

letters to no one

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by [agetwellcard](#)

Summary

When Shane starts the document, it makes sense to him.

Later on, when it's published onto a hundred different gossip sites with hundreds of comments dissecting every word, it looks insane.

It starts because Shane has no one to talk to about everything. He's never even kept a journal. He balks at the thought of getting a therapist. It's not like he's going to risk writing it down physically for someone to find. The only logical way that Shane can think of to deal with his feelings is to open up a blank Google Docs page and start writing.

or Shane decides to write down all his feelings instead of talking to Ilya. After years of writing about their relationship, the entire document gets leaked online.

Notes

did i write this all in one day? yes. is it kind of apropos? also yes.

although i did read heated rivalry, i mostly referenced the show when writing this. almost all of this is canon until after shane gets out of the hospital from the all-star game injury.

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

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

When Shane starts the document, it makes sense to him.

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It starts because Shane has no one to talk to about everything. He's never even kept a journal. He balks at the thought of getting a therapist. It's not like he's going to risk writing it down physically for someone to find. The only logical way that Shane can think of to deal with his feelings is to open up a blank Google Docs page and start writing.

He doesn't date the entries, and he definitely doesn't mean for them to sound like letters. He can't even manage to reread them despite knowing that they are surely riddled with typos. He opens the page, titles it *workout routine 2009*, and then writes everything he is thinking in the hopes that it will stop keeping him awake at night.

Shane writes the first entry well past midnight a few days after he is drafted to Montreal.

Fuck you. It was so much easier before I met you. I didn't have to think so hard about it. I told myself that people distanced themselves from me because I was awkward, because I wasn't white, because I was boring, because I wasn't something that they could easily understand and categorize.

I know that you see through it all, though. I know that you can tell exactly what I am, and it fucking scares me. Can the others tell or is it just you? Am I crazy for thinking that I was hiding it so well?

All I can think about is the way that you stared at me. I know that you know. I hope that I never see you again because I'm so embarrassed. At the same time, I want to see you again tomorrow. I want to see you right now.

The thing that scares me the most is that if you do know, you didn't seem disgusted by it.

He clicks out the page, closes his laptop, and tries to go to bed.

*

He almost forgets about the document entirely. He doesn't see Ilya for almost an entire year. The document did exactly what Shane wanted it to do: helped him forget about the entire encounter he had with Ilya in the workout room at that shitty hotel.

He sees Ilya again, though.

When Ilya leaves his hotel room, Shane tries to sleep with no luck. He wants to go through every single detail of the day. It's agonizing. After a couple hours, Shane pops up in bed when he remembers the document. His laptop is dead when he finds it at the bottom of his suitcase. He fumbles for the charger and plugs it in, tapping his foot impatiently as he waits for the screen to light up.

Within minutes, he finds the document buried under all the other documents he's created or opened throughout the year.

With shaky hands, he clicks the return key a few times and then he begins to write.

I don't know what I'm supposed to do about this.

Even though I wondered if you might be like me too, I knew that it was probably some sort of stupid, childish wish that I had. I never thought that you would seek me out. I never thought you would show up to my hotel room and touch me with those fucking hands that make me weak if I think about them now.

It seems so easy for you. I know that I am probably just another night for you. By tomorrow, you will likely forget about all of this. You don't have to be like me and fret over all the details. I'm so jealous of that. The way that you hold yourself, even when you're being a smug asshole, I'm so enamored. You don't ever seem uncomfortable.

Do you look at me and think I'm pathetic? You probably see the way I dress, or the way I stand, or the way that I so easily admitted to you that I have never even been with a guy, and you think that it is so embarrassing. You didn't make me feel that way, though. Fuck. No, you were actually kind and gentle in ways I would have never expected.

I know I don't know anything about you, but I want to know everything. I hope I can see you again. It sounds so clingy, practically obsessive. I'm no better than the creepy fans that probably stalk you on social media.

This is so bad. This is the last thing we should be doing. I already know that it will end badly. If I was smart, I would pretend like this never happened. I won't. I could never. I'm terrified at how easily you have unraveled this part of me that I've tried so hard to keep hidden. What else will you do to me?

*

He never goes back and reads the entries. When he needs to vent, he waits until he is alone and then opens the document up. He thinks it's helping. When he writes, he feels like he can breathe again. He feels like he is getting it all out of his system. He doesn't need to talk to anyone about it.

It's probably weird, he thinks. Ilya would laugh at him if he knew what he was doing. It's not for Ilya, though. It's for Shane.

They keep seeing each other, and Shane keeps writing.

*

Before you leave my hotel room, I have to keep myself from falling at your knees and repeating thank you thank you thank you.

God, I love the way you take me apart. Can you tell how badly I need your touch? Nothing has ever come close to the way that it is with you.

When we get together, there is always a moment before we even touch. We make small talk or even just look at each other. Can you tell how badly I am aching for you to touch me? Is it obvious that I am nearly shaking with restraint, from having to force myself from not reaching out the second I see you?

I feel insane waiting for you to text me back. I don't even want to check my phone in front of other people anymore because I know that it must be written all over my face how infatuated I am. I can't think of another time in my life that I've had to keep myself from smiling so much. Some of the guys on the team think I have a girlfriend. They can't see me as someone with a casual relationship.

I wouldn't tell you, but this isn't casual for me. I know it is for you. You probably like playing with me like a cat with a mouse. But I'm so gone, so fucking deep. I almost want to apologize to you for accidentally becoming obsessed with the way your hair looks after you've showered, or that smirk you always give me when I try to chirp you, or the sound you make right before you come when you're fucking my face.

*

When Shane is in Russia for the Olympics, he doesn't even bring his laptop. He's terrified at the thought of even opening up the document, like he's being watched by Russian spies. He's itching to write, though. He has so much he needs to work through, but there is no outlet. He's tried to smother it with hockey, with ad deals, with big smiles in front of the Canadian flag.

Ilya barely even looks at him. It's fine. They're in Russia. It's not like they are together. Ilya owes him nothing.

But then the Olympics end and they aren't in Russia, and Ilya doesn't even bother texting him back anymore. After practice one day, Shane opens his laptop after a couple months of not writing anything. He scrolls down so that he can't see his previous entry. He always does this. He stares at the blinking cursor for too long, not even sure where to start. He only types for a minute before closing out.

I wish I knew what I did wrong. Please tell me. I need you back in my life. I'm sorry if you could tell that I've crossed the line from casual to something more. I can hide it better, I promise. I can pretend if that's what I need to do to have you back in my life.

*

Shane almost sends the message. The words *we didn't even kiss* lingering on his phone for a few too many seconds before he slowly deletes each letter. He doesn't text Ilya stuff like that. It's exactly why he created the document in the first place.

When Shane gets home, he doesn't even bother taking off his dress pants and his wrinkled button-up. He instantly heads for his desk and boots up his laptop. He types frantically this time, like he's vomiting out everything that he needs to say.

Maybe you didn't kiss me because you can tell how far I've taken this. Maybe this is your way of telling me that this isn't anything serious. I need to take some steps back. This feels like too much. When you touch me, all the panic I feel melts away. And, fuck, you telling me what to do...I hate myself for how much I love it. When you grab my face, force me to look you in the eyes, I know that there is no going back. Whatever you want, I'll do it. I can pretend to put up a fight, but it's not real.

There are bruises on my hips from your fingers. They make me upset because you probably don't even realize what your touch will do to me, but it'll be on my skin for weeks now, a reminder of how easy I forgive you. Maybe for how desperate I am.

I hate that you can see right through me. No one else can, though. And I do hate it, I do, but sometimes it also feels like a relief, like a balm. Someone can see me. You can see me. That's all that I need.

*

Things get easier for a while. He meets up with Ilya when he can. He plays hockey better than he ever has. He makes friends. He usually doesn't need to think about how badly he wishes he had more time with Ilya. He will take what he can get when they see each other. When he doesn't know what to do with himself, when his feelings are too intense, he waits until he is alone and then opens his laptop, back usually pressed against the wall because he's so paranoid about anyone seeing what he's typing.

I would never tell you this because it's so embarrassing, but sometimes when I'm hanging out with Hayden and Jackie and their kids, I think about you. I watch the way that Hayden cuts up his daughter's food, and I listen to the way that they bicker half-heartedly over who has to do the dishes. I try to watch TV, but I feel like I've walked in on something that I should have never seen when Jackie walks up behind Hayden on the couch and rubs his shoulders absentmindedly.

(I can't wrap my brain around how their touches seem so thoughtful and romantic, but at the same time so automatic and intuitive and maybe even thoughtless. I can barely look at you in public without feeling like everyone knows about us. I can't imagine reaching out and feeling your skin without a closed door behind us.)

But I get to see them live their life together as a family and I think about you because I'm so weak. What if things were different? Could we kiss each other on the lips before work and come home and make dinner together? I try not to, but I can't help but to imagine you sending me a text in the middle of the day of a recipe you found that you want to try to make tonight. We could go to the store together and bicker about what type of cheese we should

get. And, god, I feel stupid even typing this out to no one but sometimes I even wonder what it would be like if we had a family together. I know you didn't always have a good home life, but I think you would be a good dad.

I know how fucked I am when I go to the bathroom at their house and look at their vanity with two sinks and think about what it would be like to get ready for bed with you every night. Someone else will get that. It won't be me. But in another universe, maybe I do.

*

When Shane gets home from Ilya's apartment, Hayden is not back yet. He paces the room for a few minutes before rifling through his backpack for his laptop. He knows this isn't productive. He knows he needs to go back and apologize. He needs to talk to Ilya, not to his computer. He still opens up the document.

I'm so used to you finding a way to tell me to leave without actually telling me to leave. I'm used to feeling frantic with the way that I'm counting down all the seconds we have left after fucking before you decide you have to go. You didn't ask me to leave today, though. I had everything I've been wanting for months – jesus christ, probably years at this point, and I just threw it away.

You made me food. We watched TV on the couch together like a married couple after a hard day at work. You touched me with no sexual intention behind it, and somehow that felt just as good as when you press into me during sex. We were normal for a few hours and it fucking scared me. I can't tell if you were trying to apologize for something by giving me exactly what I've been craving. It scares me even more at the mere thought of you wanting all of this too. The thought of the two of us both wanting each other like that...it almost makes me sad because I know we can't. I know it's impossible.

I wish I would've stayed even if I know I would've admitted everything to you. Do you know how badly I wish you could've run your fingers through my hair and pressed kisses to my head before I fell asleep in your arms? Does it make me a selfish person for wanting to wake up with you in the morning, every morning, for however long you'll have me?

I know it's crazy I walked out on you. I feel like I am choking on the truth about how I feel about you. If I stay too long with you, I know I will tell you. I will ruin things. I can't let that happen.

This is dumb, so fucking dumb, but I am not poetic or artistic enough to ever put into words the way that I feel when you say my name. I could listen to it all day. You could say it over and over and over and

Shane slams his laptop shut. No. He needs to do something about this.

*

A week later, he opens his laptop again. He is no closer to solving the problem. He thinks that if he keeps writing, it will get easier. If he writes it down, he will be one step closer to forgetting about all of it.

The other day I went to lunch with my parents and I imagined you there next to me.

I just know you would completely derail Mom's business talk with some topic that you find more interesting. I tell myself it's because you know how much I hate that I spend all my time with my parents talking about my career. I imagine us discussing how you hate how American airports make you take your shoes off at security and how the TSA agents always throw away your fancy cologne because you never check the liquid limits. I imagine you debating some trivial hockey fact with Mom only for me to Google it and find out that you're both wrong and we all laugh about it. At the end of the meal, you'd be the only one to order dessert, but you'd force me to try it, holding your fork out to me.

I know you would fit in so well. You would make things easier. I dream of a world where things are easy for us.

*

He knows how fucked up this is.

A few weeks ago, he downloaded the Google Docs app to his phone. It's easier this way. He doesn't need to find his laptop or wait until he is home and completely alone to write. He can lock himself in a bathroom and swipe furiously until he finds the document. He hasn't needed to write for a bit, though. He really thought that he could put this all behind him.

What he's doing right now, though, he knows this is wrong. Rose is sleeping in the other room. He could probably hear her heavy breathing if he listened hard enough. Shane can't stop himself from locking the door as quietly as he can and opening the document up on his phone.

I tried so fucking hard. I thought it worked. She is so pretty and funny and lights up the room in the same way you do. Things weren't perfect, sure, but they were fine until I saw you again tonight. I want to scream at you for ruining things. I know it's not your fault. But I want to be angry at you because I was better before tonight. I was forgetting about the press of your lips on my neck until you forced yourself back into my life.

How is it fair that I have to think about you so that I can fuck my girlfriend? I know you are probably sleeping around without even a thought about me. I have to think of your hands, and your mouth, and your stupid fucking accent telling me what to do so that I can feel anything. It's not fair. I wanted to feel normal and you ruined it.

Fuck you fuck you fuck you fuck

This is useless, Shane thinks. He needs to go to bed.

*

On the plane ride to Florida, Shane opens up the document even if his phone is on airplane mode. He doesn't care if this saves or not. It doesn't matter to him at all.

I'm not angry at you.

I wish we could talk. Maybe not as honest as I am here, but I want so badly to just have a few minutes where we are allowed to be honest and open and there is no future or reputation or fragile relationship to worry about.

I used to think it was your fault that I never talked to you like I do here. I thought you didn't want me to open up because then things would be serious and real. It must have been me the whole time. I'm not good at this in real life. I can only write to no one about my feelings so that I don't have to deal with them. Maybe I need help.

She might not be you, but it was nice to actually talk about myself and have someone listen. It makes me wonder if you would listen like that. I don't know if it matters either way. I have to say something. Need to.

*

For a little while, Shane doesn't feel the need to write.

Although it still feels a little like they are fighting it out when they are talking truthfully, Shane is finally able to parcel out bits of honesty to Ilya without feeling like he is ruining everything. He gets to know him more than he's ever had the opportunity to. They are constantly texting each other about things that aren't hotel room numbers and schedules for their next meetup. Ilya tells him about Russia, and Shane tells Ilya about Canada. They talk about movies and music and they talk about their favorite foods.

When Ilya's father dies, Shane strangely feels like it his loss to share even when he knows it isn't.

Finally, a few hours after listening to Ilya talk in Russian for several painful minutes, Shane opens up the document but only writes for a few seconds.

I hate that we're always apart. Are we forever doomed to be a timezone away at all times?

*

When Shane wakes up in the hospital, he thinks about Ilya. He's not sure if it's because he is feeling so good and so warm from whatever they are giving him for his injuries, but he manages to swallow his concerns about Ilya not knowing if he is dead or not.

But then Ilya visits him. He doesn't have to worry.

Later on, he doesn't remember asking for his phone, but his parents bring it to him. His mother tells him he has ten minutes before she is taking it away. Once he makes sure that his mother is safely sitting across the room and not looking at him, he frantically starts writing.

Oh fuck oh fuck I hope I didn't tell you.

The way you make me feel!!! So fucking crazy!!!

I love you so so so much. I am in love with you, Ilya. Oh god. I want to tell you so bad. I want you to say it back.

You visited me!!!! You care about me!!!! Please come to my cottage. Please please please please please. I want you there so bad. Please fuck me and then help me make dinner. Please play pretend if only for a few days.

Shane feels jittery, a huge smile on his face. When he glances up at his mother, she is staring at him with her head cocked curiously.

“What are you so smiley about?” she asks.

Shane instantly locks his phone even if she makes no moves to take it from him. “Nothing. Secret.”

“Secret?”

“Good secret. It’s okay.”

He knows she’s worried. He’s fine, though. He’s great even.

*

Ilya doesn’t come to the cottage.

He breaks the news to Shane a few days after he’s been released from the hospital. Shane has to pretend to be on a walk outside so that he can take the call. He walks as far away from the house as possible, paranoid that his parents will hear every word.

“Something came up,” Ilya tells him. Shane swallows thickly. Ilya says something in Russian then, something that Shane doesn’t understand. “No. Shane, I think we should...spend time apart.”

“What the fuck are you talking about?” Things were good. Ilya visited him in the hospital. They were talking. Shane doesn’t understand.

“I already told you. We can’t be *anything*.”

“I didn’t say we were. Is this about the cottage? It was just an idea, Ilya. Maybe it was stupid. I’m sorry, but we can still –”

“Shane.”

Shane usually loves to hear Ilya say his name. He hates it right now.

“I’m sorry.”

Ilya doesn’t apologize. He makes a joke. He ribs Shane. He pushes Shane against a wall and kisses him. He doesn’t apologize. Shane doesn’t want to listen to this.

“So, we’re just going to pretend that this never happened?”

There is a long pause. Shane almost checks to see if Ilya hung up on him. “Maybe. I don’t know. I just think maybe we see other people.”

Shane feels like he can’t breathe. “If that’s what you want.”

“Sure.” More silence. Then, Ilya says, “I have to go. I hope you heal fast.”

“Thanks. Bye.”

He is fine. He will be fine. He refuses to cry. He sits by the water for a bit and has no urge to dig out the document and write nonsense. The whole thing was stupid. All of it.

*

A few days later, when he’s home alone while his parents go grocery shopping, he opens the document. He almost deletes all of it. Instead, he skips a few lines and starts typing.

Do you remember the first time you skated on the ice?

I don’t. I was so young. My parents put me in lessons. Apparently, I impressed everyone with how good I was. I was so good that my future was forged for me then and there. I don’t remember my first time on the ice, and I don’t remember learning the rules to hockey, or even the names of anyone on my first team. If someone asked me tomorrow to stop and forget everything that I know about hockey, I would laugh in their face. I would tell them it’s all I know. I would tell them that everything is muscle memory. Everything is natural. I love it. I can’t forget it. I can’t stop.

Do you think you could?

*

Shane doesn’t write anymore.

Eventually, his injury heals. He goes back to working out and then he goes back to practices. Everyone is the same. They all laugh at the same jokes and they aren’t angry at him for getting injured and ruining the game. The schedule for next season gets posted in the locker room, and Shane avoids even looking at it. It doesn’t matter when they are playing Boston. All that matters is that Shane eats well, he works out, he practices harder than he ever has, he gets good sleep, he does everything to be the best version of himself that he can be.

It pays off. When the season starts up, they are on a winning streak. Everything is working out. Shane doesn’t need anything else but the ringing in his ears when they win another game. It doesn’t matter how he feels later on, when he’s alone in his apartment, the TV playing softly in the background so that he doesn’t feel so lonely.

*

One morning, when he shows up to practice, everyone is strangely quiet. Most of his teammates are on their phones or huddled above someone else’s phone, eyebrows quirked at

whatever it is that they are reading. It doesn't matter to Shane. The only thing that matters is the game in a couple nights.

He starts to get ready for practice. He realizes that some of the guys are staring at him. Some are even laughing. Shane almost reaches for his phone, but then Hayden walks in. He looks frantic, scanning the room until he lands on Shane. His stomach drops.

"Hey," Hayden says quietly to him, nervously looking around. "Are you okay?"

Shane is scared to answer. "What do you mean?"

"Fuck." Hayden winces and then sighs. "You haven't seen it yet?"

"Seen what?"

A few of the guys that are next to them start laughing. Hayden drags him out of the locker room until they are alone in an empty hallway.

"Shane, your email got hacked."

His email? Shane tries to think about what would be in there. There can't be anything too personal. Nothing that would make the whole team react like that. He tries to run through what they could have seen in his inbox.

Hayden makes a face, clearly not wanting to be the one that has to spell it out for Shane. "It's your Google account. So, it's kind of connected to everything."

Suddenly, the realization hits Shane. The document. It's connected to his email.

He quickly pulls out his phone from his pocket and Googles his own name. He only has to read a couple headlines for him to lock his phone and put it away because he cannot deal with that right now. He rubs at his face and tries to breathe evenly.

"Um," Shane starts. His chest feels tight. He worries that he won't even get enough air to keep talking, not that he even knows what he wants to say.

Hayden puts a hand on his shoulder. "Hey, Shane. I didn't read any of it, okay? I mean, obviously I saw the headlines so I know what it's about, but I don't care. It doesn't change anything."

He's talking so fast. Shane tries to remember every single word that he wrote in the document. It's thousands and thousands of words long. He covers his eyes. "Fuck, Hayden. I'm so sorry. I wrote about you and Jackie. Not – " He swallows, practically choking. "Not in a bad way."

"I don't care. Shane, it's fine. Do you want to sit down?"

Everyone knows everything, Shane realizes. Everything he's felt for years was in there. All of his feelings are being blasted on every single shitty gossip site. His parents will see it. His coaches will see it. Ilya is going to read every fucking word.

Practice will start any minute now. Shane can't skip it. He might pass out in this hallway if he doesn't leave.

"We have to go to practice," Shane tells him.

"*Shane*," Hayden starts, but Shane shakes his head and starts to walk away. Hayden is only trying to help, but Shane doesn't want to talk. He wants to do the only thing he's ever had that helps quiet his brain.

*

It doesn't help.

He spends the entire practice out of breath. He's sloppy. He gets laughed at. The coach gives him a strange look. Everyone knows, and Shane is trying to pretend like nothing has changed.

When they are released, Shane hurries to leave. He skips the showers. He keeps dropping things when he reaches for them in his locker. His hands are shaking. His phone is lighting up and vibrating endlessly from where it's sitting. Shane almost turns it off. He almost smashes it against the ground.

Even though he doesn't hear what someone says, he can hear Hayden defending Shane. It's embarrassing. Shane rushes out of the room. It doesn't matter.

He doesn't check his phone again until he is back in his apartment. He has endless messages. He doesn't even bother opening up his emails. Stupidly, Shane scans through his messages looking for anything from Lily. There is nothing.

His parents have tried calling him several times. He knows he needs to call them and apologize. His mother will be dealing with this for years now. He's terrified to speak to them, though. He's never mentioned anything about his love life beyond admitting to his short fling with Rose. Suddenly, he remembers all the things he wrote about Ilya, all the *explicit* things.

Shane falls to the floor in his doorway, struggling to breathe. He goes back to the Google search he made of his name and scrolls through all the article headlines. Every single one has Ilya's name in it. He doesn't even remember ever using his name. Shane opens up the document and searches it for Ilya's name. Sure enough, the second to last entry has his name. It's from when Shane was in the hospital.

Just then, his mother calls again. He knows he has to answer it or he'll never call her back.

"Mom," he says. His voice is trembling. It's pathetic.

"Shane, are you okay?"

She sounds even more panicked than Shane feels.

"I'm sorry for...all of this." He tries not to cry, but his mother's worried voice makes him nearly double over.

“You don’t need to apologize. This should never have – “

“I know I shouldn’t have ever kept it on there. I’m so fucking stupid. I don’t know why I would do that.”

“Please breathe, Shane.”

He tries. He really does try. Quietly, because he has to know, he asks, “Are you angry at me?”

“Of course not. Why would I be angry?”

There are too many things to even bring up. “I’m sorry I never told you.”

“Please stop apologizing,” she tells him. “I’m sorry you didn’t feel like you could tell me.”

*

Ilya doesn’t call him. He doesn’t even text him. Shane is terrified to make contact. He knows he needs to apologize to Ilya, but he doesn’t feel like he has enough words to ever make things right after ruining Ilya’s life.

He reads through the entire document for the first time. Each minute feels like torture. Each entry seems more and more personal as he reads on. He cringes at all of it. He cries at some of it. Everyone in his life has read it, but the one person who Shane is most scared of reading it won’t even reach out to him.

His parents drive over to his apartment. On the drive over, his mother has already put together a plan. She’s halfway through her speech when Shane’s father gently stops her and gestures to Shane. She doesn’t realize Shane isn’t listening. He feels like he might be sick. He can barely even make eye contact with them knowing what they read.

“Hey, it will be okay,” his father says. “We’ll figure it all out. It doesn’t need to happen right away.”

Shane nods, feeling numb. Sure.

*

When Shane goes to his next practice, he actually looks at the schedule only to realize that their next game is against Boston. He wants to scream.

*

Since he can’t bring himself to call Ilya, Shane calls Rose. He knows he needs to apologize to her, too. Similar to Hayden, she says she doesn’t care that her name was included in the leak. She’s only worried about Shane. He can’t think of anything to say that will make her worry less.

“You know,” she says when the silence is too long. “I know you probably haven’t been looking at what people are saying, but it’s not all bad. People think it’s sweet. And romantic.

And sad.”

Shane huffs, almost amused. There is a whole paragraph in there somewhere where Shane wrote that he wants Ilya to handcuff him to the bed and fuck him with his fingers in Shane’s mouth. He doesn’t exactly think it sounds romantic.

“I’m serious. You know I wouldn’t read it, really. But I’ve read that people think it sounds like a romance novel.”

“Please stop,” Shane says. He laughs a little then. It surprises him. He hasn’t laughed, or even smiled since it all happened.

Rose eats it up. “You’re basically Nicholas Sparks.”

“Fuck off! I’m way better than him.”

“I’m sure you are,” she says, the two of them still laughing. When it dies down, she carefully asks, “Have you talked to him yet?”

“No. We’re playing against each other tomorrow night. I’m terrified.”

“Oh, *fuck*.”

“Yeah.”

“I’m sorry this happened to you, Shane. You don’t deserve it.”

Shane picks at his fingers. He’s not sure if that’s true.

*

Before the game, his coach all but tells him he will not be playing. He expected it, but he’s never been benched before. The game passes in a blur. He’s not asked to speak to media. He knows everyone is interested in what he has to say. His mother told him he’s gotten hundreds of interview inquiries. Nothing like this has ever happened before, and everyone wants to be the first to hear from him.

Ilya only plays for a few minutes. When he skates by Shane, he doesn’t even look over at him.

On the ride home from the arena, he gets a text.

Lily: *can i come over tonight?*

The message makes him go cold with fear. He wants to write *of course please I’m so sorry please come over I’m sorry I said I loved you and everyone read it*. That’s how this whole mess started, though. He quickly types out, *you can. might be paparazzi outside tho*.

Almost instantly, he gets a response.

Lily: *that's ok. be there in an hour.*

Shane figures that makes sense. There is nothing to hide anymore. Everyone knows. Ilya Rozanov showing up at Shane Hollander's apartment is basically expected at this point.

There are still paparazzi waiting at Shane's apartment building. He keeps his head down and rushes inside. He feels frantic. He quickly showers and tries to clean up his apartment a little. Shane has barely been able to function the past few days. His usually tidy apartment looks messy.

When Ilya texts that he is out back, Shane rushes down to get him. There aren't any paparazzi out back, though. It's just Ilya. His hair is wet and sticking to his forehead. He's wearing too light of a jacket for how cold it is outside. Just the sight of him makes Shane want to crumble. There is nothing he can say that will make things right between them.

They don't hug. They barely even look at each other for longer than a few seconds. They take the stairs slowly. Shane is trying to think of what to say to him. He doesn't even know where to start. Inside, Ilya toes off his shoes because he knows that Shane hates them inside. It feels like a small mercy. Shane tells himself if he was angrier, he'd keep them on.

"Ilya," he starts, facing the man fully. He already feels like he's going to cry.

Before Shane can get any further, Ilya interrupts him. "I don't remember."

"What?"

"When I first learned how to skate. I don't remember it. You asked."

He's referring to the document. Of course. Shane knew that he would read it. It was only fair. A piece of him had stupidly hoped that maybe he wouldn't.

"I wouldn't be able to forget how to play either," Ilya continues.

Shane goes, "I'm so sorry," just as Ilya says, "I love you, too."

They both stare at each other.

They fall into each other. Shane wraps his arms around Ilya tightly, head pressed into his neck. He breathes him in deeply.

He didn't lose him.

Ilya *loves* him.

Without realizing it, Shane is still muttering apologies into Ilya's skin. Ilya presses a soft hand on the back of head, fingers threading through Shane's hair. He wishes they could stay like this all night. Quietly, Ilya says, "I like the way that you write."

Shane laughs, gripping him tighter. "Shut up."

“I’m serious. When will you write book? About me, of course.”

“*Please.*”

There is so much to figure out still, but Shane doesn’t feel nearly as scared. He presses a kiss to Ilya’s neck and then his jaw and then his lips.

“Ilya, can we be honest with each other from now on?”

Ilya smiles. “Please.”

Chapter End Notes

thank you everyone for reading :) although not my original plan, i could possibly be persuaded to write something small from ilya’s pov if enough people wanted it. also could probably write the entirety of the workout routine 2009 document lol.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

okay i did not expect to write more for this one, so i appreciate all the kind comments encouraging me to continue. there was definitely more to be said. i feel much more comfortable writing in shane's pov, so this took some time for me.
this starts off on the same day that the first chapter ended. this focuses more on their relationship since i have never claimed to know anything about hockey.

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

Ilya stares up at the ceiling listening to Shane breathe. He knows that Shane needs sleep so he tries his hardest to keep from moving too much. Ilya feels restless, though, and although he wishes he could sleep, it doesn't come.

Eventually, Shane sighs into his arm and asks in a deep voice, "Are you okay?"

Even after everything that has happened, Ilya is still scared of the two of them like this. He can hold Shane tonight, and tomorrow, and the day after that, but they still don't have a plan. He can't keep going to practice and threatening to beat the shit out of anyone that says a fucking word about the leak.

"Yes, sorry. Go back to sleep." It's not worth talking about right now.

Shane sits up. Part of his hair is flat against the back of his head and the other part is sticking up in a way that makes Ilya want to smile and smooth it back. He realizes that he doesn't even know if Shane snores. He doesn't know if he drools. He doesn't know if he gets up in the middle of the night to go the bathroom. They've never spent the entire night together.

"Ilya, seriously." He almost sounds annoyed.

Ilya rubs the side of his jaw. "Really. Nothing."

"I thought we said we were going to be honest."

"Okay," Ilya starts. He swallows. Shane watches him, suddenly more awake. "Why didn't you say it was fake?"

Shane looks past him and bites at his lip thoughtfully. He doesn't look upset at the question, but Ilya can tell that he doesn't want to answer it. "I thought about it. At first." He shakes his head for no reason. "Well, no. Actually, my mom thought it might be a good idea. She wasn't trying to, like, make me hide or something – it was just an idea."

"You didn't want to?"

“I almost did. All my shit was leaked, though. People had access to all my emails, all my saved locations, even my fucking internet bookmarks. It was always going to be obvious that it was real.” Shane is picking at his finger. Ilya reaches out and holds his hand so that he can’t make it bleed. “I still could’ve. Obviously. People would know I was lying, but they couldn’t prove it. And maybe I should’ve...for you.” He says the last two words so quietly Ilya can barely hear it.

Truthfully, Ilya spent the entire first day of the leak getting angrier and angrier that Shane *hadn’t* denied it. He kept thinking that eventually the silence would be broken with some sort of a release where Shane would say how crazy the accusation was, maybe even jab at Ilya’s looks or his bad English or his laziness, and then everyone could breathe again. It never came. He couldn’t force Shane to deny it. Even if he had called him relentlessly and demanded it, no matter how badly Ilya needed for things to be normal again, Shane had to make the decision himself. It didn’t stop Ilya from being tempted to deny it himself. He could’ve. He didn’t.

“But then what? I spend my entire life in the closet because if I come out as gay then everyone will know I was a huge fucking liar?”

“Why would it matter?”

Shane rubs his eye with his free hand and breathes out slowly. “I don’t know, Ilya. I really don’t. But it does. I’m sorry I didn’t include you in the decision. I know I should’ve.”

Neither of them speak the obvious truth: there is still time for them to deny it.

Ilya knows he’s being too hard on Shane. He pulls Shane close to him again, so that his head is resting on Ilya’s chest. He presses a kiss to the top of his head. “It’s okay.” There is no point in being tormented over what is already done.

After a few minutes, Ilya thinks that Shane is asleep, but then he asks, “Did you read it all?”

“Yes.”

He read it all several times. He read it in English. He translated it into Russian and read it again. He got drunk and read it agonizingly slow to make sure he got every word. At his lowest, he read through forums discussing every single entry.

“I never meant for you to see it. Or anyone. Ever.”

Ilya thinks about some of the more painful entries. Although he knew at the time he was hurting Shane to some extent, he never realized the depth of it.

“Could you tell before you read it? That I was in love with you?”

Ilya’s chest hurts at the mention of it. It still feels so new, so fragile. He’s scared if he says the words enough that Shane will change his mind.

“No. I hoped. But no.”

Shane huffs out a breathy laugh. “I thought it was obvious.”

Ilya rubs absentminded circles into Shane’s skin with his thumb. He’s finally starting to feel tired.

*

Ilya is not used to the press of another person against him in the morning. Shane’s leg is pushed against his, and when Ilya opens his eyes, he has his arm flopped over his face, mouth slightly open. Ilya smiles. He gets this version of Shane now. He gets to see him at breakfast, in the shower, brushing his teeth, standing in the mirror doing his hair. He’s overwhelmed with the richness that this new future holds, even if it also scares him.

He presses kisses into the side of Shane’s face that’s not hidden from his arm to wake him up because he’s not patient enough for wait for him to rise on his own. Shane swats him away, rolling over slightly and grumbling something.

“You’re going to miss practice,” Ilya whispers into his ear.

Shane startles when he hears it and sits up. “Oh *fuck*.” When he looks at Ilya, who can barely contain his laughter, Shane groans and flops back down. “You’re such an asshole.”

“That is no way to talk about your lover.” Ilya gives him a sloppy, wet kiss on his cheek and Shane rubs the spit away.

“Please don’t use that word.”

“There is another word that you like more?”

Shane opens his eyes and looks over to Ilya. He looks serious, but Ilya isn’t sure why. It makes him wonder if he said something wrong.

“Ilya, I need to know something,” Shane says slowly. There is an urgency to his voice that nearly jolts Ilya fully awake. “Are you – is *this* something? I want to be with you.”

“Yes. I thought so.” It won’t be easy, and the entire things terrifies Ilya. He’s been denying himself this for years. He doesn’t necessarily understand why Shane is asking like it wasn’t already obvious. He’s here. He feels like he already said yes.

“You ended it right after I asked you to come to my cottage. So, I thought you didn’t want it.”

Oh. Right.

“I always wanted it, but I was scared by my feelings for you. I thought it would be safer to end it.” Ilya doesn’t say it, but he wants to add, *and then your entire diary got leaked online and it didn’t matter anymore.*

“Did you want to come?”

“Of course.”

“Maybe this summer we can try again.”

“Tell me about it. Please.”

Shane presses closer into Ilya and starts telling him about how the sunsets look on the water.

*

That afternoon, Shane’s parents come to the apartment.

Ilya didn’t expect to still be there, so Shane lets him borrow a shirt from his closet. Ilya pulls on a plain grey t-shirt that is uselessly hung up next to another dozen plain shirts that could’ve easily been stuffed into a drawer. He smiles to himself. He didn’t realize that he would enjoy seeing these pieces of Shane: his tidy closet, the sorted sock drawer, the row of sneakers all perfectly facing out.

Shane is pacing the living room. Ilya watches him turn on a light switch that makes no difference with the sun shining through the windows, and then he grabs Ilya’s coat and puts it away in the closet near the front door.

“Have they read it?” Ilya asks.

This makes Shane still his motions. “Probably. Well, I’m sure my mom has. I’m not really sure about my dad. It’s not like I’m going to ask.”

Ilya realizes that his parents will either dislike him because he has been their son’s rival for years or because he was the person that Shane agonized over for the whole world to read.

“They know I’m here, yes?”

Shane nods. “Of course. I told them.”

Shane gets his parents from downstairs while Ilya waits for them. He idly looks through the things that Shane has on the small table by his door. In a shallow, ceramic bowl, he has a few pieces of loose change and a key ring held together with a Montreal keychain. His wallet is neatly placed next to it with a few scattered pieces of mail. Ilya thinks about what it would feel like to add his own things to the pile. He’s already been forced into Shane’s life, so he figures he deserves it.

“—I’m sure he’ll like it, Mom,” Shane says as he opens the front door for his parents.

Ilya stands up a little straighter and curiously watches them walk inside. He’s instantly nervous. He finds himself tapping his fingers on the side of his jeans, unsure what to say. He eyes Shane’s father and feels edgy.

“Ilya,” Shane starts, sounding out of breath. He motions over to his parents stiffly. “These are my parents. Obviously.”

Ilya is unsure if he should hold out his hand or not.

“Are you doing okay?” his mother asks, approaching Ilya.

Unexpectedly, she wraps him in a hug. Although, rigid at first, Ilya easily melts into the hug. He brings his arms up to hold her back. It takes him a few seconds to remember she asked him a question. “Fine. Good.”

When she pulls back, her hands linger on his back and she makes a sympathetic face. “I’m sorry about all of this. I know it’s not been easy for you both.”

Ilya hopes it isn’t obvious how shocked he is. He expected Shane’s parents to be upset at him. He realizes, though, that his mother feels *bad* for him.

“It’s nice to finally meet you,” his father says. He doesn’t touch Ilya like his mother, but he nods and gives him a kind smile. “I’m David.”

“And I’m Yuna.”

“Please don’t be weird about this,” Shane says. He’s in the kitchen with the bags of groceries that Shane’s parents brought with them. His whole face is red. Ilya realizes that it must be strange, the three of them together, all such important pieces of Shane’s life but carefully kept separate for years.

Yuna looks at Ilya and then rolls her eyes, like Ilya and her are in on some joke. Ilya smiles, surprised.

He watches the way that the three of them work around each other preparing a salad for lunch, joking amongst themselves and working together without any fuss. David cooks chicken at the stove without being asked, humming to himself every few minutes. Ilya stands beside Shane and helps him cut up some vegetables. When he reaches over to throw away scraps, his arm brushes against Shane’s. The whole thing seems like some sort of weird dream that Ilya would wake up from with a slight headache, but then all day he would think back to it and feel warm.

When they sit at the table, Shane sits next to Ilya, his parents across from him. Ilya would never mention it, and he wouldn’t expect anyone else to, but he wonders if Shane is secretly pleased. Ilya remembers a certain entry that Shane wrote about wanting the four of them to eat together. Although Ilya is stupidly happy knowing that Shane’s parents seem to like him, and that the four of them being together feels strangely easy and comfortable without any work, he also worries he isn’t living up to some fantasy that Shane has about them. He admittedly doesn’t talk much during the meal. He enjoys listening to the three of them, but he does love the way that Shane or his parents will sometimes look over and wait for Ilya’s opinion on something. Ilya still worries, though, that the real version of whatever Shane has fantasized isn’t as good.

No one mentions the leak beyond Yuna apologizing to Ilya when she first arrived. He wonders if it will be like that all afternoon until they are eating some cut fruit after dinner and Yuna finally speaks up about it.

She looks between Ilya and Shane. “What is the plan? We can’t hide in this apartment forever.”

Ilya has been checking the time on his phone all afternoon. He needs to get back to his hotel soon so he can make his flight tonight. He has known all day that they can’t hide here, but he still wishes they could.

“Do we have to do this right now?” Shane asks. When Ilya looks over at him, he has his face in hands.

From under the table, Ilya reaches over and puts a hand on his thigh. The touch is as much for him as it is for Shane.

“We’ll figure it out,” David says.

“We will,” Yuna adds.

Ilya peeks over at Shane. He doesn’t look encouraged. He won’t ask, but he wonders how bad it was for Shane when he found out about everything. Ilya had been with Svetlana when the news broke. He had been dozing on his bed, the TV playing in the background when Svetlana shook him awake and thrust her phone into his face. For a few seconds, his brain couldn’t comprehend the two of their names put together in the way they had been in the headline.

“*It’s fake*,” Ilya had instantly told Svetlana in Russian.

Unexpectedly, Svetlana gave him a hard look, one that made Ilya go cold. Without saying a word, it was obvious that she knew something all along and all the pieces were finally coming together.

Ilya had wanted to tell her to leave. Instead, he stormed off and locked himself in the bathroom. As he scrolled further and further and uncovered everything, his heart slammed against his chest. He felt dizzy. He didn’t want to keep reading, but he couldn’t stop himself. At that moment, he knew that everything was over. His career. Whatever was left of his life in Russia. Ad deals. All of it.

Without hesitating, he started to call Shane. After one ring, though, he quickly hung up and shut off his phone. He knew he couldn’t talk to him yet. At the time, he had no idea what he was going to say to Shane. He had left the bathroom and returned to the bedroom with a bottle of vodka. Svetlana stayed with him, wordlessly, and they put on an old Russian movie.

Now, he looks at Shane next to him and regrets not letting the call ring through. For most of Ilya’s life, he had to be the one to advocate for himself. He had to figure things out alone. He didn’t think that he would have Shane and his parents to help him. He feels strangely emotional at the thought that his parents barely know him but are willing to try to help him if only because they know that Shane cares for him.

Before Ilya leaves for his flight, he cards his fingers through Shane's hair and presses their foreheads together. He doesn't want to leave. He wants to fall to Shane's knees and beg him to let him stay.

Instead, he whispers, "I love you."

When Shane says it back, he wants to stay even more.

*

Ilya sits alone at the boarding gate. His teammates keep a safe distance from him. He pulls his baseball cap lower on his head and wishes he was back at Shane's apartment.

When someone sits next to Ilya, he sighs to himself but doesn't bother looking up.

"You look like a kicked puppy," Marlow tells him.

Ilya picks up his head to find Marlow sitting next to him. He's grinning, and Ilya can't tell if he's making fun of him or not.

"Fuck you."

This only makes Marlow smile wider. "Christ, Rozanov. You gonna be like this for the rest of the season?"

He doesn't bother answering.

"You know I don't give a shit, right?" he asks then.

Ilya tries to keep his breathing even.

"Is it real?"

Finally, Ilya looks him in the eyes with his head cocked and just stares at him. Although they hadn't resolved much over lunch, Shane and Ilya decided they wouldn't deny it. Although it's not easy for Ilya, and he won't actually say it out loud yet, it's enough of an answer For Marlow.

"Holy *shit*," Marlow hisses, eyes wide. "What about all those girls you slept with? Was that all fake?"

"Is real. Go fuck yourself."

"So, you were fucking Hollander *and* all those women?" His voice gets quiet when he says Shane's last name, and Ilya is grateful for that even though he's not sure if Marlow is planning on going back to the team so that they can all laugh about this later.

"Yes, Marlow. I was getting all of that ass while you got nothing. Sad for you."

Marlow laughs again. "I was getting some, fuckface."

“Mm, yes. All the ugly girls.”

This feels like their old back and forth. Ilya is grateful for the familiarity of it even if the topic is absurd.

“Is coach benching you?”

Ilya feels the smirk on his face slip away. He nods.

“Fucked up,” Marlow mutters. “Not his fuckin’ business what you do outside the rink. Not anyone’s.”

Ilya wishes that was the case. They both know it’s not.

*

When the plane touches down in Boston, Ilya turns his phone off of airplane mode and texts Shane to let him know he made it. Shane had asked him to do that for the first time years ago now. It’s so simple, Ilya thinks. No one had ever asked him to do it before. No one had ever cared. And Shane had asked him like it was something that was non-negotiable, like it was information that he had an automatic right to.

On the cab ride home, Ilya changes Shane’s contact name. Their nicknames suddenly feel superfluous.

*

“My parents like you,” Shane says on the phone the next night. His voice is raspy. Ilya can tell he’s sleepy. It sounds like he’s smiling when he says it, that shy fucking smile that makes Ilya melt. He can’t be sure, though.

Something in Ilya’s chest tightens. “Probably lie.”

“No lie. They really do. I think they’re happy for us but...worried. My mom won’t say it, but I know she’s freaked out.”

“Me too.”

“I know. Ilya, I know I already said it, but I am sorry. I know I dragged you into –”

“Shane, no. It’s not your fault.”

“It is. I shouldn’t have been writing about it. And I definitely shouldn’t have been putting it online where someone could –”

“You were hacked. Not your fault.”

There is silence from the other end. Ilya wonders if Shane is admitting defeat. He wants for him to stop apologizing to Ilya about the whole thing. Ilya has done irresponsible things his

entire life. None of them had consequences like the entire world reading all your secrets. He hates the thought of Shane beating himself up over something that he can't change now.

"I went to get coffee yesterday and I ran into fans," Shane says suddenly. He sounds breathy, like he's gritting his teeth between words. "And after we took photos, one of them told me she was sorry about what happened but that she saw, like, a lot of herself in my writing?" He sounds like he's questioning if the whole interaction was real. "I guess she was gay and played sports but never felt comfortable with her sexuality. Anyways, I guess she liked reading it because she knew she wasn't alone."

Before Ilya can think of something to say, Shane keeps speaking. "I didn't tell you because it didn't feel like something I should share and we weren't talking, but the day after it all leaked, Scott Hunter reached out to me. He basically said that he's gay and has been seeing someone for a long time too. He said something similar about understanding a lot of what I went through and that it made him feel less alone."

"Jesus," Ilya says quietly, stunned. He never would have imagined Scott Hunter being gay. Ilya always knew that there had to be others in the league, but it didn't stop him from feeling like Shane and him were the only queer men in it.

"I know this whole thing is such a fucking mess, but I don't know, maybe it could help people." Shane sniffs and breathes heavily into the phone. Ilya realizes he's crying. Ilya wishes again that they were together. "Is that stupid?"

Ilya shakes his head even if Shane can't see him. "No. Not stupid. At all."

"I know I need to make a statement," Shane says slowly. "And you can say no, but what if you did it with me?"

"Yes. I will."

*

When they arrive to the cottage, one of the first thing that Ilya thinks about is the ocean of time they have together. In reality, it's only a couple of weeks. After an entire relationship built on borrowed time, two weeks feel endless when they first get there.

Ilya has spent years spending weeks counting down to when he would see Shane next, and then he would spend every moment together thinking about when it would end. He would constantly have to check the time, minutes slipping away faster than he could account for them. Then, he would leave and Ilya would be back to waiting for the next time he could reach out and press his hand against Shane's face.

On the first night, they sit on the couch together after dinner, and Shane offers to put on a movie. They've never had time to watch something as long as a movie together. They've talked before about their favorite movies, and the actors they like, but they never have sat together and scrolled through a streaming platform for something to watch. They both go back and forth for at least a half hour before they settle on something. Ilya tucks his head on

Shane's chest and Shane wraps his arm around him. The movie plays on. Ilya doesn't check the time. They're allowed to be lazy.

They swim in the lake. They make dinner together. They nap in the middle of the day. They scroll on their phones in a warm silence together. They kiss slowly and then fuck with a tempo that Ilya barely recognizes because every touch has been so frantic for years now. They play house, and Ilya has never been happier.

After the past few months, they deserve this, Ilya tells himself. Things should be easy for them.

One night, with Shane's chest still heaving, Ilya starts to get up to go shower. Shane stops him and kisses the side of his face. He quietly asks, "Do you think we would still be together if I hadn't been hacked?"

For a moment, Ilya thinks that he maybe could've stayed away from Shane after he broke things off between them. He knows it's not true. The two of them always end up back in each other's orbit. His pull towards Shane feels magnetic. At one point in time, he hated the way he always leaned back towards Shane so easily. He knew it was complicated and messy, but he could never keep himself from closing the space between the two of them every time.

He doesn't know how to explain it all properly to Shane now.

"Yes. We would have found a way," Ilya finally says.

He grabs Shane's hand and squeezes.

When Ilya comes back from the shower, Shane is asleep. Careful not to wake him up, Ilya uses his phone to shine his way to the living room. He has to open a few different drawers until he finds what he's looking for. Turning on the light above the kitchen island, Ilya sits down on one of the barstools and flips open the notebook. He finds a series of numbers and names. He realizes they are scores for some game Shane must have played with his parents at some point. He smiles when he sees that Shane won.

Flipping to an empty page, Ilya uncaps his pen and begins to write. His English is not always perfect and he often struggles to find the right words. He doesn't want for Shane to not know what he thinks and how he feels because it's sometimes too overwhelming or difficult to say what he means.

Slowly, he writes his feelings down for Shane to find later.

Chapter End Notes

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