

blood on my shirt, rose in my hand

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/77735876) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/77735876>.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	Graphic Depictions Of Violence
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Heated Rivalry (TV)
Relationships:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov , Shane Hollander & Hayden Pike , Cliff Marlow & Ilya Rozanov , Ilya Rozanov & Svetlana Vetrova
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov , Cliff Marlow , Svetlana Vetrova , Hayden Pike , Yuna Hollander , David Hollander , Rose Landry , Original Male Character(s)
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - Mob , Russian Mafia , Ilya Rozanov is Obsessed With Shane Hollander , Developing Relationship , bratva ilya , Hockey Player Shane , Slow Burn , Mutual Pining , Closeted Character , Getting Together , Near Death Experiences , Blood and Violence , Implied/Referenced Torture , Implied/Referenced Suicide , Possessive Ilya Rozanov , Shane Hollander Loves Ilya Rozanov , Ilya Rozanov Loves Shane Hollander , Protective Ilya Rozanov , Good Parent Yuna Hollander , POV Alternating , No beta we die like Grigori Rozanov
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of late night devil (put your hands on me)
Collections:	My secret rivalry
Stats:	Published: 2026-01-15 Completed: 2026-02-24 Words: 12,539 Chapters: 8/8

blood on my shirt, rose in my hand

by [buckbrainrot](#)

Summary

Shane Hollander is the closeted captain of the Montreal Voyageurs. Ilya Rozanov is a man with blood on his hands and love in his chest, even if he refuses to name it.

What begins as a one-night stand in Boston becomes something deceptively close to forever...but danger lurks at every turn.

Chapter 1: can't look away

Chapter Notes

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

February 2017

SHANE

There's a man staring at Shane from the other side of the club.

Shane doesn't want to be here. His team finally managed to drag him out after game after game of "next time" or "I'm too tired" and now he's standing in a corner nursing his ginger ale while the rest of his team does body shots off of girls that look like models.

The man across the club is almost unfairly gorgeous. Bronze hair, sharp jawline, cheekbones that belong on a Greek statue—and yet he's looking at Shane.

If Shane were a braver man, he would go over to talk to him. Maybe flirt a little bit, see if he was interested. But Shane is not a brave man. Shane is the captain of the Montreal Voyageurs, and his best kept secret is that he's truly, deeply gay. And also a virgin, but that goes hand-in-hand with the being gay and closeted thing.

If the truth were to get out, Shane's career could be over. The Voyageurs' locker room would become hostile. Shane has heard enough slurs from the mouths of his second line for a lifetime.

He'd like to think that they would accept him. He's given them three Stanley Cups, after all. But he knows better. Best case scenario, Theriault would trade him as soon as his contract was up. Shane would probably waive his no-trade clause himself when his team turned on him. It would be a shitshow.

So as Shane makes eye contact with the beautiful man across the club, instead of going over and talking to him, he stares down into his ginger ale and mourns a different life—a life where talking to a guy he was interested in wasn't career suicide, a life where he could love whoever he wanted to love and nobody would care one bit. He sighs as he finishes the last drop of his ginger ale, moving back towards the bar for another.

When he sits down at the bar, he waves the bartender over, and he grabs his notepad right away. Benefits of being the most recognizable face in all of the NHL, he guesses.

Life must be playing some sort of cosmic joke on him, though, because as the bartender walks towards him, so does the guy who was looking at him earlier. He shoots Shane a killer smile and Shane suddenly acutely understands what women mean when they say their ovaries exploded. *Fuck, how can someone possibly be this hot?*

“Can I buy you a drink?” Oh, Shane is dead. Shane must have taken a hit during their game against the Bears and gone straight to heaven. Because there is simply no way this man is talking to him. Shane turns around to see if there is anyone behind him, but he’s at the end seat.

“I was asking you, not wall,” the man says, bemused. Even his voice is unfairly hot. Deep and sexy with a distinctly Slavic accent. It’s like he’s Shane’s wet dream come to life. Shane’s brain goes into crisis mode.

Should he let the guy buy him a drink? But what if his teammates see? But what if this is the only chance he has to ever meet a guy this attractive?

Shane does a sweep around the bar, eyes catching on his teammates wrapped up in each other and groaning that they’ve had too much to drink. *Fuck it*, he decides.

“Sure.”

“What are you drinking?” The other man inquires.

“I’ll just have a ginger ale, please.” The bartender scribbles it down.

“And I will have 2 shots of Beluga Epicure, please. Both on my card.” Shane knows little to nothing about alcohol, but he’s pretty sure that’s an incredibly expensive vodka. *Great. He’s hot and rich.* There really must be something wrong with this guy’s personality (*or how he has sex*, his brain whispers) if he’s this interested in Shane.

The man leans one arm on the bar and gazes at Shane, chin coming to rest on his palm.

“So, what’s your name, веснушки?” The man doesn’t know who he is. *At least there’s that.*

“Wouldn’t you like to know.” It comes out flat and wrong and not at all teasing like Shane wanted it to, but it still ignites a fire in the man’s eyes.

“Ok, ok, keep your secrets,” he drawls. “I am Ilya.”

“Ilya.” Shane rolls the name over in his mouth. Ilya’s eyes darken.

The bartender comes back with their drinks.

“For you, дорогой.” Shane’s fingers brush against Ilya’s as he takes the glass from his hand. Ilya signals the bartender for the check. *Oh.*

Shane chugs the ginger ale as Ilya knocks back his shots. The bartender comes back with the check quickly. *Holy fuck.* Ilya’s vodka shots are \$400 apiece.

“Will you—” Ilya starts.

“Yes.” Shane probably sounds a little desperate. That’s because he is.

“I was going to ask if you wanted to get out of here.”

Shane's heart slams against his ribs. Out of here. Away from the bar, away from his teammates, away from the life he's so carefully contained. He really should say no. He should make an excuse—early flight, work responsibilities, migraine, anything.

Instead, he nods.

Ilya settles the check with a casual flick of his wrist, like dropping nearly a thousand dollars on drinks is nothing, and then he's standing close enough that Shane can smell him—clean, expensive cologne and something warmer underneath. Ilya's hand hovers near Shane's lower back, not touching, a question rather than a demand.

"Is this okay?" he asks quietly.

Shane swallows. "Yeah."

The hand settles, gentle but sure, and Ilya guides him through the press of bodies toward the exit. No one looks at them twice. Shane keeps waiting for someone to shout his name, for one of his teammates to recognize him and put the pieces together, but the night swallows them whole.

The cold Boston air hits Shane like a splash of water. He laughs, a little breathless, and Ilya grins at him, clearly pleased.

"My place is close," Ilya says. "If you want."

"I want," Shane says, and then flushes at how earnest it sounds.

Ilya's grin shifts into something sharper, more predatory. Shane shivers. "Good."

—

Ilya's apartment is, frankly, ridiculous. Floor-to-ceiling windows, dark wood floors, art Shane doesn't recognize but knows probably costs more than his car. He barely has time to take it in before Ilya is in front of him again, close, searching his face.

"You can still say no," Ilya says.

Shane thinks of locker rooms and slurs and secrets. He thinks of the man in front of him, patient and devastatingly beautiful, giving him an out he doesn't want.

"I don't want to," Shane says.

Ilya kisses him like that's all he needed to hear.

Shane has thought about kissing men before—imagined it in stolen moments, late at night—but nothing prepared him for this. Ilya's mouth is warm and confident, unhurried, like he has all the time in the world. It's also claiming, all consuming, devoted in a way that Shane adores. He melts into it, fingers curling into Ilya's shirt just to keep himself grounded.

The rest of the night blurs into sensation and softness and the kind of attention Shane has never allowed himself to want. For once, there is no hockey, no expectations, no future consequences. There is just this.

Shane wakes up to sunlight and panic.

For one blissful second, he forgets everything. Then reality crashes back in—where he is, who he is, the flight he has to catch with his team in less than two hours.

He sits up slowly, careful not to wake Ilya. The apartment is quiet, peaceful in the morning light. Ilya looks impossibly young asleep, lashes dark against his cheeks, one hand curled in the sheets like he's reaching for Shane even now.

Shane's chest aches.

He dresses quickly, heart pounding, every instinct screaming at him to stay and every bit of hard-earned self-preservation telling him he can't. He searches for a scrap of paper, finally finding a notepad on the kitchen counter. He hesitates, pen hovering, then writes.

Thank you for last night. I'm sorry for leaving. I'm from out of town and have a flight to catch. I'm frequently in Boston for work. If you can forgive me, I'd really like to see you again, Ilya.

XXX-XXX-XXXX

He leaves the note on the counter, takes one last look at the bedroom doorway, and slips out.

ILYA

When Ilya wakes up, the other side of the bed is cold.

For a moment, he frowns, disoriented, then he spots the note. He reads it once, then again, a slow smile tugging at his mouth despite himself.

He reaches for his phone, thumbs moving without hesitation as he types a message.

I would love to see you again, вечнушки.

Chapter End Notes

i currently have 8 chapters (subject to change) and 2 additional oneshots planned for this series. my posting schedule is very up in the air- sometimes i'm able to bang out 5000 words in 24 hours and sometimes it takes me 3 days to write 200. i contain multitudes.

please feel free to leave a comment if you enjoyed!

Chapter 2: you're the only thing I know

Chapter Notes

please disregard any hockey inaccuracies. hope you enjoy!

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

March 2017

ILYA

Ilya knew this was a bad idea. From the moment he saw him, Ilya knew that he would become obsessed. Against his better judgement, he had brought the angel home. Now he is texting him like some lovesick highschool girl.

Илья: So, have I unlocked your name yet?

Веснушки: Hmmm...

Веснушки: I don't know, maybe you need to fuck me a couple more times...

Илья: What, my performance wasn't sufficient last time, Веснушки?

Веснушки: It was more than sufficient. I'm just teasing.

Веснушки: What does "Веснушки" mean anyway? You kept calling me that.

Илья: Is Russian word for "freckles". Yours are very beautiful.

Илья: If I tell you my last name, will you tell me your first? Is fair, no?

Ilya should not be doing this. Ilya *should not be fucking doing this*.

Веснушки: Maybe.

Илья: It's Rozanov. Ilya Rozanov.

Веснушки: I'm Shane.

Веснушки: Shane Hollander.

Ilya calls Cliff Marleau at lightning speed.

"I need you to run a background check on someone for me." He's already in too deep, but he truly doesn't believe Shane is out to get him. *And if he is, there were worse ways to die than*

assassination by a man that beautiful.

“Sure, boss. What’s the name?” Marleau’s voice is tinny through the phone.

“Shane Hollander.”

The line is silent for a minute.

“Did you just say– Shane Hollander?” Marleau stutters.

“Да. Yes. Why?”

“Roz, what business exactly do we have with *Shane Hollander*?”

“Is not we. Is just me. Is personal business.”

“Roz...” Marleau says.

“What?” Ilya snaps. He’s getting frustrated. Marleau is being very strange.

“Shane Hollander is the captain of the Montreal Voyageurs.” *Fuck. Fucking fuck.*

“Is that–”

“Hockey team.” Ilya doesn’t pay much attention to hockey. Apparently he should, because the stunning man he’d had in his bed just weeks ago, the one he’s been texting every day, is the greatest hockey talent since Wayne Gretzky, according to the internet.

And thus begins Ilya’s internet rabbit hole.

—

July 2017

Ilya is vibrating out of his skin.

He’s spent hours and hours poring over every bit of content surrounding Shane Hollander ever since he’d learned his name. There’s not an interview he hasn’t seen, a game he hasn’t watched.

It’s become an obsession. A dangerous one.

Ilya should break it off. Save Shane from Ilya’s poison, the darkness sure to infect him as soon as Ilya lets him in. But Ilya just can’t bring himself to snuff out Shane’s light in his life.

It’s the only thing that brings him joy, most days. His job is relentless and unforgiving and he can’t quit it, no matter how desperately he wants to, because if he tries, he’ll surely be killed.

His mother had the right idea, probably. She’d died when Ilya was young by her own hand. Ilya intimately understands why.

Grigori Rozanov had died 9 years ago. Ilya's older brother, Alexei, had promptly gone into hiding with his wife and daughter, leaving Ilya in control of his father's criminal organization.

Ilya, who was 17 years old. Ilya, who couldn't look at a body without envisioning his mother's lifeless corpse. Ilya, who couldn't fucking walk away.

Ilya, who had to repay his father's debts.

Ilya, who had killed 134 people in the last 9 years.

Ilya, who has nothing left to lose.

So when Shane texts him that he's done for the season, that he's thinking of flying to Boston to see Ilya, he allows himself the weakness.

—

As soon as Ilya opens the door, he fists a hand into Shane's suit (*why is he wearing a fucking suit?*) and drags him inside.

Shane's touch is his salvation.

Ilya buries his hands into Shane's hair, dragging him closer. He pulls them both through his apartment, then practically throws Shane into his bed. The image leaves him a little breathless. Shane is grinning up at him, body splayed across Ilya's comforter. His pupils are blown, eyes dark and glittering in the moonlight, freckles scattered like constellations across his cheeks.

Please, God, please, mama, let me have this, Ilya prays, and then devours him.

—

December 2017

His name is Richard.

Or maybe it's not. Ilya doesn't keep much track, at this point. He mostly remembers numbers.

14,327.

That's how many American dollars "Richard" owes his father's organization.

150.

That's how many people Ilya's killed by the time he's done with "Richard".

When he gets home, he releases the breath he's been holding. Lets the number sink into his brain. Lets it cleave open his chest.

The vodka burns down his throat, but it goes down much easier than the sting of what he's done.

16 people. Sixteen. And that's just since he's met Shane.

He's a monster. His hands shake as he pours himself another glass. It's not the good stuff he'd been drinking that night with Shane. It's cheap, some grocery store brand he'd bought on his way home. It's not a luxury. It's there to get him drunk.

He sits himself in front of the TV and puts on a highlight reel from Shane's most recent game. Usually watching Shane glide across the ice would make him feel better, but today, his stomach roils with guilt.

How could he possibly be worthy of someone like Shane? Shane, who's the best of the best. Shane, who touches Ilya like he's something worth keeping. Shane, who is full of sunshine and beauty and everything Ilya wants but can never have.

And God help him, Ilya loves him.

His phone buzzes in his pocket.

Incoming call: Вечнушки

Ilya picks it up.

"Shane?"

"Ilya, hi. You would not *believe* the day I've had."

Ilya hums, trying not to let the tears spill out of him. Shane continues.

"So Hayden and Jackie invited me over, right? And get this—"

As Ilya listens to Shane's story, his eyes start to droop shut. The tension floods out of his body as Shane drones on and on about Hayden and Hayden's kids and hockey and Ilya forgets about the way that Richard had screamed when Ilya blew his hand off with a pistol. He forgets about his job, about his mother's body on that bed.

He forgets about everything but Shane.

—

June 2018

Shane's in town for the Stanley Cup, this time. Montreal Voyageurs versus Toronto Leafs.

Ilya's got fantastic seats. Shane doesn't know he's at the game, and it's not like Ilya can go see him here, in public, but they have plans to meet up afterwards. Anyway, if Ilya wasn't here, he'd just be watching the game on TV, so he figures he might as well see it in person.

Watching Shane play is electric. It's beautiful when Ilya watches through a screen, but even more so in person. He watches as Shane masterfully weaves the puck around defensemen, scoring no less than 3 goals—a hat trick.

When the final horn sounds, the arena detonates.

Ilya doesn't realize he's standing until his knees hit the seat in front of him. The red light flashes behind the net. The scoreboard confirms it. 5-2. Montreal has done it. Shane has done it.

The Stanley Cup is on the ice for the *fourth time* in Shane's career. It's unimaginable.

It's a dynasty.

Ilya presses a hand over his mouth, breath coming out in something between a laugh and a sob. His eyes burn. He blinks hard, but it doesn't help. Tears spill anyway, hot and humiliating, streaking down his face as twenty thousand people scream themselves hoarse around him.

He watches Shane drop to his knees, helmet tossed aside, hair plastered to his forehead with sweat. Someone barrels into him—one teammate, then another—until Shane disappears under a pile of bodies. When he resurfaces, he's laughing, mouth open, eyes bright and disbelieving.

Ilya sinks back into his seat, hands shaking. He has seen men celebrate before—bloodless wins bought with money and threats—but nothing like this. This joy is unmanufactured. It isn't stolen. It belongs to Shane, clean and earned and incandescent.

When they announce the Conn Smythe, Ilya's heart starts pounding so hard it hurts.

“And the winner is...Shane Hollander!”

The crowd roars again, somehow louder than before. Shane's expression goes slack with shock. He skates forward like he's afraid the ice might give out beneath him, takes the trophy with both hands, lifts it awkwardly, then higher, until it's over his head.

Ilya breaks.

He bows his head and lets the tears come, shoulders trembling. He thinks of the first night Shane stood in his apartment, curious and smiling, freckles catching the light. He thinks of every text, every phone call that talked him back from the edge. He thinks of all of the blood on his hands and wonders how something this beautiful can exist in the same world.

You deserve this, he thinks fiercely, like it's a prayer.

His phone buzzes.

Веснушки: Did you see that???

Ilya laughs wetly, wiping his face with his sleeve.

Илья: Yes.

Three dots appear. Disappear. Appear again.

Веснушки: I wish you were here.

Ilya's chest tightens. He looks down at the ice, at the confetti raining from the rafters, at Shane skating in an uncoordinated victory lap with the Cup held like it might float away if he lets go.

I am here, he thinks. I'm right here. You just don't know it.

Илья: I know. I'm proud of you.

Ilya stares at the texts until the screen blurs. He closes his eyes. For one selfish, fragile moment, he lets himself imagine a different life—one where his hands are clean, where he can stand in the light beside Shane without corrupting it.

—

They meet later, after the noise dies down, after the Cup is locked away and the city spills into the streets. Shane comes to him still buzzing, cheeks flushed, eyes bright with disbelief. He pulls Ilya into a hug without thinking, arms tight, familiar, safe.

For a while, Ilya lets himself believe this can last.

He knows better.

But just for tonight, he allows himself the lie.

Chapter End Notes

next chapter is shane's pov :) trying to keep with a reasonably consistent update schedule...

Chapter 3: you're the best thing in my life

Chapter Notes

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

July 2017

SHANE

Shane knocks on the door to Ilya's Boston apartment. When Ilya doesn't respond, Shane gets a little bit nervous.

What if he had flown here for nothing? Did he somehow read their messages wrong? He did kind of invite himself.

However, his fears are assuaged about two minutes later as Ilya throws open the door and yanks him in by the front of his shirt, dragging him into a searing kiss. Then, he pulls back, eyes moving up and down as he takes in Shane's appearance.

"Why are you wearing a suit? Is not business meeting." Ilya chuckles.

"Do you want to fuck me or not?" Shane bites back. He's been stuck on a cramped plane too long to deal with this. Ilya nods. "Then shut your mouth and fucking *do it*."

Ilya obeys.

—

August 2017

Unknown Number: You can't ignore me forever, Hollander. You know what you did.

—

January 2018

Boston is fucking freezing in January.

Shane had made some lame excuse to Hayden about visiting a friend and walked out into the cold to get to Ilya's place, since he can't very well take a cab for fear of being recognized. Now, though, he realizes he maybe should have rented a car or something, because Ilya's place is a 30 minute walk from his hotel and Shane is so cold he's literally crying.

The wind bites at his cheeks as he pulls his phone out of his pocket.

Shane: Please tell me you have tea in your house.

Shane: Also, if I don't show up, you can safely assume I have died of frostbite.

Lily: Aren't you from Montreal?

Shane: Montreal is not nearly this fucking windy.

Lily: Weakling.

Lily: Yes, I have tea. Is ginger good? Text me when you are close and I will make.

Shane: Ginger is perfect.

—

When Shane gets to Ilya's apartment, he's sure he looks like shit. His nose is running and eyes leaking from the cold, and his face is probably bright red. Still, Ilya welcomes him in with a smile.

There's a steaming mug full of ginger tea on the counter. Ilya rubs his hands over Shane's shivering shoulders as he drinks it, pressing chaste kisses against his neck.

And yes, Shane loves the sex. Sex with Ilya is fantastic. But more than that, he loves moments like this, when Ilya takes care of him or he takes care of Ilya. When he can just be, can relax for a minute without the pressure of being Shane Hollander, captain of the Montreal Voyageurs. Right now, he's just Shane, Ilya's Shane.

He knows he's being reckless. That every time they meet up what they have strays farther and farther away from being casual. But regardless of logic, Shane can't bring himself to break it off with Ilya.

Not when Ilya whispers sweet nothings in Russian and English into his ear in bed. Not when they he's the only person Shane can talk to about anything and everything. Not when Ilya talks back, tidbits about his dead father and asshole brother and his mother that he misses so desperately.

All Shane can do is hold him through it all and wish that things were different.

—

February 2018

Unknown Number: I'll fucking kill you.

—

March 2018

Unknown Number: Blocking my number isn't going to help.

Unknown Number: I'll just get a new one.

—

May 2018

Unknown Number: Did you like my letter?

Unknown Number: You can't hide from me, Shane.

Unknown Number: I know where you live.

June 2018

Shane: Did you see that???

Lily: Yes.

Shane: I wish you were here.

Lily: I know. I'm proud of you.

Shane's heart is pounding in his chest, and it's not only the adrenaline. His teammates are popping champagne bottles in the locker room, and he should probably be more concerned about getting his phone wet, but all he can think about is the man he's going to see as soon as he can extricate himself from the post-Cup celebrations that his teammates are inevitably going to drag him into.

And drag him in they do. Hayden and JJ convince him to go clubbing with them, much to Shane's distaste. A little thrill runs through him when he learns that they're going to the club he met Ilya at again, though.

Amor is a fucking zoo when they get there. His unmarried teammates are swarmed by fans almost immediately, and Hayden keeps having to reemphasize that he is in fact married with no less than 4 kids.

Shane, however, has no such excuse. When women start approaching him, giving him sultry looks and complimenting his hat trick, he flees to the bar. Normally, he'd just order a ginger ale, but today he can indulge.

He's just won the fourth Stanley Cup of his career, for fuck's sake. He can take a break from his diet for one night.

"What can I get for you, sir?" The bartender inquires.

Shane deliberates. He doesn't really like the taste of beer, so probably not that. Wine would be stupid, he's at a club, so that leaves hard liquor.

An idea intrudes his mind. *Fuck it, why not.*

"I'll do uh...two shots of the Beluga Epicure, please." He's a millionaire, he can afford it. He doesn't spend his money as extravagantly as most of his teammates (or Ilya) do. Most of his

purchases are real estate, and the rest of his money sits there in his investment accounts.

“Ah, a man of taste, Shane Hollander!” The bartender exclaims. “Coming right up.”

Two minutes later, the bartender comes back with the ludicrously expensive shots. Hayden sits down next to Shane, slinging his arm around his shoulders.

“Whatcha drinkin’, buddy?”

The bartender answers for him, proudly displaying the bottle so Hayden can see.

“It’s called Beluga Epicure. These babies—” she shakes the bottle— “can get up to 15,000 dollars a pop. You know, the only reason we have it here is because one of our regular patrons loves it. Mr. Hollander here has *excellent* taste in vodka.”

The only vodka Shane’s ever had is Absolut, a couple times when he was much, much younger. He honestly doesn’t really like it much. He has no idea what possessed him to buy these shots. (He knows exactly why he bought them—the so-called “regular patron” in question.)

Hayden gawks at him. “Damn, Shane. Goin’ big for that fourth Cup, am I right?”

“Yeah.” His phone buzzes in his pocket. He pulls it out.

Lily: See you tonight.

“Ooooh, who’s Lily?” Hayden teases. “Someone’s got a Boston girl!”

“I don’t— she’s not a Boston girl.”

“Oh. Oh! So just your girl, then.” Hayden nods, weirdly sure of himself and probably a little tipsy.

Shane’s cheeks flush bright red, but he doesn’t deny it. He reaches for the first shot and knocks it back.

It’s nothing like any liquor he’s had before. It doesn’t burn on the way down. It’s clean and fresh, with notes that Shane could maybe discern if he had any type of affinity for alcohol at all. It’s very Ilya. He knocks back the second shot.

He lets himself forget for a minute. Who he is. The pressure. The horrifying texts and letters he’s been getting for nearly 2 years. His mother would kill him if she knew, but Shane knows he can’t risk escalating it by going to the police. After all, the stalker seems to know everything about him—his phone number (he’s tried changing it), his address (he’s moved thrice). But here, tonight, he’s safe, surrounded by his teammates, far away. He’s going to see Ilya tonight.

Just for tonight, he lets himself breathe.

—

He ends the night with a pleasant buzz thrumming through his body as he punches in the code to Ilya's front door.

Recklessly, he pulls Ilya into a hug and a bruising kiss while the door is still wide open behind him.

Recklessly, he invites Ilya to his apartment in Montreal for a night while he's going to be on a business trip in July. Ilya says yes.

Recklessly, Shane lets himself fall in love.

Chapter End Notes

buckle up folks the real drama begins soon :)

Chapter 4: when the nights grow cold

Chapter Notes

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

July 2018

SHANE

Shane feels almost giddy as he mulls about his apartment preparing for Ilya's arrival. His hands shake slightly from the anticipation as he fluffs his comically large assortment of pillows and drapes blankets over his couch.

He'd only moved into this place a few weeks ago, another attempt to get the stalker off his trail. Unfortunately, his attempt failed, as he received another threatening letter in the mail almost immediately, so his apartment is mostly packed up into boxes because there's no point in moving in just to move out again.

Regardless, Ilya is coming this afternoon, and Shane knows he'll be safe. No stalker with the intelligence to track him down this many times over is stupid enough to try anything with a witness. For the first time in a while, Shane feels safe.

He's been spending a lot of time with Hayden and Jackie at their house, recently. He almost feels bad for how much he invites himself over, but he knows the Pikes appreciate the free babysitting. And he can't really invite them over to his place—Hayden may not be the sharpest tool in the shed, but Shane has moved 4 times in the past 2 years, and anyone with a brain can tell that's not normal.

He's even been lying to his parents about it, which he does feel really bad about. But they would probably figure it out immediately and then Shane might have to fucking go into hiding or something and stop playing hockey and if there's one thing he absolutely is not willing to do it is stop playing hockey.

Then there's the Ilya of it all. Shane does feel bad about bringing him to a compromised place, but the letters and texts hadn't threatened anyone but Shane. And God knows Ilya already has enough on his plate. Shane doesn't know what exactly Ilya does for work, but whatever it is, it weighs heavily on him. More often than not, when Shane goes to Ilya's place, the other man answers the door with a tiredness on his face that Shane can tell runs bone-deep.

When they're together, though, Shane can tell it helps Ilya. So when his texts start to get dry or he goes radio silent, Shane makes a concerted effort to go see Ilya, even if it's inconvenient. He's hopped on many a flight from miscellaneous east coast cities to Boston just to fly back the next day.

Ilya's bad days scare Shane. He's not going to tell Ilya about his stalker problem and add one more stressful thing on top of all the rest.

The doorbell rings and snaps Shane out of his spiralling. He jogs over, quickly glancing through his peephole before tugging the door open to let Ilya inside.

Unlike most of the time when they see each other, Ilya doesn't immediately pull Shane into his arms. Instead, he moves past him into the apartment, taking in the stacks of cardboard boxes in the corners and the barren walls.

"You just moved in?"

"No, actually," Shane lies through his teeth, "I'm moving out in a couple weeks." That, at least, is the truth. "Do you want dinner? It must have been a long drive."

"Is okay, I had McDougle on the way here," Ilya replies.

Shane rolls his eyes. "I still don't understand how you eat all that shit and still look like that."

"And I do not understand why you subject yourself to awful diet."

"I'm a professional athlete! And it's not awful, it's consistent, and I like consistency."

"Yes," Ilya muses, "that you do." His face is a little sad, but Shane can't quite make out why.

"Well, anyway. I bought some nice vodka for you, so at least have some of that."

"Wow, допорой, are you trying to get me drunk so you can take advantage of me?" Ilya teases, slapping a hand over his heart in mock offense.

"Yes," Shane deadpans, before breaking out into laughter.

Ilya moves to pour himself a glass when he sees the bottle sitting on the counter. "This is—"

"I— I saw you drinking it that night at Amor. I hope it's okay."

Wordlessly, Ilya pours himself a glass and knocks it back in one go.

Then he descends on Shane hungrily. "More than okay."

—

ILYA

Spending time with Shane, as always, is like a lungful of oxygen after drowning, a warm fireplace after being out in the cold for far too long.

Being in bed with him is somehow even better. Ilya's slept with dozens of people, but nothing comes close to his Shane.

Ilya is basking in the afterglow when Shane rolls over to face him, cupping his cheeks and forcing eye contact.

"Ilya," Shane starts, "I—" He takes a deep breath.

Ilya brings his own hands to Shane's face, rubbing his thumbs over his freckles. "What is it?"

"I don't— I can't—" He inhales again. "I can't keep pretending I don't like you and— and you don't like me."

And *fuck*, Ilya does a whole lot more than just *like* Shane. But he can't. They can't.

Ilya has seen how the NHL is. How they hurl around slurs on the ice like they're nothing.

Shane can't come out, not without risking his entire career. And that's with Ilya's own situation notwithstanding.

If Shane knew the truth about the Rozanov family business, he wouldn't have to pretend he didn't like Ilya. He'd just loathe him.

So Ilya prays Shane doesn't notice the burning in his eyes and the tears that have surely collected on his lashline when he whispers his reply.

"We have to." It comes out croaky and wrong and Shane's face crumples as he pulls Ilya into a tight hug. *Always so understanding, even when Ilya has done nothing to deserve it.*

The next morning, as they lie together before Ilya's flight back to Boston, they both cry. They mourn a life they can never live in the open, a love they are cursed to never confess.

Still, Ilya whispers it against Shane's neck.

"Я тебя люблю. Я тебя люблю. Я тебя люблю."

—

Two Days Later

SHANE

Shane is so, so thankful for his ex-girlfriend.

Rose was the first (and only) person he came out to. Though, honestly, it was more like she came out *for* him.

Consequently, she is kind of the only person he can talk to about the thing with Ilya.

Shane wrings his hands together as he waits for Rose to arrive. He's already ordered; Rose knew she was going to arrive late and looked at the menu beforehand.

When Rose sits down, the tension he's been holding in his shoulders for the past few days floods out of his shoulders.

"Not that it's not always lovely to see you, my favorite ex-boyfriend, but it seems like this is a little more of a serious situation," Rose observes.

“Ifuckedup,” he breathes out. “There is this— guy I’ve been seeing. Casually. And I kinda invited him over to my apartment for the first time and it was great but—”

“But what?” Rose prompts.

“IthinkI’m inlovewithhimandIdon’tknowwhattodo,” Shane confesses.

“Tell me more,” Rose responds, grinning as she takes Shane’s hands in her own.

“I met him at this bar in Boston in February of 2017 after we played the Bears. I went home with him, and fuck, Rose, he’s so amazing. We’ve been seeing each other whenever I’m in Boston since, and then a few days ago he was in Montreal for a business trip. He’s fucking gorgeous and funny and I— I think he really likes me too but we can’t fucking be together because of me and it hurts so much. And when he was over at my apartment I told him— I told him I didn’t want to keep pretending we don’t like each other and he— he said we have to.” Shane stops. “When we had sex the next morning he cried *so hard*, Rose, and I was crying too, but fuck, I never want to see him like that again. I just— I don’t know what to do.”

“Shane, honey. First of all, it is not because of you. You are *not* responsible for the league’s bigotry and idiocy.”

Shane snuffles. “I know, it’s just— I can’t help but think that it would be so much easier if I wasn’t a hockey player.”

“Shane, you love hockey. And just let me get this all out before you say anything, okay?”

“Okay.”

“I think you should tell him. I know that it’s not really possible to be together out in the open, but I think if you love him and you want a relationship with him, you should try, even if it’s hard. Even if it’s secret. And it sounds like he wants it just as much. He just knows how much you care about hockey, and maybe he thinks those two things can’t happen at the same time, but they *can*. Don’t get me wrong, it’ll be fucking torture, but you’re gay, Shane. Are you really just going to spend the rest of your life avoiding a real relationship because of your career?”

“I— you’re right. I just—” Shane lets go of her hands and digs the heels of his palms into his eyes. “I’ll think about it.”

Rose drops the topic, probably sensing that Shane doesn’t want to cry in the middle of this random restaurant. Catching up with her is just what Shane needs to get his mind off of the glaring absence of messages from Ilya in his phone the last few days.

They discuss Rose’s newest movie, yet another sequel to the X-Squad series, and she laments being painted blue.

After dinner, they stand outside the restaurant to say their goodbyes. Rose pulls Shane in by the lapels and gives him a kiss on the cheek, her lipstick staining his face. As soon as she gets

into her car, Shane starts walking towards his apartment, which is only a few blocks from the restaurant he'd picked.

The Montreal cold brings him back into himself a little bit. It's dark out, but Shane can make out constellations above him as he strolls with his head tilted slightly towards the sky.

Unfortunately, that means Shane's not paying much attention to where he's walking, so he runs directly into another man on the sidewalk.

"Oh, shit, I'm sorry, I didn't—"

Suddenly, Shane feels the telltale prick of a needle against his neck. *Fuck.*

The drug takes action quickly, bringing Shane to his knees as his vision swims.

I'm sorry, Ilya, he thinks. I love you.

Everything goes dark.

Chapter End Notes

hehehehe :)

next chapters might be posted at a slower rate, so apologies for the cliffhanger.

Chapter 5: don't know if i'm gonna make it out alive

Chapter Notes

:)

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

???

SHANE

Shane comes to in pieces.

The room around him is dark, lit only by a single overhead light that illuminates the center of the room. His arms and legs are cuffed to a chair, and there's an additional segment of rope around his midsection, preventing him from moving almost entirely.

It's also really fucking cold. Shane is completely exposed save for his boxers. He shivers in the cold, damp room as he contemplates his next steps.

Fuck. Fucking fuck, how did I get myself into this? And how do I get myself out?

The lone door to the room creaking open distracts him from his train of thought.

A man no older than 30 stands in front of him. Mousy brown hair spills down his shoulders and meets with the collar of a black trenchcoat. His green eyes are intense, if a little manic.

It's a little funny. In any situation other than this one, Shane might have found him attractive.

He's not wearing a mask. Shane can see his face. That means he's planning on killing him.

Shane straightens in the chair. In his gut, he knows this is not some random incident. This is the stalker who's been tailing him for months, come to punish him for a wrongdoing he has cited frequently in his messages but Shane has failed to identify as of yet. He has a feeling he's about to find out.

"Ah," the man breathes. "You're awake."

Shane stays silent.

"What? Cat got your tongue?"

"What do you want from me?" Shane spits.

"What do I want from you? *What do I FUCKING WANT FROM YOU?*"

Shit. That was clearly the wrong thing to say.

“You think just because you’re famous, some hotshot hockey player, that you can go around stealing other people’s girls?”

Uh. What? Shane’s brow furrows in confusion. “Listen, man I don’t even know who you’re talking about. I haven’t stolen anybody’s—”

The man backhands him across the face as he snarls. “I warned you. I warned you what would happen if you went near her again. And yet you kept *fucking* doing it. Now you’re going to pay the price.”

Shane is still reeling slightly from the force of the hit. “I don’t— who—”

Then it hits him.

“*Rose?*” he questions incredulously. “I’m not— we’re not—”

“Deny it all you want, Hollander. I’ve been watching you, remember? Don’t think I didn’t see your little dinner date on Sunday.”

On Sunday? What day is it?

“It wasn’t—”

“SHUT UP!” The man roars. Shane shuts his mouth.

Don’t antagonize him. Maybe you can talk your way out of this. Wishful thinking, he knows. He glances back at the man’s face, at his body shaking with rage and pupils blown so wide they encompass nearly all the green in his irises.

The man stalks toward him. “You don’t deserve a clean death, Shane Hollander. Don’t get me wrong, I am going to kill you, but I believe in an eye for an eye, no? So you will suffer for what you did.” He opens his trenchcoat.

Sewn into the lining are dozens of tiny pockets. Knives. Needles. Matches. *Torture devices.*

Shane starts to hyperventilate. *Please, God, no.*

“Oh, getting scared now, I see. You’ll be screaming for me in no time.”

—

One Day Later

ILYA

Ilya fucked up.

Ilya fucked up big time. Shane hasn’t texted him in almost a week now, not since that night in Montreal. It was simultaneously the best moment of Ilya’s life and the worst thing he’s ever

experienced.

He wants nothing more than to be with Shane. And it seems like Shane wants that too. But Ilya can't give it to him.

He drowns his sorrows in alcohol and blood. Anyone who has dared cross him in the past few days has been shown no mercy. After all, he has no reason to be merciful anymore.

Shane is done with him, probably. Maybe he'll find someone who can be with him out in the open. Maybe he'll adopt the typical hockey player lifestyle, get a regular hookup in each city, avoid getting attached.

But Ilya can't do that, so he sits on his couch in his luxury apartment and contemplates throwing his body through the floor-to-ceiling windows.

He's shaken from his stupor by a series of loud knocks at the door.

"Ilyusha! Let me the fuck in," Svetlana calls from somewhere outside. Afraid of facing the wrath of his second-in-command, Ilya obliges.

"What?" He snaps, rubbing his eyes groggily. Svetlana shoulders past him into the apartment, taking in the scattered liquor bottles, coke cans, and bloody bandages all over the floor with a look of disgust.

"Ilya, you need to get off your fucking couch. I don't know what has got you all up in your feelings, but you need to get it together. Whatever it is, it can be fixed. Maybe call your Вещушки, yes? Usually that helps."

Ilya flops face first back onto his couch. "I can't," he spits, "that's the fucking problem. He hasn't texted me in days. I think— I think we might be over."

Svetlana moves to sit next to him and Ilya lifts his head so he can lay it in her lap. "I love him, Sveta. I love him so fucking much but we can't— we can't be anything. He is so *good*, and I am me. Not to mention what it would do to his career if anyone were to find out he was seeing a man." He laughs sardonically, the tears flowing in earnest now.

Svetlana cards her hand through his hair as she sighs. "Have you tried reaching out to him?"

"Once. Yesterday. Not delivered. He blocked me."

Another knock sounds at the door.

"Roz, Roz! Open the fucking door, man. You gotta see this!"

"I'll get it." Svetlana stalks over to the front door. As it swings open, Ilya meets eyes with a very panicked Cliff Marleau. He shoulders past Svetlana and all but chucks his phone at Ilya's face. Svetlana strolls back to the couch to read whatever it is over Ilya's shoulder as he sits up, scanning the headline.

BREAKING NEWS: MONTREAL VOYAGEURS CAPTAIN SHANE HOLLANDER DECLARED MISSING PERSON. LAST SEEN 5 DAYS AGO AT RESTAURANT NEAR MONTREAL HOME.

Ilya drops the phone and runs to the bathroom to retch into his toilet.

5 days. Shane has been missing for 5 days and Ilya was so fixated on drowning in his own sadness that he hadn't even considered the possibility that something was actually wrong.

Terror floods his veins, bone-chilling and brutal.

Most victims of abduction die within 24 hours of being taken. It's been 120.

Shane hadn't blocked his number. His phone had probably been destroyed.

"Marly, Sveta!" Ilya roars. "Get me some fucking guns."

—

9 Hours Later

Shane's Montreal apartment is dark and empty when the three of them get there. Ilya punches in the door code, ignoring the wolf whistle Marleau gives him when the lock clicks immediately.

Ilya flicks on the lights, expecting carnage, but there's no sign of a struggle. He wasn't taken from here, then, but from some other location. Still, he keeps his hand on his holster as he slinks through the apartment.

"Look for anything that could be clue," he orders. Svetlana and Marleau start digging through drawers.

Shane's laptop is sitting on the desk in the bedroom, exactly where it had been when Ilya was last here. He opens the lid, contemplating what Shane's password could be.

"Roz," Cliff calls from the other room, "come look at this." He's holding a letter in his hands that he presumably dug out of the trashcan. It's crumpled to hell and slightly stained but Ilya plucks it out of his hands all the same, laser-focused.

Shane,

You moved again? I already told you you can't outrun me.

No matter how many houses you buy, how many unknown numbers you block, I will always find you. Because you deserve to pay for what you did.

The letter ends there. "A stalker, then," Svetlana concludes.

Ilya walks back into the bedroom to try the computer again with renewed desperation. He punches in all the passcodes he can think of—tidbits of a life he's been collecting since that

first day they met—until finally one works and it lets him in. It's a sequence of numbers, meaningless to most, but not Ilya. The years Shane won each of his Stanley Cups, plus his jersey number. Very boring. Very Shane.

He scours the settings until he finds what he's looking for. *My Devices*. He navigates to *Shane's iPhone*, clicking on *More Info*, before pulling out his phone to make a call.

“Oi, Carmichael. I need you to remotely access the iCloud backup on the phone with serial number XXXXXXXXXXXX. Actual device is likely destroyed. Go to blocked numbers. There will be multiple. Trace them. I need a name and a location.”

“Give me five minutes,” Carmichael says.

“Make it three,” Ilya begs.

Carmichael does. “Ivan Sims. 34. Male. Celebrity photographer. Sending you the location of the phone he made the calls from now.”

Ilya pulls up the map in his text messages. A blinking dot stares back at him.

It's a residential house in Sherbrooke, about a two hour drive from here. Ilya hustles Marleau and Svetlana out the door.

“Let's go,” he snarls, “I want that motherfucker to have a hole in his head by midnight.”

Chapter End Notes

shit's gonna go down next chapter. whenever that gets posted. i estimate a week and a half max.

as always i <3 comments so feel free to leave one if you enjoyed

Chapter 6: fight so dirty

Chapter Notes

TW: graphic violence / depictions of torture, some stuff that can be interpreted as suicidal ideation

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

2 Hours Later

ILYA

The house is isolated, a private property shrouded in trees with a long driveway that sets it back from the street. The windows are lit up. Someone is home.

Svetlana pulls the car up the driveway slowly, making sure not to alert Sims to their presence. Ilya is out of the car before she even kills the engine. He stalks towards the house with brutal efficiency, gun drawn and safety off.

Marleau comes up behind him to pick the lock, carefully sliding the pins around until the door gives way. Ilya shoulders it open and slips inside.

The house looks deceptively normal. Nothing indicates that this man could be hiding a hockey star here. They tiptoe through every room of the house carefully, Marleau sweeping upstairs. Nobody is there.

There's only one option left, then: the basement.

Ilya creeps down the stairs, breath heavy in his chest as he silently prays. *Please, please let him be okay.*

He rounds the corner with a start and nearly throws up at the sight.

There is a man standing in the corner, smoking a cigarette, who Ilya presumes to be Sims. Ilya is never going to touch a cigarette again.

Shane is tied to a chair in the center of the room, wrists and ankles strapped so he can't move.

He is definitively not okay.

Lacerations cover his body, small and deep and still bleeding as if they've been reopened again and again. Small circular burns dot his torso. His nailbeds have been completely mutilated, his hands swollen and unrecognizable. He's shaking, eyes red and terrified and glazed over from the pain.

Svetlana moves first.

In seconds, Sims is on the ground, the barrel of her gun pressing into his skull.

“Who—who the fuck are you? What—?” Svetlana whips him across the face with the gun.

“Shut the fuck up,” Marleau threatens from somewhere behind Ilya, before moving to help Svetlana.

“Ilya,” Svetlana says with a pointed look at Shane, “Ilya, snap out of it. He needs your help.”

Ilya rushes to kneel in front of Shane, moving to untie his ankles, when the man in question flinches. Hard.

“Please,” Shane begs, “please, no more. Kill me, please, please, no more.”

“Shane,” Ilya whispers, “Shane, it’s me. I’m not here to—”

It doesn’t work. Shane starts crying in earnest, begging for death again and again. Ilya turns around and retches onto the floor.

Marleau turns to look at him, then glances back at Sims. Svetlana readies to shoot him in the face—

“Stop.”

“What?” Marleau questions, shocked.

“He does not deserve mercy of gunshot to head. I will take care of it.” Ilya stands up, surprised that his legs have yet to buckle under him. Shane’s pleas will probably haunt him for the rest of his life.

He fixes his gaze on Sims, who suddenly looks a lot less confused and a lot more terrified. Ilya flicks the safety back on his gun and shoves it into his pocket.

“Hold him down,” he orders, then moves so he can snarl into the man’s ear. “You made fatal fucking mistake. I do not know what you think my Shane has done wrong. I do not care. He begs for death, and by the time I am done with you, you will beg too. I am the most dangerous man in Boston. You fucked with the wrong hockey player.”

Ilya raises his foot to deliver the first blow, then hesitates. Shane is still sobbing behind him incoherently. He makes eye contact with Svetlana.

She walks over to where Shane is and gently prods her fingers into the pressure points in his neck, knocking him out. Ilya doesn’t want him to hear this.

His boot comes down into Sims’ face. He feels the satisfying crunch of cartilage and bone under his foot, twisting his ankle and grinding the sole down into it. Sims *screams*, a sickening, shrill noise. Svetlana grimaces behind him.

Ilya has never enjoyed hurting people. Every time he is called to negotiate, to collect debts, he feels sick as he hurts the acquaintances who don't cooperate. He's always wished he was born into a different family, a different lifestyle, one that didn't make him into a monster, a harbinger of violence.

Now, though, he relishes in the gore. He brings his steel-toed boot down again and again and again into Sims' ribs, grinning manically as they bruise and snap and tear at his internal organs. The sound of Sims choking on his own blood is music to Ilya's ears.

A glint of metal catches his eye.

Ilya peels open the coat, revealing a collection of what he can only describe as torture instruments sewn into the flap. He pulls a needle from its pouch and examines it.

It's covered in blood. Shane's blood. Ilya would probably be throwing his guts up again if he wasn't so fucking angry.

He drives the needle underneath Sims' nails and pries upward. Marleau closes his eyes.

He repeats the process 9 more times, a mirror image of what this man had done to Shane.

Somehow, by the end of it, he's still not dead. Ilya pulls out a knife. He rolls Sims' shirt up his torso, which is blooming with bruises and cuts.

Ilya digs the knife deep into Sims' gut and carves the Rozanov family crest into his skin.

Sims stops breathing. Ilya pulls his gun back out and fires three shots into his skull to be sure.

"Roz..." Marleau starts.

"You take care of the body. Sveta, can you wake Shane, please? I—I need—he looks like—" *he looks like he's dead.*

Once Marleau has dragged Sims out of the basement, Svetlana shakes Shane a little bit, careful not to jostle his injuries too much. He stirs slightly, hazy eyes blinking open, then widening and filling with tears as he takes in all the pain his body is in.

Ilya kneels in front of him again, desperately trying to make eye contact. When Shane's bloodshot eyes meet his, they widen just a fraction in surprise before his mouth that twisted in pain breaks into a soft smile.

"Il? S'thtyu?" His speech is slurred.

"Yes, моя любовь. I am getting you out of here." For some reason, that makes Shane frown. Ilya carries on with untying his limbs.

"Oh," Shane sighs deliriously, "I'm dreamn'. Ormybe this's he'vn."

Ilya's heart twists, but Shane allows him to pick him up with little to no fight, so he stays silent.

“Sveta,” he says instead, “tell Dr. LeClaire to meet us at Shane's apartment. I’m taking him home.”

Chapter End Notes

next chapter will probably be posted a week from today :)

comments are always appreciated!

Chapter 7: heart in my hand still beating

Chapter Notes

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

16 Hours Later

ILYA

When Shane finally stirs, Ilya nearly jumps to his feet.

LeClaire has done a thorough job. Shane is covered in bandages from head to toe, an IV feeding him nutrients and pain medication as he sleeps. Ilya's been sitting vigil at his bedside the entire time, too scared to close his eyes for fear that Shane will disappear again.

Shane's eyes blink open slowly, lids heavy and swollen from bruising and crying. Ilya hovers over him, searching his expression for recognition, but all he finds is sheer terror.

"Shane, Shane, it's me, you're okay, you're safe," Ilya reassures. Shane flinches away from where Ilya tries to take his hand. It breaks Ilya's already fragmented heart into infinitely smaller .

Ilya backs up from the bed, raising his hands in surrender.

"Вешушки, please, it's me, I'm not going to hurt you."

At that, Shane inhales sharply, then croaks out a visceral sob. The nickname. Sims doesn't know Shane's nickname.

"*Ilya.*"

"Yes, моя любовь, yes," Ilya affirms, tears beginning to spill down his face.

Shane struggles to sit himself up, wincing at the pain. Ilya places his hands gently on his back and guides him to lean against the headboard, placing a pillow behind him so as not to exacerbate his wounds. This is a pointless endeavor, though, because Shane immediately pulls Ilya into a crushing hug.

"You're here, *you're here*, fuck, *you're here*," Shane cries out. The hug is awful and clunky because Shane's arms are covered in wounds and bandages and he can't move them very much and both of them are crying so hard they can't see straight but it's still the best hug Ilya's ever been given because Shane is here and he's safe and he's in Ilya's arms.

For what feels like hours but what is probably more like minutes, they sit there holding each other.

Shane's voice, wrecked and soft and wrong, all wrong, breaks the silence.

“Ilya? How did—I mean—you—what—”

It’s like being dunked in ice cold water.

Ilya had been so focused on Shane’s wellbeing that he had failed to recognize that by saving Shane, by bringing him home, he was also dooming their relationship.

Shane is still looking at him questioningly, beautiful and sweet and teary-eyed and Ilya has been holding him with blood-stained hands.

There is no way to explain his way out of this. Ilya broke dozens of laws to get to Shane, committed atrocities that would make his own father flinch.

Ivan Sims’ mutilated corpse flashes in the back of his mind. He pulls his hands away from Shane as if burned.

“Shane, I—I need to tell you something. And I need you to just listen to me and let me—let me get it all out or I don’t think I’ll be able to get through it, okay? I know you have questions but—”

“Okay,” Shane says, like it’s plain and simple.

“When I was 17 years old, my father died. My mother had been dead 5 years then. Accident. She accidentally swallowed a whole bottle of pills,” Ilya says with a sardonic grin.

“My brother fucked off to God knows where with my sister-in-law and niece. I was left to take over the family business.” He takes a deep breath in, preparing to see the inevitable disgust on Shane’s face. He doesn’t think he’ll get through it otherwise, so he closes his eyes as the truth spills out of him like a flood.

“My father was not a good man. He was involved in many underhanded business dealings. Owed a lot of people money. A lot of people owed him money. I had to collect.”

Ilya scrunches his eyes shut harder as tears begin to flow anew. He’s surprised there’s any water left in his body to cry at this point.

“‘Collection’ is not always pretty. I have hurt many people. Killed—killed one hundred and eighty-one.” His voice breaks on the number.

“Fuck, Shane, I hate it. I want to—I want to escape like my mother did, sometimes. Is the only option, I think. I can’t—I can’t just leave. There is no one to leave business to. Bad people would find me and kill me and I wouldn’t escape at all. I know—I know it sounds like an excuse,” he whispers, “but it’s true.” At the conclusion of his statement, the silence rings in his ears.

“Ilya...” Shane whispers softly.

“You have every right to hate me. Ебать, you *should* hate me, I am a fucking monster. I lied—I lied to you for so long.” With no small amount of effort, Ilya opens his eyes, preparing for the expression of horror, revulsion. What he finds confuses him to no end.

Shane is staring directly into his eyes, face stern but vulnerable. When Ilya tries to avert his gaze, Shane shifts to look at him again.

“Ilya. Are you fucking stupid?”

What?

Shane continues, unbothered. “I don’t hate you. There is almost nothing that you could ever do that would make me hate you, baby. Yes, it’s...not great. But I understand that you are trapped. And you are a fool if you think that makes you a monster. You know, when dogs are left to starve in cramped cages, they bite. It’s not their fault. It’s not your fault. I know you don’t hurt those people for fun.”

And Shane is right. Shane is right, except—

“But I do. Fuck, Shane, when I—when we found you, I—I didn’t just shoot him in the face. Sveta tried and I fucking stopped her. I stopped her and then I—” his voice gives out again as he searches for the words in English.

“I saw what he did to your hands. I did the same to him. I fucking beat him to death with my boots. I—I carved my family crest into his *skin*, Shane,” Ilya wails. “I *am* a monster. I wanted to hurt him. I am not merciful or kind or good and I don’t—you don’t deserve this. You deserve a boring, nice man from Montreal who you can take home to your parents. You deserve someone who once you die will go to heaven with you and not straight to fucking hell.”

Shane slaps him across the face.

It’s not very effective, given that his hands are padded with gauze, but it stuns Ilya all the same.

“Do not ever, *ever*, call yourself a monster again.” Shane’s brown eyes are full of raw heartbreak. “You are not a monster. You are not somehow morally corrupt because you were angry at that—at that man for fucking *torturing me*, Ilya. I don’t—I don’t even know what I would have done if it had been you. You—you’re the love of my fucking life, Ilya. And if—if that feeling is at all mutual—anybody would have been just as angry. That’s just what happens when you love someone. You’ll do—you’ll do anything for them.”

Ilya shatters.

His hands fist into Shane’s sheets as he buries his face in the other man’s lap. He sobs it out over and over and over again.

“Я тебя люблю. Я тебя люблю. Я тебя люблю. I love you. I love you, fuck, I love you so much. Я тебя люблю.” Shane threads his gauzy fingers through Ilya’s curls, rocking them both back and forth gently.

After a while, he speaks again. “You’ve said that before. Ya teb-ya lyu-blyu,” he imitates. “That night in Montreal. Were you—it means—”

“It means I love you, yes. I just—I could not bring myself to say it to you when you did not know the truth. But when you were taken it was all I could think about. That you wouldn’t ever know.”

“I’m sorry,” Shane whispers. “You must have been so scared.”

“Shane,” Ilya grits out, “you were being fucking *tortured*. My fear is fucking meaningless.”

“No,” Shane frowns, “it’s not. You shouldn’t have had to go through tha—”

Before he can say anything else vastly stupid, Ilya tears his head from Shane’s lap and crushes their lips together.

It feels like coming home.

They hold each other in silence until they’re bleary-eyed and exhausted. The world can wait until the morning.

Chapter End Notes

hope you enjoyed! sorry this one was a little late. there's only one chapter left...but it's probably gonna be a long one so god knows when it's gonna get posted lol. hopefully within 2 weeks!

i <3 comments so please feel free to leave one!

Chapter 8: never, never, never ever let go

Chapter Notes

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

The Next Day

ROSE

Shane is still missing. Shane is still missing and Rose was the last person to see him alive and it's been 6 fucking days and the police still have nothing. *Nothing*.

Rose has given them everything she knows, which is basically nothing. No, she doesn't think Shane has any enemies worth noting. Maybe it could be some deranged fan of an opposing team looking to take Montreal's star player out of the equation, but she doubts it. From what the police can tell, Shane had been grabbed directly off the street—his phone was found lying cracked on the pavement just meters from where she had gotten into her car.

Yuna and David are inconsolable. Hayden Pike is losing his mind. All four of them have been sitting in the Hollanders' family home stewing in their anxieties for days. The police have all but declared it a cold case.

There is still one thing Rose hasn't told them, though.

Shane's mystery man.

"Yuna," she starts before she can talk herself out of it, "there's—I shouldn't be telling you this. But if it helps us find Shane, then—"

Yuna turns to face Rose, face questioning. Her voice comes out gritty and wrong from crying. "I'll do anything if it helps us find him. I don't care if you tell me Shane murdered someone and this is a fucked up revenge plot, Rose, he's our baby. Please."

"Shane—Shane and I didn't break up because of our schedules. We broke up because we were—incompatible. He's—Shane doesn't like girls like that."

"I think we suspected he might be gay," David's voice breaks in, "but what does this have to do with his disappearance?"

"There's this guy he's been seeing, I guess. They're not—they can't be dating, with the league and all, but Shane loves him. And from what he told me, the guy—the guy loves him too. I am absolutely not trying to suggest that he hurt Shane. But maybe if—if we could find him, we could see if he knows anything we don't."

Yuna stands up and pulls out her laptop from a drawer, logging into Shane's profile with terrifying ease. When Rose and Hayden give her a look, she explains. "Shane's password is not exactly hard to guess."

Rose walks over to stand behind her as she opens the messages app and scrolls through Shane's texts.

Most recently, there are:

Rose Landry

Hayden Pike

Hollander Family

VOYAGEURSSSSS!!!

JJ Boiziau

And then, there's one that doesn't fit, one that must be Shane's mystery man because neither Rose nor Yuna have ever heard Shane mention the name:

Lily

It sticks out like a sore thumb. Everyone else in Shane's phone has a first and last name, but not Lily. Yuna clicks on their message thread.

Shane: Can't wait to see you tonight.

Lily: I can't wait to fuck you tonight.

Shane: Fuck off.

Yuna clicks call.

—

ILYA

Ilya wakes up to the sound of his own ringtone. Bad Bunny's "Diles" blares out of his speakers, tinny and loud. Groaning, he removes his arms from where they are wrapped around Shane.

Shane stirs as he does this, turning to look at Ilya's phone as he plucks it off the nightstand.

Unknown Number, Ottawa, Ontario. XXXXXXXXXX

Shane takes in a sharp breath. "That's—that's my mom's number. I—how did she get—?"

"Shane, breathe. It will be okay. Do you—can I pick up? We—we need to tell your parents you are safe. Then we figure out how to tell police. They are safe, yes? We will pick up phone and you will talk to them and tell them to come to here. We can explain in person. Is better."

Ilya knows, suddenly and surely, that this is where his relationship with Shane will end.

He does not know how this will play out. But by taking matters into his own hands, by killing Ivan Sims, he has doomed them. Because even if Shane is willing to overlook Ilya's monstrosity, no mother would willingly give up her son to a man like Ilya Rozanov. He clutches Shane's pillow tight as he hits accept and hands over the phone.

"Lily? This is Yuna Hollander. I'm Shane's mom. I'm sure you've seen the news and I don't—I'm not sure what exactly your relationship with Shane is but I'm calling because I thought you might be able to help—"

"お母さん," Shane cuts in, voice breaking as tears begin to spill down his face, "お母さん, it's me. I'm okay. I'm okay, mama, I'm okay, I'm okay."

Ilya waits as Yuna sobs out something that is completely incoherent to him but Shane seems to understand, probably because he's got the phone speaker pressed so tightly to his head it's leaving an indent in his cheek. His bandaged hands are shaking.

"No, *no*, he did *not hurt me*. Mom. He found me. He found me. Mom. I need you to—I need to explain this in person, okay? And I can't—I can't come to you. I'm hurt. Yes, I've seen a doctor, yes. He hired a private physician. He knows I'm a public figure. I need you to come to my apartment. I love you. Tell Dad—yeah. Hayden and Rose are there? You can—you can bring them too. I'll see you soon. I love you. Bye."

—

2 hours later, Yuna Hollander throws open the door to Shane's Montreal apartment, rushing towards her son's bedside with a speed Ilya has only seen reached by professional athletes. David is close behind her, followed by Hayden and Rose, whose eyes settle on Ilya first, scrutinizing.

Ilya shrinks a little bit under their gazes, suddenly acutely aware that he is dressed in Shane's clothing from head to toe and they are not even remotely the same size. The Voyageurs t-shirt is basically a crop top on him and Shane's sweatpants are two inches too short. His face is probably puffy and red and this is not at all the impression he wants to be making, but he clambers out of the bed quickly to make room for Shane's parents to fuss over him.

Rose addresses him first. "So, you're Shane's mystery man, huh?"

Ilya isn't exactly sure how to respond, so he nods.

"This seems silly given the circumstances, but I am obligated as Shane's best friend to say that if you ever do anything to hurt him I will make sure nobody ever finds your body."

"I would sooner blow my own brains out," Ilya promises, and means it. If he ever hurt Shane he wouldn't be able to live with himself.

"Ilya!" Shane scolds from where he's clutched tightly in Yuna's arms. "Don't fucking talk about hurting yourself. I—you—it would destroy me. If you died like that. So please."

Hayden looks between the two of them, thinking. "You really are in love, huh, buddy?"

“Yeah,” Shane whispers. “Yeah, we are.”

This admission is what finally makes Shane’s parents pull away from him and turn towards Ilya.

“You have a lot of explaining to do, young man,” Yuna says. Ilya shivers slightly under the weight of her gaze.

“I—it is maybe best that we all sit down.” Ilya gestures towards Shane’s kitchen table before scooping him out of bed to deposit him in a chair, careful not to jostle his injuries in the process. Yuna watches the action with an indecipherable expression on her face.

Ilya takes a seat and steels himself, taking a deep breath in before beginning to explain.

“My name is Ilya Rozanov. My father was Grigori Rozanov. He was not a good man. He was what you might call, um, mobster, here in the states. He died when I was 17 years old. My mama was already dead. My brother did not want to deal with my father’s ‘business’. He runs. I become stuck.”

Shane’s family’s faces are shocked. Ilya continues.

“Shane did not know until now. I—when I heard he was missing I had to—I had to find him. I care about him very much. I know—I know it was bad idea. Now there is no story for police. But I—he—”

“Was he taken because of *you*? Because of your job?” Hayden cuts in, accusatory.

“No,” Shane interrupts. “He was...disturbed. He wasn’t after me because of Ilya. He had this deluded idea that I was somehow stealing his girl.”

“His girl?” Ilya inquires. He hadn’t actually talked to Shane about the stalker’s true motive.

Rose’s face is ashen. “Me. You were—it was because of me.”

“It wasn’t *because of you*, Rose, he was deranged. Do *not* blame yourself for this,” Shane argues.

“Ilya,” David starts.

“Yes?”

“This man, the one who hurt Shane, you—”

“I killed him.”

Yuna nods. “Good. And the body?”

“Mom!”

“It’s taken care of. I had my associates deal with it. They are used to dealing with...things of this nature,” Ilya explains.

Sensing the tension in the room, Shane inserts himself into the conversation. “Mom. Dad. Hayd. Rose. Ilya is—he isn’t a bad person. He can’t just up and leave his father’s empire. They would kill him, probably. I—I know what it looks like, but I love him. I really do. And he loves me too. So please don’t give him the third degree.”

“Shane...” Yuna sighs.

“I’m sorry. I really—I really did try. To not be—to not be like this. With Rose. But I just can’t help it. I’m sorry.” Tears are beginning to gather at his lashline. Ilya has to sit on his hands to keep himself from reaching over and wiping them away.

“No, honey, no. I’m sorry. I’m so sorry you felt like you couldn’t tell us.” Yuna stands up and gathers Shane into a hug, David joining in soon after.

Ilya watches them hold each other and cry. *He wishes his family looked like that.*

It’s a beautiful scene, it really is, until Hayden’s voice breaks through the silence, watery and sarcastic. “What, there were no nice men in Montreal? You just had to go find yourself a fucking Russian mob boss. Christ, man, you really don’t do anything by halves.”

There are plenty of nice men in Montreal, Ilya thinks. And one of them will get to have Shane, because Ilya cannot. Ilya would be lucky if he ever saw Shane again after today. He wouldn’t be surprised if he was in a prison cell by the end of the week.

“Mr. and Mrs. Hollander,” Ilya chokes out, “I—I will leave, yes? And I will—I will not call. I am very sorry for trouble. I am not—I know I am not good. For Shane. I have hurt many people. Shane will find a nice Montreal man, I am sure. Those freckles of his. I—I am sorry. Shane, I—I love you. But we cannot—I will go. I am so sorry.” Embarrassingly, Ilya starts crying, burying the heels of his palms into his eyes as he stands up to collect his things.

“Please,” Shane begs, “please, Ilya, I love you. Please, you don’t have to—we can—”

“Wait.” It’s Yuna. Ilya turns back around.

Her eyes are bloodshot, much like his own, but there’s an expression on her face that is not what Ilya had expected.

He’d expected rage, fear, suspicion. He hadn’t expected understanding.

“Don’t—you don’t have to leave. I don’t exactly agree with what you do, but I can see how much you love my son. I mean, fuck, you saved his life. You killed a man for him. I would have to be blind to deny that you care about him.”

Something takes flight in Ilya’s gut. It feels a lot like hope.

“And he cares about you too. He loves you. I—David and I always hoped he would find someone. You’re—you’re good for him. He’s been—lighter these past few years. I’m

assuming that's you."

"Yes," Shane confirms. "You—you make me better, Ilya. And you love me. So don't give me some bullshit excuse about dragging me down."

"Don't get me wrong," Yuna warns, "it's not going to be easy. Already wasn't without your job. Shane is a professional hockey player. There is exactly one out gay hockey player in the whole league. But what's a little more complication?"

Hayden and Rose laugh wetly. Ilya stands frozen. Shane is smiling at him, small and hopeful.

"We will figure out how to deal with the police, okay? They don't call me a 'momager' for nothing. Now get over here."

Her arms are open wide in invitation. She wraps one around Shane as David comes up behind the two of them, joining the embrace. Hayden and Rose both stand up, piling themselves on top of the Hollanders with arms outstretched.

Ilya collapses into Shane's chest as the strength of his family, of *their* family, holds them up.

Oh, he thinks. *This is what it feels like to be happy.*

Chapter End Notes

we've reached the end!!! this is the longest multichapter fic i've finished to date. it's a little surreal.

hope you all enjoyed the ride <3

i currently have 2 additional oneshots planned in this series:

- yuna and ilya figure out how to handle the police
- someone calls shane a slur on the ice... ilya just wants to scare him a little :)

i'm totally open to writing more, though, so let me know in the comments if there are any additional moments from this universe you'd like to see!

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!