

intrusive thoughts

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/84362961) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/84362961>.

Rating:	Not Rated
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Heated Rivalry (TV)
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov , Hayden Pike , Rose Landry , Svetlana Vetrova , Cliff Marlow , Cliff Marleau , Luca Haas
Additional Tags:	Telepathy , Accidental Mind Reading , Idiots in Love , Romantic Comedy , Smut , Coworkers to Lovers , Alternate Universe - Office , Enemies to Lovers , Shane Hollander & Ilya Rozanov's Terrible Communication Skills , Shane Hollander is not as subtle as he thinks , Touch-Starved , Shane Hollander Loves Ilya Rozanov , Ilya Rozanov Loves Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov is a Menace , Getting Together , Rose Landry Caused Problems On Purpose , Crack , Humor , Horny Shane Hollander , Shut Up Kiss , Making Out , Awkward Flirting , Bottom Shane Hollander , Top Ilya Rozanov , Blow Jobs
Language:	English
Series:	Part 5 of hockey didn't happen , Part 1 of all signs point to you
Stats:	Published: 2026-05-09 Completed: 2026-05-28 Words: 13,579 Chapters: 6/6

intrusive thoughts

by [shaneverse](#)

Summary

After insulting a suspiciously vindictive fortune teller at a street fair, Ilya Rozanov wakes up cursed with the ability to hear people's thoughts through touch.

Which becomes a serious problem when he discovers his coworker Shane Hollander, who supposedly can't stand him, is apparently thinking about him in extremely inappropriate ways constantly.

Notes

[twitter](#)

Chapter 1

There was a very specific circle of hell, and Ilya Rozanov was certain it smelled like burnt sugar, wet leaves, and overpriced artisan candles.

Thursday nights in Boston were supposed to be sacred.

After forty hours of spreadsheets, risk assessment models, and pretending to care about Vanguard Financial Consulting's quarterly growth margins, Ilya wanted exactly three things:

a stiff drink, his couch, and silence.

Instead, he was being dragged through a crowded autumn street fair by the unstoppable force of nature known as Svetlana.

"You are walking too slowly," Svetlana announced, grabbing his coat sleeve and pulling him toward a stall overflowing with decorative gourds. "We have to see the cider pressing."

"I have seen cider being pressed," Ilya said, shoving his hands deeper into his pockets. "It is just apples being crushed. I do not understand why people are paying thirty dollars to watch fruit die."

"Because it is autumn," she said brightly. "And we are young professionals enjoying the vibrant cultural tapestry of our city. Do not ruin my aesthetic with your depression."

"Your aesthetic is going to give me *pneumonia*."

Svetlana ignored him, which was her preferred response to most of his complaints.

She stood beneath the fairy lights with a cup of mulled wine that probably cost more than Ilya's monthly subway pass, looking perfectly at home among the crowds.

Ilya felt like a hostage.

"Look at this," Svetlana demanded, pointing at a booth selling miniature wooden bears. "Look how rustic. I am going to buy five."

"You live in a high-rise apartment made entirely of glass and steel," Ilya pointed out. "If you put a rustic wooden bear in your living room, the building itself will reject it."

"You have zero joy in your heart," Svetlana informed him, stepping up to inspect a wooden bear holding a tiny axe. "Go find us something to eat. I require a waffle."

Ilya opened his mouth to argue, thought better of it, and turned toward the crowd.

The cold bit through his coat immediately.

Around him, the fair was loud and packed shoulder-to-shoulder with tourists, fairy lights, and college students taking selfies with a giant pumpkin.

Miserable.

He turned to complain about the complete absence of waffle stands, took two quick steps, and walked directly into someone.

Solid chest. Dark wool coat. Broad shoulders.

Ilya stumbled back, apology already forming-

then looked up.

Shane Hollander.

Of course.

Shane looked infuriatingly perfect.

Even outside the office, without the crisp suits and unbearable power ties, Shane still looked like he belonged in a catalog for rich men named William. Tailored navy overcoat. Dark hair pushed around by the wind in a way that somehow made him look better.

Irritating.

Vanguard Financial had hired them two years ago, and since then they had disagreed on nearly everything.

Shane was polished, diplomatic, adored by management.

Ilya was *better* at his job.

Shane blinked, steadying himself after the collision. Surprise crossed his face briefly before settling into visible irritation.

“You have got to be kidding me,” he said flatly.

“Believe me,” Ilya shot back, straightening his coat, “the feeling is mutual.”

“Is there a reason you are trying to tackle me in public,” Shane asked, crossing his arms, “or is being a menace to society just your weekend hobby?”

“I was walking,” Ilya said coldly. “Maybe if you were not blocking the entire path with your ego, this would not have happened.”

Hayden Pike appeared beside Shane holding two cups of hot chocolate. He looked at Ilya, then at Shane, and immediately started laughing.

“No way,” Hayden said. “Do you two have *tracking devices* on each other?”

“It feels like a curse,” Shane muttered.

He still was not looking directly at Ilya. Just one exhausted shake of his head before he grabbed Hayden’s elbow.

“Let’s go. The air just got incredibly toxic over here.”

“See you on Monday, Rozanov,” Hayden called cheerfully as Shane dragged him back into the crowd.

Ilya stared after them, jaw tight.

Unbelievable.

He marched back to Svetlana, having completely forgotten about the waffles.

“Do you know who is here,” Ilya demanded.

Svetlana set the wooden bear back on the table. “Let me guess. *The love of your life.*”

“Do not start with me,” Ilya warned. “Shane is here. He practically ran into me and somehow acted like it was my fault. The man is a menace.”

“You are obsessed with him.”

“I despise him.”

“You were probably staring at his mouth again,” Svetlana said casually, linking her arm through his.

“I have never stared at his mouth in my entire life,” Ilya lied smoothly.

“You absolutely do. You look at him like you either want to punch him or climb him like a tree. Frankly, the sexual tension is exhausting. The entire finance department is exhausted.”

“There is no tension,” Ilya said. “Only pure, unadulterated hatred.”

“Whatever you say, darling.”

Svetlana stopped abruptly, dragging him in front of a large velvet tent tucked between a fudge stand and a booth selling leather belts.

“Oh,” she said. “We are doing this.”

Ilya looked up at the sign.

Madam Rose Landry: Truths, Futures, and Clear Sight.

The air smelled aggressively of patchouli and melting wax.

“No,” Ilya said immediately. “Absolutely not.”

“Yes,” Svetlana insisted. “I need spiritual guidance. My portfolio has been underperforming all week.”

“Your portfolio is underperforming because the tech sector is collapsing,” Ilya said. “Not because your *chakras* are blocked.”

“It is twenty dollars.”

“It is fraud.”

“And if I get cursed,” Svetlana continued, dragging him toward the tent, “I want you to share the burden.”

Before Ilya could argue further, she disappeared through the velvet curtains.

Muttering something deeply offensive in Russian, Ilya followed.

The inside of the tent was exactly as ridiculous as he expected.

Red candles. Crystals. Silk-covered table. Heavy patchouli in the air.

Behind the table sat a woman shuffling tarot cards with the lazy confidence of a blackjack dealer.

She was beautiful, sharply dressed, covered in gold jewelry, and looked absolutely nothing like the ancient mystic Ilya had been hoping to mock.

Disappointing.

This had to be Rose Landry.

“Welcome,” Rose said. Her voice was husky and theatrical. She did not look up from the cards. “Sit. The spirits are very loud tonight.”

“The spirits are probably drunk on overpriced cider,” Ilya muttered, crossing his arms.

Rose stopped shuffling.

Slowly, she looked up at him.

The stare was not spooky. Just intensely focused, like she was cataloging every single one of his flaws alphabetically.

“Your aura,” Rose said smoothly, “is giving me a *migraine*.”

Svetlana burst out laughing as she dropped into one of the chairs. “I like her. Do me first.”

Rose spread the cards across the silk table.

“Pick three.”

Svetlana obeyed immediately.

Ilya leaned against one of the tent poles, fully prepared for vague nonsense and financial manipulation.

Rose flipped over the first card.

“You are carrying the weight of a man’s incompetence,” she said. “A man in a suit. Terrible haircut. Recently took credit for your presentation.”

Svetlana gasped. “Oh my god. Cliff from accounting.”

“He will spill coffee on himself next Tuesday,” Rose continued calmly.

She tapped the second card.

“You are considering buying a piece of art that looks like a geometric disaster. *Do not buy it.* It will clash with your rug.”

“How do you know about the rug?” Svetlana whispered.

“I know many things.”

Rose flipped the final card and smiled faintly.

“You will get the promotion in February. Stop worrying about the firm. They need you more than you need them.”

Svetlana looked ready to hand over her entire retirement fund.

Ilya rolled his eyes.

“Very impressive,” he said dryly. “Cold reading is a fascinating *psychological* trick. You noticed the corporate badge under her scarf, guessed she deals with incompetent men because everyone does, and clocked the modern art obsession from the asymmetrical coat.”

Rose slowly turned toward him.

She looked deeply annoyed.

“Sit down, skeptic,” Rose commanded.

“I am not paying twenty dollars for you to tell me I am going to have a long, prosperous life,” Ilya replied.

“I am not charging you,” Rose said. “I am doing this out of spite. *Sit.*”

Svetlana grabbed Ilya by the coat and yanked him down into the empty chair beside her.

“Do not be rude to the magical woman, Ilya. She knows about Cliff.”

Ilya sighed but sat anyway, resting his hands against the edge of the table.

“Fine,” he said dryly. “Tell me about my future.”

Rose did not ask him to pick cards.

Instead, she reached across the table and took his right hand. Her grip was surprisingly warm, heavy with rings. She closed her eyes for a moment, and when she opened them again, her stare locked directly onto his.

A cold prickle ran slowly down the back of Ilya’s neck.

“You are exhausted,” Rose said quietly. The theatrical edge in her voice had vanished completely. “You fight constantly. You pick arguments because it is easier to make people angry than it is to let them close.”

“A very generic assessment of defense mechanisms,” Ilya countered, though something in his chest tightened unpleasantly. “Try again.”

Rose narrowed her eyes.

“You refuse to see people clearly,” she said. “Someone keeps reaching for you, and you keep slapping their hand away because you think everyone is holding a knife.”

“This is getting dramatic,” Ilya said, pulling his hand back. “I assure you, no one is reaching out to me. And if they are, they probably need help fixing a spreadsheet.”

Rose leaned back in her chair, gold bracelets clinking softly against each other.

She still looked deeply unimpressed.

“You think you are clever,” Rose said flatly. “You think everyone is lying to you. You think the whole world is wearing a mask.”

“I think the whole world is trying to survive the corporate ladder,” Ilya corrected. “And yes, people lie. It is human nature. If you are telling fortunes, you should probably know that.”

Rose stared at him for a long moment.

The candle flames flickered higher.

Probably a draft.

“Fine,” Rose said at last. Her voice carried a strange ringing quality now, sharp enough to make Ilya’s teeth ache. “Since you think everyone lies, maybe it is time you heard what people are actually thinking.”

Ilya barked out a laugh.

“Are you *cursing* me?”

“I am giving you exactly what you asked for.”

Rose swept one hand over the tarot cards, gathering them neatly back into a stack.

“Now get out of my tent. You are ruining the vibes.”

“Come on,” Svetlana whispered, already pulling him to his feet. “Thank you, Madam Rose. Have a wonderful night.”

They stepped back out into the cold autumn air.

Ilya took one deep breath, trying to shake off the strange heaviness of the tent.

“Well,” he said, straightening his coat, “that was a complete waste of time.”

“She knew about Cliff,” Svetlana insisted. “And the rug. Ilya, that was weird.”

“She was an observant scam artist with excellent theatrics,” Ilya replied. “And she cursed me like a Disney villain. I am going home before a poisoned apple falls out of the sky.”

“You are no fun.”

“I have been told.”

He left Svetlana in line for waffles and headed toward the subway station alone.

The encounter with Shane had already ruined his mood. Rose Landry had somehow made it worse.

The cold bit through his scarf as he descended into the humid underground of the T station, surrounded by crowds heading toward bars, restaurants, or home.

The platform was packed.

The train arrived with a metallic screech.

Ilya stepped inside and grabbed the overhead railing near the center doors.

At the next stop, another wave of passengers shoved into the car, pressing everyone shoulder-to-shoulder.

The train lurched sharply forward.

Someone beside Ilya lost their balance and grabbed onto his arm.

Instantly, a voice exploded inside his head.

I really need to call my mother back.

Ilya froze.

He looked around wildly.

No one was speaking.

The man let go of his arm with a quick, distracted, “Sorry, man.”

Ilya just stared at him.

The silence in his head was suddenly deafening.

Slowly, he looked down at his own arm.

Then back at the stranger.

Cold spread heavily through his stomach as the scent of patchouli drifted faintly through the subway car.

Fuck.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

this chapter ended up a little shorter than usual BUT as compensation i added an extra chapter to the fic <3

Ilya Rozanov did not believe in magic.

He believed in logic, flawless spreadsheets, and balanced ledgers.

So when he woke up on Friday morning with the distinct memory of a stranger's voice echoing inside his skull, the explanation was obvious:

Stress-induced hallucination.

A perfectly rational response to stress, sleep deprivation, and several hours trapped inside a patchouli-scented velvet tent with a theatrical fortune teller.

Completely rational.

Mostly.

He clung to that explanation for exactly forty-five minutes.

The illusion shattered at his local coffee shop.

The barista, a perpetually exhausted college student named Harris, handed over Ilya's brew. For a fraction of a second, their fingers brushed against the cardboard sleeve.

God, my feet are killing me. I hope Sarah takes the afternoon shift so I can go die quietly in the stockroom.

The voice exploded directly inside Ilya's head.

Loud and unmistakably Harris.

Ilya jerked back so violently that coffee sloshed over the lid and burned his knuckles. Harris barely reacted, still wiping down the espresso machine with a damp rag.

"Have a good one," Harris said aloud, normal, like Ilya hadn't just heard every thought inside his head.

Then there was nothing. Just the hiss of the milk steamer.

Pulse hammering, Ilya grabbed the cup and walked straight out onto the sidewalk, stopping abruptly as pedestrians shoved past him in the morning rush.

He took one deep breath before a jogger clipped his shoulder while running past in expensive athletic gear.

I should have eaten a banana before this. My calves are literally staging a coup.

The thought vanished the second the contact broke.

The coffee slipped from Ilya's numb fingers and burst across the pavement, splattering dark liquid over his polished leather shoes. He barely noticed.

Back pressed against the freezing brick wall behind him, Ilya stared blankly at the crowd swarming the intersection.

It was real.

Rose Landry had actually cursed him.



The commute to Vanguard Financial became a nightmare.

The subway, usually just an uncomfortable exercise in avoiding eye contact and suppressing existential dread, turned into a psychological minefield instead. Every time the train lurched and someone brushed against his coat, another intrusive thought slammed into his head.

Did I leave the stove on.

I hate Fridays so much. If Kevin cc's me on one more email, I will commit arson.

That guy's jacket is really nice. I wonder if he has a boyfriend.

My stomach hurts.

By the time Ilya swiped his badge and stepped through the revolving glass doors of the office building, he felt physically ill. His shoulders were locked tight with tension, his arms pinned stiffly against his sides like a man trying to navigate a hallway made entirely of lasers.

Somehow, he managed to reach the elevator bank without touching anyone.

Then the doors opened.

Svetlana stood waiting inside in a sharp cream blazer, a tablet tucked beneath one arm and a violently green smoothie in the other.

"You look like you are about to vomit, or perhaps confess to a white-collar crime," she observed cheerfully as Ilya stepped in.

Before he could dodge her, she reached over and patted his arm.

I am absolutely buying that geometric art piece for the living room.

Ilya flinched, pressing his spine against the cold metal wall of the elevator.

“Do not touch me,” he snapped. “And do not buy the art piece, Svetlana. It is completely hideous.”

Svetlana froze, her perfectly manicured eyebrows pulling together. “How did you know I was thinking about the art piece?”

“I am highly observant,” Ilya lied smoothly, though his voice came out alarmingly high-pitched. “Also, there is a mutated strain of the flu going around. I am implementing a strict no-contact policy effective immediately.”

“You are acting clinically insane,” Svetlana informed him as the elevator dinged and the doors slid open to their floor. “And your shoes are covered in coffee. Pull yourself together, Rozanov. We have the Q3 portfolio review at four, and Shane is already in a terrible mood.”

Of course he was.

Which meant Ilya, currently cursed, exhausted, and one accidental shoulder bump away from a psychological breakdown, was doomed.

Keeping both hands buried deep in his coat pockets, he spent the rest of the morning navigating the consulting floor like a man attempting to defuse a bomb.

Absolutely no touching.

He dodged a high-five from one of the junior analysts, abandoned his coffee in the breakroom rather than risk brushing fingers with someone reaching for the oat milk, and nearly walked straight into a glass conference room wall while trying to avoid the compliance team rounding the corner.

By ten-thirty, his nerves felt scraped raw.

Which was probably why the familiar scent of bergamot and expensive laundry detergent hit him like a warning siren the moment it drifted into his space.

Ilya closed his eyes briefly.

Oh, for fuck's sake.

“Are you planning to stare at the printer all day,” Shane drawled from behind him, “or are you waiting for it to develop sentience and hand you the documents?”

Ilya went rigid before turning around slowly.

Shane was wearing a dark charcoal henley beneath a navy blazer, which honestly felt hostile in a professional environment, a tablet in one hand and a stylus in the other.

"I am waiting for the machine to finish," Ilya replied coolly. "Corporate infrastructure occasionally requires time to function despite your personal feelings about efficiency."

"Interesting theory," Shane said smoothly. "Unfortunately, your last fiscal analysis nearly caused three separate compliance violations. I don't think the universe is the problem here."

"My analysis is flawless."

Ilya stepped closer automatically.

Like he always did around Shane.

"Your budget parameters were entirely unrealistic," he argued, glaring up at him.

"They were approved three weeks ago," Shane countered, dark eyes narrowing slightly as he stepped into Ilya's space.

Then Shane reached over Ilya's shoulder for the freshly printed stack of papers at the exact same moment Ilya reached for them himself.

Their hands collided.

Fingers dragged across the back of Ilya's knuckles.

The low hum of the office, the whirl of the printer, the chatter from the breakroom- it all vanished instantly, replaced by deafening silence inside Ilya's mind.

Then, a voice.

Fuck.

I need his fingers inside me so bad.

Ilya froze.

Every muscle in his body locked at once as he stared at Shane in catastrophic disbelief.

Shane pulled his hand back immediately, clearing his throat and clutching the papers against his side.

Outwardly, he looked completely composed.

"You can have these back when you admit the error was yours," Shane said calmly, arching one perfect eyebrow.

Ilya could not speak.

He was too busy staring at Shane's mouth, then his eyes, then, disastrously, his mouth again.

“Rozanov,” Shane said slowly, his frown deepening slightly. “Are you malfunctioning?”

“Give me the papers,” Ilya finally managed, his voice sounding noticeably strangled.

Shane raised an eyebrow, clearly registering the bizarre behavior before apparently deciding it was just another one of Ilya’s dramatic episodes.

“Fix the allocation formatting first,” he said smoothly, stepping back and reestablishing the physical distance between them. “I will be at my desk.”

Then he turned and walked away with the same infuriating composure he carried into every meeting.

Ilya stayed frozen beside the printer long after Shane disappeared around the corner.

I need his fingers inside me so bad.

It made absolutely no sense.

Pressing the heels of his hands against his eyes, Ilya inhaled slowly, trying to force his spiraling thoughts back into something rational.

Maybe the curse was malfunctioning, or maybe exhaustion was dragging some deeply buried, profoundly inconvenient attraction out of his own subconscious and projecting it onto Shane instead.

That had to be it. There was simply no other explanation.

He needed to test it.

For science, for logic, and for the sake of his own rapidly deteriorating sanity.



Ten minutes later, Ilya crossed the office floor toward Shane’s desk.

Shane sat between two massive monitors filled with quarterly projections, absently chewing on the end of a black pen while reviewing something on-screen.

Ilya leaned his hip against the glass partition of the cubicle.

“I reviewed the models,” he lied smoothly. “The issue is entirely on your end. Your parameters are skewing the margins.”

Shane sighed at once, dropping the pen onto his desk before pinching the bridge of his nose.

“Ilya,” he said with long-suffering patience, “I do not currently possess the emotional stability required for your nonsense. Look at the audit reports.”

Then he grabbed the printed documents they had fought over earlier and held them out.

Ilya stepped closer and reached forward slowly.

Instead of taking the papers normally, he deliberately let his hand slide over Shane's, fingers curling loosely around his wrist.

Shane went still.

He didn't pull away, but his grip tightened slightly against the edge of the papers.

The thought hit Ilya hard enough to make his pulse stutter.

I want to drag him into an empty conference room and let him do whatever he wants to me.

Heat rushed down Ilya's spine as he looked up instinctively toward Shane's face, expecting panic, embarrassment, literally any visible sign of distress.

Nothing changed.

Shane still looked perfectly composed.

"Are you going to take the file," Shane asked aloud, voice perfectly controlled, "or are you just planning to hold my wrist indefinitely."

Ilya swallowed hard.

Slowly, deliberately, he pulled the documents free from Shane's grip, letting his fingertips drag across Shane's palm in the process.

Shane inhaled sharply through his nose, jaw tightening almost imperceptibly.

If he keeps touching me like this, I'm going to end up in his lap.

Ilya stared at Shane in complete disbelief.

"I have it," Ilya managed, voice rough around the edges.

Shane cleared his throat and looked back toward his monitors with visible effort.

"Good," he said smoothly, picking up his pen again. "Have the revisions on my desk by three."

Ilya walked back to his workstation in a daze.

Shane wanted him.

The realization settled beneath his skin like a live wire. His gaze drifted instinctively toward Shane's desk again.

Ilya needed to touch him again.

Chapter 3

Ilya spent the entire weekend experiencing what he could only classify as severe, humiliating psychological withdrawal.

He told himself he just wanted the curse gone.

That was the logical explanation for why he was pacing the hardwood floors of his apartment at two in the morning on a Saturday.

He needed to find Rose Landry.

He needed her to reverse whatever bizarre theatrical hex she had dumped into his life so he could go back to being miserable in peace.

But every time Ilya closed his eyes, all he saw was Shane Hollander looking at him across the printer room with blown pupils and parted lips.

It was deeply *humiliating*.

On Saturday morning, fueled by four shots of espresso and pure desperation, Ilya took the subway back to the downtown plaza where the autumn street fair had been.

He fully intended to march into Rose Landry's ridiculous velvet tent, endure whatever theatrical commentary she had prepared, and pay whatever absurd amount of money she demanded to reverse the curse.

Instead, he found an empty concrete plaza.

The fair was gone. So were the decorative gourds, the overpriced cider press, and most importantly, the tent.

A street sweeper rolled slowly past, brushing away crushed leaves and roasted nut wrappers.

Ilya stood in the middle of the square staring at the exact spot where the tent had been, irritation curling hot beneath his ribs.

He pulled out his phone and searched for Rose Landry everywhere he could think of. Business registries. Spiritual forums. Obscure social media tags.

Nothing.

She had detonated a nuclear device in the center of his consciousness and disappeared into the Boston mist.

By Sunday afternoon, Ilya's irritation had curdled into something far more chaotic.

He met Svetlana for brunch at a horribly overpriced bistro in the South End after spending the entire train ride aggressively avoiding physical contact with other passengers.

When he arrived, he looked like a feral cat one inconvenience away from violence.

“You look absolutely deranged,” Svetlana observed cheerfully as she poured him a mimosa. She was wearing a silk blouse and oversized vintage sunglasses, completely unbothered by the autumn cold. “Have you slept at all? You look like you fought in a war.”

“I am perfectly fine,” Ilya lied, clutching his mimosa like a life-support system. “I am stressed about the Q3 audits. And inflation. The global economy is collapsing.”

“You do not care about the global economy,” Svetlana said, unimpressed. “You care about financial modeling and complaining about the office temperature. What is actually wrong?”

Ilya stared at her.

He could not tell her he was cursed.

Svetlana would immediately drag him to a crystal healer in *Salem* or try to use him for insider trading.

“It is Shane,” Ilya blurted out.

Svetlana slowly lowered her fork.

A terrifying smile spread across her face.

“I knew it,” she whispered. “I literally told you on Friday the sexual tension was destroying the department.”

“There is no tension,” Ilya hissed, leaning across the tiny marble table. “There is only deceit. He walks around the office looking like a Tom Ford campaign and internally he is completely unwell.”

Svetlana gasped.

“Oh my god. Did he finally send you a deranged *Slack* message?”

“He did not say anything,” Ilya muttered, dragging a hand down his face. “It is just a deeply unfortunate realization.”

Svetlana took a long sip of her mimosa. “This is the best day of my life.”

“I am serious.”

“So am I,” she replied immediately. “You are obsessed with him, he is secretly insane, and eventually one of you is going to snap and climb the other like a tree in the middle of a board meeting.”

“I am not sleeping with Shane Hollander.”

“*Mm.*”

“I am going to maintain a strict professional distance.”

Svetlana laughed, loud enough to make several people at the neighboring tables glance over.

“Good luck with that, darling. I give you until Tuesday before you are climbing him like a tree.”

Ilya scowled down at his plate.

He gave himself until *Wednesday*.



He lasted exactly twelve minutes on Monday morning.

Ilya walked into Vanguard Financial determined to keep his distance.

No touching, no lingering around Shane’s desk, no inventing pointless arguments just to hear him talk.

A simple, achievable plan.

Then Shane appeared beside his desk.

“Rozanov.”

Ilya looked up and immediately understood that the universe was a cruel place.

Shane was wearing a dark olive-green sweater over a crisp white button-down, the sleeves pushed up to reveal his forearms. Completely unreasonable. Worse, he was holding coffee.

“The audit team needs your authorization on the Q3 fiscal projections before they finalize the report,” Shane said, extending a manila folder toward him.

Ilya’s self-control died instantly.

He reached for the folder and deliberately let his fingers slide across the back of Shane’s hand.

The office noise vanished.

I want to kiss him until he forgets how to speak in complete sentences.

Ilya inhaled sharply, his lungs seizing.

The sheer, filthy desperation of the thought hit him like a physical blow to the chest. He yanked the folder away, breaking the contact, his heart hammering wildly against his ribs.

Shane cleared his throat, eyes flicking briefly to their hands before looking back at Ilya with a faint flush high on his cheekbones.

“Sign it and bring it to my office,” Shane said, his voice slightly tighter than usual.

He turned and walked away.

Ilya sat frozen in his chair, clutching the cardboard folder so tightly his knuckles turned white.

He was doomed.

Entirely, *hopelessly* doomed.

The rest of the week descended into something deeply unsustainable.

Ilya kept finding increasingly ridiculous excuses to get into Shane’s space.

Somewhere between budget meetings and compliance reviews, their rivalry stopped feeling verbal and became something far more dangerous.

On Tuesday, during a team stand-up meeting, Ilya stepped up beside Shane to look at the whiteboard. There was plenty of room, but Ilya let their shoulders brush anyway, his arm pressed firmly against Shane’s bicep.

He smells like rain and mint. I want to bite the side of his neck just to see what sound he makes.

Ilya lost his train of thought mid-sentence while explaining a stochastic volatility model.

Shane shot him a sharp look, but didn’t move away.

On Wednesday, they sat beside each other during a cross-departmental review.

Halfway through a PowerPoint slide about European market acquisition, Ilya shifted under the table until his knee pressed against Shane’s thigh.

Shane went perfectly still.

He stared straight ahead at the screen, tapping his pen against his notebook with precise, rhythmic control.

If he drags his knee any higher, I am going to drag him under this fucking table.

Heat rolled through Ilya so fast it made him dizzy.

He kept his knee exactly where it was for the next forty-five minutes while Shane calmly discussed risk mitigation strategies like he wasn’t internally disintegrating beside him.

By Thursday, the strain was obvious.

Shane snapped at junior analysts, paced during meetings, and tracked Ilya across every room without meaning to.

And Ilya kept making it worse.

A hand brushing Shane's wrist over coffee. Fingers against his back in narrow hallways. Standing too close beside conference tables.

Shane had to notice.

But he never stepped away.



Friday afternoon pushed the entire fourth floor of Vanguard Financial to the edge of collapse.

The final quarterly audit was due Monday morning. Everyone was exhausted, overcaffeinated, and quietly homicidal.

Ilya escaped to the printer room near the end of the hall to collect compliance documents. His eyes burned from staring at spreadsheets all day, and his shoulders ached with exhaustion.

He just wanted to go home, collapse face-first onto his rug, and stop thinking about Shane Hollander for at least six consecutive minutes.

The printer hummed steadily behind him when the door suddenly swung open.

Ilya turned instinctively as Shane stepped inside and let the door shut behind him with a heavy click.

He looked *wrecked*, shirt half-unbuttoned, tie hanging loose around his throat, dark hair visibly disheveled like he'd been dragging frustrated hands through it for hours.

"Is there a problem, Hollander?" Ilya asked, leaning back against the edge of the printer.

Shane stared at him for a long moment before speaking.

"What exactly is wrong with you lately?"

"I have absolutely no idea what you are talking about," Ilya replied, crossing his arms tightly over his chest.

"Do not play dumb with me, Rozanov." Shane's voice dropped lower, roughened by frustration as he stepped closer. "You have been acting insane all week."

"There is a very long list of people at Vanguard who would disagree with that statement."

"You know exactly what I mean."

Another step.

“You keep touching me,” Shane said quietly. “You keep finding excuses to get in my space. You stare at me during meetings like you’re trying to crack me open.”

Ilya’s breath caught.

That was, *unfortunately*, almost exactly what he had been doing.

“Maybe I am just trying to stop you from destroying my fiscal models with your terrible portfolio requests.”

“Your models are a nightmare,” Shane shot back instantly.

He closed the remaining distance without seeming to realize it, stopping close enough for Ilya to feel the heat radiating off him and see the exhaustion shadowing his eyes.

“And you are doing this on purpose,” Shane continued, his voice tight. “You have been pushing every boundary imaginable for days.”

“I am not playing games,” Ilya said softly.

“You are a liar.”

Then Shane finally snapped, shoving two fingers hard against the center of Ilya’s chest.

The contact was sharp enough to knock the breath from his lungs.

He gets prettier every time he looks at me like this.

The thought slammed into Ilya so fast and hard that something inside him immediately gave out.

Before he could think better of it, he grabbed Shane’s loosened tie in both hands and yanked him forward.

Shane made a startled sound as Ilya yanked him forward, both of them colliding hard enough against the printer to make the plastic casing rattle.

Ilya’s fists stayed twisted tightly in Shane’s loosened tie, knuckles pressed against the warm skin of Shane’s throat.

Yes. Finally, finally.

The thought crashed into Ilya’s head at the exact moment Shane kissed him back.

His hands tightened on Ilya’s waist hard enough to crease the fabric of his shirt as he pushed closer, mouth opening against Ilya’s with frantic, desperate intensity.

Ilya gasped softly into the kiss, overwhelmed by everything at once. Shane’s heartbeat hammering beneath his hands. The rough scrape of stubble against his skin. Bergamot, coffee, printer ink.

And underneath all of it, Shane.

He tastes so good.

Ilya made a wrecked sound low in his throat and slid both hands into Shane's hair instead, pulling him closer like he physically could not get enough. Shane groaned against his mouth, deep and rough, the sound vibrating straight through Ilya's chest before pressing a thigh firmly between his legs.

I need more, more, more, more.

Shane's thoughts were louder. *Sloppier*. Every ounce of polished restraint stripped away by the kiss.

He dragged his mouth down Ilya's jaw for half a second before kissing him again harder, like he was trying to consume him whole.

And Ilya let him.

"Hey Shane, I just needed to grab the—"

The printer room door swung open.

The rest of the sentence died instantly.

Ilya and Shane tore apart like they'd both been electrocuted.

Ilya's chest heaved for air. His lips felt swollen, his hair completely wrecked from Shane's hands.

Shane looked *worse*.

His tie hung crooked around his throat, dark hair disheveled beyond repair, face flushed a violent shade of red as he turned sharply toward the doorway.

Luca stood frozen just inside the room.

The twenty-one-year-old risk management intern was holding a stack of empty manila folders against his chest. His eyes moved slowly from Shane's ruined appearance to Ilya still half-pinned against the printer.

Luca blinked once.

Then twice.

Very carefully, he took a single step backward into the hallway.

"I am going to pretend," Luca whispered faintly, "that I am literally *blind*."

Neither of them spoke.

Luca nodded to himself like that settled the matter completely, reached for the handle, and quietly pulled the door shut again.

The click echoed through the room.

Shane stayed perfectly still for a long moment, staring at the closed door like he might actually die from humiliation on the spot.

Then he inhaled sharply and dragged a hand through his already destroyed hair, making it worse.

Ilya leaned back against the printer, heart pounding so hard it physically hurt. He lifted a hand and dragged the inside of his wrist across his mouth.

The connection was gone.

Shane finally turned to look at him.

Every trace of irritation had vanished from his face, replaced entirely by naked, unfiltered panic.

“Rozanov,” Shane said, his voice cracking on the last syllable.

For the first time in his life, Ilya Rozanov had absolutely no idea what to say.

Chapter 4

Neither of them moved.

The printer hummed quietly behind them, still spitting out compliance reports like the last ten minutes had not fundamentally altered the structure of reality.

Somewhere out in the hallway, someone laughed.

Shane looked away first.

He grabbed his briefcase off the floor with sharp, abrupt movements and headed straight for the door, already fixing his tie like he could force the situation back under control through sheer discipline alone.

Ilya stayed in the printer room long after Shane disappeared into the hallway, staring down at the scattered compliance reports near the printer.

By the time he finally left Vanguard Financial hours later, the city outside had gone fully dark.

The elevator ride down to the lobby was excruciating.

Shane stood rigidly beside him, tie still slightly crooked, staring fixedly at the glowing floor numbers while Ilya kept his attention locked on the opposite wall.

Neither of them spoke.

The second the doors opened, Shane walked straight out of the building without another word.

Which, honestly, was fair.

Luca had witnessed enough workplace misconduct to fuel HR seminars for the next decade.

By the time Ilya made it back to his apartment, the adrenaline had started wearing off, leaving behind a much more dangerous problem:

Monday.

Because eventually they were going to have to see each other again.

There was no dramatic escape route available here.

Shane still worked at Vanguard Financial. Ilya still worked at Vanguard Financial.

The quarterly audit was still due in forty-eight hours, and neither of them had died in the printer room despite several compelling arguments in favor of it.

Ilya dropped his keys onto the kitchen counter and stared blankly at his dark apartment.

Then, very carefully, he touched two fingers to his own mouth.

Immediately, the memory hit him all over again.

Yes. Finally, finally.

Ilya closed his eyes hard enough to hurt.

“Damn.”

The problem was that Shane Hollander had kissed him back like a man who had spent years trying not to.

Not impulsive.

Desperate.

The thoughts flooding through the connection hadn't sounded temporary.

Ilya paced halfway to the kitchen before turning around again with a frustrated groan.

Maybe the curse had amplified everything. Maybe hearing Shane's thoughts for a week had completely destroyed his sense of reality.

Unfortunately, none of those explanations changed the fact that Ilya wanted to kiss him again so badly it physically hurt.

He stopped pacing long enough to grab his phone off the kitchen counter, nearly knocking over a stack of half-finished financial reports in the process.

If he stayed alone with his own thoughts for another hour, he was going to start clawing through drywall.

So he opened his messages.

i need to tell you something insane

Svetlana replied almost instantly.

Meet me at the park on 4th in ten minutes

why the park? it is almost midnight

Bc emotional breakdowns are scientifically proven to be better under moonlight.

Bring a jacket

And maybe a flask



The neighborhood park was completely deserted, lit only by the harsh yellow glow of the streetlamps and the pale moonlight cutting through the bare autumn trees.

The cold was vicious, the kind that slipped straight through wool and settled deep in your bones.

Svetlana was sitting on one of the children's swings when Ilya arrived, lazily pushing herself back and forth with the toe of a designer boot.

She was wearing an enormous faux-fur coat over what looked suspiciously like silk pajamas.

"You look like a Russian mobster's widow who just collected life insurance," Ilya said as he approached, shoving his hands deeper into his pockets.

"And you look like a graduate student one email away from academic probation," Svetlana replied smoothly. She patted the empty swing beside her. "Sit. Tell me everything. Did Cliff finally break your spirit?"

Ilya dropped heavily onto the swing beside her. The rusted chains creaked in protest.

"It is not Cliff."

"Ah." Svetlana's expression immediately brightened with malicious delight. "*A Shane issue.*"

Ilya stared straight ahead at the empty sandbox.

"He wore a vest today, didn't he?" she continued. "One of the awful expensive ones that make you irrationally angry. Or he insulted your stochastic models in front of the board again. Or he breathed near you in a psychologically destabilizing way."

Ilya tightened his grip on the cold metal chains. "*I kissed Shane Hollander.*"

Svetlana stopped moving so abruptly her boot dragged hard through the woodchips beneath the swing.

"...You what."

"Today," Ilya said flatly. "In the printer room."

For a second, Svetlana just stared at him.

Then she nearly fell backward off the swing.

"*I knew it!*" she screamed, shooting to her feet so violently the swing chains rattled behind her. "I literally called this. Tuesday! I said Tuesday! Fine, I was off by a few days, but the trajectory was correct."

"Svetlana--"

“You kissed Shane Hollander,” she continued, pacing in frantic circles through the woodchips in her massive coat. “Oh my god. *Oh my god*, the sexual tension finally collapsed into a black hole. I need details immediately. Was it aggressive? Did he grab your face? Did you ruin his stupid hair?”

“This is not the important part,” Ilya groaned, dropping his head into his hands.

Svetlana stopped pacing long enough to stare at him in disbelief. “You made out with Shane Hollander in the Vanguard printer room during audit week and somehow that is not the important part?”

“Svet.”

“No, absolutely not. You have spent two years pretending to hate this man because he uses serif fonts and vests.”

“I do hate the vests.”

“You are obsessed with the vests.”

Ilya let out a low, miserable sound into his hands.

Svetlana narrowed her eyes at him, the excitement slowly giving way to suspicion. “...Why do you look like someone just informed you of your own impending execution?”

Ilya finally looked up.

“Because I need you to listen to me very carefully,” he said, voice tightening slightly. “And because there is a very real possibility I am losing my mind.”

Svetlana finally stopped smiling.

She lowered herself back onto the swing, pulling her coat tighter around her shoulders as she studied his face more carefully.

“Okay,” she said slowly. “You are starting to scare me a little.”

Ilya dragged a freezing breath into his lungs and told her everything.

The coffee shop, Harris internally complaining about his feet, the jogger at the subway station, the horrifying realization that the curse was real and triggered by physical contact.

Svetlana went completely still.

So Ilya kept talking.

Monday morning at the printer. Shane’s hand. The first thought crashing into his brain.

Then the rest of the week.

The shoulders in meetings, the knee under the conference table, the coffee cups, the hallways.

By the time Ilya reached the printer room incident, he was pacing in front of the swings, one hand dragging frustratedly through his hair while the other gestured sharply through the freezing air.

“And then I kissed him,” he finished miserably. “And because my hands were on his throat, the connection got stronger, and suddenly it was just- everything at once.”

He stopped pacing long enough to press both hands against his face. “It was *unbearable*.”

Svetlana stared at him for several long seconds, visibly trying to process the sheer scale of what he had just confessed.

“...Wait,” she said finally, blinking hard behind her glasses. “You can literally hear people’s thoughts?”

“Yes,” Ilya muttered.

“When you touch them.”

“Yes.”

“And Shane has been thinking those things this entire time?”

Ilya looked away toward the empty sandbox. “...Yes.”

Svetlana leaned back slowly against the swing chains, looking genuinely overwhelmed for the first time all night. “Oh my god.”

“I know.”

“No, I genuinely need you to understand how insane this is,” she said. “Shane Hollander is *obsessed* with you.”

“That is not the point,” Ilya groaned, throwing his hands up in frustration.

“*‘He gets prettier every time he looks at me like this’? ‘I need more’?* Those are not normal thoughts, Ilya,” Svetlana said, throwing her hands up. “He is not casually attracted to you.”

Ilya made a deeply miserable sound.

“I am serious,” she continued, leaning forward on the swing. “You spent two years thinking Shane Hollander hated you, meanwhile he’s apparently been repressing feelings so aggressively they turned into a psychological health hazard.”

A cold knot settled heavily in Ilya’s stomach.

Hearing it said out loud made it impossible to ignore.

“It does not matter,” Ilya said quietly, staring down at the woodchips beneath his boots. “Because I ruined it.”

Svetlana's expression shifted immediately, amusement fading into something more careful. "Does Shane know about the curse?"

"No."

"So from his perspective," she said slowly, "you spent a week intentionally messing with him, then dragged him into a printer room and kissed him while secretly hearing everything he was thinking."

Ilya closed his eyes. "...When you say it like that, it sounds significantly worse."

"It sounds insane," Svetlana corrected.

"I know."

"No, Ilya, I need you to understand that this is clinically unwell behavior."

"I know," Ilya exploded. He started pacing again, dragging both hands through his hair. "It started as curiosity, okay? I just wanted to know if the things he was thinking were real. And then it kept getting worse, because every time I touched him it was another completely catastrophic thought, and then he kissed me back and--"

He broke off sharply, pressing both hands against his face.

"It did not feel casual, Svet," he admitted quietly through his fingers. "That is the problem."

Svetlana watched him pace for a long moment, chewing thoughtfully on her lower lip.

"Okay," she said finally. "First of all, you are not a sociopath. You just have catastrophic coping mechanisms."

"That is not comforting."

"Second," she continued, ignoring him, "the curse is not your fault. Your decisions afterward were questionable at best, but the actual supernatural mind-reading situation is not technically on you."

Ilya groaned.

"But," Svetlana added, pointing a finger at him, "you are going to have to talk to him."

"How am I supposed to do that?"

"I do not know," she admitted. "But if you keep avoiding this, the entire fourth floor of Vanguard Financial is eventually going to collapse under the weight of whatever bizarre emotional psychosis is happening between you two, and frankly, I would like to keep receiving my bonus."

Ilya groaned, dragging both hands down his face. "Wonderful. Fantastic. I am going to die."

“You are not going to die,” Svetlana said. Then she paused. “Actually, no, wait. You absolutely are if your solution is to keep aggressively making out with him instead of having one normal conversation.”

Ilya looked deeply offended. “I can have normal conversations.”

“You kissed him in a printer room during audit season because he touched your chest.”

“That is not relevant.”

“That is the only relevant thing here,” Svetlana shot back. “You two need to use your words like emotionally stable adults.”

Ilya muttered something deeply insulting in Russian under his breath.

Svetlana ignored him completely as she stood from the swing, smoothing down her enormous coat. “Now come on.”

“Where are we going?”

“I need you to touch something.”

Ilya stared at her in horror.

“No,” he said flatly. “You are not going to start using me for experiments.”

“I just want to know if pigeons have thoughts!”



Shane spent the rest of the night pretending he was still capable of rational thought.

It became significantly harder after the third time he caught himself touching his own mouth like a complete *fucking* idiot.

Shane’s brain refused to shut up.

Every time he tried focusing on something else, it dragged him right back to the printer room.

Ilya’s hands in his tie.

The sound he made when Shane pushed closer.

He exhaled sharply through his nose and dropped onto the edge of his slate-gray couch, resting his elbows on his knees.

This was exactly why he had spent two years pretending the attraction did not exist.

Because once it started, apparently, it became fundamentally *impossible* to stop.

Shane leaned back against the couch cushions and reached for his phone before he could stop himself. He opened his messages and stared at Ilya's name for a long moment.

~~Ilya, regarding what happened tonight~~

~~Rozanov. We need to discuss professional boundaries moving forward.~~

Shane let out a short, exhausted laugh.

~~Why did you do that?~~

His thumb hovered uselessly over the screen before he deleted it.

Because the answer was obvious now, wasn't it? Nobody kissed someone like that by accident.

Shane dropped the phone beside him and tipped his head back against the couch, closing his eyes for half a second.

The violent sound of his front door slamming open shattered the quiet.

"Shane!" a voice called from the hallway.

Shane closed his eyes.

"*Rose Hollander Landry*," he said flatly, not even bothering to sit up. "We have discussed the concept of a doorbell."

Rose swept into the apartment anyway, trailing cold air and the faint scent of lavender candles. Her short hair was a complete mess beneath the hood of an oversized faux-fur coat.

She dumped an enormous leather tote bag onto his armchair before kicking off her boots near the door.

"Doorbells are for strangers," she declared. "Not your beloved older sister. Move."

She shoved his legs aside without waiting for permission and collapsed onto the other end of the couch.

Shane cracked one eye open to glare at her. "It is Friday night. Don't you have somewhere else to haunt?"

"My aura needed a less spiritually aggressive environment," Rose replied easily, glancing around the apartment. "This place feels like a luxury tax write-off. It is soothing."

"Glad my home doubles as your sensory deprivation tank," Shane muttered. "How were the tarot readings?"

"Exhausting," Rose groaned dramatically, throwing an arm over her eyes. "One girl asked if she should leave her boyfriend and immediately pulled *The Tower* and the *Ten of Swords*. I

basically had to tell her to start apartment hunting. Then some finance guy asked about crypto and the cards practically begged me to tell him to get a dog instead.”

Shane let out a quiet breath that was dangerously close to a laugh.

Rose tilted her head toward him suddenly. “Actually, speaking of finance guys.”

Shane immediately narrowed his eyes.

“You remember that guy from the autumn street fair last week?” she asked. “Tall. Blonde hair. Looked deeply offended by my entire profession.”

Shane frowned faintly. “That description applies to half the men in Boston.”

“The one who sat in my tent acting like I personally insulted the concept of capitalism,” Rose clarified. “He kept arguing with me about masks and authenticity and corporate survival instincts or whatever deeply repressed thing he was projecting at me.”

Something uncomfortable twisted low in Shane’s stomach.

Because unfortunately, that sounded exactly like Ilya Rozanov.

“Well, I cursed him,” Rose continued matter-of-factly.

Shane paused. He looked over at her. “You... *cursed* him. A literal curse. Or did you just overcharge him for a piece of rose quartz?”

“A real one,” Rose said proudly, an immensely satisfied smile spreading across her face. “Just a little cosmic retribution. I’d give anything to be a little mosquito on his wall right now. I bet he hasn’t known a moment of peace in days.”

Shane stared at her for a moment before letting out a tired sigh.

“Please do not tell me you’re actively practicing witchcraft on the citizens of Boston,” he muttered, rubbing a hand over his face. “You are eventually going to get arrested by the government.”

“Oh, relax,” Rose said breezily. “*It builds character.*”

“You cursed a stranger because he annoyed you.”

“He was rude.”

“That is still not legally defensible.”

Rose looked entirely unapologetic. “Well, he’s definitely miserable now. I told him if he was so obsessed with people hiding behind masks, then he could hear what people actually think every time he touched them.”

Shane stared at her.

Rose smiled, visibly pleased with herself. “Very psychological. Very emotionally educational. Honestly, one of my stronger curses.”

“You need professional supervision,” Shane informed her flatly.

“And yet you still love me.”

Unfortunately, that was true.

Rose’s expression shifted slightly as she looked at him more carefully. “Speaking of emotional instability,” she said slowly, “why do you look like someone just ruined your life?”

“I look fine.”

“You look haunted.”

Shane leaned his head back against the couch cushions with another exhausted exhale. “I am tired. The audits are next week.”

“Mhm.” Rose narrowed her eyes. “No. This is different. You have that look.”

“What look.”

“The *‘I made one impulsive decision and now my entire internal structure is collapsing’* look.”

Shane immediately stood up.

Rose pointed at him from the couch, looking delighted. “Oh my god. There is a person.”

“There is not a person.”

“There is absolutely a person.”

Shane was already walking toward the hallway. “I am going to shower. There is Thai food in the fridge. Do not burn incense in my apartment.”

Behind him, Rose gasped dramatically. “Shane Hollander, if this is finally about a man, I deserve details.”

He kept walking anyway, which was apparently answer enough, because Rose let out a horrified scream from the living room.

Shane stepped into the shower and turned the water as hot as he could stand it.

It didn’t help.

Every time he closed his eyes, he was back in the printer room.

Shane braced his forearms against the tile and stayed there until the water started running cold.

Later, lying awake in the dark, he caught himself touching his lower lip absently with his thumb.

He fell asleep still thinking about Ilya Rozanov.

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

happy early birthday to my love, Sasha 
love you, babe

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

Monday morning arrived already tense.

Nobody on the fourth floor of Vanguard Financial knew exactly what, but the atmosphere was radioactive enough that people were already updating their LinkedIn profiles before noon.

Luca Haas looked actively traumatized. Every time Ilya passed his cubicle, Luca stared at his blank monitor and typed furiously on a keyboard that wasn't even plugged in.

The junior analysts whispered whenever Shane and Ilya entered the same room, and Svetlana watched everything unfold over the rim of her green smoothie like she had personally paid for front-row seats to the drama.

But the real problem was that Shane was avoiding him so thoroughly it felt almost surgical.

There were no sarcastic comments about Ilya arriving late, no arguments over the Q3 projections, no quiet hovering near his desk smelling like bergamot and expensive dry cleaning.

During the morning briefing, Shane sat at the opposite end of the conference table and didn't look at him once.

Even when Ilya deliberately pointed out a flaw in his asset allocation strategy.

“Noted, Rozanov. Adjust the parameters and send me the revision by EOD.”

Shane just moved to the next slide like Ilya wasn't even there.

And sitting back down, gripping his presentation clicker hard enough for the plastic to creak, Ilya realized with sudden, awful clarity that somewhere along the way this had stopped being about winning arguments.

He had just gotten used to Shane looking at him.



By five-thirty, the office finally started emptying out.

Svetlana glanced once toward Shane's office, then toward Ilya, clearly decided something about both of them, and sent him a text before leaving.

Fix it or I am poisoning your coffee tomorrow.

Ilya stared at the message for a second before locking his phone and pretending to work until he heard Shane's office door open.

A minute later, Shane walked past the cubicles with his overcoat over one arm and his briefcase in hand.

Ilya followed him into the elevator lobby.

Shane was already standing in front of the brushed steel doors, staring at the glowing floor indicator in the otherwise empty hallway.

"Shane."

He stiffened but didn't turn around. "If this is about the audits, it can wait until tomorrow morning."

"It's not about the audits."

That finally made Shane turn around.

Up close, Shane looked wrecked in a way he almost never allowed anyone to see. His tie was loose, dark hair slightly messy, composure hanging on by a thread.

"Then what is it about?" he asked quietly.

"You avoided me all day."

Shane let out a short laugh that didn't sound remotely amused.

"Yes," he said, shifting his briefcase higher against his side. "I thought that was the most professional response after we made out in the printer room on Friday afternoon."

"We kissed," Ilya corrected quietly.

Shane looked at him for a long second. "Yeah," he said softly. "We did."

Then his expression hardened again.

"And I spent the entire weekend trying to figure out whether that actually meant something to you."

Ilya froze.

"Shane--"

“No.” Shane dropped his briefcase onto the carpet between them and stepped closer. Not touching him, just close enough that Ilya could feel the heat coming off him. “What exactly do you want from me, Ilya?”

His voice cracked slightly on the last word, and suddenly Ilya’s mind went completely blank.

“I don’t know,” he admitted quietly. “I don’t know what’s happening to me.”

Shane immediately took a step back, every trace of vulnerability sealing shut behind something colder.

“Was this some kind of game to you?”

“No.”

“Then what was it?” Shane snapped. “Because you started touching me out of nowhere. Standing too close. Looking at me like you were trying to get inside my head.”

Ilya almost laughed at the irony.

“I can explain-”

Shane shook his head. “I couldn’t even walk past the printer room today.”

“It was real,” Ilya said immediately.

Shane let out a tired laugh. “Yeah? Because you spent the entire week looking at me like you could hear every terrible decision I was making in real time.”

The words settled heavily between them.

Ilya should have lied.

Instead, he heard himself say, “*Because I did.*”

Shane frowned. “What?”

“I heard you,” Ilya admitted. “Every time I touched you.”

For a second, Shane just stared at him, waiting for the joke.

When it never came, something wary crept into his expression.

“Ilya,” he said slowly, “if you’re having some kind of breakdown, now would be a great time to mention it.”

Ilya dragged a hand through his hair. “Remember that day we ran into each other at the street fair?” He exhaled sharply. “Svetlana dragged me into a fortune teller’s booth, I insulted the woman running it, and she cursed me.”

Shane blinked.

“You’re telling me a fortune teller gave you telepathy.”

“Only when I touch people.”

A short, disbelieving laugh escaped Shane before he could stop it.

“The staring. The touching,” Ilya continued quickly. “Every weird thing this week had a reason. Monday morning by the printer, our hands touched and I heard you.”

Shane opened his mouth to argue, then stopped.

Ilya watched the realization piece itself together in real time.

“...Wait.” His eyes narrowed slightly. “The fortune teller.”

Ilya frowned. “What about her?”

“The woman who cursed you.” Shane was staring at him now with growing horror. “Red hair? Too many rings? Smelled like an occult store exploded?”

Ilya blinked. “Yes.”

Shane closed his eyes immediately.

“Oh, for fuck’s sake.”

“What?”

Shane dragged a hand down his face. “Please tell me her name wasn’t Rose.”

Ilya’s stomach dropped. “...Rose Landry.”

Shane let his forehead hit the elevator doors with a quiet thunk.

“You have got to be fucking kidding me.”

A spike of panic shot through Ilya. “Do you know her?”

Shane turned around slowly, looking completely dead inside.

“Ilya,” he said tiredly, “Rose Landry is my sister.”

Ilya stared at him.

“You have a sister?”

“Half-sister,” Shane corrected automatically. “Same father. Different mothers.”

Ilya blinked hard, still trying to process the fact that the terrifying occult woman who cursed him apparently shared DNA with Shane Hollander.

Shane dragged both hands down his face before looking back at him again.

“She came over to my apartment on Friday night and spent twenty minutes laughing about some finance bro who insulted her tarot reading at a street fair.” He closed his eyes briefly. “She did not know it was you. And she definitely did not know I was already half in love with you.”

Ilya’s brain stalled completely.

“Your sister cursed me to hear your thoughts,” he repeated weakly.

“*Apparently.*”

“Is this a conflict of interest?” Ilya asked, horrified. “Do I need to disclose this to HR?”

Shane made a strangled noise and slid down the elevator doors until he was sitting on the carpet.

“I am begging you,” he muttered into his hands. “Please stop talking like a compliance officer.”

“No, wait.” Ilya immediately crouched in front of him. “This is good. If she did this, she can reverse it.”

Shane laughed once and tipped his head back against the steel doors.

“You don’t know Rose,” he said. “She thinks consequences are spiritually educational. She doesn’t do reversals. According to her, curses wear off when people learn whatever lesson they were apparently supposed to learn.”

“That is not how science works.”

“Tell that to my sister.” Shane looked genuinely exhausted now. “Last Thanksgiving she read my aura for forty minutes and told me my problem was emotional repression and bad investments.”

Ilya blinked. “...The bad investments part was fair?”

A brief laugh escaped Shane before the embarrassment returned almost immediately when he looked at Ilya again.

“You heard me,” he said quietly.

“Yes.”

“Every day.”

Ilya hesitated only briefly before nodding.

Shane closed his eyes, color creeping slowly up his neck. “*Jesus Christ.*”

“I know,” Ilya said softly. “It was incredibly distracting.”

Shane let out a quiet groan and dragged a hand over his face again, embarrassment lingering beneath it.

Because Ilya knew now.

All of it.

“Ilya,” Shane asked after a long silence, “why didn’t you stop touching me?”

Ilya looked away briefly, jaw tightening.

“Because it was easier after that,” he admitted quietly.

Shane frowned slightly. “Easier?”

Ilya let out a short breath through his nose, almost frustrated with himself already. “For two years, I thought you hated me.” His gaze flicked back to Shane’s. “Then I touched you and realized that was obviously not the problem.”

Shane’s breath caught softly.

“I should have stopped,” Ilya said. “I know that.”

But he didn’t sound remotely sorry about it.

“I just...” His voice lowered slightly. “I needed to know if it kept happening.”

Shane looked down briefly at the space between them before lifting his gaze back to Ilya’s face, and Ilya could practically see the moment his brain caught up with what touching him meant now.

He reached out slowly, like he was testing the edge of something dangerous, and rested his fingertips against the inside of Ilya’s wrist.

The connection snapped open.

He stayed. He actually stayed.

“I stayed,” Ilya whispered before he could stop himself.

Shane pulled his hand back immediately, color rushing into his cheeks.

“You really do hear it,” Shane said quietly. “Immediately.”

“Yes.”

For a second, Shane just looked at him, like he still hadn’t fully processed the intimacy of it.

Then his gaze dropped to Ilya’s mouth again.

Slowly, Shane reached for him a second time, pressing his palm flat against the center of Ilya's chest.

Stop looking at his mouth. Think about spreadsheets. Excel macros.

Ilya laughed before he could stop himself. "Your coping mechanisms are terrible, Hollander."

Shane groaned and dropped his forehead against Ilya's shoulder.

I'm going to ruin you.

The thought hit so hard Ilya's laughter died instantly.

"You are very bad at hiding things," he murmured.

"I am usually excellent at it."

Shane lifted his head again, the last traces of embarrassment fading into something heavier. His hand slid higher, fingers curling around the back of Ilya's neck, thumb resting against his pulse.

Mine. Let me keep you.

Ilya closed his eyes briefly, overwhelmed by the softness of it.

When he opened them again, Shane was still looking at his mouth.

I want to take you home.

"You're so loud," Ilya whispered.

Shane stepped closer until there was barely any space left between them.

"Then come home with me, Rozanov."

Ilya's grip tightened around the fabric of Shane's sleeves.

"Lead the way, Hollander."

Chapter End Notes

thank you guys so much for all the hits, kudos, comments, bookmarks, screaming, keyboard smashing, emotional damage, etc etc 🥹

genuinely did not expect this fic to grow this much and i'm having the best time writing it for all of you

also... are you all ready for the final chapter?

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

fair warning: this is my first time writing smut, so please be nice to me

i had absolutely no idea what i was doing
enjoy ❤️

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

The back of the Boston taxi was cramped and smelled faintly like stale pine air freshener.

Outside, rain streaked down the windows in blurred lines while Shane sat beside Ilya looking impossibly put together.

Two blocks away from the office, he rested a hand high on Ilya's thigh. *Want you begging for me.*

Ilya shut his eyes briefly.

Shane's thumb moved once against the fabric of his slacks. *I need your mouth. I need you under me.*

Jesus Christ.

Then his hand tightened slightly.

Please let me touch you properly, Rozanov.

Ilya turned before he could think better of it and slid a hand into Shane's hair, tugging just enough to pull a rough inhale from him.

Fuck. Do that again.

"There's something deeply wrong with you," Ilya muttered quietly.

Shane's eyes dropped to his mouth.

"I'm not saying anything," he said hoarsely, even as his hand slid a fraction higher against Ilya's leg.

The taxi jerked to a stop outside Shane's high-rise so abruptly neither of them seemed to realize they'd arrived.

Shane tossed a fifty-dollar bill over the center console without waiting for change.

As Ilya stepped out onto the freezing pavement, the driver rolled down the window.

“Good luck to both of you,” he said flatly.

Shane went abruptly red beside him and grabbed Ilya’s elbow like physically moving him would somehow save his dignity.

The elevator ride to the penthouse was somehow worse than the cab.

The mirrored walls made the space feel even smaller, and the second the silver doors slid shut, Shane backed Ilya straight into the corner.

He just pressed his entire body flush against Ilya’s, trapping him between the cool glass and the solid heat of his chest.

His hand settled hard against Ilya’s waist, thumb slipping once beneath the hem of his coat.

Six more floors.

Ilya’s breath caught softly.

Shane dropped his forehead briefly against the side of Ilya’s jaw like he was trying to hold himself together.

“Tell me you can’t hear all of this,” he muttered hoarsely.

Ilya almost laughed.

“Unfortunately for you,” he whispered, fingers curling into the front of Shane’s coat, “I can.”

Shane made a quiet, frustrated sound under his breath and tightened his grip on Ilya’s waist.

When the elevator finally dinged open, Shane grabbed his hand and pulled him down the hallway fast enough that Ilya nearly stumbled laughing after him.

“You’re panicking,” he murmured.

“I’m trying very hard not to.”

Shane fumbled with his keys for exactly two seconds before finally shoving the right one into the lock with visibly shaking hands.

The second the apartment door shut behind them, he pushed Ilya hard against it.

Mine. Finally, finally.

Ilya barely managed to inhale before Shane’s mouth crashed into his.

Shane kissed him like he’d been waiting all day, one hand gripping Ilya’s jaw while the other dragged his coat off his shoulders so impatiently it nearly hit the floor by itself.

Need more. Need you closer.

Ilya made a rough sound against his mouth and shoved both hands under Shane's suit jacket, gripping hard at his waist through the dress shirt.

"You're so loud," he muttered breathlessly. "Your head is so fucking loud."

"Then stop listening," Shane shot back, voice wrecked as he caught the hem of Ilya's sweater and pushed it upward. "*Take this off.*"

They stumbled down the hallway without separating once, kissing hard enough to bruise.

Shane shoved him into the wall halfway there, thigh pressing sharply between Ilya's legs before his mouth found the side of Ilya's throat.

"Fuck," Ilya breathed, head knocking back against the wall.

Again.

With one sharp pull, Ilya loosened Shane's tie, earning a rough inhale against his mouth before the silk disappeared onto the floor beside them.

Need your skin.

"Ilya," he breathed against his throat, sounding almost frustrated by the amount of clothing still between them.

Ilya laughed and pushed Shane's suit jacket down his arms before reaching for the buttons of his shirt.

"Impatient," he murmured, brushing his mouth along Shane's jaw. "Very unlike a Lead Portfolio Manager."

"I swear to God," Shane muttered, catching Ilya's wrist long enough to kiss the inside of it, "if you mention work one more time right now-"

"You'll what?"

Shane looked at him for one dangerous second before yanking his sweater over his head hard enough to make Ilya stumble laughing into him.

They reached the bedroom half-dressed and breathless, stopping every few steps just to kiss again.

Shane caught him by the hips and walked backward until the edge of the mattress hit the back of his knees.

Ilya stayed standing between his spread thighs, looking down at him.

Shane's dark hair was a complete mess now, lips swollen red from kissing, chest rising too quickly beneath the warm bedroom light. The dark fabric of his boxer briefs clung obscenely to his hips, doing absolutely nothing to hide how hard he was.

Please touch me.

Slowly, Ilya wrapped one hand around Shane's bare thigh.

He gasped softly, head falling back against the duvet before another thought crashed through the connection.

Need your hands on me.

"You want me to touch you?" Ilya asked, his voice dropping low and rough. He dragged his thumb up Shane's inner thigh, feeling the violent shudder that followed. "I can hear exactly how badly you want it, *solnyshko*." His grip tightened slightly. "You are begging for it in there."

Shane's eyes flew open.

"Stop showing off," he muttered, breath catching when Ilya's thumb dragged slowly along the waistband of his boxers. "Fuck, just touch me already."

Please.

Ilya felt his mouth curve slightly at the edges. "There you are."

Shane glared at him. "You are enjoying this far too much."

"Maybe."

Slowly, Ilya hooked his fingers beneath the waistband and dragged the fabric down Shane's legs.

Then, he knelt on the thick carpet, right between Shane's open thighs.

Shane let out a muffled sound, his hands flying back to grip the edge of the mattress. "My God. Ilya, what are you-"

Ilya leaned forward and took Shane into his mouth.

Rozan- fuck.

Shane's hips moved forward, against Ilya's face, the moment he felt the wet tongue scrape against the head of his dick.

Ilya took him deep, swallowing a rough groan as he felt the full, heavy thickness of Shane against the back of his throat. He adjusted his grip on Shane's hips to hold him steady, setting a wet rhythm.

"Fuck!" Shane yelled loudly, his hands violently gripping Ilya's blond hair, holding him in place as he arched his spine. "Ilya, please!"

Ilya groaned around him, overstimulated. He could feel his dick wetting the front of his underwear, his blood pulsing in his ears.

He sucked harder, swirling his tongue around the glans, rolling his eyes.

I'm going to come, I'm going to come. Too fast. Ilya-

Reading the frantic edge of Shane's thoughts, Ilya pulled back with a sharp exhale, breaking the wet seal with a *pop*.

Shane let out a pathetic whine, his head falling back against the mattress as he chased the loss of contact.

"Not yet," Ilya ordered, his voice thick and unrecognizable to his own ears. He stood up, quickly shedding his own underwear.

His cock sprang free, heavy and dripping, slapping hot against his own stomach.

Shane blinked his eyes open, letting out a weak, fractured sigh at the sight of him. He closed it again, but the thought projected straight into Ilya's brain.

So big. I need it. Now.

When he opened his eyes again, his gaze tracked the twitch of Ilya's cock, his chest heaving with exertion.

"Where do you keep the lube?" Ilya asked, his knee resting against the inside of Shane's pale thigh.

Shane just stared up at him, visibly trying—and utterly failing—to form a coherent, professional thought.

His mouth opened, but only a soft, ragged pant came out.

Ilya waited exactly two seconds before letting out a fond, exasperated sigh.

"Hollander," he murmured, amusement bleeding into his voice. "You are not about to make me improvise right now."

Shane let out a strangled laugh, bringing one shaking hand up to cover his eyes before pointing vaguely toward the nightstand. "Bottom drawer. And stop looking at me."

Ilya leaned over, yanked the drawer open, and pulled out a bottle. He glanced at the label, then looked back at Shane with a slow smirk.

"Well," Ilya said softly, popping the cap. "This is significantly better than *spit*."

Shane frowned weakly from behind his hand. "Did you just read my mind or are you just being gross?"

"A little bit of both," Ilya murmured. He poured a freezing puddle of the gel into his palm, rubbing his fingers together to warm it.

He crawled back onto the mattress, and pushed Shane's knees wider until they were practically pressed to the mattress.

"I will take care of you."

The moment Ilya's slick fingers pressed against Shane's entrance, he let out a raw, vocal moan, his spine arching off the bedsheets.

Oh, my God. My God.

"Relax for me, *solnyshko*," Ilya murmured, slipping one finger inside him.

Ilya took his time to stretch the tight ring of muscle, then added a second finger, twisting his wrist.

And then he curled both fingers aggressively upward.

Shane cried out, his hands flew up to blindly grip the bedsheets until his knuckles turned stark white.

Don't stop. Ilya, don't stop, please don't stop. Fuck.

Ilya ground his dripping hips forward against Shane's calf just to chase the friction, letting out a hoarse groan of his own.

"I won't stop." He leaned down, capturing Shane's bruised lips in a wet kiss as he slid a third finger inside him, stretching him wide.

Shane tore his mouth away with a sharp, ragged gasp, his head tossing back against the pillows.

His body went taut for a fraction of a second to accommodate the sudden stretch, before melting back into the mattress with a uncontrollable shudder.

God. Yes. Right there. Harder.

Shane's hips began to stutter upward, rising off the sheets to frantically chase Ilya's hand - clawing blindly at his shoulders, leaving stinging red half-moons in his skin.

It's not enough.

"I am going to give you everything you are begging for in there, Hollander," Ilya murmured against the sweat-slicked skin of Shane's neck. "Tell me what you want."

"Please, Ilya," Shane gasped out, his chest heaving. When he opened his eyes, his pupils were blown wide. "I'm ready. Please, fuck me, please."

He shifted his hips, a desperate invitation, his words slurring together between open-mouthed kisses as he pulled Ilya's face back down to his.

"I want to feel you inside me."

Ilya swallowed hard, his control hanging by a literal thread.

When he slowly withdrew his fingers, Shane's hips bucked, blindly chasing the loss of contact. And aligning the slick head of his dick against that searing heat, Ilya slowly, agonizingly pushed forward.

He trembled, fingers digging in so hard he knew there would be bruises tomorrow. "Fuck, you're so tight," Ilya gritted out, the sheer friction threatening to undo him.

Shane's voice failed. He threw his head back, mouth open in a silent, breathtaking scream as his chest bowed upward.

Please, push it all in, please.

With a hoarse groan, Ilya felt those walls stretch and clench around him. He surrendered to the pull, driving his hips forward in one long, continuous motion until he was buried to the hilt, their bodies colliding with a wet slap.

Full. So full. Oh my god.

"Shane," Ilya gasped out. All the fight left him, his head dropping against a sweat-slicked shoulder.

The forceful contraction of muscle around his cock hit at the exact same millisecond as the blinding wave of absolute bliss detonating inside Shane's brain.

This was fucking paradise.

For one impossible second, moving felt like the worst idea he'd ever had.

"I need you to move," Shane sobbed when Ilya remained frozen by the overload, nails dug violently into his back. "Rozanov, please. Please."

Ilya pulled all the way back, shivering as the cool air hit slick skin, and then slammed his hips forward with force.

Shane screamed- a messy, ruined sound that Ilya wanted to bottle and keep forever.

Yes, yes, yes, yes. Rozanov, harder.

But Ilya didn't.

He withdrew agonizingly slow, deliberately dragging his dick over that heat, before driving back in with a heavy, rolling grind.

Shane choked on a gasp, his hips bucking upward to chase the friction.

Fuck. Right there, right fucking there.

The telepathic echo shot straight to Ilya's groin, nearly snapping his control in half.

He adjusted his grip, sliding his hands down to hook one of his legs over his shoulder, opening him up entirely.

Shane's eyes rolled back.

His fingers tangled frantically in the bedsheets as his mind dissolved into pure white static. *Don't stop. Please don't stop. I'm going to-*

"Not yet," Ilya growled, his jaw ticking. He purposefully broke the frantic rhythm, pulling back to deliver a series of shallow thrusts that left Shane whimpering in utter frustration. "You are not finishing this quickly after making me wait two years."

Bastard. Fucking bastard, I hate you, please-

Ilya laughed hoarsely, turning his head to bite the calf hooked over his shoulder. He dragged his teeth just enough to draw a sharp gasp. "You love it."

And then he drove his hips forward, finally surrendering.

Right there. Oh fuck, right on it. Faster. I'm-

"Come for me," Ilya commanded, his voice rough. "Do it. Give it to me."

For the first time all week, the relentless noise in Shane's head stopped.

He cried out, a high, broken note that shattered the air, his entire body going rigid as he came violently across his own stomach. His muscles spasmed relentlessly, milking Ilya with every pulse.

The psychic shockwave of it hit Ilya like a physical blow.

Ilya roared, thrusting deep one final, brutal time. He emptied himself with a shuddering release, his own orgasm perfectly syncing with the quiet, glowing echoes in Shane's mind.

He collapsed forward afterward, burying his face against Shane's neck while both of them struggled to catch their breath.

Shane's arms wrapped around him immediately, loose and shaky but still holding on.

For a long moment neither of them spoke.

Ilya shifted onto his side without fully letting go, one arm still draped across Shane's waist as Shane pressed closer automatically with a long, exhausted sigh.

I could stay here forever.

Ilya smiled faintly against his hair, fingers moving lazily along Shane's bare spine.

"If you never leave this apartment again," he murmured, "Vanguard will collapse, and I will lose my job."

A groan vibrated against his skin as Shane shifted closer, one leg sliding between Ilya's beneath the sheets.

"I am going to fire you," he muttered tiredly.

"You literally cannot."

Shane cracked one eye open just enough to glare at him. "I can absolutely fire you."

"You are too in love with me to do that."

Shane made another exhausted sound and buried his face deeper into Ilya's neck, his hand tightening briefly against Ilya's waist.

"This," he complained quietly, "is a violation of privacy."

I really, really love him.

Ilya's breath caught.

For a second, he just stayed still, feeling the thought settle warm and heavy in his chest before he lowered his head and pressed a slow kiss into Shane's messy dark hair.

"I can still hear you, Hollander," he murmured softly. "Your threats are empty."

"Go shower, Rozanov," Shane mumbled, already half-asleep.



Sunlight streamed through the floor-to-ceiling windows of Shane's bedroom, casting long golden shadows across the sheets and hardwood floor.

Ilya woke slowly, warm and heavy with sleep.

The apartment was quiet.

Shane was still beside him, half-awake, one arm draped loosely across Ilya's waist beneath the sheets. Without the perfectly controlled posture, he looked softer somehow, dark hair messy against the pillow, mouth still swollen from last night.

Ilya watched him for a second.

Shane blinked slowly, eyes unfocused at first before settling on Ilya's face.

Then he smiled. Small and real enough that it caught Ilya completely off guard.

"Morning," Shane murmured, his voice rough with sleep.

"Morning," Ilya replied quietly.

Shane shifted closer beneath the tangled blankets and rested one warm hand flat against Ilya's bare chest, right over his heart.

Ilya waited automatically for the familiar rush of noise to hit him. For Shane's voice somewhere inside his head talking about coffee or work or kissing him again.

Nothing.

A small crease appeared between Ilya's brows as he looked down at Shane's hand against his chest, then back up at Shane's face.

Shane noticed, the last traces of sleep fading from his expression. "Why are you looking at me like that?"

Ilya didn't answer.

He caught Shane's wrist instead, pressing his thumb firmly against the pulse point and holding it there for another long second.

Still nothing.

"Shane," Ilya whispered, his voice unsteady enough that Shane pushed himself higher against the pillows, concern flashing across his face.

"What?" he asked quickly. "What happened?"

Ilya just stared at him for another second, still holding his wrist between both hands.

"I didn't hear anything," he said finally, almost disbelieving.

Shane blinked once and slowly, understanding settled across his expression.

"The curse," he said carefully.

A smile started pulling at the corner of Ilya's mouth before he could stop it. "I think it's gone."

For a long moment, Shane just looked at him in silence, processing.

Then he sighed heavily and let himself fall back against the pillows.

"Well," he said flatly, "that's deeply unfortunate."

Ilya laughed immediately.

Shane turned his head slightly toward him, still looking completely serious.

“I had plans for that, actually,” he said. “You have no idea how useful that would’ve been during budget meetings.”

Chapter End Notes

thank you for reading intrusive thoughts ❤️

i loved writing this story and i loved sharing it with all of you even more. thank you for every comment, kudos, bookmark, and scream along the way.

also... there is a very real chance these idiots get a spin-off.

see you in the next fic 🧡

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