingers, trying to reach as deep as he can. His hand around his cock is still moving steadily. His precome is dripping all over the bed and he knows he has to think about a way to clean it up later, but right now, he can’t think of anything but Ilya.

His back arches he imagines what Ilya would see if the alpha somehow walked into his room right now, how Ilya would see him on all fours with his hips up, jerking himself off and fingering himself desperately like this. The thought sends a shudder down his spine.

Shane can hear the dirty squelching sound every time he plunges his fingers into himself, can feel the slick trickling down his thighs, can feel his stomach coiling with approaching orgasm.

Soon, his pace becomes frantic as he feels himself getting closer to the edge. He can feel it in the pit of his stomach, can see the lights flashing before his eyes, can feel his body trembling like it’s losing strength. His hips buck forward into his hand and then push back against the three fingers that are now stretching him.

“Yes—ah…! Fuck me, Ilya…!” Shane chokes out between his moans. His body is burning and his eyes are rolling to the back of his head.

It takes another few seconds before his hips spasm and his body tenses up. He calls out the alpha’s name as he spills his release onto the bed. His walls tighten around his fingers as he squirts all over his hand, clear slick dripping down his knuckles and inner thighs.

He collapses onto the bed a few seconds later, still panting and trembling at the force of his orgasm. His mind is blank for a few seconds as he slowly rolls onto his back, his skin sheening with sweat and his chest heaving.

He stares at the ceiling again, his shirt still clutched in his hand, and then lets out a heavy sigh.

“Fuck.” He murmurs.

Truthfully, this isn't the first time he touches himself while thinking about Ilya.

Sometimes, he didn't even start with Ilya in mind. Sometimes, he was under heat suppressants but wanted a quick release to ease the discomfort. Sometimes, he was reading something steamy in a book and wanted to touch himself. Sometimes, he just felt like doing it after a stressful day or an intense match.

But somehow, whenever he started pleasuring himself, Ilya would always slip into his mind. Sometimes it's Ilya's voice in his ear, sometimes it's the feeling of Ilya's large hands touching his body, sometimes it's those sharp eyes of his, and sometimes it's Ilya's alpha scent. By the time he reached orgasm, his mind was already filled with nothing but Ilya.

There's always the feeling of guilt afterwards. He has to rehearse himself before he sees Ilya again. He has to pretend that he never imagined Ilya fucking him or knotting him. He has to pretend that he wants nothing more than the friendship they already have.

Because he knows that's what Ilya wants.

Because if Ilya truly wants something more from him, the alpha wouldn't hesitate to take it, just like how Ilya takes those omegas around him.

But the more time he spends with Ilya, the harder it is to keep his feelings to himself. For him, it's a decade of rivalry-turned-friendship and years of yearning for the alpha he never dares to touch.

"Fuck." Shane whispers again.

He brings his hand up to cover his eyes and presses his palm there as if he can hold himself together by force. His throat tightens, but he forces himself to swallow the knot down.

There’s always a line between them and all this time, he has always been standing safely at the side.

But tonight, it feels like he’s standing too close to the line.

Ilya stops replying to his texts after that night.

It shouldn’t mean anything. Ilya has always been an erratic texter to begin with. Sometimes, Ilya sends him a text at three in the morning about the most random topic that came out of nowhere and sometimes, Ilya disappears for weeks like he has thrown his phone into the Charles River or something.

Shane knows this. He has known Ilya for many years now.

But this silence feels different than usual.

He’s sitting on the couch in his living room with his phone in his hand. The TV is playing some news channel on the screen, but he keeps glancing at his phone and unlocking it just to see if there’s any new notification on the screen.

He blows out a sigh and tilts his head back against the backrest. He shouldn’t overthink this, he knows it, but his mind keeps coming back to that night in Ilya’s hotel room. He can’t help but wonder if they’ve crossed a line that night.

They'll definitely see each other again in three months for the NHL All-Star Game in Tampa Bay. They will be playing for the same team for the first time in their lives. People are so excited about this, hockey fans have been talking about this all over social media, and Shane is excited too. Of course he is.

He has imagined this since the first time he saw Ilya skate all those years ago, with his reckless confidence and pure talent. He has wondered how it would feel like to move in the same direction, to anticipate a pass instead of blocking shots, and to trust Ilya instead of challenge him.

He wonders if Ilya also thinks the same. He wonders if Ilya is excited about them playing in the same team for the first time.

Shane lifts his phone, his thumb hovers over Ilya's name for a moment, but in the end, he puts his hand down. He locks the screen and places the phone face-down on the table before getting up from the couch.

Perhaps it's better to give Ilya some space, because Shane knows he also needs to compose himself before he sees the alpha again in three months.

Chapter End Notes

I originally wrote this as one-shot but it kinda got too long so i broke it into 2 parts

Also in case anybody felt like they've read this kind of plot before many years ago from a very different fandom. Yes, i rewrote the entire thing for hollanov ✨

Twitter

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The sky in Tampa Bay is clear and blue, with the sun hanging in the sky like a giant spotlight. Palm trees sway lazily and the beach stretches out beyond the resort. Athletes walk around the lobby in flip-flops and sunglasses with their families. Some are bringing their partners, some are bringing their kids, and some are bringing their parents along.

It's the NHL All-Star weekend, the time where things feel like celebration instead of competition. It's a time where everybody remembers that this is supposed to be fun, that they're competing for the charity of their choice instead of a trophy.

The bar and restaurant are filled with chatter and laughter, mixing with the sound of glass clinking and music playing from the speakers in the background. The pool area is the loudest of all with families lounging on the pool chairs, kids playing in the pool, and athletes chatting animatedly with each other.

Ilya sits on a bar stool in his dark orange Hawaiian shirt, holding a bottle of cold beer in a hand. He usually drinks vodka, but it's a sunny afternoon by the beach right now, so a bottle of beer is more suitable. He drinks slowly while scanning the faces around him.

His eyes linger a beat longer on every flash of black hair or familiar silhouette, searching for someone in particular. His eyes narrow slightly as he watches the crowd at the pool, wondering if *he* is there.

"Hey."

Ilya turns his head and finds Shane sliding onto the stool beside him. For a second, he just stares at the omega, taking in his appearance, and then he returns the greeting. "Hey."

A waiter who walks by pauses and asks Shane. "Can I get you something?"

Shane glances at the bottle in Ilya's hand before answering. "Same as his."

"Are they out of ginger ale?" Ilya lifts a brow.

Shane's mouth quirks. "I'm feeling a bit wild."

Ilya huffs out something that almost sounds like a laugh. The alpha nods lightly, but Shane can't really tell if it's approval or amusement, maybe both.

A moment later, the waiter sets a bottle of cold beer in front of Shane and walks away. Shane lifts the bottle to his lips and glances sideways at Ilya.

The silence stretches between them. There's only the sound of splashing water, upbeat music, laughter rising and falling behind them. Ilya keeps his gaze in front of him while Shane watches the crowd, the pool, the bar, and then his hands.

The awkwardness is starting to crawl under his skin.

"So, uh." Shane starts up, trying to sound casual even though his pulse is quickening. "This should be fun. I've always wondered what it'd be like to play on the same team."

"Have you?" Ilya hums.

"Yeah, I have." Shane shrugs. "For a while."

Another silence follows. Shane resists the urge to grab Ilya by the collar and shakes the alpha until he says something. Before he can actually do that, a familiar voice joins them.

“Well, well, look at this.” JJ appears out of nowhere and slings an arm over each of their shoulders. “Ilya Rozanov and Shane Hollander sitting next to each other and drinking together. Maybe I should take a picture and post it on my Instagram.”

Shane snorts while Ilya raises a brow.

JJ laughs and squeezes the alpha tighter. “Relax, Rozanov. You’ll look more handsome if you smile.”

“Say that to the ladies, not me.” Ilya scrunches his face.

“I’m just fucking with you, Rozy.” JJ laughs again and leans forward to peer between them. “It will be hell of a time. You two excited?”

“Should be interesting.” Shane nods with a chuckle.

“Let’s go East Boys!” JJ beams and pats their shoulders before dropping his arms. “Anyway, if either of you see my sister, tell her I’m not drinking. Catch you two later!”

And just like that, JJ is gone, leaving the two of them at the bar. But this time, the air feels a little lighter.

“Your teammate sure is loud.” Ilya comments.

“Always.” Shane chuckles lightly, feeling his shoulders relaxing a little.

“But he’s not a bad person.” Ilya hums.

“Yeah, he’s nice.” Shane hums and then looks toward the pool where the crowd is laughing happily. “You going to the pool later?”

Ilya follows his gaze to the pool and then nods. “I want to swim later. You?”

“I’ll probably just lay down on one of the lounge chairs.” Shane shrugs.

Ilya turns to him, staring at his face so intently that Shane feels his pulse spiking again.

“What?” He asks.

“You can’t swim?” Ilya asks, looking genuinely puzzled and slightly surprised.

“Of course I can swim.” Shane straightens immediately, almost offended. “Why do you think I can’t?”

“Just asking.” Ilya chuckles lightly.

“Asshole.” Shane mutters, but the corners of his lips are curling up.

Ilya finishes his beer with a gulp before standing up from his stool. “I’ll see you at the pool.”

“Yeah.” Shane says as he watches the alpha go.

Ilya makes his way to the crowd, already shrugging off his Hawaiian shirt as he walks. Shane takes a slow drink of his beer as he stares at Ilya’s broad shoulders catching the sunlight. His eyes linger a second longer than necessary before he forces himself to look away.

He swallows the last gulp of his beer before setting the bottle down and slides off his stool.

In the afternoon, the pool is loud and lively with the sound of splashing water and kids shouting. Shane stretches out on a lounge chair near the edge of the pool with sunglasses over his eyes, watching Ilya waist-deep in the pool with kids circling happily around him.

“Okay, listen up.” Ilya says to the kids with the most serious look on his face as if he’s about to say something important. “If you win, I will buy you candy from the machine. Anything you want.”

That gets excited shrieks from the kids. They immediately move to line up on one end of the pool under Ilya’s guidance.

Shane watches as Ilya sets the count down and swims with the kids. He watches as Ilya shouts about a shark in the water, pretending to drown just so all the kids can beat him. The alpha throws his head back dramatically at his loss and sputters about how the *shark* is only chasing him in the water.

The kids laugh and cling to him, splashing water and shrieking in joy. Ilya laughs with them, his smile just as bright as the sunshine above them. Ilya lifts a little girl and a little boy onto each of his shoulders, steadying them carefully as they squeal and cling to his curly hair.

Shane watches everything with a smile on his face, feeling his heart getting warm.

After playing around for a while, Ilya carefully puts the kids down from his shoulders and points toward the edge of the pool. “Alright. Out now. It’s candy time.”

The kids scramble out of the pool, water dripping everywhere as Ilya helps each of them up with gentle hands. Once all the kids are out, Ilya hauls himself out of the water.

Shane watches as droplets of water trail over Ilya’s shoulders, down the defined lines of his chest and abs. He swallows thickly when he sees Ilya’s muscles flexing as he moves, his wet

skin gleaming under the sunlight.

Ilya walks over to the omega, water dripping everywhere, and then shakes his head right in front of Shane to spray water in every direction.

Shane scrunches his face and quickly lifts an arm to shield himself. “What the hell?”

“You got your wallet?” Ilya asks.

Shane peeks out from behind his arm. “Yeah. Why?”

“I don’t.” Ilya says casually. “Can you give these kids some money for the candy?”

Shane gives Ilya a look of disbelief before shaking his head with a laugh. “Fucking asshole.”

Still, he pulls out some cash from his wallet and hands it to Ilya. The alpha takes the money and winks at him before jogging back toward the kids who are waiting for him.

Shane watches as the kids trail after Ilya toward the candy machine, sticking close to his legs like ducklings. One little girl tugs at his hand, asking to be carried, and Ilya scoops her up with one arm. The little girl giggles happily and wraps her tiny arms around Ilya’s neck to cling onto him.

Ilya will be a good father. Shane can imagine Ilya treating his children with patience and warmth, teaching them about discipline and rules, but also loving them tenderly.

He can imagine Ilya with *their* kids.

“Fuck.” Shane mutters to himself and quickly tries to brush the images away by shaking his head. What the hell was that thought?

“Hollander.”

Shane startles and turns his head, worried for a second that whoever is calling him could actually read his thoughts about having children with Ilya.

Cliff Marleau is standing beside his lounge chair with his hands shoved into the pockets of his shorts, looking tense and somewhat nervous.

“Hey, Marleau.” Shane lifts his sunglasses and squints slightly under the bright Florida sun. “What’s up?”

Cliff doesn’t answer right away. He glances toward the pool and then back at Shane, like he’s working himself up to say something. It’s strange to see Cliff acting like this. Shane may not know Cliff very well, but he knows the alpha is usually confident and unapologetic, almost like Ilya.

“Everything alright?” Shane sits up a little.

“I’m sorry to ask you this.” Cliff starts and then lowers his voice. “Do you happen to bring heat suppressants with you here?”

Shane blinks, caught off guard.

“It’s for my little brother.” Cliff says quickly, though his face remains hesitant. “I’ve asked around, but no one seems to bring any. I just thought… maybe you would have some with you… since you’re also…”

Shane stands up immediately. “Your brother got into heat?”

“Yeah.” Cliff sighs heavily and runs a hand through his hair. “It’s his first time traveling without his parents. The crowds, the media, the alphas… they overwhelmed him. His heat came early and he forgot to pack his suppressants.”

Seeing how genuinely worried Cliff seems, Shane’s face softens. “How old is he?”

“Eighteen.” Cliff says. “And his cycles are… a bit rough. He usually needs the stronger stuff.”

“Do you remember the brand he usually takes?”

“Oh, I have the picture.” Cliff immediately pulls his phone out and shows it to Shane. “Here. It’s this one.”

“I’ve got it.” Shane nods. “It’s in my room. Don’t worry.”

Cliff lets out a long breath of relief and his shoulders finally drop. “Oh, thank God.”

Shane smiles faintly. He has heard people joke about Cliff being a stereotypical jock bro with all bravado and ego, but seeing the alpha like this, it’s obvious how much Cliff cares about his family.

“Come on. I’ll give them to you.” Shane says and starts walking away.

“Seriously. Thanks a lot, Hollander. Really.” Cliff follows him.

“You’re welcome.” Shane hums. “Where is he right now?”

“In his hotel room. I told him not to open the door for anyone except me.”

“Good.” Shane murmurs.

As they walk away from the pool, Shane doesn’t notice the sharp gaze following him from across the poolside bar. Ilya stands there with the kids around his feet, his eyes darkening as he watches Shane leaving with another alpha.

When the sun begins to sink, the beachfront terrace comes to life.

The previously blue sky is turning into hues of red and purple, string lights are strung between palm trees, and fire pits crackle along the edge of the sand. The air smells like salt and grilled seafood from the BBQ nearby. Slow music is playing from the speakers somewhere near the bar. Laughter rises and falls as players mingle with teammates, families, and kids running around between their legs.

Ilya sits on a beanbag near the shore, legs stretched out and bare feet pressing into the sand. He’s far enough from the main crowd, but still close enough to hear the noises. He lifts the bottle of beer to his mouth and turns over his shoulder to look back toward the terrace.

He sees his teammates and friends chattering happily, arms slung over shoulders and drinks in their hands. His eyes scan around until he finds Shane among them.

The omega is standing near one of the cocktail tables, smiling at something Hayden is saying. The string lights catch in his dark hair, outlining his features in warm gold. His freckles look

more visible somehow, perhaps from the afternoon sun earlier.

Ilya keeps staring at Shane until suddenly, Cliff passes by.

Cliff squeezes Shane's shoulder as he walks and Shane turns around. His face looks surprised for a second before it melts into a smile. Cliff whispers something to him and Shane says something back, but Ilya can't hear anything from here. He watches as Cliff laughs over something Shane says and leans in to say another word before moving on. Shane watches Cliff go for a second before turning back to Hayden.

It's just a brief exchange of words, but Ilya's jaw tightens.

He looks away and turns his head back to the sea. He keeps his eyes there, watching the sun setting under the horizon while drinking his beer. After a few minutes, he hears footsteps approaching, and then a faint rustling sound beside him.

He glances sideways and sees Shane settling onto a beanbag next to his. The omega is holding a bottle of ginger ale in his hand, his eyes fixed at the sea as if pretending not to notice Ilya watching him.

"Not feeling a bit wild tonight?" Ilya raises a brow.

"The match's tomorrow morning." Shane snorts lightly.

Ilya hums and takes a long drink of his beer. The silence stretches between them and Shane feels it again, the tension and awkwardness between him. He shifts in his seat and opens his mouth, working up to say something, but Ilya beats him to it.

"I didn't know you and Marleau were close."

"What?" Shane blinks and turns his head to look at Ilya. "I don't think I'd say we're close."

“You were talking in the pool. You left together.” Ilya’s gaze stays forward.

Shane recalls how he took Cliff back to the hotel rooms to give him the heat suppressants. Cliff was concerned since he handed him a whole strip of pills, but he reassures Cliff that he doesn’t need them for the weekend. Cliff thanked him and rushed to his brother, and Shane spent the rest of the afternoon in his hotel room to enjoy the quietness.

“I helped him.” Shane says.

Ilya finally looks at him. “Helped him with what?”

Shane hesitates.

There’s nothing shameful about helping another omega in need, but somehow, after what happened in Toronto that night, things feel different. They haven’t talked about what happened last time in Toronto and Shane knows Ilya also avoids the topic like he does. It feels like bringing it up will cause a change that they don't know if they’re ready to face yet.

“Just… stuff.” Shane says quietly.

“Helped him keep him company tonight in his hotel room?” Ilya asks.

Shane’s head snaps around. “What the fuck?”

Ilya’s question lands like a slap. The pain hits first, and then anger. He can’t believe that Ilya would even think like that about him, that after years of rivalry, trust, late-night texts, and secret jokes, this is where Ilya’s mind goes to.

“What?” Ilya turns toward him as if he didn’t say anything wrong.

“Where the fuck did that even come from?” Shane demands. His chest feels tight, like he can’t take a full breath.

“It’s normal. Guys bring people to their hotel rooms.” Ilya shrugs casually.

Ilya speaks like this is normal for Shane, like this is all he is, and something twists painfully inside Shane.

“I’m not like you.” Shane says sharply.

Ilya glances at him again. “Are you not?”

Something snaps. Shane can feel fire burning in his chest.

“Yeah, I’m not like you who fuck every pretty omega who catches your eyes. You leave your room smelling like sex and someone’s pheromones like it’s nothing, like you don’t give a shit about any of them.” Shane says, feeling heat rushing up to his neck and his hands trembling slightly. His voice cracks, not too obvious, but enough that Shane feels it in his throat.

“I don’t do that. I don’t sleep with people just because I can. So don’t just imply shit you know nothing about.” Shane grits through his teeth. “I’m not like you. I’ll never be like you.”

His heart is pounding loud in his ears and it’s getting harder to breathe. He’s so angry, but also sad and heartbroken because beneath all this, he’s still in love with Ilya. It hurts more than it should because it’s coming from Ilya, from the alpha he’s been in love with for years.

Silence settles between them. Ilya studies Shane’s expression quietly. His face is unreadable, but his eyes seem to be searching for something.

“Why are you so angry?” Ilya asks quietly. “I just asked a question.”

The words feel like salt on an open wound.

“Fuck you, Rozanov.”

Shane stands up abruptly and turns away, jaw clenched and chest burning. He doesn’t trust himself to say anything else without breaking down, so he just walks away and leaves Ilya alone.

The next morning is filled with a weird tension in the air.

It’s subtle, but the players can feel it.

During breakfast, Ilya keeps glancing over at Shane while the omega pointedly refuses to meet his gaze. Shane looks at his plate, his phone, and anything that isn’t the alpha sitting three tables away from him.

The tension remains in the locker room. While teammates are chattering and joking with each other, Ilya changes his clothes at one side of the room, his eyes keep drifting back to the omega who’s sitting on the bench across the room. Shane can feel Ilya’s gaze on him, but he ignores it as he puts on his skates.

The moment they step onto the ice, however, everything changes. There's no awkwardness or hesitation anymore as their skates cut across the arena together.

They read each other's movements easily. Just with one glance, one tilt of head, or one subtle change in speed, Shane knows exactly what Ilya is thinking. He watches as Ilya drives the puck across the ice, drawing the defenders toward him. Shane uses the distraction to slip into an open space.

The crowd is loud, but it all fades into background noise as he keeps his eyes on Ilya. It's surprising how fun and easy it is, how right it feels to be playing with Ilya instead of against him.

When Ilya glances at him, Shane can see the alpha smiling. Ilya tilts his head slightly to the left and Shane immediately skates to the left.

Ilya watches Shane move before he picks up his own speed. He draws two defenders, fakes a shot, and suddenly hits the puck to the left. It lands perfectly on Shane's stick, exactly where it needs to be.

Shane swings his stick and shoots, sending the puck flying into the net.

The spectators roar and teammates cheer from the stands. Shane grins and turns around, eyes searching for Ilya. The alpha is suddenly by his side, hand gripping his shoulder as he leans in to press a quick kiss to the side on Shane's helmet.

When he turns his head, Ilya is beaming at him with that bright smile and gleaming blue eyes. Shane swears his heart nearly leaps out of his throat at the sight.

"Nice pass." He says to Ilya, slightly breathless.

"Nice goal." Ilya replies.

For a second, they just look at each other. Whatever happened last night and whatever words that were thrown like knives have melted away now.

Ilya gives his shoulder a pat before skating away toward the center as the whistle blows for next period. Shane watches the alpha go, his heart feels full yet light at the same time.

No matter how infuriating Ilya Rozanov can be, Shane can't stop falling in love with him.

The evening is lively.

The beachfront terrace is glowing with string lights and lanterns hung overhead. Long tables are filled with half-finished plates and pitchers of drinks. The players mingle together in the area, celebrating the day no matter who won and who lost. The All-Star match is about charity, showmanship, and having fun.

Some alphas gather near the main bar to join a drinking game. Rules are shouted over one another and soon, there's cheering, groaning, and glasses clinking noisily. Ilya is standing among those alphas with a shot glass in his hand.

Shane stands at the side with a few others, holding a can of ginger ale in his hand. He laughs along with the conversation and nods at the right moments, but his attention keeps drifting to the bar where Ilya is.

The alpha throws his head back with a laugh, his curls damp with sweat and his eyes bright. He then shouts something in Russian that makes the other alphas howl in laughter. There's nothing cold or restrained about Ilya right now, just warmth and joy, like he's truly enjoying himself.

Shane's heart swells to the point of aching. He remembers the first time he saw Ilya laugh like that, years ago after an intense match that could've gone either way. He remembers how his heart skipped like he had been checked into the boards without warning. He remembers how he felt the butterflies in his stomach just from seeing the alpha laugh like that.

"Earth to Shane."

He snaps out of his daze and whips his head to JJ who is smirking at him.

"Who got you zoning out like that?" JJ asks and points his eyes toward the bar. "Rozanov, is it?"

"No. What the hell." Shane laughs awkwardly, but his cheeks turn warm.

"Stop teasing him. Come on." Hayden steps in.

"I'm just asking." JJ gris wider. "But you two were insane today. I didn't expect arch-rivals to click like that once they're on the same team."

"I guess when you put two of the best players together, something like that is bound to happen." Hayden nods in agreement.

Shane rubs the back of his neck sheepishly. "Guess so."

His eyes slowly drift to the bar again.

Ilya has his arm thrown over Cliff's shoulders now, encouraging him to take another shot. Cliff shakes his head with a laugh, but Ilya just shoves the glass closer to his mouth with that wicked grin. The crowd chants until Cliff finally gives in and throws the shot back, earning a cheer from everybody else.

Ilya whoops and pounds the bar table with his palm.

Shane watches with a fond smile. No matter how chaotic and crowded the room gets, his eyes always seem to find Ilya like they're drawn to the alpha naturally.

Then, as if sensing the stare, Ilya suddenly shifts his gaze. Their eyes meet for a split second before Shane quickly looks away and lifts the ginger ale can to his lips. The warmth on his cheeks seem to spread down his neck, which is weird since he doesn't touch any alcohol today.

He hooks his finger against the collar of his own shirt and flutters it, trying to cool himself. It barely helps with the heat. He can feel sweat dampening his shirt and trickling down his temple.

"You feeling hot?" Hayden asks when he notices it.

"Yeah, dude. Did you drink something earlier?" JJ squints at him.

"No. It's just kind of hot tonight." Shane forces a laugh.

"Is it?" Hayden frowns in confusion. "It's still early February though."

Hayden's words seem to tick something. Shane looks around, suddenly hyperaware of his surroundings. Everyone else looks relaxed and comfortable. No one else is fanning themselves or sweating like him. It's just him.

His heart starts beating faster and harder, loud enough that he can hear it pounding in his ears. His breath feels shallow, like his lungs can't seem to take enough air no matter how carefully he inhales. Even the cold can in his hand doesn't feel that cold anymore.

It almost feels like a panic attack, but it's not. His stomach sinks when the realization hits him.

This is something worse than that.

This is his heat.

It's been so long since he felt this sensation, not with all the heat suppressants he takes to suppress it. It almost felt half-forgotten until his body remembers it again, now, at this moment.

"I need to cool off." He blurts out and without waiting for any reply, turns and walks away.

He can hear JJ's confused *what* and Hayden calling his name from behind, but he doesn't turn around and keeps weaving through the crowd with his head down, praying that no one can smell his pheromones yet.

The cool air greets him when he steps into the hotel building, but it barely helps with anything. He tells himself to calm down and slow his steps because panic will only make it worse. He knows this.

He didn't take any suppressant this morning since he had been taking them from three days before, just like his usual routine whenever there's an upcoming match. He also gave the rest of his suppressants to Cliff's brother yesterday because he didn't think his heat would still strike.

Careless. So fucking careless.

At least his heat didn't strike during the match. At least he made it through the game. At least he made it through the night. Now, he just needs to get to his room and lock himself there. He'll figure out how to get another suppressant later. Hayden probably carries some from his sister.

When he reaches the elevator, he presses the button and waits. His skin feels tight, his head is getting lighter, and the music from the terrace sounds distorted in his ears now. He tries to ground himself and keep his mind focused.

Once the elevator doors finally slide open, he steps inside, presses his floor number, and immediately presses the button to close the doors. He lets out a sigh of relief as he watches the panels glide toward each other.

A hand suddenly appears between them.

Shane gasps quietly when the doors slide back open. His stomach sinks when Ilya steps in.

He quickly steps aside to make some space while Ilya moves to stand next to him. The door closes with a *ding*, sealing them together, and then the elevator starts going up.

It's so much worse with Ilya here. Because of his heat, everything feels more sensitive, that includes his senses. He can faintly smell Ilya's scent in this enclosed space and it makes his pulse stutter. Heat is pooling low in his loins as his body reacts instinctively.

As if sensing something, Ilya suddenly turns to Shane, his brows furrowing slightly as he studies the omega.

"You okay?" Ilya asks.

“Yeah.” Shane nods, trying to stay calm.

“You done for the night?” Ilya asks again, still staring at the omega.

“Yeah.” Shane answers quickly. “Are you going back to your room?”

“Yeah. Same floor.” Ilya flicks his gaze to the floor indicator inside the elevator.

Shane slowly brings his hand to the back of his neck, tracing the edge of the scent-blocker patch on his nape to make sure that it’s still in place. These patches work perfectly for daily life, but once his heat truly settles, they become useless.

Please. Just a bit more. Shane chants to himself as he watches the floor indicator.

Ilya’s nose twitches suddenly. He takes a slow inhale, as if smelling something in the air. It’s subtle, but Shane notices it. He carefully glances sideways to look at Ilya, feeling cautious. Then Ilya suddenly turns his head to him like a hawk catching a movement.

The look in Ilya’s eyes sends a jolt straight through Shane’s spine.

“…What?” He dares to ask.

Shane barely has time to register the situation before he finds his back pressed against the elevator wall with Ilya caging him against it. He opens his mouth to speak, but Ilya shuts him up with a kiss.

The kiss is intense and almost fierce, stealing the air from his lungs. Shane gasps into the kiss, but Ilya swallows it all as he deepens the kiss and licks the inside of Shane’s mouth. Ilya’s alpha pheromones are flooding the small space now, taking over Shane’s senses until his knees grow weak.

By the time the elevator doors open with a soft chime, Shane's feet are off the ground. Ilya throws the omega over his shoulder with ease as if he weighs nothing at all. The motion makes Shane's head spin and his vision begins to blur as Ilya strides down the hallway.

Ilya unlocks the door to his hotel room, walks inside, and then drops Shane onto the mattress.

Shane gasps as the impact seems to knock his breath out of his lungs. Before he can register what's happening, Ilya is already there, looming above him with one hand pressing his shoulder against the mattress.

Ilya is clenching his jaw so tight that Shane can see a vein twitching under his skin, his teeth bared like a wild animal and his eyes dark and burning with desire.

Shane knows this isn't the Ilya he knows. He knows the Ilya above him is nothing more than an alpha who's driven by his rut, an alpha who's going to take him, knot him, breed him, just because his instincts tell him to.

Whatever happens next, Shane knows that it won't be something Ilya chose to do with a clear mind.

"Rozanov. Wait." Shane tries to reason, but panic is threading through his voice already.

Before Shane can even try to shift away, Ilya grabs the collar of his shirt and yanks it open, ripping the fabric and sending the buttons flying. Shane shudders when the cool air touches his bare exposed skin.

Ilya then presses his face against Shane's neck, breathing the omega in like he's starving. Ilya's breath is hot and uneven, and Shane hates how his body responds instinctively. His fingers curl into the sheets, gripping them tightly as he fights to stay himself. He can feel his slick trickling out between his legs, preparing himself for Ilya, but his mind is still here.

This isn't how he wants it.

He has imagined Ilya on him more times than he'll ever admit, but not like this, not when Ilya doesn't even realize what he's doing, not when Ilya is following his instinct instead of his heart. He doesn't want to wake up tomorrow and see the regret in Ilya's eyes. He doesn't think his heart will be able to recover.

Mustering the little strength he has left, he pushes at Ilya's chest, but the alpha immediately catches his hands and pins them on either side of his head. Ilya starts rubbing his face against Shane's neck, marking the omega with his scent. His teeth scrape against the skin as if searching for a perfect spot to place his claiming mark later.

"No..." Shane screws his eyes shut and turns his head away, his voice shaking. "Ilya, please… I'm scared…"

Ilya freezes at the words. His tight grip on Shane's wrists loosens as he pulls back slowly to look at the omega. His breathing is still heavy and his eyes are still dark, but there's awareness in there now and Shane can see it too.

He didn't know an alpha in rut was capable of looking so thoughtful. Everybody always told him that an alpha in rut is animalistic and almost feral, and all they can think about is breeding the omega who's in heat.

"Shane." Ilya murmurs.

Shane's eyes grow wide and something warm hits his chest. *Shane*. That's the first time Ilya calls him by his first name.

"Don't be scared." Ilya murmurs again, his voice low and rough as if he needs to force them out. "Don't be scared of me."

Ilya slowly brings his hand to cup Shane's cheek, his fingers trembling with restraint. The touch is gentle, so much that Shane feels his heart aching as he watches the alpha. Ilya brushes his thumb across the underside of Shane's eye as if wiping away the tears before they can fall.

All his life, Shane doesn't think he has ever heard about alpha who was able to pull themselves out of their rut state. Yet here Ilya is, breathing hard and trembling, but still fighting his instincts to stay himself.

Shane feels tears brimming in his eyes. This is the Ilya Rozanov he knows; the infuriating, reckless, and arrogant alpha, but kind and gentle. This is the Ilya he's been in love with for years.

"I won't hurt you, Shane." Ilya murmurs again like it's a promise he's making to himself as much as to Shane. "Don't be scared."

Shane sniffs softly and nods his head. This is the Ilya he loves and there's nothing Shane wouldn't give him. If Ilya wants him, even if it's just for tonight, he will let the alpha have him.

"Ilya." Shane smiles through his tears and cups Ilya's face in his hands. There's no more fear now.

Ilya's eyes seem to flash a little brighter before he leans down to connect their lips into a kiss. Their lips mold together for a couple of seconds before Ilya begins to bite on Shane's bottom lip, demanding entrance.

With an intake of breath, Shane opens his mouth and lets Ilya slide his tongue in. The alpha starts licking his cavern earnestly, as if wanting to mark every spot as his own. The heat seems to flow from Ilya's mouth to his own body, turning his blood into liquid fire.

Ilya's scent starts surrounding him, stronger than thicker than what he had ever smelled in the past. It seems to seep into his senses and curl around his lungs, so much that he can smell Ilya's scent with every breath he takes.

When Ilya finally breaks the kiss, there's a string of saliva connecting their lips before it drips away. Ilya then buries his face on the crook of Shane's neck again.

Shane smells like summer, warm and bright like the sun. He smells like sun-warmed fruit and honey, like orange blossom and green grass. Ilya knows Shane always wears a scent-blocker patch to cover everything, but there are few rare times where he caught a whiff of this scent, and he wanted more.

His hand comes up to Shane's nape until he can find the edge of the patch sticking on the skin. With a swift motion, he rips the patch off, letting Shane's scent burst into the air around them. Ilya closes his eyes and inhales deeply as if he's trying to taste the air itself.

"Fuck, Shane. You smell so good." Ilya growls.

Shane finds himself tilting his head back to present his neck. Ilya growls at the submissive action and starts leaving wet kisses and soft bites all over the skin. Shane gasps softly when Ilya sucks on a spot, and then groans when the alpha scrapes his teeth to leave a mark. His hands grip onto Ilya's tank top, tugging and pulling as if wanting to rip the garment off.

Ilya seems to sense the need. The alpha pulls back, just enough to pull his tank top over his head and throw it aside, and then leans down again, skin against skin this time. Ilya grabs both of Shane's wrists and pins them on either side of the omega's head.

Shane purrs when Ilya's body touches his. God, how long has he been dreaming of this? To have Ilya's body pressed against his? To have the alpha pinning him down like this? He has imagined this so many times, but having Ilya actually doing this to him… it's so much more than his imagination.

Ilya's lips are everywhere – kissing his freckles, his jawline, his nose, his lips, and anywhere they can reach. It's almost like Ilya doesn't know which spot he should kiss first because he wants to kiss *everything*.

Ilya trails his lips lower to Shane's collarbone, to Shane's chest, and then stops when his lips brush over a nipple. He releases Shane's wrists from his grip and moves his hands to grab the omega's pecs instead, squeezing and kneading the flesh before his lips latch onto a nipple.

"Ah…!" Shane gasps out and arches his back, one hand gripping onto Ilya's curls.

Ilya flicks his tongue over the nub until it's perked before sucking it deep into his mouth. Shane arches his back and squirms beneath the alpha, soft moans spilling from his mouth as his body starts dampening in arousal. He can feel his underwear getting soaked with his slick.

When Ilya pulls back, Shane's nipple is all red and swollen. He smirks at the sight before leaning down again to give the other nipple the same treatment. It doesn't help that Ilya's hands keep on groping and squeezing his pecs roughly, fingers pressing and digging into the flesh, almost leaving red marks on his skin.

"Ilya—ah!" Shane gasps when Ilya tugs the nub with his teeth. There's a slight sting from it, but there's also a jolt of pleasure running through his spine. He can even feel his slick gushing out in response.

Ilya seems to *sense* it. The alpha suddenly takes a loud breath through his nose, like he's breathing in all the scent in the air. His hands that are playing with Shane's chest quickly move down to unbuckle Shane's pants in urgency. Shane lifts his hips willingly to let Ilya slide his pants down, leaving him naked under the alpha.

Ilya stops and takes a moment to look at Shane. His gaze trails over Shane's flushed skin, his neck adorned with hickeys, his nipples perked and swollen, and his feeble cock leaking from the tip. Ilya licks his lips as his gaze moves lower to the glistening slick between Shane's thighs. The omega's sweet scent is curling in the air around them and Ilya can feel his mouth watering in hunger.

"Show me." Ilya says lowly.

As if following a command, Shane holds the back of his knees and spreads his legs open, showing Ilya how wet and ready he is.

Ilya sucks in a deep breath when he sees the slicked hole between Shane's legs. It's dripping wet and twitching, like it's asking for something more. He knows Shane has never been with anybody – at least that's what he believes. He has spent the past ten years keeping his eyes on Shane and scenting the omega every time they meet to make sure that there's no unfamiliar scent of another alpha sticking on Shane.

And if his creepy assumption is correct, then he will be the first one to take Shane. He will be the first one to fuck Shane, to knot him, and to breed him until he's full. He will be the first and the only one. His alpha instincts are screaming in his head, telling him to claim the omega under him. His omega.

Not wanting to waste any more time, Ilya reaches his hand down and presses his fingers against the slicked hole. He rubs his fingers against the rim, feeling how wet it is, and then pushes one finger in.

"Fuck." Ilya growls when he feels Shane sucking his finger in as if begging for more.

"Yes—ah…" Shane tilts his head back, his eyelids fluttering in delight. Having any part of Ilya's body inside him feels so right.

Ilya thrusts his finger a few times before adding the second finger. The alpha pushes them knuckles-deep and then twists his wrist, rubbing against every spot inside. Shane gasps out a moan and pushes back against the fingers. Ilya's fingers are longer and thicker than his own, so they reach deeper inside him.

Shane gasps out a moan when Ilya pushes the third finger in, spreading him open and preparing for more. Ilya seems to know which spot to touch to make him see stars. Every time Ilya plunges his fingers in, they press against his sweet spot inside. Shane whines needily, his hips instinctively pushing back against Ilya's fingers.

"Ilya… More—ah! Need you… Please…!" Shane moans shamelessly. His heat is already taking over his mind that he can't think of anything else besides having Ilya fucking him.

Ilya definitely can't ignore Shane's plea, not when his own cock is throbbing painfully under his pants. The alpha pulls his fingers out, watching the thick strings of slick following the movement before dripping off. He then brings his wet fingers to his mouth and licks the slick off as if it's the sweetest nectar he has ever tasted.

Shane watches everything, his chest heaving and his body burning with need. He watches the way Ilya's tongue licks every drop of slick from his fingers like the alpha isn't letting anything go to waste. Oh, he'll gladly let Ilya lick him down there and slurp as much slick as he wants.

Ilya licks his fingers clean and then brings his hands down to finally unbuckle his pants. Still keeping his eyes on Shane, he pulls his pants and underwear down, just enough to let his cock spring free.

Shane sucks in a shuddering breath when he sees it. He'd be lying if he said that he has never imagined how Ilya looks when he's naked, but this is so much more than his imagination.

Ilya is so big down there, all thick and engorged with veins protruding along the length. Shane's eyes instinctively trail down to the slightly thicker part at the base where the knot will form. Ilya looks so ready to fuck him open and breed him full. He can feel a glob of slick trickling out of his hole just from the thought of it.

When Ilya shifts closer, Shane spreads his legs wider to welcome the alpha. Ilya fits himself between Shane's legs and presses the tip of his cock against the slicked hole. He can see a gush of slick trickling out in response, showing how eager the omega is. With an intake of breath, Ilya pushes himself in. There's a little resistance at first because Shane is so tight, but he pushes through it.

The moment Ilya slides in, Shane's body tightens around the thick length as a sharp cry leaves his lips. He can feel every inch of Ilya sliding into him, stretching his walls and rubbing against all the sensitive spots inside him.

It's painful because he has never been stretched this wide before, but it feels so perfect to have Ilya inside him. His mind is spinning and his vision is flickering with lights as his body tries to register the overwhelming sensation. He has never felt so full yet so good before, he has never felt so wrecked yet satiated at the same time.

“Fuck, Shane.” Ilya groans once he’s all the way in. “Fuck. You’re so tight.”

“Ilya… Nghh…” Shane whines as his hands scramble to hold onto the alpha.

Sensing the need, Ilya leans down and lets the omega grab onto his back. Once Shane has a secure hold around him, Ilya starts moving his hips. He slowly pulls back until the tip of his cock is barely left inside, and then pushes back in roughly. He repeats it a few times, enjoying the way Shane moans and gasps beneath him.

Soon, Ilya’s thrusts become more demanding. His pace is relentless, almost punishing, but he can’t stop himself at this point. Shane cries out at each thrust, helpless against the onslaught. His fingers dig into Ilya’s back and his nails leave crescent marks at the skin, but it seems to fuel the alpha even more. Every part of Ilya is consumed with the need to fuck his omega and breed him full.

There’s a dirty squelching sound every time Ilya drives into him. It’s so shameful because he is so wet down there, but he can’t control his body anymore at this point. His body doesn’t feel like his own anymore. His body feels like it belongs to Ilya now.

This is something he will never be able to forget. This is something that will be embedded in his mind for the rest of his life.

Even if this will be the only time Ilya holds him, he will keep this as a precious memory.

“Ilya—*ahh!* Oh, fuck…!” Shane chokes out between his moans. He’s no longer coherent with how hard Ilya is fucking him, but he knows what he wants. He knows what his body needs. He needs Ilya to knot him.

“Fuck, Shane. Fuck…!” Ilya can feel it when Shane is getting close. He can feel Shane’s walls pulsing around his pounding length, pulling him deeper and tightening. His own knot is starting to swell, ready to plug the omega and breed him full.

When his knot grows big enough, Ilya shoves it in with a hard thrust, locking their bodies together. Shane screams, his body jerking beneath Ilya and his back arching off the bed. He can feel the tip of Ilya's cock going deep, so deep that he thinks it might have reached all the way to the entrance of his womb.

His cock spurts with release and his slick gushes out, squirting all over Ilya's knot as the orgasm hits him hard. His entire body is trembling, his toes curling and his fingers dig harder into Ilya's back.

Ilya buries his face in Shane's neck and groans as he spills his release inside, breeding the omega full with his seeds. Shane whimpers as he feels the warmth gushing into him in hot spurts. It feels strange, but so satisfying, like his body is made just for this.

Ilya eventually collapses on top of him and they stay like that for a while. Shane closes his eyes with a contented sigh. Ilya is so warm and he feels so safe being under the alpha like this. He wants to stay like this with Ilya forever.

"Ilya…" He whispers softly and runs his fingers through the alpha's curls.

Shane loses count of how many times he has come or how many times Ilya came inside him. He can't think anymore, he can no longer form any coherent words with his mouth. His voice has turned into endless cries. He can only gasp and moan at this point, yet Ilya seems to understand his needs.

Ilya is still here, his sweaty chest is now pressing against his back and his hot breath is puffing against his nape. The knot is still locking their bodies together, but that doesn't stop Ilya from rolling his hips as if wanting to go at it again.

Shane doesn't know if he can keep up with Ilya. He doesn't know how many hours it has been. Exhaustion has started to kick in and his head is getting lighter with each passing minute. He's an athlete, he trains his body and his stamina more than other people, but Ilya is insatiable. It's like Ilya can't get enough of him at all.

"Nghhh… Ilya…" Shane squirms when he feels the knot shirking, allowing Ilya to move and thrust into him again.

Ilya loops an arm around Shane's waist and starts picking up his pace, ripping out another cry from the omega's throat. Unlike Shane who is losing his mind as the hours pass by, Ilya's senses are slowly coming back. He is starting to regain control of his own mind. He is able to *think* instead of *feel*. He is no longer fully controlled by his instincts.

But it doesn't mean Ilya is out of his rut. His body is still hot, he is still aroused, and he is still fucking Shane.

Ilya can see what kind of mess he has turned Shane into. His inside is so wet and whenever he pulls out, he can see his seed mixed with Shane's slick trickling out of his hole, coating his cock with a glistening sheen. It's so dirty, yet Ilya has never seen anything so hot and so sexy before.

Shane is trembling beneath him. The omega's skin is flushed and his breath has turned into soft whimpers that make something burn in Ilya's chest.

Mine.

A voice speaks from the back of Ilya's mind. His gaze drifts to Shane's nape where the unmarred skin is glowing softly under the dim hotel lights. It's perfect. It's made to be marked by him.

Ilya growls and leans down to gnaw at Shane's nape, as if marking the spot where he is going to leave a permanent mark.

He can't have anybody get close to Shane, he can't have anybody looking at Shane, he can't have anybody touching his omega. He is going to bind Shane to him, forever and ever. Shane has to be with him.

"No…"

Shane's voice is soft, but Ilya hears it. He pulls back and watches as Shane brings his hand to the back of his neck. Shane's hand is weak and trembling, but it's still shielding his nape, still protecting himself.

Ilya freezes at the sight.

At this point, Shane shouldn't be capable of refusing anything. People say that omegas lose their minds when they're deep into their heat, yet here Shane is, still desperately trying to protect himself.

The realization hits Ilya like a punch to the face.

The thought of waking up tomorrow to see fear and regret in Shane's eyes twists Ilya's chest until it hurts to breathe. He can't do this. Not like this. Not to Shane. This was never supposed to happen in the first place.

Shane doesn't want to be claimed by someone he doesn't love. Shane doesn't love him the same way.

Shane might not want to see his face anymore after this. Shane might hate him to the bones after this. They might not be friends anymore after this. Ilya has ruined the one thing he holds

dear and there's no coming back from this, not with what he has done.

This is the first and last time he is doing this.

Gritting his teeth, Ilya starts to pick up his pace again, pounding into Shane until the omega is sobbing. He wraps his arms around Shane's quivering body and pulls the omega closer until there's no space left between their bodies, until he can feel Shane with everything he is.

Just this time, just this one last time, let him be this close with his omega. He swears he is going to keep this memory forever.

"I love you." His lips brushes over Shane's shoulder as he whispers like a confession. "I fucking love you, Hollander."

There's no reply. Shane is probably too far gone to even hear it. Maybe that's for the best. Ilya doesn't think he could survive if Shane breaks his heart right now.

Ilya screws his eyes shut and tries to shift his focus to his body instead of his heart. When he feels his knot swelling again, he pushes it in once again, locking their bodies together for the nth time tonight.

Shane cries out feebly. His cock twitches weakly with nothing spilling out, but his slick still squirts out and drips down his inner thighs. His eyes are rolling to the back of his head and his consciousness is starting to fade away.

Ilya mutters a string of curses when Shane's walls squeeze around his cock. When he opens his eyes, he sees Shane's exposed nape once more. The alpha voice in his head roars, urging him to mark Shane and bind the omega to him. The urge is so strong that his body aches with it and his nerves scream.

Ilya quickly brings his hand to the back of Shane's neck and presses his palm firmly, forcing it to stay there even as his control frays. When his orgasm hits, his instinct roars once again,

telling him to bite and claim Shane as his.

So he does.

He leans down and bites into his own hand, hard enough to tear the skin and taste blood in his mouth. It hurts, but he deserves this pain, because he has hurt Shane so much worse than this.

He doesn't move his hand. He doesn't even loosen his grip on Shane's nape even as his body shakes, even as the alpha inside him screams in frustration.

If Shane doesn't want to be claimed by him, then he will never take it.

Ilya finally pulls back once the haze clears from his mind. His breathing is still rough, his chest heaving as if he just came out from deep water. Only then does he look down at his hand. Blood is seeping from the bite wound and dripping onto the white sheets below.

It hurts, but it's nothing compared to the pain in his chest.

Shane lies unconscious beneath him. His skin is still sheening with sweat, his body littered with bruises and marks, his lips parted slightly as his breathing evens out. There's a faint tremor running through his body, aftershocks that haven't completely faded.

Ilya swallows hard.

Once Shane wakes up, there will be a mess. Shane might punch him in the face or worse, Shane might look at him with fear in his eyes. But there's no one to blame but himself, isn't there?

Ilya curls his bleeding hand into the sheets beside them and holds Shane tighter with his other arm.

“I’m sorry.” Ilya whispers quietly, not sure if he’s apologizing for what happened tonight or for loving Shane at all.

Shane cracks his eyes open and stares at the hotel room ceiling.

His mind is blank for a moment as he tries to gather pieces of memories. He remembers his heat, the elevator, and Ilya’s hands on his body. He remembers the way he begs Ilya to take him and satiate his heat. He remembers Ilya whispering something to him before he lost consciousness, but he can’t remember what it was.

Shane swallows thickly and slowly turns his head to look around the dim hotel room.

Ilya is sitting on the loveseat in the corner of the room. The alpha is shirtless with elbows braced on his knees, hands clasped together and his head bowed. Ilya looks so tense and almost frozen, like he hasn’t moved from his spot for hours.

Shane pushes himself up to sit, but winces slightly at the ache on his hips.

Ilya’s head snaps up instantly when he hears the rustling sound from the bed. Within seconds, he’s already on his feet and striding over to the bed.

“Are you okay?” Ilya asks, his brows furrowed like he’s bracing for bad news.

“Yeah. I’m okay.” Shane blinks at the alpha, still a little dazed

Ilya doesn’t look convinced. He sits on the edge of the bed, but keeping a safe distance between them like he’s afraid of getting too close.

“Do you need hospital?” Ilya asks.

Shane almost laughs at the seemingly absurd question. “No.”

Ilya nods, but the tension doesn’t leave his face. His brows are still furrowed and his jaw is still tight, looking like he’s fighting something inside himself.

“...What’s wrong?” Shane asks carefully.

Ilya takes a slow breath before turning to the omega. “It was your first time, wasn’t it?”

The question catches Shane off guard. He blinks rapidly and opens his mouth, only to close it again when he realizes that Ilya is being serious and not teasing him.

“…It was.” He answers with a quiet voice.

Ilya closes his eyes and lets out a heavy sigh like another weight has just dropped on his shoulders.

“I am so sorry.” Ilya swallows hard.

Shane blinks, not expecting an apology, but responds quickly. “It’s fine.

“No. It is not fine.” Ilya shakes his head.

“It’s fine. Really.” Shane insists.

“How can you say that?” Ilya suddenly snaps and Shane flinches slightly. “You know what happened. You know what I did to you. How can you say it’s alright?”

“What do you want me to say, then?” Shane scrunches his face, confusion and frustration mixing together. “What do you want from me?”

“Be angry. Be mad at me. Curse me. Hit me.” Ilya demands.

Shane finally sees the guilt that consumes Ilya, how it’s gnawing and swallowing the alpha from the inside. He sees the way Ilya is punishing himself and it makes his heart ache, because he knows this isn’t Ilya’s fault.

“It’s not fully your fault.” Shane says.

“It is fully my fault!” Ilya snaps again, his voice almost echoing in the quiet room.

“Why are you so mad about this??” Shane snaps back, finally losing patience.

Ilya freezes, like he’s not expecting Shane to yell back at him.

“You sleep with other omegas, with Svetlana, and with beautiful people who want you. So why does sleeping with me matter *this* much!?” Shane’s hands curl into the sheets as the words spill out before he can stop them, his voice edged with hurt.

“Because you are not like the others!” Ilya snaps back without hesitation.

Shane falls quiet for a moment as he tries to register the moaning behind those words.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” He finally asks.

Ilya looks away, fixing his gaze somewhere else like he’s afraid to look at Shane too long. “You are not like the others I slept with.”

That vague answer only irritates Shane more. “Why? What makes me different?”

Ilya hesitates, and that hesitation hurts Shane even more.

“What? Because I’m not as pretty as them?” Shane scoffs and tries to blink the tears in his eyes.

“No.” Ilya answers immediately and turns back to Shane. “You are very pretty. Ever since the first time I saw you.”

Shane can feel his heart skipping a beat. For a second, he forgets how to breathe. A knot forms in his throat and he has to look away before Ilya sees it in his face.

“You’ve never seen me as an omega though.” Shane mutters softly.

“Because you don’t want to be seen as one.” Ilya says.

Shane glances back at Ilya and blinks.

“You are an omega, yes, but you don’t let it define you.” Ilya continues. “You work hard. People know your name. Other players respect you, fear you, and want to play against you. You are an amazing hockey player and everybody knows that.”

Ilya’s hand gestures helplessly as he talks. Shane listens to all the blabbering and some Russian words that the alpha mutters under his breath. Shane watches the way Ilya tries to describe everything, his words spilling out like he’s been holding them in for long.

“I don’t know how to say the rest in English.” Ilya says at the end.

Shane just stares at Ilya, trying to process everything at once.

“So… You’ve always seen me as an omega?” He asks quietly.

“Of course. I am not dumb.” Ilya frowns.

“But you never treat me like one.” Shane says, his voice wavering slightly. “Not like how you treat other omegas. You… never try to touch me or anything.”

Ilya stares at him for a moment before answering. “Because if I touched you, you would go.”

Shane’s eyes widen in surprise. Ilya drags a hand down his face and lets out a long sigh like he’s finally letting himself be honest.

“I am surrounded by beautiful omegas. They like me. They want me. We have fun. I don’t think about whether they stay or leave.” Ilya glances at Shane before looking away again. “You are different. If I get too close to you, if I touch you without knowing what you want, you will leave me. I don’t want you to leave. Ever.”

Something inside Shane’s chest swells painfully. The room goes quiet for a few seconds, filled with all the restraint and longing they’ve held for years.

“Why do you sound like you’re in love with me?” Shane asks softly, breaking the silence.

llya doesn’t answer. His gaze falls to the bed sheets as his fingers curl into the fabric. He shakes his head faintly in denial, fear, or both.

“I am.” Shane says suddenly.

Ilya looks up. “You what?”

“In love with you.”

Ilya straightens fully. His eyes are locked on Shane like he’s afraid this is just some kind of illusion.

“You… in love with me?” Ilya asks again to make sure.

“I’ve been in love with you for so long that I don’t even fucking know what to do with it.” Shane huffs out a breath that’s half laugh and half scoff.

Ilya shifts closer to the omega. “How long?”

“I don’t know.” Shane looks down, feeling his throat getting tight and hearing his own voice cracking. “Fucking years.”

Ilya stares at the omega for a moment before speaking again. “You never said anything.”

Shane groans and tilts his head back against the headboard. “Because if I did, you would leave.”

“So we are both stupid.” Ilya hums.

“Yeah, we—” Shane stops and looks at Ilya. “Wait. What do you mean *we*?”

“I am in love with you, Hollander.” Ilya looks him in the eyes. “For years.”

Shane blinks. The words don’t quite register at first, like his brain is lagging behind his heart. Then his vision blurs with tears, so he quickly rubs his eyes with his fingers, his breath hitching in half laugh and half sob.

Ilya reaches a hand and brushes his thumb under Shane’s eyes to wipe the tears that haven’t fallen.

“Hey.” Ilya murmurs softly. “Don’t cry.”

That’s when Shane finally notices the bandage around Ilya’s hand. The white gauze is wrapped messily around his palm and knuckles. Shane’s breath hitches when he sees the faint stain of red beneath the layers of gauze. He reaches his hand and gently wraps his fingers around Ilya’s wrist.

“What happened to your hand?” Shane asks as he examines the hand.

“I bit it.” Ilya answers simply.

“You bit it?” Shane looks up with a confused frown. “Why?”

“So I didn’t bite your nape.”

Shane is stunned by the answer. He knows how an alpha in rut acts. He knows how they’re purely driven by their instinct to mate and breed. He knows that as an omega, it’s his own responsibility to keep his nape safe by wearing a collar. He knows that if Ilya had claimed him last night, it wouldn’t be the alpha’s fault.

But Ilya stopped himself.

Ilya chose to hurt himself just to protect Shane.

Shane presses his lips tightly as more tears gather in his eyes. No matter how much he tries to blink them back, his tears still fall down his cheeks.

Ilya frowns at the sight and brushes his thumb once more. “Why are you crying more?”

“Does it hurt?” Shane sniffles.

“No.”

Shane sniffles again, but there’s a little laugh in it. “Liar.”

Ilya just smiles as he continues to brush Shane’s tears away with this thumb. Ilya’s smile doesn’t last for too long though. When it starts to falter from Ilya’s face, Shane notices it.

“What’s wrong?” The omega asks quietly.

“I’m also sorry about yesterday.” Ilya drops his hand from Shane’s face.

“Yesterday?” Shane frowns slightly. “What about yesterday?”

“About you going to Marleau’s room.”

“Oh.” Shane blinks when he remembers it, and then he lets out an incredulous huff. “Yeah. What the fuck was that about?”

Ilya seems to hesitate for a moment before he mutters. “I was jealous. I thought you had something with Marleau.”

Shane just stares at Ilya, blinking dumbly as he registers the words. When he does, he huffs out a soft chuckle and shakes his head.

“Damn, you’re such a possessive asshole.” Shane can’t stop himself from smiling.

Ilya stares at Shane for a moment, like he didn’t expect the teasing response, and then he smirks smugly. “I am.”

They share a smile for a moment before Ilya leans in, slow enough that Shane has the time to pull away if he doesn’t want it, but Shane simply closes his eyes and meets Ilya in the middle. Their lips meet in a soft kiss, warm and tender, filled with all the words they never got to say.

Ilya kisses Shane like he’s savoring it, like he’s been waiting for years to kiss the omega like this. Shane finds himself melting into the kiss, his heart swelling so much to the point of hurting.

When Ilya pulls back, Shane feels dazed, like there are sparks flickering across his vision. It feels like he’s dreaming, but when he looks into Ilya’s blue eyes, he knows this is real.

“So… what now?” Shane murmurs.

“You are still my rival.” Ilya tilts his head as if considering it. “I will still beat Montreal in every game.”

“Sure.” Shane snorts.

“But when there’s only the two of us.” Ilya continues, his voice quieter now as he leans close enough for their lips to brush, and then he whispers. “We will be lovers.”

Shane smiles and pecks Ilya’s lips before pulling back to speak. “I like that.”

Ilya smirks and leans in to steal another kiss before pulling back again. “Do you bring contraceptives?”

Shane blinks. His brain stutters to adjust with the abrupt change of topic. “W-What?”

“I knotted you many times while you were in heat. You might get pregnant.” Ilya says it so casually.

Shane flushes instantly as heat rushes his face. Now that he’s more aware of it, he realizes that the feeling of *fullness* in his lower abdomen is actually his womb. Ilya had filled him so much with his seeds.

“Fucking asshole.” Shane shoves the alpha weakly on the shoulder.

“What? I do not dislike the idea of you pregnant with my child.” Ilya shrugs, and then he smirks again. “But I still want to play hockey with you a little longer.”

“I need to get something from the pharmacy.” Shane groans and makes a move to get out of the bed, but Ilya stops him immediately.

“You are not going anywhere.” Ilya says, his voice low and possessive.

Shane gulps when he feels his heart skipping a beat. He has never seen this possessive side of Ilya before and he didn’t think it would be this hot.

“I already have contraceptives. I asked the hotel when you were asleep.” Ilya says with a nod.

Shane lets out a sigh of relief and then furrows his brows slightly when he realizes something else. “Wait, what time is it?”

“Two in the morning.” Ilya says before standing up and walking over to the other side of the room.

The alpha returns a moment later with a glass of water and two pills. Shane looks at the morning after pills before taking it with water. Ilya sits on the side of the bed again, watching attentively as Shane swallows the pills.

Shane sets the glass on the bedside table and sees Ilya still staring at him. “What?”

“Wear a collar from now on.” Ilya says firmly, leaving no room for argument.

Shane studies the alpha for a second before huffing out a small chuckle. “Alright.”

For the first time, the word *collar* feels like a promise instead of a shackle.

The ice rink is gleaming like glass under the bright lights. The area is filled with the sound of board creaking, blades cutting across the ice, and murmurs of conversations from the players who are warming up for the match.

Ilya is kneeling near the faceoff circle, one knee down and one knee bent as he tightens his skate laces. Shane watches the alpha from the side before slowly skating over.

“Tonight?” Shane asks.

Ilya looks up to him. “Whose room?”

“Whichever is fine.” Shane shrugs and looks around before speaking again. “There’s this one place in this city that’s selling really good tacos. I’ve been wanting to try them.”

Ilya doesn’t say anything. Shane’s heart sinks a little when he realizes that Ilya isn’t delighted at the idea. Ilya did say that they’re lovers, but only when there are only the two of them. Right now, there are other people around them.

“You… don’t want to have dinner outside?” Shane asks carefully. “Too public for you?”

Ilya stares at him for another second before asking. “Are you asking me on a date?”

Shane can feel his shoulders dropping in relief as heat spreads across his cheeks. “Fuck you.”

“Later.” Ilya says smoothly and rises to his feet, smirking at the omega. “After our dinner date. I’ll fuck you as much as you want.”

“Fuck off, Rozanov.” Shane huffs and skates away, but then glances back and smiles at the alpha.

Ilya smiles back at Shane and watches the omega skates away. His eyes linger on the black collar peeking under Shane’s jersey, the dark color looks stark against the omega’s skin. Ilya’s chest tightens as he recalls that one night of intimacy with Shane curled close against him, kissing his lips and whispering his promise.

After I retire, you can claim me.

Ilya snaps back to the present when the whistle rings. He smirks and sets his helmet before skating into position with his teammates. Shane slowly skates toward the faceoff circle and takes his position right in front of Ilya. The noise in the arena fades as the linesman steps closer with a puck in hand.

Shane lifts his head and Ilya looks up at the same time.

Ilya’s eyes soften immediately and Shane feels his heart swelling at the sight. Their lips curl into barely contained smiles like the kind of secret that’s shared just between the two of them.

Shane adjusts his grip on his stick while Ilya rolls his shoulders. Just before the puck drops, Ilya’s smile seems to widen slightly, almost like the alpha challenging him. Shane returns it with a challenging smile of his own.

On the ice, they’re rivals. They chase the same puck and fight for the same trophy, like enemies who are destined to clash.

But off the ice, when the noise dies down and it’s just the two of them, they are lovers.

Chapter End Notes

I wanted to post this chapter earlier but i got dragged into a week-long overseas business trip and i was so exhausted i needed another week to fully recover but here it is! ✨

Now thinking about writing pregnant shane 🤤

Anyway, hope you enjoyed this as much as I enjoyed writing it!! 💖

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