

i can keep a secret, can you?

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by [pink_starfish](#)

Summary

Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov's relationship is probably the worst-kept secret in the NHL, and it's entirely their own fault. 11 years is a long time to keep a secret, and Shane and Ilya are really, really bad at sneaking around.

Or: A look into Shane and Ilya's relationship over the years, from all the people who walk in on them, one way or another.

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

Scott Hunter had almost managed to convince himself he had imagined Ilya Rozanov telling Shane Hollander his hotel room number during the All Stars game. He was probably just making a big deal out of nothing and it was only wishful thinking that he might not be the only gay guy in the league.

But then he stepped out of his hotel room and saw Hollander standing in the doorway to Rozanov's room. Hollander turned at the sound of Scott's door clicking shut, then froze at the sight of him, his eyes going almost comically wide.

Scott closed his eyes for several moments longer than blinking warranted, going through the five stages of grief remarkably quickly. There was no way Hollander hadn't just left Rozanov's room, Scott had seen his neighbour coming and going multiple times, and now he knew for sure that Rozanov had been giving away his room number earlier during the game.

He cursed his decision to find a vending machine to buy snacks. He wasn't hungry enough for it to be worth learning that the two rookies were fucking. The whole rivalry narrative that every hockey news outlet was pushing made this even worse. He really hadn't wanted to know that there was something else behind the charged eye contact the NHL liked to display beside their headlines. Now he would never be able to think about their on-ice aggression and constant chirping the same way again.

When Scott opened his eyes again, Hollander hadn't moved, and still looked terrified. He was like a deer in headlights, waiting for Scott to make the first move.

"Look, I don't care what you two do behind closed doors. It's your life." He said quietly, mindful of the fact that they were in a hallway where anyone could walk by and hear.

Hollander seemed to have been possessed with some sort of frenetic energy. "I don't know what you're talking about." He fidgeted with his sleeves as he spoke.

"Sure." Scott was a little amused by how bad the rookie was at lying. "I'm assuming you don't want anyone to know about this?"

"There's nothing for them to know about." Hollander paused, maybe realizing that Scott knew who was in the hotel room right next door to his own and was capable of drawing his own conclusions. "I was just... visiting."

"Right." Scott agreed. "Don't worry, I would never tell anyone."

"Okay." Hollander said, looking down at his feet. "Thank you." The last part was barely a whisper.

With a parting smile, Scott turned right back around and went back into his room. He wasn't hungry anymore.

Despite his best efforts to block the interaction- which was easily in his top five most awkward conversations of the year- out of his memory, it was impossible for him to not read way too far into their relationship every time he saw them on TV together from then on.

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Months later, Shane remembered his talk with Scott Hunter and his complete and utter mortification while he was texting Rozanov.

Jane: Did I ever tell you that Scott Hunter saw me leaving your hotel room?

Lily: no, when was this?

Lily: Hunter is so old i did not know he can still see

Jane: After the All Stars game.

Jane: You're such an asshole, he's not that much older than we are.

Lily: you like it ;)

Lily: he is fossil. He is

Jane: He's what?

Lily: i learned new word just for this

Lily: he is senile

Lily: so no problem, he will not have memories for long

Jane: You don't take anything seriously. What if this gets out?

Lily: you are too serious

Lily: has been months, if he has not told then he will not

Jane: I guess so.

Lily: and after all stars game?

Lily: you couldn't keep secret for six months?

Jane: Fuck off, it was your hotel room.

Lily: but it was not me who Hunter saw

Jane: Fuck you.

Lily: are you sure you want that?

Lily: what if Hunter sees?

Jane: 🙄

...

Hayden Pike liked to think that he knew Shane better than anyone else did. They had become fast friends after being drafted to the Voyageurs together, and Shane was an integral part of his life. He had been there for the births of all Hayden's children, even the fourth person to hold Ruby and Jade after they were born. Shane was Hayden's best friend and they talked about almost everything, but there was one thing he was always super cagey about: his girl Lily.

Shane had never actually told him about her, but Hayden wasn't blind. He saw Shane texting someone with a lovestruck look on his face almost every day, and the two of them had spent enough time sharing hotel and locker rooms for him to catch her contact name.

From the little he knew about their relationship, they had had their ups and downs, but always got back together. The only big scare had been that day in Boston, when Shane came back to the hotel from Lily's place early, wearing different clothes than he had left in and looking about two seconds from a panic attack. Apparently they had worked things out, though, because now Shane had broken up with Rose Landry and was smiling at his phone when he thought nobody could see him again.

Hayden was happy to see his friend happy, but wished he understood why Shane shut down the second he mentioned her name or insinuated that he might be seeing someone. Lily had been a constant mystery for years, and Hayden wished that Shane felt comfortable enough to share that part of his life with him. Plus, he really wanted to meet this girl that had kept Shane infatuated for so many years.

Hayden had come up with theories as to why the relationship seemed so illicit, but none of them seemed very plausible, and they all made Jackie laugh at him.

"Babe, this is Shane Hollander. No way is he involved with a married woman, especially not one of the Boston WAGs!" She told him over the phone one day, when he had the hotel room to himself since Shane had left to see Lily.

"It explains everything! Like why he gets all defensive and won't let us meet her!" Hayden had thought he was onto something with this one. "And that time he came back to the hotel with another man's clothes on! I know Shane, he wouldn't be caught dead with GAP sweatpants. They're not one of his sponsors, Yuna would kill him."

Jackie was silent for a few seconds. "Hayd, have you ever considered that maybe those were Lily's clothes?"

"What do you mean? Why would she have men's clothing lying around?"

Jackie sighed, the one she saved for when Hayden was being especially dense. "What if Shane is actually seeing a man, and that's why he never wants to talk about it?"

He was actually a little blindsided by this one. "You think Shane's gay?"

"I mean, it would explain some things. Like Rose Landry. I still can't believe he dated her."

"People can break up and stay friends." Hayden argued.

"You said that Shane still texts her all the time. That's not normal."

"It's not that weird." Jackie hummed, so Hayden knew she wasn't convinced. "Besides, we know he's been seeing Lily forever."

"What if Lily is a fake name, and she's a man?"

“Oh.” Jackie was starting to make a lot of sense. “I guess that would make sense. But I don’t know, this is all a little out there.”

“No more out there than him having an affair.” In the background, Hayden heard the familiar sound of a baby crying. “Shit, I just put Amber down. I’d better let you go and check on her.”

“Okay. Goodnight, I love you.”

“Love you too babe.”

Once he hung up, Hayden put his phone face down on his bed and stared up at the ceiling. Jackie had made some good points, but he would have noticed if his best friend was gay, right?

Apparently not, because Hayden learned more than he ever wanted to about Shane’s sex life the next day.

Hayden walked around the room collecting his things to pack up his bag and Shane left his phone face up on his bed while he went to the bathroom. He must have forgotten to lock it, because Hayden caught a glimpse of Lily’s name on the screen when he walked past it and couldn’t help taking a closer look at the screen, which was showing their most recent messages.

Jane: Suck. My. Dick.

Lily: i think you would rather suck mine

Lily: you like to be on your knees for me, yes?

Hayden stood there, transfixed in horror, as an image loaded in the chat. Two seconds later, he slammed his eyes shut, like that could burn the image of Lily’s dick pic (oh God, Lily was a man, Jackie was going to be so smug) out of his brain.

“Hayden, have you seen my-” Shane cut himself off when he saw what must have been an interesting sight: Hayden standing in the middle of the room with his eyes scrunched shut, probably looking like he regretted all of his life choices.

“Shane, buddy, I’m really sorry, I swear I didn’t mean to snoop on your messages, I just saw a little bit because your phone was on.” Hayden rambled.

Shane was also starting to look a little bit panicked. “What was wrong with my messages?” He grabbed his phone, which had since turned off, and his face went pale when he saw what ‘Lily’ had sent while he was in the bathroom. “Oh.”

“Hey, hey, hey,” Hayden said, gesturing for Shane to sit down on the bed with him. His breathing sounded a little erratic, like he was hyperventilating. “It’s okay. Shane, I don’t care if you’re gay, or just seeing a man, or-”

“Really? Because I am. Gay, I mean. And seeing a man.” Shane told him. Hayden was grateful for the interruption, because he didn’t know what other words would have come out of his mouth if he’d kept talking.

“You’re my best friend, of course I don’t care that you’re gay.” Hayden willed Shane to believe him. “I understand why you’ve kept this a secret for so long, and I’m sorry that I wasn’t a safe space for you to come out to. I hope you know that I would never tell anyone.”

Hayden really did understand why Shane would do his best to keep this under wraps. The NHL, and hockey in general, was not LGBTQ+ friendly, no matter how much they outwardly pretended to be. Ten minutes in a locker room with any team in the league would teach you that.

“Don’t lie, Jackie’s going to know by the end of the day. That’s okay, though, I like her better than you most of the time. And it’s not that I didn’t trust you, I actually didn’t realize I was... you know, for a long time. You didn’t do anything wrong.” Shane Hollander really was too good for this world. Trying his best to reassure Hayden, when he was the one who was just forced into coming out.

“I haven’t done anything right, either.” Hayden chose not to ask about how he had been seeing ‘Lily’ for so long without realizing he was gay. “But I’m so happy to hear that you’ve been seeing someone! I hope it’s going well, you always look happy when you’re texting her-him, sorry, that’s going to take some getting used to.”

“I think it is.” Shane’s smile was shy. “It’s complicated, though.”

Hayden was practically itching to interrogate him, but Shane looked like he was reaching his limit for emotional conversations. He clapped Shane on the shoulder, standing up. “That’s great! Good talk, buddy. I’m really proud of you.”

First on his immediate to-do list was finding eye bleach, because he really didn’t want to remember what Lily’s dick looked like. Then he needed to call Jackie to debrief. They had a lot to discuss now, and maybe she would know the answers to some of the questions he could never ask Shane.

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Jane: You really need to stop sending me dick pics.

Lily: why? I thought you like them :(

Jane: That’s not important.

Jane: Hayden saw it.

Lily: saw what?

Jane: The dick pic you just sent me!

Lily: did he like it?

Jane: You’re impossible.

...

The next time they had a game in Boston, Hayden and Shane were in different hotel rooms. It was very inconvenient for Hayden, actually, since he'd forgotten his toothbrush and Shane usually packed two.

Hayden called him, but it rang through to voicemail, which was weird, since Shane had told him he was staying in that night. It wasn't very late yet, so Hayden shrugged and decided to stop by Shane's room. It was just down the hall, so it seemed easier than heading out to a store to buy a toothbrush.

He knocked on the door. "Shane? Are you in there?" He called out when no one came to the door after a few seconds.

"Yes, one second!" Shane called back.

"Hayden." Shane said when he finally opened the door. "What are you doing here?"

"I was wondering if you had an extra toothbrush..." Hayden trailed off. Shane didn't look put together in the least. His shirt was backwards, and inside out, and he only had one sock on. His hair looked like someone had been running their fingers through it. Aggressively. "Is this a bad time? I can come back later."

"No!" Shane insisted. "Come in, let me take a look."

The door clicked shut behind him, and he watched Shane dig through his bag until the bathroom door opened and Ilya Rozanov stepped out.

"Well," Hayden wasn't quite sure where to start with this.

Shane looked like a deer in headlights. "Ilya!" He hissed, "I told you to stay in the bathroom!"

"Sorry, solnyshko, I thought he left." Rozanov didn't look very sorry. Instead, he seemed to be appraising Hayden.

"Shane, what is Rozanov doing in your hotel room?" Before Shane could answer, Hayden noticed that Rozanov wasn't wearing a shirt and had what looked suspiciously like a hickey on his chest. "Actually, don't answer that, please."

"It's... not what it looks like?" Shane tried, looking to Rozanov for help.

"Not at all. Never in my life have I seen Hollander without clothes." Rozanov agreed.

"Oh my god, okay. Holy fuck." Hayden said slowly. "Shane, you know I support you, but Rozanov? What happened to Lily?"

Rozanov started laughing, which kind of scared Hayden, because he hadn't known the other man was capable of feeling things other than anger and malicious glee.

Shane swatted at him. "It's not funny!"

“Is very funny.”

“What? Why is this funny?” Hayden was beyond confused.

“I am Lily, Pike.”

This was all so outside the realm of possibility that Hayden didn’t know what to do. “No you’re not. Shane has been seeing Lily for years, and you two hate each other.” He couldn’t wrap his head around the idea that the soft smile Shane directed at his phone so often could be for Ilya fucking Rozanov.

“I am aware, I was there the whole time.” Rozanov was such an asshole, Hayden didn’t see how Shane could put up with him.

“You are being very unhelpful.” Shane informed his... boyfriend? Fuckbuddy?

“Is what your team says to you, yes?”

“Asshole.”

“Is okay, they know you are second-best hockey player.”

“Fuck you.” Shane said, his eyes narrowed. Hayden got the horrible feeling that they were about to start making out.

“Alright! I will leave you two to it. Shane, you can tell me all about this later, right?”

“Okay.” Shane didn’t sound like he was listening, focused on Rozanov with a look on his face that Hayden had never seen before and never wanted to see again.

Hayden walked out of there as fast as he could without running, realizing once he was back at his room that he never got that toothbrush from Shane. All of that trauma for nothing, he mourned.

His thoughts were still racing as he laid down to sleep that night, but one particularly horrifying question kept him up: the rivalry, the chirping, the constant fighting, was it all foreplay?

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“Why, why, why does this keep happening?” Shane muttered to himself once Hayden was gone.

“You’re the one who said he could not break curfew tonight. We could have been alone in my penthouse.” Ilya pointed out.

“Shut up. Him seeing your dick pic was bad enough-” Ilya’s obnoxious laughter cut him off.
“It wasn’t funny!”

“It was a little funny. Do you think he’s realized that he’s seen my dick yet?”

“No, please don’t say that. Whatever you do, don’t tell him that.” Shane pleaded.

“I will save it for maximum impact. Maybe during a game.”

“Oh my god, don’t do that. Poor Hayden.” Shane could already imagine the face Hayden would make.

“He is fifteenth best player on your team, you will be fine without him.”

“Can you at least try to be nice to him? We’re friends, you’re probably going to be seeing a lot of him now that he knows. His wife will probably invite you to dinner.”

“I don’t want to have dinner with Pike’s family.”

“You won’t have a choice. His wife, Jackie, is really nice. I bet you’ll love her.” Jackie was a wonderful person, and she could be very stubborn. Shane had no doubt that he and Ilya would end up at her house next time they were both in Montreal.

“She must be an angel, to put up with Pike all day.”

“That is exactly the kind of thing I need you to not say.”

“Is free country, you cannot stop me from speaking my truth.”

“Who taught you that?”

Ilya was such an ass, and if Shane was any less in love with him he didn’t know what he’d do.

...

Cliff Marlow stood awkwardly in the middle of the hallway in Montreal General Hospital, trying to work up the courage to go into Shane Hollander’s hospital room.

The moment he heard Hollander hit the ice during their game the night before, he’d known it was bad. The check had been entirely legal, but that didn’t stop him from feeling awful about it. He never wanted to see guys get injured, even the other team’s top player.

The chewing-out he’d gotten from his captain the night before had only made him feel worse. Ilya was probably his closest friend on the team, but you wouldn’t have been able to tell from how coldly he had treated Cliff after the game.

He didn’t quite understand what had set Ilya off so bad, but seeing Hollander get taken out like that had clearly shaken him. Through the haze of oh god, did I do that after Hollander went down, Cliff had noticed how worried Ilya looked, how he’d skated right up to the medical personnel and asked something like is he okay?

Cliff had seen the news articles reporting that Hollander would be fine, but was out for the season with a concussion and injury to his collarbone. That had been a relief, but he had still

wanted to stop by in person to apologize. He had no idea how that was going to be received, though, so he was hovering in the hall trying to work up the nerve to go in.

He felt kind of stupid just standing there actually, so he finally made his way to Hollander's room. When he pushed the door open, he was surprised to see Ilya in there, sitting at Hollander's bedside.

Ilya looked up sharply. "Cliff. What are you doing here?"

"Ilya, don't be rude." Hollander slurred before Cliff could respond.

He noticed that Hollander was a little out of it, with a dopey smile on his face. They must have put him on the good drugs.

"I could say the same thing to you, Ilya. But I wanted to stop by and apologize, Hollander. I didn't mean for you to get injured, let alone end up in the hospital." Hollander nodded, but looked like he was on another planet, so Cliff wasn't sure how much of this he would remember the next day.

Hollander turned to look at Ilya, frowning. "Ilya, where did you go?"

"I have not moved."

For the first time, Cliff noticed that Hollander was calling Ilya by his first name. He hadn't known the two of them were close enough for that. Hell, it had taken Cliff years to get to that point with his captain.

"Yes you did. Where did your hand go? My fingers are cold." Cliff was a little confused now.

Making uncomfortable eye contact with Cliff the whole time, Ilya offered Hollander his hand. Hollander grabbed it immediately, looking very satisfied with himself. He seemed to have forgotten that Cliff was still in the room, looking up at Ilya with something that could only be described as heart eyes.

Cliff decided to take his leave before he saw anything more incriminating than Ilya holding hands with his rival.

"Well, Hollander, I'm really sorry, again, and I hope you heal up fast. Ilya, um, I'll keep all of this to myself, okay? I'm happy you're happy." Cliff turned on his heel and left before he could stutter through anything else embarrassing.

His brain was occupied by thoughts of Ilya and Hollander for the rest of the day. Mainly, how? Since when? And most importantly, why? Ilya had looked all too comfortable letting Hollander hold his hand. Cliff hadn't even known he liked guys. The only other times he'd seen Ilya with that fond look on his face were when he was texting his Montreal girl, Jane.

Wait a damn minute. Shane Hollander. Jane, from Montreal. Was it a coincidence, or had Ilya thought he was being funny? Hollander being Jane would make all of this so much worse. No way had Ilya been sleeping with his rival for the entirety of their rivalry.

Nevermind how long the two of them had been together, Cliff supposed he would have to start being nice to Hollander now, if Ilya was in love with him. He hoped Hollander wasn't too embarrassed when he got off the drugs and remembered what he'd done.

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Jane: Why is Cliff Marlow texting me 'get well soon'?

Lily: i gave him your number after he visited you in hospital

Jane: He visited me in the hospital?

Lily: yes, while i was there

Lily: do you not remember?

Jane: I sort of do.

Lily: while he was there, he found out we are together

Jane: What?

Lily: did i forget to tell you this?

Jane: Yes, you forgot to tell me! How?

Lily: someone who was loopy from medicine was upset when i let go of his hand

Jane: Oh no.

Lily: you looked like sad kitten

Lily: you said, my hand is cold

Lily: with this face :(

Jane: Never let them put me on the good stuff ever again.

Lily: is okay, Marlow is good guy

Lily: he is good friend, would never tell

Jane: I'm glad you have friends like that.

Lily: so am i.

...

David and Yuna Hollander had suspected that their son might be gay for years. Sure, Shane had dated a girl in high school, then dated Rose Landry, but both of those relationships had been so short-lived that all they'd done in the end was fuel their suspicions. He and Yuna had been doing their best to seem open and woke, and waiting patiently for their son to come out to them.

Except now, David was sort of regretting that decision, because maybe that would have stopped this from happening somehow.

This was visiting Shane's cottage to look for some dish soap, and finding Shane pressed up against a window with Ilya Rozanov's tongue down his throat and hands on his ass. This had not been covered in the contingency plans he and Yuna had made for however Shane decided to come out to them.

So David fled the scene in a panic, ignoring the startled Dad! from the doorway. The ten minute drive back to his and Yuna's place helped him calm down, and start to regret the way he'd reacted. If Shane was inviting Rozanov to his cottage, the one that even his best friend Hayden had never gotten to visit, it must be serious, so he needed to compose himself and warn Yuna to be nice.

"Hey, Yuna!" He called when he entered their cottage.

"In the living room, honey!"

"You look like you've seen a ghost." His wife remarked when she saw him.

"Not exactly. I didn't get the dish soap, but I did see Shane. He has someone over."

"Oh, that's great!" Yuna frowned when David flinched. "It's not great? David, we've talked about this, you said you would be fine with Shane being gay."

"No, no, it's not that, it's this particular man... you'll recognize him, so you have to promise you'll be nice."

"Of course I'll be nice, this is the first time Shane's ever brought someone here. Who is it?"

David shook his head. "I'll let Shane explain that one to you."

"You're acting so serious. I'm sure it's not that bad."

Yuna must have regretted her flippancy later, because David saw her eye twitch when Ilya Rozanov stepped through their door.

...

It hadn't taken long at all for Ilya to win Shane's parents over. After the awkwardness of their first meeting, Ilya got along with his parents better than he did.

Now that Ilya lived in Ottawa, Shane knew that he went to their place for dinner at least once a month, even when Shane wasn't there. He was a little jealous, actually, of how seamlessly Ilya had incorporated himself into their little family. Ilya liked to do puzzles with Shane's dad and helped him cook, things that Shane had never had the patience to do growing up and was never around to do now. He could keep up with his mom in a conversation about hockey, something that not many people could do, and seemed to enjoy her fussing, which Shane usually pushed away.

Shane knew that Ilya had been really nervous about making a good impression on them, and maybe he hadn't initially, but now his parents knew how much of a sweetheart Ilya was underneath all the snark and treated him like their own son. It meant the world to Shane, to see Ilya be showered in all the affection he deserved.

But that didn't mean he appreciated being displaced from his spot as 'favourite son' by his boyfriend.

It was especially obvious on nights like these ones, when Ilya and Shane had time to visit his parents for dinner together.

"Shane!" His mom greeted him with a hug when he walked through the door. "It's good to see you still have time for your poor, lonely parents."

"Hi, Mom," Shane said as she released him and turned to Ilya.

"Ilya, sweetheart, you haven't been here in forever." She said, and Ilya pulled her into a hug and gave her a quick kiss on the cheek.

"It is good to see you, Yuna."

"We've missed you around here! David is in the kitchen still, but he's been looking forward to showing you the new puzzle he bought last week."

"I can't wait." Ilya sounded genuinely excited by the prospect, and it made Shane's heart swell.

Shane listened to Ilya make conversation with his parents while they ate Ilya's favourite chicken alfredo, only contributing when someone addressed him directly. He must have had a lovestruck expression on his face, but no one mentioned it.

After dinner, they migrated to the living room and ended up playing UNO. Yuna crushed them all, of course, even though she always insisted it was a game of chance. Shane found that he didn't mind losing, for once, not when three of his favourite people were in the same room, happy to be together.

...

Svetlana Vertrova had just landed in Ottawa, and her connecting flight to Boston had been cancelled because of the snow. The airport staff had told her the next available one wasn't until tomorrow when the weather was supposed to clear, so she pulled out her phone to look for hotels in the area. Halfway through typing 'hotel' into the search bar, she remembered that she knew someone who lived in Ottawa now.

She pulled up their chat and scrolled up until she found when Ilya had sent her the address of his new house, then called a cab. It had been a few months since they'd met up now that he'd left Boston, and she was looking forward to seeing him again.

Svetlana called him when she was on her way, but he didn't answer the phone. It was still early enough in the morning and she knew he didn't have practice, so she supposed he might

still be asleep, or have put his phone down for a minute. She wasn't worried.

She knocked on the door of his giant house in the middle of the suburbs, and it opened almost immediately.

"Sveta!" Ilya said from the other side, pulling her into a quick hug before stepping aside to let her in. "I didn't know you were in Ottawa."

"My flight was cancelled, so I am stuck here now." She replied, toeing off her shoes.

"Ah. You can stay here, if you want, until you fly out. I have a spare bedroom." Ilya seemed distracted, glancing over his shoulder every few seconds.

"Thank you." She said, like that hadn't been her plan all along.

Before Ilya could lead her any farther than the entranceway, a man's voice called out from the hallway. "Ilya? Who was that at the door?"

Svetlana blinked when Shane Hollander came into view. "Ilyusha!" She said, delighted. "You did not tell me Shane Hollander is here!" She made a conscious effort to switch into English for his benefit.

"He did not know you would be here, either." Ilya looked a little embarrassed. "But yes, this is Shane. Shane, this is Svetlana. Her flight was cancelled, so she came to visit."

"It's nice to meet you." Hollander said, holding his hand out for her to shake. "Ilya has told me so much about you."

She shook it. "He has told me nothing about you. Is a shame, I have been telling him you are hot for years."

"Oh. Thank you?" Hollander blushed bright red. He really was the polite Canadian boy the media liked to portray him as.

"Ilyusha, how long has this been going on?" Svetlana had no doubt that the two of them were together. There was no other good reason for Hollander to be in Ottawa at his rival's house, and there was no mistaking how comfortable the two of them looked in each other's space, as well as the numerous hickies she could see on Hollander's neck, peeking above the collar of his sweater.

"We can talk in living room." Ilya told her, after making uncomfortable (for Svetlana) eye contact with Hollander for a few seconds. "I will make coffee. And I will get you your disgusting smoothie, dorogoy." He left with a parting kiss to Hollander's cheek, and wow, this was more serious than Svetlana had thought if he was using pet names.

She sat down at the end of the couch, and Hollander sat across from her, on the loveseat. He looked a bit nervous to be left alone with her and brightened considerably when Ilya came back, distributing their drinks on the coffee table between them. He sat right next to Hollander, even though the seat looked a bit too small for two grown men and there was a whole empty armchair along with lots of space left on the couch.

Ilya took a deep breath. “Sveta, Shane is my boyfriend. We have been seeing each other for many years, but have not been dating very long.”

“Wait.” Something had just occurred to her. “Is this ‘Jane’? Did you call him that because the names rhyme?”

“Yes. In his phone, I am ‘Lily’.” Ilya admitted.

Svetlana gasped. “You two are the cutest! Tell me everything.”

Ilya did not tell her everything, which was probably due to Hollander jabbing him in the side whenever he started saying anything even mildly inappropriate, more than him being unwilling. He told her a lot, though, and she figured that Hollander didn’t actually mind, since he held Ilya’s hand the whole time.

Hollander warmed up to her after a few hours, and she was glad. She guessed that not many people knew about his relationship with Ilya, so she was glad that he felt comfortable enough to share that with her and let her stay in his home. From what she had learned about ‘Jane’ over the years, he was shy.

In the evening, the three of them sat down to watch New York play Las Vegas. Svetlana was right in her element, making fun of all the players with Ilya.

“Look at him. He is so old. Should retire already.” Ilya shook his head, watching Scott Hunter get onto the ice.

“He’s not that much older than we are.” Shane argued.

“No, he is dinosaur, right?” Ilya smiled wider than that comment warranted.

“Oh, god.” Shane looked up at the ceiling like he was praying for patience.

“He needs to ice his knees?”

“Stop.”

“He is missing his cane right now, yes? I’m sure it is by the bench.” Ilya was looking more and more gleeful as he went on, while Shane looked increasingly irritated.

“I get in a fight one time, and you never let it go! I can’t believe you found someone who lip-read all of that, it was years ago!” He exclaimed.

“What?” Svetlana interrupted. “You said all this to Hunter?”

“Yes, he is very bad at chirping. Is why he never gets in fights, he would be too embarrassed.” Ilya said, looking right at Shane.

“Fuck you, I don’t need to get in fights to win my games.” Shane retorted.

“If you say so.”

Svetlana still thought they were adorable, even when they argued. After keeping up a rivalry for so many years, she supposed it must be part of their love language.

In the morning, Ilya offered to drive her to the airport, but she refused, since she knew he had practice in a few hours. “Give you more time with your boy, yes? I’m really happy for you, you’re good together.”

She hugged both of them at the door, and left with Shane Hollander’s number in her phone and the knowledge that Ilya would be just fine, here in Ottawa. He wasn’t alone, after all.

...

“You know,” Shane said thoughtfully one night while he and Ilya were tangled together underneath a blanket watching TV, “I just realized something.”

Ilya side-eyed him a little. “That is never good. Don’t think too hard, lyubimyy, you might hurt yourself.”

“Oh, fuck off, this is serious.” Shane rebuffed him, pushing his face away gently with one hand.

“What is it, that is so serious we have to stop watching Nailed-It?”

“You don’t even like Nailed-It. You think they’re all annoying and stupid.” Shane muttered, only a little bit petulantly.

“They are annoying and stupid. It is fake. No real person can be that bad at cooking.” Ilya turned back to look at him again. “But what is bothering you, kotenok?”

“It’s not bothering me, I just think it’s a little weird.” At his boyfriend’s raised eyebrow, Shane elaborated. “We’ve never actually, like, come out to anyone. On purpose.”

“This is true. You are so bad at keeping your hands to yourself. I know I am best and hottest hockey player you have ever seen, but-”

“Shut up!” Shane interrupted, and Ilya laughed, eyes bright.

“You don’t like that so many people have found out accidentally?” He guessed.

“I don’t know,” Shane admitted. “I just feel like it might be nice to tell someone normally, for once.”

“Yes,” Ilya agreed easily. “I am thinking you already have a plan for this?”

He knew Shane so well. “Yeah. I was thinking, when J.J. is here for the camp this summer, we could tell him at dinner or something? He’s my friend, and I think he’d be cool with it.”

“If you want. I will never complain about more people knowing you’re mine.” Ilya smiled, and Shane was helpless but to smile back, just as wide.

It never ceased to amaze him how far they'd come since their early years of sneaking around (which they had maybe been worse at than Shane remembered). Now they were together for real, and they saw each other on the weekends, and they could exchange 'I love you's in three different languages without a second thought.

...

J.J. Boiziau was having a great time in Ottawa, coaching at the Irina Foundation's Game Changers camp. He had been reluctant to come at first, but he was really glad Shane had invited him, even if it meant he had to see Rozanov every day.

The coaching staff was a mismatched bunch of people, but they all got along great, for the most part. Even Rozanov, who was surprisingly not as much of an asshole as usual. He was a little nice, sometimes, even to J.J., which was a stark contrast to the constant chirping and aggression he usually got during the season. Maybe he was just on his best behaviour around the kids.

Rozanov was definitely on his best behaviour around Shane, who didn't hesitate to poke him in the arm, or leg, or whatever he could reach whenever he insulted anyone (which usually meant J.J. or Hayden). J.J. still couldn't believe that the two of them were friends now, after so many years of extremely public rivalry and countless traded insults.

But even if it turned out that Rozanov wasn't such a bad guy, after all, that didn't mean that he was looking forward to going to dinner with him. Shane and Hayden were going to be there as well, but J.J. typically preferred to steer clear of the guy when they weren't on the ice together.

It'll be fun, Shane had insisted, like going out with the guys after a game.

Well, Shane, J.J. had wanted to say, 'the guys' doesn't include Ilya Rozanov.

But Shane had looked so excited to get them all together while they were in Ottawa for the camp, so J.J. couldn't say no.

He hyped himself up before he left his hotel room. "You can do it. It's only three hours of playing nice for Shane, and then next time you see him you'll crush his shitty team." He nodded to himself in the bathroom mirror, then called a cab to take him to the private little hole-in-the-wall Italian restaurant they were meeting at.

The place was practically empty when he got there, save for a couple sitting at a table and Hayden in a booth in the corner, as far away from them as he could get.

"Salut," J.J. said, sliding in beside him. "Where are Shane and Rozanov?" He was a little surprised Shane wasn't here already. His captain had a reputation for being early to everything, and J.J. himself was a couple of minutes late.

Hayden shrugged. "I'm sure they'll be here soon."

The two of them rolled in 5 minutes later, Shane looking a little flustered as he sat down beside Rozanov. "Sorry we're late, traffic was bad on--"

"Sure, buddy." Hayden interrupted him with a little laugh.

Shane glared.

J.J. had no idea what Shane had threatened Rozanov with, but it worked wonders, and the four of them made surprisingly civil small-talk all throughout dinner and Rozanov only tried to get a dig in at J.J. or Hayden twice. The insults were way tamer than the verbal abuse he usually spouted during games, so J.J. wasn't actually mad. But, man, did he not hold back on antagonizing Shane.

When Shane asked Rozanov to pass him the pitcher of water: "Hm, no, will be good strength exercise for you, help improve your weak backhand."

"Fuck off, I do not have a weak backhand!"

"That is not what your stats say."

A while later, J.J. watched with awe and a little disbelief as they almost got in a physical fight over Shane's pasta.

"No!" Shane's voice was only a little quieter than a yell. "That was the best one!"

Rozanov, who had just stolen one of his gnocchi, smiled unrepentingly. "Is okay, you can still have the second-best one."

Shane's eyes narrowed. "Don't say it."

"It will be better for you anyway, since you are the second-best hockey player-" Rozanov was forcefully shut up by Shane covering his mouth with a hand.

Two seconds later, he whipped it away. "Ew, did you just lick my hand?"

Rozanov smiled angelically, even as Shane wiped his palm on his shirt. "It is... how do you say? Oh, right, is preview, for later."

"Okay, what the fuck?" J.J. whispered to Hayden as Shane blushed bright red.

Hayden only shook his head, with a look on his face that would be more fitting on someone experiencing war flashbacks. "I don't know, man, just leave them to it."

And J.J. would have been content to leave it at that, ignoring his many questions, but that option was taken away from him.

Shortly after their argument, Shane excused himself to go to the washroom, and Rozanov followed him with a parting smile to Hayden, who had started staring off into space like he was trying to dissociate from this situation.

J.J. shifted uncomfortably in his seat when they still hadn't returned several minutes later. "Alright," he said eventually, standing up. "I need to go to the washroom as well." He hadn't wanted to crowd the washroom, but they were taking a really long time.

Hayden's eyes snapped to his, a little wild. "No, don't do that."

"What are you talking about, man, I need to take a piss."

"Oh, god," Hayden said, closing his eyes. "Go on, then. But don't say I didn't warn you."

Well, that was more ominous than this situation warranted, but J.J. let it go. Hayden seemed to be having a bit of an off night, so J.J. was sure he was just being dramatic.

J.J. pushed the door to the men's room open and was greeted by the sight of Shane up on the counter, making out with Rozanov, when he turned the corner.

"Holy fuck!" Apparently Hayden had not been being dramatic. J.J. didn't think he was ever going to forget the sight of his captain with Ilya Rozanov's tongue in his mouth.

Shane's hands left Rozanov's hair like he'd been burned, and he turned to look at J.J. with wide eyes. Rozanov was much less apologetic, taking his sweet time to get his hands out from up Shane's shirt, oh good lord.

"Ilya, I thought you locked the door!"

"No, it does not lock."

"Oh, god," Shane buried his face in his hands. "J.J., I'm really sorry-"

"Wait," J.J. could almost feel the gears turning in his head, so many things were coming together. "When you said that you two are friends..."

"We're together." Shane confirmed. "That's actually why I organized this dinner, we were going to tell you."

"You're together." J.J. repeated. "Like, dating. You and Rozanov."

J.J. had known Shane was gay for months, but he had never, not once, thought of Rozanov as someone that Shane would potentially date.

"Yes." Shane confirmed. "We have been for a while."

"Is he 'Lily'?" J.J. asked. "Is that why you would never tell us anything about her- or him?"

"How does everyone always figure that out right away?" Shane asked Rozanov, which was confirmation enough.

"The names are very similar, lyubimyy. You were not as clever as you thought you were."

“This is so bad,” Shane shifted uncomfortably where he was still sitting on the counter. J.J. agreed, but didn’t dare say it out loud.

“Why don’t we go back to the table?” Rozanov suggested. “Pike is probably wondering what is taking so long.”

J.J. assured them he would be out soon and let them leave without him. He was regretting his decision to go to the washroom at all. He probably could’ve held it until he got back to his hotel, it wasn’t worth the mental trauma he’d just experienced.

He lingered longer than he needed to before braving the table again. The atmosphere was still a little tense. Shane looked mortified, Rozanov looked smug, and Hayden looked like he’d rather be anywhere else. As per usual, then.

J.J. assumed that Hayden had already known about all of this, judging by his reaction when he had tried to leave the table. Hayden had tried to save him, he realized. He would never ignore Hayden’s advice again.

“So,” J.J. started. “How long have you two been together?”

“Depends what you mean by together.” Rozanov said, since Shane still looked too embarrassed to carry on this conversation.

“How long have you been seeing each other?” J.J. clarified.

“We’ve been official for two years, but we’ve been seeing each other since our rookie seasons.”

“Oh my god.” J.J. didn’t know whether to be impressed by Shane, or horrified.

“Yes.” Rozanov agreed. “That is something that Shane says to me often when I-”

Shane practically lunged to physically cover Rozanov’s mouth for the second time that night. “No.” He said.

Then Rozanov pouted, which confirmed that J.J. was having a fever dream and none of this was real. “You are no fun.” He complained.

“No! We were supposed to have a nice dinner and do this normally, but you couldn’t keep your hands to yourself!”

“That is not how I remember it.”

J.J. left them to their bickering, which he had come to realize always sounded more fond than any insults should, and turned to Hayden. “Is... is this real?”

“Yes.” Hayden laughed at the look on J.J.’s face. “I know, I didn’t believe it either when I found out, but look at them.”

Following Hayden's eyes, he saw that Shane and Rozanov had somehow gotten even closer together on the bench while they argued, and watched as Rozanov pressed a kiss to Shane's temple.

"Oh." He said. It seemed kind of obvious, now, that they were a couple. Thinking back on it, Shane always had the same soft, infatuated look on his face when he was around Rozanov that he did when he was texting 'Lily'. And Rozanov had a Shane face, too. J.J. wondered how he hadn't noticed before.

"Yeah, they're happy together. Don't tell Rozanov I said this, but he's really not all that bad." Hayden admitted.

"Does this mean that I have to be nice to him for real, now?" J.J. asked when the horrifying thought occurred to him.

"You don't have a choice."

Fuck.

"So," J.J. said once it looked like Shane and Rozanov were done fighting. "Are you two, like, out?"

He realized it was kind of a stupid question before Shane shook his head. The tabloids would be all over this one if they were.

"Not very many people know," Shane told him. "We want to come out at some point, but not anytime soon."

That seemed sad, being in a years-long relationship with only your closest friends knowing about it, not able to be seen together in public doing anything couple-y.

"Okay. I can keep your secret, Shane." J.J. couldn't imagine doing anything else, even if Ilya Rozanov was a part of this one.

"Thank you." Shane's smile was shy, but blinding.

...

Jane: So that went well.

Lily: no it did not

Lily: did you see his face?

Jane: You're right, that was so bad, I can't believe this keeps happening.

Lily: wow what a day

Lily: shane hollander says i am right

Lily: i have this screenshot now you will never get rid of it

Jane: Fuck you, you asshole.

Lily: you wish 😊

...

Then, Ryan Price happened. Not even three days after the ‘J.J. Incident’ as Shane liked to call it, Ryan goddamn Price walked in on them making out in a storage room. They had been so careful to be professional at the rink during camp, and the room had seemed so out of the way that they hadn’t worried about being caught, but their luck really was that bad.

After Ryan was gone and they were alone again, Shane leaned forward until his forehead thunked against the front of Ilya’s shoulder. Ilya’s arms wrapped around his waist immediately, pulling Shane into his chest.

“Jesus Christ.” Shane said, with feeling. “Not again. I thought we were breaking the cycle.”

“It is like you are talking about trauma.” Shane could feel Ilya’s chest shaking a bit as he laughed. “Is not a big deal, dorogoy.”

“I know, I know, it just makes me feel like a teenager again, getting caught sneaking around. I mean, look at this!” Shane stepped out of Ilya’s arms and gestured broadly to the room around them. “This is barely better than a closet.”

“Is that what Shane Hollander did when he was a teenager? Make out with girls in closets?” Ilya teased.

“Well, no, but-”

“Is fitting, since you have not come out of the closet.”

“That was terrible.” Shane said, but he was smiling.

“Besides, Ryan is also gay. He is also dating a man. He does not care.”

That was all true. Ryan hadn’t even seemed surprised to learn that they were together, beyond the initial shock that came with walking into what you thought was an empty room to find two people in a compromising position instead.

“I know, but maybe the next person will.”

“There are no buts.” Ilya said gently. “Except for yours. You have a very nice butt, have I told you that?” Shane rolled his eyes, but Ilya kept talking. “It is maybe my favourite part of you, except for your freckles.”

“Wow, it’s nice to know you’re only with me for my body.” Shane joked, pushing up onto his toes to press a kiss to Ilya’s cheek.

“And it is also funny to see people’s faces when they see us kissing.” Ilya’s smile grew just thinking about it. “They are so surprised, they do not believe their eyes.”

“It is a little funny, sometimes.” Shane admitted.

“So you do not need to stress. Nobody bad has found out, and people will keep our secret, if we ask them to.” Shane didn’t know how he felt about the fact that Ilya was being the sensible one right now. Usually it was the other way around.

“You’re right.” He acquiesced.

Ilya pulled his phone out of his pocket, opening his camera and setting it to video. “Can you say that one more time, just for me?”

“No, fuck you!”

...

Rose Landry sneaks into the ice rink with sunglasses on and a hat pulled low over her face. Well, not quite. She’s not sneaking in, Shane is escorting her in so she can visit the camp he’s running. She’s not there for the camp, exactly, she’s there to see Shane, but the camp in Montreal is the only place the two of them were able to meet while she was nearby.

She had actually been supposed to get to Montreal in time to get dinner, but she had finished shooting for the day faster than usual, so she was a few hours early. She had called Shane, and he’d told her she could stop by the camp until he was done for the day. So she was dressed in her little disguise to avoid the cameras that could catch her entering the building before they were safe inside with the photographers that Shane (or Yuna Hollander, that woman had her hands in everything) had hired who would be careful not to catch her in any of their shots.

Once they were in the empty lobby, Rose took the hat and sunglasses off and shook her hair out, more relieved than having worn it for 5 minutes it probably warranted.

Shane led her through the arena. “Everyone is still on the ice, so do you want to come hang out in the break room? Everything will be done in like an hour, so I don’t know what you want to do while we wait, but we can go out to dinner after and-”

Rose took pity on him when it didn’t seem like Shane was going to stop nervous-rambling. “Sure, that sounds good. It’ll be nice to sit down for a few hours without a camera in my face.”

“Yeah,” Shane agreed. “No one is going to miss me, since things are wrapping up soon and only the after-care kids will be around. We need to wait until the end, though, because I’m driving with Ilya.”

“Ilya, huh? Rozanov?” Rose asked while they walked.

“Yes.” Interestingly, Shane’s face was turning pink. “We’re friends, so I offered to let him stay with me while he’s in Montreal.”

“Shane!” Rose said, pretending to be scandalized. “You’ve never even let me in your house.”

“You’re not exactly around to visit very often.” He pointed out, stopping in front of what must have been the break room and holding the door open for her.

She made her way to one of the armchairs along the far wall, which looked surprisingly comfortable. Shane joined her a moment later, sitting in the one beside hers.

Rose had really missed being able to talk to him in person. She had been looking forward to the opportunity to needle him about the guy he was seeing, since she knew there was someone and he had perfected the art of changing the subject and making excuses over text and when they called. He couldn't exactly run away when they were face-to-face, so she wanted to test her luck.

She decided to save that for dinner, though, and made small talk with him about the camp he was running, their summers so far, and the upcoming season. Shane liked to pretend to be above gossiping, but she knew he held onto her every word when she complained about her annoying coworkers.

Eventually, what felt like ten minutes but might have been closer to an hour later, the door to the break room swung open and Ilya Rozanov stepped through.

Rozanov was one of the hockey players that she wasn't entirely sure about, even though he was friends with Shane. She had seen him playing for years now, as long as he'd been in the NHL, and he always seemed so arrogant and cocky. It was deserved, of course, he was lauded as the best player in the league next to Shane, but Rose had never liked people who were convinced they were above everyone else.

He was one of the few players that Shane had never talked to her about, so she had no idea how the two of them were supposedly best friends. From what she had seen of him during games and from the media, he was sweet, polite Shane's polar opposite.

"There you are, Shane, I was looking for you," Rozanov said, then he caught sight of Rose. "And you look like Rose Landry. I've heard so much about you."

"Ilya Rozanov," Rose returned his smile and shook his hand when he offered it to her. "Shane hasn't told me anything about you."

"He is a very private person, no? Getting him to talk is like pulling teeth." That made Shane grumble, something that sounded suspiciously like 'asshole'.

"Exactly! Maybe you can help me, do you know all his dirty little secrets?" Rose asked, amused by the way Shane was looking more embarrassed by the second.

"I should have known this would happen." He said. "Ilya, don't you dare."

"I might know one or two." Rozanov admitted.

"And I will be the only one spilling them, thank you very much." Shane interjected.

"So you are keeping secrets from me!" Rose turned to Rozanov. "Can you believe him?"

Rozanov shook his head sadly. "Shane, you are being a bad friend. Tell the lady your secrets."

Shane looked baffled by this turn of events. “You’re taking her side? You’ve known her for two minutes!”

“And I already like her more than you. It is unbelievable that someone so cool dated boring Shane Hollander.”

Judging by his face, Shane was regretting letting them meet. Rose decided that she actually loved Ilya Rozanov. He was her new favourite hockey player.

“Fuck off!” Shane snapped back. Rose noticed that despite the teasing, Shane didn’t look upset or uncomfortable, just a little embarrassed. She guessed that after years of an on-ice rivalry, teasing and slinging insults might be a way of showing affection. It was almost cute. Boys were so emotionally constipated.

“I know, I am a bit too cool for him,” Rose agreed. “But he’s been getting better! He has a stylist now.”

“Oh, I know. He looks very sexy in his new outfits, yes?” Rozanov’s voice lowered until it was almost a purr, his eyes fixed on Shane, who was steadily turning red.

“Ilya!” Shane honest-to-god squeaked. Rose had never seen him do that before.

Before she could think about it too hard, Rozanov pulled a chair over and sat with them. Shane immediately rotated his body away from Rose and towards him, like he was caught in his orbit. She doubted he even noticed he was doing it.

“Shane, why have you never introduced me to this lovely woman?” Rozanov asked.

“Because you flirt with everything that has a pulse. Even my exes.” Shane muttered, so quiet that Rose could barely make out his words.

“Jealous, sweetheart?” Rose watched with wide eyes as he reached over and slid a hand up Shane’s thigh, like the sight would disappear if she blinked. His hand was way too close to the inside of Shane’s thighs to be friendly, but Shane didn’t look weirded out.

Instead, he looked away from the large hand that was basically fondling his leg and startled when he saw Rose, like he had forgotten she was there. “Ilya!” He hissed.

That was it. No ‘why are you feeling me up’, no ‘this is weird’, just Rozanov’s name, like the only strange thing about this was that he was doing it while someone else was there.

“No fucking way,” Rose breathed as the thought occurred to her with startling clarity. “Your secret boyfriend is Ilya Rozanov?”

Shane didn’t even try to deny it, he just looked resigned. “Yes.” He sighed.

Rose was beyond delighted by this turn of events. This was better than any of the romance movies she had been in, and it was real. “You really do know all of his dirty little secrets!” She said to Rozanov.

“I know all of the dirty ones, yes.” Rozanov confirmed with a smirk.

“Shane, this is great! I’m so happy for you!” She gushed.

“I’m happy, too,” Shane admitted quietly.

“I’m glad, you two seem really good together!” And Rozanov did seem to be really sweet to Shane, like he knew all of his buttons, when it was okay to press them and when to let up.

“Better than you think, but Shane would probably not let you see.” Rozanov looked very proud of himself when Shane choked.

“I can imagine.” Rose said appreciatively.

Shane was getting redder and redder. Rose was fascinated.

“It looks like Shane has been embarrassed enough for now, yes?” Rozanov noted. “We should go so you two can get to your dinner.”

“Yes!” Shane jumped at the opportunity, practically jumping out of his chair in his haste to escape the conversation.

“Don’t worry, Shane, you’ll have lots of time to tell me everything later.” For some reason, Shane looked the opposite of reassured.

...

When Shane got back to his place after dinner, he made his way to where Ilya was watching TV in the middle of the couch and flopped bonelessly across his boyfriend.

“How was dinner, solnyshko?” Ilya looked away from the game that was on and helped Shane shift into a position that was comfortable for both of them.

“It was good! I love getting to see Rose, but...” He trailed off, biting his lip.

“But?” Ilya prompted.

“But she had so many questions. I don’t even remember all of the things I told her, but most of them were probably embarrassing. She’s really good at getting me to talk.” Shane rambled.

Ilya huffed out a laugh. “Good. You need someone to talk to who doesn’t play hockey and is not your mom.”

“Hey, my mom is the best!” Shane blew out a breath. “But yeah, it was nice to talk to someone and not have to hold things back that they wouldn’t want to hear. Rose was disappointed I wouldn’t tell her more about our sex life.”

“Hm, sounds like she would get along very well with Sveta.”

“Did Svetlana ask about us having sex?” Shane hadn’t even considered that before. He tried not to think about other people having sex as much as he could, but he knew not everyone lived by that philosophy.

“Of course, she thinks you are very hot,” Ilya told him. That did not make it better.

“Rose thinks that you’re hot, too.” Shane was horrified. “They would get along great. But they’re never going to meet, so I don’t have to worry about that, right?”

“Probably not, no.” Ilya sounded like he was just trying to appease Shane, but he chose to believe him anyway.

Shane turned his attention to the game that was going on in front of them. “Who’s playing?”

“Shane,” Ilya chided. “Please do not look at the television. Your sexy boyfriend is right here and has been waiting to get you alone all day.”

Shane was helpless but to look back at Ilya, letting his boyfriend pull him in by the front of his shirt.

...

Troy had almost gotten used to rooming with Ilya Rozanov during road trips. At first, he had been nervous about being on a team with Roz, but since they had gone to the bar together and come out to each other on the way back to the hotel, he’d realized that Roz was actually a huge softie.

Roz was probably his best friend on the Centaurs, so it wasn’t surprising that they ended up rooming together often. Roz was a good roommate; he didn’t stay out late, didn’t leave his stuff everywhere, and didn’t snore. All in all, better than 90% of the guys Troy had roomed with before.

Which is why, when Troy skipped out on going out after a game one day, he was surprised that Roz wasn’t in the room already when he headed up. His captain almost never went out with them and that night had been no different, so Troy had no idea where else he could be. They were in Anaheim, there was nothing else to do.

He shrugged and laid on his bed, then turned on the TV. When he saw it was set to a replay of the game he had just played, he turned it right back off and settled for doomscrolling instead. He heard the door creak open while he was going down a rabbit hole of watching dog videos, which was probably a good thing because dogs made him think of Harris, and thinking of Harris might make him do something stupid like text him.

Roz’s voice followed the door opening, but he wasn’t talking to Troy. “Yes, kotenok, I know, I will buy groceries once I am home.”

Troy sat up a little at the tinny, decidedly male voice that came through the speaker of Roz’s phone. “You’ll remember vegetables, right? Not just coke and sugar?”

“Yes, I know, I need nutrients- you don’t need to make me a grocery list, I know what is in my house.” Troy frowned a little. Who was reminding Roz to buy groceries?

“Good.” The voice was a little familiar, but Troy couldn’t place it. “I can’t wait to see you.”

“Me neither.” Roz turned the corner, saw Troy sitting on his bed, and froze. “Moya lyubov, my room is not as empty as I thought it was, so I think I have to go now.”

“What? Ilya, not again-”

“I will call you later!” There was a soft click as Roz hung up with whoever he had been on face time with. He lowered his phone, but Troy caught a glimpse of the contact anyway.

“Was that Shane Hollander?” He blurted. He had sort of suspected that the two of them might be together, but in the same way one would suspect that the moon landings were fake- a feeling, not something you would ever expect to find out is true.

Ilya groaned. “Not again, we had a streak!”

“What?” Troy asked.

“Nothing.” Roz deflected. “Yes, that was Shane.”

“Did you call him ‘my love’ in Russian?” Troy was pretty sure that’s what some of those words meant. He had heard them before, somewhere, he thought.

“How do you know that?” Ilya looked surprised.

“That’s not important, what’s important is that you’re in love with Shane Hollander, just like I said you were!” Troy was never going to get over this.

“Yes, yes, I am dating Shane Hollander. But you cannot tell anyone, okay? Is a secret.”

“Of course I’m not gonna tell anyone, Roz.” Troy was a little insulted that his friend had even thought that he’d do that, after they’d bared their souls to each other. “I’m very familiar with the closet.”

“Right.” Roz said, like he’d forgotten that Troy had just as many things to hide as he did. Well, maybe not quite as many.

Troy had so many questions, he was practically bursting at the seams. “Wait, is that why you moved to Ottawa? For Hollander?”

“He is most of the reason, yes.” Roz confirmed.

“I knew you were a softie, but who knew you were such a romantic?”

Roz looked affronted. “I am not a softie. I don’t know this word, there is no translation in Russian because we do not believe in it.”

Troy couldn't help but laugh. "You're ridiculous, man, but it's good to hear you've got someone around whenever you don't hang out with us."

"Oh." Roz shifted uncomfortably. "Yes, we are both very busy so we don't get a lot of time together."

That opened a window for Troy into what it must be like for them, beyond the enemies/rivals-to-lovers storyline that must have been Hollywood-worthy. It would be really sad, to love someone and not be able to say it out loud, and then only see them for a few days at a time when your schedules lined up on top of that.

"I'm sorry, man. That fucking sucks." Troy offered.

"Is okay. It is worth it."

Troy could agree with that. If he was with Shane Hollander, he would think it was worth it too. Hollander was a total fucking babe.

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Hours later, Ilya went out for a walk and called Shane back.

"Hi, Ilya," his boyfriend breathed when he picked up. "Who was that in the hotel room? How did it go?"

"Hello," Ilya replied. "It was Barrett. He already guessed that we are together, so he wasn't very surprised."

"Was he okay with it, though?" Shane asked. He sounded so worried for Ilya, it made him feel soft inside.

"Of course he was. I have told you about Barrett, yes? How he is gay and has embarrassing crush on our social media manager?"

"I do remember you mentioning that," Shane let out a little laugh. "I know someone else who used to have an embarrassing crush."

"Does not count, we were fucking the whole time." Ilya argued.

"It totally counts, Ilya, you had a huge crush on me." Ilya internally mourned his playboy reputation.

"It was the same size as your crush on me." He pointed out.

It made it all sound so trivial, their years of sneaking around and constantly biting their tongues, calling his feelings a 'crush'. The juvenile word didn't seem to fully encapsulate the complexity of the feelings Ilya had held inside his heart for so long, but it seemed to make Shane happy to call it that, so he let it go.

“Sure.” Shane said. Ilya bet that if he was with Shane right now, he would be repressing laughter. “Oh, I almost forgot!”

“What is it?” Ilya prompted when his boyfriend wasn’t immediately forthcoming.

“Our counter, we need to reset it.”

After so many people (Boiziau, Price, and Rose) had figured them out (read: walked in on them in compromising positions) over the summer, Ilya and Shane had started a counter at Ilya’s house in Ottawa. The number on their ‘Days Since Someone Found Out’ counter had been getting pretty high, but now it was all for nothing and Ilya would have to set it to zero once he got home.

“Shit.” He said. “We had a good streak going.”

“I know, almost six months.” Shane paused for a moment, like he was debating whether or not to say something. “But this one was definitely your fault, so the tally goes on your side.”

“Fuck, it was not my fault!” Ilya denied.

“It totally was! You said that we could face time since your room was empty.”

“And you believed me!” Ilya said, a little petulantly. He really didn’t want to lose, and this tally would tie them up for whose fault each incident had been.

“Ilya,” Shane said, and Ilya did hear himself, so he accepted defeat.

“Fine. It’s like you don’t love me anymore.”

“Ilya,” Shane said again. “You know I love you, even when you’re annoying.”

“Thanks, I learned it from you,”

“You’re an ass.” Something rustled on Shane’s end of the call. “Shit, I’ve got to go. Talk to you tomorrow?”

“Yes. I love you,” Ilya said.

“Love you too.”

Ilya slipped his phone into his pocket once the line was closed, heading back to the hotel room he was sharing with Barrett.

He and Shane had made progress in the last few months. Shane wasn’t particularly upset when someone they knew caught them anymore, and they had even turned it into a light-hearted competition. One that Ilya didn’t intend to lose, so he would have to be careful for the next couple of months.

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That year, Ilya decided that he needed to throw a Christmas party. He didn't celebrate Christmas on the 25th, but everyone else did, including Shane, so that was good enough for him.

Shane tried to talk him out of hosting, but it was something that Ilya knew he needed to do, since he barely ever went out with his teammates after games or when they hosted events at their houses.

The Centaurs' reactions to the invitation to Ilya's house made the hassle worth it, even if it meant that he and Shane were spending the evening of the 23rd after their game preparing his house to have people over. Shane was such a neat freak that his house didn't need much cleaning, but they had to prepare food, drinks, and decorate.

"Are you sure about this?" Shane asked for maybe the fifth time that day.

"Yes, lyubov moya, I'm sure. Is too late to take back invitations now anyway." Ilya repeated a variation of what he had said the other four times.

"It's never too late." Shane sounded a little too serious for Ilya's liking.

"Shane." Ilya cupped his boyfriend's face in his hands. "Everything will be fine. There will only be a few people here, and maybe their wives, and I like all of them."

"And me." Shane said quietly.

"Yes, and you," Ilya agreed. "But you don't have to be here if you don't want to."

"I want to be. There's nothing wrong with your friend from another team coming to your Christmas party, right?"

"Right. And everyone will love you, perfect Shane Hollander."

"I don't think they're all going to think I'm perfect." Shane said wryly.

"Well then they have never seen your ass. Anyone who has seen you naked knows you're perfect."

"I don't know if I want your teammates to be looking at my ass." Shane objected.

"Yes, I'm the only one who should be looking at your ass." Ilya agreed.

"Okay, stop talking about my ass now, please." Shane said, punctuating his statement with a chaste kiss to Ilya's lips before slipping out of his arms to keep decorating.

Ilya watched him go without further comment, but he was totally staring at Shane's ass.

...

When Wyatt Hayes got to Ilya's house, he was surprised that Shane Hollander was the one who opened the door to welcome him in. He had met Hollander before, when he had coached

at his and Roz's camp, but he still did a double-take when he saw a freckled face smiling at him from the doorway instead of Roz's. He supposed he should've expected this, since the Voyageurs had been in town for their game the day before.

"Hayes, come on in! How is Lisa doing?" Hollander asked, looking over Wyatt's shoulder like his wife might be hiding somewhere. He really was too nice, for the figure that would undoubtedly be Wyatt's sleep paralysis demon, if he ever had one.

"Good, good, she couldn't get away from work." Wyatt was still a bit disappointed that Lisa had gotten stuck working overtime at the hospital on Christmas Eve, he had been looking forward to spending the evening with her.

"She'll have to come next time," Hollander led him to the living room, where almost everyone else was already sitting.

Hollander made a bee-line to where Roz was lounging on the loveseat with a beer in his hand, leaving Wyatt to sit in between Bood and Haas on the couch. He was a little surprised to see Roz shift over to make room for Hollander, letting the other man squeeze in beside him into a space that was really too small for two grown men to fit comfortably.

Not for the first time, Wyatt wondered if the rivalry and friendship the two of them were always pushing to the media was a cover for something else. He had been teammates with Roz for too long not to know that he had a partner that he only saw every few weeks, which was the reason he ducked out of team outings all the time.

Roz had never explicitly told any of them he was seeing someone, but all the signs were there. Back when Roz had first been traded to the Centaurs, Wyatt had done an embarrassing amount of research into him, both his career and what little was available on his personal life, to try and get a read on him before he got to Ottawa. He had wondered, like everyone else on the team had, what made one of, if not the best player in the league come to Ottawa, which was notoriously known as a shit team. What he'd seen was a brash, arrogant man who was photographed with a new woman on his arm every week.

The Ilya Rozanov he had gotten to know was nothing like that. He was arrogant, but most of it was entirely deserved, after the career he'd had. It turned out that Roz was actually a total sweetheart, and he was one of Wyatt's best friends.

Most surprising of all, he had never picked up anyone that Wyatt had seen. On the rare occasions he went to the bar with the team, he always left by 10:00pm, alone, like he had someone waiting at home for him.

Then, there was the way Roz was constantly on his phone, texting somebody with a soft smile on his face that Wyatt never saw anytime else. Except when he looked at Shane Hollander, of course. He had become very familiar with Roz's 'Shane Hollander' face during the Game Changers camp. He had no concrete proof that the person Roz was always texting was Hollander, of course, but the contact name 'Jane' along with the photo of Hollander's beaming face were compelling evidence.

Watching the two men basically cuddle on the loveseat, all of those thoughts came rushing back. Sometimes he wondered if he was the only one who saw it, and how anyone who'd seen them interact had missed it. Like, seriously, Roz never ever made that face when Hollander wasn't right in front of him.

Wyatt sighed, closing his eyes briefly and praying for patience. Sometimes he wished that he wasn't so perceptive, because there were some things that he didn't want to know, especially when no one else did. He resigned himself to another day of acting like he believed that Hollander and Roz were just good friends who liked to cuddle sometimes.

Wyatt ended up having a great time at Roz's house, even though his wife wasn't there. It was a relatively small gathering, all things considered, and the atmosphere was warm and comfortable. After a few hours, even Haas and Hollander had relaxed, both of whom had seemed tense and unsure at the start of the night. As much as the Centaurs (and their fans) liked to joke that their team was fueled by the power of friendship and love, it was sort of true. They were very friendly.

Wyatt kind of wished that Hollander hadn't loosened up enough to argue with Roz, though. He had heard enough of their bickering during the weeks he had spent with them over multiple summers, and they could be vicious sometimes. He didn't even know who or what had started the fight this time, but Hollander was looking increasingly irritated every time Roz spoke and Roz seemed to think it was a fun game to see how mad he could make Hollander.

"I know, is very sad you are getting too old to win any more cups." Roz said with sympathy that was obviously false, judging by the shit-eating grin on his face.

"Fuck you, I have more cups than you do!" Hollander retorted. "And we're the same age, you asshole!" Wyatt was a little horrified to notice that 'asshole' sounded like a term of endearment.

Roz just shook his head sadly. "But I am the faster skater, so I will win many more."

"That's not what my Fastest Skater prize from the All Star competition says!" Every one of Hollander's responses sounded so practiced, Wyatt wondered how many times they'd had this exact argument before.

"It was basically a tie," Ilya objected.

"Oh, so now you believe in ties? What about our scoring race from our rookie year, huh?" Hollander and Roz seemed to have forgotten there were other people around, focused on getting in each other's faces.

"That doesn't count, it was so many years ago." Ilya waved his hand dismissively.

Shane looked incensed. "Doesn't count- I'll show you 'doesn't count'!"

He stood and walked out of the living room without looking back, and Roz jumped up to follow him immediately. "We will be back, just getting dessert." He announced.

Wyatt didn't believe him. He was actually a little worried about the state of their relationship, fighting this much couldn't be healthy for them. When they didn't come back for a few minutes, Wyatt decided that someone should check on them to make sure they didn't kill each other.

"I'm going to go check on them," Wyatt nodded to the doorway they had left from. "Maybe they need help carrying something."

"I'll come with you," Bood said, which prompted Dykstra and Haas to stand as well.

The only one left was Troy, who was so enraptured with talking to Harris that Wyatt doubted he'd noticed anything else going on for the last hour. The size of his crush gave Wyatt second-hand embarrassment.

The four of them followed the hallway to the kitchen, where Roz and Hollander were decidedly not getting the dessert. Instead, Hollander was sitting up on the counter with Roz between his legs, and Roz's tongue was in his mouth. Wyatt watched in shock and a little bit of horror as Roz's hands slid up his thighs to grab Hollander's ass.

"Holy shit." Slipped out without Wyatt's permission. Beside him, Dykstra, Bood, and Haas were echoing similar sentiments, looking much more surprised than Wyatt thought they should.

Roz stepped back from Hollander hastily, like he'd been electrocuted, looking to the group of them crowding the doorway. "Shit."

"Shit is right." Hollander, who was still up on the counter, agreed.

Both of them looked relatively unconcerned about the fact that four people had just discovered their years-long secret relationship.

Bood recovered his voice first. "Are you two, like, dating?"

"No, I make out with every pretty boy who comes to my house." Roz said with a straight face.

"Ilya!" Shane admonished. "Yes, we're together."

"Wow. I can't say I saw this coming." Dykstra looked shellshocked.

"I did," Wyatt offered. "Roz is really obvious when you know what to look for."

"See! I've been saying that for years!" Hollander said to Roz.

"Years?" Haas asked.

"Yes, we've been a thing for years. Don't ask how many, I won't tell you." Roz started to shoo them out of the kitchen. "I will get the dessert now, go back to the living room."

Wyatt agreed easily, sort of happy to finally have confirmation that he had been right all along, even if he wished that he had found out a different way. Lisa had made fun of him at first when he'd tried to tell her his theory, but his gaydar had been on point, no matter what she said.

...

Shane buried his face in his hands and groaned as they all filed out of the room.

"Hey, this is okay," Ilya reassured him. "We are the gayest team in the league, any homophobes would not survive."

"I know, but I thought we were done with people walking in on us making out." Shane lamented.

"Me too. But, on the bright side, this time was totally your fault."

"Why would that be a bright side?"

"That means that the tally goes on your side."

Shane didn't even need to ask what Ilya was talking about. "It does not. You started the argument."

"Yes, but you made it worse." Ilya pointed out.

"That doesn't matter, it's the person who initiated it's fault." Shane insisted.

Ilya decided that just this once, since his boyfriend seemed more upset about this than he was, he could take the blame.

"Fine, fine," he said, raising his hands in surrender. "I'll take the tally, even if you're being unreasonable."

"I'll show you unreasonable." Shane muttered.

"Not right now, sweetheart, there are people in the other room." Ilya reminded him.

"Right," Shane sighed. "And that's not going to make this awkward at all."

"It won't. They don't care."

"Ilya, it's not that part, they just saw both your hands on my ass."

"They are just jealous." Ilya said. "They wish they could touch your ass."

"Will you stop with that?" Shane swatted his hand away when Ilya went to touch his ass again.

When Ilya and Shane finally went back to the living room, things weren't awkward. No one treated him, or Shane, any differently, and Ilya could see it acting like a balm on Shane's soul

after the passive-aggressiveness he'd experienced from the Voyageurs ever since coming out to them. Before they left, all of the guys made sure to reassure him and Shane that they knew not to tell anyone about them.

"They're good guys." Shane told him once everyone was gone and they were alone again.

"I told you. Gayest team in the league."

Shane looked like he was finally starting to believe it.

...

A few short months later, the chance for anyone else to discover their relationship by walking in on them was taken away by a FanMail video. Ilya would never, ever tell Hayden Pike, but he was the tiniest bit glad the responsibility had been taken out of his hands- it was such a relief to be able to love Shane out loud, where other people could see them.

The video outing them also meant that the guest list for Ilya and Shane's wedding that summer was bigger than they had ever imagined. Ilya was glad for it, on his wedding day, surrounded by so many people he loved who loved him, or his husband.

What he wasn't glad for was the merciless teasing the two of them got from everyone. Chirping was part of hockey, and the reception was full of players from different teams, so everyone was partaking in good-natured teasing all day. It got really bad, though, during Hayden Pike's speech.

"Why did you make him your best man?" Ilya whispered to Shane during the middle of Hayden's (kind of boring) speech.

"Shhh, he's talking," Shane replied.

Ilya grumbled, but sat back in his chair. Little did he know that everything was about to go to shit.

"You know, Shane never actually came out to me," Hayden was saying. "I found out he was gay one day when I saw someone send him a dick pic."

This was met with catcalls and wolf-whistles. Ilya thought it was funny, but Shane looked like he wanted the ground to swallow him whole.

"I thought that was the biggest surprise I would get from Shane that year, but Shane had a bigger trick up his sleeve." Hayden gestured to Ilya.

"One night, when I went to see Shane in his hotel room, he had a surprise, Russian, half-naked guest. Who knew that the rude man who calls me Montreal's fifteenth best player to my face would go on to marry my best friend? I can't tell you how many times..."

Ilya and Shane didn't realize the disastrous consequences Hayden's little speech would have until later, when most of the wedding party had left. Hockey players spread gossip more than teenage girls, and people had started to compare stories.

“Holy shit,” Hayden was almost crying laughing.

“Swear jar.” Jackie chided quietly, her instinctive reaction whenever her husband swore.

“Did you ever tell anyone about your relationship, like, normally?” Hayden continued.

Ilya paused to think for a moment. They had a bit of an audience. “We told Rose, right?” He asked Shane.

“No,” Rose cut in gleefully. “I guessed after you started feeling Shane up in front of me.”

“Damn, Roz!” Came from the direction of the Centaurs, who weren’t even pretending not to eavesdrop.

“Right,” Ilya sighed. For some reason, he hadn’t seen this coming. “I’m sure we told someone, didn’t we?”

“I don’t know, we might not have.” Shane sounded mortified by this turn of events.

“These things just happen when you try to sneak around for two many years.” Ilya announced to the room at large.

“Nothing ‘just happened’.” Boiziau objected. “I caught you making out in a public bathroom, dude, that was definitely on purpose.”

“That was one time!” Shane hissed, his face bright red.

“I don’t even believe you, Shane, how are we supposed to know you just didn’t get caught the other times?”

Ilya looked back and forth between his husband and Boiziau like one might watch a particularly entertaining tennis match.

“It’s not like we made out every time we were alone together!” Shane insisted.

“You kind of did.” Ryan Price interjected.

“Oh my god,” Shane covered his face with his hand. Ilya was too busy laughing at him to help.

Ilya marvelled at how lucky he was, here at his wedding with his husband- he didn’t think the novelty of calling Shane his anything would ever wear off- surrounded by laughter and people who loved them.

It made him nostalgic, almost, seeing all the people who had found out their secret over the years in one place. Even when he hadn’t realized it, there had been so many people in their corner, rooting for them. So many people had found out something huge and kept it to themselves for as long as Ilya and Shane needed them to. But now, everything was aired out for the whole world to see, and Ilya found that he wasn’t scared and he didn’t regret it at all- he couldn’t imagine ever wanting to keep Shane a secret again.

End Notes

thank you for reading! hope you enjoyed, I thought I was funny.

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