

Shoe box

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Shoe box

by [EtoileGarden](#)

Summary

He hadn't meant to keep them. To make it a collection. But the shoe box shoved under his bed, (next to the shoebox full of family and hockey photos, and another box of random memorabilia from his childhood,) had been getting heavier and heavier.

Shane lets himself be stupid, is caught out being stupid, and ends up feeling stupider. Ilya does not think he is stupid.

Notes

Hi this is my first HR fic, and I wrote it in one sitting in a rush to put this one idea down. I hope you enjoy! As always, unedited xxx

Chapter 1

He wants to not know when it started. Wants to be able to pretend he had been unaware of this...habit he'd picked up. Like if it had been unconscious of it, it would absolve him of any blame.

He knew though. And it was so stupid. So. Stupid. Shane tried so hard all the time to not be stupid.

Because he knew how he came across sometimes. When he stuttered or hesitated before replying to a chirp in the locker room, a friendly jibe, an unexpected question. He practiced his replies, the speed he could deliver them, the calmness he could pretend he had, the composure. Knew some people took his hockey singlemindedness to mean that was the only thing he knew or could be smart about.

Sometimes Shane agreed with them. But he still didn't want to come across as stupid even when he was.

The first thing he had stolen from Rozanov, he had not meant to steal. It was a single dollar note, fallen out of Rozanov's belongings in the locker room after their photo shoot together. After their shower. After Shane had been explicitly allowed to look.

He had picked it up and opened his mouth to tell Rozanov about it. To give it back. He had pocketed it instead.

He didn't need the money, obviously. Especially not a single dollar. It wasn't about that. He didn't want to think what it was about.

He still hadn't spent the dollar.

Sometimes it wasn't even technically Rozanov's belongings Shane stole. Sometimes, after they'd fucked in a hotel room and Shane was putting himself back together in the impersonal hotel bathroom, he would spot one of the wrapped handsoaps, unwrapped on the side of the sink. And it made no sense. Because ultimately that was a gross thing. Dirty hands touched the soap. He didn't care.

The soaps often came two at a time, so he would unwrap the untouched one and use its wrapper to rewrap the used one so it could go into his pocket and Rozanov wouldn't notice. Hopefully. He never said anything, so Shane assumed his small acts of thievery had gone unnoticed.

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He hadn't meant to keep them. To make it a collection. But the shoe box shoved under his bed, (next to the shoebox full of family and hockey photos, and another box of random memorabilia from his childhood,) had been getting heavier and heavier.

He only stole small things. There were several single cigarettes, bent from being palmed into a pocket and then shoved into a box. A handful of hotel soaps, carefully wrapped in their twins' paper. A trail of hotel names. The original dollar note. A scrap of paper from Rozanov's hotel room floor that held a few scrawls of cyrillic that Shane had forbidden himself from even attempting to translate. A lighter, still half full of lighter fluid. A hotel keycard that Rozanov had probably been fined for losing. A ripped wristband from one of the nightclubs Rozanov had visited one night after a game, before coming to Shane's hotel room and fucking him on the floor because there was only one bed in the room and no spare sheets and Shane didn't want to sleep in a gross bed. A stick of gum. A couple of coins. Four receipts, so faded from time that they were basically illegible. One of them had been for a bottle of gatorade Rozanov had left the room to go buy him before coming back to fuck him again. A beer bottle cap.

The only items in the box that were any larger were a few pieces of clothing. And they hardly counted as stolen items because Rozanov had told him to wear them. A pair of boxer briefs so that Shane didn't have to walk to his own hotel without underwear, or while wearing his soaked ones. A shirt for the time Rozanov had accidentally ripped Shane's while wrestling it off him.

He had stolen the sock though. Sometimes wondered if Rozanov still had its pair or if he'd thrown it out.

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So. Shane was stupid. He knew that. He knew that what he was doing was stupid, even though it paled in comparison to the stupidity of hooking up with his famous rival (and that also paled even further in comparison to the stupidity of falling in love with said rival).

Being stupid didn't stop him from doing his best not to come off that way. Didn't stop him from hoping that no one else knew.

It felt like a safe stupidity. How would anyone know? How would they ever find out? No one else came into Shane's bedroom. No one had any reason to look in the boxes under his bed. No one would be able to pair the insane collection of items to Ilya Rozanov, or to the infatuation Shane had for him.

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"Let me see," Shane said, the moment Rozanov shut the door behind himself in Shane's Montreal apartment. "No," he said, as Rozanov moved to push him up against the wall, "let me see it first. I'm not kissing you if it's fucked."

Rozanov groaned, threw himself dramatically against the hallway wall opposite Shane and dropped his head back. "You are killing me, Hollander," he said. His words slightly slurred. His lips looked swollen. "Is no big deal. Even did gargle of mouthwash so you won't taste blood."

"I'm not worried about that," Shane snapped, stepped forwards to close the distance between them again, him pinning Rozanov to the wall this time, one hand firm on Rozanov's chest.

"Mm," Rozanov nodded, eyebrows high, eyes amused. "You have tasted me worse. Even kiss me after I eat you."

“Shut up,” Shane grunted, annoyed to feel his cheeks already heating with a flush. “And open your mouth.”

“Ooh, Hollander,” Rozanov drawled, “You spit in it? Kinky.”

“Shut up,” Shane said again. He could feel his flush washing down over his chest. “Let me see the goddamned damage, Rozanov, because I am not fucking letting you use your mouth on me with an open wound.”

“You love my mouth on you,” Rozanov shot back, but finally complied, opening his mouth and closing his eyes.

The tooth that had been knocked out near the end of last period had seemed to be knocked out clean. A lower back molar. When it had dropped from Rozanov’s mouth Shane had imagined he could hear it dropping onto the ice.

The gum didn’t look bloody, but it did look a little inflamed. He found himself moving, using one hand to grip Rozanov’s chin to hold him in place, and the other to press his thumb in to the side of Rozanov’s mouth to nudge carefully at the edge of his gum.

Rozanov made a muffled noise, his eyes were open again. He closed his mouth around Shane’s thumb, sucked on it hard.

Shane ignored the dizzying rush in his stomach, pulled his thumb from Rozanov’s mouth, stopped him from trying to follow with his hand still on Rozanov’s chin holding him still.

“Okay,” Shane said, “kissing is fine. Carefully. You can’t go down on me though.”

“I will make up for sucking next time,” Rozanov said, his hands were on Shane’s hips, dragging him closer. “Will choke on you before fucking.”

Shane couldn't bother acting harassed now. Let himself be kissed hard. Kissed back. Let their positions be reversed again as Rozanov pushed him back up against the wall, rucking his shirt up as he did, breaking the kisses only to pull the shirt off.

"Bed," Rozanov instructed, holding Shane's shirt in one hand, Shane's pec in the other. "Maybe I let you ride me."

"Let me," Shane scoffed, his legs already taking him to the bed, his hands already working his trousers off. "You're such a jerk."

"Mm," Rozanov sounded smug even as he folded Shane's shirt in half before dropping it onto a chair. "You like it. You want me to be jerk to you. You want me to jerk you."

"You're not clever," Shane shot back, climbing onto the bed and shuffling up it so he could sit with his legs splayed apart. "And anyway, didn't your text say you were going to make me come without touching my dick? Y-you had some pretty big claims this morning."

Rozanov's grin was wide, despite how it must have hurt a little with the swelling. "Just telling you how it is," he said, "I know you like plans, yes? And I like breaking plans, a little."

"Hm," Shane flexed one thigh and then the other, trying to release some of the tension he could feel building in every muscle of his body. "Sounds like you don't think you can. Sounds like you over promised."

"No," Rozanov shook his head, still grinning widely as he all but stalked to the bed, climbing onto the end and in between Shane's legs with fluid momentum. "I do not do that. I say I can. And I will. And then, when you are all... soft and wet faced after? I make you come again with my hands. Hm?"

"I don't think we have time for that," Shane said. Although he did already feel like all Rozanov was going to need to do was touch him for real and he'd come. They might have time for him to be able to get hard again if he came right now. "When will you learn your lesson? First saying you'd win the game tonight, and then this?"

“Would have won game if your ape did not hit me instead of puck,” Rozanov said, his hands fitting neatly around Shane’s hips and dragging him down the mattress just a bit.

“I am sorry about that,” Shane said, bit down on a gasp of relief as Rozanov ground himself down against him, hard and hot. “He - he - it wasn’t a clean hit. I ch-chewed him out after, and he got a fine.”

“Is fine,” Rozanov said, was bent down over Shane now, face hovering over his. “He thinks he is good, but he knew I would score on him if he did not hit me.”

“Comeau is,” Shane began, and then gave up on the excuses when Rozanov bit at his earlobe, “Fuck.”

“Yes,” Rozanov said, his grin loud in Shane’s ear, “he is a fuck. I fuck you now, so we shut up about ape.”

Shane was okay with that.

-

After - once Rozanov had made Shane come on his cock, and after he had gotten out of bed to get Shane water and made Shane drink it, and after he had pulled Shane - all loose and damp with sweat - back against him, and after he had used both his hands to wrench another orgasm out of him -

After all that, they showered. Sometimes they showered one after each other, but Shane felt like his legs wouldn’t hold him, and his arms didn’t want to let go, so they showered together. Rozanov with hands much more careful and soft than usual, and Shane with his mouth against Rozanov’s neck, leaving marks he knew he shouldn’t.

They dried off and dressed together in near silence, both of them exhausted from the game, the orgasms, and also for Rozanov, the injury.

“Our plane is at five,” Rozanov said, leaning against the wall as he pulled his shoes on. “In morning. Disgusting time.”

“You get up at five for training all the time,” Shane pointed out. His plane didn’t leave until eleven in the morning.

“Disgusting every time,” Rozanov said firmly, straightened back up. “Okay, Hollander. Next time I see you, mouth will be healed.”

“Better be.”

“Until then you can jerk off to thoughts of me making you come so hard twice tonight that you cry.”

“Shut up,” Shane scoffed. He’d only cried once, and only a little, and it wasn’t really crying. “God. Do you have all your shit?”

He knew for a fact that Rozanov did not have all his shit, because Shane had already spied the tank top Rozanov had been wearing under his shirt, crumpled up underneath the chair. Had already imagined it in his shoebox at home.

“Oh,” Rozanov said, his hand slapping suddenly at the pocket of his jeans, “I almost forget, I have - for you -” he grunted, scrabbling in his pocket for a moment before pulling out a small ziplock plastic bag.

Shane stared at him and the bag. Couldn’t make out what was in it with only the soft light from the lamps.

“What?”

“Is my tooth,” Rozanov grinned, “I saved it for you.”

“What,” Shane repeated, stepping closer so he could see that the vague shape in the bag was indeed Rozanov’s tooth. A little smear of blood drying on the inside of the bag. “The fuck? Why would you -”

“For your collection,” Rozanov shrugged, thrust the bag at Shane’s chest. “Or do you need to take it when I don’t see? Is that rule? I can drop and pretend to forget about. Like my shirt.”

Shane’s whole body was suffused with heat - not like the heat it had been overwhelmed with earlier with Rozanov wringing pleasure out of him - a rolling flush of dread and shame and stupidity.

“Rozanov -” he said, voice cracking and stopping.

“Is okay,” Rozanov said. He hadn’t lowered his hand yet, hadn’t lowered his gaze from Shane’s face.

No one was meant to know. Especially not Rozanov. Especially. Not. Rozanov. How long has he known? Had he seen Shane shucking soap in one of the bathrooms and hiding it in his pocket like an insane creature? Had he laughed about it with other people? Had he left things out on purpose like a game to see if Shane would steal them?

“Hollander,” Rozanov said, his voice not as amused as it had been.

“You have to leave,” Shane said, the only words that came to him. He turned from Rozanov shakily, his shoulder bumping Rozanov’s outstretched hand, and he dropped the bag. “I’ll - I’ll get you your shirt. And then. You can go.”

“Hollander, I don’t want my shirt,” Rozanov said, slow, heavy.

Shane stopped mid stride, kept his back to Rozanov. Shame was eating him alive. Was making his hair stand on end. “Then go,” he said. “Just. Just go. Please.”

Nothing. For a long moment, no movement, no words. Then a long exhale from behind Shane, and he heard the rub of shoe on floor, and the door was opening. Footsteps. Door closed. Silence.

He stayed stock still a moment longer, and when he turned to make sure Rozanov was gone, he saw the bag with the tooth in it still on the floor.

He should just throw it out. It was waste. He should throw out the tank too.

He should. But he was stupid. Even when he was ashamed and scared. He wrapped the tooth bag in the tank, and folded them both small in the corner of his luggage. They would both go into the shoebox. The last things to go in.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

hi guys! Thank you so much for the response to the first chapter! I really appreciated it, and it gave me the motivation to write more rather than leaving it as a one shot. xxx

Rozanov did not stop texting him. Shane had been only about 98% sure he would stop, keeping the 2% margin there for Rozanov texting simply to make fun of Shane for his obsession with him, or for the reality to finally hit that Shane was fucking weird.

Rozanov texted him the very next day, just after Shane had gotten back to his hotel room in Toronto after team practice. He had been expecting a message from Yuna, so he'd barely glanced at his phone before opening the notification. He wished he had, so he could have had a little forewarning rather than the moment of panic about what his mother was texting him.

Lily

6:42 PM

Do you jerk off to my things?

He threw the phone onto the bed, watched as it bounced on the firm hotel mattress before landing face down. Hayden, still standing near the door of the hotel room, also on his phone, laughed.

“Your phone bite you?” He asked.

“No,” Shane replied, felt like he sounded too sincere about it, so added; “fuck off.”

Hayden laughed at him, “Okay,” he said, “I’m going to grab another shower - the water pressure at that rink sucks so bad, I always feel like I’m trying to clean myself underneath a

sneeze or something.”

“Gross,” Shane muttered, kept his eyes on his phone on the bed as if it might suddenly roll itself over to make him look at the text again. “Hate that imagery, bud.”

“Hate to be sneezed on,” Hayden replied, dropping his game bag down by the bed he’d claimed earlier that day, and rustling in his hotel bag for his nicer shower supplies, “I mean, I get sneezed on like, a million times a day at home because I swear the twins always catch a cold right as I step into the house, but at least those are basically my own germs, right?”

That was amusing enough for Shane to finally drag his eyes from his phone to look at Hayden, to snort a half laugh. “Sure,” he said, “because the bugs they catch from all their preschool classmates are genetically yours too.”

“Don’t make me think about it like that,” Hayden groaned, straightening back up with his body wash in one hand, “leave me to my ignorance.”

Shane left him to his ignorance. Sat down on his bed next to his phone. Waited until Hayden had shut the bathroom door behind himself before picking it back up and turning it over.

Rozanov’s text still blinked up at him from the screen. The text he was expecting from his mother had arrived as well, waiting at the top of the screen. Shane ignored it for now to focus on wrestling his emotions.

On one hand he desperately wanted to reply to Rozanov immediately in the negative. Who did he fucking think Shane was? (On the same hand, however, he knew he couldn’t quite do that as truthfully as he wanted to because it wasn’t like he pulled out the box and like... jerked off into it, but he did sometimes peruse the items and *think* about Rozanov, and then after he’d put the box away, perhaps, maybe, he would jerk off.)

On the other hand, he wanted to fully ignore the text. Delete it even maybe. If he didn’t engage, then surely Rozanov would drop it eventually. He only bothered with Shane because Shane let himself *be* bothered. He knew Rozanov loved to bait him into arguments, into

frustration - both emotional and sexual. That he was... amusing to Rozanov. So if he just didn't take the bait...

He so badly wanted to take the bait. Maybe he could take the bait in a way Rozanov wasn't expecting. Maybe he could - could reply saying he did jerk off to his things. That would be surprising. And then maybe Rozanov would be disgusted and never text him again, or more likely would continue texting until they ended up sexting and Shane would have to go hide in the bathroom immediately after Hayden came out so he could jerk off in the shower.

It was safer to leave it. Best to ignore it. Rozanov had been... playing with him for god knew how long, Shane shouldn't give him any more ammo against him. He opened his mother's text instead.

-

Next day

Lily

3:01 PM

Nice OT goal. You need to work on your footwork.

-

Shane's footwork was fucking fine. He ignored this text as well, went out with his team to celebrate their win against Toronto.

-

Lily

9:55 PM

So that was a yes about the jerking off, yes?

-

Shane had another four games before he got to go home again. He enjoyed roadies, but there was nothing better than playing on home ice. Nothing better than his own bed. Nothing better than finally getting to take the incriminating bundle of (literal) Rozanov out of his luggage and hide it away in the shoebox under his bed. He should have just taken it back to his house the same night, rather than packing it, but he'd already brought his travel bags and gear to the flat so he wouldn't have to go back to his house, and he hated to break a plan. Should have just broken the plan.

He had multiple texts from Rozanov burning a hole in his phone. Hadn't been able to stop himself from looking at them - he hated having notifications on his phone screen, so really he had only opened the messages to make the notifications go away - but he hadn't replied to a one of them. Despite several times wanting to. Rozanov did not make it easy to ignore him. Sending texts after each game - both his and Shane's - in turns complimenting and insulting. Sending follow ups of the jerk off questions, and scenarios in which he would definitely jerk off over Shane's tooth if Shane would ever be so nice as to gift him with it. Which was not something that turned Shane on at all, because that would have been extremely weird.

Really he should have thrown the bundle out. Should throw the shoebox and its contents away. Burned them maybe. That would have been safer. Instead he refolded the shirt. He placed it carefully. He hid the tooth underneath the soaps, and also a toothbrush that Rozanov had used once at Shane's flat.

He wasn't going to get to have Rozanov anymore - even if Rozanov hadn't given up yet, there was no way Shane could let this keep going. No way. He wouldn't have Rozanov, just some reminders. Much safer. Memories.

-

Memories and Rozanov's texts. They weren't daily anymore, three months since the tooth, which was a good sign, but they were still frequent. Shane had looked up how to turn off read receipts now as well, so he didn't feel as weak and guilty about reading the texts as he did when he knew Rozanov would be cackling about catching his attention.

He probably should just block the number, as he kept telling himself he was only reading the texts to keep his phone screen tidy, but - he *was* weak. He wanted to read the texts - something he would only admit to himself when he couldn't sleep and would open the text thread simply to scroll through them. He wanted to pretend that Rozanov was still - not safe, because nothing they had ever done together had ever been *safe* - comforting. Some place, some person that Shane could be himself with. Even if it wasn't all of himself, it was more of himself than he felt he could be basically anywhere else. He could be rude and - yes - slightly neurotic, because Rozanov was also rude, and seemed to like his neurocentricities, even if only to chirp him for them. His chirps were never. Mean.

In the real world Shane had to be Shane Hollander. Shane Hollander who was polite, and fair, even if he was sometimes a stern captain. Shane Hollander who was known for giving boring, clean responses in interviews. Shane Hollander who was uptight and didn't have fun and was so straight and normal that he'd seen multiple memes for years where a cropped photo of him was a stand in, a short cut for cookie cutter morality and goodness. Hayden had sent him one last week - a screenshot of a text post - *when ur competing to be the most basic hischool crush but ur opponent is shane hollender*.

Hayden had then, after Shane's reply of '???' explained that apparently he was the most commonly crushed upon celebrity currently. Which was definitely not true. And when he had said that to Hayden, Hayden had replied with twelve laughing emojis and then a text that still rattled around in Shane's head uncomfortably.

Hayden Pike (hockey) (dude u cant just put hockey after every1s name thats insane)

12:23 PM

Cmon dude, even jackie knows ur like the most safe guy to crush on cos ur so nice and polite and keep a clean house and u dont sleep around but ur still hot. she says ur every straight girls dream guy and that if she didnt know u personally and know ur actually funny shed think u were made in a factory called something like 'perfect straight boyfriend who folds the laundry' honestly she had way too many opinions about this, so maybe be less attractive to my wife, hollander.

So. He just. Missed getting to be messy the way he got to be messy with Rozanov. And he knew if Rozanov ever heard him say that he'd be leering at Shane and talking about Shane being a dirty slut or something else, and okay sure MAYBE he was, but he wasn't talking about that he was. Just.

It was a good thing that he was so consistently read as straight. It made him feel sick and like his stomach had fallen out, but it was a safe thing. It was a good thing his reputation was so good, because it helped his career, and his team, and it made his family proud. It just also made Shane feel like he had been wrapped in an acid soaked sheet and been smothered.

-

By the time the next Montreal vs Boston game was looming, Rozanov's texts had dropped to maybe once a week. Shane was pretty sure the once a week texts were drunk texts, too, because they often came misspelled, late at night, or in dick pic form.

Shane had only jerked off to the dick pic twice. Had then deleted it from the thread like he did with any photo evidence Rozanov sent him, because Rozanov was a fucking idiot and didn't do it himself. Although to be fair, from Rozanov's end, if his messages got leaked, their text thread probably looked reasonably similar to any of his other hook ups messages and no one would even think twice about it. Shane's messages being leaked would not be so acceptable.

He should delete the messages.

He should block Rozanov.

He didn't know what he would do if Rozanov texted him and asked him to come over when he was in Boston. If he would give in. What he would do if Rozanov chirped him about it on the ice. If he would look at Shane the way he did sometimes, dropping the challenge of his face and just leaving the smile.

He should make plans. He should promise to go out with the team after the game, like a good captain should. Celebrating or commiserating with the guys. Socialising. Not staying back to go sneak out to fuck the rival captain. JJ was always trying to get him to come try a new restaurant or bar. Hayden was always trying to get him to fit in with everyone else. All he had to do was tell them that he'd come out with them, and they would make sure it happened, even if he tried to resist it later. Even if Rozanov sent him a room number or an address or a dick pic. Or a tooth.

-

Over center ice Rozanov grinned wide at him. Wide enough that Shane could see teeth even while keeping his head down, only looking in his peripheral.

“I got my new tooth,” Rozanov said, voice chirp loud, “maybe later you come. See it, yes?”

Shane didn’t respond, even as his face burned and he yearned to hiss at Rozanov to keep his voice down, the fuck.

“Maybe if you are lucky,” Rozanov continued, voice finally lower, “I let you feel it.”

Shane’s cock liked the idea. Shane didn’t. He felt so flushed it was a miracle the ice wasn’t melting below his feet.

The puck dropped. Rozanov won it.

Shane stole it back seconds later. Threw sense memory of his fingers against Rozanov’s gums out of his head. Threw himself out of his head. Any part of him that was not Hockey was sidelined. Watching from behind the barrier.

-

It was a rough game. Rozanov chirped everyone, loud and consistent and annoying enough that he and several of Shane’s teammates got into tussles. Shane did his best to avoid the ice around Rozanov, keeping his attention glued to the play rather than Rozanov’s taunting voice. He picked on Comeau several times, daring him to knock out the matching tooth on the other side of his jaw. Suggesting that perhaps actually not, seeing as history showed Comeau didn’t have the best accuracy. It wasn’t the worst chirping - except perhaps to Shane, where every

mention of the tooth felt like a jab in his guts - but Comeau was never good at holding his temper, especially not with Rozanov.

When Shane had joined Montreal, and Rozanov had joined Boston, he had hoped the rivalry in the media about them would die down. They were both great players. The best, maybe. Their drafts made sense for who they both were. Shane didn't even care (much) about being second pick. He knew these things were often decided very bureaucratically where the teams agreed beforehand on who they wanted, and the order of picks was just showboating.

The rivalry had not died down. It had built up. His team had clung to it immediately. They played more aggressively against Boston. They put Shane on the ice more often with Boston. They dissed Boston in the interviews more perhaps than they dissed any other team. Shane could sit there and be perfectly polite about Boston and Ilya Rozanov, but his team would hand the reporters the rivalry, and it grew around him.

His team hated Boston, and much more, they hated Ilya Loud Mouth Rozanov. The superstar slut who wasn't as good as he boasted about. The Russian who was too at home. The asshole who needed to be taught a lesson. They all assumed Shane hated him too, felt the same things they did, despite Shane never saying a word. They heard their own words and put them in Shane's mouth.

Even after last game, when Shane had - not quite - yelled at Comeau, they thought Rozanov was fair game, so long as they played clean. Because obviously that was all Shane cared about.

So when Comeau - clean but very unsportsmanlike - tripped Rozanov right into the barriers, he skated past Shane, away from where Rozanov was sprawled on the ice, and grinned at him.

"That should shut him up, cap," he said, "you're welcome!"

If it wasn't for the fact that Shane could see Ilya - Rozanov - getting up already, with a hand from Marleau, and if it wasn't for the fact that it would be extremely out of Shane's known character, he would have fucking punched Comeau right in the grin. He had great accuracy. He could probably even aim right for the same tooth.

Because Shane could never do that while still being Shane Hollander, and because Ilya was back on his feet, and shaking his head at Marleau, Shane did not chase Comeau down to pummel him into the ice. Instead he turned to check with the refs for the play, and slotted back into the game.

Kept his head fully in the game until it had been nearly half an hour and Ilya was not back on the ice. Was not sitting on the bench or leaning against the barrier. None of his team mates looked too worried, but that might not mean much.

Maybe they just had great game faces. Maybe they thought their coach and team medic were simply being cautious. Maybe they just hadn't thought about the passage of time. Maybe Ilya was suffering a brain bleed and no one knew it and he might die in this arena without anyone noticing and with a million unreplied texts from Shane and it was Shane's fault that he was acting like he had been today because Shane had been ignoring him so Ilya was being annoying and it worked too well and now he was dead.

He signaled a swap, clambered over the barriers to his water bottle. Sat hard. Drank. Forced his brain to stop. To. Shut up. He couldn't do or know anything. Yet. He had to finish the game. He had to stay calm. He got back onto the ice a few minutes later. Hayden bumped their shoulders together.

They won, barely. Only because Boston was missing their captain.

-

While they changed in their hotel room to go out - JJ had been ecstatic that Shane had agreed a whole week in advance - Shane checked the news for updates. Ilya Rozanov headlines were usually a fair balance of praising his Hockey skills and paps of him with girls at random parties. Shane preferred those to the injury related ones, even when the reporter or whoever tried to imply that Rozanov's stats proved his superiority to Hollander. It wasn't true. They had similar stats in a way that was annoying even.

He read that Ilya had suffered a bleed in the eye, and had been whisked away to check the damage was superficial and not a sign of deeper trauma. The article did not have an update

on whether it was deeper trauma or not. The official NHL Boston page did not have any update except that Rozanov was being checked out in the hospital but was stable and in good spirits. That meant nothing. Ilya was a goddamn performer. He could be grinning and chirping as he bled out if he wanted to.

And he hadn't texted Shane. Nothing. Not a stupid sext, or a dig at the way Shane fumbled a pass more than once tonight, or a room number.

He didn't text while Shane was in the car into town. He didn't text while Shane sipped at a beer. He didn't text when Shane tried to swap to gingerbeer and one of his teammates ordered him a shot instead. He didn't text while Shane made himself throw up in a bar bathroom, trying to get the numbing alcohol and the stinging fear out of his guts.

He hadn't texted by the time Shane managed to persuade Hayden to back to the hotel with him. Small hours. Throat hurting. Messages only from the wrong people. A woman in the bar had clung to him, her breath nothing but tequila against his cheek as she whispered about taking him home to her bed. Jeers from his team as they told him to go and he declined. He was too drunk. Wouldn't be good. Sorry. Sorry. Would love to otherwise. But. No. Sorry.

No news updates. Nothing on Ilya's instagram (which Shane did NOT FOLLOW except on his fake account where he just posted pictures of animals and scenery he liked and only followed anyone other than Ilya so that no one would accuse the account of being a stalker), or any of his teammates' accounts. Nothing to do with Ilya anyway, but Shane did like the post St Simon made of his cat doing a big stretch. Surely he wouldn't have posted that if his captain was dying.

No text when Shane got out of bed again only a half hour after collapsing into it to go vomit again. The tequila shot the woman had given him. The vodka soda Drapeau had handed him. The protein bar Shane had eaten to try and feel stable.

He texted Ilya.

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

um so we have another chapter added because Svetlana really wanted to be part of this story))

Conversation in italics = in Russian

CW. Short discussion about past miscarriage and past sexual offence. Details in end notes

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

Svetlana had arrived at the hospital two hours after Ilya had. She had been in a meeting for an hour and a half of his time there, and had come straight from it, arriving just as Ilya had been assured he didn't have a brain bleed, and the team trainers were making noises about how long it would take before Ilya could be back on the ice.

She sent everyone except the doctor and Ilya out of the room with a sharpness she reserved specifically for Ilya situations.

"Ms Vetrova," the doctor said, once Svetlana had shut the door, "I was just telling Mr Rozanov that we are no longer worried about a brain bleed. We've also ruled out anything more than a mild concussion. He has a sprained wrist, but we are about to strap him up and then he can go home."

She's met this doctor a few times. Met a lot of the doctors at this hospital actually. Ilya always says she doesn't actually need to come every time, but why wouldn't she come? Every possible time she could? Why should he have to be here alone.

"Thank you," she said, "I will take him home with me." Switching to Russian, she spoke to Ilya, who was still lying, closed mouth on the bed. *"Why are you so quiet Ilyushka? This is good news."*

"I am quiet sometimes," he snarked back, moving slowly to fold his arms, and then immediately rushing out with the opposite of quiet. "Maybe I am simply mourning getting to go for drinks with the team. Had to be dragged here instead, and it's not even dramatic. If I was going to be hurt, it could at least have been something enough to make a splash. To make --- Jane text me all worried. Maybe worried enough that she would - nevermind. The doctor is pretty, isn't she?"

"You are a weasel and a rat," Svetlana told him easily, tucking away the Jane talk into her back pocket for when she got Ilya home. "She is married and you are smelly."

-

Ilya talks the rest of the time it takes to splint his wrist, and to talk about some basic pain and anti-flam medication. Talks all through being told to protect his eyes for the next few days, sunglasses, not too long on screens, etc, call a doctor if the bleeding began again. Yapped through discharge and a quick conference with his team, and then, as soon as the door to Svetlana's porsche shut, he was quiet again.

He had been talking about nothing all that time, talking just for the sake of it, or to spite Svetlana maybe. Being the charming asshole he was. Irritating.

She did not push him to talk, and he lay his head back against the headrest with his eyes closed and his phone in his unsplinted hand.

-

At Ilya's house he showered, did not even accept her offer to help him with it, and she shoved his gear away and ordered them dinner delivery. She took his phone off him as he came back downstairs, damp and only in sweats and his splint.

"You are meant to be protecting your eyes," she told him when he protested, "you are too clingy with your phone. You said it was not dramatic enough for Jane to text, yes? So why are you still waiting?"

He scowled heavily at her, threw himself down onto his couch, and then shuffled over and held his hand out to her. She let herself be pulled down into his arms because it was clear he was looking to hold her and nothing else. She was too pissed off for anything else.

She put her arm around the back of his neck and pulled his head down against her shoulder, careful of his eye and the bright bruise on his forehead.

She waited.

He was not on anything more than over the counter painkillers, not concussed. He was home from the hospital well before midnight. They would have won the game tonight if not for the hit. He should not be as maudlin as he so obviously was right now, not letting her prod and poke him into silly retorts. Normally he wouldn't talk about Jane unless he was so drunk he became soft and needy and his jaw would start to shake. A few weeks ago he had told her - while clutching the vodka - that he had tried to be romantic and gave Jane his knocked out tooth. Svetlana had told him that only a freak would find that romantic, and he had rebutted that his Jane was a freak, she stole little things from him all the time and thought he did not notice. Svetlana pressed to be sure he did not mean things like his money, or his identification, and he had laughed at her as if she was stupid to be worried for him. Had told her that Jane stole silly things, like mementos. Reminders of their nights together. He said he wanted her to know she could have more. That he wanted her to. He said that Jane had not received his tooth with the intended message.

"Did you," she asked, slow, "get hit on purpose?"

She could feel him frown against her neck, but he didn't move to sit up or away from her.

"No. Why would I do that?"

"So Jane would text you," Svetlana tapped the phone she had put down on the arm of the couch next to her. It lit up, and his screen was flooded with notifications gone unopened, but nothing new. No Jane.

Ilya shook his head, careful. *"I would take advantage of a bad injury. Not try for one. Sveta. I am not desperate."*

She laughed a little, despite the mix of irritation and melancholy spilling in her stomach over her stupid Ilya. *"You are an attention whore,"* she said kindly. *"You always want attention. Nothing new, Ilyushka. Why are you embarrassed for wanting Jane's attention?"*

"I don't want to talk about Jane," he said, turning his head further to press his face into her hair, hiding. To hide further still, he switched back to English. *"What did you get us for dinner?"*

-

Even the great Ilya Rozanov gets tired after a game and an injury, and when he falls asleep on the couch midway through the twelfth lap of the Monaco race, she gets one of his spare blankets and tucks him in. Then - and she wouldn't normally do this because she is not his maid - she cleaned up the remnants of their dinner, and put his shit away. His phone was still on the arm of the couch, and they had both been keeping a half eye on it all evening as it vibrated with incoming notifications. They would see it was not from Jane, and then they would ignore it.

She had been ignoring it since they put on F1, and it was a coincidence really that she looked one last time as she put her shoes on to leave, and *Jane* came up onscreen with a buzz.

Jane

12:52 AM

theres no news update on your condition. are you okay? Im worried about you.

1:01 AM

please.

when you wake up please let me know youre ok.

Svetlana would love to really snoop here. She knew Ilya's code because it was 6969 as he was an idiot. She wanted to see more of who Jane was. She would not do that to Ilya. Not by going through their messages anyway. She had a much more pressing question she needed answered about Jane. One she hadn't brought up to Ilya yet because he wouldn't talk about Jane while sober, and was too drunk to listen when he would talk.

She didn't open Jane's messages, but navigated to Ilya's contacts instead until she found Jane's number, and took it down in her phone. Ilya could be mad at her later, but at least he would wake up to texts from Jane.

-

Shane had given up on hearing back from Ilya at this point. Had not given up on refreshing the news pages for any updates. Had climbed back into bed, pulling the sheet up over his head so the light from his phone wouldn't wake Hayden up.

Surely no update was like no news was good news. If Ilya was in some crazy surgery, or fighting death than the journalists would be all over it. Crazy fans would be surrounding the hospital. Shane's heart would surely be icing over.

In between one heavy blink and the next, his phone buzzed in his hand and Shane's intestines tried to climb out of his throat. He opened the notification before fully taking it in. He had thought; who the fuck else would be texting him at this time?

UNKNOWN NUMBER

1:37 AM

Hello sticky fingers jane

What the fuck. Shane stared at the text blankly for a few long seconds, trying to make it make more sense. Was this Ilya? With a new phone and a terrible sense of humour? Who else

would text him like *this*. He had almost lifted his hand to try and tap out an investigative reply when the next text buzzed in.

UNKNOWN NUMBER

1:39 AM

I am friend of ilya's, and unlike Ilya I have connections I am willing to use. So I have question for you to answer truthfully. Remember I know you are thief.

Have you ever stolen used condom.

Shane swore under his breath. Fought his way out from under the sheet, and took himself and his phone back to the bathroom. He didn't turn the light on, just flicked the lock, put the toilet seat down, and sat on it to stare in disbelief at the messages. A *friend* of Ilya's. Ilya told people about him. About *Jane*. About the - Shane was not a fucking thief. He had just - it wasn't like that. He had never even shoplifted a lolly. Why the fuck would he steal a condom? A *used* condom. He knew he probably came off as a gross freak, but he wasn't that much of a freak. Did Ilya think he was? Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.

He should probably block this number. Fuck.

1:42 AM

I don't know who you are or why he would give you my number but i would never do that???? Why would i do that?

Is ilya okay?

I'm sorry i stole his shirt and cigarettes and whatever but even if ilya says im a huge slut its not like i want to keep his cold cum.

Gross

God. He was still a bit drunk maybe. He was being stupid. He should still block this number.

Is Ilya okay???

UNKNOWN NUMBER

1:44 AM

Ilya is ok.

Shane waited after the first text, willing this unknown friend of Ilya's to provide more information. To provide context to the insane question. To say anything else.

Nothing else came. Eventually he sent one last text to them, and then went back to his rumpled bed, where he finally fell into real sleep.

2:13 AM

Thank you

-

Lily

8:07 AM

i am ok.

was just little tap. drs dramatic.

eye look like blood bath but is fine.

when is your flight out?

Jane

8:07 AM

Who did you give my number to and why the hell were they asking me about stealing condoms.

Flight is at 2PM

You're an asshole.

Lily

8:09 AM

condoms? what?

i do not give your number out

because you never text back so would be cruel spirit of me

are you in normal hotel?

Jane

8:09 AM

Are you kidding? You can't come here, Hayden is here, and you're an asshole, and you're probably meant to be fucking resting.

If you didn't give my number to someone then who the fuck is this

IMAGE ATTACHMENT

INCOMING CALL: LILY

Shane swiped to end the call on instinct. Then rolled out of bed - which he ought to have already been out of really - and once more shut himself in the bathroom. Hayden was really going to think he was so fucking hungover, throwing up in the bathroom again. Better he think that than know that Shane - after turning the shower on as cover - was swiping to answer his phone as Ilya called again.

“I think maybe,” Ilya said, no hello, his voice raspy in a way that did evil things to Shane’s stomach, “my friend Svetlana.”

The evil things happening to Shane's stomach changed tune to a different more evil thing. He swallowed hard. Rubbed the heel of his hand across his eyes and leaned against the sink for support.

"Your friend. Svetlana. Who you hook up with."

"Da. Yes. That one. She - she is protective."

"Why would you tell her about me?" Shane asked, couldn't help himself. Swallowed down on other questions he shouldn't ask. "And about - god - were you trying to make her jealous? Or -"

"No," Ilya cut in. Shane could hear him heaving an aggravated sigh over the phone, and felt madder than ever for a split second. "No - I - she is good friend. To me. Since we were children. Is not romance between us, Hollander."

Between Ilya and Svetlana or between him and Ilya, Shane didn't know. It didn't matter.

Ilya continued.

"She does not know," he said. Cleared his throat. "That you are - this has happened before, see? So she. Worries."

"What?" Shane grunted, leaned forwards so he could press his forehead into the cool mirror. "You've had a hook up steal things?"

"Yes," Ilya sighed again. "No. Not like that. No. You know the. In the condom. The uh - wet - that I make. Cum."

Shane groaned. Wanted to cover his ears. Wanted to hit his head repeatedly against the mirror until he bruised. “What the fuck, Rozanov,” he hissed, “I don’t - yes of course I fucking know what’s in a condom, I -” he paused very suddenly, his rusty cog of a brain finally clicking slowly over. “You’ve had someone try and steal your sperm?” he asked, voice a little higher than he meant. “To like. Get pregnant?”

“Yes, that,” Ilya said, Shane could hear him snapping his fingers. “Baby trap. Have, uh, rich baby daddy.”

“Fuck,” Shane said. Svetlana didn’t know that he was not Jane. He was so cold all of a sudden, like he had stepped out onto the ice as is, no gear, bare feet. “Do you have a - a -”

“No. Whole world would know. Probably. If I did. No. She. She was pregnant for a while. And told me. And then she lost it.”

Shane considered. He fiddled with the hand towel hanging near his face. Avoided his reflection smushed up against himself. “An abortion?”

Ilya sighed. “No,” he said. “Other thing. Mistake thing.”

Shane closed his eyes. “Miscarriage,” he said. Rolled his face over the mirror until he was on a new cool part of the pane and the reflection left over was hidden in condensation. “When?”

“First year of being captain,” Ilya said. “I thought she was just random hook up. She had planned it. Came to my house three months later to say she was pregnant with my baby and she had lawyer. I panicked. Sveta was with me and she handled. Talked to lawyers. I said I would want to be. Part of baby’s life. And give money. Two weeks later her lawyer says to my lawyer to close case. Baby gone.”

Ilya had said so much more than Shane had expected. Maybe the most words in English in a row that Shane had ever heard him say that weren’t just chirps or sex addled mumbling. His face was damp from the condensation on the mirror. He didn’t know what to say.

“Fuck,” he said. Breathed out and in again sharply and tried again. “Ilya. I. That’s fucked up. Sorry.”

A long silence. Just the two of them breathing over the phone. If Shane strained he thought he could hear Ilya’s breath catch and release ragged.

“So,” Ilya said, firm. “Svetlana. She is. Rude to steal your number. Rude to text you like that. But she is just being my friend. Does not want me to be. Hurt.”

He wonders if he and Ilya should have tried talking on the phone a long time ago. If there was something about the magic of being able to hear each other without being seen, the intimacy in sharing breathing without touch, that let them actually talk. Without Shane’s awkwardness. And fear.

“Okay,” he said. “I understand.”

Ilya sniffs a little, clears his throat. He had sounded like he had just woken up when he’d called. Shane imagined him lying in bed, hair messy. Pinks cheek. Naked maybe. Pulled focus back to the phone as Ilya spoke again.

“You will not kick Pike out?”

Shane considered it for a half moment. Going over to Hayden’s bed and shaking him awake and telling him to please fuck off for a few hours so that Shane’s secret lover could come over. Ew. Not lover. Secret... secret.

“No.”

“Come to my house?” Ilya asked. Cleared his throat. “I have wanted you to talk to me. And now you are, so, even if you are only not mad for today, maybe we could. Maybe you could come to my house and I show you I am fine.”

“Um,” Shane hedged. His hand hurt where he was clutching the sink. Hadn’t realised he had been holding it so tightly. His knuckles stood out starkly. “Ilya.”

“My dick was not hurt yesterday,” Ilya said. “My mouth was not hurt. Only one eye hurt and I can look at how hot and pretty you are with just one eye.”

Shane reminded himself that he found this annoying, and not sexy at all. And that he was a bit hungover. And that. Ilya had told someone about him. About how he. Took things. How Ilya knew he took things. About the tooth.

As if hearing Shane’s thoughts over the phone, Ilya changed tack again. “I miss you,” he said. Like it was a thing they said to each other. Like it was something that didn’t burn them both.

“Send me your address.”

Chapter End Notes

CW a hook up in Ilya's past steals a condom they used to self impregnate herself so as to 'baby trap' Ilya. She has a miscarriage early on. No details are discussed.

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

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

Hayden had been both bemused and worried about Shane going out, especially as Shane had only relented enough to say he was going to see a friend. He pointed out that they had to be at the airport at one, and that Shane would have to be back here at noon for the team bus, and Shane never missed the team bus but he might if he was planning anything more than a quick coffee catch up with his 'friend'. Hayden had also pointed out that if Shane was going to go see his Boston girl he could just tell him that. Then, while Shane tied his shoes, pointed out how hungover Shane still looked, and how he knew Shane was still feeling crap, and c'mon man, don't push yourself.

Shane left with the promise that he would call Hayden if he was going to be anywhere near running late, and that he wasn't going to 'push himself'.

Managed to make these promises and leave the hotel while looking calm and in control of himself, and then the moment he was tucked into the back of his uber, hoodie down over his eyebrows, he let himself hunch in around the nausea that was his stomach.

He didn't know what this was. Him. Going to Ilya's house. Was he giving in? He didn't know what the rules were here. There was no social agreement he knew of on how to handle it when your... something lets you know that he knows you steal random shit from him by giving you a tooth, and then you ghost him, and then he gets hurt and you freak out and his friend texts you cryptically, and he sounds so sad that you agree to come over.

He was pretty sure most people would find this situation difficult to handle, not just him. He was well aware that he often just... missed cues that other people around him seemed to understand implicitly.

Jacki had tried to talk to him about it once, while he was helping her with the dishes and Hayden was putting the girls to bed. She'd started by talking about how he was such a reactive player on the ice. How she knew that he could just *see* the plays like they were being announced a second before. How he and Hayden and their team mates communicated on the ice near silently, in a way that the average person (or hockey player) could never understand.

He had blushed a little at this onslaught of compliments that seemed to be coming out of nowhere. Mumbled a little about how he had been practicing it all his life, how it was second nature now.

She had nodded along with him, handing him dripping dishes to dry and put away, and then continued the onslaught in a direction he hadn't been expecting. By asking if maybe he felt like an onlooker sometimes, in non hockey situations. If it ever felt like everyone else had been taught rules to the game that he never had.

He hadn't said anything. Kept drying dishes.

She had kept on, careful, keeping her eyes on the sink. Asked if maybe the reason he didn't like going out with the team was because off ice they seemed to switch codes, and were harder to understand.

He had said he didn't like to go out with the team because it was always too loud, and he was a professional athlete and needed to go to bed early, and do his pre-bed stretches, and that actually he needed to go because he had told his mum he would call soon to talk about a - uh - sponsorship opportunity or something and he was sorry to leave the rest of the dishes but he'd do them all next time he came over.

-

Ilya opened the door before Shane could knock twice on it. His hand was still caught midair, and he dropped it awkward and stiff down to his side before turning sideways and slipping himself past Ilya and into the house.

Ilya snorted, but didn't comment until he'd shut his door on the outside, and turned to lean against it, watching with eyebrows raised as Shane shuffled his shoes off.

One of his eyes had a bloody smear across the white, like someone had painted it there. He had a nasty bruise on his forehead. He wasn't holding himself like he was in pain - and that was something Shane was good at spotting the cues for. He was okay. Smirking at Shane like a fucking asshole, but okay.

“I talked to Sveta,” he said, once Shane had nudged his shoes into alignment against the wall. “She is sorry for stepping over. She also says we are freaks for each other.”

Shane blinked at him, then shook his head a little. He hadn’t thought any of this properly through. Which he hated. He always thought things through, except when it came to making ill advised decisions around Ilya. He tried to think his Ilya decisions through, tried to make a plan with it, and then he still somehow ended up here. Blinking at the most annoying man to ever exist.

“Why would you tell her about us?” he asked, winced at his use of ‘us’. Hoped Ilya would not point out that they were not an ‘us’. “I thought we weren’t - we were keeping it a secret.”

Ilya’s face dropped the part of the smirk that was real amusement, only kept the facade. “I only tell her small things. She does not even know you are not girl. You think I tell her that my Jane steals my pens and my spare change and she immediately thinks, ah yes. Classic Hollander move, I see him do that on ice. No.”

Shane had been looking at Ilya’s face, looking at his bloodied eye, but he dropped his gaze now, focused intently on Ilya’s socked feet instead. There was a hole in the left one and the side of his big toe was sticking out.

“I just,” he said stiffly, “just. Don’t like. Not knowing.”

Ilya waited, and when Shane didn’t continue his halting speech, sighed and pushed away from the door.

“Come have coffee,” he said, striding past Shane without touching him. “You look like shit, Hollander.”

Shane should leave. He had confirmation that Ilya was more or less fine. He followed after Ilya, trailing a few steps behind like some stupid sad dog.

“Sit,” Ilya directed, once they were in his kitchen. He gestured at some stools next to the island counter he was walking around to get the the coffee maker on the far bench.

Shane sat. Things were easier in his brain when he just did as Ilya said. Little things like that. Small, clear instructions. He wasn’t like. Always doing what Ilya told him to do. Obviously.

“You want yours black,” Ilya said, not looking at Shane. “With no sugars or anything, yes? Boring coffee for boring man?”

Shane folded his arms on top of the counter and pillowed his face on them. “Yes.”

They were both silent while Ilya made coffee, the machine making enough noise for both of them.

Shane kept his head on his arms, eyes heavy lidded as he watched Ilya’s back. Didn’t move when Ilya turned and put the hot cup of coffee in front of him, or when Ilya dragged one of the stools around so he could sit opposite Shane at the counter.

Closed his eyes fully when Ilya reached a hand out to drag his fingers through Shane’s hair. It was already a little sticky uppy, and Ilya’s fingertips felt nice against Shane’s scalp. Soothing over the part of his skull where his headache was living.

“You have been ignoring me,” Ilya said. Straight into it, a strange thing for Ilya to do when ‘it’ was not sex or hockey. “I thought it was just embarrassment. Then you ignore me longer. I think you are angry. Then you text me and talk to me and come to my house when I ask, just because my eyeball gets a poke, and I think. I don’t know. I think maybe you miss me like I miss you.”

His hand is still on Shane’s head, heavy and warm, cupping the back of his skull. Shane wants to keep his eyes closed and stay in the heat of it forever.

“I don’t know what I think,” he finds himself mumbling.

“Hm?”

He’d spoken too into his arms. He clears his throat. Keeps his eyes shut. “I don’t know what I’ve been thinking,” he says, clearer. “I was embarrassed. And angry. But also. I don’t know.”

“Not often for Shane Hollander to say he does not know,” Ilya said. He withdrew his hand now, and there was a short pause while he took a sip of his own coffee. “Perhaps he is too much of light weight for so much drinking, hm?”

Shane turned his head so he could hide his face fully in his arms now. So he could open his eyes to the warm darkness between his hoodie and the counter top.

“How’d you know I went drinking?”

“Internet is full of photos of sore winners drinking and throwing up,” Ilya said, and then as if he could feel Shane’s stomach going cold, added; “no vomit photos of golden boy, but I still see him in backgrounds looking too green.”

Okay. Good. His mother wouldn’t kill him then. He could look like he was a fun guy, going to clubs with his team, but not look like an irresponsible guy drinking too much. Even though he was and he had.

“No one updated the media on your condition,” Shane said after a few more moments of Ilya drinking his coffee in silence. “I didn’t know if you were okay. I was trying not to text you. I didn’t want to-”

To what? To lose by breaking his spell of not texting Ilya? The only way to not lose that was to never ever text Ilya again and he knew he wasn’t strong enough for that. He would have broken at some point. Probably too late for Ilya to text him back. And then what? He would just. Wait to see if he lost twice by waiting to see if Ilya would ever text him again?

He felt himself spiralling.

Dragged himself upright. Did not look at Ilya. Took hold of his coffee, blew on it, took a sip.

“I give you my tooth,” Ilya says. “To say. Sveta says I should have just said it. That just my tooth was not enough. But it was to say that I like it. When you want my things.”

Shane took another mouthful of coffee, held it in his mouth for a moment before swallowing. He couldn't look at Ilya when Ilya's voice dropped low and earnest like that.

“How long did you know?” Shane asked. “That I'd been. Taking things.”

“A while,” Ilya shrugged. “First thing I knew for sure was lighter.”

Not the whole time, then. Maybe half the time.

“Did you. Did you always know. What I took?” He was thinking about the humiliation of the tiny hotel soaps. Of the grotesque nature of his want.

“No,” Ilya sounded curious. “Sometimes I notice, and sometimes I think I notice but do not know what you take.”

“And you didn't say anything,” Shane said. If he kept his gaze focused on his coffee he could keep doing this. “You didn't. I don't know. Think it was weird. Want me to stop.”

“Hollander,” Ilya sighed. “Ugh. You are so boring. How do you do this? Yes I thought it was weird. Does not mean I did not like it. Weird and boring Shane Hollander wants to take bits of me to keep. Like I am something special. Going to gift shop after the ride.”

Shane wished he didn't like how much he liked listening to Ilya say things like this. The way he made himself sound so huffy and fond at the same time.

“How am I weird and boring?”

“You just are,” Ilya huffed, “you are mess of things that I like. Boring and clever. Boring and weird. Boring and hot.”

“Right,” Shane said, “but always boring?” He felt himself smiling despite himself.

“Yes,” Ilya laughed, “always boring. Shane. Are you still boring and angry at me?”

Yes. No. Maybe. No. He put his coffee down and slid his gaze from the half filled cup to Ilya’s chin. Shook his head.

“No more than usual,” he said, voice a little weak. “I should have texted you earlier, last night. Instead of drinking.”

“Yes,” Ilya said. “If you had texted while I was still in hospital I would have called and been so pathetic to you, saying to please come nurse me to health with your mouth. I would say the doctors told me I needed to see freckles right now or I would die. That they told me I needed your cock in my mouth.”

Shane snorted. He was too tired to act as affronted as he ought to be. “I would have told you to fuck off,” he said.

“Yes,” Ilya nodded, “and then you would ask for address and I would tell you.”

“And I’d come,” Shane agreed.

“At least once,” Ilya added, winked.

“You still want that,” Shane said. Didn’t want to ask it, so it came out flat. “Even though I’m like. This.”

Ilya scoffed. His hand was reaching across the counter again, and he gripped Shane’s chin with his thumb and forefinger and tipped his head up just enough that Shane’s view shifted from chin to eyes.

“I want you just like this,” he said. “I want you stealing my shopping list so you can keep me. I want you with your face so scrunched and mad. Yes. You are very hot and very good, Hollander, of course I want that.”

Shane reminded himself that ‘that’ was just hooking up, and his face burned hot, but he couldn’t keep his heart from beating hard and hopeful in his chest. Hopeful for what he couldn’t guess. Wouldn’t.

“I kept your tooth,” Shane said.

“I know,” Ilya rolled his eye, “was beautiful gift to give. I know you are too polite to throw out gift.”

“God, I hate you,” Shane said, meaning it not at all, and grinning as Ilya grinned back at him.

“Save it for the reporters, Hollander,” he said, leaned over the counter, “they would love that soundbite.”

He kissed Shane hard and hot, and a little wet. Shane kissed back, his hands moving immediately to hold Ilya’s face, to drag him closer.

It had taken a while for Shane to decide to sell his Montreal house. He and Ilya had their new place in Ottawa, and the cottage as well, and no reason to need the place. If they were visiting the Pikes they would stay with them, and the only other reason they ever really went to Montreal now were for games, in which case they stayed in the hotel with their team.

Shane had just. Wanted to hold onto it for a while. It had taken a long time to process leaving his Montreal team, to process how he had left, and it felt like cutting a tether.

It was a tether that needed to be cut, though. So here they were now, packing up all the remnants of Shane's personal items. He had arranged for a company to move all the furniture and accoutrements out and donate what they could.

Shane had already done the lions share of the move over the months leading up to him truly living in Ottawa with Ilya. Had brought his things over a duffle bag at a time until his Montreal place was nearly only basic necessities.

There will still some books though, and some old medications in the cupboards to throw out. Old uniforms, some medals, and the memory boxes he'd forgotten under his bed. He had a few photo albums at their new house, but they were the carefully collated ones rather than the messy moments he kept with an idea of scrap booking that never came to fruition.

He hadn't forgotten about The Shoebox. It had just. Momentarily slipped his mind.

"Ah ha," Ilya called, loud and triumphant while Shane was standing in the kitchen trying to decide if he should just chuck the old spices or bring them home. "I have found it, moy lyubimyy!"

"It?" Shane called back, dropping the little cartons into the rubbish because upon peering inside the powders looked clumped and that felt gross.

"Come see," Ilya replied, and then cackled. Which was unnerving.

By the time Shane made it to the bedroom he already knew what he was going to see, but it was still... a little embarrassing to see Ilya sitting on the stripped bed with the shoebox open in front of him, holding up a little plastic bag with a tooth in it.

“You kept it,” Ilya said.

“I told you I did,” Shane replied, leaned against the doorway in an attempt at cool collection.

“Yes,” Ilya said. “But you kept on keeping. All of it. Even when you have me always.”

Shane shrugged.

“Is this soap?” Ilya asked then, putting the tooth bag down on his knee and pulling out a small round lump. “Hotel soap?”

Shane didn’t reply except to grimace a little. Ilya could see exactly what it was, he didn’t need Shane to admit to it.

Ilya cackled again, the fucking menace, and delved deeper. “I like you keeping my underwear like a prize,” he said, “I thought you would just wear them like normal, not hoard.”

“Shut up.”

“I thought you must be taking cigarettes,” Ilya said then, lifting up and dropping several of them, “I was always running out sooner than expected. I never knew for sure, though.”

“I had to take those,” Shane said, “someone had to start weaning you off them.”

“Ah, yes,” Ilya nodded, “this is why you take. No other reason.” He looked up at Shane, and then patted the bed next to him. “Sit. Tell me why.”

“I’ve told you why before,” Shane huffed, but crossed over to the bed and sat anyway. “We’ve talked about this.”

“Mm, yes. Maybe,” Ilya allowed. Pressed a kiss to Shane’s temple and then quickly to his mouth as well. “But I think there is more. Tell me.”

Shane let himself lean into Ilya, dropped his weight against his sturdy shoulders. Stared into the collection. Some of the soaps were warped into each other, melted by time and bad storage.

He gestured to the other shoeboxes still on the floor. The ones Ilya had opened to check their contents and found them full of photos and certificates. Paper work and wrist bands and game schedules. Proof of Shane’s every day life and work.

“I wanted proof,” he said eventually. “I wanted something tangible to look back on. I wanted. A record of us.”

Ilya sat with that a moment. Squeezed his arm tight around Shane. “We have photos together,” he said. “At our games and events. Professional photos. No casual photos. No you and me photos, only Hollander and Rozanov photos.”

“Yeah,” Shane said. “I knew I couldn’t have photos. I just wanted something.”

“Okay,” Ilya said. He dug back into the shoebox for a moment before pulling out the dollar note that started it all. “We could, uh, frame? Some of these memories. Put with our other memories. Maybe not frame the soaps.”

“Definitely not the soap,” Shane agreed.

“Maybe the underwear, yes?”

“No.”

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all for reading!! I have another story in mind that I want to write soooooo watch this space I guess? xxxx

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