

Instant Family: On The Flat Circle

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by [stabthroughme](#)

Summary

"Time is a flat circle."-Ilya Rozanov at the draft of his and Shane's son.

Mac Hollander-Rozanov has been captain of the Canadian Juniors team twice, was the youngest member of the 2026 gold medal Team Canada Men's Hockey Team, and was the first overall draft pick in 2026. To Montreal, which is... Complicated. Really complicated. His bio parents kicked him out for being gay, and he wouldn't trade his family for anything in the world, but being the gay poster boy for the team that shunned his dad for being gay because he has his dad's name? He can't even focus on just playing hockey because everything he does is either good for the Metro's image or good for his supposed rival.

Aristotelis Floros has been captain of the American Juniors team twice, was the youngest member of the 2026 silver medal Team USA Men's Hockey Team, and was the second overall draft pick in 2026. To New York, which is a dream come fucking true. He's playing with Scott fucking Hunter, even if he announced 27-28 would be his last season Aris still gets to play with him! So fuck you, Hollander-Rozanov and your handsome fucking face and your goddamned superhero rescuing tendencies. Aris Floros is going to win the Stanley cup first.

Chapter 1: Ilya

A Family Dynasty; Ottawa's First Season Game Plays Host to the Boy Raised in the Centaurs' Locker Room

Published: October 2027

[A photo from the 2026 Milano-Cortina winter Olympics, the members of the Men's Hockey Team for Team Canada stand on the podium with their gold medals hanging from their necks, centre of the podium stands Shane Hollander with the captain's C on his jersey, to his right stands his husband Ilya with the alternate captain's A on his, they are holding hands and to Hollander's left with his arm around the young man's shoulders is their son, Mac Hollander-Rozanov, every one of the small trio has misty eyes]

When the NHL and Olympics reached another agreement about allowing NHL players to represent their countries in the Winter Olympics there were two names on everyone's minds when it came to Team Canada. The question on everyone's minds had been who would take the title of Team Captain, and who would be the Alternate. What no one had expected, however, was for their young 18 year old son to be named to the team alongside them.

As was well reported on in this publication and others, Team Canada was an entirely different beast than previous years. They arrived with colourfully proud declarations on their otherwise white jackets, allowing no one to erase their queerness or their pride in representing their country. Especially in a rare games where the Olympic committee allowed for teams of individual athletes to perform, namely the Russians who wore plain jerseys with only names and numbers on them, the Hollander-Rozanov dynasty was faced with a physical manifestation of the hatred that brewed for them.

Now, young Hollander-Rozanov has followed in one father's footsteps in being the first draft pick on the 2026 draft day, and the footsteps of his other father into the Montreal Metros arena. His first game of the regular NHL season will bring him home, though, to the halls of the arena that raised him, and pit him against his fathers and the team that he himself has been quoted saying "are like one big extended family, always there whenever [he] call[s]".

This season also brings the skying of Ottawa's long beloved alternate captain, Zane Boodram, after he was forced to cut his career short with a critical leg surgery, the details of which have not been made public.

It will be an emotional night on many fronts, though Harris Drover-Barrett, the communications director for the Ottawa Centaurs released an on the record statement that the team looks forward to facing Montreal, and couldn't be happier or prouder that Hollander-Rozanov's first game in the NHL regular season will still be played on his home ice.

In the last six years the Metros fell from a dynastic team, with three Stanley cup wins in five years, to not even making the first round of the playoffs in the five years since Hollander left the organization on tense terms. A hemorrhaging of talent followed, with former star players

like Gilbert Comeau leaving for Tampa and Hayden Pike following Hollander to Ottawa as soon as there was cap space available. In the last five years the high turnover rate with their coaching staff and a floundering GM has led to a miss-matched team that even the best coaches in the league couldn't parse. Hollander-Rozanov's draft seems just as much a blatant PR stunt as it does a desperate attempt to wash away any sort of curse (magical or otherwise) that appeared over them following their treatment of their first Hollander.

Time will only tell if the young player who's led the Team Canada Juniors to two consecutive gold medals and scored one and assisted on another of the five goals in the gold medal game at the '26 Olympics will be able to save Montreal from itself, or if they will toss out his undeniable talent the same way they tossed out his father's.

There was something about playing against their son for the first game of the season that had Ilya buzzing more than usual. Shane was acting so like his mother, worrying over every post and article that Ilya had taken his phone away, but it had faded entirely when they'd all skated out for the opening game.

There were three Stanley Cup Champions banners hanging from the centaurs rafters, Bood's early retirement at the end of last season had meant a new jersey for Shane, and their son, in a Montreal Metros jersey bearing their shared names, watched the whole debacle from the side of the ice.

And, despite it all, the arena had given Mac a standing ovation when he'd skated to the ice. It reminded Ilya of whenever Shane had played against the Centaurs.

Wiebe sent Ilya in for the ceremonial face-off and, always angling for good TV, Mac was of course sent in too. Bood was dropping the ceremonial first puck, his own jersey number retired and hanging next to the banners he'd been there to help win.

"Hey Uncle Bood," Mac greeted as he skated up to the end of the silly little bit of carpet they put down.

"Fucking hell, Timbit! Look at you!" Bood's friendly voice boomed, his even friendlier smile beaming at Mac, and his leg finally free of the full leg cast that had been dragging him down. "All grown up!"

"Do not ask him how many times we had to turn around to grab something he forgot," Ilya chirped, his proud smile never wavering. "Including his ADHD medication. Twice."

Mac grinned. "The perks of living so close to home, eh Papa?"

"Thank fuck the Western conference did not even stand a chance," Ilya agreed, bending over for the photo.

It would, inevitably, go viral, as most posts of their little family did. Ilya was pretty sure Mac was shaking a little, his grip on his stick tight. If it had been any other rookie, Ilya would've trash talked or taken advantage of it, but as Bood waved goodbye, took his cane from Cassie, and the carpet was rolled away, Ilya moved forward and bumped against his son.

"Is just another game, *moy mal'chik-zaichik*," he reassured. "You play bad this game, who cares. It is your first, not your last. You have decades to play. You play good this game, great start to your decades of playing. You play only okay, well that is more than most rookies get."

"How many goals did you score your first game?" Mac asked, side-eyeing his father.

"Two," Ilya answered with a smirk, knowing Mac already knew the answer. "Try for three, Macushenka," he goaded.

"Full hat trick on my first game," Mac nudged Ilya. "You're not going easy on me, are you Papa?"

"Me? Never. Your Dad on the other hand..." Ilya shot a wink at Shane where he was watching from the Ottawa bench.

The refs blew their whistles and Ilya returned to the circle for the real face-off.

Mac did manage to score two goals, and had one assist, in his first NHL game. Even still, Ottawa beat Montreal with a near last-second goal from Shane.

Ilya was so fucking smug he yanked Mac off balance and hugged him right on the ice, the Centaurs piling on around them.

His son was a fucking *legend*.

Chapter 2: Mac

New York Admirals; A Look Into The Future

Published: October 2027

If you were to ask anyone in New York to name a hockey player, odds are they'd name any number of the Admirals. If you were to ask anyone else across the country, odds are they would in fact, name Scott Hunter.

As we watch the first few games of this season, previously announced over this summer to be Hunter's last, it is clear which roles he leaves empty for the young Aristotelis Floros to fill. While Hunter needs no introduction, his presence in New York near omnipresent and his activism for the queer community has made him a renowned figure across the country, Floros has remained relatively niche in the hockey world.

Floros captained both the 2025 and 2026 American World Juniors team, his only two appearances on the team, though they walked away without a medal in '25 they came back swinging and managed to win a silver in '26, marking the second silver medal of his career, though the first came earlier in 2026, just off the heels of defeat against the Canadian Juniors team that knocked them out of the running for any of the medals. That first silver being, of course, the silver that the Team USA Men's Hockey team took in the 2026 Milan winter Olympics.

That winter Olympics seemingly set the stage for Floros to be the second draft pick, playing occasional centre but completing the line as left wing to Hunter's centre and Carter Vaughn's right wing. The trio worked incredibly well together, though Floros quickly earned a reputation for shit-talk, and Hunter's frequent grabbing of the young player's jersey to pull him away from possible fights became a well reported on phenom, with a Twitter account with the handle @huntersfiestykittenfloros counting how many times it happened during the games and amassing a respectable 15k followers.

Still, what makes Floros' pick all the more interesting to those who have been watching the incoming class of rookies, is that he starts this season with a score to settle against the young man responsible for shutting the American Juniors team out of medal contention in '25, and played no small part in the relegation to silver for the '26 Olympics and Juniors teams. That young man has been referred to in many online circles as the "First Son of Hockey"; Mac Hollander-Rozanov.

Hollander-Rozanov is the son of the other two players most likely to be named if you asked someone to name an NHL player; Ilya Rozanov and Shane Hollander, whom share three Stanley Cups won with the Ottawa Centaurs and have an additional four between them (Hollander with three, Rozanov with one). Hollander-Rozanov was the first draft pick, to the Montreal Metros, following his adoptive fathers' examples.

Every time these two players have met on the ice the games have been incredible to watch, though many don't hold out hope for this upcoming game against Montreal; one player can

only do so much to pull a scrambled team out from under their own stupidity, even one as sought after and impressive as Hollander-Rozanov.

Mac pinched his phone between his thumb and forefinger, swinging it up then letting it slide between them before pinching it to stop again. They were playing in New York, his first road trip game and it was barely five hours away from home. He, technically, had a hotel room to stay in, but he'd left basically the second they'd arrived.

He reached the museum's front desk and gently rapped his knuckles on the top counter of it. The clerk looked up with a friendly smile.

"Hi, I'm here to meet up with Kip Grady," he said. "He's expecting me."

"What's your name?" The clerk grabbed a pad of sticky notes that Mac knew were the dollar store version because Kip had complained about it that summer after camp.

"Mac Hollander-Rozanov," he answered simply. He was fairly sure he'd managed to keep the pride he felt in his name out of his voice. It had been his name for 6 years, the name he split with his dads and shared with his toddler baby sister. He could stop flaunting it whenever he needed to...

"Alrighty, I'll let him know you're here." They gestured to the side for him to wait.

"Thanks, have a good day," Mac spoke quickly and moved to the side to look at one of the sculptures in the lobby area. He tilted his head to one side, trying to figure out which ancient civilization it came from without reading the plaque.

"Timbit!" He heard Kip call from the top of the *very* tall stairs.

If Mac was honest with himself he knew there were worse nicknames, in and out of hockey, and he also kinda loved it. Troy Barrett had been the first to use it for him, the first year he'd been helping out at camp beyond just being a participant. They didn't have junior coaches or junior leaders at the Game Changers camp, so it had felt apt to give him his own little nickname. The fact that he'd been "found" at a Tim Horton's had made it stick even more.

Mac smiled and wrapped his arms around Kip, hugging him tight. "Between the first game in Ottawa and the next four in Montreal it feels sorta unfair that the next one is here."

"Oh well, you know we're just ping-ponging you around to your uncles," Kip teased. "We 100% make the schedule."

"Is it *really* gonna be his last season?" Mac changed the subject, taking Kip's bag so he could pull on his coat.

"What, with all the old jokes your dads make you think he's got more in him?"

"I dunno it just feels weird, the idea of New York hockey without Scott Hunter." Mac held the door for Kip like he always did. New York in October was nippy, but not entirely unpleasant. "Pretty sure my teammates thinks this is a whole Illuminati type thing."

Kip grinned. "Your network of former and current NHL guncles?"

"Yeah, I guess. I mean, it's night one of our road trip, everyone else is sneaking their rookies out to bars or clubs, and I'm out here going to a museum to meet up with my mostly responsible uncles who can and will report me to my dads."

"How does it feel?" Kip genuinely wanted to know and Mac knew it.

"I mean. I got a little bit of it with the Juniors and then the Olympics last year but that was still..." He made a vague gesture, his hands still in his pockets moving them around. "This feels more like I'm supposed to be doing it on my own. Struggling more."

"Do you want us to leave you alone?"

"No!" Mac was quick to dismiss that. "Honestly? I've seen enough stories about rookies losing it their first year, far away and mostly cut off from family cause of the crazy schedule. This makes it a little easier."

"You're still a kid." Kip held his hands up when Mac glared at him. "I mean, you're an adult but you're also supposed to be a university student, and you're an instant millionaire. That can fuck people up sometimes."

"Yeah," Mac mumbled. "I guess."

"At least you won't go on a sports car binge, your Dad would freak."

"And Scott would put another point in his list of reasons I'm Papa's clone."

"He doesn't keep an actual list."

"Mhm. I'm sure he doesn't."

Kip pulled the door to the Kingfisher open, and while yes, technically it was a bar, they also had really fucking good food. And Kyle and Eric had started shifting it into a more family-friendly vibe pre-8pm. They also knew exactly how old Mac was and wouldn't serve him a drop of alcohol even if the Quebec drinking age was 18.

"Mac!" Kyle greeted from behind the bar. "Shit, are you playing tonight?" There was a moment of panic while he checked the schedule of games they kept printed.

"Tomorrow night, we just got in this afternoon and we're off again at butt fuck o'clock the day after." He saw Kyle's eyes take on a sparkle of mischief and open his mouth and Mac held up his hand. "If you're going to make an anal joke at 4pm on a random Tuesday I request you to *not*."

Kyle smirked and slid the menu towards Mac. "Your request is my demand, Timbit."

"Yeah yeah, apple cider please, Kyle."

"And chicken nuggets?" Kyle teased lightly, sliding the already open can towards Mac.

"And fries with the herb mix?" Mac asked.

"You got it, kid."

Mac slid into the usual booth, Kip's jacket and bag already tucked into a corner as he was off chatting to someone. Unlike his other uncles, neither of Mac's fathers had played with Eric Bennett, but the Kingfisher had become a sort of hub for the queer hockey players, retired and active, to congregate. So Eric and Kyle were included in the web of close friends of his dads that got the honorific.

"Hey Mac," Scott's voice came from behind him and when Mac turned he heard his Papa's voice in his head.

"Seriously, though, go wish him luck."

Aristotelis "Aris" Floros had been on Team USA at the 2026 Olympics, though that was far from the first time Mac had faced off against him. Canada had knocked the Junior US team out of medaling at the 2025 Juniors, and Mac had felt bad enough about it that he'd baked a whole batch of shortbread and dropped it off in the team lounge as an apology. He'd thought about doing the same at the Olympics but he didn't have access to a kitchen.

Mac had known he was gay since he was 9 years old and watched Scott kiss Kip on live TV after the New York Admirals had won the Stanley Cup. It was why his birth parents had kicked him out and *remained* out of his life, why Ilya and Shane had taken him in and adopted him. But the abstract concept of being into guys and being face to face with a guy who made his whole fucking body light up... Well those two things were super fucking different.

And Aris Floros, with his tan skin, strong jaw, dark hair, and nearly too-blue to be real eyes... Well, Mac could never doubt his sexuality when Floros was in the room.

"Hey Scott, Floros," Mac nodded to the rookie player a few paces behind Scott. "Making me feel like a bad teammate, I left my roomie at the hotel."

"Who're you rooming with?" Scott asked.

Mac sighed. "JJ."

Scott laughed, full and easy and every bit the charming queer rights poster boy.

"Boiziau?" Floros clarified, his hands in the pockets of his jean jacket with a couple pins Mac tried to ignore. Floros was clearly as surprised at Mac's existence in the Kingfisher as Mac was that Floros had shown up with Scott.

"Uh, yeah. He's one of my Dad's best friend, promised to look out for me." Mac shrugged. "And he stuck around, unlike most of the other guys."

Unlike my Dad, he thought but didn't say. Mac still had a weird taste in his mouth, playing for the team that had ousted his Dad so fucking easily, despite the three banners that flew in the

arena *because* Shane Hollander had been the team captain. The complete overhaul in management, ownership and hemorrhaging of talent had made it a little more palatable.

"Oh. Neat, I guess."

"I'm gonna grab a bear, you want anything rook?" Scott asked.

"Uh..."

"They have tea," Mac offered. "It's just the bagged kind but..." He trailed off.

"Yeah, great, I'll have a black tea. Whatever kind they have," Floros answered Scott. And then Scott was back at the bar.

"Hey," Mac offered.

"Hey," Floros echoed.

They stayed there, Mac sitting in the booth and Floros standing awkwardly between two booths.

"You can sit down?" Mac intellectually turned it into a question. "Kip's around here somewhere too-"

"Is this some sort of psych out?" Floros' eyes narrowed.

Mac frowned and blinked. "What?"

"Showing up here, being friendly with my Captain, right before a game."

"You mean meeting up with the men I have seen for at least two weeks every summer since I was 13?" Mac crossed his arms, putting a physical barrier between him and Floros.

"What do you-"

"Game Changers, Floros. With my dads. Y'know. The ones who's names I share? Who are close fucking friends with Scott and Kip and Eric and Kyle and Ryan Price and Troy Barrett and Luca Haas? The whole gaggle of queers?" Mac rolled his eyes. "Not everything is about winning hockey games."

Floros frowned a little deeper and awkwardly, like waiting for a bear trap to trigger and sever his feet from his body, sat across from Mac.

"So. How're you liking New York?" Mac asked, trying to make small talk. "You're pretty close to home, still, right?"

"Uh huh."

"Is it much different?"

Floros shrugged.

"Ooookay then." Mac looked around the room for wherever any of his Uncles were. Kyle was busy taking someone's order, Eric had yet to emerge, and Kip and Scott were making out in a darker corner of the bar.

He did, however, notice Ottawa playing on one of the TVs. He squinted, trying to remember if they were playing that night.

"Live feed," Floros half-grunted, looking at the same screen. "Against Boston."

"They hate my Papa in Boston," Mac muttered.

"Yeah cuz he left to play for a shit team."

"They're not shit anymore," Mad shot back. "And he had good reasons."

Floros frowned at him. "What? Money?"

"Oh my *god*," Mac sighed. "No, dumbass. He moved to Ottawa to be closer to Montreal when he and my Dad got serious."

"Wait really? He went to a shitty team for *that*?"

"Again, the Centaurs aren't shit anymore. He got them three fucking Cups. How many has Boston had in the last decade?" Mac smiled his fake smile. "I'm waiting."

One of the servers set the red plastic basket of chicken bits and herb coated fries in front of Mac and a large mug of tea and bowl of individual milk and sugar packets in front of Floros.

"Thanks," Mac said, genuine and cheerful.

"Of course, anything else?" They turned to look at Floros.

"Oh uh, I'm okay. Thanks." Floros did *not* sound genuine and cheerful, he sounded pained and awkward.

Mac sighed and shoved the basket into the middle of the table. "Have some fries, Floros. Relax and leave the game on the ice."

"You can't honestly compartmentalize this shit?"

"If my Papa can have the most savage chirps on the ice *and* be an asshole off the ice and everyone still loves him, then yeah. We can compartmentalize and leave our jobs at work." He picked the basket up and wiggled it in front of Floros' face. "It has herb salt mixed on the fries fresh outta the fryerrrr."

"If I take one will you stop trying to talk to me?"

"Maybe." He shook the basket.

Floros took a fry and ate it.

Before Mac could bug him again Eric's voice boomed across the small pub.

"TIMBIT!"

Mac grinned and raised his hand in a stationary wave. "Hey."

Eric came over and clapped one hand on each of their shoulders. "Well. Glad to see you're not following in your predecessors footsteps."

"What?" Floros blinked.

"Going at each other on the ice and then fucking in dark hotel rooms," Eric explained.

Floros blushed bright red and Mac winced.

"*Please* don't talk about my dads like that," Mac groaned and Eric grinned.

"Fair enough. You kids want anything?"

"We're good, thanks Uncle Eric," Mac answered quickly.

Eric squeezed both their shoulders and moved on to the next group of regulars.

"Sorry, y'know hockey players are like that." Mac made a vague gesture with a fry. "Loud, vulgar."

"Yeah," Floros said quietly. "Timbit?"

Mac hummed. "Yeah. Game Changers doesn't really have a like, leaders in training program, so when I've helped out the last couple summers without participating they started calling me that." He shrugged. "Hockey nicknames stick like crazy. Just wait till you get one."

"It doesn't bother you?"

"Why would it?" He nodded in the approaching Kip's direction. "My Papa calls him Smoothie Boy."

"He does?" Floros frowned again. He seemed to be perpetually confused, like he'd been dropped into the world of hockey with no prior knowledge.

"He does," Kip confirmed. "I make a mean smoothie. I can send one with Scott for you tomorrow if you want, Aris?" It was a genuine offer and it made Floros duck his head.

"Can you send him with one for me?" Mac asked.

"Sorry, Mac, gotta keep the good vibes for the Admirals only." Kip slid into the booth next to Mac and stole one of the fries. "Team loyalty, y'know?"

"Yeah, yeah." Mac grinned and looked at Floros. "He makes really good smoothies."

Chapter 3: Aris

Russian Hockey Players Permitted to Form Team as AIN

Published: December 2025

In a shocking decision from the International Olympic Committee for the first time there will be a team made up of Individual Neutral Athletes will compete without any designation linking back to the Russian Olympic Committee. Previously, Russia competed in the 2018 Pyongyang games as Olympic Athletes from Russia (OAR) following the suspension of the Russian Olympic Committee due to the doping scandal, and again under the Russian Olympic Committee banner at the 2022 Beijing Olympics for the same reason.

The official communication lists the Russian invasion of Ukraine for their decision, athletes may compete but only as AIN athletes, and the hockey teams will not have any symbols on their jerseys save for names and numbers.

While many expected a complete ban on participation in line with other such international events (in the sporting world and beyond) the move has been met with strong opposition not only from Ukrainian athletes but from former Russian Olympians themselves.

"This is a complete farce," Ilya Rozanov, former captain of the 2014 Olympic Russian Men's Hockey Team, said in a statement given before a game in Ottawa. "They are competing for Russia, in support of Russia, and any medals they earn will be Russian. Not only does this put the Ukrainian team in the same place as this team, it opens the floodgates to the rampant bigotry that will permeate any games they play. The IOC has a duty to their athletes to ensure our safety."

Rozanov, who has since become a Canadian citizen and married fellow hockey player Shane Hollander, is expected to be named to Team Canada. It has been corroborated by many sources that unless Team Canada is willing to make provisions to protect them from the AIN Russian athletes, we may very well be going into the first Olympics in over a decade that NHL players have been permitted to compete in without the two best players in the league.

Rozanov is not the only one to speak out on this issue, the united group of Game Changers (a group of professional hockey players consisting of NHL, AHL, National, Juniors, and past Olympic athletes started by New York Admirals Captain Scott Hunter) of which Rozanov and Hollander are members, released a similar statement calling on the IOC to be transparent in their decision making and their plans to provide assurances of protection for the athletes most likely to be harmed by this decision.

Evan Dykstra, Rozanov's teammate on the Ottawa Centaurs, released his own statement on Instagram attached to his sharing of the Game Changers statement. It reads in part "[...] As a Ukrainian Canadian this decision not only risks the safety of our athletes, but calls into question the existence of AIN as a category. [...] We have seen repeated instances of Russian athletes at other international events antagonizing not only Ukrainian athletes, but any

athlete they seem to find inferior. I know many Canadians, whether they are Ukrainian or not, are puzzled and hurt by this decision."

It was stupid. Aris knew it was stupid. But the cleaning staff liked him, and when they noticed the new kid sneaking into the guest lockers right after they'd finished setting up for the Metros arrival they didn't say a word.

But he was thinking about the Olympics, about the way Mac had smiled and swooped in and told off the Russian athletes in flawless Russian in his Canada jacket. And when Aris had texted Scott to let him know what had happened Scott had told him he was in good hands with him. And he was thinking about how kissing Mac had felt, how touching Mac had felt, how Mac *fucking* him had-

So yeah. It was stupid. But he left the smoothie in the little cubby above Mac's stall, arranging his gloves to insulate it.

The letters of the two last names that were functionally gold in the NHL barely fit on the little velcroed plaque. Aris thought about tracing the letters, but he had a workout to do, and he wasn't going to upset his pre-game schedule for some cock, no matter how good it was.

He hadn't anticipated the coach and Scott feeding into the rivalry the media was concocting around Aris and Mac, but he did what he was told and skated to the first face-off against Mac anyways.

"Thanks for the smoothie," Mac said as he arrived, looking like he was fucking born on the ice.

You're welcome, Aris wanted to say. I don't really like smoothies anyways but you seemed to want one and you said to leave the game on the ice so-

"Mhm," he said instead.

When the Admirals won the game regardless of Kip's good luck smoothie going to Mac and not Aris, he figured it wasn't really that harmful.

Unknown Number

thx 4 the smoothie

this is mac, btw

Aris stared at the messages waiting on his phone when he got back. It had been a singular flash of bravery that had him scribbling his number for Mac at the draft. But that had been... A while ago.

Unknown Number

So you remember how phone numbers work, Hollander-Rozanov?

XD

u know anywhere in this city that has like

actual food at this hour?

You like gyro?

obv

Meet you outside in ten?

k

Aris showered and made a show of leaving normally only to double back and pull a hoodie over his dress shirt, his suit jacket shoved into his backpack. Mac was waiting in the alleyway in his own hoodie, a faded Team Canada one that Aris didn't recognize from the 2026 Olympics.

Mac noticed him and grinned, wide, unguarded, the bunching of his cheeks shifting his glasses frames up a bit. His long-ish blonde-brown hair was pulled up and hidden under a beanie with headphones hanging around his neck.

"Hey," Mac greeted, as openly as he had greeted Aris at the Kingfisher. "Good game, Floros."

Aris smiled as wide as he could, which was still admittedly not a lot. "You too." He gestured to the other end of the alleyway. "Gyros?"

"With pickled beets?"

"Of course." Aris started walking and Mac fell into step next to him.

I'm sorry for being a dick. It was a lot. I don't know what I'm doing here. It feels like everything's too much. I don't know how to do any of this-

"My dads said to tell you good job on that goal," Mac's voice broke through Aris' internal monologue, trying to figure out how to make it external. Which, as always, was a big fucking problem.

He blanched a little. "Your dads know?"

"That we fucked?" Mac laughed as he looked at Aris' face. "Relax, Floros. They suspect, probably. That's it." He shrugged. "They're probably expecting our teams to make us do a sit down interview at the All Stars game like Montreal and Boston did to them."

"It's weird, right?" Aris said before he could overthink it.

"What is?"

"The whole way this idea of us having a rivalry is totally out of our control." Aris shrugged. "I dunno, it feels like..."

"Like they're using you to play a part?" Mac finished and Aris nodded. "Yeah. I guess it feels kinda weird. Mostly being on this side of it." Mac purposefully stepped on a crunchy leaf as it slowly meandered across the sidewalk, Aris tried and failed not to find it charmingly adorable. "I mean, I've seen this with my dads, and every time they've won a cup the last few years it gets dragged up all over again."

"But I thought they hated each other at first."

Mac laughed, full and loud and exactly like the laughs Aris imagined giving fairies like Tinkerbell their wings.

"They never hated each other," Mac said, laughter lifting his voice as it looped through every letter of every word. "They were hooking up basically since their rookie season started."

"Wait really?"

Aris thought back to the interviews the two of them had given over the years, before the world knew about their relationship. There was a statement that had been shared at one point, Aris hadn't really paid that close attention to it.

"The whole time?" Aris asked again.

"Yep," Mac popped the p.

"So it was all made up?"

Mac shrugged. "Half of the NHL is playing the game, the other half is the stories they can tell around it. Rivalries make good TV, make good branding. And Papa's a smartass and Dad gives as good as he gets so it's not like they had to stretch the truth very far." He made a gesture in the air in front of them. "Fine line between love and hate, y'know?"

No.

"Yeah."

They reached the tiny gyro cart and the guy recognized Aris, not as an Admiral but as a regular who hadn't been by in a bit. He punched in Aris' usual order and looked at Mac who ordered lamb with extra tzatziki and pickled beets. They waited a short time and then they had their food and, like the barely post-adolescent male athletes they both were, inhaled them as they vaguely meandered in the direction of Mac's hotel. Which happened to mean walking past the temporary apartment the team had put Aris up in.

"What time is your flight tomorrow?" Aris asked.

"7am, arrival at 5." Mac sighed. "At least it's JFK."

Aris laughed once and stopped. He looked at Mac who only took a couple more steps before he turned and looked at Aris.

"That's five hours," Aris said after a long moment of quiet.

"Yeah. Not a great amount of sleep."

"There are other ways to spend those five hours." Aris didn't feel like dancing around it.

Mac tilted his head to one side, a crooked smirk on his face that *spelled* trouble. "Oh yeah?"

Aris pulled his keycard out of his pocket and swiped it in front of the back door of the luxury Manhattan apartment building. He opened the heavy door and looked at Mac. "Yeah."

Mac crowded Aris into a corner of the private elevator that went to the penthouse apartment Aris was staying in. At 6'5" Aris had a full half foot on Mac but curled as he was into the corner he was looking up to meet his eyes.

"Tell me what you want, Floros," Mac murmured, his nose inches from touching Aris'.

"*Fuck me*," Aris fully begged, desperate and hot and already so hard from the proximity of Mac that he couldn't fucking believe it.

Mac kissed him. He grabbed Aris by the chin and yanked him into it, Aris' spine curving even more. It felt fucking insane. Aris had hooked up with half a dozen guys since the Olympics, including another player at the draft, and he'd fucked every one of them and he hadn't been drunk enough to get past the block in his brain to ask for it the other way around.

But he'd already been tipsy when Mac had rescued him from the Russians, he'd already been tipsy when he'd offered to thank Mac *properly*-

"*Please*," Aris gasped as the elevator doors dinged and opened.

It was *such* an impersonal space but Aris didn't exactly know what to do besides play hockey, so he had added it to the list of things to handle later.

"Bedroom?" Mac asked with the same sort of casualness that someone at a restaurant would ask a server for directions to the bathroom.

"Yeah. Yes. Uh. Mhm." Aris felt his brain trying to get words out like it was the first few chugs of a train engine before it properly started.

Mac didn't seem annoyed, his head tilted to the side, eyes sparkling, and the smallest little smile on his lips. Aris kissed him again, deep and long and coaxing Mac's tongue into his mouth which was easier than it probably should have been.

"End of the hall," Aris said finally, pushing his lips back against Mac's the second the words left his mouth.

Aris was *not* a small guy, even by hockey standards he was pretty big. He was tall *and* he was broad and muscular. He'd had enough lumberjack comparisons that he felt like an honorary Canadian at this point.

And yet, Mac lifted him like it was no big deal.

Aris couldn't help the moan that fell out of his mouth when Mac carried him down the hall. Being manhandled was *fucking hot*.

Mac set him on the edge of the bed and grabbed handfuls of fabric near the bottom of Aris' hoodie, pulling it and the dress shirt underneath clean off. The rest of their clothes followed and then Mac was crowding Aris into the bed, their hard cocks bumping against each other as they kissed with what was quite frankly an absurd amount of tongue.

It was, quite possibly, the hottest thing Aris had ever experienced.

"Lube?" Mac asked before scraping his teeth over Aris' jaw.

Aris flailed his hand in the general direction of his nightstand. Mac opened the drawer and paused, looking almost forlorn.

"What?" Aris asked, a little panicked.

"I only have five hours," Mac sighed, pulling a condom from the drawer. "Would love to see what all those do to you."

If Aris hadn't already been bright fucking red from how turned on he was he would have *definitely* blushed at that insinuation. "Next time?" Aris offered it like an olive branch.

Mac grinned, wide and unguarded and entirely focused on Aris so much it was *blinding*. "Next time," he confirmed.

And then he was kissing Aris again, his slicked up fingers slowly opening him up and *fuck* it was *so fucking good*.

"*Fuuuck*," Aris moaned, long and drawn out, hips pushing down into Mac's fingers.

"Yeah, just like that baby, just relax." Mac didn't *sound* self satisfied or smug, he sounded... Fucking enchanted. Aris closed his eyes to avoid looking at him because fuck, if Mac was looking at him with even a shred of what he sounded like...

"Maksimilian Hollander-Rozanov I swear to fucking god if you don't fuck me right now I'll-"

Mac bit down at the join of Aris' neck to his shoulder and Aris cut himself off with a filthy moan. He heard the sound of the condom wrapper being torn open and felt Mac's fingers pull out and he was empty, painfully so, for a handful of rapid hummingbird-esque heartbeats before the blunt tip of Mac's cock pressed against his hole.

Aris reached up blindly, guessing where Mac's head would be, and found his stupidly soft long hair and grabbed hold of it, pulling their mouths together like a starved man finding

food for the first time in years. He felt Mac's hand dig into his hip and *fuck* he hoped it would bruise like it did last time.

"Yes, *fuck* yes, Mac-" Aris moaned into Mac's lips and felt the man's grip tighten. "Fuck me *please*."

"You are- *fuck* it."

Mac didn't pull out slowly or give an adjustment period, he straight up rammed in and out of Aris like a fucking machine, not giving him even a second the catch his breath, forcing him to just *adjust*. It was fast and brutal and Mac made the smallest fucking adjustment and started pushing against Aris' prostate on every thrust and *fuck*-

Aris was so gone, mind floating and fuzzy and hands grasping at Mac's hair, at his arm, fingers scraping up to wrap around the back of Mac's shoulder and dig into the meat of it. He wanted Mac to break him open and shove inside and leave no room for anything else.

"You think you can come like this, baby?" Mac whispered right in Aris' ear and fuck, yeah, he probably *could*. He felt close already which was annoyingly humbling, how long had it been? Five minutes?

Mac's lips trailed nipping kisses down Aris' neck and *fuck* he wanted Mac to leave a thousand marks all over his body for him to play coy about when his teammates pestered him.

"Come for me?" Mac whispered against Aris' skin and he was *gone*. He was vaguely aware of Mac's continued muttered praise, "yes baby, so good, just like that, fuck you feel so good" and it made him shudder.

Mac stilled and spilled inside the condom, his head pressed into the crook of Aris' neck. He stayed there for a moment, and Aris let the hand that had been scratching Mac's back up go flat, pressing into the space between his shoulder blades.

"Be right back," Mac whispered, pulling out slowly and dipping into the bathroom.

Aris turned his head to watch him, the light flicked on and it's too-harsh white glow that Aris *hated* made Mac audibly hiss.

"Gross, why are your lights like that," Mac spoke loud enough from the bathroom that the nearly entirely silent apartment felt cavernous, like it was echoing and amplifying his voice.

"Didn't pick 'em," Aris answered. He watched Mac come back with warm cloths, wiping down the mess Aris' cum had made of his own stomach. "Stay?" Aris asked.

Mac grinned and dropped the wet wash cloths on the pile of Aris' clothes. "Y'know I'd only wake you up-"

"Don't care. I don't have a game tomorrow." Aris, in a herculean show of strength, lifted his hands and made grabby motions for Mac.

"You look like my baby sister," Mac's voice carried laughter and light and *oh* Aris craved it. "You ever make fun of me for ordering chicken nuggets I'll remind you of this."

"Chicken nuggets fucking slap." Aris shoved the comforter and top sheet down and wiggled under them without getting up. Mac slid in right next to him, one arm reaching around to force Aris onto his side and draw him closer. "Hi," Aris whispered, his face right up against Mac's.

"Hi," Mac replied. "When're you in Montreal next?"

"Uh, November, I think. Layover into Winnipeg. Why?"

Mac grinned. "Because I found a Greek place you'll *love*."

Aris smiled and kissed Mac, gently, not for sex but because he wanted to. "I'll hold you to that."

"They even have that opa cheese-"

"Saganaki."

"-and the deep friend not onion rings-"

"Calamari."

"So yeah, I think you'll like it." Mac grinned wider. "Aaaand," his voice took on a sing-songy tone, "they don't use lettuce in their Greek salads."

"Be still my beating heart." He butted his head against Mac's. "Try to sleep. I'll drive you to the airport."

"M'kay."

Annoying Greek

You could've blocked that.

Seriously what the fuck are you even doing?

I thought Montreal was supposed to be good

Oh my god that was fucking horrible how do you even play that badly?

Holy shit is Hollander okay?

Holy shit is Rozanov okay?

What the fuck is happening?

Chapter 4: Ilya

Chapter Notes

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

[Three photos posted May 24th 2024 jointly to Ilya Rozanov and Shane Hollander's Instagram accounts. In the first Ilya holds a small newborn wrapped in a baby pink blanket and a hand-knit newborn cap with the same base colours and stripes as the Ottawa Centaurs' home jersey, his face is largely hidden from camera but he is cradling the infant very carefully. In the second Shane sits in a rocking chair shirtless with the same newborn held to his chest, his head bent down as if to whisper something into her ear. The third has the family's dog, Anya, laying down on the couch sniffing the infant's head while Mac Hollander-Rozanov holds her, his mouth is open as if mid-speech to the dog.]

Irina Hollander-Rozanov ❤️✍️

This Victoria Day long weekend wasn't as restful for our family as it probably was for yours. After many years of navigating the adoption framework and being left heartbroken in private, we made the decision to pursue surrogacy. This is, perhaps, the one year we're glad to have not moved forward past the first round of the playoffs, as the next few months will be insanity as we adjust to life with a newborn.

We also intend to set boundaries here and now with the general public; we will share photos and moments from our private lives with our daughter's face obscured until she is old enough to make the decision for herself, just like her older brother did. We ask that any photos taken and shared without our prior consent at least follow this same rule, that her face not be visible to others in an effort to protect her safety. We will also never answer questions regarding who is or isn't her biological father, we are both her fathers and that is not contingent on blood. We may be professional athletes but we are also people who are entitled to our own privacy and boundaries.

Ilya didn't regret punching one of Mac's teammates for their dirty hit on Shane. Shane was pissed at him, though, and Mac was trying his best to smooth it over.

"It's part of the game-" Shane started.

"The game has *rules*," Ilya countered. "And consequences when the rules are not followed."

"Yeah I know," Mac said to his baby sister who was showing him the new giraffe toy they had gotten her. "I know yes it does have a long neck, yes it does." He looked at them. "It was a dirty hit, dirty hits come with retaliation, it's what happens."

Shane glared at his can of cranberry ginger ale.

"Was a very dirty hit," Ilya agreed.

"Next time *maybe* consider letting me handle it, though?" Mac suggested, shifting Irina to hand her off to Shane who, predictably, lit up, entirely entranced. Mac crossed to Ilya on the couch and sat next to him, bumping his shoulder into Ilya's. "It's my team, Papa." He switched to Russian, spoken quickly and quietly, *"And the only one left in Montreal is JJ. It's not the same team that hurt Dad, so maybe give us a little grace?"*

Ilya sighed and turned on the TV, glad that this time it was just some bruising on Shane's pretty face and that Mac hadn't been on the ice for the scrum. He'd barely been on the ice at all.

"I have to head to the airport in the morning," Mac said, fiddling with his phone. "Uh, Colorado, Winnipeg, Vancouver, then back to Montreal."

Ilya pulled out his own phone, checking the Centaur's schedule against the Metros'. "We are in New York, Toronto, Buffalo, Detroit, then home-"

"I'm out again after a couple games in Montreal," Mac sighed, letting his head fall back on the couch. "Oh joy. More JJ hovering."

"Is he being too much?" Shane asked, tucking himself into Ilya with Irina sleeping against his chest.

"A little." Mac shrugged. "I know it's normal for the rookies to get paired up with the older players but pairing me off with JJ feels like, excessive? I dunno." He sighed. "I went out in New York, told him about it four times, and then he proceeded to freak out like I'd been abducted. I showed up for the flight earlier than he did." He grinned. "I think he thinks Papa will kill him if anything happens to me."

"Possible," Ilya mused. Shane glared at him over his glasses and Ilya's heart skipped a beat. *Fuck* he loved Shane so much.

"I can ask him to tone it down," Shane offered.

"Would you?" Mac sighed. "Especially in New York. I spent the day with Kip and grabbed dinner at the Kingfisher. It's not like I was unsupervised." He clicked the faded and worn Centaurs PopSocket back into his phone and slid it into his pocket. "At least he hasn't tried to move in."

"I do not think his wife would like that very much," Ilya mused, an arm slung over Shane's shoulder to play with the hair at the nape of his neck.

"I'm off to sleep. Go easy on Uncle Scott, he's getting ancient." Mac was already halfway up the stairs.

"Goodnight!" Ilya said, grinning from ear to ear when he turned to Shane. "See? He is ancient. Our son agrees-"

"Scott thinks he's a miniature version of you."

"No," Ilya sing-songed. "He's a miniature version of *you*, Hunter thinks his rookie is a miniature version of me."

"Who?" Shane frowned. "Floros?" Ilya hummed idly, watching the aforementioned young player score a goal on a highlight reel on the TV. "He seemed quiet."

"I recall some remarks," Ilya hummed. "But Mac seemed to..." Ilya grinned as he trailed off.

Shane grinned back. "You think he spent any time with Floros in New York when he was out from JJ's thumb?"

"We *may* be projecting a little, *ryukzak*," Ilya murmured, pressing a kiss to Shane's shoulder.

"Backpack," Shane translated easily. "Maybe. Maybe not. We'll just have to wait and see. And *not* push and *not* meddle." He looked down at Irina, sleeping ever soundly, entirely enchanted. "We should go to bed."

"We should," Ilya agreed, though neither of them made any indication of moving.

Instead Shane turned and kissed Ilya, deep and soft and full of adoration that flowed easily between them. Ilya slipped his fingers into Shane's hair and cupped the back of his head, pouring love into his side of the kiss.

"I love you," Shane murmured. "Even when you start fights."

"I do not start fights, I finish them," Ilya corrected. Then he kissed Shane's nose. "I love you too."

Chapter End Notes

Okay thus begins the sequel fic to Just Add Ice. I know there's probably not gonna be nearly as much interest in this but I kept thinking about the next generation of queer hockey players and how we saw the very start of it with Luca so this sorta...
Snowballed!

Hope yall enjoy!

Chapter 5: Aris

Family Affair; Centaurs Star Players' Son Goes Viral For Live Commentary

Originally Published: October 2022

Like many Ottawans my eyes were on the ice as the Centaurs took to the ice in their first regular season game as Stanley Cup champions. There have been many think pieces about what about this particular iteration of the team's makeup led to their breakaway success last season but lost amongst it all, or at most mentioned as an afterthought, is the young teenager who's become a constant at home games since October of 2021.

Much of the hockey world was shocked when less than a year after their marriage (which was a shocking development in and of itself), Centaurs Captain Ilya Rozanov and fellow centre Shane Hollander announced that they had adopted a teenager they had previously coached at their Game Changers Hockey Camp.

"Mac has been at every game, and spent virtually every weekend and PD day at the arena," said the Centaurs Communications Director Harris Drover. "He's like every other team kid, and like every other member of the Centaurs family he's excited to cheer his dads and the team on this season."

The teenager's Instagram account quickly amassed half a million followers when it was made public over this summer, with photos bearing the same hallmarks of careful consideration found in Rozanov and Hollander's own social media posts. It is clear that the Hollander-Rozanov family has set the rules of engagement; they will give looks into their lives as they wish to, not as is demanded.

Case and point was the formal Cease and Desist filed against the Toronto Sun this summer following reported harassment by a photographer apparently under contract with the publication. The rest of the summer passed with few posts from any of the new family, and no teammates made mentions of them in their own posts which led to speculation that there were issues with adjusting to life as a family.

After last night that speculation seems to have been thoroughly laid to rest as Hollander-Rozanov took to his Instagram to provide live commentary of the game from his rink-side seat, Mr. Drover seated on one side and Hollander's parents on the other.

"Oop, sorry Uncle Scott," the teenager can be heard saying behind the camera as Troy Barrett rams into Scott Hunter and Rozanov takes control of the puck. He does not sound at all apologetic, and his tagging of Hunter's official Instagram and that of Hunter's husband Christopher Grady echoes similar posts Rozanov has made over the last decade.

Grady, for his part, shared the same story to his Instagram with an uncaptioned photo of cookies on a coffee table in front of a fireplace with the Hollander-Rozanov family dog, Anya (a Centaurs legend in her own right) curled up watching the game on TV.

An account by the name of jg2003 on YouTube uploaded a screen recorded version of Hollander-Rozanov's commentary, spliced together with Grady's reactions and clips from the broadcast by various commentators. It is the only video on the channel, and the view count is already in the hundreds of thousands, with top comments focusing on the custom Centaurs jersey the teenager sports; 81 on one arm, 24 on the other, and both names and numbers on the back.

"Do you kiss your mother with that mouth, Floros?" One of the Dallas defencemen said during a stop in play.

Aris grinned. "Your mother found my mouth pretty damn skilful."

"Okay, enough." He felt Scott grab the back of his jersey as he skated back to the red line, like a kitten getting scruffed, though he blew a kiss toward the Dallas player before turning around and skating back to his place.

"I cannot wait till I'm not responsible for you," Scott sighed.

"What am I taking precious years off your life old timer?" Aris teased.

Scott shoved him towards his spot on the line. "Cool it, rook, you wanna still have a face after this season."

Aris crouched in position at the red line and waited for the puck to drop in front of Scott and the Dallas centre.

In his not-so-humble opinion, the number of hot weather states with NHL teams was only vindicated by the number of Canadian and northern players they hired. There were so many sports they could play year round, in the places without seasons, that hockey teams seemed silly to him. Though he *did* appreciate that it meant flying down when the weather got colder. New York was currently being hammered by a freezing rainstorm, while Dallas was warm, sunny and dry.

"Remind me, how long has it been since the Admirals got a cup?" The Dallas winger next to him, Dryden, attempted. He really should've known better, he'd played under Aris at the World Juniors.

"Well at least our pics with the Cup are in colour," and because Aris could, and like every other arena they played in there were pride flags all throughout the crowd, he added, "and in the history books."

And then the game was on again, and *god* Aris loved playing. He loved the feeling of the ice under his skates, loved feeling it get torn up more and more as they played, loved the whooshing of air past him, the reverberations of the puck hitting his stick in a pass before passing it right on for a goal. The crush of bodies to celebrate, because yeah, it was Dallas, and yeah they kinda sucked, but it still felt *good* to score.

He couldn't believe he'd almost missed out on this.

"We're playing hockey, by the way," Aris said to the goalie. "Not dodge-ball. If you were wondering."

"Fuck off, Floros," the goalie (Huts? Hern? Aris wasn't sure and he also didn't really care) grumbled.

Aris shrugged. "Just making sure the rules were clear!"

When the game ended 3-0 no one was surprised, there was still the celebratory cheers in the locker room after and Aris checked his phone while he waited for his teammates to finish getting ready.

Unknown Number

when do u land?

what the fuck did you say to holt, he looks ready to punch you and he's like

the chilliest guy ever

good job meeting expectations :D

Aris sighed and texted back.

Unknown Number

11am EST.

Who's Holt?

the goalie?

do i need to get u trading cards to jog ur memory?

Oh.

I reminded him we are playing hockey.

???

It seemed like he was playing dodge-ball. Thought he could use the reminder.

ha!

I expect Greek food.

i got u dw

when do u have 2 leave?

Got to be back at the airport for 8, then late night flight landing in Winnipeg at 11pm.

You do not get to keep me overnight

:(

Not for the first time Aris wondered if Mac had ever opened the little emoji keyboard on his phone.

"Who ya textin?" Carter asked in a sing-song voice.

"Hollander-Rozanov," Aris answered easily. "He's insisted on rescuing me from Scottie's poor food choices during the layover." He looked at Carter. "You're not invited Vaughny, you gotta suffer."

"What? Why do I have to be Scott's airport buddy?"

"Because you're my best friend?" Scott said, coming in from the shower very confused.

Carter placed his hands on Scott's shoulders. "You know I love ya, bro. But you think the peak of airport dining is the lemongrass soup from that fresh food chain in Canada."

"Freshii," Scott supplied. "And it's good-"

"Uh huh." Carter looked at Aris with big, begging eyes.

"No. I want to eat good Greek food in peace without you bugging the shit outta me." *And possibly, probably, get railed afterword.*

Which, if Scott wasn't someone who had literally watched Mac age through the awkward teenage years and wasn't *Scott* about sex he would've said. Maybe. Probably.

"Didn't realize you two were friends," Scott said as he sat down after shoving Carter off. There was an inflection there he didn't like, and Aris almost thought Scott would bring up the Olympics.

Aris shrugged. "Rookies in the same season. Pretty sure his parents forced him to be nice to me." Scott still looked lost so Aris made a vague gesture towards the room the media waited in for post-game interviews. "You *know* they're trying to set him against a rival, given the name and his parents and everything."

"Oh. Well, that'll be interesting," Scott mused.

"You're feeding into it and you know it," Aris scoffed.

"Well yeah," Scott started, "but-"

Carter laughed his loud, boisterous laugh. "I don't think Timbit's capable of pretending not to like someone."

Scott pointed at him in a *that's what I meant* motion. "Pretty sure Timbit likes everyone who isn't an asshole."

"And yet he's texting Aris!" Carter ruffled Aris' hair and Aris shoved him away, returning to the stupid amount of buttons on the dress shirt he'd gotten in a TJ Maxx back in Jersey.

"Leave it on the ice, right?" Aris grinned sidelong at Scott who seemed to age visibly.

"Please," he all but begged.

"Aye aye, captain." Aris grabbed his bag and pulled his suit jacket on.

"Wait you and Timbit have each other's numbers?" Carter asked.

"Yeah?" Aris looked up and saw Carter's eyes shine with what would have been a bad idea if it wasn't already happening. "Just because we're both queer doesn't mean we're fucking. I'm not fucking Scott."

Scott had been mid-drink and choked on his questionable coffee order. "What?"

Aris gestured to Carter. "He looked like he was gonna try to like, parent trap Hol-Roz and me."

Scott tilted his head to one side in consideration before shaking his head. "Nah, Carter sucks at setting people up it'd cause a whole incident."

"Again, just because we're both queer guys doesn't mean I wanna fuck him." Which. True. Aris didn't want to *fuck* Mac. Getting fucked *by* Mac however... "Or do you secretly wanna fuck Benny and Kyle and Rozanov and Hollander and-"

"NOPE!" Scott was, predictably, bright red, and the locker room was filled with heckling comments about their blushing virgin bride of a captain.

Aris tossed Scott's suit jacket at his face. "Hurry up, if we miss the flight and I have to have lemongrass soup and a shitty burrito again I will make it *your* problem."

"You're already my problem."

"I will be an even *worse* problem," Aris countered.

"Not possible."

"Wanna test that theory?"

Chapter 6: Mac

Chapter Notes

This is the second chapter from this round of updates, the first update was chapter 5

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

Player Interview; Aristotelis Floros, the Future of the American Hockey Dream

Published: January 2026

The announcement of Team USA came with baited breath; for the first time in over a decade NHL players are permitted to compete once again. There were many names that were given; Scott Hunter, Carter Vaughn, and Cliff Marleau to name a few. What remained to be seen, right up until the announcement, was if the team would be entirely made up of NHL stars or if there would be wildcards pulled from the ranks of the World Juniors team.

When Aristotelis Floros' name was announced, in the midst of NHL greats, his was the only such name called up from the team.

Floros grew up in New Jersey, not far from where Team USA Captain Hunter has played for over a decade. Floros was quoted just a few weeks ago as viewing Hunter as a massive source of inspiration, which, when quoted alongside other names like former Admirals goalie Eric Bennett and Ottawa Centaurs (and Team Canada alternate captain) centre Ilya Rozanov, a clear pattern emerged. There are obvious comparisons to be drawn between this upcoming generation of queer hockey stars and those who paved the way for them.

This will be your first Olympic games, coming right off the heels of the Junior Worlds where the US placed 5th, do you feel that pressure?

F: *Absolutely, it feels like fuel though.*

Because you're the only member of the Juniors team to be put on the Olympic team?

F: *Yeah I guess.*

There are already comparisons being drawn between you and Mac Hollander-Rozanov, do those bother you?

F: *Not really. He's a great player, a great Captain, and I look forward to playing against him at a higher level.*

Many of your Team USA teammates, and Team Canada members, have posted statements against the IOC's recent decision to allow a team of AIN athletes from Russia to compete in Milan. Do you have anything to add?

F: I think everything that needs to be said has been said by them.

You're not a man of many words, are you?

F: Not really.

You do have a bit of a reputation amongst your Juniors teammates, though. Do you think competing against athletes that might not speak or fully grasp English will change your strategy?

F: Strategy?

Your teammates have said you're not the nicest to your teammates, one of them was quoted as saying you have "savage chirps".

F: Oh. Uh, yeah I guess. Save them for the Canada game, right?

So you think you'll play Canada?

F: Like every other Olympics, yeah. It's the main game everyone watches, right? I grew up talking to online friends about the winner or loser getting to claim different celebrities based on who won the game.

Claim?

F: Like, a lot of celebrities born in Canada would move to America for some stuff and then there'd be arguments about who got the claim them as Canadian or American. It's all kinda stupid.

"What the fuck kind of car is this?" Floros asked, dumping his carry-on bag on the floor of Mac's car.

"A respectable and responsible one for the conditions common in Montreal *and* New York," Mac answered in short, clipped words, the tiniest hint of a Russian accent slipping into his voice.

"You got a fucking soccer mom SUV as your car. As a fucking 20 year old NHL player." Floros shook his head in disbelief. "Happy birthday, by the way."

Mac grinned. "Thanks. And don't give me shit when your city's covered in ice and your fancy fucking car is useful as shit in a hole."

"The fuck sorta phrase is that?"

"A Canadian one- oh I fucking *hate* this airport," Mac swore as he pulled out of the line of cars. "I meant to tell you to go straight to the end cause the carousels are on the other side."

"Yeah without a bus to head to I did get a little lost. Vaughn and Hunter are skulking around the airport, I think Vaughny's convinced him to book one of those airport lounge massages."

Floros pointed to the charger plugged into Mac's phone. "Can I?"

"Yeah sure." Mac let out a string of curses in French that only ended when he heard Floros laughing at him. "Oh fuck off, Floros."

"How many languages do you even speak?" There was a lilt to his voice that made Mac bristle, the same sort of tone he heard from Floros on the ice.

"Ottawa is a bilingual city," Mac defended.

"Wait it is?"

"Yeah. It's-" Mac sighed. "Fucking Americans."

"You're the one that's fucking an American here," Floros said without missing a beat.

"Why are you the way you are?"

"Perfect?"

"Annoying."

"You love it."

"Fuck off."

Mac was definitely pouting the rest of the drive into Lasalle. The Greek place was along the old canal, and he'd called ahead to book in their upper floor for the afternoon. It was a smaller half floor that overlooked the water through a full wall of glass, and wasn't visible from the floor below.

"Don't you need to pay for parking?" Floros asked.

"Oh, Montreal's parking is done from an app, that little sign," he pointed to the little sign with a QR code, a lot number, and then a parking space number, "tells you what spot you're in. And you can pay for more time from your phone. It's super fucking helpful."

"You tell all the guys about your handy little parking app?" Floros teased.

Mac rolled his eyes and opened the door. "Honestly I don't get how anyone has time for dating."

"Vaughn's been trying to set me up with his wife's actor friends. He said, and I quote," Floros made air quotes with his fingers, ""they're all equal opportunity hotties" and I am not *entirely* sure what that means."

Mac scoffed and gave his name to the hostess, always overly kind. It made him unreasonably happy and proud to see Floros thank her and be just as polite.

"How much food do you think we can get away with ordering?" Floros asked, looking at the three page menu. "Oh shit, drinking age's 18 here."

"Yup." He wanted to make a comment about Floros not waiting another two months to drink but decided to leave it. "You don't play till tomorrow right?"

"Yeah, morning practice at the arena though."

Mac groaned. "God those are the worst."

"Hunter actually *likes* them, I swear." Floros shook his head. "I mean, he's married but he loves morning practices, says it's a good luck charm except then we play like shit cause we're tired from doing bag skates for three hours."

Mac grimaced. "Oof, yeah we don't go that hard during our game day practices." He didn't mention that half the practice was spent running the drills with just JJ because everyone else acted weird or ignored him. Instead Mac turned to the waiter and smiled, letting the conversation fizzle while they ordered.

Or rather, while Floros ordered basically everything on the menu except the soups and the extra sides. He looked adorably panicked when the server asked if they wanted any wine, shooting a look that read clearly as *help me* to Mac. Mac thought about letting him stew in it, but decided against it.

"So, how's Montreal been?" Floros asked after their wine had arrived, a little stunted and awkward, like he was trying to follow a script.

"Weird," Mac answered. "Like, I went a couple of times, before, and then when the team basically disavowed Dad we never really came back. Hell, the Pikes moved to Ottawa to be closer to us and their family. There was literally nothing left for us here except..." Mac swirled his wine around in his glass, watching it halo around the sides of it. "They have a trophy case, right? Their own little plaque of all the Stanley Cup teams, and Dad's on the last three. They haven't won since, and I think they only drafted me to try to... I dunno. Fix it?"

"What exactly happened there?" Floros asked. "Do you know or?"

"Yeah, Dad and Papa were outed, they were benched for a game, and when Dad went in to talk to his team they all gave him the silent treatment except for Hayden." He sighed. "Then they faced the Centaurs and fought like hell into game 7 but Dad caught an edge and tripped and people started saying it was on purpose, that he *let* Papa win. The whole team believed it, except JJ and Hayden. They still do."

"Well that's bullshit," Floros said instantly.

"Yeah well. None of them have won a cup since, so. Made it pretty damn clear that Dad was the reason they won any, but they really fucking burned that bridge." Mac sighed. "If I could've said no I might've. Even knowing the only one left is Uncle JJ, the team still feels... Sour. I dunno if I'll get over that any time soon, and we weren't even family yet when it happened."

"Is that what you mean when you say before?" Mac flinched a little and Floros held his hands up. "Hey, you don't gotta tell me anything, sorry." And he was, actually sorry. It wasn't the way someone would fake an apology couched in learn-to-take-a-joke-isms like the teammates he'd had in the Juniors. Like some of the teammates he had *now*.

"Yeah. It just... I dunno, if you decide to have a kid it feels like you should be prepared for them to be gay or disabled or trans or any of it and still love them. And they... Didn't. So calling them my parents in any way, shape, or form feels disingenuous. I *have* two parents who love me and support me, and I have people who fucked to make me and then told me to fuck off the second I wasn't the perfect cishet white guy hockey legend they wanted me to be." Mac took a long sip of his drink. Floros let him, not asking any more questions. So Mac offered up more. "I think I would feel different, if I was a baby or a young kid, but... I dunno, knowing that it's not just that they gave me up, but knowing the reason is because they don't like how my brain chemistry works? I don't owe them shit, and they certainly don't deserve any sort of parental title."

Floros reached over and set his hand on top of Mac's where it was worrying the rolled hem of the cloth napkin on the table. "And you don't owe anyone any sort of explanation," he said firmly.

"You sound like my parents," Mac meant for it to sound jovial, but it came out more sincere than he wanted.

"Hey if I can sound like the guys who have 7 Stanley Cups between them that's a pretty damn good thing." Floros removed his hand when three waiters arrived with two trays each of food.

"Don't forget the gold medals," Mac teased and Floros flipped him off as the waiters lit the saganaki on fire and set the still sizzling calamari in front of Mac. He waited until they'd left to shove the woven wicker basket of squid to Floros.

"I hate the fucking texture of that. This however..." Mac cut right into the saganaki and heaped a large amount of it onto some pita.

Floros popped one of the not-onion rings into his mouth and moaned the sort of noise Mac was maybe a little too familiar with. "And it's not even chewy!" He exclaimed, quickly shoving another piece into his mouth.

"Told you I found a good Greek spot," Mac gloated. "They have slow roasted lamb shank on Sundays."

"How easy do you think it would be to get traded?" Floros half-joked.

You don't wanna be in Montreal, Mac thought, recalling the latest in the slew of homophobic jokes levelled at their social media guy. And Mac. Mac was pretty sure if Floros had been drafted to Montreal there would be a lot more broken bones on the team. He was certain if he told JJ half the shit he'd overheard, let alone muttered at him, the next Ottawa game would put the injury count from that first '21 game to shame.

Except Mac wasn't a kid, he wasn't going to tattle, and this was just how things were in the league. He knew that. He was the bottom of the pecking order and he had time to do before he had any sway that was his own and not built on his dad's legacies.

"You don't wanna get traded when they drafted you *specifically* to make you Captain when Scott retires," Mac teased instead.

"It *should* be Carter," Floros disputed, a blush on his face and the tips of his ears.

"He's not far from retirement either, his wife wants him to be around more and she's slowing down her pace too." Mac smiled at the confused look Floros gave him. "I know things. *And* Rose Landry is my godmother. Literally and in the fairy tale way."

"Your family is like, a concentrated secret organization," Floros muttered, shaking his head.

"I mean, between my parents, my Uncles, and the rest of the hundred or so hockey players Scott's got in his Game Changers changing hockey culture thing. Yeah, probably pretty apt." He levelled his spoon at Floros. "So watch it with the chirps, smartass."

"Yeah yeah," Floros grinned. "Scott yanked me out of one in Brooklyn before a fight broke out."

"Oh yeah! I saw that, have you seen people editing your faces onto gifs of feisty kittens being yanked away by their moms?"

Floros' eyes twinkled. "You *have* to send those to me. I can send them to Scott after games!"

"Oh he's gonna be so grey by the end of this season," Mac sighed. "You should send an apology basket to Kip. History textbooks, tea, mugs."

"Depends on how the season ends," Floros grinned. "No offence, but I don't think Montreal's gonna be a real contender this year."

"Maybe not, we're still gonna try though."

"Of course, I wouldn't expect anything less from Maksimilian Hollander-Rozanov."

Mac *hated* when someone used his full first name, he'd actually considered changing it entirely when he'd changed his middle and last names. But he hadn't, because just *Mac* didn't feel Russian, and even speaking Russian on a daily basis with his parents to the point that Ilya's Russian accented English slipped in when he got irritated didn't make him feel Russian. He'd thought, as a kid, that maybe when he got to the NHL he'd take his biologicals back to Russia and see where his bio-male had come from. But that obviously wasn't possible anymore.

And despite all that, the way Aristotelis Floros said his full first name didn't bother him.

"Would be nice for you guys to take it, though," Mac mused. "Given how the last one New York got changed things for all of us, giving Scott one last cup would be... Sweet. Fairy tale ending type shit."

Floros nodded but remained quiet for a minute, moving the cut up bits of his salad around with his fork. Mac let him sit in whatever words he was pondering. Eventually, he spoke up again, quiet, like he was admitting something in a dark room and not a restaurant at lunch time.

"I was thinking about quitting hockey, before that."

"Yeah?"

Floros nodded.

Since they'd met at the Junior Worlds, Floros had had some version of a bi pride flag on his bag. He'd looked at Ilya like he walked on water when he'd been there. At the Olympics Ilya had been the only athlete who had made Floros actually open up in a group setting, the hefty dose of hero worship seemed to go unnoticed by Mac's Papa, who was too focused on competing for the country that had welcomed him and given him his husband and children. It had been a silent agreement, going into Italy knowing that it was the first Olympics that they *could* be out proudly. That they could *all* be out and proud. The Canada and US hockey teams had started it, arriving to the opening ceremonies with pride pins visible and ally pins on those who weren't comfortable being out or simply weren't queer.

Secretly, Mac's favourite photo wasn't one he was even in, it wasn't from the gold medal game or his dads kissing on the podium while Ilya flipped Scott off. It was Scott, Ilya, Shane, Luca, and Troy in their team jackets. Harris had snapped it, while they were out grabbing coffee. He had posted it with the hashtag gamechangers and tagged the camp and Irina foundation. It had been overridden in the news cycle by other events and medals, but it had done decent numbers.

"I get that," Mac said.

"I'm glad I didn't, I mean I'd put so much time and effort into it, and my parents had put so much money into it too... But it was just. Too much. And then..."

"And then," Mac echoed. "You tell him that?"

"Fuck no, have you?"

"Nope. I think if I told him how old we were when it happened it would make him do that tired exhausted thing he does whenever he has to interact with my Papa." Mac paused before taking his next bite of food. "It was what made me realize there was a word for how I was feeling. I think... If I told Scott, with him knowing how everything went down, what it led to, he might feel guilty for it."

"Guilty?"

"I mean, I was kicked out of my childhood home and disowned in the middle of October in Canada." Mac shrugged, trying to play it off like it wasn't a big deal. Floros didn't make any move to brush it off, though, so Mac sighed and continued. "He was there, they all were, when I was fucking terrified that my dads would offload me, that it was too much with their

schedules. I would've figured it out eventually but him coming out like that? The Belovs having little to no reaction to it? It made me feel seen and safe enough to come out to them and look what happened."

"Oh. Yeah, he'd feel guilty." Floros frowned. "Wait, if they were all there for it why Timbit?"

"Hockey nicknames. And I got sent on coffee runs to the Timmy's next door and got myself a box of timbits every time." Mac smiled. "I'm pretty sure my Papa made a joke about not being able to claim me as a volunteer since they paid me in timbits."

Floros stared at him for a long moment, brow furrowed.

"What?"

"You eat like a toddler."

"You're the one that said food is meant to be enjoyable." Mac shoved the last of the saganaki into his mouth.

Floros had a near pained look on his face. "How the fuck did *you* beat *me* at the Olympics?"

"The power of chosen family," Mac answered with a smirk and a wiggle of his fingers. "Y'know the same fuckheads who keep harping on Dad for letting the Centaurs win said that Scott made you guys let us win."

"Did they miss the three fistfights on the ice?"

"Apparently!" Mac grinned. "Harris and I listen to them sometimes and laugh at them. He says they probably only watch highlight reels and farm reddit threads."

"Harris?"

"Mm! Troy Barrett's husband, head of communications for the Centaurs. Sweetheart, him and Kip have a similar kinda vibe but like, not the same if that makes sense?" He shrugged again. "Sweethearts, have great stories, make great fucking food."

"Yeah cause that's how you should categorize people," Floros scoffed.

Mac was starting to *actually* like Aristotelis Floros, annoyingly. He knew how to play at being friends with people he didn't like, he'd done it basically his whole life, and he'd fucked a fair few of them because they were hot, he'd thought Floros would be the same. He figured they'd eat, maybe have a quickie in the car, and he'd drop the annoying American back at the hell that was Trudeau and go to focus on his own game with his team of shitheads Mac was getting very good at pretending to like.

"Wanna grab tea?" Mac heard himself offer as they finished the last of the wine bottle. They were, maybe, a little too tipsy to responsibly drive and there was an exorbitantly expensive cafe around the corner that had a whole wall of tea. "We can walk off this," he gestured to both the empty bottle and the stack of empty plates.

"Yeah, okay." Floros smiled at him and Mac ignored the way his heart danced a little.

Chapter End Notes

Mac: I don't have time to date

Mac: drives to fucking Trudeau airport (for non montrealers it is the WORST) to pick up a guy to bring him to a restaurant he specifically tried bc he thought the guy would like it and surprise the guy likes it and yeah this is definitely not a date

Chapter 7: Shane

Chapter Notes

This is the third chapter from this round of updates, the first is chapter 5

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

@PopCrave

Following in the footsteps of giants? Mac Hollander-Rozanov's been spotted with supposed rival Aristotelis Floros on the streets of Montreal. The kicker? The New York Admirals shouldn't be anywhere near Montreal right now!

[altID: A snap of the NHL's hottest rookies, Mac Hollander-Rozanov and Aristotelis Floros on a street in Montreal's Lasalle neighbourhood, to-go cups in hand, Mac is laughing and Aris is wildly gesturing with his arms like the Greek hunk he is]

| @HolRozTruther

Oh my god he's just like his dads! #Maris

"Hey, did you see this?"

Shane squinted at Ilya's phone screen trying to make out the two fleshy blobs. "No. Still can't. Too close, Ilya."

"Shit uh," Ilya looked around the room for Shane's glasses.

Shane grinned down at Irina who was combing her Barbie's hair the same way Shane was combing hers, into little french braids that took forever to do. But she'd asked for them and Shane was weak to refuse.

"Your Papa needs to put a dollar in the swear jar," Shane said. "Don't forget to tell him that."

Ilya came back into the room with Shane's glasses in hand and Irina with her sweet babbling voice shouted, "JAR!"

"What did I say?" Ilya asked, carefully sliding the glasses onto Shane's face, his fingertips trailing over the shell of Shane's ear.

"S-H-I-T," Shane spelled.

"That is not bad word," Ilya argued.

"Yes it is. Jar."

"Is not-!"

"I *will* ask Jackie and she'll agree with me," Shane declared. Ilya grumbled and pulled a loonie out of his pocket to add to the tissue-paper and glue-covered jar that Irina had made at preschool. "What were you trying to show me?"

Ilya shoved his phone into Shane's eye-line with a grin. "Look."

On the screen was a photo taken from someone's phone of Mac and Aristotelis Floros with to-go cups in hand. Mac was smiling over the lip of his cup at Floros who seemed to be animatedly arguing with him about something. There was water visible through the spindly trees and a French road sign in the background.

"The Admirals don't play in Montreal for a while." Shane frowned. "Like, a really long while."

"I *know*," Ilya sing-songed. "I texted Hunter. They have layover on the way to Winnipeg."

"For a whole day that's a long-" Shane started.

"For *eight hours*." Ilya grinned wide. "I told you I was right."

"It could be nothing," Shane looked at his husband over his glasses. "I think all that ego inflating you've been doing via fanfiction has gone to your head, Rozanov."

"Well, we're pretty sure they had a *thing* in Milan, right?" Ilya sat on the couch. "Hunter thinks so too."

"Oh does he?" Shane made a mental note to tell Scott to stop gossiping with Ilya, encouraging him would only make it worse.

"Mm. Do you know what your son neglected to mention about his time in New York?"

No matter how much shit he gave Scott, Shane couldn't stop himself from taking the bait. His husband was a gossip and Shane loved to listen to him talk. "What?"

"Hunter brought Floros to the Kingfisher, apparently he's been struggling with getting separation from his family and Saint Scott Hunter has been bringing him along to build relationships outside his family." Ilya put his hand on Shane's shoulder. "Kip would not make Mac a smoothie because he wanted Mac to lose," he pulled a face, "but *Floros* asked for one and then didn't drink it. The janitors found the extra smoothie cup *in the guest locker room*."

"Okay and?"

"*And Floros left the arena first!*"

Shane sighed. "Ilya-"

"Ask JJ where he was that night!" Ilya pressed.

"Ilya, no. You can text if you want to, but you're reading into this too much." Shane finished off the last of the two French braids in Irina's hair. "If he wants to tell us-"

"Mac says Floros pretty," Irina helpfully added.

"Oh? What else does he say, *moya malen'kaya printsessa*?" Ilya asked, looking smugly at Shane over her head.

"He said he is like Disney prince!" Irina grinned. "Said he likes tea! That. That. That he can come to tea party! Cause he is smart! And- Oh. That is secret. Pinkie secret." She made a serious face and held up her pinkie.

"Oh. Well, is it a *good* pinkie secret?" Shane asked. "It isn't hurting him or you to keep it?"

"Nuh uh!"

"Good, then you can keep that secret, isn't that right Ilya?" Shane looked at Ilya who sighed and flopped over into the layer of pillows in the corner of the couch.

"I have been defeated by pinkie secrets," he said while Irina giggled.

Chapter End Notes

A short lil chapter with domestic hollanov-ness to round out these updates :D

Chapter 8: Aris

Team Canada Juniors Interview

Published: December 2025

This is your second World Juniors playing together, correct?

Mac Hollander-Rozanov: Yeah! It was great to play with these guys last year, and this is the first year I've been captain, so it feels like a sorta celebration like, all the time.

August Kern: Last year felt like we were all kinda finding out groove, there were some kinks to work out and still are, but it feels like we're really gelling this year!

James Jacobs: I remember my first Juniors we had this sort of instant connection and then a bunch of the guys aged out and some of them moved on to NHL teams early and it feels kinda like we've been playing catch-up since but this time round feels super cool!

Jacobs you were drafted two years ago to Winnipeg, how does it feel knowing you're heading into the NHL right out the gate?

J: It's not quite right out the gate, but it's nice to know where things are heading, I mean you spend your whole life training and you hope you end up in the right head space at the right time to make the right impression, it's a whole lotta luck and dedication.

H-R: And talent in [f-ing] spades! Don't sell yourself short Jacobs!

K: Yeah!

J: It's exciting, I guess, and a couple of the guys who I've played with have given some great tips to get ready so I feel rearing to go.

Any advice for your teammates heading into their draft?

J: Ha! Hol-Roz doesn't need any advice from me!

H-R: (Laughing) Yeah I think I've got enough advice. I've put a limit on it, for the sake of my poor phone plan!

K: We've basically gotten PowerPoint presentations from everyone on the Ottawa Centaurs at this point.

J: Haas gave me a whole ass fruit basket because he said he wanted a fruit basket when he was playing in his last World Juniors.

Seems like you've all got a big team pulling for you then,

K: Absolutely! The culture shift that's been sorta shoulder-checked in has really taken hold. I mean, we all started coming into this division, this level of play, with really gross stories and

even grosser reactions from Hockey Canada. Being able to push back against that grossness and move forward only really happens because we have that support.

Culture shift?

H-R: *It's been really important to me to model what I hope hockey will become. I've been raised by two of the best players in the world and I've also had my comments heavily moderated because there's still so much homophobia in hockey, and it all ties back into misogyny and racism like a big [f-cked] up knot. Untangling the good of hockey from the bad is important, calling out the comments that guys have been conditioned to think are okay, and taught are valid to repeat, that's really important. I know I've got the name to do that, I know I've got the community around me that even if none of the other guys on the team were receptive to it, if they were all pushing back against me, it would sting but I'd be able to survive. Using that, using my name and my fame, I guess, for that is exactly what my family would want.*

J: *Yeah, like, we've all sorta grown up all over the country in cities and towns of all sizes, but having these conversations that Hol-Roz starts lets everyone sorta start from this understanding that like. It's not okay, but it's also not your fault if you don't know better, because hockey culture in Canada has enabled this sort of shitty behaviour for so long it's basically codified. Like, I remember growing up and my tiny town treated the hockey guys like gods, like they couldn't do anything wrong. And we've seen, recently, what that leads to. When Dallas Kent was convicted it started to shift things, but the conversations were still not really happening across the country.*

H-R: *I think that's something great about Team Canada, it's not like other sports where they decide a whole team is gonna wear that name, but it's the best players from across the country all thrown together, kinda like a more frequent version of the Olympic teams.*

K: *But we see each other a lot more, too. Like we were having these conversations last year, and like Jacobs said they'd been having them a little before that, and we've been building every year on that sort of understanding and unlearning, and then we take all that back to our home teams and it gets to ripple out from there.*

H-R: *I really hope that this continues though, once we're all aged out.*

J: *Yeah, that's my main fear here, I think. That we'll have done all this unlearning and then someone will decide to clean house and start from scratch and no one will keep it going.*

Jumping off from that, if you could give any advice to the future members of Team Canada, what would it be?

H-R: *Don't be a [f-ing] bigot. You wanna chirp be creative, resorting to homophobic, racist, misogynistic comments just makes you look stupid.*

J: *Actually talk to your teammates, not just on Team Canada, but on your home teams too. I don't mean like, talk at them, I mean ask about their families or their dogs or whatever their lockscreen is. Actually get to know them, cause they can be your best friends if you let them,*

and hockey is a small world, you'll probably see them again someday and you'll wanna make sure you don't look like an [a-hole] when you do.

K: *Don't take anything for granted. You're not owed anything, you have to earn it, and when you do earn it keep working at it. You're not suddenly the shit just cause you made Team Canada, you gotta keep earning it. If you sit back on your throne you're not worth the spot.*

"Oh, Mr. Bigshot used his first NHL paycheck to buy a fancy condo, huh?" Aris teased, as Mac input a door code and stepped into a private staircase.

"No. It was already furnished, and renovated in the 2010s." Mac looked at Aris, eyes raking over his body. "Super soundproof."

"Oh really?" Aris closed the car door. "Sounds like a cool place."

They stepped into the staircase and out of the wind, dropping their to-go cups in the garbage bin just inside the door. "I can't believe you ordered coffee."

Mac rolled his eyes and started up the stairs. "I like their coffee."

"But did you *see* that wall of tea?"

"Yeah. I don't like tea-"

"You haven't found the right tea yet," Aris interrupted.

Mac smiled at him, something unreadable in his eyes. "Is that a threat, Floros?"

"Yes. Abso-fucking-lutely it is."

There was a second code for the door into the condo and when it opened Aris tilted his head to one side, then the other, before walking in and looking around.

"What?" Mac asked. "I only picked a couple things, but the interior decorator my Dad had hired ages ago for the cottage and Montreal and Ottawa houses was more than happy to refurnish the condo."

It was modern, but instead of some sort of minimalist aesthetic it felt cozier, with rugs and throw blankets and plush stools at the breakfast bar. There were genuine paintings on a couple of the walls, and one giant canvas hung along the wall opposite the curling stairs that depicted a forest in a million different shades of green and no other colour. Mac's medals from the World Juniors and the Olympics hung in cases in front of his jerseys, but despite the three golds including one from the *fucking Olympics*, a Centaurs jersey hung pride of place. It had two numbers on it, 81-24, and Mac's hyphenated name on the back.

"I've got a shittily furnished, impersonal apartment that's more white than either of us and you have a proper fucking home." He gestured to the jersey. "This isn't a standard merch jersey."

"No uh, it was a gift from Centaurs HQ. Harris presented it to me the first day of training camp for the 22-23 season." Mac smiled at it, a soft sort of smile that Aris committed to memory, lying to himself that it was for like, strategy reasons. Or... Something. "That was after my adoption was finalized. It's one of a kind, obviously. But... I wore it to every Cens game I got to see. And at home. They won the cup that year too, there's a picture of me wearing it somewhere, in the middle of a pile of players."

Mac's eyes were shining, smile still soft, his hands tucked into the pockets of his sweatpants and his head tilted to one side as he recalled the memory. The home itself was soft and cozy, but Mac seemed so at peace, perfectly in place, and so soft...

"Oh," Aris said, he had meant for it to be an acknowledgement but instead it came out a little too awed. Mac looked at him over his shoulder and all Aris could do was kiss him.

It wasn't a surprise, they were there to fuck of course, but the way Mac kissed him back all soft and giving sent a shiver down Aris' spine that wasn't from how Mac's still slightly chilled fingers slipped under the hem of his shirt.

"Bedroom?" Mac's suggestion was pressed into Aris' jaw and followed by a nip at the skin that stretched over the bone.

"Lead the way, Timbit," Aris gently pushed Mac back towards the stairs, but Mac's hand caught on Aris' wrist, yanking him along.

They reached the bottom of the stairs and Mac pressed Aris' back into the glass railing, kissing along his neck just long enough for Aris' guard to lower. And then Mac was pulling Aris' shirt over his head and sprinting up the stairs with it, two at a time.

"Fuck- Hol-Roz you little asshole!" Aris sprinted up the stairs behind him and into the open bedroom. He tackled Mac to the bed, pressing him into the pastel orange sheets. Their legs became a jumble, Aris had one hand on Mac's hip and the other pinning one of his wrists to the bed.

"You should've played football," Mac teased, pupils blown and voice just this side of husky. "Or rugby. Still could, maybe you'd finally get that gold medal-"

"Shut the fuck up," Aris growled.

"Make me, Floros."

Aris really fucking liked kissing Mac Hollander-Rozanov. It was becoming a problem. He would fixate on the way his mouth moved in interviews, he'd watch the French ones too even though he didn't understand them and the AI-translated subtitles were mostly nonsensical. He knew how Mac's mouth moved around the sharp sounds of English, the rolled sounds of French, and the softer tones of Russian muttered to himself on the bench during games. He had stared at Mac's mouth so much and kissed it far too little.

It was a problem, one he could *definitely* solve by just stopping kissing him.

Mac's tongue flicked over the roof of Aris' mouth and he ground down against Mac with a moan that was swallowed greedily.

"You have me at your mercy here, Floros," Mac murmured when Aris trailed his mouth down to the hollow of Mac's throat, feeling the vibrations of his words against Aris' lips.

"I've got two hours," Aris whispered. "I plan to make the most of it."

Chapter 9: Mac

Chapter Notes

This is the second chapter from this batch of updates starting with chapter 8

[a selection of vertical still photos from Mac Hollander-Rozanov's Team Canada Instagram takeover. The first a selfie with an obnoxiously Canadiana themed travel mug covered in buffalo check, maple leafs, beavers, and moose, the fabric reusable cup sleeve a set of rainbow, light pink, light blue, white, brown and black chevrons. The second a picture of some of Team Canada, Team USA, and Team Switzerland gathered around a table trading pins and wrapped snacks. The third a selfie of Mac and Ilya Rozanov, grinning proudly at the camera. The fourth is a selection of the younger players, Luca Haas (Switzerland), Floros (American), and Jacobs (Canadian) arguing over a board game with the hashtag 'TheRealTournament', in the background Ilya Rozanov is mid-motion of eating the colourful dice the board game came with.]

[A video with a small black and white box at the top of the screen with the words "how does it feel to play on a team with your parents?"]

Mac: It's really fucking cool! It's the first Olympics with any of the Men's hockey players being out, it's the first Olympics with my Papa playing for Canada, it's my first Olympics period, there's a whole lot of firsts happening and it's like, infectious! So much energy all the time! I don't think I've stopped smiling since I got the call!

[Ilya pushes into frame]

Ilya: We also have not stopped smiling!

Mac: Yeah! It's fucking awesome!

Shane, somewhere behind the camera: Language!

Mac: It's hockey swearing is normal!

Ilya: [says something quick and sarcastic in Russian that has Mac laughing hard enough the video cuts out]

Mac was, terrifyingly, addicted to the way Aris' cocky quiet confidence disappeared into sweet sounds and gentle touches. He wondered, as Aris' lips trailed down his chest, if this was to sort of high drugs brought to some people. The kisses were soft and feather-light, fanning out from the middle of his torso then back in and down like some sort of strange squiggle that constantly came back to the centre. It took *ages* for him to even get to the

waistband of Mac's sweats and by the time Aris' thumbs were hooked into the waistband and pulling them and his boxers down Mac was terrifyingly rock hard.

"Fuck you, Floros," Mac gasped when, instead of putting his lips to Mac's cock they instead fell to the inside of his thigh.

"Oh I'm sorry," Aris teased, huffed breaths of laughter tickling his balls, "did you have other plans?"

"You and your fucking mouth."

"You seem to be enjoying my mouth quite a bit, Hol-Roz." Aris licked his tongue up the crease of Mac's thigh to the jut of his hipbone.

"Fuck you."

Aris hummed and *finally* closed his lips around the head of Mac's cock.

It took every ounce of carefully held control not to thrust up into Aris' mouth, instead cupping the back of his head to encourage him. Aris' breath hitched at the gentle pressure, and when he lifted his impossibly blue eyes to look at Mac he looked so damn beautiful Mac wasn't entirely sure this was *real*.

"C'mon, baby," Mac encouraged, "take it for me."

He watched Aris' eyes flutter closed and felt as he moved to obey, swallowing Mac's cock down until the tip of it hit the back of his throat. He watched Aris shift, and go further, and suddenly the head was sliding its way down Aris' throat until his lips were puckered around the base of his cock, nose pressing into Mac's skin.

"Good," Mac cooed, his fingers brushing the hair back from Aris' face. "So good for me, so good at taking instruction- *fuck*," he moaned moments after Aris' moan vibrated his throat and the cock sheathed in it. Aris' breaths were heavy, and Mac felt when drool started to drip from Aris' lips to the hair of Mac's crotch.

"Can I fuck your mouth?" Mac asked, breathless and so fucking turned on. Aris looked up at him, big blue eyes hazy, and Mac couldn't help but add a soft, "please?"

Aris didn't pull off, he pulled the hand Mac had fisted in the sheets to his hair, his other hand raised in a thumbs up.

Mac used Aris' hair as leverage, slowly pulling him back before fucking up into his pliant mouth. The action itself was hot as fuck, the warm, wet, *tight* clench of Aris' throat welcoming his thrust so damn easily, but the way Aris' eyes rolled back into his skull? The way his head sagged, only being held up by Mac's hands in his hair?

He had a fucking gold medal from the Olympics, he'd stood on first place podiums for every fucking game he'd had ever played, but having Aris entirely at his will was a whole other prize.

"So good, baby," Mac groaned, a bitten off moan pulled from his throat the moment Aris' contracted around his cock, and *oh fuck* this was going to be the most embarrassing sexual encounter of his life if he came too fast and Aris would *never* let him forget it.

"Fuck, I wanna fuck you." Mac yanked Aris up and kissed him, drool-slick chin pressing into his as Aris clumsily kissed back.

"Please," Aris moaned, grinding his cock against Mac's.

"Please *what*?" Mac teased, holding Aris' chin in an iron-tight grip to keep him from leaning in for another kiss. Aris whined, and Mac couldn't stop the smirk that shot across his face.

"Be a good boy for me and use your words."

Aris whined again, pushing against Mac's hand and grinding his hips down. Mac wrapped a leg around one of Aris', his knee bent and his foot moving to sit under Aris' other leg. Aris ground into him again and Mac used the shift of Aris' centre of gravity to roll them, pressing Aris into the bed with the hand that remained on the jaw Mac was so unhealthily obsessed with.

"Use your words, Aristotelis," Mac spoke more firmly. "You've usually got so many of them for me, is rendering you speechless really this easy?"

"Please fuck me," Aris begged. He was so fucking pretty when he begged, enchanting blue eyes hazy, lips kiss-swollen and voice hoarse, cheeks flushed and hair mussed.

Next time he'll be on his knees, Mac promised himself.

"Good boy," Mac praised, kissing the square of Aris' jaw as he leaned over to his bedside table and pulled out the lube and condoms.

Mac loved fucking Aris, he loved kissing him, loved Aris' mouth on him, loved Aris-

But.

Watching his legs fall open, watching his eyes shut, hearing the soft gasp every time Mac pressed the first finger in...

Well, the first time Mac had chalked it up to not getting any in Milan, too busy being a fucking Olympian for the first time. The second time, in Aris' apartment, well that was a fun coincidence, and clearly Aris needed to get out more.

This third time?

With Aris gasping and whimpering so prettily, trying to stay still when Mac added a second finger and honed in on his prostate, tan fingers digging into the orange sheets...

Mac didn't have time for a relationship, didn't have time to date, but fuck if this was what Aris was like *every* time? He would need more, more of him begging, of him taking Mac's fingers, Mac's *cock*, like he was made for it.

Leaning forward as he added a third finger, Mac nipped at Aris' ear, relishing the shudder and the grind down of Aris' hips. "Who else gives this to you? Who else have you *let* see you like this?"

"No one," Aris answered honestly, eyes darting quickly behind closed eyelids.

Oh. There's no fucking way- That was just for the moment, for the dirty talk-

"No one?" Mac asked, keeping his voice flat.

"No one," Aris repeated, opening his eyes to look at Mac. "No one else. Don't trust it."

How the fuck was Mac supposed to respond to that? The only appropriate response to the warmth in his chest at the honest answer seemed to be to kiss the ever-loving daylights out of Aristotelis Floros and rip open the condom before he could forget who made him feel so damn good.

Before he trusted someone *else*.

Aris' moan was so fucking loud, his head pressed back into the sheets, his hole clenching down on Mac's cock, and fuck it was so fucking addicting how the fuck was Mac supposed to try this with anyone else? The random guys he'd hooked up with in club bathrooms hadn't been *nearly* as responsive, the other players he'd fucked who'd pretended to hate him hadn't begged, the ones who were definitely puck bunnies hadn't moaned his full fucking name the way Aris was.

"*Maksimilian*," Aris moaned, over and over again, like a chanted prayer, the slightly different Russian stressed syllables sounded so beautiful in Aris' voice, in his *moans*.

"So good for me, Aris," Mac murmured and Aris *keened*, his back arching and hands grabbing at the sheets. And oh-

Oh, Mac was so fucked.

Chapter 10: Aris

Chapter Notes

This is the third update from the round of updates starting with chapter 8

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

[Video posted to @KingfisherNYC depicting Aristotelis Floros behind a long cardboard box with a series of straws poking out the top, and different liquids in glasses hidden from his view.]

Kyle, behind the camera: Okay so Aris here is gonna taste test some of the mocktail options we've got here at the Kingfisher, since he's the team baby and can't drink yet.

Aris: Hey!

[Aris proceeds to sip each drink, with names popping up on the screen in rainbow bubble letters, until he reaches the last drink, which is a shot glass labelled 'pure mint extract'. Aris tastes it and barely manages to keep from wincing, though his voice is an octave higher than normal.]

Aris: Oh! That's! Interesting. Really Kyle, that's... Really interesting.

Kyle, barely containing a laugh: Which one's your favourite?

Aris: The last one, definitely.

Kyle: Liar.

Aris: No seriously, what's in the last one?

[He willingly takes another sip, this time gagging as he tried to swallow.]

Aris: Mm! So good!

Kyle: Aris. That's just pure peppermint extract.

Aris:...

Aris: What?

Kyle: You were supposed to say your actual favourite, kiddo.

Aris: Oh.

Kyle: Fucking hell now I feel bad, you want some fries?

Aris: And tea?

Kyle: You got it kid.

[A still photo is tacked onto the end of Aris with a cup of tea and a red plastic basket of fries, smiling at the camera, with the caption "You don't have to be a people pleaser to enjoy our mocktails. We promise not to give you straight peppermint extract."]

"God it's fucking freezing out there," Aris groaned, watching the snow turn to slush as it hit the ground. "Odds on me making my flight?"

"Oh you'll be fine, if your flight takes *off*?" Mac grinned, flannel pyjama pants making him look cozier than he already did. "Whole 'nother matter."

"God I really don't wanna get stuck here," Aris sighed.

"Well get going and find out," Mac grabbed a coat from his front hall closet and tossed it to Aris. "Here. Winnipeg's gonna be worse."

"Don't you need-"

"I've got my Team Canada parka, I'll be fine." Mac made a dismissive motion and returned to the kitchen while Aris pulled the lined hoodie Mac had lent him over his head.

"What're you doing?" Aris asked, walking into the kitchen.

"Getting you tea, the best you'll get at Trudeau is Timmy's or Starbucks, same in Winnipeg." Mac dropped a teabag into a ceramic travel mug printed with a teal painting covered in sticks with a silicon disk at the bottom. Mac tapped the bottom of the cup as he handed it over. "Take this out and it's good to get washed in the dishwasher without cracking, you'll be able to get boiling water on the plane and probably one of the lounges."

Aris looked at the cup and grinned. "This is a loose leaf tea bag."

"Mhm. You talked about shitty teabag leafs for eight minutes, uninterrupted." Mac slid a little dog-shaped sugar bowl over the island to Aris.

Yet again, Aris found himself kissing Mac. Easily. Too easily. It probably should've been unnerving how naturally it happened.

"You got time to drop me off?" Aris asked.

"What's in it for me?" Mac asked, his arms still loosely looped around Aris' waist.

"I'll get you some of that coffee you like in Winnipeg," Aris offered, knowing there was already an order of it waiting in his hotel room.

Mac had talked about coffee, when Aris had stopped talking about tea, tangled in bed sheets on a shitty cardboard bed in the Athlete's Village.

"Fuck yes, they've got their holiday blend out now too." Mac grabbed his car keys. "C'mon, Floros, you got some coffee to buy!"

Mac dropped Aris off, his less-than-suitable coat shoved into his bag. He cleared security and made his way to the first class lounge the team was slowly congregating in.

"Hunter why are you pouting?" Aris asked, dropping in the seat next to him as the captain moved his bag.

"He didn't get his mediocre soup," Carter answered. "So he's pouting. Because no one wanted the soup."

Aris reached into his bag and pulled the soup he'd made Mac stop for. "Hollander-Rozanov says your soup is also shitty, by the way."

Scott stared at the plastic bag tied around the to-go soup container then back at Aris. "Floros. What the fuck?"

"Look, I got actually good Greek food and a really fucking good cup of tea, I'm in a good mood." Aris closed his bag and leaned back. "If you're lucky this'll continue to tomorrow night's game."

"How is Timbit?" Carter asked.

Great at blowing my back out and he remembered I like loose leaf tea and it definitely wasn't a date.

"Said it would be a fucking fairy tale ending for us to get the cup this year. Also his car is so fucking boring. His Dad's fucking European you'd think he'd have some taste."

"That would be Hollander being a nervous wreck," Scott supplied. "He does that. A lot."

"We get in fistfights on ice that we skate on with blades strapped to our feet and *cars* make him nervous?"

"*Rozanov* in a fast sports car makes him nervous," Scott corrected. "C'mon rook, we got a plane to catch."

"Hey did Timbit give you any cookies?" Carter asked.

It took Aris a second to calibrate that it wasn't a euphemism.

"Oh, uh, no?"

"Shit. Kid makes really fucking good cookies."

Aris thought back to the shortbread cookies that had magically appeared in the Team USA dressing room at the Juniors the day after Canada had knocked them out of medal contention.

He chose not to dwell on it, grabbing hot water for the tea bag in his travel mug and waited with his teammates for the private jet to pull up to the gate.

About two hours into the flight, Scott sat next to him. There was chattering up front, around Carter and Matti, as always, but Aris preferred to just sit.

"So," Scott said. Aris waited for him to continue. He didn't.

"So?"

"You spent the day with Mac."

"Yeah?"

"You spend a lot of time with him?"

"We're both rookies, played each other for a couple World Juniors," Aris shrugged, "it's cool having someone to talk to about the whole adjustment thing. Complain to about ancient teammates hovering like mother hens." He gave Scott a pointed look.

"So you're friends?"

"I guess? Why?"

Scott cleared his throat awkwardly and stood. "You've got a bruise on your neck, wear a scarf."

Chapter End Notes

Scott will NOT be telling Ilya about the hickey on Aris' neck :)

Chapter 11: Mac

Chapter Notes

This is the fourth update (though it will be further separated out) of the round of updates that started with chapter 8

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

Annoying Greek

ur playing at home 4 a bit rite?

You should learn English

Yeah, why

Если хотите, я могу говорить по-русски.

Ha ha ha fuck you

thats the plan babe

we play brooklyn then nj next week

same place?

I have coffee for you

good boy

;)

Mac watched the three little dots appear and disappear multiple times before giving up and getting up from the cafe table he'd been sitting at to continue his jog back to his car before practice.

He didn't know if Montreal's arena would ever feel like home the same way the Cens arena did. He kinda hoped he'd get traded somewhere else, even if the condo was nice it wasn't exactly *his*. It was in his Dad's building, though he'd never actually lived in it from what Mac could tell. It felt more personal than those fully furnished luxury units that travelling C-suite execs and traded hockey players stayed in, and the art that Eric's dealer had hooked him up with was nice. There were pieces of his apartment he could see himself moving around with

him, just like there were bits of his gear he brought with him. He used the same brand of tape as Ilya, but he preferred to use the black colour because the white hurt his eyes if he looked at it too long.

"Mac! Hey!" He turned his head and blinked, confused and surprised to see the Metros' Harris in the parking lot.

"Oh! Hey, Felix." Mac smiled as the PR manager approached. Like Harris, Felix was really into his job, and like Harris, he knew the team sucked right now. Unlike Harris, Felix sort of bumbled through his job in a way that Mac wasn't entirely sure was an act to keep the "scary hockey players" from feeling threatened, but that certainly seemed to be part of it.

And unlike Harris, Felix was *not* considered "part of the team". Though he was pretty sure the only person who considered *Mac* "part of the team" was JJ.

Felix had sat in on the "informal get together" that Mac had *not* told his dads about, where the new owners had stressed that Mac's obvious openness about his sexuality wasn't the reason they had drafted him and that they were so very happy to have him. And then Felix had sent him the date and time for the Metros float at the Montreal Pride Parade in August with an apologetic tone and words that conveyed that it wasn't really optional for Mac to attend.

"I'm getting a bunch of the guys who get how Instagram works to do account take-overs for a day when we're down south for a bit. Y'know, JJ's taking over during the travel day to Jersey, Dumont's running it when we play Brooklyn, that sorta thing." Felix acted like Mac had never heard of a take-over before.

His takeover of the Team Canada account during the Olympics was still the top result when someone searched his name on YouTube. He didn't exactly have many (or any) impressive NHL goals to his name to pop up instead.

"Yeah, I uh, I know what a take-over is, Felix." Mac tried to smile but he felt kinda weird. "You want me to do one?"

"Oh would you? That would be so awesome!" Felix continued to talk while Mac cringed internally. Because *now*, on the practice day between facing Jersey and Brooklyn, he would have to do things *besides* Aristotelis Floros after practice.

"Alrighty, send me the login and I'll make sure to do that," Mac tried to sound upbeat but he opened his car door and got in. "I gotta get to physio so."

"Oh! Right! Well, have fun! See you soon!"

"Bye." Mac drove off.

Harris Drove was *a lot*, but he was genuine. Felix's exuberance seemed fake. He missed Harris. He missed Ottawa and Anya and Chiron and Troy and Wyatt and Gen and Wiebe and Hayden and Haas and every other member of the team.

"Yellow!" Harris answered instantly. "You in jail?"

"What?" Mac laughed. "No, I'm fine. Just needed to talk to a social media person who's not using my face every five seconds to go '*see? we are so not homophobic anymore! we hired the last gay guy's son too!*' and expect me to be happy about it."

"Do you want me to talk to Felix?"

Mac sighed. "No. Just, what sorta shit should I even do for a take-over when I planned to spend the whole evening in bed watching stupid TikToks?"

"Recreate stupid TikToks with your teammates?" Harris suggested.

"I don't think they'd be into that," Mac sighed.

"Well, when's the take-over?"

"The day between Jersey and Brooklyn."

"Oh, easy. Rope Scott and Carter into it. If they do it your team'll get defensive and want to do it too." He heard the jangle of metal against metal and then the scrape of gravel and the jangling slowly faded. "Maybe see if there are any charities that the Irina Foundation benefits in the area?"

"Oh. Yeah, that's smart. There's gotta be, right?"

"I mean, you'd have to ask Scott but I'm pretty sure the charity he picked is in New York, and so is Brooklyn, sooooo..."

Mac grinned. "Thanks Harris."

"This feels like it should be conflict of interest," Harris teased. "Why don't you ask Felix?"

"Because he's Felix. And you're Harris, my favourite person at Cens HQ and the best Coms Director in the league."

"I'm telling Wiebe you said I'm your favourite."

"He knows that," Mac rolled his eyes. "Thanks, seriously."

"I'm an angel, I know."

"I'll make you some apple cider cake-pops next time I drive down," Mac offered.

"Ugh, yes, please. Troy's been so busy he hasn't baked at all and I am *suffering*."

Mac laughed. "You got it. Gotta head in for practice."

"Don't get broken! Love ya, Timbit!"

"Love you too, Uncle Harris," Mac said as he ended the call. Well shit, now he had to rope Floros into this too.

The Metros arrived in Jersey and went straight to the arena for pre-game skate and the game. It was *just* hectic enough that JJ accepted that Mac was going to catch the train into New York after the game without any real push-back.

"Make sure I have your location, yeah?"

"Yeah. Not doing that, sorry."

They didn't win, it didn't really matter, Mac's head wasn't in it.

Annoying Greek

You should tell Hus where to shove it

Seriously how is your team this bad?

>Okay I know how but holy shit

Oooo one goal! Yay!

Aaaand Jersey's scored. Holy shit, does your goalie know how to do his job?

Do any of your teammates know how to do their jobs?

How fast can you get traded out of there? They benched you

1223 for the door, by the way.

"I can't request a trade," Mac said as he entered Floros' apartment and dropped his travel bag on the floor by the door.

"Why not?" Floros asked from the living room. "They don't use you-"

"I'm their PR hire," Mac interrupted, toeing off his shoes and padding into the living room. Floros was sprawled along the couch, the giant thing barely long enough for him to lay down on with his shoulders propped up against one armrest, his phone in both hands with the bottom of it on his sternum. What was most terrifying about the image was that Floros was in the hoodie Mac had lent him weeks ago.

And the fact that all Mac wanted to do was drape himself over Floros' body and fall asleep.

Floros scoffed. "You're not that pretty, Maksimilian"

"Reparations for how they treated my Dad and look at our gayboy PR." He leaned over the back of the couch and looked at Floros dead-on. "You don't think I'm pretty?"

"Like a princess," Floros deadpanned. "Here." He held up a white paper bag covered in foiled gold stars with gold ribbon handles.

Mac opened it and gasped. "They make 7 pound bags of Glitter Not Bitter?!"

"No, I ordered it three months ago." Mac couldn't tell if Floros was being sarcastic or not.

He hugged the bag of coffee beans to his chest. "Thank you."

Floros hummed in response, watching over the top of his phone as Mac returned to the door to tuck the coffee into his travel bag. Mac pulled the small-ish tin he'd grabbed from Dollarama covered in little rainbows with a blue to pink gradient on it. He dropped on the other end of the couch and held the tin out to Floros.

"Oh my god that's the gayest tin ever," Floros laughed, letting his phone fall flat against his chest. "Where the fuck did you find it?"

"Dollar store. Thought you could use something not," he gestured around the room with the tin, the goods inside shifting around, "absolutely boring."

"What's in it?"

"Open it and see, Floros."

Floros took the tin and opened it cautiously, like he was expecting something to explode out of it. Instead, there were carefully packed cookies.

"The little stars are toffee brown butter shortbread, the pinwheels are a sugar cookie with almond flour in it instead of the extract, then you have the chocolate crinkle cookies and then the brown butter chocolate chip cookies," Mac explained. "I've been testing recipes for the Christmas cookie boxes I do every year for the Cens and my uncles."

Floros blinked at the cookies. "When the fuck do you have time to brown butter?"

"Well. Not like there's a lot of Metros parties happening that want me around." Mac focused his eyes back on his phone. "Besides, we play the game and then we lose and no one really wants to celebrate anyways."

"Yeah but like, training and team events and volunteering?" Floros bit into one of the pinwheel cookies and moaned. "Fuck, you know how to bake."

Mac smiled a little. "It's fine. I'm the PR hire, it'll be fine."

"Ottawa should try to grab you," Floros mused. "You'd be happier, the team would love it-"

"And I'd be treated like a kid who's only there because his dads are the captain and alternate." He shrugged. "It's fine."

Floros looked at him for a long moment. "What team would you pick to play on, if you could?"

Mac thought for a moment. "I actually thought Winnipeg would grab me, if Montreal didn't. I've been there a couple times as a kid, there's a good chunk of Slavic folks there. Seems kinda, I dunno. Homey, I guess."

"And they have good coffee."

"They have fucking *great* coffee," Mac corrected. He clasped his hands and stretched out his arms behind his head. "What time do you have practice tomorrow?"

"9, you?"

"Half-day, 10 to 3." Mac looked at Floros over his glasses, watching him eat another cookie. "Do you wanna fuck me or or the cookies?"

"The cookies can stay," Floros answered, putting them aside and sitting up, suddenly much closer than he had been. "You leave in three days."

"We better make the most of it then, hm?" Mac slid his hands up Floros' legs and yanked him forward into Mac's lap.

Chapter End Notes

I also realized I never shared the little picrews I made of [Mac](#) and [Aris](#).

And a lil peek at the [height difference](#) between them :D

Chapter 12: Aris

[A video of Mac Hollander-Rozanov in a boring white-washed kitchen, a hand-wound coffee grinder in his hand as he speaks. A little white box sits just above his head with the purple-pink segment on the top reading "AMA!"]

Mac: Hey Metros fans! I'm Mac Hollander-Rozanov, here to continue the takeover on this four day road trip! We're in New York right now, playing Brooklyn tomorrow, and we've got a practice today. If you've got any questions send them in the box up there and I'll try to answer as many as I can! Tomorrow you've got Dumont taking over for our game against Brooklyn and the last of this little quad of takeovers, so this is your second to last chance for any questions!

Aris was watching, silently judging from behind the camera, as Mac recorded a video on the Metros' Instagram story soliciting questions while making himself coffee and Aris tea in Aris' kitchen.

"Sorry," Mac said when he posted it.

"There's no way people are gonna think you're filming in a hotel," Aris replied, looking at the kitchen that was similarly as bare of personal knickknacks as it was devoid of the random non-specific artwork that seemed to be in every hotel room. "Can I make breakfast now or?"

"It's 6am and you want to make breakfast."

"Crepes?" Aris teased, pulling the batter from the fridge. "And you didn't *have* to get out of bed, y'know."

"Yeah but it'd feel weird, staying in your bed without you." The time on Mac's phone went off and he poured the coffee from the French press Aris had ostensibly bought to make tea. Really, he'd bought it for the person standing in the kitchen in one of Aris' nice knit sweaters that was a touch too big on him. Just in case.

Aris dropped a kiss to the top of Mac's shoulder, the skin wide open and tempting with the way the neckline had fallen to one side while Mac made their morning caffeine hits. He didn't say thank you or any of the incredibly fond and mushy words that circled his head.

"I don't even know what to do with this," Mac gestured to where his phone lay on the counter. "Harris suggested roping Scott, Carter and Eric into it but Eric's so retired I don't think he knows what Instagram is. And Carter would get way too into it."

"You're doing something besides drinking protein shakes and working out, that's already a pretty stellar takeover in the NHL's books," Aris teased. "Go to the New York Public Library and find a book to talk about, or go to a bagel place and eviscerate New York style bagels versus Montreal."

"Why don't you do an Admirals take-over?" Mac pressed.

"Because Christina's convinced I don't know how to use Instagram." Aris grinned and placed a plate of four folded crepes in front of Mac before making himself any.

"You post thirst traps to your story on a regular basis," Mac argued.

You're following me? You check my stories?

"Yep. She hasn't checked, and Scott's too Scottie about it to tell her."

"You're avoiding social media duties by weaponizing Scott Hunter's awkwardness around sex?" Mac held his hands up and politely golf-clapped. Aris took a little bow.

"Thank you, thank you. I don't wanna deal with Admirals social medias." He waved the spatula in his hand. "Besides, they don't pay us for it."

"No, they just pay us millions of dollars to skate around a couple times a week," Mac deadpanned.

"And train. They also pay us to train. And travel. And fuck up our bodies irrevocably." Aris gestured between the two of them with the spatula. "We're insurable assets, Hollander-Rozanov."

"What time does your practice end?" Mac asked.

"Uhhhh," Aris drew out the sound as long as it took him to unlock his phone and open his calendar app. "'till 4."

"Wanna meet at the Kingfisher?"

Aris thought about it, turned the thought over in his head as he swore out loud over the crepes that he'd momentarily forgotten about that were starting to be crispy instead of golden. He could go to the Kingfisher, they'd already been photographed hanging out in Montreal during a layover, this was a much more believable story than walking down a random Montreal street just the two of them. A former Admiral owned the bar jointly with his captain, it was a known queer sports bar and they were two out queer athletes...

"I can probably get there at like, 4:30 if I leave on my own. If you want me to bring Scott you'll have to wait for another two hours at *least*."

Mac smiled. "Cool. I'm gonna head to the queer kid's place this morning before mine starts, since they're an Irina Foundation benefactor it seems like two birds one stone sorta thing. Harris suggested it too. Have interesting content for the takeover, and technically the Metros *are* still a promoting partner for the foundation thanks to JJ."

Aris kept his focus on the crepes when he asked, "Scott know you're going?"

"Hm? Oh, no, why? Should I tell him? Y'all have practice anyways."

"So you're heading there alone?"

"Yeah, why?"

If Mac didn't think he needed someone with him to visit a shelter that housed homeless queer youth, most of whom had run away or been kicked out, then he knew himself well enough and it was not Aris' place to ask. They were friends, Aris could acknowledge that much, but it wasn't like they were together. They didn't have the time for it. The fact that they'd seen each other as much as they had was just some good luck.

"Just wondering, I mean there's not like, any liaison or anything from the foundation here?"

"Nope. Gramma's the treasurer and president of the foundation and there's a communications person and a fundraising person. Then we have a camp director in the summers." Mac perked up a little. "Hey, you ever feel like spending a couple weeks coaching some kids-"

"I'll let you know," Aris finished and sat next to Mac. "Anythin' interesting on the little question box thing?"

Mac scrolled through. "Mmm, someone wants to know what I think of the US team at the Olympics." He grinned. "You really did try your best-"

"Shut it, Hol-Roz."

"Oh, someone's asking what my favourite cookie player is." Mac opened his photo album and scrolled through to find a gingerbread cookie he'd decorated. "That one's easy. Hmm... Oh. Huh."

"What?" Aris looked over as Mac tilted the phone towards him.

In a little innocuous black and white box someone had typed *"why did you show a fucking Admiral around our city"*.

"OG 6 rivalries are always there," Aris dismissed, though something in his stomach felt uneasy.

"You wanna answer?" Mac half-joked.

Aris thought about it for a second. "When we head outside?"

"Fucking deal."

They bundled up in their coats and headed down to the street. There was a bagel place between Aris' apartment and the nearest subway stop, so they dipped in and Mac grabbed coffee in one of their obnoxiously branded cups.

"Well, given that a couple of the Admirals are long time family friends and I know for a fact that Scott Hunter is the *worst* person to get stuck in a layover with it seemed like good sportsmanship to rescue an abandoned rookie from a lifetime of Freshii lemongrass soup,"

Mac spoke into the camera, his breath fogging the air. "Isn't that right, Floros?" Mac turned the camera to Aris who grinned.

"The soup isn't that bad, it's the burritos that you have to order to feel any sort of full that make it worse."

"And why don't you just eat somewhere else?"

"Because Scott's ancient and we all feel bad for him, you never know when it could be his last meal, y'know?"

Mac laughed, clear and real and posted the story, tagging Scott, Aris, and the Admirals' accounts while they waited for the subway.

"Well that'll be an interesting start to practice for me." Aris grinned.

"Isn't your apartment like, right next to the rink?"

"Eh, a ten minute walk or so. But it's fucking freezing and I don't wanna."

"You thought about finding a permanent place yet?"

"Not really. It doesn't really feel real, yet. Still." Aris gestured for Mac to take the last free seat and stood next to him, holding onto the railing. "Kick my ass into gear over the summer, though."

"You got it, Floros."

"Didn't realize Hollander-Rozanov was in town," Scott said, setting his bag down and giving Aris a look. "Ancient? Really?"

"You are, and he's not. They're playing Brooklyn tomorrow night and they played Jersey yesterday." Aris shrugged away the quizzical look. "He's visiting the shelter you hooked the Irina Foundation into."

Scott's brow furrowed. "The one here? In New York?"

"Yeah."

"Is JJ going?"

"Don't think so."

"He does... Know, who the shelter targets, right?" Scott talked around it the same way Aris had only hours earlier.

"I think so, seemed like it." Aris held up his hands. "I asked if he was going alone and he said yeah and didn't seem that bothered by the idea. He might just be that secure in his story that

it's a non-issue for him and you're making a big deal out of nothing," he spoke as much to himself as Scott.

Scott who was typing at his snails pace.

"Send a voice memo," Aris suggested.

"Hollander won't check it," Scott said without looking up. "Do you know what time their practice ends?"

"Starts at 10 ends at 3. He's planning to head to the Kingfisher after." Aris pulled off Mac's hoodie and tossed it into his stall. "You think it's a bad idea, right?"

"For him to go alone? Yeah. Fucking horrible idea."

Aris sighed and pointedly kept looking at the back wall of his stall. "Permission to skip practice, captain?"

Scott frowned at him for a moment, surprise written all over his face. "What?"

Chapter 13: Shane

Chapter Notes

This is the second from this batch of updates that starts with chapter 12

[a photo of the outside of a three story modern building in New York, Scott Hunter is pictured talking to a couple of teenagers and a social worker with a badge around their neck, a sign above the door behind the small group bears the name Gavin's Home with a rainbow flag hanging in the nearby window]

@IrinaFoundation: The Irina Foundation is proud to announce our partnership with Gavin's Home, a safe place in New York City for LGBTQIA+ youth to access support of all kinds! The Irina Foundation's recent t-shirt design contest winner (by @HallieDrawsStuffReally) will be for sale at future Admirals games and the Admirals will be matching donations up to \$500,000 USD!

Shane's heart was hammering in his chest. They very specifically had given Mac the broadest of strokes of what Scott's chosen charity did, on his therapist's recommendation. Scott had chosen it the year after Mac had joined their family, Shane knew Ilya would never say it but they were both touched that he'd pick something so close to their family. Yuna had been searching for similar charities in Ottawa ever since and found nothing.

Which terrified Shane to even think about, knowing that without them Mac *really* would have slipped through the cracks.

He called Scott Hunter.

"Is Mac with you?" He asked the second Scott picked up.

"No, he's already on his way."

"So he's staying with you then," Shane assumed.

"No uh, Aris told me."

"Aris?" The name didn't compute in Shane's mind until it did. Of course when it did, Ilya emerged from the locker room. "Aristotelis Floros?" He clarified, watching confusion flit across Ilya's face.

"Yeah. He's here-"

"Let me talk to him," Shane demanded.

"What?" He heard a voice farther away and then closer. "Hello?"

"Floros, please tell me you're making assumptions."

"No he said Harris suggested it."

Shane frowned. "He wouldn't-" Then he sighed. "He would, he doesn't know every foundation partner just the one he and Troy picked. Shit."

"It's for the takeover the Metros are having him do," Floros continued to explain. "I'm not like, way off the deep-end here to be worried? I don't know him that well but it seemed sorta..."

Whatever it was Floros didn't finish his sentence.

"No, you're not off the deep-end. Shit." Shane scrubbed his free hand over his face. "I'll text JJ, see if he can get there-"

"I can go," Floros offered. "We've got an optional practice, I was planning on going but I can opt out, right?"

"Yeah of course," Shane heard Scott's voice in the background.

"Cool. I'll head out there now, he's only 20 minutes ahead of me, and he's taking the subway."

"I'll call my car service," Scott said.

"Wait, make sure Scott gives you my number and keep me updated, Floros," he said it like an order before adding, "please."

Ilya's confusion remained as the call ended, and he stepped forward, his skates muffled against the plastic flooring. "What is it?"

"Harris suggested that Mac use his takeover of the Metros account to showcase a partner charity," Shane answered.

"That's not so-"

"He's in New York, Ilya."

Ilya didn't catch it instantly, his mind translating the words, and then it sunk in, and Ilya's eyes went wide. "Floros is going to him?"

"He knows the city better than JJ does, and Mac isn't pissed at him for hovering like he is with JJ." Shane tried to take a deep breath but found that he couldn't breathe as deeply as he wished. Ilya placed his hands on either side of Shane's face and just held him, breathing in exaggerated movements. "Fuck I can't breathe."

Chapter 14: Mac

Chapter Notes

This is the third update beginning from chapter 12

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

[a video of Mac Hollander-Rozanov walking in New York, his breath fogging in front of him as he talks. He's answering a question bubble that reads "what was your favourite part of the Olympics?"]

Mac: Honestly the way that it felt like a microcosm of the globe. I knew that there'd be less countries at the Winter Olympics than the Summer Olympics but the fact that there were people from Kenya and Ireland and Lithuania all sitting at the same tables in the mess hall talking and trading little pins and trinkets was really fucking cool to see. I think I heard more languages in a single day at the Olympics than I've ever heard in my life! Also the food was really fucking good and someone from the Mexican team started a table of snack trades, so we left like, ketchup and all dressed chips and grabbed some really tasty Japanese crispy treats that were kinda like Hickory Sticks but puffier and a different flavour. I *dream* of that crunch.

Mac couldn't breathe. He recorded clips on his phone when the volunteer said he could, he posted them, tagged the Irina foundation, and it was all like he was a guest in his own body. It wasn't even that bad, it was school hours and most of the people who lived in the shelter were gone for the day, there were a couple people Mac's age though.

People who were so much like him it hurt. Like him, but so much more unlucky. So much more *alone*.

He couldn't look anyone in the eyes and he felt like he was shutting down.

What the *fuck* was he doing, this wasn't going to be good content and for the first time in years he couldn't figure out how to fight his way out of the dissociation.

"So when they come home from school, what happens?" He heard a voice ask, just behind Mac.

The volunteer answered and Mac stopped recording afterwards. He had to leave, had to head to practice, had to say thank you-

Aris was already thanking everyone, asking to set up a visit with some of the Admirals players, taking someone's card, waving goodbye, and gently herding Mac into the backseat of a black SUV with tinted windows and the divider up.

"How many colours are in the logo on the divider?" Aris asked, eyes focused on Mac.

Mac focused on the logo, it was a silly cartoon of a typical New York yellow cab being hit with a hammer. Yellow, black, white, orange, and a red hammer. He held up five fingers.

"Can you name them, *erastís*?"

Aris was speaking so calmly, soft, grounded. Mac closed his eyes, focusing on the image in his mind of the silly logo.

"Red," he said. Then he took a breath, shallow and shaky. "Yellow. White." Another shaky breath. "Orange. Black."

"Good."

It should've felt condescending, it didn't.

"What can you touch right now?"

Mac dug his fingers into his elbows. "Sweater. Your sweater." He'd had a coat where was his "coat?"

"Right here." He felt Aris drape it over his lap. "I've got your phone and wallet too."

"Practice-"

"You're opting out," Aris interrupted.

It isn't optional.

"Can't do that."

"I called Boiziau, he's handling it." A beat, Mac's heart was racing and he could hear it pounding in his ears.

It's not optional and the team already doesn't like me and the coaches already bench me most of the games because they don't actually want me to play I can't miss practice-

"Can I touch you?"

Mac nodded and Aris pried Mac's fingers from their white knuckle grip on his elbows, bringing them up to sit on Aris' shoulders.

"Breath with me, Timbit. I've got you."

Aris took deep, slow breaths. Mac took three quick ones for each breath. Then two. Then, as the car slowed down, he was finally matching breaths with Aris.

"I've got you," Aris repeated. "We're at my apartment, are you okay to go up?"

"Your practice-"

"Was optional," Aris finished. "Hey, look at me Mac."

Mac opened his eyes and looked at Aris. His big blue eyes were fixated on Mac's face, concern and comfort saturating them in equal parts.

"I'm going to order in, how do you feel about sushi?" Aris asked like it was a matter of life and death.

"Sushi's good." Mac felt the corners of his lips lift a fraction.

"Okay. Let's go up and look at the menu, okay?"

"Mhm."

They got into the private elevator and Aris wrapped an arm around Mac's upper back. Mac folded like wet paper, turning into Aris and pressing his face into Aris' chest like it would erase the guilt and irrational terror and even more irrational fear mixing up inside him.

"I've got you," Aris said a third time, this time his words reverberated through Mac's body.

Aris sat Mac at the kitchen island and set an actual paper menu in front of him. It was a nice, heavy card stock with raised embossed borders and swirls between the different sections of the menu. Aris pulled out his phone and typed something before sitting next to Mac with the food delivery app open.

"I like seeing all the options without scrolling," Aris explained. "Makes it easier to avoid FOMO when you look at it later."

"That's smart." There wasn't any inflection in Mac's voice. It was completely dead, empty, he was too exhausted to add any.

"Yeah, I've been known to be smart sometimes." Aris added miso soups and side salads to the order. "That does not correlate to making smart choices, for the record. We both know I'm a hot headed idiot sometimes."

"You are, yeah." Mac took the phone when Aris slid it over to him and added several rolls and a rice bowl with salmon and avocado.

"No tuna?" Aris asked.

"Not in sushi. Or plain. Don't like it. Tuna melts are a whole other story though."

Aris grinned. "More for me then."

"They make as much as we order... Oh. That was a joke. Right."

"Not a joke, silly comment. Do you want more coffee? Or hot chocolate? I've got extra mini marshmallows."

Aris was being so fucking nice it was breaking Mac's brain a little. He was an asshole, a quiet asshole who used his few words to make cutting remarks. Except that was as much a mask as Mac's existence was.

He balled up the extra length of the sweater sleeves in his fists, his hands securely wrapped up in the same soft knit as the rest of his torso, the knit that smelled like vanilla and walnuts. Like Aris.

Mac's phone started to ring, Ilya's face filling the screen.

"Privet, Papa," Mac said as he answered on speaker.

Ilya rushed into concerned Russian, asking if Mac was okay, apologizing for not telling him about the specifics of the charity, and asking if he was okay again.

"I'm okay," Mac answered in Russian. *"Floros is here, he is ordering sushi."*

"Your Dad is worried too, are you really okay or just saying you are?"

Mac took a moment, focusing on feeling his body, from the way his toes curled against the fabric of his socks to the tight band of them around his ankles, the loose fit pants and the way the seams pressed into his skin, the soft give of Aris' sweater and the smell of it and the warm man to whom it belonged next to him.

"I am okay now. If you had told me I don't know that it would have made a difference. I didn't start to feel off until I was already on the tour."

"Can Floros hear me?"

"Da," Mac answered looking at Aris.

"Floros I am choosing to trust that you are a good enough person not to share any of what Mac is going through right now with the press."

Aris recoiled slightly. *"I would never."*

"Good. If you even try to, I advise you to recall how long Shane and I have been playing in the NHL. We are not people to throw money around on useless things. We have lots of it." Ilya's voice was calm, his accent more present than it had been in a long time. Mac knew that tell for what it was, knew it was because Shane was somewhere waiting and watching and listening and scared. Knew it was because Ilya Rozanov was the one to make threats in their family, and he would follow through.

"Papa," Mac sighed. *"I am okay,"* Ilya's accent seeped into Mac's own voice.

"You sound Russian," Ilya noted. *"You are not okay."*

"You sound Russian," Mac parroted. *"I will be."*

"When are you next home?"

"Not until Christmas," Mac answered, head in his hands. "We play home ice until All-Stars game."

Ilya hummed his displeasure. "I will call Bennett."

"Okay."

"*Ya tebya lyublyu, mal'chik-zaichik*," Ilya spoke softly.

"*Ya tebya lyublyu, Papa*," Mac replied.

The buzzer rang and Aris hopped up to answer it, socked feet retreating to the elevator.

"He's gone to grab the food, Dad," Mac said after the elevator doors closed.

"Are you okay?" Shane sounded terrified and hollow and absolutely nothing like Shane Hollander; hockey superstar and Olympic gold medallist. He sounded like Shane, sitting in the hall outside Mac's door, when he'd thought Mac was asleep, crying in Ilya's arms terrified someone would take Mac away.

"Yes."

"Really?"

"Yes."

"Promise?"

"Yes."

He heard Shane let out a long breath, the kind he always let out after a panic attack. "I'm sorry, Mac."

"It's okay. It wasn't relevant until it was. I didn't think to ask, you didn't need to tell me." Mac put his head in his hands and closed his eyes. He could almost imagine he was at home, curled up on the couch, Irina hugging him while his dads made him hot chocolate and Anya cuddled up next to him. "I'll call Dr. Young when I get a chance to breathe, okay?"

"Yeah. Yeah, good." Shane took a deep, audible breath, and Mac mimicked it, remembering the countless times they'd breathed together while Shane held him. "We're good."

"We're good. Fucking exhausted and it's not even 10am."

Shane laughed a tired laugh. "Take a nap, Mac. Let us know if you need anything, okay?"

"I will. Love you."

"Love you too."

Mac hung up and laid his head on the cool marble counter top, face turned towards the elevator.

He hadn't realize he'd fallen asleep there until he felt Aris draping one of the plain white blankets over his shoulders. He blinked awake slowly, looking at Aris through half closed lids as he moved around the kitchen. He watched Aris empty a small dishwasher that took up half the space of a normal dishwasher, carefully putting away the single set of dishes. There was one pot, one pan, one large plate, one smaller plate, one bowl, one glass cup. He watched Aris open empty cabinets and place the items in the right places.

The only thing he had multiples of were the mugs, hand-thrown mugs large enough for all of Mac's fingers to fit through the handles. He hadn't even noticed the difference in the sizes of their plates that morning. He hadn't noticed that Aris had used a smaller fork and a smaller plate, that he hadn't had his own cup of juice from the fridge.

It seemed so lonely.

"Hey," Aris greeted softly when he realized Mac was watching him. "How're you feeling?"

"Like I got run over by a big ass truck," Mac answered, not lifting his chin from the counter.

Aris carried a large circular to-go platter of sushi over and set it between them. "I thought you knew."

Mac hummed in response, picking up one of the styrofoam soup containers and swirling it, watching the miso mix back into the soup with the bits of green onion and small cubes of soft tofu. "How'd you get there?"

"The secret alphabet mafia of the NHL," Aris answered with a small smile.

"Hmf," Mac half-laughed. "I'm sorry for the threats. It's a Russian thing."

"I think it's just a familial love thing," Aris tilted his head to one side, "though the Russian accent made it scarier I won't lie."

"Would tell you he's harmless but..." Mac trailed off and sipped his soup.

"One of the top results for his name on YouTube is a compilations of his fights," Aris finished.

"Mhm."

Aris shrugged. "It's not like I'd say shit anyways."

"I know."

"Good." Aris reached out, slowly, telegraphing how he was moving before his hand got close enough to make contact with Mac. He had ample time to pull away, but he didn't, and Aris' hand came to rest on the back of Mac's neck, his palm cushioning the square of Mac's jaw while his fingers slipped into his hair. "Is there anything I can do?" Mac shrugged and Aris clarified. "I can be here, physically, I can listen if you want to talk, I can try to give advice, I can distract you, whatever you need, just tell me."

Mac nodded. He didn't really know what he needed, it felt like whatever had been in his head was gone, and all that was left was the vague buzzing noise. He heard the hum of Aris' fridge, the bluster of the wind outside his window, and the slow, consistent breathing of the man with his fingers barely ghosting against Mac's spine.

"Food is good."

"Yeah?"

Mac nodded and grabbed the plastic bowl of rice that was topped with exorbitant amounts of salmon and avocado. He used the pig plastic flat-bottomed soup spoon that the restaurant had included in the bag to mix the toppings into the rice and then shovel large bites into his mouth. Aris picked out pieces of sushi from the platter, letting Mac just eat in silence.

"It would've been worse," Mac said after a long moment, keeping his focus on his rice bowl. "If they hadn't answered... None of my friends were answering their phones, I wasn't close to any of my teachers, it wasn't... It was them or nothing. I'm not smart, I play hockey and that's it. If they hadn't answered, if they hadn't showed up, I wouldn't be like those kids I'd probably be dead." He took a deep breath, but his voice still came out choked, "I might've ended up in the system but then I would've aged out and ended up with nothing. So... I'd be dead. There's nothing like that in Ottawa, and the shelters there are always overwhelmed and there's never enough being done. People set up tents and get pushed out because fuckwads don't like looking at them it's just..."

Mac shook his head, pushing the what-ifs out of his head. He wasn't dead, he wasn't stuck in a system that didn't care, he was part of a family that loved him. He wasn't alone. He wasn't aging out, he had everything.

"I've been in therapy since I was 13. Through all of it. I think I'd be more fucked up if I'd just toughed it out." Mac shook his head again, trying to shake out a clear thought.

Aris just sat silently, picking over the sushi with one hand while the other cupped the back of Mac's neck.

"Is your family normal?" Mac asked.

"What counts as normal?"

Mac shrugged. "I dunno. Not like mine?"

"Yours is pretty normal, Mac. You've got parents who love you, grandparents who spoil you, a little sister who worships the ground you walk on. Seems pretty normal."

"Oh." Mac didn't tell him about Shane's panic attacks, that they had careful rules about sharing any photo or video taken within the house or out of it with their family to try to keep the panics to a minimum. He didn't tell Aris about the days where Ilya woke and moved like a zombie throughout the house until his meds kicked in. Or the days when they didn't. He didn't tell Aris about the year in high school where he'd picked his fingers raw and bleeding

trying to focus before they were able to find a private psychiatrist who had a shorter wait list than a year who could diagnose and treat his ADHD.

He didn't tell Aris about the dozens of babies that nearly joined their family only to have the birth parents change their mind, about the discussion of opting for surrogacy and how Irina sharing their parents' blood had felt like he was being replaced. How sometimes he felt like a bump in the road, a person that wasn't supposed to be there. No matter how much they told and showed him he did.

"They worked a lot," Aris answered. "My parents. My mom worked two jobs, my dad worked hundred hour weeks more often than not, my sister got a job at a fast food place as soon as she could and my brother dropped out of high school to work."

"Money was tight," Mac surmised.

"Yeah, because of me." Aris huffed out a breath. "Every minute I wasn't at school keeping up the GPA for my sports scholarship I was training. We couldn't move somewhere more affordable or back to Greece with my extended family because the school and training programs were all in the same place and Greece didn't have anything even remotely comparable. And even though I didn't live in a dorm I didn't really see any of them. When I made the USA Juniors it was like... A sign, I guess. That it was worth it. I trained in the summers, I kept training, and it was all... Worth it, I guess. My parents retired in October, my brother's gone back to school for his GED, my sister's going to university."

"And now you're a millionaire who can't figure out how to just spend the money you have on things you want." Aris looked at Mac for the first time since he'd sat down, genuine surprise in his eyes. "The Belovs weren't well off, they sent me to the Game Changers camp and paid my dues for the hockey league but that was my Christmas and birthday and their parental day gifts. Now I have a whole ass fucking trust fund. It was a lot to get used to."

"Oh. Yeah. It would be." Aris sighed. "I mean what do I even spend it on? Like, I'm paying my siblings' tuition, for their rents, for my parents to travel."

"Video games?"

"And when would I play them?"

"In the off season."

"So why would I buy them now?"

Mac laughed near silently, little puffs of breath and shaking shoulders the only indication that he was laughing at all. "You should find a sugar baby," he said thought the huffed laughter.

Aris flushed bright red, standing up so quickly his bar stool almost fell over. "Shut up," he grumbled.

"I'm just saying! Then you'd have something to spend money on!"

"You're the worst, asshole."

Mac grinned and leaned back in his chair. "Yeah but you've decided I'm stuck with you 'til you find a tea I like."

"You're the worst," Aris repeated, grabbing the sushi platter away and snapping the clear plastic cover over it.

Chapter End Notes

erastis: lover

mal'chik-zaichik: little rabbit (a common term for Russian parents to use with their children)

Chapter 15: Ilya

Annoying Greek

Does Montreal do Christmas markets?

idk

ottawa does

and canal skating if it freezes over in time

#globalwarming

I'm so done with New York Christmas

The top recommendations for things to do at Christmas in NYC?

See the Nutcracker. See the Rockettes. See an Admirals game. Skate at Rockefeller.

I think I could maybe manage one of those.

go skate?

also fuck balanchine go see abt's nutcracker

Balanchine?

And no I will not go skating in public where I will inevitably get mobbed for selfie requests the second a single person notices.

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Balanchine

do not encourage me u will regret it

r u not going home?

My parents aren't home and my siblings are joining them for three weeks in Japan

Even with the four day break that's too much travelling. I'd get what

12 hours? Maybe?

Doesn't really seem worth it.

whens ur break?

Game on the 22 then the next one is the 27th

Have you gotten the call about All-Stars week yet?

lol yea

dad says it's stupid, papa's threatening to riot

they lumped him in w scott

v #allyslay of them

For fucks sake

Please never refer to the fucking NHL as #allyslay ever again

Carter asked if there was a group chat

I said yes

Purely to make him pissy that Rozanov and Hollander won't make one and Scott won't either

He's been ranting about it for seven minutes straight

not a bad idea actually

hang on

#allyslay

Haasy

???

Timbit what??

Annoying Greek

Now I know why Scott's going grey.

thats aaaaaaall u hun

gc 4 as28

Dryer

wtf does any of this mean

Annoying Greek

Groupchat for All-Stars '28

Why are u a dryer?

Dryer

Your name is apt Floros

Annoying Greek



J Jacobs (coffee)

Hol-Roz how the fuck do you have Dryden's number?

~i have my ways~

Haasy

Roz, Hollander, Hunter, Bennett, Barrett, Price, Wiebe

a lady never tells

J Jacobs (coffee)

Why is there a (coffee) after my name

bc when i run out of good fucking coffee i call u

obv

J Jacobs (coffee)

jfc this weekend is going to be a fucking nightmare

Annoying Greek

come 2 ottawa for christmas

i can drive u

dads would be happy to have u

haas + hubby, my dads, dads parents, price + fabian

u won't be the only stray

I'll think about it

papa goes nuts for christmas

i think u'd like it

v gay yuletide

i think u should talk to fabian

abt ur family

he has complicated family feelings too

a lot of them do

Okay

ill give u his number

No. Okay I'll come to Ottawa for Christmas.

yay

lmk ur flight details

Ilya waited in Shane's Range Rover outside Trudeau airport. He had shades and a toque pulled over his hair, Christmas music was chiming happily through the otherwise silent car, and he was drumming his fingers along with the music.

He watched Aristotelis Floros walk out of the airport in his Admirals cap and Team USA parka and stop short when he saw Ilya. Ilya waved and gestured to the empty passenger seat.

"Mac's flight was delayed, he is flying straight to Ottawa," Ilya said when Floros opened the door. "Get in."

The drive was silent for all of forty minutes when Floros piped up. "He landed in Ottawa."

Ilya hummed acknowledgement.

He spent the next twenty minutes looking at Floros out the corner of his eye. He was not a bad player, far from it. Ilya had listened to Yuna and Shane dissect every draft pick and the teams that claimed them and what it would mean and what their strengths were. With Floros they had a touch of personal experience, if at a distance.

Ilya wasn't an idiot, when Kyle had half-jokingly suggested they wear pride pins to the Olympics when the team rosters dropped it had been taken as a joke. And then it sat, through the gathering at the Kingfisher to celebrate Haas' engagement, until it wasn't a joke anymore. Pride pins were easy to find, they got large ones, two inch circles with saturated colours. Unmissable against the white background of the Team Canada jackets. Haas had spread it a little to the Swiss team, and Ilya had watched after the opening ceremonies as the ally pins started spreading too. Harris had come with them, as had Yuna and Shane, and the three of them became the dispensers for the specific flag pins.

He had also seen the way Floros had watched him, like he was some sort of fictional hero brought to life. Shane had reminded Ilya not to let it go to his head, but he'd listened when Ilya had needed a moment when Floros arrived with a bi flag on his Team USA jacket. He'd called Eric Bennett, because he needed someone else to just hear it.

There were two openly bisexual NHL players in the history of the sport. On the same day Ilya watched his son be drafted to the team he had the *most* complicated feelings about, Eric Bennett had texted Ilya a pink, purple, and blue heart emoji. Because that number became three; Eric Bennett, Ilya Rozanov, and Aristotelis Floros.

"You are Eric Bennett's favourite player in the league right now," Ilya mused as the station started playing the entirety of the Nutcracker.

Floros whipped his head around to look at Ilya. "What?"

"Eric Bennett, former goalie for your team? Owns the Kingfisher?" Ilya grinned, fully aware that it was not that Floros had forgotten who Eric was but instead disbelief.

"I know that what do you mean favourite player?"

"You are his favourite," Ilya repeated. "Is biased, I think, by sexuality. He cannot claim me as his favourite player because Hunter would probably murder him. And I think Kyle would not mind, so long as he got to play the rich widow."

Floros blinked like an owl, slightly out of sync, as he processed.

"We keep an eye on you," Ilya continued. "And Mac too, obviously. But you do not come from hockey people, yes?"

"My family doesn't really watch hockey, they just knew I was good."

Ilya nodded. "Yuna, Shane's mother, she put you as first draft pick. Mac will not let her forget it." He grinned, shooting Floros a sidelong glance. "Yuna Hollander makes Shane look normal about hockey." Ilya's gaze returned to the road. "And, for the record, we would not have let you go somewhere like Toronto or Florida."

"Let me?"

"I am captain in Ottawa and former captain in Boston where my best friend is GM, Barrett has connections in Vancouver, Price has connections to half the teams in the league, and of course Hunter in New York." Ilya made a circular gesture in the air with one hand. "You would not be drafted somewhere unsafe."

"Like Toronto and Florida," Floros finished.

"Yes."

"Who's idea was that?"

Ilya shrugged. "Not an idea just... We protect our own, yeah? We don't stand here shouting about all the ways hockey is fucked up just to let one of our own end up in one of the problem teams. I made groupchat, added Vaughn so Hunter would actually check it. Just in case."

Floros huffed a laugh, grinning and looking out the windows. "So the saviour thing is a Rozanov thing."

"What?"

"At the Olympics?" Floros looked at Ilya like he should know what he was talking about. Ilya shook his head and shrugged. Floros sighed. "A couple of the Russian team cornered me, gave me shit. Mac showed up outta nowhere and told them to fuck off in a very long uninterrupted train of thought in what I assume was Russian but I'm not entirely sure."

Ilya grinned to himself. "You will learn," he said. "Is not so hard when you have someone to practice with. You speak Greek, yes?"

"Yeah, haven't really used it much though."

Ilya frowned. "Your family, are they... Supportive?"

"I mean, sorta. They're not homophobes but I barely talk to them." Floros looked out the window again. "We're basically strangers at this point, so if they have an issue they'd have to go out of their way to let me know about it."

"Blood is complicated," Ilya said. "You do not have to explain that in my home."

He thought for a moment, about how Scott said that Floros reminded him of Ilya, especially when he was younger. Quiet off the ice, an asshole if anyone tried to reach out, defensive whenever someone tried to push deeper, push for more. How much easier it would have been if someone had told him to just stop being an asshole and let some people in.

"You are not alone, Floros," he added. "Scott may be retiring but he will not go far. Admirals are made by Benny and Hunter, they are like the Centaurs that way. When you have been a Centaur or an Admiral you will always be a Centaur or Admiral."

"You are playing in a league trying to be better, and we all play a part in that but we are not changing it alone. And when all of it gets too much, when it seems like things will never change and it will stay a breeding ground for horrific levels of homophobic misogynistic rape culture there will be kids who send you a message saying that seeing you be out, seeing you speak up, means the world to them. There will be players at all levels who come up and keep carrying the torch."

"This is a relay, kid, not a marathon."

Chapter 16: Aris

Chapter Notes

This is the second from this batch of updates that starts w chapter 15

[A photo jointly posted to Ilya Rozanov, Shane Hollander, and Mac Hollander-Rozanov's Instagram accounts that depicts Hollander-Rozanov in the 2024 Team Canada Juniors uniform, a toddler bundled up in a red and white maple leaf patterned hooded, bootied, and mittened onesie in his arms as he skates backwards. Framed on either side of the image in Centaurs travelling jackets with their numbers on the backs Hollander and Rozanov skate away from the camera and towards their children, Anya is peering over Rozanov's shoulder at the camera. They are wearing each other's numbered jackets.]

Happy Holidays from the Hollander-Rozanovs! Most pictures of baby's-first-Christmas include a picture with Santa, but getting to Sweden proved to be enough of an adventure! We're so proud of Mac and his team, and we can't wait to keep the Centaurs' winning streak going!

Aris walked into what could at best be described as chaos and at worse a fucking disaster zone. Rozanov stopped in the entry way the same moment Aris did, both watching with heads tilted to one side as Mac, his Dad, and his Grandmother moved in a chaotic flurry of movement. One of them would pass a blonde preschooler with ringlets and freckles off while the other scribbled something on a piece of paper and the next would check on something in the mess of the kitchen.

"This is not normal," Rozanov whispered.

"I thought he got his neat freak thing from Hollander?"

"Oh he does," Rozanov confirmed. "The Centaurs have a game tonight. It will be chaos. Is why I escaped to fetch you from airport."

Aris watched from the relative safety of the doorway with Rozanov as Mac counted quickly, switching between French, English, and Russian numerals at seemingly random intervals.

"They kicked me out," an older man said, Aris assumed he was Mac's grandfather from the way he held an already opened bottle of coke to Rozanov with ease.

"And wouldn't relinquish Irina?" Rozanov tsked, taking a drink from the bottle. "They do this to themselves."

"Every year," the man agreed. Then he seemed to notice Aris behind him. "You must be Aristotelis Floros." He held his hand out. "David Hollander."

Aris took his hand. "Aris, please." He tried to smile an easy-going care-free smile. "If someone uses my full name I assume I'm in trouble."

"Well not yet at least," David grinned back and Aris felt himself relax a little.

"Floros!" Mac shouted. "Get your ass in here and take the boxes for the New Yorkers so I can check my math again!"

"I'll take your coat," David said as Aris toed off his boots. "I suppose we'll just have to forgive you for the team spirit."

Aris smiled. "It's the best cold weather coat I've got. Haven't gotten a chance to find one that isn't overpriced crap in New York yet." He stepped into the open concept kitchen, standing on an empty end of the kitchen island that had a light dusting of flour over it. "Okay, how many boxes?"

"One of the rectangle ones for Scott, Eric, and Carter. One of the square ones for the Kingfisher staff, another square one for Jallo. And Rose's gonna be in New York next week so you'll have to take hers too." Mac stacked them in front of Aris. "That's all six for New York, right?" He looked at Hollander who had a notebook in his hand.

"You were gonna send one for Svetlana and Marleau too," Shane read off. "They're in this section."

Mac replied in Russian and Shane nodded as Mac stacked two more square tins on top. "Okay. Math again."

Aris stood there, one hand on the top of the stack to keep them from falling over, and waited for Mac to be satisfied.

"And then four extras just in case," he declared as he finished another round of mismatched numbers and names. "Okay, you have room in your bag right?"

Aris nodded. "As instructed, metal casing too."

Mac grinned and Aris shoved down the urge to kiss him, locking it in a box and jumping on it till it disappeared. Mac had flour on his nose and cocoa powder on the arm of his glasses. He could perfectly picture Mac rubbing his nose with the back of his hand and pinching the arms of his glasses to pull them up or back.

"You could offer him a drink, Mac," the only woman in the house chastised. "Before turning him into your cookie box pack mule?"

"I am well aware of my purpose here, Mrs. Hollander," Aris smiled. "I received very clear instructions in the form of a flow chart."

"It was *not* a flow chart," Mac huffed.

Aris pulled out his phone. "Leave space in your checked bag for cookie boxes. Preferably a metal cased one, but if you don't have one then plastic will do, if you don't have that stiffened fabric will suffice, if you have a stick bag that'd be perfect. Also make sure you declare it as gifts at the border and homemade and specify the value is 5\$ per box," he read out.

"That is flow chart," Rozanov agreed.

"There wasn't a diagram though," Mac disputed. "It was just an if/then!"

"Which is different from the itemized list of rules and expectations including something about not mentioning a certain Christmas ballet until everyone's had at least one drink." Aris tucked his phone back into his pocket.

"Mac has capital-o Opinions on that ballet which we shall not name," Hollander explained. "And Ilya has capital-o Opinions on the music."

Mrs. Hollander smiled warmly and put a hand on Aris' arm. "Let's get those cookies packed away and get you settled," she said. "Leave them to clean up the mess."

"Yes ma'am."

Aris followed her up the stairs and into a guest room, grabbing his bag from the hallway on the way by. It was a nice, impersonal guest room. There were slate grey sheets on a king-size bed and a lamp on each side table.

"So, how are you settling in to New York?" Mrs. Hollander asked.

"Fine, I don't think the guys have left me alone for more than a day or two at a time though." Aris pulled a couple small bags out of his suitcase.

"You're lucky you're not dealing with the Cens," she mused. "There've been a couple rookies who've been put up here or with Troy and Harris."

"God that would be even worse." Aris followed her back downstairs and snuck the small bags under the tree. Rozanov squinted at him and Aris held up his hands. "I know, I was warned, gag gifts only."

"Mac is training you well," he noted.

Chapter 17: Mac

Chapter Notes

This is the third update from the batch starting with chapter 15

[A photo posted to the Ottawa Centaurs' official Instagram with a line up of 23 individually decorated gingerbread jerseys with the numbers and names of every player.]

@OttawaCentaursHQ: *It's that time of year again! @macholroz playing for a different team doesn't mean he's neglecting our longest standing tradition! Merry Christmas to all who celebrate, and we'll see you all in a few days for Ottawa v. San Francisco!*

C'est encore le temps de l'année ! Le fait que @macholroz joue pour une autre équipe ne veut pas dire qu'il abandonne notre plus vieille tradition ! Joyeux Noël à tous ceux qui le célèbrent, et on se retrouve dans quelques jours pour Ottawa contre San Francisco !

The 23rd ended with cookies being handed out and Mac and Floros in Shane's soccer-mom SUV finally empty of cookie boxes after hours and multiple checklists. The 24th passed in a fuzzy blur, where all Mac could think about was how easily Aris fit into the family that had chosen him. How simple it would be to just... Be with him.

What he was doing his best to ignore were the rumours circulating sports sites, blogs, and podcasts that despite being captain of one of the All-Star teams, Montreal was looking to trade Mac. That Hollanders were a curse on Montreal. That it was a mistake for him to end up there. The unfinished take-over tumbled around in Mac's head, the non-optional practice he'd missed felt like a strike against him that even JJ couldn't protect him from.

Sitting in Irina's room watching a cheesy kid's Christmas movie was a guaranteed way to make his brain shut off. He let his baby sister play with his hair until she decided to curl up on the ground with him and watch the movie. He hadn't realized he'd fallen asleep until he heard her door open and realized she was gone. He blinked and turned around, looking at her clock. It blinked in a green glow and read 4am. It was Christmas Day and his baby sister was somewhere toddling about the house.

He got up, ready to chase after her, only to catch sight of her sneaking into Floros' room.

"Psssst," he heard Irina hiss. "Christmas!"

"Mm? Oh. Hi mini-Hol-Roz. It's definitely Christmas, yeah." Floros didn't sound like he'd been woken up...

"Presents! There's so many! And! And! I wanna see if Santa ate Mac's cookie!"

"We can go peak, but your dads said you had to stay in bed till 5am."

"We gotta be quiet toes?"

"Yeah, quiet toes, and careful toes, okay?"

"kay!"

"And quiet voices too."

"Okay," Irina whispered.

Mac heard the creaking of the stairs and waited until he heard rustling and the quick running of Irina's feet on the first floor before he slipped out the door and down the steps to sit and watch. Irina flitted around the room, the tree's lights were twinkling and there was a set of glitter foot-prints from the fireplace to the cookies and back. The cookies had big bites taken out of them, the glass of milk was drunk, and the carrots she'd left for the reindeer were gone. He watched Irina try to convince Aris to lift her up to sneak a peak into her stocking, Aris grabbed her and had her sit down and play a guessing game about what was under the tree.

Shane was up next, freshly showered, and he joined Mac on the stairs, watching with him.

"Seems like a good kid," Shane whispered.

Mac nodded silently.

"Just because it took us seven years to properly figure it out doesn't mean you have to take that long to think things through." Shane wrapped an arm around his son's shoulders and Mac leaned into him. "You're meant to learn from us, not mimic us."

"I don't have time for a relationship," Mac said, not even really believing his own words.

"It's okay to be scared," Shane replied. "It's terrifying. You don't have to do or be anything you're not ready for."

Mac sighed and leaned into Shane, letting his eyes close and pushing away anything but family.

The little bags and boxes under the tree were passed out, Shane perched on the end of the couch with Ilya's legs on either side of him and his chin tucked on Shane's shoulder. Irina, of course, had the most toys. She unwrapped a doll from a catalogue she'd gotten from one of the young readers magazines Yuna had gotten her a subscription to for her birthday. There were outfits and furniture and in her play room was a properly sized doll house for her to decorate however she wanted. Aris had gotten her a whole ass proper tea set, with fake tea canisters that smelled like different teas and had little sticker sheets for her to decorate the seven pieces (not counting the teacups).

"I can't believe you're indoctrinating my baby sister into your tea cult," Mac muttered, sipping his coffee.

"Well someone has to in this house of tasteless heathens," Aris shot back.

True to form Aris had bought everyone else teas, but in accordance with the Hollander-Rozanov gag-gifts-only rule, they all had stupid, pun-y names. Ilya cackled at the Very Bear-y herbal tea with a tin covered in even cheesier renderings of different kinds of bears than the stupid tattoo he still had. Shane's was a blueberry black tea called Black And Blue with an illustration of a beat up hockey player on the tin. David's was some sort of financial pun that he found hilarious that escaped Mac's understanding. Yuna's was an orange tea with the name Orange You Glad To See Me. Mac's was a cinnamon sugar concoction labelled Snitched Get Stitch-er-doodles.

"I was told it steeps well in a simple syrup for coffee and baking an sh- stuff," Aris caught himself.

"You're better about it than we are," Shane dismissed as he sat back down after helping Irina free her new doll from its tall blue box.

"She is being raised by hockey players in a locker room." Ilya gestured to Mac. "And he turned out perfectly well adjusted!"

"Not sure you can consider Mac well adjusted," Aris chirped, thankfully twisting out of the way of crashing onto the coffee table covered in coffee mugs when Mac shoved him out of the way.

"*Please* keep the rough-housing to the ice," Yuna begged. "Don't make me have to apologize to Haas for a second generation of Hollander men's behaviour."

Mac smiled sheepishly and hugged his grandmother tight.

Christmas dinner was a familiar point of existence with an ever rotating guest list. Haas' A-list artist husband had managed to get the day off and watching Aris have a minor crisis about being in the same room as Fabian had Mac and Ilya laughing.

Just as they were about to sit down at the table Haas and his husband announced one last surprise and left for the door, Anya's excited barking heralding the arrival of another straggler.

"ROSIE!" Irina screamed and charged at the movie star who had entered the Hollander-Rozanov's dining room.

Mac wasn't far behind his baby sister, feeling like the teenager who was whisked away on random half days whenever Rose was filming close enough to spring him from school. She hugged both her godchildren tight and kissed Ilya and Shane's cheeks while Fabian pulled up an extra chair and David grabbed an extra set of dishes.

On the bright side, Rose's arrival had shuffled where everyone had been sitting, and now she sat between Mac and Aris. Which was both a good thing and a bad thing because now Aris was sat between Luca Haas who had enough embarrassing hockey stories about Mac to fill a whole novel, and Rose Landry who had been the first person Mac had called when he'd seen Aris for the first time.

"Hi, sorry, I don't think we've met before," Rose said to Aris as she sat down.

Aris, thankfully, seemed more star struck over the collection of sports and sport-adjacent gays that made up Mac's family than the A-list movie star sitting between them.

"Aris Floros," he introduced himself.

"Rose Landry," she spoke like no one would know that. Mac was pretty sure at least 95% of the world knew her name. She also squeezed Mac's shoulder and smiled a specific kind of knowing smile without even looking at Mac.

A smile that Shane *also* caught onto, brows furrowing slightly as his eyes flitted between Mac and Rose until Ilya handed him a steaming dish full of carved up ham.

"You guys do sweet potatoes weird," Rose declared, even as she dished some of them up for herself.

"There's no marshmallows," Aris agreed.

That broke Mac's brain. "You- What?"

"Marshmallows, on sweet potato casserole. They get all toasty and sh- stuff," Aris caught himself again.

"Marshmallows?" Shane said again, slowly, like it was a foreign concept.

"It's like, normal Thanksgiving and Christmas food," Rose defended, putting her hand on Aris' wrist as he tried to pull his phone out to google it. "I'll make it next time."

Whenever the next holiday she *could* join the Hollander-Rozanovs at the table was remained up in the air, constantly.

"Aren't you supposed to be in New York or something?" Mac asked. "I was gonna send your cookie box with Aris-"

"Last minute flight, and I have to leave at 8 tomorrow but it was worth it for *this*," she grabbed a heavy ladle of the cheese sauce that David made every holiday and drenched her plate in it.

The conversation flowed on and food was eaten. Aris seemed to relax, like the mental block in his head that mostly kept him on best behaviour off the ice had evaporated.

"He's cute," Rose whispered to Mac who very nearly choked on his drink.

"Shut up," he begged.

"Godmom duties," she shot back, smiling. "So are you two..."

"His family's in Japan and he has a game on the 27th."

Rose smiled. "Hollander men, always rescuing the strays."

"*You* are not a stray, and I'm pretty sure you rescued Dad, not the other way 'round."

Rose hummed and looked at Aris, laughing with Haas over something Dryden had said a few hours ago.

"He's cute," she repeated. "And a good hockey player."

"Yeah cause those are my requirements for guys." Mac rolled his eyes.

"It worked for your dads, and Fabian, and Harris, and Kip, and Kyle, and-"

"Yeah yeah." He gently poked his finger into her side. "You know I don't have time for that with all of Montreal's..."

"Montreal-ness?" She supplied and Mac hummed his agreement. "Well. You ever need your fairy godmom-"

"I'll call, I promise."

He really needed to be better about calling her. Or at least texting her. She was just as much a part of his family as everyone else she was just... Harder to see. Unlike most of the rest of Mac's family, her schedule was *not* publicly available and it was certainly not easily google-able.

"Merry Christmas, sweetie," she said as way of acceptance of his apology and one of her own, for prying. But it was *most certainly* not a guarantee she wasn't going to pry more later.

And Fabian's eyes were sparkling from his seat between Ryan and David, grinning over his wine glass as his own eyes slid between Aris and Mac.

Fabian and Ryan gave Rose a lift back to the airport and soon enough they were alone in a quiet house, Mac changing over the clean dishes for the last of the dirty ones. His sister was asleep upstairs, his grandparents had returned to their home, and his dads were in their room doing whatever Mac was not going to think about.

The dishwasher chimed it's happy tune when it started again, and Mac turned to go to bed when he came face to face with Aris, quietly closing the cupboards Mac had left open.

"My flight's at 11," he said.

Mac nodded. "We leave at 7, stop in at a McDonald's or something."

Aris nodded and closed the last of the cabinets and they moved to the stairs together. Mac paused when they passed through the archway that cut through the kitchen wall to the main hallway, where Irina had decided to hang the mistletoe that year.

He grabbed Aris' wrist and pulled him back and kissed him gently, cradling his cheek in his other hand.

"s bad luck," Mac whispered. "Not kissing under mistletoe."

"Oh."

Mac kissed him again, soft, selfish, promising himself it was the last one.

"Goodnight, Floros," he murmured, and then he was going up the stairs to retreat to his room and scream into his pillow.

Mac did *not* have time for any this.

And, he was pretty sure, Aris didn't have time for him either.

Lingering on that? Well. It stung more than Mac would like to admit.

Chapter 18: Distance

Chapter Notes

The last of the batch of updates starting with chapter 15 (but a little later than the others bc of coding mishaps)

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

#allyslay

Annoying Greek

What time do we have team skate?

Dryer

I'm not getting in until noon on the 29th

Dallas v Winnipeg on the 28th so Jacobs and Kern are probably gonna be late too

J Jacobs (coffee)

Kern's leaving right after the game like some kind of psycho

What tf flight are you taking Dryden

Southwest has one leaving at 7am

Dryer

I am not getting up before 7am

Haasy

Ottawa has week before off

The husbands are already plotting

Mac say nothing

lips r sealed dw

they can try

but if i know nothing they will learn nothing :D

Dryer

Hol-Roz have you ever heard of emojis

Haasy

Yes

Annoying Greek

Yes

Haasy

He does not like them

theyre too bright

and yellow

ew

hate them

Dryer

You scare me

good

Kernit
I second the ew emojis
Gross
Also JUJ has new coffee roast do u want some
YES
obv
pls
i will pay u
Kernit
50\$ for the 7 lb bag
wtf is my name?
Dryer
Hol-Roz made the chat
So we are stuck with his contact names
Kernit
Doesn't answer the question???
Annoying Greek
[kerngoaliekermiteme.jpg]
Kernit
wtf is that
Is that
Is that my "oops i blocked you" face
On kermit the frog's body???
yes :D
Haasy
I thought the same thing
It spiralled into exposing Roz and I to Veggie Tales
I do not like childrens TV here
it is scary
Annoying Greek
[zoboomafoo_swing.gif]
Haasy
wtf is that
Kernit
It's Zoboomafoo!
Dryer
and the Kratt brothers!
while walking in the woods one day
chris and martin saw something strange
Annoying Greek
a little leaping lemur who likes to bounce and play
J Jacobs (coffee)
they followed their new bouncing friend
not knowing where this adventure would end
Haasy
what in the cult shit is this
ask wyatt

or dad
irina's been loving zoboomafo recently

"What is a zoboomafoo?" Haas asked when he entered the locker room.

"A lemur," Ilya answered. "A sometimes puppet sometimes real lemur. He's dead now, but his kids are alive."

"And we are not saying that anywhere near Irina," Shane said pointedly.

"That is more confusing than you think." Haas set his bag down and shrugged out of his jacket.

#allyslay

Dryer changed the group name to AS #1 Team 28

Annoying Greek changed the group name to #allyslay

Annoying Greek

Do. Not. Fuck. With. The. Chat. Name.

Hol-Roz will make your life hell

Dryer

When he actually wins a game he can name the chat

Annoying Greek

I have more points than the rest of you combined.

I say leave it

J Jacobs (coffee)

Is it true that Mtl is trading him already?

Dryer

Probably

Their PR hire sucks

Annoying Greek

Mtl sucks

They don't play him

They drafted him to make it look like they're not homophobic douche-bags anymore

Lo and behold

Homophobic douche-bags remain

Dryer

???

Annoying Greek

I mean, the only person who stuck with that team was Boiziau

Pike jumped ship after Hollander the second he could

Think the team's just cursed

J Jacobs (coffee)

Honestly checks out

You get a team that old with as big a fumble as they had w OG Hollander only to fumble Jr?

Gotta be a curse
Haasy
Mtl can eat shit
i'm right here guys
Haas is right tho
mtl can eat shit
J Jacobs (coffee)
You good bro?

Mac 🍪

I'm here if you need to talk
You deserve better, Mac
And they sure as hell don't deserve you
Read 8:48 PM

#allyslay

just waiting to find out where
jj's threatening to pull out of AS weekend under protest
Haasy
Good.
J Jacobs (coffee)
Sorry bud
Sucks ass getting traded
Kernit
Whoever gets you's guaranteed a cup tho
Haasy
Bigger and better things, right?
right
see u guys next week

Chapter End Notes

leaving Aris on read??? when he finally put your contact into his phone??? damn Mac
thats real avoidant of u bby

It occurred to me that people might be interested in seeing some of the bits from the
Pinterest boards I made for both Mac and Aris, so lmk if that sounds interesting 💖💖
I'm so glad people are liking this, it's the first time I've actually made in-depth OCs so
knowing people are invested makes me so so happy

Chapter 19: Aris

Team USA's Oldest and Youngest Members Get Candid After Opening Ceremony Mediastorm

Posted: Feburary 2026

So let's just cut to the chase here, you two were some of the spearheads for the movement at the opening ceremony that saw the entire Men's and Women's hockey teams from America, Canada, and Switzerland wearing pride flags or ally pins. What spawned it?

***Scott Hunter:** Honestly it wasn't really meant to make a statement beyond the fact that we exist. We're here, we're queer, we're fully supported by our teams.*

***Aristotelis Floros:** Yeah I mean, I've been wearing a bi pride pin on my travel gear the whole time I've been on the US Juniors team so it didn't really seem out of left field to do it at the Olympics too.*

There are people who say you're actively antagonizing the Russian athletes with these pins.

***H:** We're not doing anything besides being proud of our queer identities and being supported fully by our teammates.*

Really?

***H:** Really. This is my first Olympics as an out gay man, as a married gay man, and as a gay advocate. This is the first games where men's hockey has been as queer as the women's, the first time all four of the teams from Canada and the US have been captained by out queer people, and we've got Luca Haas as the Swiss captain too. I'm proud to wear the stars and stripes of my country, but I'm equally proud of the rainbow flag.*

Anything to add to that?

***F:** Honestly I showed up with my little bi flag pin at the airport and [Carter] Vaughn just shoved a bigger one into my hand. He was like, really excited about it.*

***H:** [Carter] Vaughny likes to make it crystal clear where his allegiances lie. He's also thrilled that Roz isn't the only bi guy hockey player at the Olympics, I think he's mostly just missing [Eric Bennett] on the ice. We all kinda hoped the three of us would get to go to 2018 or 2022, but obviously negotiations with the NHL and IOC fell through. Having Floros on the team with us makes Benny happy, though.*

How does that make you feel?

***F:** I mean, I was like, 10 when Scott came out-*

***H:** Fuck I feel old.*

F: You are. But Scott and Rozanov and Hollander and Lundin and Bennett and Baldwin and Price and Haas and Barrett were my heroes as a kid, growing up and playing with them, and against them, it's the sorta thing you dream about when you're a kid.

Hunter?

H: I think there's an interview somewhere that I did with Troy [Barrett], Shane [Hollander], and [Ilya] Roz[anov] where we were asked how it felt to be publicly out NHL stars knowing the next generation was looking up to us. I'd gotten that question a lot before then, but that wasn't long after they adopted their son [Team Canada's youngest player Mac Hollander-Rozanov] and we all got a front row seat to how us living openly was affecting the next generation of players. Playing these games with Floros adds a whole other layer to it, cause this is the generation that's being drafted now, the generation that's grown up seeing us, seeing that being queer in the NHL is okay and accepted by the large portion of fans. There are still problems, probably will be for a while yet, but we've started it.

*F: I think as we go through the different divisions it's also been clear that some of them are more open to change than others. The World Juniors was a whole other problem, [James] Jacobs and [August] Kern did an interview a bit ago about it cause they and Hollander-Rozanov have been open about pushing back on the hockey culture in Canada. There were a couple athletes who were loose with their c*ck-suckers and f*gs at the Juniors but it was shut down more than not by their own teammates.*

H: Letting that kind of shit fly is why hockey's been a breeding ground for bigotry for a long time. There's something about recognizing and calling out the problems, publicly, that helps shine light and make it not okay anymore.

Is that why you're wearing the pride pins?

H: Yeah. I'm proud of who I am, and our teammates are proud to be allies. We're representing our countries on the global stage for hockey, being clear that no matter what some people in boardrooms at all levels think hockey is for everyone.

Mac was ignoring Aris, had been since Christmas. Which. Sucked more than it should have.

It certainly *bothered* him more than it should have.

He skated like a zombie through practice and tripped over nothing no less than five times in the eight hour practice. He blamed it on jet lag, they'd been playing a bunch of the west coast teams and had flown back at a stupid hour and he'd barely slept. It was definitely jet lag and not the fact that Mac wasn't talking to him.

Fuck him. If he wasn't going to reply then Aris wasn't going to waste time thinking about him-

Except that every third or fourth story on any of the sports networks seemed to be talking about Mac getting traded. He even tried tuning into a Greek network and got an earful of his

own career highlights that bled right into the so-called rivalry with Mac on the ice. Which turned right into speculation about what team might snatch him up.

Scottie 🤔🏒

Kip's making meatballs for 6



Aris let himself into Kip and Scott's apartment building, punching the code into the private elevator and using his foot to push down on the door handle.

"Your rookie has no manners," Kip tsked, looking at Aris from the kitchen.

"The rookie brought cupcakes from Magnolia, and the box is too fucking flimsy." He closed the door with his hip and carried the box into the penthouse, setting it down on the table.

"And how many did you eat on the way?" Kip teased.

"Two, *but* I bought them separately so there's still six in the box." Aris opened the box and wiggled his fingers over it. "See?"

Kip grinned and walked around the island, putting his hand on Aris' shoulder. "You're learning," he cooed and Aris rolled his eyes.

"No he's not," Scott deadpanned from the couch, his neck bent over the back of the couch to look at them. "No you're not."

Aris huffed, though he was still smiling. "I am *so* learning! I haven't called Dryden a bitch in two weeks."

"If you want a fucking sticker you'll be waiting a long time."

"Oh! That reminds me!" Kip looked at Scott. "Grab the stuff my family sent for him!" Scott huffed as he got up and Aris, having *learned*, did not make a joke about him aging. "My parents insisted on doing gifts for you, and Scott and Megan talked about you *basically* the whole night."

They'd been insistent about Scott bringing Aris along to the semi-regular dinners at the Grady's place when he'd shown up ready to start training camp. There was at least one dinner a month, and it had felt so fucking normal that Aris had been forced to reckon with the fact that his family was *not*. He'd learned about Scott's mom, who'd worked to get him through hockey on her own, but Scott had nothing but good, happy memories of her. No forgotten birthdays or guilt trips about how much she was giving up for him.

So his family was *not* normal, even as they posted endless photos of their travels to Japan, their education, the parties they went to, the friends they had. It seemed like he was an

outsider in his own family. An asset, an investment, like a collection of stocks tucked away in a folder with a lock on the cabinet.

"And you told them they didn't have to, right?" Aris took the two brightly wrapped packages and set them by the door.

"We did," Scott agreed as he followed. When Aris turned to return to the dining table Scott was holding out a paper bag stamped with gold foil Christmas trees. "But we were also hypocrites."

Aris was *not* going to cry. He wasn't. He *wasn't*.

Except he kind of was.

"Fuck you, Scottie," Aris huffed. "You're expecting me to open this now?"

Scott grinned. "Yeah, that's kinda how this works."

Aris pulled the white tissue paper out from the top of the bag, pulling out a beautiful knife with an octagonal handle and a knife guard keeping the blade fully encased.

"There's also a set of actually nice stainless steel pans being delivered to your shit apartment next week," Kip added, leaning against the kitchen counter.

"My pans are fine-" Aris tried and Scott rolled his eyes.

"The Teflon is literally chipping off into your food, Floros."

"Yeah but they're not burning or anything-"

"You're taking the pots, Aris," Kip said firmly. "Now get your butt in here and be useful. Bring the knife."

Aris stepped into place next to Kip and let the familiar conversation wash over him. He felt the snippy, sharp edged mask slip away, offering honest responses as the knife glided through the fresh herbs and garlic like butter. He reached a mid point between not having to force words out that had them coming out meaner than he'd meant and the easy quiet listening as Kip and Scott talked about the mundane nothings of the world.

They talked about hockey, because of course they did, and it felt *nice*. Scott brought up a weakness in Tampa's pool of defencemen, Aris recalled the exact stats of the player who was a couple years older than Aris and hadn't improved nearly enough to be worth his salary. They talked about strategies for the different teams they'd be likely to face in the playoffs, about Aris and Scott's places in the scoring race that had Rozanov and Hollander and Mac jostling around first, second, and third, with Aris and Scott close behind at fourth and fifth.

"Are you excited for the All Star game?" Kip asked Aris who shrugged quietly. "You gonna sign up for any of the trials?"

"Maybe? I mean, probably but the rest of the guys are all so pumped about specific ones that I don't really need to."

"Well, we'll have Mac, Roz, and Shane on the speed skating, probably shot accuracy too." Scott pointed at Aris with half of one of the tennis ball sized meatballs on his fork. "You should sign up for the one timers. Ilya and Shane have been trading off as passers for it since it started, they'll grab a passer from your team too. Probably Jacobs, unless they wanna lean into the whole legacy thing and grab Mac. It's more complicated than the shot accuracy contest."

"Eat your meatball before it lands on the ground," Kip interrupted, grinning, and turned his eyes back to Aris. "You'd have fun, I think. Carter loved it last year, Scott hated it-"

"I didn't *hate* it it was just weird the first year, it was a last second sorta thing," Scott defended. "No one knew what was happening and they explained it with a shitty diagram that was only kinda correct."

Aris' eyebrows drew together as he laughed. "Wait, didn't you *win* the first one timers?"

"Yeah cause no one knew what they were doing and Shane didn't try to intentionally fuck me over," Scott brushed off.

Aris and Kip exchanged a look that had become just as frequent as the random required dinners, one that said *'he's selling himself short again and we both know it'*.

"Unlike Rozanov who loves to mess with you?" Aris offered the diversion, letting Scott bitch about Ilya Rozanov was almost as common as his self-deprecation.

"It's how they express affection," Kip sighed.

Scott crossed his arms and huffed, offended. "No it's how Rozanov *is*."

"He's on of your best friends," Kip disputed. "Eric and Carter, then Ilya. In that order."

"I don't order my friends-"

"So you admit you're friends with Rozanov," Aris interrupted, smirking.

Scott wrinkled his nose. "Fuck off."

Kip parked Aris on the couch while Scott cleaned up and Kip grabbed a container of protein-heavy double chocolate brownie ice "cream", tossing it into Aris' open hands while he tried to locate the TV remote.

If his family *had* been normal, if his siblings had been normal, he imagined it would've felt like this. The bickering with Scott and hogging the ice cream and shouting when Scott stole the blanket, and kicking him until Kip sat between them with the remote and turning on an episode of the crime drama Scott had gotten Aris to start watching on plane rides. Talking over the volume of the TV, getting dragged into a hug by Kip only to have the ice cream stolen.

Eating dinner at the penthouse apartment that felt homier than Aris' childhood home.

There were, at best, just over five months left of this sort of normalcy. Like pretty much every other Admiral, Aris was trying his best to ignore how many of these games would be the last time they'd be playing against teams with Scott. He wished he'd had more than one season with him, he'd hoped he'd have a few years when he'd been drafted but...

Scott winced when he got up, tenderly stretching out his neck and arching his back to try to crack the vertebrae back into place. Hockey was a brutal fucking sport, Aris hadn't asked but he was almost certain that Scott had a barrage of surgeries and treatments lined up as soon as the season ended. Injuries that had gone barely patched up that were only getting worse.

He had meant to pretend to fall asleep, his back to Kip's side with Kip's arm stretched over the back of the couch, but before he knew it he actually was.

Chapter 20: Mac

Chapter Notes

This is the second update from this batch starting with chapter 19

[A video posted to Scott Hunter's Instagram c. 2023, tagging Troy Barrett and Mac Hollander-Rozanov. The video shows the ice of the All Stars game, open for athletes to skate on to warm up while cameras and lights are checked. Occasional graphics flash across the ice, and random tracking spotlights swirl around the arena. Scott can be heard behind the camera talking with Troy and Mac as they skate around the ice in sweats, passing a puck back and forth. In the background, just off the ice, a spotlight catches on Shane and Ilya, Shane is pressed up against the outside of the boards and Ilya is pressed against him in a filthy kiss.]

@ScottHunterHockey: *All Stars weekend with some friends and The Kid!*

| **@CarterVaughnOfficial:** *You can tell Scottie didn't notice cause he would've cut the video*

Mac had been attending All-Stars weekends for years, he loved it. The stupid contests, the games that were just for fun, they brought everyone to life before the playoff stress settled in for real.

As it stood, he was still a Metro, so his off week was the week after the game. He wasn't sure what he'd do, honestly. He'd been completely benched for the two games Montreal had played the previous week, and he'd given up going to practices after a week of being ignored at them. So he packed up his apartment, put everything into one of those shipping container moving companies, and waited for the official details to be finalized.

It still sucked, but he knew it was only taking this long because people actually *wanted* him.

He sat at the hotel bar, watching the miserable New York late-January weather trickle down. It was grey and gross.

He'd been invited to the Kingfisher, but he didn't feel like waiting for some smack talk to start.

A hand clapped him on the shoulder.

"Hey Captain!" Kern spoke loudly before taking the seat next to him. Kern played for Winnipeg, their second goalie, and he looked like a muppet, wild red hair, bushy brows, and extremely expressive eyes and face.

"Kernit," Mac greeted with a smile. "How's being an All-Star feel?"

"Pretty sure they just needed to pad the team out," Kern dismissed.

"You've got more saves in the games you've played this year than most get in a lifetime," Mac slightly exaggerated. "You deserve to be here!"

"Seems fun, at least," Kern diverted attention away from his skills and Mac shook his head with a smile. "What?"

"Goalies are either puffed up assholes or waaaay too down on themselves," Mac noted. "Hey, you gonna do any of the skills contests?"

"How many are you signed up for?" Kern teased.

"Shot accuracy, speed skating, purely to spite my dads," Mac answered with a grin.

"Hell yes, Hol-Roz!"

The rest of the team trickled in and they shifted to steal a corner booth instead. Luca arrived and slid in right next to Mac who lifted his legs and stuck them over Luca's lap like he'd done whenever they were relegated to the same seats on a Cens bus. Jacobs arrived and dropped the seven pound bag of coffee on the table, and Dryden was the last to arrive.

Or rather, the last Mac knew how to engage with.

Being around Aris Floros after Christmas had felt weird, like the boundary of *just sex* had gone from rink-side glass to the ice on cleaning day; melting and barely a boundary at all. Mac hadn't replied to Aris' text when the rumours had broken that Montreal was looking to trade Mac. He knew the leaks came from Metros HQ, knew they leaked them to get the best possible value for his contract.

He knew Ottawa was trying to get him, though Shane and Ilya had been tight lipped on it. Mac felt like shit for hopping Montreal said no. He didn't want to be stuck in a position where he played on his parents' team until he became a free agent and had to leave of his own volition. It all sucked so fucking much.

He wished Aris had gotten drafted to Montreal and he'd been drafted to New York.

"You see the jerseys yet?" Jacobs asked. "Shield for them, sword for us. Feels... I dunno, sexual?"

Mac made a face. "Do *not*."

"What?" Jacobs was laughing with the rest of the team. "They're basically drafting us queers and the allies into two sets."

Shane had said the same thing when the teams had been announced. The league was trying to illustrate how far they'd *advanced* in the last 6 years, and Mac was already tired of being used for his sexuality.

"Very true," Luca agreed. "Thought it seems more of a farewell tour for Scott than anything."

And yeah, that had been what Ilya had said. The last All-Stars weekend that Scott would participate in, the first openly gay player passing the torch on to those who benefited from his bravery.

The cynic in Mac sounded more like Shane, the hopeful kid who'd watched that kiss over a decade ago sounded more like Ilya.

"What's a farewell tour?"

Mac felt the hairs on the back of his neck stand up, it felt like he'd suddenly forgotten how to breathe and oh *fuck* Aris was walking over from the bar with a drink in his hand. He hadn't heard Floros' voice in over a month, hadn't been close enough to shove him against a wall and kiss the hell out of him until he was begging-

"All-Stars weekend," Kern answered. "For Hunter."

"Huh. Yeah, I guess. You guys see the jersey they're sticking us in?" Aris pulled over a chair as he spoke and sat down.

"Oh we're not allowed to talk about them," Jacobs piped up.

Aris raised an eyebrow. "Why not?"

"Because my dads are on the other team and if you start making innuendos I will make sure we lose," Mac answered.

Aris grinned at him and stayed, thankfully, quiet. But there was something behind his smile, behind the indifferent mask, behind the layers that Mac had been granted so many chances to see beneath, and it looked at Mac like he was a ticking time bomb. Just waiting for Mac to hurt him and-

Oh *fuck*.

That's what it was, Aris was waiting for Mac to hurt him. He wasn't sitting close enough, he was keeping the table and their teammates between them, physical distance, like being closer would hurt. He needed to fix this, he didn't have time this weekend but fuck it he'd *find* time. Now it was just...

What the *fuck* was Mac supposed to do?

Chapter 21: Ilya

Chapter Notes

This is the third from this batch of updates starting with Chapter 19

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

International Pride; Queer Athletes Make a Splash at World Pride

Published: 2022

So you've all had your own journeys with coming out, what's something you think is universally applicable?

Ilya Rozanov: I do not think there is one universally applicable anything to coming out. Everyone's story is different, and that is doubly true when you are faced with any sort of public facing role.

Scott Hunter: I agree, I see a lot of people say I made it easier for NHL players to come out, but there are two former NHL players who came out while playing and were quietly shuffled into the background, and another two who came out only after retiring.

Troy Barrett: I think every journey has to be different, everyone has different pros and cons to weigh before coming out publicly. I never would have come out if I didn't feel like my team supported me, if I didn't have my partner by my side to help me figure out how.

Shane Hollander: Yeah, the decision paralysis with coming out got me, a little bit. I came out to my then-teammates as gay, but their reaction wasn't the greatest. I had a couple guys on that team who supported me fully, but the rest of them didn't really... Welcome it? It was a first step and it just sorta... Felt like a failure of that first step, so it felt safer, better for me and everyone else, to just stop there.

It's been five years since you brought your now-husband onto the ice and came out very publicly, do you think you would have done anything different looking back?

Hunter: I would've hired Harris to make a video first!

Barrett: You know he would've died on the spot!

Hunter: Joking aside I think the impact it had was what made the moment, I'd come out to my friends, my coach, my team, and I'd planned to have a press conference and it just seemed easier. I knew it would have an impact but I didn't realize how big that impact would be, even in the lead up to that planned press conference.

How did that impact the rest of you?

Hollander: *It made everything fell possible in a way it wasn't before. Hockey is still such a straight, cisgender sport, Max Riley is one of the best players in the game and he still isn't able to find a team or division that will let him play.*

Rozanov: *Yes, teammates always were getting married and popping out babies like rabbits, it was the only acceptable way to be a hockey player. That or stay single forever.*

Barrett: *It was really rattling, honestly. It felt like a massive earthquake had ripped through the world but only a couple people noticed.*

Rozanov: *That is good way to describe it. It certainly changed things, for Shane and I it definitely did.*

But you three still waited to come out.

Barrett: *Well, I'd built a life around being an asshole on a team that wasn't the most celebratory of Scott's bravery.*

Hollander: *And we didn't ever really choose to come out, we had vague ideas of a plan after we were married but it never really materialized into anything concrete.*

Rozanov: *Getting outed wasn't the best experience, but it saved us from figuring out how to do it. Kept us from getting paralyzed again.*

Do you feel some sort of duty to the other queer players who've come out since 2017?

Hunter: *Absolutely. I count them as my friends, and I'm honoured they feel the same.*

Rozanov: *He is like our ancient old wizard guide.*

Hunter: *Roz.*

Rozanov: *What? You are ancient.*

Barrett: *If anyone's the wizardly guide it's you, Roz.*

Rozanov: *But you agree I am not old.*

Hollander: *Ilya, focus.*

You're all good! What do you mean that Rozanov's the guide?

Barrett: *It's sorta an in-joke, he had a direct hand in me and my partner getting together, and he gave [Ryan] Price and [Eric] Bennett advice that led to their own queer happily ever afters.*

So Rozanov's the matchmaker?

Hollander: *Don't encourage him.*

Hunter: *He 100% is.*

Barrett: *Like gay Yoda.*

What do you all hope for the next generation of queer boys looking up to you all?

Hollander: *We've all gotten a closer look at that in the last couple years, not just with the kids at camp but with our son.*

Rozanov: *Mac has allowed us a window into where youth hockey is now, in terms of it's culture, but also in the impact we have had on him before he even met us.*

Barrett: *Mac's been both uplifting and humbling to have around, for the same sorta reasons. He's 14 and he was a young kid when Scott came out, he's that first sort of class of kids going into division hockey where being gay is an option, but he's also proof we've got a long way to go.*

Hunter: *I can't wait till he stops looking at me like I'm some sort of fucking saint.*

Rozanov: *That makes two of us.*

Hollander: *We also know that Mac's not alone, we've had a couple Juniors reach out to us from around the world, and we also play with [Luca] Haas who's been out basically from the start of his career in the NHL. It feels like we're at the very start of a new chapter for not just hockey but professional sports in general, I mean we've got negotiations starting for a professional women's league in the next couple of years and I really hope that takes off!*

Barrett: *Yeah the girls have been really setting the standards for being out and accepting for a while now and it's really nice to see that they'll get the same chance we do, hopefully.*

So you're all supportive of getting a professional women's hockey league?

Rozanov: *If we could throw money into making it happen we would.*

Hunter: *Absolutely! I'm keeping my fingers crossed for a New York team.*

Barrett: *And an Ottawa team, obviously.*

Hollander: *And whoever's making the roster for said Ottawa team please draft Leah Campbell. Or New York. I just need her and Max to be in the same timezone as us.*

Barrett: *And driving distance!*

Hollander: *And driving distance.*

"I beat you," Shane gloated, skating back to the bench.

"Ack, by a millisecond! Is basically the same!" Ilya exclaimed.

"Still faster."

"Is basically the same."

"Mhm. You wanna try that again?"

"For *fucks sake*," Scott groaned. "Please stop."

"What? Are you being homophobic Hunter?" Ilya teased, pulling Shane into his lap and smirking at Scott. "Or are you just jealous Smoothie Boy is not here?"

"Fuck off Rozanov."

"Oh he's been pouty all day, Roz," Carter leaned back and stretched, looking around Scott at Ilya. "I should text Kip, I should call Kip, I should send Kip a voice note, do you think Kip read my text, should I send another voice memo?" Carter rolled his eyes. "It's almost as bad when we're on the road."

"At least you don't have to deal with these two." Wyatt nodded to Ilya and Shane. "We draw straws to find out who's stuck neighbouring them."

"Why?" Scott asked.

Ilya laughed, tucking his chin over Shane's shoulder and burying the laughter in his neck. Scott looked at Shane for an explanation but he was flushed and meeting no one's eyes.

"Roz what'd you do to Hunter?" Cliff asked, holding out a bottle of sports mix.

"Oh Hunter does not understand why my teammates do not want to neighbour Shane and I on road trips." Ilya grinned as he took the bottle.

The same shit-giving mischief that no doubt sparked in Ilya's eyes were reflected in Cliff's and before Shane could notice or interrupt, Cliff was leaning forward.

"You see, Hunter, when two hockey plays love each other very much-"

"Fuck off, Marleau!" Scott exclaimed, shoving Ilya's shoulder and sending him into Cliff. He was, unfortunately for him, blushing brighter than even Shane.

"Shane is a wonderful performer," Ilya teased both his husband and Scott. "I do not know how you slept in 2011, with all his-"

"Ilya!" Shane clapped his hand over Ilya's mouth. "Stop it!"

Ilya grinned behind Shane's hand, looking at him and his bright red flush and beautiful freckles and the lips he hadn't kissed in far too long. He tilted his head to one side, telegraphing every dirty thought and fantasy he was having with Shane in his lap.

"Timbit's up," Wyatt interrupted Ilya's train of dirty thoughts and it was as effective as a frigid shower at quelling the fire he saw in Shane's eyes.

Both of them stood and leaned on the boards, watching Mac skate over to the line.

"If he wins, it will not be basically the same," Ilya said.

Shane shook his head, smiling to himself. "Biased."

"Maybe so, but our son is incredible."

"Objectively," Shane added and Ilya nodded.

They watched Mac take off, round the corners and then straight down to the finish line. *The only thing straight about me is how I skate*, Mac had joked on more than one occasion. He was fast, faster than either of them, and reliably so. Where Ilya and Shane had traded off the fastest times on occasion (though, Ilya could acknowledge the title *mostly* went to Shane), Mac left them both in the dust. He finished 0.68 seconds faster than Shane's time.

Ilya watched his son do an honest to god fist pump, the same way Shane did, when the time blinked at him from the scoreboard. He turned to say something to Shane when his eyes landed on Floros, forearms braced against the boards, watching Mac just as intently as they were, maybe more so. They'd given a press conference where similar nothing questions were launched at the two of them as had been launched at Shane and Ilya, though there seemed to be some sort of divide between the two of them that hadn't been there when they'd left Ilya and Shane's home the day after Christmas.

"*Did you say anything to him?*" Ilya asked in Russian, nodding to Floros.

"No," Shane answered, grinning when Mac skated over. Ilya grabbed his son by the shoulders and kissed him on the head like the damn fucking proud dad he was.

Shane clapped his hand on the arm. "Well, now you know you're faster."

"Was just some good luck," Mac dismissed, Russian weighing down the embarrassed tone of his vowels.

"How many times are you going to claim good luck at one of these things?" Ilya gestured around at the packed rink.

"At least one more," Mac answered, grinning as he skated away.

"*I did talk to our son, though*," Shane said as they sat down again, watching Mac be enthusiastically welcomed into the younger team all whilst Floros kept his physical distance and looked like it pained him to do so.

"*What did he say?*"

"*He doesn't have time for a relationship.*" Shane sighed. "*What was it you said?*" He switched back to English, "time is a flat circle."

Ilya hummed his agreement.

"Floros' birthday is Monday," Scott noted. "Timbit's trying to get the teams to do a big embarrassing round of Happy Birthday for him."

"They're *definitely* fucking," Carter added.

"He spent Christmas with us." Shane looked over at Scott and Carter. "And Irina said Mac's called him a Disney Prince."

"And he rescued Floros at the Olympics," Ilya glared at Scott, "which you failed to share."

"I am *not* a gossip."

"You know, Hunter, studies have shown that a community that gossips is a healthier one," Ilya mused. "I can send you the psychological study if you don't believe me."

"You read psychological studies?" Scott scoffed.

"Ask him what book he's got on his side table," Shane's voice was somewhere between egging Scott on and boundless pride in Ilya.

"You read?" Carter jabbed.

"Dostoevsky," Ilya answered. "Crime and Punishment, trifold translation, the original Russian, the Pevear/Volokhonsky English translations, and a French translation." He shrugged. "Ask Bennett. We have a book club."

"The book club is the two of you because Kyle and I got bored of your high-brow literary picks," Shane corrected. "You have a reading buddy, not a book club."

"Do you have a secret degree from Harvard too?" Scott asked, half in disbelief half genuinely checking.

Ilya waved his hand. "Russian education system is spotty. Not worth pursuing any sort here, not while we're playing. Maybe when we retire."

"Oh. Okay then." Scott skated off for his stick handling event and Ilya settled in to watch, his arm around Shane.

Chapter End Notes

Your favs say support the PWHL! Especially the Victoire (they would never do our boys as dirty as the Metros)!

Chapter 22: Aris

Chapter Notes

This is the fourth update from the batch starting w chapter 19

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

NHL's Hottest Rivals; Hollander-Rozanov and Floros On Same Team at All Stars Game

Published: January 2028

One of the most celebrated NHL traditions, the All Stars weekend kicked off officially on Saturday. For the first time in 15 years the kick-off press conference featured an interesting echo; the two players with the hottest rivalry in the league sitting at a table answering questions. One an American who spends his time playing for the New York Admirals who are well on their way to a cup for the first time in years. The second? The son of those aforementioned echoed players who gave their first press conference at the All Stars game in 2011.

The hot topic of speculation going into this All Stars weekend was the prodigy child of the established Hollander-Rozanov dynasty who's first season with the NHL has seemed to turn all the promise and talent he brought to his rookie season to ash. "Whatever mtl is doing with Mac is digging their own grave" one Twitter user is quoted as saying. Rumours began circulating earlier this month that the Montreal Metros, who signed Hollander-Rozanov as their first draft pick, is already looking to trade him.

Any questions asked in even a tangential vein were left to hang in silence by both young men after the first received firm answers of "no comment" from both of them.

When asked how they felt playing on a team together, this year's All Stars theme labelled as Old Guard vs. Next Generation, Hollander-Rozanov laughed easily and exclaimed he's "just glad Floros and my Papa aren't going to be facing each other on the ice. I think the rink would turn into a roasting stage instead!"

Floros, known to be reserved off the ice and the source of a fiery stream of ruthless chirps on it, acknowledged Hollander-Rozanov's comment with a smile and an insistence that Ilya Rozanov "fucking loves me".

One of my colleagues asked if they had hoped to play alongside Hollander, Rozanov, and Scott Hunter at their first All Stars, which is worth noting will be Hunter's last as he announced his retirement in September.

"We've both played with them before," Hollander-Rozanov answered. "I played with my dads at the Olympics, Floros plays on a line with Scott every other game. It's fun to switch it up!"

A question was posed if they thought the teams felt unbalanced and both Floros and Hollander-Rozanov let the question hang for a moment before glancing at each other and dissolving into laughter.

"I guess we're testing if experience and age outweighs talent and youth," Floros said, smirking.

Hollander-Rozanov was quick to add, "I mean I've spent my life at a rink watching these guys practice at an obsessive level, and the All Stars game always gets crazy numbers in goals anyways. I think this'll be fun, either way it plays out!"

"People keep trying to compare Hol-Roz to Rozanov, Scottie's even got a list of reasons he's a mini-version of him, but he's got the analytical side from Hollander, and like he said he's seen the guys practice for years, he's learned from all of them." Floros' smug smirk is focused off-stage and he raised his voice as he leaned away from the microphone, clearly directing the next bit off stage as much as at the assembled press. "We just gotta listen to him and we'll know everything about their shitty music tastes!"

A voice that sounded like Evan Dykstra of the Ottawa Centaurs shouted back a string of obscenities. The press conference was called to an end and both athletes left with polite waves.

Undoubtedly, if Hollander-Rozanov's name came up in trading circles next season the Admirals would have snapped him up, we've seen what former-rivals-turned-teammates does for a team and Floros is reportedly being eyed for the C. As it stands, there's no clear front runner for who'll take him. There's speculation that Montreal trading him now might be entirely to keep Hollander-Rozanov and Floros from picking up the momentum from Hunter's departure and running with it.

Either way, I doubt there's ever been more GMs at an All Stars game actually paying attention, the generational theme has players from Winnipeg, Dallas, Ottawa, New York, Anaheim, LA, Tampa, and San Francisco all playing under and alongside Hollander-Rozanov. How he works with each of them is no doubt more critical now than any All Stars game has ever been.

Aris *really* liked playing with Mac, and that was... A problem. Sort of. They wouldn't play together again until, at least, next year. Despite the swirling rumours, until Scott finished out the season New York didn't have the salary cap space to take on Mac. Whatever team got him next would want to hold onto him, hopefully.

They finished the rounds of photos and Aris went to head for the showers only to feel the familiar tug of Scott grabbing the back of his jersey and spinning him around to face the rest of the players. A discordant chorus of Happy Birthday echoed not only from the best players in the league, but from the arena full of super-fans who came to see a game that didn't matter just to watch the best of the best play hockey like kids having fun again.

Aris didn't cry, but it was a near thing.

A collection of the guys from both teams were heading to the Kingfisher, and though Aris said he'd be there, his feet carried him away.

He went home, to the empty white apartment, and unpacked his bag, glad that even if his parents didn't text, if his siblings didn't call, at least the people who understood him had celebrated his birthday and-

There was a small, white paper bag, the handles tied together with a gold ribbon bow, a tag hanging off it. In his bag. That he had not put there.

Thought it sounded like something you'd like -M

He untied the ribbon and opened the bag, inside was a metal cylinder made up of three different pots of tea. One was a cardamon maple black tea, the second a cinnamon apple rooibos chai, and the third a cucumber melon green tea. Each container had a small blurb about the farm it came from, each had individual Fair Trade and Slave-Free logos, and a little map of the world covered the whole cylinder, oriented so each place that grew the tea sat on the proper tea canister.

His door opened as the sleek and modern wall clock gently chimed midnight.

And then Mac was standing in Aris' apartment, a tall Tupperware container under his arm as he toed off his shoes like the good Canadian boy he was.

"Jesus!" Mac jumped when he saw Aris standing in his kitchen. "Scared the life out of me, Floros. What are you doing here?" He sounded so fucking Russian.

"In... My apartment?" Aris blinked. "Why are you here?"

"You're supposed to be at the Kingfisher getting drunk," Mac said accusingly, the hand not holding the Tupperware going to his hip, accent still thick. "What are you doing home this time of night?"

"No. What. Sorry, you're in *my* house, Maksimilian, you don't get to police me existing in my own apartment and what the fuck is that?" Aris pointed to the Tupperware.

Mac's eyes widened and he looked away, muttering something under his breath in what Aris was *pretty* sure was English.

"What was that?"

Mac heaved a sigh and as Aris sat at his kitchen island Mac walked over to put the Tupperware down on the edge of it. It looked sorta like a yogurt container, but with the same fogged sides of older Tupperware and no lid. Mac unlatched four latches on the bottom of the container, two at a time, with loud clicks and softer bumps as they rested on the marble counter top.

"I was going to leave it in your fridge," Mac explained as he lifted the fogged plastic up, Russian still clinging to the rounder vowels.

It was an eight inch tall, five inch diameter lilac purple frosted cake, there were sprigs of lavender and a sprinkle of some sort of powder on the top. It looked like one of the personal size cakes in the windows of the bougie bakeries that seemed to pop up all over Manhattan.

"It's lavender-earl grey," his r's rolled slightly, vowels softer. "There's four layers of earl grey vanilla chiffon cake with lavender frosting in between the layers, it's a French buttercream, same as the outside. I thought about using blueberry compote in the middle but I didn't have time and Kyle and Eric's kitchen only had blueberry syrup and chiffon cakes are already pretty sticky and I didn't wanna weigh them down so." Mac curled his fingers into his palms then flicked them out towards the cake in a muted ta-da gesture. "Happy Birthday."

"You... You *made* this?" Aris stared at the cake.

"Mhm. The lavender is food grade but I wouldn't recommend eating it, and I sifted the tealeaves before I infused them in the milk and used the dust for the top, so it might be a little strong- What?"

Aris was staring at Mac, lips parted slightly as tears clawed at his throat and eyes like they had in the arena.

"I needed the distraction," Mac dismissed, cheeks pinking.

"You made me a birthday cake," disbelief was palpable in Aris' voice, he just hoped it covered the way his vocal chords had suddenly turned to gravel, scraping against each other.

"Yeah. It's not a big-"

"You made me a birthday cake, from scratch. You invited me to Christmas with your family. You stepped in at the Olympics and made sure I was okay when I was having a fucking panic attack. You felt so bad about knocking me out of medal contention you smuggled us shortbread." Aris stood and finally put down the tri-layered tea canister. "You got me tea for my birthday, you got the entire All Star arena to sing me a stupid song, you ignore my texts for a whole fucking month unless they're in a group chat, and your baby sister said you called me a Disney prince."

"You sound Russian as fuck right now which means you're really fucking nervous and you think no one notices that you're fucking terrified right now because you're usually great at hiding it but your fingers were covered in band-aids when you got here three days ago because you've been picking at them." He was standing over Mac, looking down at him, and Mac wasn't running. "I noticed. You pulled away because that's what you do when you don't understand what's happening, to protect yourself, I get that. But you just brought me a fucking birthday cake so if you think I'm letting you walk out that door right now you're so fucking wrong because for the first time in my shitty fucking life chasing after the person I care about doesn't feel like it's going to be worthless."

Mac blinked up at Aris, fear in the soft brown eyes that peered over his round glasses frames.

"I'm going to kiss you now," Aris declared. "Okay?"

"Yeah, okay," Mac breathed.

Aris cupped Mac's cheek and instantly felt Mac tilt his head into his touch, and then Aris kissed him. He'd kissed Mac a hundred times over, at least, and not all of them had been seeped in lust, but this one felt a thousand times more monumental than even the first one in Milan. Aris had wondered what it would feel like to play another sport, like diving or ski jumping, where the adrenaline high is so instant and then gone, with no point to bail out if something goes wrong. He supposed it felt like this, this kind of kiss, where there was no heat save the warmth unfurling in his chest, unrestrained.

"You better stick around to split this cake, Maksimilian," Aris whispered, wrapping an arm around Mac's shoulder like he could keep him trapped.

"It's really fucking good cake." Mac smiled and kissed Aris again, short, sweet, his arms looping easily around Aris' waist like they belonged there. "I made a cupcake batch to test the recipe would work with oat milk."

"And does it?"

"Tastes better, honestly." Mac glanced over at Aris' dishwasher. "Don't suppose you've got more than one plate yet?"

"Not yet." Aris nodded to his junk drawer. "I've got a lot of plastic cutlery now, though. So more than one fork."

"Good thing I thought of this." Mac moved to step out of reach and Aris' hands trailed down his body until he was fully out of reach. "You'll have to make sure they get back to Eric and Kyle though."

They didn't end up with separate plates, instead a quarter of the cake and two forks were carried with them to the couch where Aris lay against Mac, his back to Mac's chest, and one hand holding the plate on his chest as he let his head rest on Mac's shoulder. One of Mac's legs lifted up to wrap over Aris' thigh and keep him close, like some sort of octopus.

"I'm sorry," Aris said, taking a bite of the cake. "You deserved a proper first season not the bullshit you got."

"None of them are even talking to me," Mac admitted and Aris barely tamped down an angry noise he knew wouldn't be helpful. "I showed up for practice and got no one passing in drills and the coaches didn't talk to me. And I was benched the last couple of games." Mac shook his head and then turned to press his nose into Aris' hair. "Hopefully by the end of the week I'll have a new team."

"Ottawa?"

"I hope not," Mac sighed. "I love them all, they're family but... I dunno, maybe someday just not *now*."

"I hope you stay in the Eastern conference, at least," Aris admitted. He gently pressed his head back into Mac's. "I like you being close."

"I like being close too." Mac sighed, fingers fiddling with the hem of Aris' shirt. "I don't know who all has the cap space right now. New York doesn't, Detroit might, Florida doesn't. I could ask Dad or Gramma but..." He shrugged the shoulder Aris wasn't resting on. "I dunno, it just pisses me off. They wanted to use me for PR, wanted to prove they could win another cup, and now it's all my fault they're doing horribly despite the fact that I'm not even Alternate!" Mac stabbed a bite of cake and shoved it into his mouth with a little more violence than was necessary. "Sorry."

"You're right, it's bullshit. And it's not your fault." Aris shifted and put the cake on the nearby coffee table before fully turning to be functionally planking over Mac, their legs a tangled mess. "You know if we could, New York would grab you in a heartbeat."

"And have you as my captain? Fat fucking chance Floros," Mac teased.

"Oh, you'd love it," Aris argued, "being told what to do on the ice only to come home and order me around in bed."

"Mmm," Mac hummed, eyes flicking down to Aris' lips before back to meet his gaze, a sort of slow-burning lust in his eyes rather than the fiery inferno that ignited with a single touch. "You like being told what to do, though."

"I do," Aris agreed. He would deny it, anywhere else, in front of *anyone* else, he would. "And you're a control freak."

"You're into it."

"Unfortunately." Aris undermined it with a soft tone and smile even he knew was dopey as fuck. "You got any plans this week?"

"Thought about going somewhere warm, you?"

Aris let his head fall to Mac's chest, laying like a blanket on top of him. "Thought about trying to see my family but my parents are off travelling somewhere and my siblings are in school so... Not really."

"What would you *like* to do?"

Aris thought for a moment. A very *very* long moment. "I dunno. I thought about going to Greece this summer, we went once when I was a kid, my extended family pooled money for us to go. It was nice. My Yaya sends me a postcard every month, pretty places in Greece. Benny says it's nice this time of year."

Mac hummed and lifted his hands, one finding their way to Aris' hair, the other resting between his shoulder blades. "Where does your Yaya live?"

"Ithaca," Aris answered. "Like the one from the Odyssey." Mac hummed again and Aris nuzzled against his jaw. "What're you doing? I can hear you typing."

"There's a flight leaving for Greece tomorrow- or I guess today, at 7pm."

Aris pulled back to frown at Mac. "What?"

"You have a week off, I have a week off, Greece is warm, has beaches, you could see family you haven't seen in at least a decade. It's not on this continent where every fucking sports network talks about me getting traded." Mac grinned. "Win, win."

"Do you even *have* clothes for warm weather here?"

"Nope." Mac shrugged. "I can steal yours. And buy some. Or... Yeah, my godmother's in town she can have a whole fucking runway-ready wardrobe figured out in a couple hours."

Aris shook his head. "But those tickets are last minute they've gotta be-"

"*Malen'koye solntse*, I have a trust fund and an NHL salary." He poked between Aris' brows. "If you don't want to-"

"You want to go to Greece with me?"

"Sure. You want to go to Greece, I want to spend every night this week fucking you silly." Aris flushed bright red and Mac grinned triumphantly. "Let me make up for ghosting you."

"I could also buy tickets to Greece."

"Yeah you could. But oops. Last two tickets on the flight are bought," Mac winked, "whatever will you do now?"

"Maksimilian Hollander-Rozanov you are the *worst* kind of enabler."

"The cute kind?"

Aris growled and kissed a cheekily grinning Mac into the couch.

Chapter End Notes

Mac: Realizes he wants an actual relationship w Aris

Mac: well i'm just gonna sneak into his apartment and leave him a birthday cake that is super fancy and flavoured with things i know he loves and then sneak out and not talk to him and this will be the best foolproof plan ever

Aris: is in his apartment

Mac: tf u doing here????

Also enough folks expressed interest so I present to you all [the pinterest board](#) of Aris and Mac

Chapter 23: Mac

Chapter Notes

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

@huntersfiestykittenfloros: *So we're all agreeing that's Aris right? #maris*

[Screenshot of selfie shared to @macholroz's Instagram stories of him laying back in one of two middle seats in a first class commercial airplane, he's throwing up a peace sign while angling to catch the person in the seat next to him, already in a tiger face mask, giving the camera finger guns as the bright rainbow bubble letters on screen read '*Athens bound #vacation*'.]

|@HolRozTruther: *Oh 100%! Randomly heading to GREECE with someone doing bisexual finger-guns? Who else could it be?*

They flew in to Athens, and the moment they stepped off the plane and into the waiting complementary car, Mac felt a million pounds lighter. It was warm and bright and the hotel they had for the first night before their next flight on to Ithaca had a clear view of the Parthenon. They spent all of five minutes looking at the view before Mac had Aris spread out beneath him, working his tongue over every inch of his body.

They made it to Ithaca through a smaller flight and a boat ride, and arriving felt like they were stepping into another land.

The harbour provided views of white-washed houses with red clay tile roofs that Florida homes tried to emulate and failed. They went to their small little rented house that overlooked the water and stashed their bags and the extensive wardrobe that Rose had insisted on sending for both of them.

Aris seemed nervous as Mac put away the groceries they'd ordered, fidgeting and aimlessly pacing from one room to another. Mac let him pace, let him work through whatever thoughts were cycling in his mind.

Mac was *not* a cook. He could make some basics, but he spent most of his time ordering in or buying prepped meals from a health food store around the corner from his apartment in Montreal. Aris could cook, he'd insisted on renting out a house for the exact purpose of having a full kitchen at his fingertips. But Mac could bake a mean focaccia.

When he set the dough aside to proof he turned and looked at Aris.

"What?"

"You're freaking out," Mac surmized, setting down a mug of tea. "Sit down, drink the tea. Breathe. Talk to me."

Aris did as he was told and Mac sat next to him at the large, round wooden table in the kitchen.

"I don't know if they know what the pin means," Aris said after a moment. "My cousins sent pictures of the family at Yaya's watching the Olympics, and I think *they* know what the pin means but I don't know if anyone explained it to Yaya and..." He blew out a long breath. "My parents are basically roommates, my direct family always had this distance between us even before hockey started being a career path to be funded." He was tapping his fingers on the mug. "None of them sent a text or even called. I turned 21, that's not an insignificant birthday, and none of them called or texted. My Yaya left a voicemail, a couple cousins sent birthday gifs on Facebook, but my parents and siblings did nothing."

Mac placed a hand on Aris' wrist, his hand quickly covered by Aris' other hand. He didn't say anything, he just stayed there, close and touching him.

"What if they're... not okay? With me? With-" Aris looked at Mac. *With us*, Mac finished in his mind.

"You know my Papa doesn't talk to his family." Mac carefully began to stroke his thumb back and forth along the side of Aris' wrist. "His brother's a... not great person. His father died in 2017, and before that he was also not a great person. Both of them forced Papa into a sort of shut-down mode, he had to interact with them but they drained thousands, maybe millions of dollars from him. He set up a trust account for his niece for when she turned 18, she's our age so she has access now. But he hasn't had any contact with anyone in Russia for years, not since he and Dad decided to be entirely together."

"But I mean, that's Russia-"

"No," Mac interrupted. Not angrily, gently, firmly. "Russia is the largest country by landmass, it covers so much of this planet and there are so many cultures within it that claiming every person in the country is homophobic or otherwise bigoted does a disservice to the brave people fighting as much as they can to change things. My Papa's family, *my* biological family, both are Russian, but they are not shitty because they are Russian. They're shitty and cut off because they're homophobes who put their bigoted beliefs over the people they're supposed to love most in this world." He squeezed Aris' wrist. "I have a dozen uncles, a mess of cousins, all of them chosen family. Scott, Kip, Eric, Kyle, they're your family too. Carter, Matti, Tommy, the Admirals, they're your brothers. That's what a team is. If they're not okay with either of us, then that's their loss."

Mac let that sit for a moment, watching the words settle into Aris' anxious mind before he continued.

"But, I think they might already know. You wore the pin, there were hundreds of articles, your Yaya still sends you postcards, your cousins still send you gifs, it's reasonable to assume they know." He pressed a kiss to Aris' bare shoulder. "If you want to go on your own-"

"Not really," Aris finished. "If it goes badly I... I'll probably just shut down. Again."

"You've been less in your head lately," Mac noted.

Aris smiled a little self-consciously and Mac leaned over to kiss the sweet smile, because he could and he wanted to and it made Aris smile even softer.

"I've been working on it," Aris admitted. "It... Helps. When what I say is actually heard instead of just... Ignored."

Mac combed his fingers through Aris' hair, pushing it away from his face. "I like when you say things that aren't chirping." He set his chin on Aris' shoulder, looking at him closely. "You're a real sweetheart, Aris. When you let yourself be."

"You're a little biased there," Aris murmured softly, eyes closed as he turned his head to face Mac, his nose gently pressing into Mac's cheek. "I'm only sweet with you."

"Well doesn't that make me feel special." Mac had meant for it to sound teasing but it was barely breath formed into sound, quiet enough that the gentle ebbing of waves in the harbour almost carried the sounds away.

Almost, but not quite, as Aris whispered back, "you are," before kissing him.

Mac was raised right, he knew to bring something, and rather than hedge his bets on the wine selection he brought the fresh focaccia, covered with a cotton hand towel, to Aris' Yaya's house.

They walked, it was nice out and both of them wanted to make the most of the mid-winter sunshine. Both of them were in linen pants and loose button-down shirts, though Mac had tucked his into the waistband of his pants while Aris' had the top few buttons undone. Something about Aris in the warmth of the Grecian sun just felt *right*.

Aris knocked on the door, gold watch glinting in the sun. Mac heard some shouting and then the door opened to reveal a short woman with dark hair peppered with grey, Aris' nose, and deep brown eyes.

"Aristotelis!" The woman shouted, eyes lighting up and hands extending to grab hold of Aris' arms and pull him into a hug, speaking what Mac assumed was lightning-fast Greek.

They were ushered into the house and a collection of people with Aris' hair, nose, and infuriatingly beautiful jawline mixed together with a hundred other features seemed to appear from an infinite number of doors and stairwells. There were a good dozen adults, a couple of teenagers in an awkward stage of life, and kids with eyes that looked at Aris like he was some sort of mythical figure. The people all took turns crushing Aris in their arms, a couple of them tag-teaming him and worrying over him.

Mac just stood a little behind him and watched, smiling softly.

Then, the smallest woman in the home approached and held Aris' face in her worn hands, her hair long and entirely silver, braided back while a brightly coloured scarf held the shorter pieces from falling into her face. She had a warm voice, and nearly golden eyes. And then

Aris and the older woman turned to Mac. He heard Aris say his name amongst the string of Greek words, and Mac raised his hand in a wave.

"Oh he speaks only English?" One of the middle-aged women asked.

"Russian and French too," Mac answered. "And a little Italian, but the service I was using to learn fired all their translators and replaced them with AI that got a bunch of the words wrong so it stopped being useful." Okay so yeah, he was nervous. He felt justified in this jumble of nerves though.

"An educated American!" The woman exclaimed.

"Canadian," Mac corrected, with what appeared to be the correct level of offence on his face.

"Canadian!" A few of the people in the tight entryway cheered.

"You play for New York too?" One of the younger men asked.

Mac tried not to wince as he said, "Montreal, for now at least."

"We're not here to talk about hockey," Aris interjected before more questions could be asked. "Mac made bread."

"Focaccia," Mac corrected.

"It's got yeast in it, it's bread."

Mac rolled his eyes with a sighed "*Americans*," that earned him laughs and enthusiastic nodding. He pulled the cloth off and set the dish down where he was directed to, on the wooden counter top. The flakey salt, tomatoes, lemon slices, and thyme-infused olive oil dimpled into the dough in a carefully balanced array.

Aris' Yaya looked at the bread, poked the corner of the crust, and nodded approvingly when it crackled satisfyingly under her touch. She pat Mac's shoulder and said something in Greek before she switched to French.

"*You can stay, good bakers are hard to come by*," she declared. Mac grinned and Aris spoke in quick Greek, pulling out his phone to show the old woman the cake Mac had baked him.

"*So*," one of the young women who seemed around Mac and Aris' age saddled up to him with a glass of wine in each hand. She extended one of them to him and joined him, staying out of the way as several people, including Aris, began to busy themselves around the kitchen. "You're an Olympian."

"Mhm." Mac grinned. "Won gold, too."

"Yes, we felt rather conflicted in this house," she mused, "we do not have Greek Ice Hockey team here, but even so we do not like watching Americans win. But Aristotelis played for them, so we had to cheer him on." She clinked her glass against Mac's. "At least the Americans did not get the gold, eh?"

"Oh, between me, my family, and the other team members that wasn't even a possibility." Mac was exceedingly distracted when Aris rolled up his sleeves and fell into rhythm with his family. He almost missed the woman's next question.

"Your family, you have two fathers, yes?" She held up a phone, turned off, before she slid it into her pocket. "Your Wikipedia page said so."

"Yeah, Ilya Rozanov and Shane Hollander adopted me when I was 13."

"Your biological parents kicked you out, yes? Was first line on the page."

Mac tried to ignore that factoid. On Ilya's page the first line was *'Ilya Grigoryevich Rozanov is a Russian-Canadian hockey player in the National Hockey League and the star centre and current captain of the Ottawa Centaurs, who won the team their first three Stanley Cups'*. On Shane's it was *'Shane Hollander was the star centre and team captain of the Montreal Voyageurs, before being traded to the Ottawa Centaurs to play with his husband Ilya Rozanov, the first openly gay couple made up of two professional hockey players.'*

"Uh, yeah. They weren't exactly supportive." Mac sipped his wine.

"Sucks for them, you are millionaire now."

Mac choked on his wine and the woman smiled.

"Alexia," she introduced herself. "Aris' mother is my aunt. Not that she knows it. Strange family, them." Mac chose not to comment. "Do you have large family now?"

"Yeah, or." Mac moved his wine glass in a circle, gesturing around the packed kitchen/dining room that seemed to take up half the bottom floor of the house. "Not this kind of large family. Chosen family. About a hundred uncles, cousins, pretty much everyone on my dad's hockey team is family to me."

"Build-a-family," Alexia said with a smile. "Some, I suppose, have bad families of blood."

"Yeah. But hockey kinda... Makes everyone family, in a weird spider-web way. You spend a lot of time away from family travelling, it's a team sport so we either win or lose together." Mac shrugged. "It's a pretty strong bond, if people let it be."

"Aris said you made him come to Greece." Mac nodded. "Do you not have to play game all winter?"

"There's a week break around the for-fun game the league puts on, it's called the All Stars game. It's not for anything except bragging rights and fun, before we all dig in to really play for the Cup. Not every team has the same week off, about half have the week before off, and the rest get the week after. New York and Montreal both got the week after."

"Do you like Montreal?"

"It's alright."

"But you like Aristotelis," there was a slight edge to her tone, and a teasing glint in Alexia's eye.

Aris walked over to them, about to ask Mac a question.

"Eh, he's alright," Mac said, grinning and looking right at Aris.

"Alright, huh?" Aris put his hands on his hips, his fore-arms had a light dusting of flour but the light sheen of oil on his fingers left an imprint on the fabric of his pants. The skin beneath Aris' oiled fingerprints was a series of matching, wonderfully mottled bruises in the shape of Mac's hands. His grin turned smug, possessive.

Mine.

"Mediocre at best," Mac agreed while Alexia snickered into her wine glass.

"Oh well fu-" Mac slapped his hand over Aris' mouth.

"Children, Floros!" Mac chastized. "You don't want them showing up to school using English swear words, do you?"

Aris sighed and glared at Mac, but there was no real heat in it.

"Did you need something, *malen'koye solntse*?" Mac asked innocently, removing his hand.

"Yaya wanted to know if your bread-"

"Focaccia," Mac corrected, but Aris kept talking.

"-would be good to warm up in the oven or not."

"Oh, yeah, at uh, hang on." Mac bit his tongue a little, the tip poking out as he did the math. "175 Celsius for a couple minutes."

"Got it." Aris looked at Alexia. "What are you saying about me?"

"Nothing," Alexia sing-songed with the smirk of a troublemaker. "I might pull up your Facebook though-"

"Please don't," Aris said the same moment Mac said, "please do."

Alexia's grin spread and she raised her glass in Mac's direction, extending her index finger to point at him. "I like him."

Aris rolled his eyes, cheeks turning a little pink. Mac stood up on his toes and kissed Aris' cheek, watching the blush spread more and his blue eyes turn to mush. Mac passed him, his hand trailing along Aris' back, and walked over to Aris' Yaya and switched to French to pass along the instructions.

Sitting at the huge table with a mix of chairs and benches, mismatched cutlery and plates, as food was passed around and conversations engaged everyone felt so very familiar. It felt like Christmas dinner with all the various strays that Ilya and Shane invited over for holiday meals, like Bood's backyard grilling dinners, like going to Boston Pizza after a successful game when he was in school, like celebrating his adoption date every year.

It felt warm and welcoming and like the sort of family that Aris deserved to have. No one talked about Aris' siblings, or his parents, not after the one off-hand comment from Alexia. But they did talk about Aris, about the medals he'd won, the trophies he'd earned, the goals he'd scored. They were watching, from Greece, even if Aris' immediate family wasn't.

Mac joined in the conversation, asking about the other members of the family, how close they all were. He learned that there was Yaya, her husband had passed before Aris was born. She had four children, including Aris' mother, twelve grand-kids of whom only four were in attendance, and the youngest of the round-faced children was her only great-grandchild. That devolved into a typical begging for more great-grandchildren and grandchildren. One of the children lived in Athens, pursuing a doctorate, while the eldest grandchild lived in Canada where they taught at one of the universities, though no one seemed to remember which.

It was a huge, extensive family.

And Aris deserved every drop of love they were giving him, even as he shifted uncomfortably under the constant stream of praise and adoration. There were encouragements to eat more, drink more, and make sure there was room for desert. Desert was the sort of homemade baklava Mac dreamed of having the time to make, with carefully steeped rose water syrup and home-roasted pistachios and walnuts.

"Yaya likes you," Alexia said as they packed up leftovers for the two of them to bring back to their rental, family members being called to say hello and bye to Aris over the phone. "It's probably a lot."

"Honestly?" Alexia nodded and Mac continued, "I'm probably more used to this than Aris is. Team meals were a big part of my life, from the second my dads first took me in I gained a huge family. Even if I hadn't been able to stay with them as my legal parents, that family would've still been there. This," he gestured around the lively room, "is normal. Usually more French than Greek, though."

It took another hour to actually leave the house, the sun was fully set and promises were made to visit during the off season. They walked in comfortable silence back to the rental house, unlocking the door and storing the leftovers in the fridge. Mac let Aris sit in quiet, watched him move about the kitchen making tea and carrying it to the balcony that looked out over the harbour.

Mac wiped down the counter, put the plug-in kettle back in it's corner, and followed him out with a blanket.

"Do you want to talk about it?" Mac offered, draping the blanket over Aris' shoulders.

"It feels... Shitty, to be mad at my family." Aris' eyes were looking out at the horizon, focused on some point farther than even he could see. "But I am. It feels like... Hockey was fun, we played on the frozen pond out back of my school, too big skates, too short sticks. Then it became a job, the sort of soul-sucking job that pulled all the joy outta it. But I was good at it, the coaches all said so, and my parents kept buying used gear and new-ish skates and working so fucking hard. They never really... Asked. I was good at this thing that had a shot at making me money, so they went full throttle and if I said anything even remotely bad about it it was all about how much they were sacrificing and how lucky I was and how ungrateful I sounded."

"And you almost quit anyways," Mac recalled and Aris nodded.

"You know what Scott said, in his speech that year? That he started to suspect he was that thing hockey players throw around as an insult?" Mac nodded. "It felt like that, this sort of slowly dawning horror that I was, at least partially, into guys. I knew it would only get worse the more competitive the programs, that was just the culture of this sport, the price to pay and I... I didn't know if I could pay it. And we weren't really in *that* deep yet, so I could bail out, I could start missing shots, tripping over my skates, I could fake being bad on the ice. But that first practice back everyone was talking about how *brave* Scott was, the kids, the adults, coaches and parents and teammates and the kids in the division above me who had practice before my team. And I thought, if he's brave for that, I could stick it out a little longer, see if things changed."

"Did they?"

"A little, at least at my rink they did. One of the head coaches had a kid, probably like, 20 or 21 at the time. He kissed a figure skater at the rink's annual Christmas market, Coach made it clear no one was to give any of them shit for it." Aris tapped a pattern out on his mug for a moment, and Mac let the silence hang around them. Aris didn't sound like he'd finished, just paused, and he took a sip of his tea.

"By the next year I was in long weekend training camps that cost extra, and then a private school recruited me for a partial scholarship and that was that. Working to put me through hockey training became the unifying thing in our family except... I wasn't part of it. I was the reason my sister didn't get to go to prom, the reason my brother couldn't go out on dates with any of the girls he liked, the reason my mom and dad shared a car, the reason they used the food pantry. The reason Christmas was socks and shampoo. The reason we drank instant coffee that tasted like shit because it was cheaper than the cheap tea, and we didn't need to add sugar cause half the packet was sugar anyways."

Mac stepped closer and leaned over, wrapping his arms around Aris' neck and holding his own elbows. He pressed a kiss to the top of Aris' head and held him.

"They sacrificed so fucking much, and now when I'm paying them back for it all they don't send a card or text for my birthday. They didn't acknowledge I was drafted second, or that I was a fucking silver medal Olympian, or the captain of the American Juniors teams for two whole fucking years, or the captain of my Juniors team, or that I'm about to be the fucking captain of the New York fucking Admirals." Aris' voice cracked and Mac lifted his hands from his elbows to place one on either side of Aris' face, holding him as much as he could

without moving him. "And it's so shitty to be mad at them for it because they gave up everything-"

"It's not shitty," Mac disputed gently, pressing his face into Aris' hair. "There's more to being a parent, a family, than pure provision of material needs. They weren't selflessly giving up their indulgences, they were working to put you on a career path to become a fucking millionaire *knowing* you'd pay them back for it. They were paying into their futures through you, and you never asked them to."

Aris didn't say anything else, he stared out at the water for a few more minutes and then he tilted his head back to look up at Mac. His eyes scanned Mac's face, looking for something.

"Beach day," he declared.

"What?"

"Tomorrow." Aris stretched his neck up and kissed Mac quickly. "I wanna see how long it takes your pasty Russian-Canadian ass to burn."

Mac hummed in consideration. "Will I be permitted to ogle?"

Aris grinned. "That could be negotiated."

"Mmm, if there's no ogling I don't know that a beach day on the Mediterranean is worth it. Hmm." Mac dropped a kiss to Aris' forehead. "I like your extended family, they seem to care a lot."

"I like them too," Aris' voice was quiet, a tender sort of joy carrying through his voice. "What're you doing this summer?"

"Uh, volunteering at the Game Changers camp for a couple weeks, probably going to the cottage for Canada Day." Mac poked Aris' shoulder. "Making you buy a fucking house and furniture that doesn't look like it came from the set of American Psycho."

"Wanna come back here?"

Mac grinned. "We'll see, pretty boy." He knew the *absolutely* carried through his tone from the way Aris' smile spread and softened.

Chapter End Notes

Mac: tries to post Aris vaguely

In-world obsessed fangirls: clocks him via bi finger guns right away

Chapter 24: Aris

Chapter Notes

This is the last from this duo of updates starting with the last chapter (23)

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

Failure to Start; a Name Has Nothing on Blood

Published: February 2028

Like most hockey fans I started this season with nothing but excitement. Two of the most talked about prospects were not only starting this same year, they also came to this game with a pretty cut and dry rivalry. At every turn on the international stage, Mac Hollander-Rozanov took the top spot, relegating Aristotelis Floros to at best second, and at worst fifth place.

And yet it is Floros, the working class kid who's whole family banded together to help him excel, who is doing exceedingly well with his team, beating Hollander-Rozanov out for third place in the scoring race. While it seems all the money in the world has left Hollander-Rozanov with an inflated sense of self-importance, according to unnamed sources within the Metros organization.

According to these unnamed sources, Hollander-Rozanov's abandoning of a planned take-over of the team's social media accounts was accompanied by a full missed practice that went unexplained by Hollander-Rozanov and Metros captain J.J Boiziau. This comes on top of a long list of issues, with the hot-shot claiming captaincy at the queer free-for-all that is the most recent All Stars game. It's becoming clear to all that what little talent he showed in the speed skating and shot accuracy contest is not transferable to being a team player on the ice.

What the rookie lacks in talent and dedication to the game, he makes up for in name alone. Rumours of trades have narrowed down to Boston, Winnipeg, and Vancouver, all teams that would be happy to trade on the legacy his adoptive fathers of less than ten years have built for themselves. No doubt in 20 years this older model of Hollander-Rozanov will have been fully eclipsed by the child that shares the biological drives of her fathers, and with the PWHL proving to be just as popular as the NHL she will no doubt have her pick of teams to show what a real Hollander-Rozanov can do.

Watching Mac on the beach was something else entirely. Aris had half expected him to not know how to swim, Mac was so categorically *winter* in his head that picturing him outside of snow and ice felt like sacrilege. There weren't many people around in the first week of February so the beaches were mostly empty of the tourists who considered the water warm and the locals who thought it was frigid.

"Pretty sure your cousins think there's something wrong with us," Mac said as he returned to the towels that they'd spread out on the sand.

"It's like, 62 degrees." Aris let his eyes rake over Mac's body, over the muscles and jut of his hip bones that Aris *really* wanted to taste. Mac so often existed in hoodies and sweaters, hiding just how ripped he actually *was*, that being able to just stare at all the muscles he had was wild. Aris had catalogued them by touch in his mind but seeing them in the bright light of the sun was an entirely different gift.

"Yeah I think they forget we spend most of our time in freezers." Mac twisted his hair in his towel-covered hands, wringing the extra water from the long strands. Aris raised his hands out and gently pulled on Mac's calves. "What?" Mac asked, laughter hitching his voice as he looked down at Aris.

They were on vacation. Mac hadn't taken the septum piercing out since he'd put it back on after the All Stars game, he'd left his hair down in Aris' reach instead of braided or otherwise pulled back, and the cross on the golden chain was hanging perfectly in the valley between his pecs. He looked like a fucking sex god and Aris *needed* to kiss him.

Mac dropped the towel next to Aris' hip and slowly knelt down, straddling his legs. "Can I help you?" He asked, smirking.

"You're so fucking pretty," Aris whispered.

"I'm aware." Mac smirked, draping his arms lazily over Aris' shoulders. "You're not so bad yourself, *malen'koye solntse*."

"What is that word?"

"Nothing bad," Mac answered, teasing. *Rephrase it, be clearer*, he seemed to say.

"I mean, it's Russian but I don't think Google translate would be useful." Aris lifted a hand to twist the clasp on Mac's golden chain back around to sit against his spine. "Just curious."

"*Malen'koye solntse*?" Aris nodded and Mac smiled, cupping Aris' cheek in one hand and leaning closer, his lips barely brushing Aris' as he spoke, "it means little sun."

Well *that* was doing interesting things to his heart.

"Nicknames are sort of a *thing* for Russians. Like the GM in Boston, her names Svetlana, but she's also one of my Papa's best friends from childhood so she's Sveta. My Papa rarely uses my name, he uses... Okay it's a really common familial pet name, it's like uh, little rabbit?" Mac was rambling, over-explaining, and *fuck* Aris was so far past falling for him. "I know nicknames are a normal thing for most people but- okay there's this musical that's based on War and Peace and there's a line in the opening song about how every one of the characters has nine different names. That's kinda what it's like. Sveta calls me Maksimka, calls my baby sister Irinka. It's just how things are, there's a million different names and you never really use your full name which is why Maksimilian feels wrong-"

"It does?" Aris interrupted. "I didn't mean to-"

"Not-" Mac raised his eyes to the sky the way he did whenever he was going to admit something embarrassing. I don't know why but you are the sole person who doesn't piss me off."

"So it's not... Wrong?"

Mac put his hands on Aris' cheeks, suddenly staring right into his eyes. "Aris if *you* stop calling me Maksimilian I may die."

"Oh." Aris wasn't entirely sure what to make of that. Okay, no, his dick knew what he wanted to make of that. "Fuck me?"

Mac laughed, a soft noise that was more soft huffs than laugh. "Okay, baby."

They stumbled into the rental house tangled in each other, Mac's hands had wandered their way beneath the waistband of Aris' swim trunks and the moment the door closed he was pushing them down and off. And then he was gripping Aris' thighs and lifting him up with ease.

"Have I mentioned how fucking hot it is when you do that?" Aris breathed, burying his fingers in Mac's salt-curling hair, his hard cock pressing into Mac's stomach.

"You're not *that* heavy," Mac teased, kneeling on the bed and setting Aris down. "Lay back like a good boy."

And *fucking hell* those words, in that tone, in *that* man's voice did things to Aris he should probably be unpacking with a therapist. He obeyed, because of course he obeyed Mac. Aris *did* stretch his arms above his head, watching the heat of Mac's gaze rake over his torso.

He watched as Mac's beautiful amber eyes caught on the bruising over his hips, shivered as he placed a hand perfectly over one of the bruises while the other pressed into the mattress next to Aris' head.

"Mine," Mac pressed the word into Aris' chest. The drag of his teeth down Aris' sternum felt like Mac was digging into him and unearthing his battered heart to lay it bare between them.

Aris reached down and caught Mac's chin, drawing him up from his path of nipping kisses to look him in the eyes. "Mine," Aris repeated, blue eyes boring into brown.

Mac smiled and kissed Aris, deep and sweet and adoring and *fuck* Aris didn't know how he'd survived without Mac kissing him like *this*.

"*Fuck*," Aris groaned as Mac slid a slicked up finger into him. "If you drag this out I will kill you- *fuck*."

"But you look so pretty writhing on my fingers," Mac purred. "Taking them so well, spreading your legs, you're so good at it."

"*Maksimilian.*"

"Yes? You have something to say, baby?" And just as Aris opened his mouth with what was definitely going to be a witty comment and not just begging, Mac slipped a second and third finger in, and Aris was fucking *gasping*.

"So loose already, *vozlyublennyy*. You're doing so good for me."

What Aris *wanted* to comment on was the unending babbling praise and sweet, filthy words in between kisses laved over the skin of his neck. What happened instead was, "*fuck me, please,*" gasped out as he ground down into the fingers stretching and curling up into his prostate.

"So good for me, Aris." He heard the crinkle of a condom wrapper opening and felt Mac's fingers caress his cheek. "Can you open your eyes for me, baby?"

He opened them, the afternoon sun streaming through the windows turned Mac's hair to pure gold. He felt his mouth drop open in awe, looking up at the man hovering above him, the man who knew on some weird sort of instinctual level exactly how Aris wanted to be fucked from one moment to the next.

"You good?" Mac checked, nudging his nose against Aris', his glasses fogging a little from Aris' panting.

"I'd be even better if you started fucking me," Aris answered, managing to unknot his fingers from the blankets to bring his hand up to return to his mission of scraping up Mac's back.

"As you wish, *malen'koye solntse.*"

It didn't matter that they'd spent the day before their evening flight fucking, or the day in Athens fucking, or every morning and evening since then and easily a dozen times before. Aris *still* wasn't used to the way Mac's slow push in shoved every molecule of air from his lungs, leaving him arching off the bed and gasping. If anything, their first time on a shitty cardboard bed in Italy had been the worst of their hookups. Mac didn't do *anything* by halves and he was a *very* quick learner.

Mac's hand slid down to lift one of Aris' legs up, hiking it up over Mac's hip and opening him even more just as he bottomed out and-

"*Fuuuuck,*" Aris moaned, feeling as Mac's smug, handsome fucking smile pressed into his neck.

"You feel so fucking good, do you have *any* idea how much the last month fucking *sucked* without you- oh *fuck.*"

Mac kissed him, like he was intent on devouring Aris whole, like he was savouring him and indulging all in one.

"*Move,*" Aris growled, grinding his hips up into him.

"Impatient," Mac chided, nipping at the corner of Aris' jaw.

"For you?" Aris dug one set of fingers into Mac's hair and the other into the skin of his back as if he could leave perfect swirling imprints of his individual fingerprints in Mac's skin. "*Always.*"

"You're going to fucking kill me one of these days, Floros." Somehow Mac managed to sound like he'd been fully run over by a truck.

"Damn right I will, now," he dug his heel into Mac's back, "fuck me."

When Mac did *finally* move he set a brutal pace, hips snapping in and out with a frequency and force that made it impossible to forget exactly how much time they *both* spent on their bodies. Aris *could* have, probably, contributed, but laying back and just *taking* it as Mac adjusted to torment his prostate and bit and sucked a veritable bouquet of bruises into his neck was a laziness he was more than happy to indulge in.

It was his vacation, and his boyfriend wanted to rail him every fucking night *just like this* and Aris was in fucking heaven.

They were literally in the lounge about to board their flight back to New York when Mac's phone rang and his shoulders noticeably tensed. He picked up and held the phone to his ear, his voice tight when he greeted whoever was on the other end of the line.

And then he seemed to relax entirely, huffing a relieved sigh and hanging his head, his hand rubbing his eyes and shoving his glasses up in the process.

"Thanks, Farah, when's their first game? Oh. Awesome. When's the announcement-? Okay. I'll text you the details of the shipping company. Yeah. Thanks. Yeah, it's definitely an improvement. Yeah. Okay. Buh-bye." Mac hung up his phone and grabbed Aris' shoulders. "I'm not a fucking Metro anymore."

Aris grinned. "Oh thank fuck we can stop pretending to like them now?"

"We can stop pretending to like them now," Mac affirmed. "But you never *really* tried to pretend you liked them."

"Because they benched you and stuck you on fourth line when they did let you play like fucking idiots." Aris' grin shifted into a cocky, asshole smirk. "Don't suppose I get boyfriend privileges and get to know-"

"They're gonna announce it tomorrow, so no. You do *not* get to have super special boyfriend privileges." Mac picked up his bag and then rose up onto his toes, kissing Aris' cheek.

"You're gonna need to get a really good parka, though. C'mon, we're boarding."

I realized I was being too nice in the little snippets I was putting in front of chapters and thought it was time for there to be one everyone could get pissed about. It's okay though, Mac hasn't seen it bc he's been too busy fucking Aris' brains out :D

Putting out only a couple chapters today bc of the ao3 downtime and the last chapter was pretty long. godspeed to all of us who are about to embark on being ao3-less shortly



Chapter 25: Ilya

Chapter Notes

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

#allyslay

Kernit

OH FUCK YES!

WE GET HOL-ROZ!

J Jacobs (coffee)

Do I get to stop being (coffee) now that you can buy it yourself?

no

i'm attached to it now

if aris finds the coffee bean emoji next time he steals my phone u can ask him to change it

Haasy

We get to say fuck Montreal again, right?

Wyatt wants to know

Annoying Greek <3

Yes

We're all gonna kick Montreal's ass and knock them so far out of playoff contention not even next season's wildcard can save them

Haasy

Shouldn't be very hard

Dryer

Next time wpgs in Dallas we are getting bomb ass bbq

Haasy

IDK Dryden, Bood does some pretty good barbeque

Timbit might be spoiled

Annoying Greek <3

I want bbq :(

Dryer

Sucks to be in the Eastern con now

Doesn't it?

Kernit

<3???

Mac???

???

wat???

im abt to get on a plane tf do u want

Kernit

Why does Floros have a <3 after his name now?

╰_(ツ)_╯

he knows what he did

flight time byeeee

see u 2 soon :D

Haasy

I know why 😊

Ilya's phone rang, not with the usual phone call but with a FaceTime call from Mac. He picked up, a happily sleeping Irina on his hip.

"Plane landed safe, yes?" He answered.

"They have a fucking hug rug at this airport and it's *so easy* to navigate. I never want to deal with Trudeau ever again." Mac had a black centaurs toque on and large sunglasses. He looked behind the phone and shouted something in Russian that the phone's microphone failed to transmit. "What?"

"No that wasn't-" He switched to Russian again. *"Just come here, yes I can carry the bags. We're fine come say hi."*

The video feed jostled and then Ilya was looking at a young woman with brown hair pulled back from her face and a smile that seemed achingly familiar.

"Hi *Dyadya* Ilya!" The young woman greeted and Ilya nearly dropped his daughter.

"Ava!" He shouted, English completely leaving his mind. *"How are you- You're in Winnipeg with Mac? How?"*

"I got a job dancing at the Royal Ballet here, I saw Mac at the Toronto airport and we had the same flight. The hockey team has him staying at the same hotel the ballet is putting me up at." She made a face. *"Your new country is silly. Your capital city does not have your National ballet, and it also does not have your royal ballet."*

Ilya was smiling like a crazy man, tears rimming his eyes and turning the mid afternoon sunlight into prismatic lines across his vision. *"You are okay, yes?"*

"I am, I will come to Ottawa when I can, I promise. I have a baby cousin to meet." She smiled and shouted at Mac to take his phone back.

"Surprise," Mac said when he reappeared on Ilya's phone screen. "Literally ran up to me at the airport. I almost didn't believe her but she knew *a lot* of things."

"She left Russia?" Ilya shook his head as if it would clear the suddenly descended fog. "She's in *Canada*?"

"I know! She saw the announcement and got my number from Farah too, they were working on a plan to fly her to a Cens game, so she verified it too." Mac grinned. "We're thinking about finding a place together, since I'm gonna be travelling so much it made sense."

Ilya muttered several swear words in Russian. "You're happy though? Being in Winnipeg?"

"Hockey's a community thing here, and I played with Kern on the Canadian Juniors team, and Jacobs had a year overlap with us too. They said it's insane in the best way. Oh shit they

sent a whole ass driver! Hell yeah." He looked back at the screen. "I'll call you and Dad later tonight, okay?"

"Okay. I'm glad we can hate Montreal again."

Mac grinned. "Kick their asses for me, okay?"

"You know I will." Ilya grinned and stared at his phone long after the call ended.

He watched his phone screen turn off after two minutes of inactivity and then he was staring at the black screen. His niece was a dancer, a *professional* dancer, one that had a job at a *Royal* Ballet company. She seemed... Alright. And Mac seemed to be glowing with happiness.

"-Ilya?" Shane's voice faded into his ears and he blinked turning to look at his slightly concerned husband. "Everything alright?"

"Ava's in Winnipeg," he stated. "My- *our* niece, Alexei's daughter, she's in Winnipeg. She's a *dancer*, Shane. She's okay. She's not in Russia, they didn't do anything to her because of me, she's *okay* and she's *out*."

"They didn't do anything to her?" Shane clarified.

He knew, Ilya had confided in him thousands of times over, that the one person he was scared for was his niece, his niece who had been almost nine years old when he'd left Russia for the last time. He didn't give a shit what happened to Alexei, he honestly didn't care that much about Alexei's wife either. But Ava was innocent. Ilya had been there when she'd been born, had been the first person to hold her. Her mother was in emergent surgery, Alexei ascribed to their father's ultra masculine belief that he shouldn't touch her, and she was so small. She'd needed someone to hold her.

Ilya had thought about her a lot, and then when Irina had been born and Ilya had held her for the first time he remembered how small she'd been, how small she'd *still* been when he'd last seen her.

"It didn't seem like it. She seemed... Happy. Healthy." Ilya let the tears fall, hiding his face in his husband's neck.

She was okay.

Chapter End Notes

I'm not bullshitting about [about the hug rug](#) at the Winnipeg airport, by the way. It got taken away during COVID and when it was put back there was a whole celebration. They also have a rainbow variant they use for pride :D

Also IK fandom has named Ilya's niece Irina but I don't think Alexei/Andrei would name his daughter after his mother given how [vague gestures] asshole-ish he is, esp w the hc about him hating Ilya bc he looks/is most like their mother

Chapter 26: Mac

Chapter Notes

this is the second update from the batch starting w chapter 25

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

Annoying Greek <3

How's Winnipeg?

its fuckin -40

What's that in F?

baby

-40 is where c and f converge

No fucking way you're lying

Google it

I will!

...

Jfc no wonder people hate getting traded there.

idk, vibes r good

kernit stuck so he pretends to hate me now

also jacobs has game???

Game?

he has 2 partners and both of them are objectively hot as fuck

1 of them's a fuckin artist

warn eric im showing up w a fuckin posse next time wpg plays ny

A posse?

jacobs partners wanna come next time were in ny so thats 3

plus kernit

kitts is cool too, his wifes a dancer at the ballet here

their kids are fucking adorable too

and lafond's spouse is a vet at the humane society

like i think between ot, ny, and wpg we have a great section of hockey culture getting shifted

its fucking cool to see

You know Scott, your dads, and Barrett are spearheads there right?

yeah but

i saw/heard every time they all made statements abt shit and there was always so much push back and no real change

wpg doesn't even have a secret society member, none of them joined up w scott's group but theyre all so chill

idk, its not perfect but its so much better than mtl

Yeah?

there's an old train station depot thing here that got turned into a huge food court and the river freezes over and they do skating on it

on both rivers

there's 2 rivers aris

2

whole

rivers

Well aren't you spoiled for choice?

booking tickets 4 summer

post cup obv

Obviously

Are you good to fly here then leave from JFK or something?

def seems easiest

im dangling the <3 over kerns head

jacobs is not as dense

he is helping drive kern insane

its so fun

kitts has started filming it

There better be memes getting made

I need a Miss Piggy appropriate face from him

lol will do my best ily<3

Love you too

"Oh fuck yeah!" Kern exclaimed as he skated over to the edge of the rink. "It wasn't a fever dream!"

"Aw, you dream of me Kern?" Mac placed his hand over his heart, voice heavily sarcastic. "How sweet."

"He's been drooling waiting for you to show up with cookies," Jacobs tattled, skates scraping as he stopped next to Kern.

"No cookies yet, the Fort Garry doesn't have a kitchen in the suites apparently." Mac stepped onto the ice and placed a hand on Kern's shoulder. "I promise I will make you cookies when I have a kitchen and time."

Someone blew a whistle and the three of them joined the rest of the team at centre ice. The coaching staff broke the players up into groups to round-robin warm-up drills, and then the head coach Klassen skated up to Mac.

"I hear you had a bit of a shit time in Montreal," he said, blunt, to the point.

"Yup." Mac nodded his head. "Surprise surprise, I don't magically make an entire team instantly win a Stanley Cup without anyone else pitching in."

"Waste of talent, but we're glad to have ya." Klassen good-naturedly slapped Mac's back. "You'll fit in well here, Winnipeg might be the shittiest city to live in in the league but the community makes up for it. In my opinion, at least."

Mac smiled. "I know, I snuck out to a few White-Outs when my dads had games here. Felt like the whole damn city gave a fuck, even the people who don't do hockey."

"Winnipeg's got a long memory, people remember losing our team like it was yesterday. Getting it back, holding onto it, it's pretty damn important." He pointed at Mac. "You tell your dads I said fuck you, costing us our first Cup back home," there was no vitriol in his voice, it seemed like he could've been talking about a community beer league's trophy rather than *the* Stanley Cup.

Mac laughed. "I'll make sure to pass that along."

"And, setting expectations," Klassen gestured to the arena, "we all win together, we all lose together. I don't buy that magic charm curse on Montreal bullshit, you play as best you can, that's all I expect of you."

"Yessir."

Klassen gestured for him to join one of the groups and Mac easily fell into the rhythm of practice. The sniping jokes, the warmth of a team that cared, it felt like the Cens but entirely his own.

When practice finished Kern and Jacobs near synchronistically bent their heads into Mac's view as he dressed. Mac looked between them and sighed.

"What?"

"Annoying Greek heart?" Kern needled. "C'mon Hol-Roz, you *gotta* explain that."

"I don't *gotta* do anything, Kernit." Mac shoulder-checked Kern away and sat down to pull on the thermal socks he'd grabbed at the airport.

"Kernit?" Kitts, the Bison's captain, leaned forward, heavy duty winter boots already on.

"Well, he looks like a muppet." Mac smirked. "Oh you gotta see the meme."

"There's a meme?" Kitts raised a brow.

"Hang on I'll scroll for it," Jacobs said, pulling out his phone.

"He makes muppet-y facial expressions," Mac added.

"I do *not*- James I will tell Jules that you're bullying me."

Jacobs didn't listen, showing Kitts the edited meme from the All Stars group chat with a wide grin on his face. "Jules knows I bully you, they don't care. It's a sign of affection."

Mac pointed at Jacobs. "This is why you're never losing the coffee."

Jacobs flipped him off while Kitts laughed loud over the meme.

"Kernit!" The captain exclaimed loudly. "Oh my god it fits so fucking good!"

"Thanks Hol-Roz," Kern grumbled.

"Half the fucking NHL calls me Timbit cause I was abandoned at a Timmies, get over it." Mac messed up Kern's hair and pulled his sweater on. "I'm so fucking glad y'all don't do the suit thing."

"Camp to like, late October we do. Then we start up again in May if we're still playing." Kitts pointed at him. "And we do it at away games if the opposing team does it."

Mac glared at his phone, a barrage of updated calendar dates from Farah filling the screen as he scrolled through, checking for any messages he might have missed. He cleared all the notifications and dumped his phone on the bench next to him, focusing on lacing up the fancy winter boots the team HQ had had delivered to his hotel room.

"Cute dog," Lafond, a defenceman who had the stall next to Mac's, said with a gesture to the phone. "Mutt?"

"Rescue," Mac confirmed. "My dads' *real* first kid. My Dad keeps insisting they'll get a cat at some point and that he doesn't like dogs and yet he's Anya's favourite."

Lafond nodded sagely. "It's always dads and the dogs they didn't want." He grinned. "What're you doing tonight, rook?"

"Figure out some place to grab food, preferably with good beer. Montreal has the whole hipster too-good-for-you beer culture, except for Kahnawake but that's a bit out of my normal reach." Mac pulled on his coat. "Probably call my parents so they don't freak the fuck out and assume I've been run over."

"Oh we got you there, bud!" Lafond grinned wide and threw his arm around Mac's shoulders.

Chapter End Notes

ask me why I know off the top of my head where f and c converge :) go ahead :) ask :)

Chapter 27: Shane

Chapter Notes

This is the third update starting with chapter 25

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

[A photo of the Ottawa Centaurs float at the 2022 Ottawa Pride Parade, it's a large pickup truck with chalk-paint rainbow hand prints covering the body of it and a long trailer being pulled behind it. The trailer has two balloon arches, one at the front and one at the back, metallic fringe blows in the wind and a tall pillar in the middle of the trailer carries the Stanley Cup, and everyone is wearing an Ottawa Centaurs Pride Night jersey, the players have their names and numbers on the jerseys and their spouses and children are in similar jerseys with the exception of Harris Drover who's jersey reads '*WHBAG Organizer*'. Ilya, Shane, and Mac are on the trailer, mid-dance, Mac is spinning, his face naturally obscured, with his arms raised and one hand holding onto Ilya's making him spin as well, Shane is laughing at his husband and son. This is their first public outing since announcing Mac's adoption.]

@IlyaRozanov81: Happy Pride Ottawa! Couldn't think of a better way to spend my day with the #StanleyCup than sharing it with the people who make Ottawa feel like home for me, my husband, and our wonderful son. As we go into the next season I hope you'll all cheer just as loud for your favourite gays in sport! Not sure how next pride will stack up, last years was not only my first pride being out but also the first pride married to @ShaneHollander24 and this year was our first as a family! Maybe we can celebrate with two cups?

|**@ShaneHollander24:** Worst comes to worse we can just bring Anya next year

||**@macholroz:** Or drag Gramps Gay up north

|||**@IlyaRozanov81:** @ScottHunterHockey

||||**@ScottHunterHockey:** 👍

|||||**@macholroz:** Scott Hunter Flips Off Minor Hockey Player Who Idolizes Him

|||||**@ScottHunterHockey:** @ShaneHollander24 please pick your kid up from practice before I punt your husband into the sun

|||||**@kgradyhist:** Aaaaaand happy first pride Mac!

|||||**@macholroz:** Thanks uncle kip!

The house was in a nice neighbourhood and Shane was so fucking glad they booked a driver when he referred to an intersection as Confusion Corner. It looked like a bunch of similar houses all over the country from the post-WW2 building catalogues; a simple box with warm burgundy siding, a small front yard, and window boxes with flowers blooming in the spring air.

Ottawa had been put up against the Admirals in round one of the playoffs, and while they played their hardest it was the one game seven loss that Shane didn't mind so much. Ilya had lightly threatened Scott that he better get to the final round and had simply smirked when Scott had asked *'or what'*.

They climbed out of the tinted-windowed SUV and while Ilya grabbed their bags, Shane grabbed their daughter and her car seat. The front door opened off the side of the cube and Mac grinned at them all. The second Irina realized who was on the porch she was wiggling in Shane's arms and trying to run across the, thankfully not so busy, street.

"MAC!" She yelled, running at full speed the second Shane set her down once they were across the street.

Shane watched, smiling, head tilted to one side, as his son scooped up his daughter and spun her around. Mac looked peaceful, happy, relaxed. He hadn't seemed like that, even coming home for not infrequent family dinners from Montreal.

"He looks happy," Ilya said and Shane nodded. "He looks like you did, when you settled in with the Centaurs. Not waiting for the other shoe."

Shane smiled. "Yeah?"

Ilya nodded and followed up in Irina's footsteps, bags in hand. Shane watched his husband hug both their children miles away from his home, a familiar warm tingly sensation settling in his chest. He walked inside, listening to Ilya dish out approval over the large windows in the living room, the small fireplace that had a TV mounted above it, the marble counter tops in the kitchen. He had nothing but good things to say and Shane followed close behind them, happy when Mac started pulling things out of the fridge to make a very late lunch.

They listened to him talk about his teammates, about settling in and living in a new city. He raved about the small queer-run grocery store a few minutes away, about the farmers market that his favourite coffee roasters had a booth at every week, about the pizza place that did curry pizza. He talked about the store that sold cabbage rolls in frozen single serve portions that tasted better than the times they'd tried to make them from scratch. He talked about fans who spoke to him in Russian just walking around the city, about the people who'd shown up to every home game with pride flags, who showed up at the city's White Outs outside the arena with the white jerseys and rainbow flags and all the people who welcomed him.

"We're doing a float in the parade this weekend, Klassen said to extend an invite to you two, so long as you don't wear Cens jerseys." Mac grinned. "Most of the team's going, a couple are trying to figure out childcare cause their little ones don't do good with loud and heat."

Ilya smiled. "Sounds fun, yes Shane?"

"Why would your coach want us there?" Shane blinked.

"Because-" Mac cut himself off with a sigh. "I'm not over-inflating Papa's ego again."

Ilya's smile shifted to his cock-sure grin that made Shane's heart skip a beat and his eyes roll. "We are icons, *gazonokosilka*."

"Lawnmower," Shane translated on instinct at this point. "And we are not icons, that's Scott."

Mac heaved a sigh. "Scott, Troy, you, Papa, me, Aris, Haas, Jacobs," he counted each name out on his fingers, "we're the only open and active queer NHL players. Scott retires after this season," he lowered a finger, "and despite how great it is in Winnipeg and New York and Ottawa, Toronto is still a cesspit, and most of the other teams just choose not to acknowledge us, some are allies but don't have any out players because they don't have the name recognition and don't wanna risk the attention. You two, Troy, Scott, you guys playing while out is the only reason Haas, Jacobs, Aris, and I can play while being out. That means a lot, regardless of what team you're playing for."

"Just because Hunter started it does not mean he is only one seen as trailblazers," Ilya added. "We all know how far hockey has to come before it catches up with rest of Canada, and America is falling behind too. What was it you said, *mal'chik-zaichik*? Being seen is important?"

"Visibility saves lives," Mac supplied and Ilya pointed at him with the paring knife he'd been using to chop an assortment of vegetables.

"Yes that." Ilya smiled at Shane. "We are icons."

The back door opened before Shane could respond and the atmosphere shifted. The same young woman who had appeared in FaceTime calls walked in in a black bodysuit and pale tights, her hair pulled back and still sweat-damp. She, like Ilya, wore an Orthodox crucifix on a gold chain around her neck, and she, like Ilya, had echoes of laughter in the same corners of her eyes.

"Ava," Ilya said her name in disbelief, despite the multitude of FaceTime calls and texts exchanged.

Ilya hugged her so fiercely that Shane couldn't help but think of the nights Ilya had clung to him, to Mac, to Irina, when he'd worried about what the country of his birth was doing. The two times where police had shown up to talk to Ilya about any ties he had to Russia, about the money he wired every month into a Russian bank account.

He wondered how much of that money had fuelled Ava's carefully laid plans to leave the country behind.

Her mother was dead, she'd said that in the first one-on-one call she'd had with Ilya. Alexei was a captain in the police force now, corruptible for enough people's gain that they wanted him to have power.

Ilya pulled back enough to look at her, and Ava's eyes scanned his face just as his scanned hers. They had the same nose, Shane noted. The same eyes, the same smile, and the same air of sadness.

He saw a lot of himself in Irina, but they both knew what there was of Ilya was the mannerisms, the way she laughed was like him, the way she grinned when she was about to do something she knew she wasn't supposed to was Ilya's *and* Mac's.

"I was supposed to be home sooner," Ava's Russian accent sat heavier in her English, reminding Shane of those first few English words he'd exchanged with Ilya over a decade ago. "Costume fitting went long, meant to shower first."

"Go shower," Ilya's accent was stronger in response.

Shane picked Irina up and set her in one of the tall chairs at the lifted bar-top height breakfast bar. "If any family gets the need to shower before anything else it's ours."

"Hockey boy sweat worse than dancer sweat," Ava stated, smiling as she toed off her shoes and disappeared up the stairs.

Chapter End Notes

Yeah fun fact; the Royal Winnipeg Ballet is not the National Ballet of Canada, that's in Toronto. Neither of them are in the capital city. As book readers will recall, the only thing in Ottawa are museums and bars /lh

Chapter 28: Aris

Canadian Prodigy Joins the Bisons

Published: February 2028

Like many Winnipeggers I celebrated raucously when the Bisons came home. Since then we've gotten close to a Stanley Cup twice, one loss to Tampa hurting much more than the other to Ottawa, another long-shot team at the time that has since become the dominant team in the NHL. That dominance is thanks to the ruthless players that wear the C and A; Ilya Rozanov and Shane Hollander. Now Winnipeg has a player to call our own that is a literal combination of the two; Mac Hollander-Rozanov.

I got a chance to sit down with the newest Bison a few days after he arrived in Winnipeg, just after his first win with the team against Chicago where Hollander-Rozanov not only scored the first and last goals of the game, but also achieved his first hat-trick on NHL ice.

Like many who move from below the 49th, the first thing Hollander-Rozanov said when we met at the Little Sisters on Osborne was "fucking hell is it always that cold?" It has been a bit of a rude welcome for our newest player, it's been -40 for the better part of the last week, though Hollander-Rozanov's complaints aren't for his own sake but worrying about someone I would come to find out is his cousin, Avelina Rozanova the latest of a slew of Russian dancers to sign with Canadian ballet companies.

"I really like it here a lot," Hollander-Rozanov says as we sit with our coffee in the corner of the cafe. "I got to come with my dad's a couple times and it always felt like such a hockey city. There's the sort of pride in the team that's a unifier here. Even in Ottawa you'll have people who've only ever lived in Ottawa show up to games in Admirals jerseys, and only when the Admirals play! That's not a thing here, everyone's Bisons, and the White Out's are insane in the best way."

Hollander-Rozanov politely declines to make any comments on his time with Montreal beyond the statement that was put out, but there's a sort of tiredness that sits in him. Later in our interview I get a glimpse into why.

"I'm glad to be on a team that feels like a cohesive team, where the coaches play to our strengths as a team and not rely on individual players throughout the whole game. Hockey's an intense sport, we're trading off and on the ice almost as fast as F1 drivers trade off wheels, and we're rarely on it for more than a minute or two at a time. There's only so much impact one player can have on a several hour long game when they play in ninety second intervals."

Returning back to his memories of visiting Winnipeg he smiles fondly and, unprompted, proceeds to gush about several small businesses, including the independent grocers Black Market Provisions across the road, Jacked Up Jill coffee roasters at the St. Norbert farmers market (that James Jacobs, Bisons centre, has apparently been supplying him with often enough that the word coffee appears in his contact on Hollander-Rozanov's phone), and

Cinnahollic the cinnamon bun maker. He was also the one to suggest meeting at this Little Sisters, happily drinking their Winter Spice latte.

When pressed he also talks fondly about his teammates.

"I've met a lot of them before, obviously Kitts and my Papa did a fair bit of press a few years back when the Cup was going to be Canadian for sure, one way or the other so we made sure to drop some cookies off when they were playing in Ottawa. And I played with Kern and Jacobs on the Canadian Juniors, and again in January at the All Stars game. It's not quite as gay a lineup as Ottawa but I think me and Jacobs put us on par with New York now."

He says that last part cheerfully, like it's a part of an in-joke and not a rather downbeat commentary on the state of the NHL that all the queer players are relegated to the same three teams. At this current moment, this season has the most out and active NHL players in the history of the league, and while that number has been slowly, steadily growing, when Scott Hunter retires at the end of this year it will, for the first time since the Admirals player came out, drop. Hollander-Rozanov remains unconcerned about it, though.

"I've played through Juniors with a bunch of guys chomping at the bit for their draft days in the next couple years who are queer. Hell, Jacobs was only barely starting to be open about using the label queer for himself and now he's collecting partners like Pokemon." He makes sure here that I include a note to our readers that that is a direct description from Jacobs' own two partners and not a disparaging comment against polyamorous people.

"I think we're reaching a point where the first generation of queer hockey players in the NHL are retiring, and I think people are going to start to see what I've known at a personal level. Scott's a great example of it, he's been open about the fact that he's put off several surgeries he'll need to undergo in the next couple of years for them to help at all, and each of them has pretty long recovery times. I know that he's pushed himself harder than he should have because he needed to prove that being gay didn't make him a bad player.

"I've also grown up with my dads," Hollander-Rozanov continues, stating the obvious elephant in the room. "Dad's always been pushing himself as this model minority, even before he came out as gay, because he was proving he was the best. Papa was the same way, proving he was worth the paperwork to play in the NHL. They both won Stanley Cups within their first five seasons, and they've been pushing themselves and each other every step of the way. Playing on the same team hasn't dulled that, really. They're pushing and pushing and pushing because they do have something to prove, no matter how much they win they always will.

"I'm excited to be part of this generation of queer players, the ones my dads and uncles paved the way for, because we'll be watching them all retire soon enough because they've pushed themselves to be extraordinary to counter-balance their queerness in the eyes of the hockey world. Me, Haas, Jacobs, Floros, we get the benefit of that work and we get to prove we can just be normal players too. We don't have to be perfect from day 0, Jacobs certainly hasn't been, and I certainly wasn't. And Floros only still has his teeth cause Scott's pulling him outta fights before they start for real."

Aris sat in his stall, double checking the score after their own game. Everyone else was huddled around phones. Winnipeg or Anaheim. It was game 7, into overtime 1-1, and according to the google tracker on his phone Mac had scored the one goal for the Bisons.

Scott dropped on the bench next to him, looking at the screen of Aris' phone. "Vaughny says if it's Winnipeg we need to look into hiring an Etsy witch and that is a phrase I don't know if I want to ask Kip to define."

"Too complicated to explain," Aris said without looking up from his phone.

"Hm."

Aris felt Scott watching him and it was kinda unnerving.

"What?" Aris asked finally.

"You know if Winnipeg wins we'll be facing them for the cup."

"I am aware how brackets work, Scottie."

"You'll be facing Mac." Scott placed a hand on Aris' shoulder. "One of you will walk away from your rookie season with a Stanley Cup and be responsible, likely in no small part, for the other losing. Do you think you're capable of not holding that against him?"

"Yeah?" Aris frowned. "Why?"

"Because you've been sneaking off with him every chance you got this season, and whatever it is that's going on between you two might be really good now, but are you *sure* you two can survive being the focal points of this game?"

"We won't be, you're the one retiring," Aris dismissed. "If the media wants to drum up a rivalry between us it'll be fine, it happens all the time and it's not like we're sitting here being in total denial like *some people*." He shrugged Scott's hand off his shoulder. "I swear we're fine, Mac's a friend. Shit's all good."

"Okay." Scott held his hands up. "Just making sure."

"We're fine," Aris repeated.

Because they were. He knew Mac wasn't putting too much on this season, knew Winnipeg wasn't either. He knew Mac had said it would be a fairytale ending for Scott to retire with a Cup win, knew that it felt like winning either way to Aris. Either Mac won and proved Montreal was just shit, or New York won and Scott got to skate off into hockey history.

He could tell Scott about Greece, about the extended family he'd reconnected with that had been so damn proud of him and known so much about him. About the days spent on a beach with Mac, alternating between dozing, sun-bathing, fucking, and swimming. About Mac coming with him, supporting him, and being adored by the family Aris had found in Greece. About Mac texting him *i/y* on a regular basis, about him saying it back.

Scott was, probably, the safest person to talk to about this weird thing between him and Mac. But he hadn't seen Mac in ages and the texting, phone calls, and yes sexting and FaceTime jerk-off sessions that had taken the place of their almost monthly meet-ups didn't seem like the time to bring up talking to Scott about this.

Scott who was Mac's uncle and Aris' captain and holy shit was the secret society of gay hockey players so damn prevalent, Aris might as well sign with the fucking Centaurs.

Winnipeg won, *Mac* won, scoring with an assist from Jacobs.

"Well, I sure hope so, kid." Scott clapped Aris' shoulder and left the locker room.

Chapter 29: Mac

Chapter Notes

This is the last of the two updates from today starting with chapter 28

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

Canada's Ilya Rozanov Accuses Russian Athletes of Intimidation

Published: February 2026

In a shocking statement released Friday by Team Canada, the Ottawa Centaurs, and Rozanov himself, the hockey superstar levelled several accusations at the AIN Russian athletes and their coaches. Among the list are several translated instances of slurs Rozanov himself heard levied at Rozanov, his husband and Team Canada Men's hockey team captain Shane Hollander, their son and fellow Team Canada athlete Mac Hollander-Rozanov, as well as the Canadian women's captain Leah Campbell, the USA Men's captain Scott Hunter, and the Swiss Men's captain Luca Haas. There are also specific instances of threatening gestures, and alleged stalking behaviours listed with dates and times over the course of the first week of the Olympic Games.

Most terrifying is the accusation that the Russian delegation inflicted personal distress on Rozanov. The nature of this personal distress is not shared, though the statement broadly states that it has to do with people Rozanov knew in Russia before he left the country for the last time in early 2017. Reports on social media spread like wildfire just 24 hours earlier when Rozanov was spotted screaming at an unidentified man in Russian, with Hunter, Campbell, Hollander, Troy Barrett, and Haas all seen in the immediate aftermath holding Rozanov back as Russian athletes laughed and led the man away. A photo that has since been overrun in the viral cycle of Olympic news shows the players, all coaches at Rozanov and Hollander's Game Changers Hockey Camp, circling Rozanov and Hollander. It is the only photo of that particular moment, as those in the area seem to have either not cared or been intimidated out of snapping any pictures by the glares of professional hockey players.

Mac had gone to countless Pride Parades, always walking with the Centaurs, and while yeah, a fair amount of the fervor had been because it was *Ottawa's* team and *Ottawa's* boys, he knew that it was also because of *who* his dads were. What they represented.

Winnipeg, with its parade starting in front of the beautifully Neo-classical Leg and winding through downtown, the Portage and Main intersection, and ending at the Forks, had a shorter, smaller parade than Ottawa. But there were thousands of people there, and they seemed to all recognize Shane and Ilya.

Irina was freshly four years old, with a rainbow sparkle tutu and enough glitter to fill a sky with stars, and she alternated between Ilya's shoulders, Shane's hip, and Mac's back.

Jacobs' partners had arranged for shirts for the family members of players, their player's name on the back in bright neon rainbow letters. And it did something to Mac's emotional state to go from preparing to face off against the Admirals (more specifically his childhood fucking hero in his final season and the guy being trained to replace his hero who Mac was definitely falling in love with) to seeing his dads, the two best fucking players in the whole damn League, with the hyphenated name they'd given him on their backs.

He wished Aris was there, but the Admirals' flight wouldn't land until that evening and Mac was pretty sure he wouldn't be seeing Aris until the game tomorrow. But.

His mind conjured up the image of Aris wearing the same damn family t-shirt with Mac's name on the back and-

This fucking series would kill him. Completely. Dead.

Games one and two were in Winnipeg, three and four in New York, so if they didn't lose every game they'd be back in Winnipeg for five and six. Maybe they'd even get to game seven-

But fuck Mac was *tired*.

Anaheim had given them a good fucking run for their money, and it showed.

Pride revitalized the team, everyone was there, walking and dancing with their families to the music blaring from the giant bison float that lit up with rainbow colours. But the previous day's practice had been a shit show, uncoordinated and messy to the point that Klassen had sent everyone home early with orders to rest.

Mac sorta felt like a curse, now.

Yeah, they'd made it to the final round of the fucking playoffs, and *yeah* he'd scored the two game seven goals that had gotten them here, but the way the team seemed to have completely fallen apart on the ice felt like his fault.

They reached the end of the parade at the Pride fairgrounds between the theatre and the Forks and Mac pointed his dads towards the Forks building to get Irina to the bathroom.

The rest of the team stepped out of the way of the continuing parade and started to congregate in smaller groups, looking at the day's schedule and the map of the festival grounds.

"Ope, incoming," Kitts warned and Mac braced just in time for Ava to latch herself onto Mac's shoulders.

He turned to look at her over his shoulder, catching her legs so she was on his back.
"Enjoying your first Pride, Ava?"

"Is fun!" She declared before switching to Russian, "*Makeup Department gave us all these little gems for our faces, I grabbed some for Irinka too.*"

"She'll love that, she's got enough glitter on her to cover the entire fucking team." Mac grinned, looking at his cousin with rainbow face paint and brightly shining iridescent gems stuck to her face.

"I didn't realize you knew Avelina," Kitts' voice had Mac looking back at him. Kitts' wife, a tall willowy blonde woman who looked like the picture of a ballerina, had draped her arm around his waist.

"Rozanova," Mac stated simply. It didn't register so he sighed and continued, "Russian last names shift by gender, Rozanov is the masculine, Rozanova the feminine. She's Papa's niece, making her mine and Irina's cousin."

"Wait, shit, really?" Kitts scoffed. "Damn, your family's got fingers in hockey *and* ballet?"

"Yeah I guess." Mac glanced at the Forks building, watching as Irina ran through the blocked off parking lot towards Ava. "Didn't realize we were both gonna end up here, though."

"Good that you both have family here now, though," Kitts' wife spoke softly, offering a genuine smile.

Mac smiled back at her. "Yeah."

"Are you excited to face off against New York?" She continued the small talk and Mac did his very best not to scream about it.

"I mean, I've played against them a fair amount. Kinda sucks that the first time I'm facing them as part of *this* team is in the fucking playoffs."

He watched Mrs. Kitts cast a worried glance in Irina's direction but it was Shane who dismissed her concerns.

"We gave up trying in December. She's being raised at a hockey arena, she hears worse on a regular basis." He wrapped an arm around Mac's shoulders, the steady, familiar weight of it settled some of the anxiety in the pit of his stomach. "You and Ilya are gonna grab food and a spot to sit inside, if you can find one. I'm gonna take Ava and Irina down to the riverbank."

"M'kay," Mac waved bye to the Kitts and ducked into the Forks building.

He beelined for the second floor to the little fridge at the back of the Trading Company's storefront, grabbing six pints of the edible cookie dough stocked there. He checked out, tucked the paper bag into his insulated backpack, and then jogged down the stairs to help Ilya find Irina and Shane-friendly food.

Ava's Russian shouting pulled Mac from the dead sleep he'd been in seemingly from the moment his head hit the pillow. Ilya, Shane, and Irina had returned to their hotel suite after

leaving the Forks the previous afternoon, and he'd gone straight home to crash.

It took him a moment for the words she was shouting to sink in.

"There is a tall handsome Greek at the door."

Mac shouted back in Russian, *"let him in!"*

And then he was fighting to get out of bed. He grabbed his glasses, frowned at the glowing alarm clock on his side table that told him it was 10am, and then realized his phone with the *actual* alarm set hadn't made it to the wireless charging pad. It was all of a half inch off.

He grabbed it and plugged it in in the kitchen on his way, catching Ava's *look* between Mac and the front hall entrance as she pulled her sneakers on and grabbed her keys from the carved loon key holder they had at the back door.

"What?" Mac asked in English.

"Is very pretty boy," she replied simply. "I have rehearsal. Do not lose too badly, Maksimka!"

She blew him a kiss and he flipped her off as the door closed behind her.

Aris walked through the archway that cut the front hall off from view of the kitchen and Mac's smile spread like a cookie baking in the oven; slow and sweet.

"So you've met Ava," he said in greeting.

"She looks like a mini-Rozanov," Aris stated, "like she could kick my ass."

Mac laughed. "Oh she could."

"Another Rozanov trait? Kicking asses and saving them?" Aris seemed to pause at the small entry into the kitchen that was formed by the wall with its cutout through to the backdoor mudroom and the end of the breakfast bar counter, like he wasn't sure he should step closer.

Mac stepped closer because like hell was he going to let Aris be in *his* house and *not* have his hands on him somehow. He placed his hands flat against Aris' hipbones and slid them slowly back, pulling Aris into his arms as they encircled his waist. "Whichever the day calls for, yes."

Aris' forehead thunked onto Mac's shoulder and he seemed to go completely boneless. Mac felt the marrow-deep exhaustion lift from him like the steam curling from the boiling kettle in the corner.

"Hi," he murmured fondly, lips turned to brush a kiss against Aris' temple.

"Hi," Aris mumbled back. He heard Aris take a deep inhale and then sigh contentedly.

"Montreal to New York spoiled us."

Mac hummed his agreement and let his hands travel lower, gripping Aris' thighs and lifting him up into his arms, carrying him the few feet to set him on the sturdiest part of the kitchen counters. "Didn't think you'd come," he said with a gentle bonk of his forehead against the back of Aris' head.

"Wasn't gonna, but uh," Aris pulled back and bit his lip, eyes looking down and away from Mac in embarrassment.

"But?" Mac prompted.

"The hotel had shit tea options and I figured... Why would I text you to complain about it when I could just... Show up?" The way he turned the last two words into a question, the subtle blush on his cheeks, the way he seemed so unsure if he could fit in this version of Mac's life at all.

Mac kissed him. Gentle, soft, not caring that he hadn't had time to brush his teeth yet. Aris melted into him, fingers finding their way into Mac's hair like a magnet drawn to it's opposite; natural and inevitable.

"I have many options," Mac murmured against Aris' lips. "Kettle's got a temperature dial and everything."

"Fuck, does *Winnipeg* have room on their roster?" Aris groaned. Mac laughed and opened the cupboard, pulling down the little woven box where he'd been putting the teas he'd started collecting for Aris.

"You thinking of turning traitor during the playoffs, Floros?"

"Fuck the playoffs, it feels like this season has lasted fucking *years*."

"Dad said the first season always feels like that, it's a new schedule, new cities, trying to build a place for yourself in it all." Mac reached out and grabbed Aris' hand, kissing the back of his palm. "Have you found a place yet?"

"I said-"

"To bug you about it during the summer. It's *June*, Floros. It's summer. Find a place that doesn't feel like a fucking movie set."

"I meant when we're not playing, fuckhead."

"Yeah well you could have a nice cozy place for *me* to crash in in New York but noooo you gotta have the fucking boring ass white washed furniture!" Aris barely managed to stifle a whole ass fucking *giggle* and Mac whirled on him, eyes bright and mouth open. "Was that a fucking giggle?"

Aris turned beet red and turned away.

"Oh fuck, no, Aris, fucking hell-" Mac crowded into Aris' space, slotting between his legs and cupping his face in his hands. "That was so fucking cute holy shit."

"Fuck off," Aris grumbled, cheeks so warm under Mac's fingers.

Mac kissed him, not sweet or adoring but instead intending to fucking *devour* the giant in front of him who arched his back so prettily, begged to be fucked, took orders so nicely, had the biggest fucking praise kink Mac had ever seen, and *fucking giggled*.

Oh *fuck*.

Oh he was so goddamn fucked.

Mac wasn't just *falling* for Aristotelis Floros, he was *in* love with him.

Chapter End Notes

Hehehehe sorryyyyy mini cliffhanger it's okay :D

Also I've debated writing the little snippet that the article at the top of this refers to (and some of the other Olympics shenanigans) but they'd be posted as one-shots bc I wanted this story to focus on the 27-28 season!

Chapter 30: Aris

Chapter Notes

Just the one update for today :D

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

Winnipeg took the first game, New York the second and third, then Winnipeg the fourth. It was fucking intense and it was also... Kinda really fucking nice.

Despite his whinging and complaints about the plainness of Aris' apartment, Mac spent every moment of spare time in it. They slept in the same beds, in the burgundy house in Winnipeg or in the penthouse in Manhattan. Mac made coffee and tea and fresh bread and Aris made them breakfasts and dinners. They made a list of what Aris wanted for a permanent place in New York and Mac started reaching out to real estate agents. It felt so fucking normal and blissful and domestic. It fuelled both of them on the ice.

It was fucking intense, but so *so* fucking fun. Mac played with Winnipeg like he belonged, like he fit into their team strategy, like he was a *part* not a prop. It made him good, and felt so fucking familiar too.

Aris had been playing against Mac for years and he hadn't realized how much Montreal had dulled the spark in him until he was back on the ice with a team that had his back.

New York won the fifth game in Winnipeg, and then they were back to New York.

Mac skated up to Aris, safely on the other side of the line during warmups, grinning and waving at someone in the stands.

"Your dads here?" Aris asked.

"Oh pretty much everyone," Mac winked at Aris. "Just in case you all manage to take this game."

Aris grinned. "He's gonna cry, win or not."

"Yep!"

Aris looked back at the ice, focusing on stretching out his back, when he felt Mac's stick tap his thigh. "What?"

"Turn around," Mac said gleefully.

Aris did as Mac told him to do, like always, and was about to ask why when he spotted them. All 17 of his extended family, including the ones that *hadn't* been at Yaya's home in Ithaki were sitting rink-side, and every last one of them were wearing his jersey, with *his* number on it. He felt Mac shove his stick into Aris' back, pushing him in their direction, and he was skating to the edge of the ice, hands up on the glass like he could reach through it and hug each of them.

His parents weren't there, his brother wasn't there, his sister wasn't there, but he had *family* right in front of him, smiling and chattering at him even though it was impossible to hear them.

The whistle blew to signal the end of warm-up and Aris skated backwards, waving at his family until he reached his bench.

"Damn, you really are Greek huh?" Carter chirped, hanging over the boards to wave to Aris' family too. "There's like, a hundred of 'em."

"17," Aris corrected. "Maybe you shouldn't be on the ice if you think 17 people are a hundred," he chirped around the thick glob of emotion in his throat.

"One more game and you're not my problem anymore," Scott sighed, grabbing the back of Aris' jersey and yanking him onto the bench.

Aris grinned. "Oh I'm your problem for life, Scottie. Sorry, I'm like a baby duck. You were nice to me one time, now I've imprinted." He turned and spotted Kip in the seats just behind the box. Aris waved gleefully mouthing '*hi Kip*' in big exaggerated movements. Kip laughed and waved back and Aris turned back to Scott. "Also your husband likes me. And Bennet. And Kyle. And-"

"Jesus fucking Christ why did *I* end up with the mini-Rozanov," Scott grumbled.

Aris shoulder-checked him as they skated out onto the ice. "Could be your last game, old timer. Make it count."

It was Scott's last game.

New York won, and the season ended, and the handshake line ended with Mac crushing a misty-eyed Scott into a hug. Scott lifted the cup, the stands cheered, and they took pictures for history's sake. And then their families were on the ice, and Aris hugged every member of his family quickly before telling them he'd be right back.

In the walkway, out of view of the cameras, Ilya Rozanov handed Aris a white jersey with rainbow banding and the Admiral's logo. Troy Barrett, Ilya, Shane, Mac, Luca Haas, and Jacobs were already waiting, in similar white jerseys with the rainbow banding with their team logos on them. Ryan Price and Eric Bennett were also laced up, Price and two athletes Aris assumed were Baldwin and Lundin were in Camp Game Changers pride jerseys and Eric was the only other one in an Admirals pride jersey.

Before anyone could consider following Aris off the ice, he was stepping back on, in a new jersey, with everyone else following close behind him. They skated an almost full lap, only diverting when the red carpet Crowell stood on, barely containing his glower, got in the way.

Aris skated to Scott's side as the others fell into an honour guard lining the way off the ice.

"What the fuck?" Scott breathed.

"Without you, none of us would've even thought about being open," Aris answered. "You literally paved the way for all of us, there are kids playing right now who have never had to hide who they are while playing because of you. Change might be small to start, but it's coming. This is a relay, not a marathon, and you're our anchor. It started with you." He nodded over to the spot just off of centre ice where Scott had kissed Kip on live TV. "Right over there. This," he nodded to the honour guard, "is our way of saying thank you."

Aris let Scott just stare, then he caught Carter's eye and nodded to the guard. In the spaces between the queer players past and present of the NHL, the Admirals filled in, every last one of them smiling at Scott and Kip where they both stood, crying, at the end of the line. Aris skated to stand next to Barrett, and they all waited.

He could imagine the way the commentators were framing this, but he knew that Harris Drover was somewhere nearby posting the exact reason to the Centaurs, Bisons, and Admirals social media feeds at the same time. If there was any doubt what this meant, it would be squashed in a handful of words, and the photo of nearly all of them at the Olympics in their team jackets and pride pins that they'd all posted in the last intermission of the game.

Today another season comes to an end, and many players retire, but one will be remembered in history books. Scott Hunter's brave decision to come out publicly over a decade ago shocked many, and it also opened the closet door for the handful of players who are here to show him just what that meant to them. Change starts small, it starts with one person being brave enough to stand up and be true to who they are and the morals they hold dear. Scott Hunter is, without a doubt, an icon of the queer community, but he is also a friend and mentor who will be missed.

We stand as representatives, not of the NHL, but of the LBGTQIA2S+ community that Scott has continued to stand up for on and off the ice.

[a video plays, a compilation of Scott Hunter on the ice and at various queer events and organizations overlaid with different narrations labelled by name and team affiliation]

Luca Haas, Ottawa Centaurs: *Canadians and Americans play good hockey, so even over in Europe there are people who watch the Stanley Cup, watch the NHL. Especially if you play hockey. Sitting there, watching Scott Hunter open that door, made it clear to me which league I would be aiming for.*

Mac Hollander-Rozanov, Winnipeg Bisons: *I was nine watching the game with the people who birthed me. It was the moment that made me realize I wasn't the only one, that there was a word for how I was feeling, and that it was okay. That it wasn't a bad thing to be gay.*

Troy Barrett, Ottawa Centaurs: *I was in Toronto still, when Scott came out. I remember being terrified to my core that someone would notice, would lump me in with him, would figure me out. But Scott coming out also opened the floor to discussions in other teams, like the Centaurs, where my husband would be able to get his job and be out and open and beloved by the team from his first day. I owe him for that, for making this league a little safer, so I could stop pretending to be a fucking asshole.*

Ryan Price, 2010-2019: *Well, uh, everyone knows what hockey's like. My husband talks about being a kid with a family that billeted junior players and how they were all pretty shitty to him because he was more of a stereotypical gay guy, and it turned him off the sport for good. It turned me a fair bit off the sport too. But I see the impact Scott's made in the younger generation, with the kids at the Game Changers Hockey Camp, and how their attitudes shifted.*

Ilya Rozanov, Ottawa Centaurs: *Russia is not a place that is open about this sort of thing, now it is codified in law as illegal but even when I was young it was not possible. It seemed like the one thing that NHL and KHL shared, that being gay or bi or pan was not allowed. We just don't do that here. And then Scott went for it, and it felt like every bad thing in my life was sucked up by a tornado and didn't matter anymore.*

James Jacobs, Winnipeg Bisons: *I remember the next practice everyone was talking about it, trying to figure out what it meant. My coach explained it to us, he'd never let anyone on the team use any sort of slur or swear word on or off the ice, but that what Scott had done was brave. I didn't realize until a few years later why it resonated with me so much deeper than any of my teammates.*

Shane Hollander, Ottawa Centaurs: *I've always been a little slow on the uptick, so I didn't realize I was gay until a few months before Scott came out and Ilya loves to remind me of that, but watching that game with my parents, struggling with whether I could tell them I was gay let alone that I was in love with Ilya Rozanov... Well suddenly we had a future, one that wasn't a complete unknown, because Scott had gone first.*

Eric Bennett, New York Admirals, r. 2020: *Scott is one of my best friends, and when he came out to us privately, first, I knew it was scary for him. Even knowing him as well as I do, it was scary for me too. But Scott was there, waiting to catch me, not just as my friend and as my captain, but as the guy who'd done this all before.*

Aristotelis Floros, New York Admirals: *I was thinking about quitting hockey. Like Hunter said I was starting to realize I was that thing that kids threw around locker rooms and ice rinks as an insult, and it wasn't fun anymore. Then it felt possible, again. My coach's kid came out at the end of year banquet that year, because of Scott. Because it felt possible.*

Yeah so this was where the fic was originally going to end but they kept chattering in my brain so there's another 9 chapters to go now

Chapter 31: Mac

[A screenshot from Mac's ill-fated takeover of the Metros Instagram stories where his back is to a counter and the phone is set up on an island, the kitchen is white and plain and Mac holds a coffee grinder in his hand, mid sentence, there's a collection of tea canisters behind him. A second screenshot from Aris' Instagram of him, shirtless, in his kitchen making tea with the caption 'home sweet home' and a collection of tea canisters on the counter behind him.]

@MarisIsReal: *So I was rewatching Mac's takeover post-trade and realized that kitchen looked soooooo familiar! And then Aris posted a story literally today (June 7 2028) making tea in his kitchen. Yall. The tea things are the same, the kitchen is the same, you can even see the coffee grinder in the corner behind the tea thingys! #Maris*

|@huntersfiestykittenfloros: *Oh my god!!! You're so right! Mac staying with Floros in NOVEMBER!!!! And then Greece in February!!! Adding this to the #Maris timeline right now omg*

They were, technically, supposed to be hopping on a flight back to Winnipeg, but there were no more games left to play, and Scott had physically dragged Mac and Jacobs out of the Bisons locker room while shouting the rest of the team was also welcome at the Kingfisher. It was clear they didn't have a choice, and they also weren't likely to make their flight the next day.

The Kingfisher was *packed*, mostly in Admirals colours but there were more than a few white jerseys with various rainbow team emblems on them too. Jacobs' two partners had managed to find a seat in the corner, looking on at everything and everyone in the Kingfisher like they were extraneous.

"Jules!" Mac shouted over the crowd, grabbing their wrist when they got close enough. He spotted Kyle behind the bar and leaned over, keeping hold of their hand. "Where's your husband?"

"He just ran out for ice." Kyle turned to Jules. "Hi, sorry, we can get you non-iced drinks-"

"You need to sit here," Mac declared, sitting Jules on a bar stool, "and talk to Kyle about art shit. Kyle this is one of Jacobs' partners, Jules this is Kyle his husband owns the bar with Scott Hunter." He made a gesture between the two of them as he dropped his coat behind the bar. "Talk art shit!"

He ducked under someone's arms and returned to where Kern, Jacobs, and Jacobs' other partner, Francis, were still in the corner.

"This is a *lot*," Francis said, eyes almost crossing as he tried to track everything that was going on.

"Yeah well, they won the cup, they're gonna be a lot," Mac explained. "Also, we're not sitting here, c'mon."

He pushed through the crowd to the back corner table, depositing his teammates on one of the benches before sitting himself down next to Ryan.

"Good enough reason to get back on NHL ice?" Mac asked him, grinning.

Ryan smiled an actual smile, bumping his shoulder into Mac's. "I won 70\$ off your Dad."

"When did you guys even have time to plan that?" Kern demanded.

"Oh it's been planned for like, the whole season at this point," Jacobs answered.

"When he announced he was retiring, so technically before the season started." Mac stretched his arms back, his shoulders cracking. "*Ough* I can't wait for weeks of just relaxing."

"Until you're coaching," Ryan pointed out.

"Well, yeah." Mac grinned, nudging Ryan back. "I gotta earn the timbits."

"I still can't believe he's actually like, retiring." Jacobs shook his head. "I mean, until next season starts I don't think it'll sink in."

"Oh it probably won't sink in for him for a bit yet, either. It took a bit for me and I was *really* ready to just be *done* with hockey." Ryan ran a hand through his hair in the sort of nervous way he always did whenever he referenced how much he'd started to hate hockey before he retired. Especially in front of active players.

Kern let out a low whistle. "Fuck yeah, I can't imagine doing this shit and having to deal with fucking Toronto."

"Toronto 10 years ago," Mac added.

"Fuck, Timbit, you gotta make me feel *that* old?" Ryan leaned back in the booth.

"Is he making you feel old or are you just old?" Ilya asked, leaning on the divider between the back most booth and the next.

Ryan rolled his eyes. "We started playing the same fucking year, Roz."

"No, you are misremembering, I-" Ilya started.

"You're now the second oldest queer player in the league," Mac finished, standing and putting a hand on Ilya's shoulder. "Sorry, Papa, you're the ancient one now. Transitive nature of calling Dad old when he was the second oldest, that makes you old now too."

Ilya gasped and pointed to himself then looked at Mac's teammates. "Do you see this disrespect?"

Jacobs grinned. "Yeah, Hol-Roz. You should respect your elders."

Mac laughed, taking the chance to slip behind the bar and out of the crowded room.

"You good, Timbit?" Eric asked, arm wrapped around his shoulders and squeezing him in a sideways hug.

"Yeah," he grinned. "*I* didn't have to do an extra hour of press tonight."

"Fair enough. Fries are coming out in a bit, you wanna stay back here?" Eric offered.

Mac grinned and hopped up onto the counter space behind the bar that had once held extra shelves for the shitty cheap alcohol but had been empty since Scott and Eric had bought the bar. There was a warm feeling, deep in his bones, as Kitts arrived with some of their other teammates, to this little sanctuary.

So they'd lost, oh well, it was a loss that didn't really hurt. Especially not with everyone around him, the people he loved, celebrating.

Annoying Greek <3

Just dropped everyone off at their hotel

OMW

do u want a drink?

Doubt I'll get out of there without at least a couple shots

if u don't want any u know kyle will swap them for water

I know

Fries?

ofc

tea?

OFC

"Kyle could you pass me my coat?"

Kyle picked it up and held it out to Mac as he continued on his path making whatever drink from the rainbow of cocktails named after the queer hockey players someone had ordered. Mac pressed the little lever on the kettle next to his counter-perch down and pulled one of the loose leaf tea bags out of his travel kit, stuffing the rest of it back into his pocket. He reached

up and pulled down a mug from where the clean ones sat on top of the bar back, dropping the tea bag into it.

The entire bar erupted in cheers when Scott *finally* arrived, and the cheering grew impossibly louder still when he grabbed hold of Kip and kissed him.

"Gee, you'd think it was 2017," Mac chirped when the cheering died down.

"Do you see what you've done, Rozanov?" Scott shouted across the bar. "Ruined a perfectly good kid, you did!"

"Improved!" Ilya corrected, grinning as he slid back into the booth Harris, Troy, and Shane had claimed. Mac watched Ilya grab food from Shane's plate and that bone-deep warmth seemed to pulse, like every person in the bar had one heartbeat.

Mac had just finished pouring the water into the waiting mug when he was crushed into Scott's arms.

"Hi Scottie," Mac laughed, arms pinned to his sides.

"I asked you, directly, if you had any big dramatic moments," Scott pulled back and tried his best to glare at Mac, and failed spectacularly with the way his eyes were misting and the permanently affixed smile "and you lied to my face and said no!"

"Yeah, and?" Mac grinned and put his hands on Scott's shoulders. "You're the one that wanted me to stop looking at you like a saint."

"You were *nine*?" Scott hissed.

"Yes that is how time works."

"Nine years old."

"Mhm." Mac poked Scott's shoulder. "I told you, you're ancient."

"I *am* fucking *ancient* oh my god," Scott groaned.

"Think of it this way, Scottie, Aris isn't your problem anymore!"

"Yes he is, Kip's attached now. Fuck it really is like those feral fucking cat gifs."

"What am I?" Kip asked, pushing Scott to stand next to Mac's perch before grabbing a pitcher and starting to fill it up.

"Perfect," Scott said, smiling like a lovesick fool.

"Attached to Aris," Mac spoke at the same time.

"Both true," Kip agreed. "Though, you're just as attached to him."

"Like Shane and Anya," Scott sighed. His eyes moved around the room and he frowned. "Where is he?"

"Dropping his family off at their hotel," Mac answered.

Scott hummed. "Was nice of his parents to come."

"His parents weren't there." Mac's emails, calls, texts, and multiple different messages on social media platforms had gone unanswered. Alexia said the same was true when the others had reached out. "His Yaya, aunts, uncles, and cousins came, though." He turned to pull the tea bag out and found Scott giving him a knowing look, while Kip tried and failed to pretend like he wasn't eavesdropping. "What?"

"You sure know a lot about his family," Scott noted.

"You gossiping with my Papa again?" Mac deflected.

"Look, I didn't tell him about the Olympics, I didn't tell him about your rendezvous in Montreal and the definitely not a hickey on Aris, I didn't say shit about where you were after the All Stars weekend," Scott counted out each of the four points on his fingers, "and I didn't tell him that Aris didn't sleep at the hotel in Winnipeg at all this series."

"Do you want a fucking sticker?"

"Mac," Kip chided. "Be nice."

"I'm the nice one!" Mac gasped.

"Who's deflecting *again*!" Scott grabbed the fries from the server who was attempting to deliver them to Mac and held them out of Mac's reach. "I'm retired! Give me something here!"

"Give me my fucking fries! I will climb your bar again!"

"No rough-housing behind the bar." Kyle snatched the fries from Scott. "Both of you lose introvert privileges, fuck off."

"I didn't do shit!" Mac huffed, stuffing his jacket behind the bar anyways.

"The broken glass I'd have to clean up and get out of your bodies doesn't care who does or doesn't do shit, Timbit." Kyle handed him the plastic basket and pat his cheek. "Go sit down like a normal person instead of perching behind the bar you don't work at."

Mac, like the fully grown adult he was, stuck his tongue out at Kyle and grabbed the mug, but he did what he was told and left the back of the bar. He did, however, retreat to the still empty table in the front corner of the bar, sitting down with his fries and Aris' tea.

Somehow, despite the loud cheer that had gone up when Scott and Carter and every other Admiral arrived, Aris managed to sneak through the door unnoticed.

"Tea from Winnipeg, sugar, no milk," Mac said as Aris stopped at the table.

"You flew my family out from fucking *Greece*."

"Yeah." Mac held the basket up. "Gonna accuse me of psychologically messing with you or are you gonna have a fry?"

Watching Aris' mind work on the ice was one thing, they had both played this game pretty much their whole lives, they knew the rules, what was allowed, what the goal was. Hockey was their life, their brains were trained for it just as much as their bodies were.

Watching Aris' mind try to compute that someone cared about him was a whole other game, though. He'd been the same on his birthday, just after the All Star game, staring at Mac like there was some reason for him showing up with a cake and sneaking a present into his bag, besides caring about him. And yeah, maybe if Mac hadn't been sneaking in it would've been clearer. But then he'd watched Aris realize there was no other reason. And then Aris had pointed out that Mac had been sounding particularly Russian.

Mac stood and put the mug of tea into Aris' hand. "I know how it feels to play without family watching, and I know how much better it feels when the family watching is the family that loves and accepts you."

"You-" Aris bumped his forehead against Mac's. "Two weeks and then you're making us come back."

"And then we can go again, after those two weeks." Mac smiled. "C'mon, Jacobs' partners are here and you didn't believe he had game."

Mac moved through the bar, not needing to hold onto Aris to know he was behind him. "No, I believe he has game, I just don't believe you care enough about it."

"What does Mac not care enough about?" Jacobs asked.

"You having game," Aris answered.

Jacobs laughed and put his arm around Francis. "I'm not the one drinking tea at a bar after winning the fucking Stanley Cup, Floros."

"Is he even legal here?" Ryan asked.

"We're being very very good, Pricey, don't worry, everyone here can legally drink." Carter appeared from nowhere with a shot glass that he held out to Aris.

"Is that the good vodka?" Mac narrowed his eyes at the glass.

"Dude, I don't know I just asked for vodka."

Mac took the shot and put it in front of Jacobs. "Papa! Kyle's serving shit vodka again!" He shouted over the buzz of the bar.

"Kyle! How many times-!" Ilya's shouting faded away as Jacobs pulled a face.

"That is not good vodka," he declared.

"Damn, forgot the fucking vodka snobs were here," Carter mumbled.

"Find some fucking champagne or something, shots are for NHL awards not for the fucking cup." Mac waved his hand dismissively and Carter snapped and pointed at him.

"You're so right Timbit!"

"Champagne? Really?" Aris muttered.

"I'll drink it it's *fine*-"

"Mac you're 20 you can't drink in the States," Ryan interrupted.

Mac crossed his arms. "Ryan you know damn well I've been drinking since I was 12."

"And in this bar," Shane added. "Ryan, Fabian's trying to call you-"

Ryan's hand went to his pocket and he sighed. "Phone's behind the bar. Shit."

"Oh is that how you're avoiding the drunk text repeat performance?" Mac chirped.

Aris and Kern had the same glint in their eyes. "The *what*?" Kern asked.

"Not a fucking word, Mac," Ryan said, pointing emphatically as he left for the bar.

"Sit down," Mac instructed, gently pushing Aris towards the bench. "Have a fry, *malen'koye solntse*."

Carter returned, grinning, with two bottles of champagne. "Now, Kyle said we couldn't shake them-"

"And we're not going to," Aris finished, taking one of the bottles. "Because we like Kyle and we don't want to cover the bar in champagne when you already covered the whole fucking locker room like a teenage boy discovering porn for the first time."

"We do like Kyle," Carter agreed.

"And Eric would kill you," Shane added, his hand resting on Mac's shoulder. "You okay?" He asked, quiet enough that only Mac could hear.

"*You're* the competitive one in this family," Mac dismissed easily. "Besides, it's not like the Olympics. We'll get it next year."

"Keep dreaming, Timbit," Troy chirped, elbowing him as he set a full pitcher of beer down on the table.

Ilya returned, depositing a shot glass into Aris' hand and holding a chilled whisky glass with a good amount of what was definitely vodka out to Mac. He took it, clinking his glass against Ilya's, and took a sip.

"See, they stock good vodka," Mac teased, grinning.

Kern, Jacobs, and Aris all looked at him like he'd grown a second head. "How the fuck are you drinking-" "There's no way that's vodka-" "Are you fucking insane-" all layered over each other and Mac let his grin slip just the other side of feral.

"*Ya Russkiy*," he answered with a flourish of his vodka glass.

Shane squeezed his shoulder before releasing it. "Exceedingly Russian."

Scott appeared, frowned at Mac and started, "isn't he still-"

"Not in Canada," Mac interrupted.

"And Ilya gave it to him, so I think that's a legal loophole," Aris added helpfully.

"And I will remind you how many shots you bought for the two rookies in 2011." Shane had started to lean into Ilya's side, Ilya's arm wrapped around Shane's waist as a brace and shield all in one.

"He bought us shots?" Ilya asked.

"No," Shane hummed. "You were busy sulking on a roof."

"I was *not*- Oh. Oh wait. Yes, yes I was." Ilya kissed Shane quickly.

"Are they always like that?" Kern asked.

"Yep," Jacobs answered, downing his drink. "You think Kyle would give me the good vodka?"

"I'll get you good vodka," Mac answered. "You gotta meet Eric properly anyways."

Getting Kyle to hand over a round of shots of the good vodka was easy enough, after a half-serious "that better be water" directed at Mac who very much chose not to answer. Haas joined them, and the little gaggle of queers gathered round the bar, Jules and Francis on either side of Jacobs, Kern and Haas grinning, and Aris looking as relaxed as Mac had ever seen him in a bar.

"To Floros!" Haas cheered, raising his shot glass.

"Finally winning something before Hol-Roz!" Kern added with a laugh.

The group threw their shots back and Mac took an equally long drink of his vodka, then a second because he could and watching the reactions made him feel even more smug than usual.

"What do you mean finally?" He asked Kern, grinning as Kyle filled their shot glasses again.

"What?" Kern frowned at his shot glass. "No- Look this is very good vodka but it still burns like a mother fucker-"

"Wimp," Mac chirped.

"There's no fucking way you're drinking that much straight vodka," Jacobs insisted.

"He is," Luca sighed and downed the second shot before, wisely, flipping it over on the bar top.

Aris grabbed Mac's glass and took a sip, verifying, but also treating Mac to a moment to stare, smug, and just starting to buzz pleasantly instead of the normal anxious buzz. He watched Aris' lips purse, watched him swallow thickly, watched his cheeks puff out as he exhaled heavily.

"That's straight fucking vodka," Aris confirmed. He dumped his shot into Mac's glass and gulped down a few mouthfuls of tea to wash the taste from his mouth. Mac *really* wanted to taste good vodka on Aris' tongue-

"Only straight things I do; vodka and skate." If he needed to try to seduce Aris he would've dropped his voice, leaned into his vowels. Instead he just worked his hand up under the hem of Aris' shirt, letting the chirping and teasing and camaraderie flow around and through them both.

He felt Aris lean into him, his forearm draping over Mac's shoulder in a way that could have been read as friendly overly-affectionate hockey touch. Except that Aris was fiddling with the neck of Mac's shirt and his fingertips were brushing over his skin and Mac was *really* annoyed that he hadn't put bruises on Aris anywhere they'd be seen.

There were *far* too many Kingfisher regulars who were looking at Aris (and to a lesser extent Mac) like they were waiting to pounce.

"Damn, Floros, what'd that guy do to you?" Jacobs teased and Mac looked back at Aris who was glaring someone out the door.

"Aris, stop scaring off the regulars," Kyle admonished.

"Floros," Mac chided, grinning as Scott approached. "Stop negatively impacting your former Captain's only business venture."

"It's not my *only* venture." Scott grabbed the back of Aris' shirt. "And I need this one, we're toasting or some shit."

Chapter 32: Aris

Chapter Notes

This is the second (and last) update of the day

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

HockeyNow; Pride 2028: The Next Generation of Queer Players

Published: June 2028

(Note: This interview was conducted prior to the Stanley Cup playoffs and the emotional farewell to Scott Hunter on the ice)

You've all been open about your sexualities from the start of your careers, correct?

Mac Hollander-Rozanov: *I mean I didn't exactly have much of a choice! Good thing about my traumatic coming out being so public is that I never have to come out ever again!*

Aristotelis Floros: *Yeah, the fact that I showed up to my first practice for the American Juniors team with a pretty clear bi pin didn't really leave room for misinterpretations.*

James Jacobs: *I mean I had shit to figure out first but yeah.*

H-R: *You figured your shit out out loud in the locker room in Sweden.*

F: *No!*

J: *Yeah...*

H-R: *He got there. Eventually.*

After this season's All Star game broke from tradition and had multiple rookies on your team, do you think the special treatment you're getting is negatively or positively impacting your careers?

H-R: *Well given that I got traded my first season...*

F: *I'm not sure it's special treatment so much as capitalizing on what will draw viewers and fans to spend their money to watch it.*

So there's no special treatment?

H-R: *If there is I've yet to see it materialize.*

F: *I think people assume Hol-Roz's name gets him special treatment, it doesn't. Nepotism doesn't exactly work well in a high intensity fast paced sport like hockey. If you can't keep up you're not gonna be on the ice. We've all gotten to see how he plays with teams that actually value him and use him as the asset he is.*

J: *Yeah, Winnipeg was already a great team, but having Hol-Roz join us was like a real boost. He's pretty adaptive, we still don't know what line or position he plays best cause he's just so multi-tool useful!*

H-R: *Gee I love being compared to a multi-tool.*

J: *You have me in your phone as your coffee dealer you can be a multi-tool.*

Coffee dealer?

F: *Hol-Roz made a group chat for the All Stars game this year, most of the team has trickled out since but the three of us, Haas, Kern, and Dryden are still in there. And because he made the chat we're all stuck with the contact names he gave us.*

J: *And he really likes a coffee brand in Winnipeg.*

H-R: *Obsessed with. I can admit I have a problem.*

How do you all feel, going into this playoffs season knowing you're likely to play against each other?

H-R: *I mean, everyone knows my dads played against each other for a decade while being in a secret relationship. It's about leaving it on the ice, and yeah one team will make it to second place, but whoever it is still walks away as the conference champions.*

J: *I think people forget that a lot of us have played together, especially recently. We had the Olympics two years ago and [Brisebois] was on our team. We're kinda used to playing against Floros at this point, but we're also used to just kinda vibing in the downtime.*

F: *I definitely anticipated more strict lines in the sand about inter-team friendships but most guys have friends on other teams.*

H-R: *Yeah no psych-outs-*

F: *Shut the fuck up.*

H-R: *Nope*

"I thought you were gonna leave this on the ice," Aris bemoaned as Scott dragged him towards the tables in the middle of the Kingfisher that Kyle had complained about having to pay extra to shore up.

In case they won and a 250+ pound hockey player wanted to climb them.

Carter had climbed up on the sturdy tables in the middle of the bar and he'd managed to pull Matti Jallo up next to him.

"It's effective." Scott grinned and shoved Aris up.

Aris' teammates grabbed hold of his forearms and pulled him up, he turned and grabbed Breezy's hand, then Anderson's, and by the time he looked the rest of the team had pulled each other up on top of the tables too. Jallo clapped an arm around Aris and the entire Admirals team became a tangle of affectionate arms and limbs and boozy breaths.

He didn't entirely catch Carter's rambling, affection filled speech, but it ended with, "we're Stanley Cup Champions, baby!"

The team roared in victory, the regulars and families that had come to the Kingfisher cheered, even the other players clapped. He spotted the Gradys in the centre booth, all in Scott Hunter jerseys, raising their glasses proudly.

"Hey, and! A moment of good sportsmanship to acknowledge the Bisons gave us a fucking run for our money!" Scott raised his glass towards where Jacobs, Kern, and Mac had congregated at the bar.

"Give us a proper season with Hol-Roz and you'll be celebrating *our* win next season!" Jacobs shouted back. Mac elbowed him and said something quick and sharp and entirely too intelligent for a clearly drunk Jacobs to grasp.

"Y'know," Jallo's Finnish accent tickled Aris' ear. He was *definitely* thinking he was whispering, he was not, he was in fact talking a little above his normal volume and his wife was laughing behind her hand. "I thought you and the Timbit were gonna pull a Scott when you ran off the ice."

Aris had thought about it, about kissing Mac before they skated back out onto that ice, but he hadn't. Mostly because he didn't want to feel like he was stealing a kiss in the unlit hallway a half second before they had a statement to make. Aris felt simultaneously protective of this thing with Mac, of Mac himself, and didn't want it to feel like it was secret, didn't want Mac to feel like Aris was ashamed.

"Well they've only been hooking up the whole season," Scott's contribution had Aris' cheeks burning and Carter gaping at him.

It was Ilya Rozanov's voice that had Aris almost shoving Scott off the table and apologizing to Kip for turning his husband into a paraplegic. "They've been *what*? Scott Hunter you were supposed to be telling me things! I sent you study!"

"I don't gossip about sex Roz!" Scott shouted back. "Especially not where your kid is involved!"

"If you could shut up that'd be great," Aris grumbled.

"Oh you've been posting targeted thirst traps for the whole fucking season," Scott's voice was, thankfully quieter, but Aris was still boring a hole into the table.

"Scott," Kip was laughing as he called his husband's name. "Stop embarrassing Aris you'll feel like shit about it tomorrow."

"No! Cause I don't gotta deal with it! I'm retired! I don't gotta cover for your sneaky hookups!" Scott placed his hands on Aris' shoulder. "For next season just remember. Scarves. They exist."

"Scott, buddy, that's enough," Mac's voice was closer and he was helping Kip pull Scott down off the table.

"Oh hi!" Scott smiled at Kip when he had both feet on the floor again. "I love you."

"I love you too," Kip said quieter than Scott had been the last half hour, though he raised his voice so Kyle would hear when he added, "and I think you're cut off."

Aris sat on the edge of the table, watching Kip wrangle Scott into a chair only to be pulled into Scott's lap.

"Oh he's gonna feel so shitty tomorrow," Mac muttered.

"He deserves the hangover." Aris looked at Mac. "I didn't tell him-"

"*Malen'koye solntse*," Mac interrupted, smiling at Aris. "It's okay, we're not exactly subtle."

Aris tried to frown but he'd won the fucking Stanley Cup in his rookie fucking season and the boy he loved was smiling at him like *he* was the prize. His eyebrows might've moved the smallest bit. "I thought we were."

"You came home with me for Christmas, you snuck in a quick hookup on a layover, you pulled me from a full on panic attack, I got the All Stars teams to sing happy birthday to you, I flew us to Greece, I flew your family to New York, and you stayed at my house in Winnipeg instead of your hotel room that you were supposed to share with a roommate." Mac placed his hands flat on the tabletop, on either side of Aris' legs, his thumbs lifted up to press into Aris' thighs. He leaned in and whispered, giving enough distance that they could claim it was just to talk, "we don't really do subtle, baby."

Aris kissed him, hands dropping to blanket Mac's at his sides, his whole centre of gravity shifted into the kiss, into *Mac*. Because Mac was a lot of things; three time WJHC champion, gold medal Olympian, baker, adoptee, inheritor of one of the biggest hockey dynasties of the modern era, coffee addict, but most importantly Mac was there to catch Aris, just like Aris was there to catch him.

"Wanna go home?" Aris asked.

"Does it still look like a fucking movie set?" Mac chirped as if he hadn't left the apartment that morning.

"Fuck you." Aris kissed him again. "C'mon."

As they turned to leave they heard Kern's voice from the back corner, "I- Oh my god. That's why there's a heart- Shut the *fuck* up James!"

Ilya Rozanov

You break my son's heart I will destroy your career, your family, your team, and everything you have ever cared for

See you at camp, you will teach with Barrett.

Chapter End Notes

Hehehehehe :)

Chapter 33: Ilya

Chapter Notes

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

[A photo carousel posted to Ilya Rozanov's Instagram account. The first photo is from the 2028 All Star game, Ilya is on the bench and Scott Hunter is on the ice and leaning on the boards to talk to him, both men are laughing. The second photo is from 2024, in a pastel yellow nursery Scott is gently bouncing a newborn while his husband smiles from a chair, Ilya's reflection can be seen in the mirror behind Kip's chair. The third photo is from the Olympics, Ilya in a Team Canada jacket has his arms thrown over Scott and Troy's shoulders in front of the sign out front of the Olympic hockey rink. The fourth is a photo from 2017, Ilya's taking a picture in the mirror, he's in a tank top and Adidas branded sweatpants, his Boston Raiders ball cap is on backwards and his sunglasses are blacked out lenses and a black pair of headphones hangs around his neck, his phone is in one hand and the other flipping it off.]

@IlyaRozanov81: *So the old man finally retired. Let it be known the following words are only being shared because I think watching him read them while either drunk or hungover will be very funny.*

It is no secret that without Hunter we wouldn't be standing here. I would not have my son, my daughter, my husband, nor my found patchwork family of very very queer hockey players. I know how it feels, to win the cup and have no one to come onto the ice to celebrate with. I know that it is the most bitter of feelings, to have finally reached the top, and have no one there to share it with. Hunter's public coming out was not what he'd planned, but he did not wait for the press conference to be scheduled.

In 2017 the NHL changed, and though there are still those fighting against that change, but the 26 year old who watched and felt like every bad thing in his life had been sucked up by a tornado decided to take a chance because it was possible? Hunter made it possible for him.

He is one of my dearest friends, my children have grown up riding on his back, and he will always be welcome in my home as he has opened his home to countless others. He is the brother I always wished I had. Scott Hunter is a hero, but most importantly he is the very best kind of person. When faced with a world that hates him, he instead faced it down with unapologetic kindness, radically practiced acceptance, and an iron clad defence of the people who needed it most. #MyHeroScottHunter always.

Even if he is 10000000000 years old.

|@ScottHunterHockey: Fuck you Rozanov (❤️)

||@IlyaRozanov81: we are besties do not lie(❤️)

|@makescens2me: Awwwww besties goals fr

||@IlyaRozanov81: yes exactly

|||@ScottHunterHockey: You are a menace to society and to me personally

||||@IlyaRozanov81: you love me stop lying

||||@ScottHunterHockey: Debatable.

Gay Hockey Dads

Scott

You're exactly the kind of brother I wished I had too

Kip



Shane

It's fine Ilya's just a little teary eyed right now

Is not a lie

Will not be the same playing New York without you

Will try to wrangle Floros during Ottawa games

Shane

At least we adopted our hockey son

Kip

We looked at adult adoption it's complicated

Scott

He's functionally a Grady anyways

Kip

My parents are still holding grudges you two stole him for Christmas

Shane

To be fair

Mac stole him for Christmas

да

I am just the chauffeur.

Scott

We get them next Christmas

Shane

You could just come to Ottawa

Kip

If I don't do Grady Christmas I think my parents might have heart attacks

Scott

They really love Christmas

Shane

Bring them and let them Mac and Ilya be Christmas monsters together

Maybe we can make them help drink through Ilya's eggnog stash

Eggnog is nectar of gods

Kip

Of course he likes eggnog

Is very comforting texture

Reminds me of other things 🍆🍆💦

Scott

You're the worst

Shane was tipsy, loose, and clingy. It was one of Ilya's favourite versions of Shane, the one where he didn't care, where his brain was quiet enough to seek out physical affection from

people besides their family.

He watched Shane wrap his arms around Harris, chattering happily about who was likely to win what award. He watched the Admirals kiss their partners, celebrate like little kids, and then slowly start to trickle out.

"Too bad the kid left early," Eric commented as he poured Ilya another two fingers of the good Russian vodka.

Ilya grinned. "I do not think they care one way or the other." He raised his glass. "Every out bisexual player in the history of the league has won a Cup."

Eric grinned, pride radiating off of him as he clinked his beer bottle against Ilya's glass. "Damn right."

"We should kidnap him," Ilya proposed. "During camp. Go on some sort of... bisexual adventure."

"Bisexual adventure? What exactly makes it a bisexual adventure?"

Ilya shrugged. "I do not know. We are bisexuals on an adventure?" Eric laughed and Ilya crossed his arms, glaring at the former goalie. "I don't fucking know is just an idea."

"What the fuck is there to even do in Ottawa?" Ilya smirked and Eric held up his hand. "Do not say your husband." Ilya closed his mouth. "Uh huh- Oh dear lord."

A very much drunk Scott wrapped an arm around Ilya's shoulder. "You're so mushy Roz!"

"I am not mushy-"

"So mushy squishy soft inside." Scott sighed. "You gonna stop calling me old now?"

"You going to stop aging?" Ilya grabbed hold of Scott as he started to lean a little too far to one side, pulling him into a chair. "You kept Floros from losing any teeth his rookie season, good job. Now don't knock out your own by falling over in your own fucking bar."

"The NHL should give you a trophy," Eric declared. "The Wrangled-A-Menace-Rookie trophy."

"Does not have the same ring to it. Drink," Ilya ordered, handing Scott a bottle of water he'd opened. Scott had spent fifteen minutes struggling with a bottle cap while drunk at one NHL awards event years ago, and as amusing as the video had been of Scott trying to use his teeth to bite off the cap *and* neck of the plastic bottle it had given Ilya the same feeling as videos where small confused creatures got stuck in buckets.

"Yes *mother*," Scott sniped, drinking the water regardless.

"Is that what the bisexual adventure is? Teaching Floros how to mother hen?" Eric teased.

"If he can't instinctually mother hen then it is not for him," Ilya declared.

"He made Mac stop for my soup!" Scott grinned then his smile fell. "I won't get my Canadian airport soup anymore."

Ilya rolled his eyes. "You're flying to Canada in two weeks, Hunter. You'll be *fine*."

"Oh. Right." Scott huffed out a breath. "I think I may be, slightly, a little bit, drunk."

"No shit," Eric muttered under his breath, bemused smile still on his face.

"Oh really? What makes you think that?" Ilya grinned.

"There's two Bennys and two Ilyas. That's a nightmare, two Ilyas? Shane would like it- No, actually he wouldn't. You'd fight each other over him you're too..." Scott gestured clumsily to all of Ilya.

"Too what?"

"Too Ilya." Scott perked up when Kip approached. "Hiii."

Kip, with the patience of a saint in love that Ilya was sure he would never achieve, smiled at Scott and helped him put his coat on. "Our car's here, we're going home, and you, oh husband of mine, are going to *bed*."

"Okay! Night Benny! Fuck you Rozanov!" Scott hugged Ilya tight and Ilya reached up to pat his hand.

"Goodnight Scott. I'm proud of you and I love and value your friendship too," he deadpanned.

"Wow, Ilya, that was deep," Eric said as Kip gently led Scott out of the bar.

"He will not remember it in the morning," Ilya dismissed.

"Yeah, I know. But I will, and you will."

"You have had front row seat to me being emotional wreck on more than one occasion, is fine," Ilya dismissed with a wave of his hand. "So. Bisexual adventure."

"There's hiking trails around Ottawa, we could make him hike a mountain," Eric suggested.

"Hm. Maybe. Will see how he responds to my threat first," Ilya mused.

"Ilya. Did you threaten Aris?" Eric crossed his arms.

"He is dating my son, is requirement." Ilya threw back the last of his drink. "Pass me Mac's coat- Dear fucking *lord* his meds and phone are in his pocket. My son is a gay disaster just like his father," Ilya sighed and tucked the coat over his arm when Kyle held it out to him.

"Where does Floros live?"

"You sure you wanna interrupt?" Kyle teased, slotting into Eric's space with an arm draped around his husband's shoulders.

"Fuck you Kyle, yes. He needs his meds tomorrow morning and he will be too hungover to want to leave Floros' bed." Ilya stood up. "And I need to get my husband to a bed before he falls asleep on Harris again."

"Night Ilya," Kyle sing-songed.

"Goodnight Kyle, night Bennett."

It was easy enough to tempt Shane out of the bar, Ilya just needed to smile and hold out his hand and Shane's hand was sliding into his and squeezing gently, his wedding ring solid in Ilya's grasp.

Ilya left the jacket with the concierge at Floros' building and sent a text to Floros to let him know, and then they were in their expensive hotel room, and Shane was asleep in Ilya's arms.

Exactly as things should be, he thought to himself as he slowly drifted off.

Chapter End Notes

Ilya and Scott being brothers is so special to me

Chapter 34: Mac

Chapter Notes

The second and last from this update batch starting w chapter 33

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

Your Favourite Actress' Fun Connection to Ottawa; Rose Landry Talks Found Family

Published: 2025

Like most people I've seen and loved my fair share of Rose Landry movies in my life, from cheesy FBI thrillers to X Squad to the more dramatic pieces she's hard to avoid. Luckily, she's also someone who publicly puts her money where her mouth is with her multi-million dollar donations to queer rights charities, food pantries, emergency relief efforts, education, and of course her long standing public sponsorship of the Landry Scholarships at the Game Changers Hockey Camp in Ottawa.

Most people with as close a family as the Landrys tend to stick close together, but as multiple years worth of Instagram posts, tabloid shots, and thousands of tweets prove, a close family doesn't exclude this superstar from settling into the wide web of found family.

"Obviously it started with Shane," she says, cracking a joke about how 90% of her ex boyfriends have come out as gay while dating her. Shane Hollander, Ottawa's own golden boy hockey star, is the first brick for her found family.

"With Shane came Ilya, we knew each other through him before we ever had an actual conversation. It was the same for Shane and Svetlana." These next two names vary in familiarity, Ilya Rozanov has been captain of the Ottawa Centaurs for 7 seasons now, and Svetlana Vetrova is the GM for the Boston Raiders and the daughter of a former NHL goalie.

She goes on to say that she hadn't even met Ilya in person before his and Shane's very private 2021 wedding, but attending that wedding had given her a dozen more family members.

"Luca's always been a sweetheart, Ilya and I playing matchmaker across the continent was so much fun and so rewarding. Shane rolled his eyes about us enabling each other but he was smiling just as wide when Luca finally popped the question at the Hollander-Rozanov stray's Christmas this year."

Rose happily dives into the so called stray's Christmas at which she has been a near constant since the first one in 2022. "I only had three days off, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and Boxing Day. I was filming in Montreal and I was supposed to fly back to Michigan but there was a huge weather event so we wouldn't've been able to land. I had resigned myself to Chinese food in my hotel room when Ilya pulled up at the airport. It's a Rozanov thing, I

think. Mac was in the car with hot chocolate and mini marshmallows and cookies and we drove back to Ottawa blasting Christmas music."

Mac Hollander-Rozanov was adopted by Shane and Ilya in 2022, and has been seen multiple times over the years shopping with Rose and/or his fathers. Similarly, Rose was one of the first people to meet Irina Hollander-Rozanov after her birth last May, with Rose's most liked Instagram Reel showing the small group of people that were pulled together to help clean and deliver frozen home-cooked meals to the Hollander-Rozanov house.

The Reel was taken by Rose, starts with showing the stocked freezer with taped labels for contents and cooking instructions. It then pans over to several trash bags in the hands of New York Admirals Captain Scott Hunter, Ottawa Centaurs players Troy Barrett and Wyatt Hayes, former NHL players Ryan Price and Eric Bennett, and their spouses (Kip Grady, Centaurs Communications Director Harris Drover, Doctor Lisa Hayes, Fabian Salah, and Kyle Swift). It was posted a few days after Irina's birth was announced on Shane and Ilya's Instagram feeds, along with the clear boundary they expected to be respected.

"Setting that boundary was really important to all of us. It had been a sorta unspoken thing, not posting any pictures any of us took at their place or their cottage without consulting them. I don't think they ever said no, mostly because none of us wanted to do anything that would expose them. Those first few days after they were outed were really unnerving, and I think that's carried through with the care we all take with them, their home, and their kids."

I asked if there was anything she wanted to share about their kids, given that both Mac and Irina have her as their named godmother. After the interview her agent passed along an additional clip of her talking about the two children, having cleared it with their fathers.

"I'm really protective of both of them, all four of them really, but especially the kids. I mean, Mac was so unsure of himself when I first met him and now he knows where he belongs, with us, and he knows what he wants. Irina's a joy, if I'm calling her dads or Mac she'll insist on babbling on the phone to me and it never fails to make even the worst, coldest, dampest night shoots a million times better."

Separate from that clip, during our initial interview, she said, "There are a few people I've met where it's been clear they were meant to be parents, Shane and Ilya are two of them. You can see it with the kids at Camp and with their teammates' kids. Good people raise good people, and they're two of the best people I know, and their kids already reflect that. They would go to war for their kids, and I'd be right there behind them like the rest of our family of misfits."

"Y'know something about flying first class feels way more asshole-ish than just chartering a flight," Aris said as their flight liaison closed the door of their private chauffeured car that was included in the airfare.

"Well, New York to LA is a pretty long flight and I don't want to charter a plane every time I wanna hang out with my godmother." Mac leaned forward and read out the address Rose had sent him to the driver before he sat back in the seats. "Plus, more environmentally friendly."

"Uh huh." Aris grinned. "Spoiled."

"You're the one who spent the flight inhaling instant noodles."

"They were included!"

Mac kissed the back of Aris' hand and took a long moment to admire him in the LA sun. "Hmm." He brushed Aris' hair back with one hand, it had started to grow into his eyes in the later half of the playoffs, too focused on playing to win to take a break to get a haircut. "Rose is gonna play dress-up with you and if you even slightly indicate that she's allowed to she *will* give you a full make-over."

"You sound way too into that idea."

Shrugging Mac slid his hand down to cup Aris' cheek, his fingertips tapping against the line of his full play-off beard. "You've probably got a couple extra weeks before you gotta shave it."

"And you sound *way* too sad about *that*," Aris teased.

Mac sighed dramatically. "Well it's not like it'll be gone forever, I suppose."

Aris rolled his eyes. "Uh huh."

"What? It's hot, I like you with a beard- Do *not* make a bi joke about that Aristotelis I swear to *god*-" Aris was already laughing, and the joyful confidence that had settled into him since winning the cup seemed to radiate from him. *Fuck* Mac loved this man.

Rose met them at an open air mall filled with designer shops, she had her plainclothes security with her and she wrapped Mac in a tight hug the moment he was in reach.

"And you! Mr. Stanley Cup Champion!" She held her arms out to Aris who accepted her hug without looking even a little bit awkward. "I'm glad Mac dragged you along! Shane won't let me buy him more clothes and I'm limited on getting Irina anymore." She sighed and looked at Mac. "And your Papa has *never* needed my opinions."

Mac smiled, happily linking arms with her. "Ava wanted to tag along but tech week."

"Well I suppose I'll have to fly up to Winnipeg then. God, I haven't been there in *years*, not since that one Hallmark movie I did." She linked her other arm with Aris'. "C'mon. I have plans for both of you."

The plans, it turned out, included a list of designer shops that Rose had called ahead to to clear out completely. She waited until the third shop, where she banished Aris to the fitting room and pulled Mac into one of the rounded sectionals to wait.

"So?" She prompted, smiling. "How was Greece?"

"Greece was... Nice. We're going back after the awards, before Camp," Mac answered, tucking his feet under his legs to sit cross-legged. Rose grinned and waited. And waited. And

waited.

"He's my... Friend."

Rose pursed her still smiling lips and raised eyebrows, head tilting to the side. And waited again.

"What?"

She blinked at him.

I know you I listened while you worked out that you experienced sexual attraction for the first time when you looked at him and you called asking for a last minute wardrobe for both of you.

Mac lowered his voice to a quiet whisper, "I think I'm in love with him?"

Rose made a strangled squealing noise, shaking his shoulders affectionately. "Obviously!"

"Sh- *sh sh shhhhh*," Mac shoved one of the fancy decorative pillows into Rose's face. "Shut *up*."

"Are you two together?" She pressed, grinning wider when Mac nodded. "Oh my *god*!"

"This next season is gonna *suck* though," Mac sighed, falling back into the couch. "I mean, we finally get our shit figured out and now I'm in Winnipeg 'cause Montreal couldn't be bothered to hold onto my contract for a full season and give New York a chance to grab me,"

"Obligatory fuck the Metros," Rose inserted and Mac smiled.

"Obligatory fuck the Metros," he agreed. "I dunno how this is gonna work and I love Winnipeg like, *a lot*. And Aris is *made* for New York..."

"You're a multi-millionaire. How long of a flight is it to New York?" She was already pulling out her phone.

"There's no direct commercial flights-"

"Again, multi-millionaire. Charter one. It's only four hours. Give or take 15 minutes." Rose looked at Mac over her phone screen. "Not that long. Not Montreal to Ottawa short, but short enough you could manage it once a month at least."

"We'll play each other twice in the regular season, and then they'll probably shove Jersey and Brooklyn into the same road trip so that's another one, then the All Star game." He counted each out. "That's four times, probably for like, a day maximum."

"And Christmas," Rose added.

"Okay, five times. That's still not... What we've gotten to have." Mac heaved a sigh and sat up properly. "I am never going to make fun of my dads for taking eight years to figure their shit

out again."

"No, no you should *definitely* still make fun of them for taking *eight years* to figure their shit out, it's what they deserve." Rose looked over as Aris stepped out of the change room in a soft knit butter yellow sweater, collared shirt, and slacks.

She wiggled her finger and Aris did a slow spin, there was an embroidered bumblebee with slightly shimmering gold thread woven through the sweater. Rose had popped up and off the couch at some point, turning Aris and holding up similar sweaters. She was saying some sort of compliment, the exact words were lost in Mac's mind the moment Aris smiled his soft, bashful yet confident smile. Any other higher thought left him when he looked at Mac with that same smile.

"Oh *hun*," Rose sighed, shaking her head.

"Hm? What?" Mac turned his face towards Rose but his eyes stayed glued to Aris.

"I think that's a stamp of approval," Aris' voice had a teasing undercurrent to it.

"I'm dressing you both for the awards, by the way," Rose declared, disappearing into the section of the little boutique with a shop attendant. "Let me *really* play."

Aris watched Rose walk away and clicked his tongue against his teeth. "That seems like a bad idea."

"No, no," Mac insisted, stepping close enough to slide his arms around Aris' waist. "This is a *very* good idea."

Aris blushed and Mac had a hundred dirty fantasies flash through his mind in quick succession. He didn't have time to do any of them, nor would he subject the employees of this designer store to anything. He did yank Aris against him and kiss him, though. His tongue pushing into Aris' mouth and claiming every millimetre of it.

"Down boys," Rose chided. "C'mon, I've got plans and I need to make sure you'll fit. Aris, you're good to wear that out. C'mon."

Chapter End Notes

The line about Rose dressing Shane up like a barbie doll and Shane being down bc he doesn't care abt clothes and Rose knowing abt Ilya in TLG made me feral when thinking abt her and the Hollanov kids bc ofc she takes them shopping!!! Ofc she spoils them rotten!!!! Ofc she dresses Aris specifically to drive Mac insane like she was doing with Shane for years :D

Chapter 35: Aris

Chapter Notes

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

#allyslay

Dryer

Floros dude when did you have time to bag Rose Landry?

Annoying Greek <3

?????

Dryer

hotbuzz.com/news/rose-landry-spotted-with-hockey-star-floros-in-la

Kernit

Oh my fucking god

J Jacobs (coffee)

KSJFHGSKJDHG

oh my god????

they're saying i set u up???

Haasy

Ah yes, good job setting your boyfriend up with your godmother. I foresee no complications there. Family dinners will be so normal

Dryer

This reads like AI

Kernit

It does

Annoying Greek <3

They're vastly overestimating my flirting skills
exceedingly

this is so fucking funny

Kernit

Pls tell me you two are in Winnipeg rn I need to howl abt this and Jacobs abandoned me<

J Jacobs (coffee)

If you want to come to the fuckfest with my partners you know that's an in-depth discussion

Kernit

I did not want to know that

in vegas 4 awards

Annoying Greek <3

Would love if Haas could show up and help me keep Mac outta Crowell's way

Kernit

Let him be a menace

#freeholroz

Haasy

Do not let him be a menace

:(

Rosie

Hey you and Aris okay?

mclosing it laughing

teammates are too

If you need to let it hang for a bit until people just stop talking about it that's 100% fine by me

they are literally calling you a grooming cougar

if anyone asks either of us we're telling them where to shove it

unless that would make it worse? idk hollywood shit

OMG please tell them to shove it!!!

Will give your Dad a heart attack but Ilya will lose it

Love you! Good luck at the awards!

thx! ly2!

pls give me a peak?

I haven't given him a sneak peak of yours and I'm not giving you a sneak peak of his.

The awards were, largely, uneventful. Some reporter did ask Aris to confirm the rumours and his confused face and instant "no" had become a looping reaction gif half his cousins had already sent him. Mac was in a forest green suit, his septum ring flipped up, and hair down. He looked like he'd just walked off a movie set, the clothes perfectly fit to him. The suit Rose had sent Aris with was a typical black suit, black shirt, and gold cuff links. They didn't match, which Aris had half expected when she'd insisted on not telling Mac what she'd picked for him, but Aris was already waiting to strip the suit pieces off and-

Scott had taken the Hart trophy, and Aris had heard the whole Admirals hoot and holler from where they'd been scattered around the room.

Aris took Rookie of the Year. When he returned to the table with the small trophy he was allowed to keep Mac leaned over and whispered, "two to five."

"Five?" Aris whispered back.

"I got onto the Canadian Juniors team an extra year, before I was captain." Mac winked. "We won gold too."

Aris turned away from the stage, whispering into Mac's hair. "So what happens if I win the Conn Smythe too?"

"Whatever you want," Mac answered.

"And if you win?" It was the one award Mac was actually likely to take. Aris *really* wanted him to take it. He half wanted to spend his Rookie of the Year speech telling everyone why they were wrong and should've given it to Mac instead.

"You buy the penthouse by Central Park." Mac pulled away enough to look at him. "And we go to Ikea."

"Deal." Aris held his hand out, to shake on it, in the few inches of space between them. Mac shook his hand and then kept hold of it as trophies were announced and speeches given.

Mac won the Conn Smythe, so Aris didn't have to insist they give away Rookie of the Year, and he had a penthouse to buy.

They came back from Greece tanned and relaxed, and three days earlier than originally planned. The penthouse that overlooked Central Park wasn't as close to the rink as the temporary one had been, but Mac had given the keys to the penthouse to the interior designer that had done his Montreal condo. The walls were painted warm yellows and bright minty blues and greens, the couches were insanely comfortable, and Aris' Olympic jersey was mounted with his silver medal above an electric fireplace that had been mounted beneath a wooden mantle.

The penthouse was different from Scott and Kip's, it wasn't all windows and modern. It had a fairly large balcony deck space with decorative marble railings that gave way to art-deco windows with thick leading in curling arches at the tops. The kitchen was huge, it had a proper convection stove and an oven that divided into two, it had a huge fridge and a bright, hand painted tile back-splash. The dining table sat along the windows while the marble counters formed a horseshoe in the back, all lit by the natural light. There was a wooden archway into the front hall, where a door separated the private elevator from opening right into the home. On the other side of the hallway was the spacious living room with it's large projector screen that came down whenever it was called and the throw blankets were the same orange colour as the sheets on Mac's bed. A bookshelf ran up the side of the staircase, with guest bedrooms taking up the rest of the ground floor.

The second floor was only a half floor, over the living room and kitchen, with the same beautifully styled windows letting light through to illuminate the three rooms that branched off from the landing. One was an office, a computer and desk and chair there mostly because it felt like something a grown adult apartment *should* have, though the treadmill, weight machine, and free weights in the corner were much more likely to be used. The second was the en suite which had two doors, one off the landing and one into the master bedroom. It was

as calm and soothing as a fucking *spa*, with a deep tub, large enclosed glass shower, and a toilet with a whole fucking bidet ass washing system that Aris was a little too freaked out to figure out just yet.

And then there was the bedroom.

There was a massive king-sized bed in the middle of the room, a long shag carpet beneath it, and a set of two matching dark wood side tables. A second electric fireplace sat opposite the bed against the warm brick, with a love-seat positioned to face it, a TV was mounted above it, and a collection of photographs were printed off and framed on the mantle. There was a photo from an article that had run in a hockey publication, years ago. It was a still from the first game they'd played against each other, the edges blurring in motion, it had been the moment Aris had realized he could actually *play* against Mac. He'd still lost but it had stung a little less, with the nursing of homemade shortbread. There was a photo from Greece, a selfie Mac had taken where Aris was looking at Mac with the biggest fucking heart eyes he'd ever seen. If that photo was anywhere *but* the bedroom he would've been too embarrassed to look at it. There was a family photo that had been taken the day after the Admirals had won the cup, Yaya had her arm around Mac's shoulders and Aris had been holding three of his youngest cousins. Eric had taken it, and he'd taken the one next to it, Scott and Kip and Kyle and Mac and Aris and Eric sprinting into frame; Scott had Aris by the back of his sweater, Aris had an arm each draped over Kip and Kyle's shoulders, Mac was catching Eric and making sure he was in place. It was just as much a family photo as the one next to it.

The photos weren't the only personal touches, though.

On one side table was a phone charger, the charger for a smart watch, and allergy meds. On the other was a wooden glasses nose in the shape of a bison face, a little indent carved into the tabletop to hold a bottle of ADHD meds, and a wireless charging pad. In the en suite a little metallic jewellery box with velvet cushioning had three different septum rings in it and sat next to a toothbrush holder shaped like a train that held two toothbrushes.

It was Aris next to Mac. He had the same charger in Mac's room, next to Mac's orange bed, with his allergy meds. Mac's side table in Winnipeg had the same carved little indent so he wouldn't knock them off, and his phone made the charging pad more often than he remembered to plug it in. He'd gotten the little train toothbrush holder in a shop in Winnipeg and had placed it, proudly, on the counter.

The trip to Ikea was mostly for the other sort of "homey touches".

"I'm convinced you just want meatballs," Aris said, slipping his hand into Mac's as they walked into the building. The closest Ikea was, in fact, in New Jersey, which was enough of a trek Aris would've just ordered things from home. Except Mac wanted to go to Ikea.

"It's not a finished home until you've had Ikea meatballs," Mac stated with authority.

They got meatballs and tucked up in a corner of the food hall, away from people.

"My dad took me to Ikea, the day after they picked me up." Mac stabbed one of his gravy-smothered meatballs and popped it into his mouth, grinning at Aris. "They had *no* idea what

they were doing and told me to just pick. I ended up living in a replica Ikea show room for two years before I outgrew the bed."

"Which is why you contracted an interior designer for you condo," Aris surmised.

"I mean, I went to Ikea then too. And Ava and I went when we bought the house in Winnipeg. It's tradition at this point." Mac grinned. "We're having meatballs and gravy and pasta for dinner."

"You don't cook."

"Microwave meatballs. Packet of instant gravy. Pasta." Mac wiggled three fingers in the air. "That I can cook."

"Gravy on pasta?"

"It's really fucking good." He smirked at Aris, smug in a very particular, competitive way. "'s too bad you weren't at the '24 Juniors. The Canadian and American teams went to the Ikea museum."

"What like you dragging me to art museums in Milan?" Aris teased.

"I got you tea. You said I could do whatever if I got you tea. And we were too sober for more sex." Mac sighed, eating the last of his meatballs, and leaned back in his seat. "I can't believe we only fucked once in Milan. And that I didn't corner you in the bar at the draft."

"And the '26 Juniors. Are we gonna keep waxing poetic about the places we missed hooking up?"

"Oh, I'm planning to make up for it, baby." He stood. "Now, we're going to wander through Ikea and hope no one recognizes you."

"Or you." Aris followed, leaving the tray on the dish rack as they passed.

"Your home state, Aris, not mine." Mac's hand found Aris' and they tangled their fingers together.

They were through the kids sections and into the fake apartment layouts when Aris locked eyes with his mother. His mother, who was standing next to his sister and father who hadn't noticed him.

"Aristotelis," she greeted, distant, professional. None of the warmth that Mac or Scott or even Ilya Rozanov had when they said his name. She looked at Mac next to him and Aris felt like a cat, puffing up to appear bigger, like her apathy was something he could protect Mac from. She didn't ask who he was, though.

"Hey mom..." Aris looked between her and the rest of his family. "What're you doing here?"

"Well, Penelope is moving into her first house with Marcus, you remember him, her fiance." Aris did not even know his sister was seeing someone. "First time she has to furnish a whole

place, so we're helping her out. Nikolas just went to get someone's help- Oh here he is."

Aris was taller and stronger than his older brother, but he still fought the urge to shrink out of the way when he returned.

"Well. Good to see you-"

"Aristotelis!" His brother looked at him like he was looking at some long forgotten high school acquaintance. "Didn't realize millionaires slummed it in Ikea." He looked Mac up and down. "Who's this?"

"His name is Mac, he's my boyfriend."

"You're gay?" Nikolas scoffed. "Didn't realize they let gays play hockey."

Aris squeezed Mac's hand, trying his best to telegraph *please don't*.

Mac smiled a fake, for show smile. "They're actually quite fond of us. Ottawa's two star players are gay and married, they've got another two gay players besides. Winnipeg's got me and another gay player besides. Oh and the Captain of the New York team's gay, the one Aris is on?"

"Oh. Yeah, cool. How's the hockey thing working out?" Nikolas asked, not even looking at Mac or Aris.

Well enough for you all to live off.

"Good."

Mac squeezed his hand and Aris squeezed back. It was better to just leave it. They hadn't even really started and Aris was *not* going to let anything, least of all his family, ruin one of the few days he had with Mac.

"Sorry, are you Aris Floros?" The person in a bright blue Ikea polo shirt asked, standing between Aris' father and sister and the awkward quad of small talk.

"Yeah." Aris smiled at them, genuine smile.

"Oh my god, can I get a picture- Holy *shit* you're Mac Hollander-Rozanov."

Mac smiled. "Yep. I can take the picture if you want-"

"Your dads are like, my literal heroes," the employee gushed. "And you being so open, both of you! I was kinda worried when Scott Hunter announced he was retiring that the Admirals would backslide but you guys getting drafted and being like, really really good makes me really hopeful that it'll keep going, y'know?"

"I get that," Aris agreed. "Don't tell him but Rozanov's my hero too."

"Can I get a picture with both of you?"

Mac nodded, smiling brightly, and Aris was love struck staring at it in the employee's camera.

And then there was a teenager, maybe 16 years old, asking for a photo that their parents took. And then there was a couple college kids Aris and Mac's age. A half dozen photos were taken, conversations were had, and Aris' family watched from the sidelines in disbelief. At some point both him and Mac pushed their sleeves up to talk and sign and take pictures without overheating.

"People actually care about hockey?" He heard Penelope ask his father.

"Apparently," was his father's only response.

"Mr. Floros," a kid, maybe 10, was in Aris' jersey, and he'd found a pen. "Would you sign my jersey?"

"He never takes it off," the kid's mom said as Aris crouched and signed over the thick parts of the 25 on the back.

"I wore it to the last game!" The kid exclaimed like that explained it.

"Well, that makes it a pretty great good luck charm, huh?" Aris scribbled a little message for the kid and capped the pen.

"See!" The kid grinned triumphantly at their mom.

"Hockey players are a superstitious bunch, if anyone knows about good luck charms it's us," Mac added, winking at the kid.

"Like your medals!"

"Oh no, those aren't good luck charms, those are trophies." Aris stood and shook out his hand. "Huh, I should practice my handwriting."

"Yeah you really should." Mac grinned and handed the kid the hockey card he'd shyly held out to him. Mac's handwriting was *gorgeous*.

There was enough of a lull in the crowd of people that a couple Ikea employees showed up and offered to escort them around. And they lumped Aris' family in with him and Mac.

Aris kinda wanted the ground to swallow him whole.

"What medals?" Aris' father asked, direct, to the point, never one to waste breath on extra words.

"Aris scored one of the American team's only goals in the gold medal game," Mac answered. "They still took silver, but the match up wasn't exactly a fair shot."

"What like at the Olympics?" Penelope scoffed.

"Uh, yeah. At the Olympics. And then at the World Juniors later that year." Mac looked at Aris' family with the same fake smile and eyes that burned with a rage Aris hadn't really seen on him before. A rage that was *definitely* hotter than it should have been. "For people who talked about how much you sacrificed for his career you really know absolutely nothing about how incredible of a player he is."

"His coaches said he was good," Aris' mother said, with a detached sort of pride.

Mac inhaled and looked at Aris. Aris couldn't meet his eyes, looking out at the show floor.

It was an employee who spoke up. "Good? He's a generational talent, he was the *only* player on the American team that wasn't an NHL player, that's so incredibly rare it's basically unheard of. Like, in living memory I think there's been two players named to the American and Canadian teams when NHL players were allowed to compete that weren't NHL players. That's those two. Gold and silver Olympians right there. Fucking hockey *royalty*."

"We're not a hockey family," Nikolas said the same disinterested line they had all repeated at one point or another.

"Wow, you must really love hockey then," the employee directed it to Aris.

Mac squeezed his hand. Aris just nodded, quiet.

"He's always been a quiet kid," Aris' mother said.

No I wasn't. You just didn't listen.

He thought about when he'd gotten a B on the science test he'd studied hard for, how proud he'd been of it. How they'd glanced at it for less than five seconds and asked if it would affect his GPA and lose him the scholarship. He thought about the fridge covered in report cards and old macaroni art and pictures. All Nikolas and Penelope's.

He thought about asking to go to the pond for his birthday, to play hockey for fun. He'd been turning 14. They'd said it was a waste of his skates. He'd stopped asking, after that.

"Alright, well I think that's everything on my list," Penelope declared as they reached the end of the show floor.

"Well I'm sure Yaya will send you some lovely pieces. She sent us home with some beautiful place mats, and these lovely woven doormats too," Mac gushed, but his eyes were sharp.

"Yaya?" Nikolas asked.

"Oh, we spent Aris' birthday in Ithaki. 21's a big birthday, y'know? And he wanted me to meet his family, and we had the week off with the All Star game. Yaya and Uncle Stamatis and Uncle Kimon and Aunt Avra, and the cousins, y'know little baby Corinna is so cute. Yaya got on us and everyone else about grandchildren and great grandchildren, of course, but it was such a lovely warm home. With all your travelling you really should pop in, they're so proud of Aris. The house had so many photos, there was a clipped article from an interview

he gave in Greek at the Olympics about being openly bi and the whole pride pin thing we all did there. Yaya said I could stick around since good bakers are hard to come by."

Aris watched his family's faces as Mac listed off his mother's siblings by name and talked so openly about the acceptance they'd been met with. They ranged from confusion to discomfort to anger in his father's eyes that Aris had dared return to Greece.

"We just got back, actually," Mac added. "Yeah, we rented a yacht and had a big family party. Alexia tried to call you all but I guess you were busy buying a house. But yeah, Japan at Christmas is definitely cooler than spending it with a huge loud family."

"And we're heading back for August," Aris said. "You could join us, if you're not too busy with your fiance. I'm sure Yaya would love to meet him."

"You are spending a lot of time in Greece," Aris' mother's discomfort was palpable.

"We flew the whole crew out for the final game, too. They watched Aris win the Stanley Cup his rookie season, that's a pretty big deal."

They all let that just hang as they approached the line for the cash register.

"Well, it was great seeing you all, we've got a few more things to find for our apartment." Mac was already leading Aris away.

"*Mac*," Aris started.

"I'm not letting you pay for anything on top of what you already give them," Mac hissed.

They ended up in a quiet section of the maze of knickknacks. Aris pressed his back against the wall and sighed.

Mac stood in front of him, holding Aris' hand in his like it was the one thing keeping him from committing a murder. "Wow I hate your parents and siblings how the *fuck* are you related to them?"

"You're not related to yours," Aris said, quiet and empty.

"True. Nature and nurture, wow someone should make a case study of us. Hey. *Hey*," Mac's voice was soft, his hand coming up to rest against Aris' cheek and oh. Aris was crying. "You don't have to do anything or say anything, but I'm right here. You're okay. We're okay."

"I'm okay," Aris insisted.

"It's okay to not be."

Aris let his forehead thunk against Mac's, eyes closed and tears beading over his waterline regardless. "They know nothing about me."

"Do you want them to know you?"

And wasn't that a question. Aris had always assumed they'd had a base level of knowledge about him, about his grades, about his career, about how much he was making. He was propping all of them up, after all. But they really knew *nothing*. They probably didn't even know the name of the school they'd sent him to, just that there was a scholarship for the sport that could make them rich.

"I don't know."

"That's okay," Mac affirmed, his thumbs slowly rubbing back and forth over Aris' cheekbones.

"I don't think I want to care about them anymore." He took a deep breath and looked at Mac, at his warm brown eyes and the reflection of the warehouse lights on the glass of his glasses. "I don't think I can cut them off but I don't... I don't think I can count them as family anymore. I don't think they ever really were my family. They were just... Roommates."

"You don't owe me or anyone else an explanation." Mac's eyes narrowed a fraction. "Least of all them."

Aris wrapped his arms around Mac's rib cage and let his face bury into his neck, smelling him and feeling *held* and *safe*.

"I love you," he mumbled into Mac's soft skin.

He heard Mac sigh, soft, content, and then felt his nose press into Aris' hair. "Ya lyublyu tebya, Aristotelis."

"What's that mean?" He could guess but he wanted to be sure.

"There's two ways to say I love you in Russian. One emphasizes love, the other emphasizes you above all others." Mac's lips pressed against Aris' scalp, his breath even and caressing against the sensitive skin there. "I love *you*, I choose you, *malen'koye solntse*."

"Pretty romantic for a hockey player," Aris tried to chirp but there was a lump in his throat that wouldn't let his sarcasm through.

"I've loved you since 2025. You fucking bowled me over, and then in Milan you were so soft and honest and open..." Mac's fingers were playing with the hair at the nape of Aris' neck and he felt like he was in some sort of dream, like he was going to wake up and the last year wouldn't have been real. "And now I'm confessing all that shit in a fucking Ikea warehouse."

Aris laughed, thick and wet, and tightened his arms around Mac's chest, his fingers slotting between vertebrae of Mac's back. "'s not the most romantic spot."

"Could be worse. Could be at the cafe with the dollar hot dogs and the hot dog water smell."

Aris was shaking with laughter, feeling it rumble through Mac's chest and back into his own skin. "I think you get a pass. First date to Greece is pretty damn romantic."

"I'd argue our first date was tourist trap gelato, cheap wine, a cardboard failure of an anti-fucking bed, and three hours of blabbering about coffee and tea."

"After you swooped in like fucking Superman and told off the Russians." He picked his head up and looked at Mac. "You ever gonna tell me what you and them were saying?"

"Maybe someday, *moye dorogoye serdtse*." Aris raised a questioning brow and Mac simply kissed him. "Let's buy some frozen meatballs and go home."

Chapter End Notes

Do you hear that? it's the sound of my checkov's gun firing :D And making Aris Miserable AF!

Chapter 36: Scott

Chapter Notes

This is the second/last update from this batch starting with chapter 35

Surprise :D Scottie chapter!

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

Support From US Team Captain Scott Hunter at the World Juniors

Published: December 2025

Rumours are flying about the as of yet unannounced Men's Hockey Team for the Milano-Cortina Olympics this coming February. One name that is not a surprise is New York Admirals' captain Scott Hunter who was announced in October as the Captain for the team, mirroring his earlier 2014 Olympics season where the American team barely beat out Canada for the gold. Some names, like fellow Admiral and 2014 Gold Medalist Carter Vaughn and Boston Raiders' Captain Cliff Marleau are a given, but the exact specifications of the team are kept well under wraps, with the lineup scheduled to be announced in the first week of January.

This is the first Olympics since 2014 that the IOC and NHL have reached an agreement to allow NHL athletes to participate with hockey superstars like Ilya Rozanov and Shane Hollander announced for Team Canada a few days after Hunter. It seems a given that pretty much all athletes will be NHL stars for the Canadian and American teams.

But a recent series of photos and videos posted to Hunter's Instagram stories seem to have indicated a wild card. Minneapolis is currently hosting the World Juniors tournament and Team USA Captain Aristotelis Floros recently faced a crushing defeat against the Canadian team. Floros was an undisputed star of the US team, with a total of ten goals across five games.

In the photos and videos posted to Hunter's Instagram stories Floros can be seen next to the NHL star watching the rest of the games with a variety of snacks and drinks in hand. There have also been a couple photos posted to his main account showing Hunter with his arm around Floros' shoulders at a dinner hosted for the Juniors players, indicating a level of familiarity. The caption on the post reads "Getting to know the 2026 draft class".

Floros would be an incredible addition to the Admirals lineup, the team's gone without a Cup win since the history making win in 2017 where Hunter publicly came out. Floros is openly bisexual and no doubt has benefited greatly from Hunter's bravery in 2017.

George and Margret Grady loved Scott, and Scott loved them. They'd come down onto the ice with Kip this time round, with Megan and Andrew and their daughter, Tilly in the cutest hand-knit Admirals hat. Scott had taken his infant niece from them and put her in the bowl of the cup, the picture was now Andrew's phone lock screen, replacing his and Megan's wedding photo. She'd given Scott some shit for that, but he'd noticed her lock screen was the exact same picture.

Scott felt as at home in the Grady's Brooklyn as he did in their penthouse in Manhattan, as he did in the Admirals' locker room, on the ice. If he'd retired without this, without the Kip and his family, he probably would've lost it.

What he hadn't expected, when Margaret was up in Williamsburg to help with Tilly and George and Kip were at a history lecture, was for Mac and Aris to show up on the Grady's door.

"I thought you guys were supposed to be in Greece," he said, letting them both in.

"Had some stuff to do for the penthouse," Mac answered, eyes not leaving Aris.

Aris who looked a thousand miles away, moved as if on autopilot. He sat on the end of the couch, long legs tucked under himself to take up as little space as possible.

"The Kingfisher seemed too public and you didn't answer your phone," Mac spoke like it was an explanation.

"You want something to drink? There's coffee, I can grab him some tea?" Aris nodded and Mac followed Scott into the kitchen. "What the *fuck*, Timbit?"

"We ran into his family at fucking Ikea yesterday. He seemed okay and then he just sorta," Mac waved a hand in front of his own face, "blanked out."

When Aris had arrived at training camp in September he'd been calling his parents and siblings every day, every break he was refreshing Instagram pages to watch their stories, and had barely talked to anyone else the first week. Except for Scott and Carter. He'd been the same at the Olympics, getting him to do anything outside of practice and compete had been a careful balancing act of guilt tripping, claiming morale boosting, and saying his family would want him to be making friends.

"I thought he was close with his family?"

There was something Shane Hollander did when he wasn't sure if he was allowed or supposed to say something; his lips folded over his teeth and the skin above and below them touched as his eyes shot to the bottom right corner of his field of view. Mac did the same thing.

"Mac."

"His family treated him like an investment," Mac said quietly. "They gave up proms and dates and graduations and family time to afford hockey and if he ever complained even a

little bit they threw it in his face. They didn't call him on his birthday or send a card or a text or anything. They don't answer his calls or texts, he finds out where they are by watching their social medias. They didn't know he won silver at the Olympics, didn't know he won the fucking *Stanley Cup*." Mac huffed a humourless laugh and wiped at his eyes. "They didn't even know he's bi."

Every interview, every article, every *shred* of coverage of Aris had mentioned his sexuality. When he'd been drafted to the Admirals it had added to the whole being Scott's successor thing, even the handful of pieces that had focused on the rivalry between Aris and Mac had mentioned it. He'd had seven different sizes of pin-back buttons with the bi flag, not mentioning the little enamel pins that were stuck to his bags and suitcase as long as Scott had known him.

Kip had jokingly looked up adult adoption at the Kingfisher after going on one of his wonderful history tangents about how it had been used for decades to make sure queer partners and found families would be legally recognized in emergency situations. Aris had designated Kip as his emergency contact at the start of the regular season and said it was just because Kip would be closest.

Scott carried Aris' tea to the living room, setting it down on one of the mosaic coasters Kip and Scott had brought back from their honeymoon for the Gradys, and then he focused on Aris.

"Hey, kid," Scott said, crouching in front of him. "Y'know you're staying for dinner now." He aimed for distraction, for levity. For *we don't have to talk about anything if you don't want to*.

Aris took a breath, opened his mouth to say something, and just sighed, his eyes closing. Scott waited, patience was one of his most well practiced virtues.

"You said your mom worked hard to pay for hockey," he said finally.

"She did."

"But she loved you."

"Yeah."

"I don't think my parents- maybe they did, when I was a little kid but... I think they stopped loving me." When Aris opened his eyes they were full of barely contained tears that *crushed* Scott. "Why did they stop loving me?"

Scott pulled Aris into his arms, he was broader than Scott and an inch taller, but he was curled into himself and then into Scott and he suddenly seemed so much smaller. His fingers clung to the back of Scott's crew neck like a toddler clinging to their blanket, and he was shaking, *trembling* as Scott held him.

"I don't know," Scott answered truthfully. "I don't know why they stopped loving you, but they do *not* deserve you. You are more than what you bring to the rink, you are more than the money you make." Scott was squeezing Aris probably a little tighter than was comfortable

but he couldn't force himself to let go. "You are worth so much more than any fucking medals or trophies. I am *so* fucking proud of you, Aris."

"What did I do wrong?" Aris asked, voice quiet and shaking.

"You didn't do *anything*," Scott said firmly.

He didn't need to know Aris' parents *side* of this, he'd been Aris' roommate on virtually every road trip because he actually liked the kid. He'd made countless meals for him, right alongside Kip, and kept his favourite high-protein chocolate dairy-free ice cream in the freezer and didn't say shit about how gross it was. He bought Aris tea and made sure the players' lounge had an electric kettle. He *knew* Aris, knew he was a really fucking good hockey player but he was also so fucking smart and so damn perceptive. He knew what would get under players' skin and even if it pissed Scott off sometimes it was also an incredible fucking skill.

"A parent's job is to love their kids, no matter what. To make them into the best people they can be." Scott kept one arm wrapped tight around Aris while the other rubbed soothing circles into his back, defaulting to how he'd learned to comfort Irina when she'd been teething. "They failed you. It doesn't matter how grown up you are or how independent you grew to be because they weren't there, you were their kid. *They* failed *you*."

Aris didn't say anything, but he stayed clinging to Scott. Mac picked up the mug of tea and set it on the plug-in mug warmer Scott had gotten Margaret for Christmas before he sat on a seat across the room, behind Scott's back but putting himself in Aris' line of sight. They stayed there long enough that Scott's knees were aching and his wrist was starting to cramp from the repetitive movements. He didn't move and he didn't stop.

The front door opened and Scott heard George and Kip's voices. George said something about getting changed and the stairs started to creak as he climbed them. Kip turned into the living room, gorgeous bright eyes shifting from excitement to instant concern, and then he was sitting on the couch next to Aris. Scott's moving hand stilled and Kip placed a hand between Scott's, gentle but present on Aris' back.

"Hey, buddy," Kip said, sounding every bit his father's son. "You okay?"

Aris sat up enough to look at Kip, hands loosening their grip on Scott. "Realized my parents stopped loving me at some point, and my siblings maybe, probably hate me," he sounded so fucking *drained* and *empty* and Scott's heart ached and his mind raged.

Kip wrapped his arms around Aris' shoulders and hugged him side-on, Aris' shoulder digging into Kip's chest. "Then they're not worth it."

"They paid-"

"So what? Scott paid for my doctorate does that mean I owe him my entire career?" Kip squeezed Aris tighter for a second before letting his arms go slack again. "You're 21, you're a whole ass adult who's been training your whole life. They might have put up the money for fees and gear but it's *your* talent and *your* life, not theirs. Your parents owed you food, shelter,

education, and love. You don't owe them anything, they chose to spend money on you, your siblings chose to work, you *can* choose to repay that, but you don't *have* to."

Aris sighed and leaned back, into Kip's arm and the couch, and Scott stood, his knees' protests ignored.

Ilya was right, he was *really* fucking old.

Scott placed a hand on Aris' shoulder. "And you don't have to make one concrete decision, you can change your mind as much as you want it's *your* choice, how you choose to relate to your parents and siblings is for you and only you to decide."

"And no one in this family will judge you," Kip affirmed, looking at Mac he added, "or in this house right now, for that matter."

"Judgment free zone," Mac confirmed.

"Drink your tea. We're having ravioli for dinner." Scott moved back into the kitchen, leaving Aris with Kip, and braced his hands against the kitchen counter. He'd retired, there were no more fights to get into on the ice, no more assholes to punch to let out all the rage that was building and bleeding forward from the back of his mind.

"Hey, champ," George's calm, grounding voice came from right next to him. "Everyone's okay."

"What?" Scott's voice was raw, scratchy, thick, and *oh*. He was crying. He couldn't remember the last time he'd cried out of pure frustration. "Oh. It's fine. I'm okay," he dismissed.

George didn't believe him but he didn't push, instead pouring himself a mug of coffee from the coffee pot they'd made in the morning.

Scott remembered when he'd found Gavin's Place and pitched it to Ilya and Shane. They'd been on board instantly, of course they were Mac was skating on the ice when Scott pitched it and they all knew *why* Scott had pitched it. He would've found some other queer charity, but Gavin's Place was because of Mac, because it was a place for the kids that didn't have Ilya Rozanov's personal cell phone number to call when they needed someone to catch them when they fell. To be there for kids who needed to find a family outside their blood.

Aris had grown up a couple hours drive away, he'd been to Admirals games where Scott played with his private school's hockey team, he'd *told* Scott that. It was *really* hard not to imagine a world where Scott had talked to Aris when he was younger, maybe only a couple years before they met in that barn the Juniors were in. Or he'd just taken Aris from that barn, brought him home to Manhattan and just kept him. *Protected* him earlier.

At least we adopted our hockey son.

If Scott ever met the Floroses there was a high likelihood he would rip them to shreds. They had Aris, they'd held him as a baby and toddler and somehow they'd stopped caring about him, had detached themselves from him.

They'd abandoned Scott's son and that was so goddamned unforgivable.

Chapter End Notes

Smthng smthng when the mind feels fully psychologically safe (sleeping in Mac's arms and waking up in them) it is able to process traumatic events with delayed responses (realizing Aris' parents couldn't give a shit about who he is or what he does so long as their investment pays off even if it's an incredibly dangerous line of work that will destroy Aris' body)

Chapter 37: Aris

Chapter Notes

Just the one update tonight (cw for homophobia mentions)

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

[A photo posted to the Irina Foundation's Instagram of the coaches for the Game Changers Hockey Camps in a line on the ice; from right to left Leah Campbell (PWHL Ottawa Volts), Julie Owens (PWHL Ottawa Volts), Max Riley, Ryan Price, Izzy Fulson (PWHL Montreal H  raut), Zane Boodram, Shane Hollander (NHL Ottawa Centaurs), Ilya Rozanov (NHL Ottawa Centaurs), Mac Hollander-Rozanov (NHL Winnipeg Bisons), Aristotelis Floros (NHL New York Admirals), Scott Hunter, Wyatt Hayes (NHL Ottawa Centaurs), Eric Bennett, Hayden Pike (NHL Ottawa Centaurs), Troy Barrett (NHL Ottawa Centaurs), and August Kern (NHL Winnipeg Bisons). Leah, Julie, and Max have their arms around each other while Max reaches up to pull Ryan's shoulder down. Izzy and Bood are doing finger hearts to the camera. Ilya and Shane are front and centre, Ilya's arms are thrown over Shane's shoulders and Mac's shoulders, Mac's other arm is wrapped around Aris' waist. Scott has one forearm on Aris' shoulder and the other is high-fiving Eric over a crouching Wyatt who is giving the camera a goofy smile and finger guns. Hayden and Troy are actively trying to cover Kern's double middle fingers while laughing.]

@IrinaFoundation: *We're about to kick off the first session of this year's Game Changer's Hockey Camp here in Ottawa! Would you believe us if we told you this was the best most PG option? (Parents we promise August Kern will not flip off your children, he was told he had this half-day of training to get it all out.)*

@KittsPlaysWPG: *And now the world can see what's making me go grey early. My 2nd goalie is a menace.*

@macholroz: *Aw this is actually a really cute picture if you crop out Kernit's chaos*

@jjjjjacobsfrwr: *Kernit's chaos is exactly why I didn't show up. Yall can deal with him for the summer*

||@IlyaRozanov81: *I will teach him my ways*

||@KingfisherNYC: *Ilya no*

||@hdrover: *Ilya no*

||@ShaneHollander24: *Ilya no*

||@troybarhockey: *Ilya no*

||@yunamomander: *Ilya no*

||@IlyaRozanov81: *Only because Yuna said no*

Supposedly, Shane had some last minute things to worry about that he'd dragged Mac to help him with him at the arena that was hosting the camp. Supposedly.

Because Eric was waiting in the parking lot of a provincial park and he was supposed to be at the arena.

"This feels like a bisexual Illuminati meeting," Aris said, holding onto Anya's leash as Ilya clipped himself into a belt tricked out with carabiners and pouches full of treats, dog poo bags, and a zipper pocket he shoved his phone into.

"Da, basically," Ilya confirmed.

"Is Hollander actually freaking out?"

"Oh 100%, no matter how many years we do these camps he always finds something new to worry about the day before they start." Ilya clipped the long retractable leash to one of the heavier duty carabiners.

"Ilya decided we're having a bisexual NHL players adventure and Hollander's worrying is just a really great cover." Eric held a bottle of environmentally safe sunscreen out to Aris, who gratefully took it and started to apply it. "Alternatively titled the mother-hen adventure."

"See I don't have to mother hen, I've got you and Scott in easy reach to mother hen the Admirals," Aris chirped, though it was very much true. He had gone from making sure his teammates on his Juniors team and the US Juniors team ate actual food and not just boxes of sugary cereal from the breakfast buffet to getting to just sit back and watch as Scott guilted their Olympic and Admirals teammates into taking care of themselves.

"Is also a good thing to hike," Ilya stated. "You've met most of the other coaches, you'll meet Pike, Max, and Leah tomorrow."

"Hayden and Ilya's friendship relies on shit talking more than his and Scott's," Eric warned.

Aris laughed and crouched in front of Anya, spreading some of the sunscreen Eric had given him over her nose. "Didn't realize you *could* shit talk more than you do with Scott."

Ilya smirked. "I am man of many talents, c'mon."

The hike started with a steep climb to an outlook, then on to a second outlook about halfway through. If Aris didn't spend a large portion of his waking hours working out and training for one of the highest intensity sports out there, he probably would've given up. When they reached the second outlook they stopped and sat on a couple of larger rocks, leaving the tables and benches for the people who were stopping for a shorter period. Eric pulled sandwiches out of his bag and Aris couldn't help but chirp about it.

"Y'know there's mother henning and then there's abduction followed by almost two hours worth of hiking with enough pre-planning to have gourmet sandwiches in your bag."

"If you don't want the sandwich-" Eric reached out to take it back and Aris bit into it.

"No fuck off, my sandwich," he said around the food.

"Wonderful table manners Aris, what is Eric and Scott teaching you?" Ilya tossed a napkin at Aris' face.

That was the first time Ilya had called Aris by his first name, in the same sentence he used Scott's first name it felt like some sort of Rubicon had been crossed. He wasn't Floros, Ilya's opponent on the ice, he was Aris, the serious boyfriend of Ilya's son. No one had called him Floros in weeks, not since the post-cup win press and the NHL awards in Vegas. He'd been Aris, Aristotelis, and a dozen sweet pet names whispered in English and Russian.

"You okay?" Ilya asked. Eric was FaceTiming Kyle from the lookout's fence line.

"Hm?"

"You have been quiet for a long time, and thinking." Ilya smiled and looked out over the beautiful rolling hills and winding river. "And Scott called Shane last week to be talked down from driving to Jersey to do something violent."

Aris cleared his throat and tried for a steady tone of voice. "He did?"

"Mm. Calling me would not be good for talking down from violence, and Shane has much experience." Ilya sipped his water. "When Mac was named to the Olympic team the Belovs reached out through his former caseworker. They wanted to *talk*. Shane and I met with them before even mentioning it to Mac, he was busy with his Juniors team in Kingston so we thought it was smarter to leave him to it unless it seemed genuine."

"Did it?"

Ilya laughed, dark and humourless. "The man insisted that Shane and I were to blame, that we corrupted his son and were clearly pedophiles trafficking him to Italy to *service* the team." Ilya spit the words and glared into the mountains. "The meeting was recorded, we found out they were continuing to claim Mac as their son, and we served them with a Cease and Desist. And have restraining orders ready to be filed. They do not live in Ottawa anymore."

He turned and looked at Aris. "You and Mac are two of the best hockey players in the league, you are certainly the best of your generation. I know how it is, to go from being the best on your own and moving slower to accommodate your teammates to suddenly facing someone who is just as good as you are. You have not been alone in climbing to the top, it is framed as a rivalry because it is easiest for the media to understand. They see us push Shane and Mac as hatred, they see them pushing us back as returned vitriol. They do not understand how it feels to have someone who perfectly understands how you are feeling, how your mind works, and push you to be the best version of yourself on and off the ice."

Aris looked out at the hills, eyes tracing over the curves of them like he was reading full sentences on a page. "Did you ever tell Mac, that his biologicals showed up?"

"No. We were going to the Olympics, and after what happened... The timing of it feels too suspect."

"After what happened?" Aris asked.

"Da. Team Canada backed me, when I reported it but... *pff*," Ilya blew out a long breath, and inhaled slowly again. "Ava's father, my brother, is not a good person, he is a drug addict and did not care about my career beyond the money I could give him. He hated me, my father was always disappointed in me even when he lost his mind. The last time I saw my brother was 2017. Until he showed up, outside the Canadian residence in the athletes village in Milan." He cracked his knuckles. "You know that Russia was barred from Olympics, prior to their invasion, right?" Aris nodded. "I testified in front of WADA, when they investigated the 2014 Olympic team. I told them about the culture, how any route to being the best of the best was encouraged. How guys I had competed with in Regina and Ottawa five years before were unrecognizable, short fuses and short tempers. It was anonymous, but there was a leak in 2023, I was warned that Russia would likely find some way to take it out on me."

"So they flew your brother to Milan?"

"There was no other reason for him to be there." He looked over at Aris again, eyes scanning his face, trying to decide whether to continue. Aris let them just sit in silence. "Mac told me what the Russian athletes said to you, about being the pretty young thing to keep Scott happy. Is same thing Alexei said about Shane. And what the Belovs said about Mac. There is typical homophobic dog whistle and then there is three different instances of Russians appearing around the Olympics to say the same thing."

"That's... Kinda freaky." And it was, there wasn't any other way for Aris to phrase it.

"Twice is coincidence enough for my mind to get paranoid, learning they used the same phrasing with you and Mac and Shane just..." Ilya clenched a fist like he was feeling the ache from punching someone. "I managed to land a punch on him before Shane let Scott and Troy pull me back." He smiled, this time a proud one. "And we managed to keep their team from getting anywhere close to a medal."

"Their team was a mess," Aris recalled.

"Well their star Russian players were all disqualified on propaganda grounds, and the Russian NHL athletes refused to compete." Ilya smiled. "They refused to compete without their flag, sounds great to Russia and keeps them in good standing with NHL and IOC while giving them an out."

Aris nodded and stood up, stretching his arms up over his head and hearing a couple cracks in the process. "I'm gonna need a clearer list about the shit you just said. Specifically what I'm allowed to tell Mac outright and what I have to be sneaky about telling him." Ilya glared at him and Aris shrugged, dropping his hands to his sides with a quiet *thwak* against his thighs. "Look, he's an adult, he deserves to know everything. Especially if there's legal shit he should be aware of. I get why you didn't tell him when it happened but I'd think we'd all have learned our lesson about not telling him things when they happen and then never bringing them up again. And, y'know, you might be his dad but I'm his boyfriend and I'm not gonna keep shit from him."

Ilya drove back to the arena, Anya comfortably passed out in Aris' lap.

"Scott said your family is not good," Ilya said into the silence.

"Yeah I'm... Still figuring it out." Aris sighed, petting Anya slowly. "I don't want to cut them off, if I did it'd be..." He trailed off, not sure what the right word was.

"I was the first person to hold Ava when she was born. I was 17 and my brother thought he was too good to hold her, that it was beneath him. His wife was out cold after surgery." Ilya's eyes were on the road, but he spoke freely, knowing Ava was safe in Winnipeg was probably helping. "When I cut off my brother I knew it would mean Ava would suffer for it. I set up a trust for her, after my father died and I decided to never go back. He couldn't touch it, but she could when she turned 18. I didn't contribute much in the grand scheme of what we make, but it was structured that she could live off the interest and never have to touch the initial contributions."

That... Wasn't a bad idea. Come the start of the season he could set aside enough from his first couple paychecks to set up his parents and siblings. They wouldn't be able to do global travel in first class but they could live comfortable lives. Especially his siblings with their sparkly clean normal people jobs and his parents' retirement funds on top of it.

"Why did you keep your name?" Aris asked. "You cut off your brother, your dad's dead, so why not change it when you got married?"

"Names are a thing in Russia, changing it wasn't... My mother's last name was the same as Ava's, Rozanova. I thought about changing to it but... Well, I was still returning to Russia every summer until 2017. Was seven seasons of being Ilya Rozanov. It was more my name than it would ever be my father's or brother's." He glanced over at Aris. "Floros does not feel like your name?"

"Not really. I mean, it does 'cause hockey. 90% of my friends are hockey people, but... It's theirs too. Feels like it outweighs how much it's mine purely by numbers."

"You are close with your mother's side, you could change to that," Ilya suggested. "Or change it to Hunter, he's spent the last couple of years parenting you anyways. Is only your second season, you can change your name to anything."

He was right, he could change his name to anything. Ilya was also right that, for the last two years if Aris had needed to talk to someone that wasn't his parents or sibling's answering machines he called Scott or Kip.

Scott had reached out before the US Juniors and it had meant the *world* to Aris.

His first phone call had been a stupid one, trying to figure out how to tie a damn tie for the arrival photos. Scott had already been in the city and he'd shown up and taught Aris how to tie a tie, and had made him iron the TJ Maxx shirt and jacket. Compared to a fair number of his teammates, Aris had looked really put together. Scott had dragged him along to the gold medal game, despite the fact that Aris was still nursing his wounded pride, had told him it was good sportsmanship. And had bought him a big bag of sticky caramel popcorn.

Kip had gotten Aris a set of metal tea canisters that still sat in his kitchen, had taken him to museums and answered questions even when they were probably stupid ones. Kip had picked Aris up from the airport after the draft and driven him back to his dorm room with a tuna poke bowl with extra avocado and travel mug of hot tea in the passenger seat waiting for him.

If anyone had parented him at all *ever* it had been Scott and Kip.

Scott who pulled him out of fights but backed him up when fists were actually thrown. Kip who bought the brownie vegan ice cream that Aris loved and made sure he would have at least one home cooked meal a week.

"It'd get framed as the ungrateful queer who abandoned his family name," he sighed.

"Let them." Ilya pulled into a parking spot next to Shane's soccer-mom SUV. "Who cares what they say, their job is to sell stories and get clicks. Your job is to play hockey under whatever name you want to have."

Chapter End Notes

Gonna be doing single uploads for the last few chapters :D Icb we're almost done! Place your bets on if we get over 80k now!

Chapter 38: Mac

Chapter Notes

The only update from this batch

This chapter is dedicated to everyone who's left comments

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

[A selection of voicemails left by Aris Floros]

December 16, 2025, 9:34 am: *Hey mom, just calling cause I just found out I'm gonna be captain for the US Juniors team. I think it's gonna be really cool and I'm gonna meet a bunch of guys from all over the world and play hockey against them for the whole US. And I'm captain which means they think I'm a good player who the guys'll listen to.*

[Deleted without opening December 16, 2025, 9:35 am]

January 3, 2026, 11:04 pm: *Hey dad, just wanted to call cause... We lost. We're not gonna be in medal contention and it sucks. I just- (the voice starts to sound tearful) I let everyone down and I know that's my fault and I need to just accept it and move on but I wish you guys were here. Love you. Bye.*

[Deleted without opening January 3, 2026 11:05 pm]

January 5, 2026, 9:07 : *Pen I'm going to the Olympics! I just got the call! I'm gonna be on a team with Scott Hunter and- oh my god I'm going to the Olympics! It's gonna be so cool! I'll try to get you guys stuff from Milan- Oh my god I'm going to Italy!*

[Deleted without opening January 5, 2026, 9:08 am]

February 6, 2026, 1:28 pm: *Niko I waved at a camera in the broadcast! I hope you guys saw! There's so many athletes here it's so cool. The guys on the team are nice, we're all wearing pride pins and ally pins and Canada and Sweden are doing it too. Shit's a little tense sometimes but there's a gelato place in the Athlete's Village, it's really cool and more pastel than I thought the colours would be. One of the Italian athletes said that's because it's real gelato. Let me know if you want anything specific, 'k bye.*

[Deleted without opening February 6, 2026, 1:28 pm]

February 10, 2026, 10:37 am: *Mom Ilya Rozanov knows my name! And we traded pins! And there's a snack table full of so many different kinds of snacks, I grabbed some from Korea that I thought you might like. This team is so much more chill, like we're all still competing but there's a chill sort of vibe to the locker rooms. They're so confident in playing together that playing with them feels so normal! Oh, I gotta go, Scott's coming over. Love you bye!*

[Deleted without opening February 10, 2026, 10:38 am]

February 17, 2026, 5:57 pm: *Hey Pen, I just made a probably really stupid sex decision but he was really sweet and listened to me talk about tea and he knows shit about coffee. And he got me gelato which I could've gotten for myself but he insisted. He's really nice but he also is the reason we lost at the Juniors last month so I kinda wanted to hate him even though he's so fucking pretty. He should be a model- Actually I don't see Canadian ads he probably already is one, his dad's in like a bajillion ads. I'm probably a little drunk still, the wine here is really good.*

[Deleted without opening February 17, 2026, 5:58 pm]

February 22, 2026: *Dad I won a silver medal! It's not gold but! I'm officially an Olympic medallist! I won a silver medal! This is so insane! I hope you guys were watching! I think that New York is gonna draft me in June, Scott hinted at it anyways. It's only a couple hours from home so you guys could come see me play all the time. I get a couple free tickets to every game so you could give them away or bring people from work if you wanted to. I can't believe I won a silver medal!*

[Expired, not opened]

June 26, 2026: *Hey mom, I tried calling everyone else but their phones are busy. I'm wondering if any of you are here? I sent you guys plane tickets and it said you used them to get to Buffalo but I don't see you at the hotel and none of you are answering my texts... Just... Let me know, I guess? I'm heading in to the draft room now. If you guys can't make it TSN streams the draft and this is kinda a big deal...*

[Expired, not opened]

June 26, 2026: *Hey Pen, thought you'd wanna know I'm going to New York so. If you wanna come into the city for shopping or anything I'll cover it. I've got a year until I start playing but I'll have to find a place and you've always been better at decor than me. Okay, I love you. Bye.*

[Expired, not opened]

December 25, 2026: *Merry Christmas Dad, sorry I couldn't make it home, hope everyone liked the gifts, a bunch of them are from Milan. None of you really said anything specific so I mostly just guessed. I got my final contract from the Admirals today, it's... A lot of money. Base pay is almost a million bucks but the stuff my agent got for game bonuses is... My signing bonus is pretty big too. I did the math real quick and, if I play just okay and only in half the regular season games I'm looking at 2.5 million in the first year. Up to almost 4 million if I play well and more often. So I guess we're set now, right? I signed it and the bonus will go through before the New Year, so we're pretty good. Anyways. Merry Christmas. Love you.*

[Expired, not opened]

September 19, 2027: *Mom training camp is going so good and Scott brought me to the bar he owns, it's not always a bar it's like a pub or something? He runs it with Eric Bennet who was like, the best goalie in the league for years! And he knew my name! And said he'd watched me at the Juniors and Olympics! He said I play good! Everyone here is so nice and Scott and Eric's husbands are lending me so many books. Eric's husband Kyle speaks Greek too! I get to talk to someone in Greek and it's so nice! They invited me to a family dinner thing at Eric and Kyle's place and they're making Greek food and it won't be as good as*

yours but I'm so excited!

[Expired, not opened]

December 27, 2027: *I know I know Niko I'm late with my Christmas calls but I've been a little busy. Hope you guys are having fun in Japan, it looks like it. Who's that guy with Pen? She doesn't tag him in any of her posts but he's in a lot of them. Mom and Dad seem to like him anyway. I'm looking at getting a place, I can't decide if I should get an apartment or a house cause if you guys want to come to any games I want to have guest rooms so you don't have to deal with New York hotels. It looks like we're gonna be serious contenders for the Cup this year, that means that we're gonna win the whole thing this year, be the best in the league. My agent's been fielding sponsorship requests but you said that sports people doing ads and sponsorship was tacky and didn't make any sense so I'm not taking them, it's just nice to be wanted, y'know?*

[Expired, not opened]

Ice rinks had always felt like home to Mac. Sitting on cold steel benches that weren't quite wide enough to do up skates as quick as possible and just get out there and make the most of it. The feel of the ice cutting underneath his blades, of the cold air on his face, of the padding on his shoulders.

The Game Changers Hockey Camp had changed arenas a couple times. The year Mac had gone had been the last time there had been a camp at the Metros' practice arena. The camps had gotten big enough that they'd started leasing out the University of Ottawa rink and some of the empty dorm space over the summer for kids who flew in from all over just to train, and they'd started leasing the McGill rink for the Montreal leg of the camps which always involved a trip to find where David's hockey photo was.

Mac wasn't the only person in a GCHC Alumni jersey, though almost all the rest of the alumni were off-ice volunteers who mostly wore the t-shirt versions as they organized the dorm kids and different age groups. He'd barely stood up from lacing his skates when he felt someone jump onto his back.

"You're getting predictable Iz," he said, grinning over his shoulder at the Montreal Héraut star defencewoman. Izzy had been one of ten girls at Mac's first camp, two puffed space buns underneath her helmet and a skill for chirping that had Mac in stitches. She was two years older than him, had been one of Montreal's first draft picks of the full PWHL season, and she was a much better player than Mac.

"Maybe but!" She switched to French, teasing right into his ear *"I heard you have a boy!"*

Mac flushed. *"Yeah and we have a half day of free skate training before the kids get here, you really wanna waste it gossiping?"*

"Who's gossiping?" Kern's French had more of a Prairie accent to it, like Dykstra's did.

"Izzy, Kern, Kernit, Izzy," Mac introduced, tilting his head to point to each of them, his hands full of Izzy's legs.

"Bonjour!" Izzy smiled, pushing her face over her arm on Mac's shoulder so her ear and the half dozen piercings in it were pressed into Mac's. "Glad to meet any of Timbit's teammates that *don't* suck." She sighed. "Though now there's no one to talk me out of getting more piercings."

Mac rolled his eyes and stepped onto the ice, Kern close behind. "You have a phone."

"You don't *use* your phone," Izzy shot back.

"Make a group chat with Floros and he uses it," Kern chirped, skating out in front of Mac and starting to skate backwards. "James threatened to add him to the Bisons chat to make him check it."

"I check the team chat, I just don't text in it," Mac defended himself. "And my dads still haven't forgiven you for sneaking Papa's signature on the piercing consent form the first time."

"And yet I'm here!" She grinned. "And Julie helped and she's here too."

"Because Leah said we needed more girls." Mac hiked Izzy up more as she started to slip. "Surprisingly the only PWHL athletes willing to give up two weeks of their break are the two who graduated."

"Y'know, three professional hockey players from a single week-long session is really great averages," Kern supplied.

"Don't forget the couple dozen across the European leagues," Mac added. "Mostly from other sessions but still."

"And Gordon's playing for Queens right now with a deferred draft date so he can graduate." Izzy hummed. "Still can't believe they're just taking everyone, though."

"It's to fundraise for the Foundation, making it into a tryouts thing kinda defeats the purpose." Mac came to a stop at the edge of the rink where Shane was glaring at the clipboard in his hand. "What is it?"

"The zamboni schedule wasn't included in the papers U Ottawa gave us."

"Do we *need* the zamboni schedule?" Mac asked. "Every other year they've done it when we've gone for lunch break and the couple of times we asked in between."

"Well yeah, but- ISABELLE!" Izzy had grabbed the clipboard out of Shane's hands and skated away with it.

"Dad you don't even have your skates on yet." Mac pushed Shane's shoulder. "Get ready to coach, maybe?"

"I need that!" Shane had his arm fully extended, hand splayed as if it would make the clipboard magically appear back in his hand.

"Then put your skates on and go get it yourself, you're a faster skater than her anyways."

"No he's not!" Izzy shouted from the opposite side of the rink.

"Is Iz causing problems again?" Ilya asked, dropping his skate bag on the floor next to a bench. "Is new record time."

"*We've* been here for hours," Mac pointed out. "Doing Safe Sport training shit. Which Aris still has to do-"

"He's doing it now," Ilya waved a dismissive hand at Shane's relatively high pitched noise of stress. "Will be quicker to do it one on one anyways."

"It's just the last portion, he's done the background checks already." Mac tapped a quick succession of open-palmed slaps against the tops of the boards. "C'mon, you really think I'd let him slack on 'em?"

"Hol-Roz was on my ass about getting the shit done the second I said yes," Kern added helpfully.

"I was on Iz and Julie too. Iz had hers done in December." Mac watched Shane put on his skates and grinned. "You know I *do* try to make your life easier at camp."

Shane looked up and smiled at Mac. "And I appreciate it every year."

Mac stayed at the side boards but turned so his back was leaning against them, watching as the coaches and other volunteer staff took to the ice. Mac recognized every one of the volunteers, they'd either been at camps he'd attended or started volunteering at camps he'd attended. It felt, in a weird way, like being back on his Juniors team competing against any of the other teams. He knew everyone's names, knew which doughnut they'd go for in an assorted box from Tims, knew if they were coffee or tea drinkers, knew their allergies, knew that a couple of them ate according to different religious doctrines. He watched his parents talk and chirp and laugh alongside everyone.

He felt Aris' chin on his shoulder and smiled, turning to look at him and get a quick, soft kiss. "You enjoy your bisexual adventure?"

"You mean the planned out abduction and surprise hike?" Aris hummed and turned to tuck his face into Mac's neck. "Was okay."

"So you loved it," Mac translated and Aris' hidden smile felt against his skin was enough confirmation.

Izzy and Julie skated to near simultaneous hard stops in front of Mac, the scrape of the ice pulling Aris from his hiding place.

"So this is the boy," Izzy surmised.

Mac rolled his eyes, his warm smile undercutting his faux-annoyance. "Aris this is Izzy and Julie, we were at camp together in 2021."

"As of yet the most successful class of GCHC," Julie added, smirking. "Though a lot of our class ended up with professional hockey careers, *Timbit* got a whole ass family outta it."

Mac grinned. "Should be added to the waver; your kid might get adopted by some star hockey players, beware."

"Aris!" Scott shouted from across the rink. "Get your skates on!"

"I don't have to listen to you anymore!" Aris shouted back as he sat down on the bench. Mac turned to look at him, watching Aris lace his skates like he hadn't spent several sleepy hours with those fingers scratching up his back.

"*Fuck, you're so in love look at you,*" Izzy teased in French, wedging right up into Mac's personal space while Julie did the same on his other side.

"Yep," Mac popped the p, grinning at Aris' confused face, mid tightening his laces.

"What did she say?" Aris asked.

"Of course *l'Américain* doesn't speak French." Julie flopped her head to lean on Mac's shoulder. "*Questionable taste, my friend.*"

"He speaks Greek," Mac stated.

"And he's trying to learn Russian first," Aris added, tying his skates and standing up. "And of the four of us, who's won their League's highest trophy?" He stepped onto the ice and pointed to himself with both thumbs. "This American."

"Mac'll take it next year," Julie deflected. "And we'll take the Walter-"

"Not if Montreal takes it," Izzy interrupted.

A chorus of "fuck Montreal"s came from the assorted Ottawa players.

"Not *le Héraut*," Mac shouted back, skating towards the gathered group.

"Management's pissed about how they treated you," Izzy added. "Metros reached out to do a joint summer shoot for banners and bus ads. Got told fuck no." She playfully shoulder-checked Mac. "We've got your back. They don't get to use our exceedingly gay team to prop up their bullshit homophobic choices."

"Would've been great if our home/away schedules aligned at all ever," Mac muttered.

Izzy flipped her braids over her shoulder with a wink. "I do not control the schedule, only the level of badassery I bring to it."

The kids ranged in age from ten to sixteen, the closest lived down the street and skated with the team Mac had been on when Ilya and Shane had adopted him, the furthest was from Seoul. They started with games, the half day Sunday had been added a few years earlier when they'd started having international students and wanted to break down some of the cultural

barriers and encourage everyone to just be kids for a bit. The actual coaching started Monday, splitting into groups based on position meant Shane, Ilya, Scott, and Mac ran drills for centres for half the morning before combining the forwards to cycle through drills after the first zamboni pass of the day.

By the time they reached lunch and sent the kids into the open hall with the off-ice volunteers Mac had barely talked to Aris for hours. Aris sat next to Mac, though, and wordlessly traded the chilled coffee drink from the catered lunch for the ice tea in Mac's, their chairs close enough their legs pressed together.

"There's a couple of centres who are convinced they're the main player and no other players matter," Scott said, and Mac pulled out his phone to open his notes app.

"Yeah Jesse, Daniel, and Kylie, right?" Scott nodded and Mac continued, "I think we might be able to chock some of that up to unfamiliarity, they're the centres who haven't played with any of the other forwards before, but there's definitely some peacocking happening."

"And Henry's a little too self conscious about passing," Troy put forward.

"Yeah he took the swing all picture perfect and then chickened out last minute," Aris agreed. "Definitely a confidence problem."

The lunch hour passed with more discussions on first day notes and then they were back on the ice.

Mac had watched Aris with his cousins and their kids in Ithaca, he'd spent a couple hours every day of the last couple weeks they'd *been* in Greece immersed in Aris' family and they were heading right back after camp ended. There was something about watching Aris be kind and caring and careful with watching his mouth around the kids that Mac *had been* that was so vastly different and achingly familiar all at the same time.

They woke up in Mac's bed in Shane and Ilya's home, drove to the arena together and picked Irina up from her day camp while Shane and Ilya worked on day's end admin. Aris fit into the off season version of Aris' life so perfectly it almost felt like he'd been there the whole time.

Aris had told him about the hiking trip, about the conversations. Aris sat in the passenger seat while Mac drove and called the law firm his agent had used and gotten shuffled around until someone easily took on the filing of Aris' name change paperwork on Tuesday. He didn't want to tell Scott until he had everything lined up. Wednesday's lunch hour had been spent with Ilya, Mac, and Aris working on setting up three trusts to fund his biological family without any contact needed. Aris' lawyers had come back with the legal letters laying out the formal severing of contact being the condition of the trusts.

By the fourth day it smacked him right in the face, when Aris, Ilya, and Shane were each working on coaching a trio of players right before one of the short games. He knew that Aris' chirps had led to Scott declaring him a miniature Ilya, but watching him interact with children directly between Mac's parents made it so fucking clear that Aris was as much a combination of Ilya and Shane as Mac was, but where Mac had been able to fall back and

have his parents catch and protect him, Aris had been ignored. He'd formed as a person with pieces that matched Ilya and Shane and pieced that were entirely his own.

"For the record I'm very *very* glad you two aren't trying to hide at these camps," Ryan said, handing the box of timbits back to Mac.

"Knock on doors and you'll be fine," Mac spoke without looking away, watching Aris laugh freely and chirp something that had Ilya's mouth dropping open in gleeful shock.

Ryan threw a timbit at the side of Mac's head. "I refuse to be held responsible for the depraved things you dads were doing in the equipment room."

Mac ate the timbit.

"You know, I did not think I would like him but he's okay," Hayden said as he plopped down in front of Mac, taking a timbit out of the box. "You have slightly better taste than your Dad."

"Be nice," Scott cautioned, with the specific tone that parents used to warn their kids off from being idiots.

"I am being nice!" Hayden insisted. "We all know Hollander has shit taste-"

"He dated Rose Landry and married Ilya Rozanov, that's pretty good taste," Mac interjected. "If you wanna talk about his taste in friends-"

Hayden shoved Mac back and off the bench of the bleachers onto the foot step behind him.

On the last day of camp the letters were served to Aris' biological parents and siblings, and as a distraction Mac had roped him into his last day of camp tradition. They led the campers to the large campus Tim Horton's and each of them were allowed to pick out a doughnut and a drink to watch their coaches play a proper game before the final long-form game of the camp. They all sat in the bleachers as the coaches pulled on neon coloured pinnies and divided into two teams with Eric and Bood acting as refs. It ended up being Centaurs and Max versus the rest, or as the kids declared; the girls, the gays, and GusGus.

"I can't decide which is worse," Kern declared after the game. "Being called a Muppet for stopping goals or a mouse from a Disney movie."

"You're a Muppet because of your everything, not just because of your no-goal face," Wyatt helpfully explained.

Aris skated over and kissed Mac before they got off the ice for the zamboni to clear. They only stopped when Kern yanked on the back of Aris' jersey.

"I hate that Kernit's spreading, you know that?" He pointed between the two of them. "I blame you."

"Blame the internet, I just found the meme," Aris defended, elbowing Kern multiple times until he let go. "I gotta head to New York over the weekend, if anyone wants anything."

"You will be in Montreal for Sunday afternoon," Ilya stated it like a threat and Mac couldn't help but roll his eyes.

"We'll be in Montreal for Sunday afternoon," Mac repeated like he was a sullen teenager being told to recite something in class.

Ilya grinned with narrowed eyes. "You think you can give me lip?"

"I know I can."

"You don't want your game snacks then." Ilya held up a box of timbits and sprinted into the hallway, Mac chasing close after him.

"They're literal toddlers," he heard Aris say.

"You get used to it," Shane sighed fondly.

Chapter End Notes

Aris: decides to change his name

Aris: needs to have everything figured out before he tells Scott

Scott: ah yes aris is talking to me less because he is coaching and/or fucking his boyfriend and i do not want to know about that

Seriously tho, all of you who've left comments have given me life! For the emoji comment-ers, I see you all leaving your hearts and heart eyes and I value all of them! The people who leave a couple word comments and longform comment-ers your words are screenshotted in a folder on my computer to remind me that people actually like this fic. The rare occasion/one time comment-ers I adore you all so much!

Specifically going to name some of the frequent comment-ers here who I see so often in my comments even if I don't reply to all of them know that seeing repeated comments on multiple chapters fills me with so many happy bees all buzzing around my head!

Thank you ohdaniboi, loonylaura, HoldingHandsOnTheWii, barbaricyap, Amnesia_the_crazy_cat_lady, and TooMuchHappiness

Thank you TechnoMagicalWitch, ninisnightshade, PhoenixPixie, solarfox, Hi_you_readers, nevermindirah, nyxlyx and mountain_girl22

Thank you Pink_paw_14, MargretMango, Aihsa, I_am_a_b0r3d_drag0n, JadeLight, coffeeandtv, 0H_grams, and danisanerd

Thank you SheinHollander, oAriane, flywithkathleen, a_fantasy_2, sadhappylady, ElleCC, and theMagnusBane

See you all soon (in the next 48 hours) for the final chapter <3

Chapter 39

Chapter Notes

The last full chapter update!

The New Dynasty; A Captain Hunter Remains

Published: October 2028

Those of us that feared for the future of our beloved New York Admirals can rest assured the team is in safe hands. The announcement of number 25 as the new team captain wasn't a surprise for anyone who was watching closely, it seems as though the young man had been personally selected by Scott Hunter back in 2025 to pass on the C. What was absent from the announcement was the Rookie of the Year's last name, and after tonight's opening game the world finally knows why.

I was given an embargoed press release from the Admirals early on Monday, three days before the home opener. Rarely has one of these press releases been good news, most often they're trades or retirements or injuries. The Admirals' statement, though, reads much like the Hunters'.

"Many people form close bonds with their teammates, while most make their friends the godparents of their children, Scott Hunter and his husband Kip Grady have begun the formal adult adoption process with the full legal support of the Admirals organization. The player formally known as Aristotelis Floros has initiated a legal and professional name change, and will henceforth be referred to as Aristotelis Hunter in all future communications.

"Aristotelis Hunter has his own reasons for removing connections to his family of birth, but we as an organization have been front row witnesses to the transformation that has happened under Scott and Kip's care. He has gone from a player who remained quiet and withdrawn off the ice to someone who actively engages within and without our team community and wider city landscape. We as an organization speak often about the benefits of strong support systems for athletes and nowhere is that clearer than in the case of Aris, Scott, and Kip. The player we began last season with is unrecognizable as the player who arrived at his first training camp, and it has been a wonderful thing to witness."

There will no doubt be bad faith actors who see this gesture as a sexual one, despite Aristotelis Hunter and Mac Hollander-Rozanov's recent Instagram post where they announced their relationship to the world. Quite a lot has been said about the on-ice rivalry between the two young stars, mirroring the coverage of Hollander-Rozanov's fathers' on-ice rivalry, but unlike his fathers this rivalry seems to be likely to last long after this relationship reveal with Hollander-Rozanov's fellow Bison August Kern commenting on Hunter's post "will

you stop rubbing it in that you won 1 (one) single thing over Hol-Roz now?" Which Hunter replied to with a "no" and a smiling angel emoji.

Comparisons will be drawn and extrapolated from Hollander-Rozanov's adoption story, though as Shane Hollander said in a recent interview on the topic "we [Ilya Rozanov and Hollander] only shared as much as we did because we knew people would see Mac had attended [Game Changers Hockey Camp], something that has a very public price tag, and assume that any parent who paid that much for their child to train would be a good and fit home. We know that queer people are constantly accused by bigots of being groomers and pedophiles, and as much as we could we wanted to shield Mac from that. Maybe looking back we could have phrased it better, but I've always preferred clearer, blunter words than more politely phrased ones."

Regardless of Hunter's relationship with the people who raised him, there is a heartwarming story to take away from all of this; in the midst of the most stressful games of his life the teenaged Aristotelis found adults he could trust to keep him safe and help him, and then went on to win a cup together and stage a heartwarming farewell after the final game.

Aris felt kinda stupid, but after the camps were over they headed back to New York and Mac had insisted on making Scott a birthday cake which meant he was using Aris' kitchen. And that had turned into reaching out to Scott and Kip's friends and the Admirals and now there was a party happening in Aris' new home and his boyfriend was busy fighting the humidity of New York summer and there was a piece of paper Aris had signed and was waiting to talk to Scott before his lawyer processed it.

"Did you kill someone?" Scott asked, eyes narrowed at Aris when he arrived early.

"What? No-" Scott grinned and Aris rolled his eyes. "You're the worst. Why are you even in my house?"

"You said to get here early."

He had. When Aris figured it would be easier to say words. Mac wasn't any help, he'd done his name change paperwork in secret and hadn't talked to Shane or Ilya about any part of it.

"I cut my family off," Aris said. Blunt, straightforward. "Ilya helped, at camp. Cutting them off monetarily felt like a betrayal, but they've got trusts now. If they're smart about it they'll be able to live comfortably off the interest for the rest of their lives. And they were served legal letters that I'm cutting contact with them, I don't know what they're actually called but..."

Scott placed his hands on Aris' biceps, halfway to a hug, and ducked his head to look at Aris' face. "Are you okay?"

"Why did you decide not to change your name? When you and Kip got married neither of you hyphenated or changed it..."

"I mean, Kip said that he'd been a Grady when he'd earned his masters and it was the fancier piece of paper. I just... I don't have much left of my mom, but it was her name, and it was mine. Why?" Scott asked.

"Ilya said since I've only got a season under Floros it'd be pretty easy to change."

"You thinking about changing it to the name your family uses in Greece?"

"I thought about it, but there's so many. All my aunts changed their last names, my married girl cousins changed theirs, so it doesn't feel as... I dunno..." Aris shrugged, worrying the sleeve of his dress shirt between his fingers- No, this was definitely Mac's dress shirt, there was silver embroidery on the cuffs. That thought soothed his nerves a little, like Mac wasn't standing feet away speaking in threatening Russian to the batter and icings.

"Would you hate it if I changed my last name to Hunter?" Aris asked. Blunt. Straightforward. Preparing for Scott to hate him for even thinking to ask it. Why had he bothered with the paperwork he should've just spun a wheel of common surnames and picked one of them-

Oh.

Scott was hugging him.

Tight arms wrapped around Aris that felt as much like a shield as the one hand grabbing the back of his jersey had.

"You want to be a Hunter?" Scott asked, voice thick.

Aris wrapped his arms around Scott and hugged him back, tight enough that it forced the words out of him. "You taught me how to tie a tie, you made me feel comfortable talking off the ice, you keep your home open to me- you're my family."

Scott pulled back enough to lock his tearful eyes on Aris' when he said, "you're mine too."

He sniffed and smiled. "Cause I got you soup?" Aris teased and Scott laughed a watery laugh and hugged him again.

"I'm so proud of you," Scott's words were so sincere. He'd said it before, after the World Juniors.

*"Doesn't matter that you lost, it matters that you played your best and you led your team as best as you possibly could. You did that and more and for what it's worth, **I'm** proud of you."*

"You were the first person to say that to me," Aris confessed, leaning into Scott. Scott's hands tightened in Aris' dress shirt, and Aris felt so damn protected. "Don't do violence on my biological family, I don't wanna have to explain why I'm using your name after you get arrested."

"I am so sorry you didn't have the family you deserved. They put far too much on you at far too young an age and none of it should have happened."

"Yeah well." Aris smiled, feeling lighter than he had in a long time. "I got better parents out of it."

Aris spent Scott's birthday party moving between Scott, Kip, and Mac's arms. A handful of Scott and Kip's friends that he hadn't met yet were introduced to Aris as "this is our son, Aris," and it made the slight discomfort of having strangers in his home completely disappear. Kip talked just as proudly about him to his coworkers and friends from university as Scott did to the handful of guys he'd played in the Juniors with.

And Mac kissed him, easily. A kiss to his shoulder, between his shoulder blades, on the back of his neck, his cheek, his jaw, and his lips. Aris felt like he was being bathed in affection, romantic love swirling through him as much as the familial.

The season opener game in New York was bright and loud. They started by skying Scott's jersey, number 21 and the C stark white on the red Admirals jersey, Kip and Aris standing with him on the ice to watch it happen. No matter how long Aris played with the Admirals without Scott, his jersey would still be there. And Scott would still be in the stands for every home game.

It was the first public event that marked Aris as part of Scott's family, he'd left his jersey and pads behind in the dressing room for this part, not wanting to pull focus from Scott's moment. Aris and Scott's agents had worked together on the post that would be going live in less than ten minutes, in the break between the retirement and the team taking to the ice with the cup. It publicly announced Aris' name change, had a couple pictures of Scott herding Aris around at both Juniors, the Olympics, and last season's games. Aris hadn't had to update his emergency contacts but he had gone through the legal process of designating Scott his medical PoA which was about as far into the adult adoption process as they'd gotten before training camp and pre-season games started up again.

Returning to the locker room Aris could hear the musical guest playing over the intercom as he strapped into his gear. And then he paused. The pre-season games he'd used his jerseys from last season, but the crisp new jersey hanging in his stall was more his than it had any right to be. It matched the label above the stall, Hunter printed above the big 25 on the back, and on the front was the big C. That had been announced a few hours ago, though Aris was pretty sure it would be low down on the list of questions the press would want to ask about.

When Mac and Aris had gone back to Greece after Scott's birthday, Scott and Kip had joined them and been as chaotically welcomed as Mac had been. Kip had taken a picture of Aris and Mac sitting together in Yaya's house, an espresso cup in Mac's hand with his arm around Aris' shoulder and Aris asleep on Mac's chest. They'd both posted it with heart emojis, though Aris had included a note underneath it that read '*@AuggieKernIce this means Mac and I are dating, if you were still confused what the very obvious heart and making out in the middle of a bar meant.*'

He pulled the jersey on and fell into line with his teammates, at the back, the lights swirling around the arena as loud music played.

"Fits you," Carter shouted over the music, grinning at Aris. "Do a twirl!"

Aris rolled his eyes but waddled through a spin anyways, Carter and their teammates whooping their approval.

Then they started announcing the players, and for a brief moment, Aris was alone in the tunnel, staring at his teammates on the ice, circling the Admirals logo at centre ice.

"And your new Captain, number 25! Aristotelis Hunter!" The announcer's voice boomed and it was drowned out by the roar of the crowd as Aris stepped onto the ice and finished the circle.

They spaced out, skating three laps around the rink, waving at the crowd in the stands. Each time Aris skated by his seats, the ones that had sat empty through the entirety of the 27-28 season, he saw Scott and Kip making fools of themselves and Mac grinning, phone pointed at the ice with Yaya on the other end.

Mac's season opener was the next day, he'd be leaving the arena and getting straight onto a chartered flight to Winnipeg to be able to make morning practice.

But he was here, in Aris' seats, calling his grandmother so she could hear the way New York cheered for him.

So he could kiss Aris after the game in a rare stolen moment.

Yeah. He could definitely work with this.

Chapter 40: 15 Years in Headlines

Chapter Summary

An epilogue of sorts

Chapter Notes

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

"I Told Him I'd Take It,"; Bisons Take Stanley Cup After Hat Trick in Game 7 From Hollander-Rozanov

Published: June 2029

"The Idea of Playing Without Him Isn't Worth It"; Ilya Rozanov Retires at 38 After Shane Hollander's Injury Cut Cup Hopes Short

Published: July 2029

Hollander-Rozanov Named Captain of Winnipeg Bisons

Published: October 2029

Bisons Win Back to Back Stanley Cup; Proposal on the Ice

Published: June 2030

The Dynasties Merged; Behind Hollander-Rozanov and Hunter's Greek Wedding

Published: August 2030

Luca Haas Named Captain of Ottawa Centaurs

Published: May 2031

10 Years Later; How One Phone Call Started a Formidable Hockey Dynasty

Published: June 2032

Max Riley Named Head Coach of Team Canada Men's Team

Published: November 2032

Scott Hunter Award; New Trophy for NHL Awards Sponsored by the New York Admirals for Activism Off the Ice

Published: May 2033

New York Admirals Take the Cup

Published: June 2034

Latest Contract Shake Ups; Hollander-Rozanov and Hunter Joint Sign to Ottawa Centaurs

Published: July 2034

Ilya Rozanov and Shane Hollander to Succeed Brendon Wiebe as Ottawa Centaurs Co-Head Coaches

Published: June 2035

15 Years of Camp Game Changers; A Roundup of All the Stars the Hollander-Rozanov Brainchild Has Brought to Professional Hockey

Published: July 2035

In His Father's Footsteps; Hollander-Rozanov-Hunter Couple Announces Adoption of Twin Teen Landry Scholarship Recipients

Published: January 2036

Last of the Old Guard; Troy Barrett Announces Retirement After End of 36-37 Season

Published: December 2036

Looking Back; 20 Years After Scott Hunter Became First Openly Gay NHL Player

Published: June 2037

"Changing the Game; Queer NHL History Told By The People Who Made It" Book Excerpts

Published: March 2038

A Prodigy to Look Out For; Irina Hollander-Rozanov Attends Game Changers Hockey Camp "For the Last Time"

Published: July 2039

Turning All the Right Heads; Irina Hollander-Rozanov Debuts in Women's Juniors at 16

Published: December 2040

Hollander-Rozanov vs Hunter and Hollander-Rozanov vs Marleau; The Hockey Dynasties Taking the Ice Winter Olympics 2042

Published: December 2041

Chapter End Notes

Surprise chapter :D

Thank you everyone for coming along with me on this ride. I truly didn't think anyone would care about these little guys I made up in my head. Y'all have made it REALLY HARD for my imposter syndrome lately 🙏

Thank you all for loving Aris and Mac as much as I do, and for loving Kern and Jacobs and Ava and Irina (and Izzy and Julie with their handful of lines).

As of yet I don't have any plot bunnies for Irina beyond the small nugget that she's 17 at her first Olympics and plays against Marleau's daughter who she's grown up crushing on.

That being said I do have some vague ideas for other OC stories in the GC universe, at least one of them could theoretically be in the same universe as Instant Family though I will have to see if it my trans guy artist Ash comes out of my brain the same way Mac and Aris did, or if I'll have to tempt him out with something.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!