

Up Close and Personal

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Up Close and Personal

by [Spotsandsocks](#)

Summary

An AU where Shane and Ilya meet in very different circumstances.

Ilya's a generational talent, a star and recognised wherever he goes thanks to his talent on stage and the lucrative magazine and advertising contracts his fame brings him. He lives his life in Boston as best he can but recently someone has taken against him and while the threatening letters were unpleasant they didn't bother him much.

He was more bothered by the knife in his side that stopped him performing for months, but now he's healed and due on stage in a few hours.

He hopes he can still make it because he hadn't been expecting a stranger with uncertain motives to approach him in a deserted alley.

When he finds out exactly who he is his life gets much more complicated.

Ilya Rozanov has various problems in his life but right now the most pressing one is the dark haired freckled man who's crashed into his life.

Notes

Welcome to a Hollanov Bodyguard au.

I'm just playing around with this right now but thought I'd get this first bit out and see if anyone is interested in reading about bodyguard Shane and his annoying client Ilya Rozanov

I am not saying this won't grow in size and word length because if you've read my other aus you'll know that would be foolish but.... I'm not planning a lot of plot so fingers crossed

I won't be publishing chapters that regularly so read along if you will, it's nice to have you with me and if anyone wants to cheer me on it'll probably inspire me to write more and faster.

Chapt 2 is pretty done and will be headed out soonish

Just the tags to do now... I hate doing the tags!! Tags are likely to get added to as we go and we may have smut - moderate or more intense who knows at this point. We'll see how it goes and how well the boys get on... 😊😊

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

Chapter 1

"Ilya Rozanov?"

His name, an unexpected question, spoken in an unfamiliar voice draws Ilya's attention from the fascinating middle distance he'd been staring at and into the dark eyes of a stranger.

He blinks stupidly at the man standing nearby, he hadn't even noticed him arriving in the alley. He looks to be about the same age as him, he's certainly as tall as he is, maybe a little wider it's hard to tell with the distance and the jacket.

There are a few dark strands of dark hair sticking out from the back of a wool hat and the tip of his nose is turning red.

He doesn't look particularly dangerous but that's what he thought the last time too.

Once he's taken in the view Ilya realises that the man is the only other person around and that he's blocking the exit from the alley to the street.

That particular realisation sends a chill rushing down his spine and highlights the fact that Ilya really hadn't been paying nearly as much attention to his surroundings as he should have been.

Fuck.

Svetlana is going to kill him if he gets murdered in an alleyway on the evening of his return performance.

The stranger is still waiting for confirmation of his identity but Ilya doesn't answer, instead he just keeps his eyes on the stranger who's slowly moving closer.

The drag on his cigarette helps to settle his nerves. No, he's definitely not thrilled to find himself alone in a deserted alley with a man he's never seen before.

Reckless, stupid, selfish.

The words echo in his head in a voice that's far more familiar than the stranger's.

Those are the words his father would say to him right now if he were here.

Except Ilya doesn't need his father's censure to remind him of his flaws, he knows what they are and he knows he should know better by now but he hasn't learnt.

He never learns.

After all if a broken rib, and what he likes to think of as a light flesh wound haven't knocked any sense into him yet what will?

Like they say in the worst of the tabloids he's a lost cause. Doomed to self destruct, that's if he gets the chance, maybe he won't last that long after all, maybe someone else is about to choose how this all ends for him.

On the bright side, at least if he's about to get killed he won't have to see his father this evening or hear the inevitable complaints about how he's doing everything wrong.

Keeping his face blank Ilya looks the newcomer up and down and blows the smoke from his cigarette in his direction while contemplating just how much trouble he's in right now.

The man is definitely unfamiliar, he's sure he'd remember if he'd seen him before, dark hair, dark eyes. His lips are pink and plush and look temptingly soft. He has freckles too.

Surely no one with freckles that cute can be dangerous.

The pink mouth is stretched to one side, it's kind of almost a smile but not really. The attempt at a friendly expression looks genuine enough but maybe a little unpractised.

Ilya's heart starts to beat a little faster. It's just nerves, he's not actually scared. He's not going to jump to conclusions. He's fine, everything is fine.

This situation could be about anything; an old hook up he doesn't recognise because he was far too drunk, a crazy fan who wants a lock of his hair or worse, a slightly less crazy fan just looking for an autograph or maybe he's someone new to the business wanting a mentor or words of advice.

It's hard to guess what the motivation behind this ambush could be just from looking at him.

This man could be a paparazzi hack looking for a scoop or he could be the ex boyfriend of someone Ilya slept with who isn't happy to learn Ilya Rozanov was a far superior lover than they were.

Of course, Ilya swallows around the sudden dryness in his throat, he could also be the mysterious 'someone' behind those letters.

The letters with the threats he's been getting.

This could be the same person behind the attack that left him injured and unable to work for months.

They stare at each other; the stranger's gaze is openly assessing while Ilya looks back rather more cautiously.

There's probably enough space around his potential attacker that he could get away if he tried. He's fast, agile and the man doesn't look particularly dangerous. Although that might be a side effect of all the handsome; he takes that aspect of the mystery man in again, dark hair, dark eyes, not exactly smiling but not not smiling either. There's a look in his eyes Ilya can't quite name but might be able to soon.

The man speaks again -

"Shane Hollander."

It's an introduction and the name sounds vaguely familiar.

He frowns as Shane Hollander holds out a hand, Ilya at least has the sense to check his surroundings again before accepting it briefly then letting his hand drop, ignoring the tingling the warmth of his skin brought with it.

He takes another drag of his cigarette. Did he get a message about a Shane Hollander? Is he meant to meet a Shane Hollander today? It's a vague possibility now he's heard the name. He's just not that sure, it's hard to keep track of it all sometimes; he's either too busy, too drunk, too tired or too sad.

Hollander's chin tilts towards the wall Ilya's been leaning on.

"You know you really shouldn't be smoking out here, especially on your own."

He carries on ignoring the no smoking sign on the wall behind him. A shrug and pout seem a sufficient response but he adds "Ok." anyways to be polite.

It's always prudent to be polite to potential mad men who might be waiting for the right moment to stab you.

The man waits; silent, patient, but with an air of quiet expectation. The extended silence doesn't seem to be making this Hollander person uncomfortable even if Ilya can admit he's becoming more on edge himself with every second that ticks past. That's only because Sveta has gotten into his head about the "danger" and the small mostly insignificant fact that the letters and the threats held within them are still being sent.

Not by this man though... he doesn't look the type.

Svetlana's voice is suddenly loud in his head, she's saying in scathing tones - "oh there's a type is there? And what does the 'type' look like Ilya, do assassins come with labels now?"

Assassin is just the type of over dramatic word she'd use. Ilya isn't important enough to assassinate. He's just annoyed someone somewhere a little too much. Is not that serious.

This man isn't a danger to him... probably.

Ilya studies his unknown companion, no he's sure of it. This "Hollander" person doesn't feel like a threat.

The silence finally breaks with Hollander's voice again.

"I've seen clips of your performances online. You're very talented."

Ilya knows that so there's no point being modest about it.

"Yes."

That makes Hollander laugh, it's a short bark of a sound but it's kind of a nice noise anyway and those pink lips twitch as looks away, he's obviously trying to hide his expression but doesn't quite manage it and so Ilya discovers Shane Hollander has a cute smile as well as cute freckles.

Assassins probably don't have cute smiles or do they? Ilya thinks about it, might be a useful skill in an assassin actually.

Ilya tells his brain to be quiet. This isn't an assassin or a hitman of any type. This is just... a fan of his work, but, and this is the important question, is he a crazy one?

Is always possible, there are many many people out there who can not tell the difference between private and public life for people who are famous but Ilya doesn't think that Hollander looks like an over invested fan of the arts and Ilya knows the type pretty well by now.

Hollander doesn't look like he's a frequent visitor to museums or the ballet or art galleries. He has trainers on, and sweatpants and he looks more like a jock than anything else. Some kind of athlete maybe. Maybe even a professional one, Ilya doesn't pay much attention to sports but he doubts he's a basketball player or a sprinter, he has the wrong body type, maybe baseball? Not football either, his list of possible sports is running out. Hockey? Boston has a hockey team right? That would fit.

Hollander is obviously strong, you can see that from the broad shape of him, muscles pressing against the fabric his jacket sleeves and stupid sweatpants.

Hollander stands up straighter and folds his arms, causing his jacket to flap open a little which means Ilya is able to notice something else about him too.

Unless he's mistaken it looks very much like he can see the strap of a holster. Which means Hollander is wearing a gun.

Fuck.

A chill travels straight down the centre of his spine and Ilya is forced to acknowledge that Hollander is right; he really shouldn't be in an alley all alone with a man who's carrying a concealed weapon- even if he does have a nice laugh and the most stunning freckles Ilya has ever seen.

It also occurs to him that it's hardly the time to be thinking about freckles but he is. Obviously the depth of his reckless, stupid selfishness knows no limits.

Ilya thinks that if his luck has finally run out, which wouldn't be a complete surprise at this point, because he's been using it up pretty fast it would be just like him to be thinking about freckles and not something more important when he dies.

Watching the other man Ilya can't help wondering if his luck has really just run out.

Ironically he'd had a fight with Sveta last week on the subject of him taking risks and being stupid, she'd ended it by yelling at him loud enough to send anyone close by to leave as fast as they could. She'd been saying something about him not being a cat with lives to spare. He'd actually agreed with her point, even if he would never admit that, if he were a cat he'd be down to about three lives by now.

He stands up straighter. At least if he's going to get himself killed in this lonely alley at least it will be by a hot assassin/hitman.

It's a small consolation that the last thing he'll see will be something so pretty.

Brain still avoiding the more important issues at hand Ilya wonders if it's messed up to be attracted to someone you think might be here to kill you.

Probably.

Hollander moves slightly, just a shift of weight from one foot to another but it throws another shiver down Ilya's spine and his heart thumps loudly.

Maybe he doesn't actually want to get murdered.

Ilya considers his options; he could maybe take him, knock him down and run past, get away, get back inside in time before he gets the gun out.

He ought to try, even if it's just so Svetlana doesn't cry again. He hates it when she's sad. She cried a lot after the last attack, but more angry tears than sad because she was furious with him. He understands, she'd been badly shaken by that evening and he knows she loves him and would mourn his death, one of only a few people who would.

Yes he ought to try and live a little longer for her at least. He'd also like to perform again at least once more and the new kid needs someone to look out for him, Marlowe would be pretty pissed too, if he had to step up and take the lead at au ch short notice. Cliff is good but not that good. He'd need more time to practice the role.

Yes Ilya decides, it would be best all round if he didn't get murdered right now.

So what to do next to avoid it? Ilya knows he's strong, fit, you have to be to do what he does, so he's got a chance as long as the gun stays out of it. His muscles are already tense, ready to run or fight he's not sure yet.

Last time everything happened so fast he'd had no time to have an existential crisis about his life ending, today is different and Ilya's actually surprised to discover that against all his expectations a small measure of self preservation remains buried deep inside him.

He actually wants to live and maybe not just for the sake of a handful of friends but for himself.

He still has things he wants to do.

Inexplicably while considering the puzzle of Shane Hollander and the gun he's carrying Ilya discovers he doesn't want to die, all alone, murdered in an alley, by a stranger- even if that stranger is gorgeous.

As he stares at him Hollander flushes, cheeks turning pinker under those stupid freckles. He shrugs and his nose crinkles up as he says.

"Yes, it's a gun."

The words aren't a threat, they're just a simple statement of fact.

Ilya returns them with his own simple truth.

"I know."

Hollander's eyebrows lift, not by much but enough to notice.

"I prefer not to use it but it's part of the job. To be honest it should probably bother you a bit more than it does. I might not be very nice."

The statement ends in an actual smile that he's allowed to see and Ilya quite inappropriately likes it, he feels his own mouth twitch in response.

He knows he should be more scared but he's not really, he's still confident he could get away if he tried and flirting with danger always did turn him on. Deciding to embrace his reputation of recklessness he lets himself smirk across the few feet of space between them.

"Oh... you are nice?"

Hollander shrugs, "I'm betting I'm nicer than you. I hear you're quite the asshole."

Despite everything the words and the slight sparkle in those very pretty brown eyes makes Ilya snort, genuinely amused. He points at his chest.

"I am asshole? I am not one with gun in alley, being all mysterious and dangerous."

Hollander blinks at him, his expression changing once again, the life and animation draining from it.

"No you're not. I am."

And Ilya can't help notice that the sparkle in his eyes is gone, as is the smile.

So as previously stated -

Fuck.

It takes three more heartbeats for something else to happen and when it does, it's rather underwhelming; Hollander rolls his eyes and shakes his head.

"You have no idea who I am do you?"

The tone is mildly irritated but not particularly hostile. He'd say frustrated or exasperated if he had to choose because he's been working on his vocabulary.

Ilya shrugs, the tension in the air gone almost as soon as it appeared.

"I do. You are Shane Hollander- you said this. Yes?"

There's a heavy huff of exasperated air, then-

"I don't know if it's better or worse this way! Fuck, I knew this would be difficult."

Hollander seems to be talking to himself.

"I bet you don't even read your messages! You did know I was arriving this week right?"

Ilya's face must transmit the answer clearly enough because Hollander's shoulders slump and he sighs loudly.

Ilya has to bite his lip to keep from smiling. He knew this man was not a danger to him and now he knows he's even cuter when he's annoyed.

Hollander's hand waves around in the air in a frustrated gesture that's another thing that Ilya probably shouldn't find so appealing.

"Unbelievable!"

Hollander covers his eyes in despair and Ilya is enjoying his drama very much.

Large hands move around again.

"I don't know if I can work like this? You obviously have no idea about personal safety! Out here all alone, talking to strangers, practically asking to be attacked again..."

Oh, of course he knows about that, everyone does, it's not like it is secret, it was all over the news and magazines but still Ilya finds he's annoyed that Hollander knows about that night, about the mistake he made then.

His irritation leaks into his voice.

"Was not attacked, was just a fight..."

The scoffing noise Hollander makes before he speaks is just plain rude and not appealing at all.

"A fight that the police confirmed was staged and ended with you getting stabbed by someone who got away. You could have been killed and they could be waiting to try again."

His scorn filled protest is automatic now, he's tired of people making a fuss about that. It wasn't even that bad and it definitely (probably) wasn't a deliberate attack.

"Was only lightly stabbed, barely a scratch, was not even that serious... "

His fingers absently travel to where the recently healed scar is, on his left side just above his hip, and he tenses at the memory of the pain he felt that night. He wakes up sometimes remembering it, that and Svetlana's fierce scream of rage when she saw the blood and he dropped to his knees, staring in dazed confusion at the red stain on his hand and shirt.

He notices Hollander noticing his movements before he's even realised what he's done and is annoyed with himself for revealing even that much of how he truly feels about that experience to this man.

Hollander snorts inelegantly at the obvious lie,

"Well everyone else thinks it was very deliberate and pretty damn serious and I know you couldn't work for months."

Handsome or not Ilya's not sure he likes Hollander very much anymore.

"Who are you?"

The man holds out his hand again and Ilya takes it a second time, more out of habit than anything else. It's very warm, larger than his and Ilya can feel the calluses that tell him the man works out. Not that he didn't know that already from just looking at him.

"I told you- Shane Hollander and if you read your messages you'd know I'm your new close protection officer. I've been hired to make sure you don't end up dead."

Ilya runs the rapidly spoken, unfamiliar English words through his head more slowly.

Close protection?

What does that mean?

This Hollander person is overly interested in his safety and he has a gun he doesn't like to use.

Protection?

The word gets translated into Russian and back again. The puzzle pieces slide into place and Ilya doesn't like the picture they make.

"Bodyguard?"

The word is coated in disdain that narrows Hollander's eyes immediately.

"You? You are bodyguard?"

He can feel his eyebrows reach their maximum height. It's ridiculous. He doesn't need protection no matter what those letters are saying will happen to him.

"For me? They think I need bodyguard?"

He lets out a stream of Russian that ends with a curse.

Hollander won't understand it but Iyla thinks he'd be unbothered by the outburst even if he could speak Russian because he seems completely unfazed by the temper tantrum and his own words remain calm.

"Yes, they do and I've seen enough of the threats to agree with them. You need me."

He's never heard anything more wrong in his life. He doesn't need anyone least of all a bodyguard and certainly not this particular bodyguard.

"Is stupid! I am Russian, I protect myself!"

His cigarette waves around leaving a trail of smoke behind it. He glares a glare that has been the undoing of many who have crossed him. It doesn't seem to register with Hollander even when he intensifies it and mutters furiously.

"Do not need babysitter."

Hollander is obviously as unimpressed by the disgust smothering the last word as he is the glare.

"Well important people obviously disagree with you and they're certainly paying enough for my services. They've bought you the best, maybe appreciate that. They must think you're worth it."

There's something lurking behind Hollander's eyes that suggests he has his opinions or more likely own doubts about that. Ilya stares back even harder, cursing him again in Russian under his breath but Hollander doesn't even seem to notice this time.

"I'm not officially starting until tomorrow, so I'm not on the clock yet , I was just passing and saw you out here, wanted to introduce myself, see what I was working with."

The pause that follows that statement is loud and Ilya doesn't particularly like what it implies.

He meets Hollander's eyes defiantly and despite himself finds he still likes the spark he sees there. This man has steel inside him and Iyla won't be able to get his own way easily which isn't a thrill in any way at all.

Hollander's lips twitch before he speaks. A small flash of humour or something else, perhaps he appreciates a challenge too.

"You really should go inside now. Like I said it's not a good idea to be out here all alone."

Then Hollander starts to walk away from him. He's only taken a few steps before he turns back with a sly grin that Iyla can't decide if he wants to slap off his face or remove in some other way.

"Come on.."

It's annoying being told what to do, mostly because he was going to go back inside anyway, just before Hollander showed up.

If he's out here much longer Sveta will get stressed and that is not something anyone wants.

Grudgingly Ilya stubs out his cigarette on the wall and takes a step forward - he's just doing it because it's getting colder and he wants to go back inside to reassure his friend he's not been murdered recently, not because of any other reason, like doing what his want to be bodyguard is telling him to do.

He trails a few steps behind the man who's just turned his world upside down, already silently plotting how to get rid of him.

Then to add insult to injury the man he thinks he might actually hate says far too casually.

"And you might want to think about quitting smoking too. Can't be good for your performance. "

Ilya refuses to rise to the bait, he's pretty sure Hollander is just trying to annoy him now.

"Oh and I have tickets for tonight, I'm looking forward to seeing what you can do, never been to a ballet before. I've heard you're meant to be pretty good."

Hollander doesn't see the expression on his face because he's turned away and is walking off again, Ilya calls out anyway, his voice as offended as his face.

"Pretty good?! Hollander I am best! Is why people are stabbing at me! Trying to kill me! They are jealous, want my spot. Take my place."

Without turning around Hollander raises his voice to answer.

"Thought it was just a fight and only a light stabbing?"

They're already at the stage door so Ilya stops as his new, unwanted and quite unnecessary bodyguard continues onwards.

He raises his voice at the retreating figure. Yes he does hate him. A lot.

"I do not want bodyguard. I do not need bodyguard!"

Shane Hollander turns around. He looks far too amused for Ilya's liking.

"You won't be saying that after I save your life!"

And then he's gone, disappearing around the corner and out of sight. Ilya stares at the empty space a moment longer and then with nothing else to do goes back inside looking for someone to yell at about the decision to hire him a bodyguard with annoyingly gorgeous freckles.

Shane walks away from the encounter with his new client far more confused than he'd expected to be or that he'd let on to said client.

Rozanov probably wouldn't have noticed anything odd but Shane thinks he covered his traitorously fast heart and flushed cheeks pretty well anyway.

Those cheeks heat up again in the cold Boston air and he does his best to ignore it. It's just embarrassing to have been so affected by him in such a short amount of time, especially as the dancer had been mildly obnoxious. Shane promises himself that it'll be different next time, next time he'll be prepared.

The sentiment is undermined by the urge to look back in case he can still see him standing there.

Stubborn self control keeps his head facing forward as Shane wonders if you can actually prepare for being around that kind of person...

Possibly not, it's just an unfortunate truth that in the flesh Ilya Rozanov is quite literally breathtakingly stunning.

He hadn't really been expecting that or the way his chest had tightened or how his pulse had jumped when they shook hands. Twice.

Shane didn't know why he'd been so affected. It's not like he didn't know what the man looked like. He's seen dozens of pictures of Rozanov, who hasn't, he's one of the world's most photographed men after all and Shane knew it was completely normal to consider him handsome. It's practically a cliché to be of the opinion that the greatest ballet dancer of his generation is attractive. He can hear Rose now - oh he found the hot guy hot! What a shocker.

He should have been better prepared. He's watched clips of the man performing on stage and some interviews so yes he'd already been impressed with his body and skill and he'd heard his voice and that accent before but it hadn't made him feel any of the things he'd just been feeling.

Who could have predicted that a face to face encounter with Boston's Principal dancer wasn't at all like looking at a dull static picture or watching a YouTube clip.

In real life Rozanov was simply stunning... arrogant, stubborn and obviously annoying, but still at the centre of it all breathtaking.

Up close and personal Rozanov had an air of ... something almost intoxicating. There was something about the way he talked, the accent probably, the look in his eyes, the crooked curl of his lips when he smiled and he'd only been with him a few minutes.

Fuck.

Walking faster in an effort to get away from his confusing feelings Shane tries and fails to ignore the shiver that runs down his spine.

Fuck, fuck fuck. He tries to remember why he agreed to do this job? Even then, right at the start he'd had a feeling that it was going to be a mistake, that Rozanov would be more trouble than he was worth but he'd said yes anyway. Of course he had, not that it had anything to do with wanting to meet Ilya Rozanov.

No, nothing to do with that at all. Shane might be confused but he knows that much.

Ok, so he can admit that, yes, maybe he's kind of enjoyed looking at his photographs over the years, he's only human after all, but he's absolutely sure, absolutely, totally sure that he had no particular desire to actually meet the globally admired and internationally famous ballet dancer.

It was just a really good contract, clear terms, well paid and for a decent amount of time. The threat to Rozanov was obviously real but it seemed fairly low stakes, at least from the investigation he and the team had been carrying out. The Boston Ballet Company were just being cautious, protecting their most valuable and famous asset. Shane is pretty sure that Rozanov must be worth a fortune to them, the cut they'd get from his advertising deals alone would be remarkably profitable, a face like that was very valuable. His body just added to his worth, his talent and charisma an extra bonus.

Shane tries not to think too much about any of that or the way that body will look later when he sees him dance. He's seen the pictures, all the fashion shoots and the behind the scene shots of rehearsals and performances. It's an impressive physique but he'd certainly not seen very much of it just now, Rozanov had been all bundled up in a coat and scarf ... that suited him far too well too. He was ridiculously handsome just standing around in the cold in an old coat and hat.

Fuck, and tonight he'll get a completely different view as well. Shane drags his thoughts firmly away from what certain people's bodies will look like in ballet tights and back to something much more sensible - the job he's been employed to do.

A job he's already regretting but that's what he did so he's stuck with it. His mother, as always, had left it up to him to make the final decision on the contract. She said it was his choice because it was his life being used to protect others, but he knew she thought it would be a mistake to pass up a job as simple and lucrative as this one was.

Shane has done his research then decided it was suitable for them so he'd said yes. Just a sensible business decision. That's all.

The mild lie sits uncomfortably on his chest and basic honesty compels him to admit, at least to himself, that the final yes did maybe have a *little* something to do with wanting to meet Rozanov in person.

He just seemed so ... interesting and he was undeniably hot. Shane has looked at a lot of pictures of him recently and well, he's only human.

Ignoring the mild disgust he feels at acknowledging his personal weaknesses Shane justifies the situation as best he can. So what if he likes it when people are passionate, dedicated and talented and so very very good at what they do. Rozanov is described as a generational star,

he's the best and he knows it. It's perfectly understandable that you might want to meet someone like that isn't it? It's not like Shane wants to do anything about it. It's not like Shane could do anything about it and Rozanov wouldn't be interested anyway.

Shane shakes his head at himself, even if the bodyguard/client thing wasn't an issue. The dancer is famous, ridiculously attractive and at the height of his career. He has lovers all over the world he'd not even think about someone like Shane even if the rumours of his bisexuality are true.

Shane forces his mind away from the physicality of Rozanov to his personality.

Unfortunately he finds that aspect of him fascinating too.

There are conflicting stories about who Ilya Rozanov truly is and Shane ever curious wants the truth.

He'd seen photos, official photoshoots and press shots and more candid less flattering ones taken by low grade paparazzi looking for scandal. He's read the stories, heard the gossip but despite the initial response to Rozanov's name seeing to be "yeah he's an asshole" there's a different version of the man out there in the world too.

He's heard enough to know that despite the reputation Ilya generates that's not all there is to him. The other stories, rumours more than anything say that he looks out for the youngest and newest dancers, he offers support and a shoulder to cry on when needed. He stands up to bullies and Shane has heard, mostly from talking to waiters, nurses and bartenders, as part of their pre investigation into the case that the "hot ballet guy" was anything from "ok" to "a sweetheart."

He had a reputation as a good tipper, being polite and never seemed to make unnecessary demands unlike many other stars in the world of celebrity fame.

Shane had also heard that Rozanov was great with the children who wanted his autograph or photo and that alone suggested that there was more to him than the world sees.

Shane smiles softly to himself, as he walks through the Boston side streets towards his rented apartment. The world sees an entitled, antagonistic often drunk playboy prone to drama who thinks life is about having a good time but what if that just a shield he keeps up to keep people away from his true self. Shane can identify with people who don't show their whole self to the world.

Finally Shane had accepted there was only one way to stop obsessing about which version of Ilya Rozanov was real, so he'd given in to the growing curiosity he felt about the man he'd be protecting for 6 months and arrived a few days earlier than he intended.

He wanted to see the great Ilya Rozanov's return to the stage, and it had taken Rose some time to get hold of tickets. Now he has one night to get a sense of the man through a live performance. Shane hadn't expected to see him while he was out taking a walk and certainly not lurking out the back of the theatre, smoking a cigarette for god's sake, but he had and then he'd been unable to resist the urge to introduce himself.

Right now, based on recent events Shane has to admit he's leaning more towards the public asshole persona of Rozanov being the real version of the man. He might even be a little disappointed about that.

Still even if he is a dick he can dance and the performance this evening is something he's looking forward to.

Pausing in his journey, Shane double checks his direction of travel and speeds up, he'd better get back and get changed soon . When they'd bought the tickets, on expenses because he's not stupid, he had no idea what you were supposed to wear to the ballet but he'd asked Rose for help and she'd guided him in the right direction, for a price... apparently she bought herself a ticket too and would be coming with him. He'd complained but hadn't actually minded, he loves Rose's company and with her style advice at least he knows he'll be looking good if Rozanov happens to catch sight of him later.

Not that that's important in any way. It's just nice to look nice when you go out, and it's nice if other people think you look nice.

That's all quite normal isn't it.

Shane happily accepts that as the truth, no further introspection required as he pushes the door to his apartment open and feels the welcoming warmth of inside heat his cheeks up, kicking off his shoes he smiles to himself about nothing in particular, just pleased to be back inside and suddenly so warm again.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Ilya Rozanov is returning to the stage tonight much to the delight of the patrons of the Boston Ballet.

Tonight his performance will be watched by his fans and if he's lucky and actually gets to his seat in time the man who's been employed to protect him.

Unfortunately Shane has been kept waiting and he's really not that fond of waiting.

Chapter Notes

Chapt 2 awaits us and it's been giving me a little bit of trouble, every time I started proofreading it decided it wanted to be a bit different again and we were editing !

I hope it's all worked out ok in the end.

Again just to say I know nothing about ballet, Boston or the Boston ballet so please just enjoy the vibes.

It's all about the vibes accuracy is overrated 😊

Also ignore any typos a girl has to stop re reading at some point!

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

Shane tried, he really did, but ultimately he's failed, which is more than a little bit annoying.

The wave of irritation washing over him as he accepts his failure makes his feet move even faster.

It hadn't even been anything hard; he'd just had to stand still and be patient but as the minutes ticked past Shane's patience wavered until finally it was gone and he had to move or go mad. It's the only way he can cope when the itchy bubbling feeling builds up inside him and wants to burst free, so for his sanity he accepted failure and started pacing back and forth across the lobby of the Boston Ballet's opera house.

The theatre staff hovering at the edge of his vision are probably wondering why he hasn't taken his seat yet. They probably think he's been stood up but he refuses to look and discover if it's just curiosity or pity on their faces.

He hasn't been stood up, that's not the problem, his problem is that she's late.

Again.

And it's not like that's a surprise either, she's always late, but it's something he can usually cope with, tonight however she's cutting it too fine and it's stressing him out.

Another glance at his watch reveals the performance will start in a handful of minutes and yet no matter how many times he glares at it, the entrance into the theatre remains empty.

With a little effort Shane forces his jaw to relax — Rose is wonderful, one of his best friends and he loves her dearly.

He stops pacing but that just means his leg starts to jiggle as he taps his foot instead. Despite his efforts the tension in his jaw builds again as his teeth clamp together; yes he loves her, but she's also as aggravating as Hell sometimes.

The pacing resumes. It helps a little.

How hard is it to get somewhere on time? He manages it, in fact as much as Rose is almost always late he is almost always early and this evening was no exception.

Shane had been the first of the audience to arrive so he'd had his choice of quiet corners and empty spaces to wait in and had chosen the perfect spot swiftly.

He didn't mind waiting a normal amount of time, standing around in shadows and dim corners was second nature to him, it's literally his job to wait, to lurk and hover and sometimes when the occasion calls for it to loom. He's good at it all but for this evening a gentle lurk was perfect.

So as he waited for Rose, tucked away and unnoticed, the number of people milling around him had swelled, bringing with it the typical noise and excitement you'd expect before a performance, especially one as anticipated as this one is. Eventually the room was packed and a little too noisy for his liking.

The atmosphere had been electric. Shane had it on good authority (Rose's) that the ballet world was buzzing about the return of one, if not *the* greatest star of modern ballet.

They say Ilya Rozanov is a rare generational talent, a natural prodigy. He's also the popular favourite of the gutter press and tabloid magazines but that's not relevant information tonight.

Shane looks again but there's still no sign of Rose. He really wants to take his seat now but he keeps moving.

It's some comfort to know he looks good while he's pacing around like an idiot. The suit he's wearing fits him perfectly. Ironically he has Rose to thank for that, her habitual lateness might drive him crazy but she does have an excellent sense of style.

Before setting off for his evening's entertainment Shane had studied his reflection and been rather impressed with what he saw, it was always nice to go out looking good after all , but he

certainly hadn't wasted any time thinking about who might be around tonight to appreciate his outfit or the way it fit him.

Another loop of the lobby goes past; he's almost at the point where he's monitoring each second he has left before he has to decide what to do.

He hates to be late so it's ironic his two best friends are habitually tardy. Shane checks his phone again to see if there are any messages beyond the generic -

Sorry! running late!!!

- that Rose sent earlier and the three messages he's sent since then asking where the hell she is.

It's not like he was expecting much, it's not like he was expecting her to be here before him, or even on time, that would have been ridiculously optimistic, but he had hoped to see her before he was the last person waiting.

He hadn't even asked her to come with him tonight, she'd been the one to insist on accompanying him; intent on seeing the great Ilya Rozanov's first perform after his enforced 'sabbatical'.

Shane checks the time again, well her chances her seeing anything are diminishing fast.

He watches the current minute tick over into the next one. That's it, he has to go, he won't miss the performance because of Rose. He really wants to see him.

It.

The show.

That is, he wants to see the show that Rozanov is in.

Shane checks his watch again.

He's come here to see his new client and that's what he's going to do. It's reconnaissance, research really, that's all. He needs to get used to being around Rozanov, get familiar with how he moves, his face, the way people react to his presence.

His interest in seeing him perform is just a part of the research required to do his job well.

In his head he can hear Rose laughing, which is fair, it's not a very convincing lie, especially as technically he has already seen Rozanov tonight, has already had the opportunity to see how people behave around him. He could leave if he wanted to, research done.

Except Shane doesn't want to leave. He wants to stay and see more of him, just for research purposes of course. It's the responsible thing to do.

It had only been a glimpse earlier after all; Shane had had his first experience of Ilya Rozanov in public around half an hour ago. The star of the show and a stunningly beautiful

woman he'd already seen in photographs had entered the lobby arm in arm to rapturous applause.

They'd moved around the crowd slowly, shaking eagerly extended hands, smiling, making small talk. Rozanov's eyes had often scanned the room while the woman talked. Shane hadn't particularly wanted to be noticed so he'd shuffled further into his corner, definitely not hiding behind the large potted plant sharing his section of the room and he was fairly sure he hadn't been noticed by the dancer as he toured the room.

He was however spotted a little later, due to the advantage of height that Rozanov had by then. Shane had watched the glamorous couple finish their circuit of the room then head upstairs. The two dancers had stopped one last time before disappearing to talk to some older men waiting for them at the edge of an ornate balcony.

Shane recognised them both from the background paperwork he had and while the woman, Svetlana Vetrova, was pleased to see her father, Rozanov was noticeably less pleased to see his.

Rozanov's face had stayed eerily blank while Shane watched his father talk at him.

When the lecture was finished Rozanov had looked away for a moment and his wandering gaze had found Shane instantly.

Their eyes only met for a moment because Shane looked away instantly silently cursing the fact he'd been caught staring.

The memory pinks his cheeks now like it had then but it's no good worrying about that now or waiting any longer he needs to her to his seat.

Striding towards the suddenly expectant usher Shane has his ticket extended when he hears his name.

Turning with a sigh he finds Rose rushing toward him; she looks stunning in a short silver dress with a pair of high heels dangling from her fingers. She's pink and out of breath and totally gorgeous and not for the first time he wishes he did want to sleep with her. They'd be so good together if it wasn't for the fact that he was very, very gay.

She's trying to get one shoe back on at the same time she apologises.

"Sorry sorry sorry! I know you're mad at me but it really wasn't my fault this time... the "

He hauls her by putting his hand up.

"I really don't care - let's just go sit down."

The usher finishes checking the tickets as Rose wobbles on one leg next to him and Shane starts to complain because, you know what, actually, he does care.

"How hard is it to be on time Rose?! We have like" he checks his watch again. "Two minutes to spare. I don't even know why I put up with you!"

The usher is doing a poor job of hiding his amusement as he hands back their tickets and indicates which way they should go.

As usual Rose is completely unbothered by his distress at her lateness.

"Because I'm your best friend, I'm ridiculously hot, which makes you look good and I know what clothes to put you in so you look hot too, and I'm excellent at my job not to mention..."

Walking away Shane blocks out the rest of the words that will be 100% truthful as she staggers and hops alongside him, grabbing at his arm, trying to put her other shoe on, of course being amazingly talented at everything she does she's in heels again in seconds and then she strides off ahead of him, skirt swishing as she moves.

Rose looks back over her shoulder with a grin.

"Hey, you better hurry up, don't want to miss the start."

There's no point in reacting so he rises above the teasing and speeds up because she might be late and infuriating and aggravating but she's also always right- he doesn't want to miss the start.

The Hollander problem is in the lobby when he and Sveta enter it.

The man is trying to hide behind a plant pot but he's too big and too handsome not to be noticed. He looks fucking delicious in the suit he's wearing and Ilya works hard to make sure the man doesn't notice him noticing that.

He'd thought the unwanted bodyguard had been cute when they'd met earlier and while he wasn't wrong about that - he is cute, he's also hot as hell.

Fuck. Ilya doesn't dare risk another look but he wants to. God does he want to.

This bodyguard situation is fast becoming untenable. A huge unpleasant, probably very messy problem.

Ilya doesn't want a bodyguard and he certainly doesn't want a bodyguard he'd be interested in fucking.

No, he'll just have to get rid of him, it's the only option. Maybe even tonight. Ilya is used to acting like a diva so it shouldn't be hard to piss the straight laced wanna be bodyguard off enough that he quits on the spot.

He manages to get one more look at him from the balcony and is secretly thrilled to see that Shane Hollander is already looking at him. The sharp turn of his head and flush of pink on his cheeks is adorable and it gives him an excellent idea for how to send this handsome nuisance running.

With Hollander looking away he can afford to look a little longer, the view is at least a small consolation for having to be lectured by his father. At least his papa leaves early tomorrow,

that's something to be grateful for.

Sveta pulls him away with an excuse for their fathers and he lets her, grateful as always that she knows what he needs. As they move closer to the stage he looks for someone to help with his brilliant idea.

It's easy enough to find someone who will help, doing the principal dancer a favour is a sensible move. Ilya smirks to himself after the boy leaves his dressing room with his instructions and a hastily written note.

Hollander thinks he's so smart and handsome let's see how he handles what Ilya has planned for later tonight.

Sometimes it's useful to have a reputation as a headstrong arrogant diva.

Extraordinary. Breathtaking. Phenomenal.

Those are words Shane already had in his head and was hearing echoed around him during the intermission.

The man has a reputation for being arrogant but after seeing him on stage Shane thinks he deserves most of that confidence.

Rozanov's performance had been mesmerising and Shane didn't even know anything about ballet. It didn't matter though- the sheer talent, the raw physicality of the man was awesome to watch. His partner was amazing too and together they took your breath away.

Standing awkwardly in a crowd and sipping his ginger ale Shane wonders if Rozanov and Svetlana Vetrova are a romantic couple as well as dance partners. It didn't say so in the notes for the job but they had so much chemistry it made you wonder. Shane carefully ignores that he doesn't particularly like the way the wondering makes him feel.

Next to him Rose is drinking a gin and tonic and making effortless small talk with an older couple they've ended up standing with. Shane smiles when it seems relevant and nods at the right places but mostly stays quiet. He doesn't love this kind of casual social interaction but today it might be worth it to have seen the performance he's just seen and there's still more to enjoy. Shane deliberately ignores the way his lips twitch at the thought.

"Mr Hollander?"

Summoned abruptly from his imagination he turns to find himself looking at a stranger wearing a slightly anxious expression.

The unexpected interruption and unfamiliar anxious face flicks a switch on inside him. Shane shifts his body weight, blocking Rose from the boy's reach, not that she needs his protection. He scowls, looking him up and down for signs of danger or concealed weapons. He doesn't see anything alarming but still scans his surroundings anew, looking for other clues that this young man is a potential danger or not.

Shane decides he's not. The adolescent, still waiting for a response from him, is half his size and looks more nervously than dangerous. Still you can never be too careful, Rose doesn't look particularly dangerous but she is.

Shane decides it's safe to confirm his identity and does so with a curt nod.

Behind him he's aware that Rose has stopped talking and is paying attention to their visitor too. She's picked up on his tension and is focused and ready for whatever happens next, he's not worried about this kid but it's good to know he'd have back up if it was needed.

Eyes wide and flicking between the two of them, the boy holds out something. The slight wobble in his voice reveals he's even more nervous than he looks.

"Th this is for you sir."

Still frowning Shane takes the folded piece of paper, curious about the contents.

Maybe Hayden has phoned the theatre and left a message. It would be a little odd to not call or text him but not completely unheard off. Sometimes they prefer less recordable means of communication.

A quick look inside the folded sheet reveals that the note is not from Hayden. He wishes it was but it's not. Shane finds himself looking at a message that's signed with a large R and what is presumably meant to the rest of *his* name - if you squint optimistically you can see the ov at the end.

The message is short and to the point.

On the page, in a much clearer penmanship than the signature would lead you to expect, Shane finds himself staring at words that invite him to Rozanov's dressing room once the performance is over except 'invite' would be a generous interpretation of the text.

Why does Rozanov want to see him?

He doesn't have long to dwell on the possible reasons which is probably good for his blood pressure because the note is snatched from his hand, it's only after the fact that he registers the weight and familiar warmth of Rose's had shifted and is the reason his message is gone.

Shane opens his mouth to complain about the theft before he confirms to messenger that no, he most certainly won't be coming to Rozanov's room after the performance when a low and excited ooohing breeze past his ear and spoils his plans.

"Well that's going to be a big yes from us!"

He hisses her name, furious at her for saying the exact opposite of what he was planning on saying but he might as well not have bothered, her attention is all on the boy.

She's all smiles as she says; "Please tell Mr Rozanov that Mr Hollander will be delighted to see him after the show."

The young man nods, adding a small bow that's completely unnecessary if you ask Shane before he spins on his heels and graciously flees as fast as he can, confirming Shane's theory he was part of the ballet company.

Shane watches him go before turning slowly a range of emotions at war within him to confront his betrayer.

Rose is clearly waiting for him to explode, her eyes dancing with amusement and a beaming smile on her face that's undiminished in the spotlight of his glare.

She's the perfect picture of innocence, long eyelashes fluttering at him, voice full of fake concern.

"Shane Honey? Are you ok? You look all hot and bothered."

She keeps smiling and he seriously considers deleting her number from his phone because who really needs such aggravating friends.

He attempts to make her understand the gravity of the situation.

"Rose, why the fuck did you say that? I don't want ..."

It's as far as he gets before she shushes at him; a finger on her lips and for a second it feels like he's back in kindergarten. He tries again...

"Rose."

He frowns harder and puts as much authority as he can into the four letters of her name.

Unfortunately his sternness has no effect on her , apart from generating an roll her eyes and a flat unimpressed- "Shane".

They stare at each other; a familiar and silent stalemate.

Any strangers watching their standoff might consider the inquisitive quirk of Rose's eyebrow, travelling to him across the great divide between them would indicate that she would be interested in hearing more about his point of view but he knows better than that.

It's not a 'do go on' kind of eyebrow, it's a ' I dare you' kind of eyebrow.

Ignoring the warning he tries anyway, leaning in closer to mutter what he hopes will be a persuasive argument into the shell of her ear

"Look, we really don't need to go, I'm meeting him tomorrow morning, there's no point."

He aims for a casual, 'I'm not really bothered but let's not' tone so she doesn't get suspicious about his inner turmoil.

He even manages a smile.

"It'll just be a waste of your time."

Rose just keeps looking at him and smiling sweetly before she dashes his weak hopes of reprieve.

"Ah but it won't be will it 'cos *I'm* not seeing him tomorrow and *I* want to meet him."

Another silence lengthens as they wait to see who's resolve will break first.

Sadly for Shane it was never really a contest.

Rose pouts at him with not an ounce of sympathy on her beautiful face.

"Don't worry baby boy I won't leave you alone with the big bad, super hot rock star ballet dude..."

The pout slides into a smirk.

"....unless you ask me nicely. I didn't think he'd be your type but..."

The last word is drawn out playfully and he can feel the blush starting to creep up his cheeks. She notices it too damn it, he needs to be more careful or she'll start suspecting something is up. Not that there's anything to suspect of course but Rose notices even the smallest clues when things are out of place or wrong or just unusual. It's what makes her so good at her job but at times like these he wishes she wasn't quite so perceptive.

Accepting defeat as the lesser of two evils, Shane mutters under his breath.

"I should have brought Hayden!"

She laughs at that, "Oh yeah sure, he just loves the ballet! We both know he'd have complained all night."

Imagining that puts a slight smile back on his face, it's true Hayden would had moaned constantly but at least Hayden wouldn't have wanted to go backstage and meet Rovarov.

Reluctant to let go of his grievance Shane does his own complaining.

"I hate you right now, I hope you know that."

Rose demonstrates her understanding of his feelings by throwing her arms around his neck and whispering in his ear.

"No you don't, you love me... because I'm your best friend."

He snorts, " Maybe, but don't let Hayd know, he'll sulk for weeks, he thinks it's him."

She winks and it's obvious she'll be holding the information in reserve in case she needs it one day.

Before he can say anything else the crowd briefly stills to the shrill tones of the end of intermission bell. Finishing his drink in a swift swallow Shane leaves his glass behind and places his hand on Rose's back and slowly they make their way back towards their seats.

Just before Rose knocks he tries one last time to spare them both what's bound to be an awkward and unpleasant encounter.

" This is so not a good idea. Let's, let's just go."

She doesn't even look at him, too busy smoothing and fluffing her hair. Watching her prepare to meet Boston's most famous primaballerina (yes he knows it's not the right word but it kind of helps) Shane's stomach flips uncomfortably.

He's not sure he really wants to watch Rozanov flirt with his best friend or to watch her flirt back and they're bound to... Rozanov is a infamous ladies man and god knows Rose is literally one, if not *the* hottest woman here tonight. Shane might be extremely gay and unable to appreciate the hotness of her beauty but he's not blind and he can appreciate beauty in all its forms perfectly well and anyway he's had it on good authority from various independent sources over the years that she's smoking.

Hands now sliding over the fabric of her dress removing imaginary creases Rose ignores his stuttered concerns and then it's too late to escape anyway because the door is opening and Rozanov appears framed within it and Shane's reminded of just how well he can appreciate beauty all over again.

Ilya blinks twice to check he's really seeing what he's seeing.

He is.

It's not that it's an unpleasant sight- far from it but it is unexpected. He'd opened his door fully expecting to see the face of the wanna be bodyguard he ordered to his room but instead there's a rather attractive woman standing in front of him.

It takes him a moment to register that she's not alone and standing just behind her is the man he wanted... no, expected. He takes a moment to enjoy the delightfully annoyed expression on Hollander's face and the gloriously thick arms fighting against his jacket sleeves as he folds his arms and glares over the woman's shoulder.

Ilya couldn't be happier; it's an excellent start. He's even more convinced now that this will be easy, Hollander will be a pushover, and Ilya is a world class rage baiter. Hollander will be furious about something any second now and quitting in no time at all. Just like he planned.

The girl is a twist though, Ilya immediately reviews his plans... this is maybe Hollander's girlfriend?

The brief wave of disappointment is easy to ignore, pushed aside by a new idea for getting rid of Hollander.

Flirt with girlfriend = bodyguard quits even faster. Perfect.

He amps up his smile and beams at the admittedly very beautiful woman. She smiles back so he takes the time to look her up and down slowly and thickens his accent because that works for some woman- men too... but right now he's being a lady's man.

"Was not expecting such beautiful woman to be knocking at my door..."

He ignores Hollander and his heavy huff of disapproval and throws his full charm at the still unidentified female.

" is, I think, wonderful surprise."

He adds a dash of suggestiveness into his smile, holding eye contact in what he knows is blatantly sexual. The woman meets him stare for stare but there's a slightly unimpressed glint in her eye that tells him she's more than used to be admired and he needs to do more if he wants a reaction.

She hasn't even bothered to blush unlike Hollander who blushed so pretty for him earlier today.

The mystery woman's lips twitch as she says -

"I'm with him."

She tilts her head back to indicate Hollander who's refusing to look at him and continues to look like he'd rather be anywhere else than here.

Ilya can't help grinning at the sight of him sulking but when he looks back at his other visitor he's alarmed by the expression on her face. He feels very seen and it makes him slightly nervous; to cover the disquiet he pretends to notice Shane Hollander for the first time.

"Ah yes, Mr Hollander. We need to discuss our plans, yes?."

The response he gets is delightfully frosty and it's unfortunate that he finds the clipped tone kind of sexy.

Hollander says -

"No, we don't. It's all very clear in the contract and as I'll be starting tomorrow, we can discuss any details then."

There's a heavy pause after that declaration and Ilya doesn't respond at once. Hollander manages not to roll his eyes but it's obviously hard for him. He seems to be trying to smile at him now but it's a poor effort.

"So... you must be tired, we'll be going."

Feeling positively gleeful about Hollander's increasingly bad mood Ilya presses his advantage.

"Noooo! I'm never too tired to drink with beautiful lady... "

He directs his next word at the woman.

"Vodka?"

He holds out a hand to invite her in and it's accepted with a smile and finally he gets an introduction.

"Rose Landry; huge fan of vodka and the ballet."

The unhappy noise Hollander makes as he follows his maybe girlfriend into the room is music to Ilya's ears, walking backwards, gently pulling the lovely Rose with him, means he can make a show of appreciating the view.

He's not faking his admiration, she really is lovely and he makes sure his appreciation is obvious, but he's really much more interested in watching Hollander's reaction.

A quick glance reveals that his "future bodyguard" looks less than impressed by his girlfriend's gushing enthusiasm and proximity to a famous, sexy, ballet prodigy.

"Mr Rozanov..." Rose starts again and he interrupts her smoothly,

"Ilya please..."

Her smile widens but there's still no blush on her cheeks , which is unusual. He usually has them blushing pretty quickly and moaning not long after, but not tonight it seems.

That's ok, undeterred by the lukewarm reception he indicates that she should sit and he continues to deliberately ignore Hollander as he heads towards the secret stash of expensive vodka he hides for himself and Svetlana. You simply cannot trust the corp de ballet with unlimited access to the good stuff.

From her chair Rose picks up the conversation while he arranges glasses and opens a bottle. Hollander stands off to the side silently. Ilya doesn't bother to pour him a drink but he watches him to make sure he notices the slight, but if he does it's too hard to tell.

Tuning back into whatever Rose is saying he smiles his best I'm meeting a fan in public smile.

"Ilya... you were absolutely amazing tonight. I've been going to the ballet since I was little and honestly I think you're the best I've ever seen. Shane was impressed too. Weren't you?"

Mid pour he glances again at Hollander. She's obviously trying to pull her boyfriend into the conversation. Hollander however is not inclined to answer.

Ilya bits his lip to stop a more genuine smile breaking free. Hollander is adorable- he obviously prefers being stoic- all folded arms and blank face to polite conversation. Ilya suspects it's all part of his "I'm a very professional bodyguard" routine.

It suddenly occurs to him that maybe Rose is his client and not his girlfriend. It makes sense and the idea makes his pulse flicker a little faster for some reason. Ilya glances again at the brooding menace trying to invade and ruin his life.

He's not acting particularly boyfriend like but then again Hollander's face is giving little away, it's a good act because Ilya has already seen glimpses of how much expression can fit on that pretty face. He'd almost be impressed if he wasn't determined not to be.

Looking back at Rose he finds she's looking at Hollander too, waiting for his response but the only acknowledgment of Ilya's talents that Shane Hollander is willing to share with the room, is a gruff nondescript noise that might possibly be an agreement but also might not.

The lovely Rose, prompts Hollander again, this time with his first name and a look that Ilya would classify best as 'don't embarrass me.' Svetlana uses the same look on him frequently which provokes a brief feeling of affinity with the man that's positively alarming.

Fortunately he's quickly distracted as Rose has managed to elicit a reluctant response from the other side of the room with the power of her stare alone, Hollander finally mutters;

"I suppose it was ok."

The grudging compliment makes Ilya look his way again and he can't help smiling at what he sees, Hollander looks so annoyed at having been made to say something nice. Like angry kitten, it's actually pretty adorable and Hollander is also very pretty so it's no hardship to look at him for a moment longer.

Ilya can't help smiling and the annoyed expression on Hollander's face fades as the moment stretches. Then unexpectedly under the dual focus of both Ilya and Rose, Hollander's lips twitch, a smile lurking behind it, it's almost as if he suddenly realises any lie he tells won't be at all believable. They all know Ilya's performance was magnificent.

Ilya watches as Hollander sighs and the small smile trying to break free wins the fight;

"Fine, it was amazing... *you* were amazing, you're extremely talented. You must be glad to be back to dancing."

Ilya had started beaming as the compliment slowly unfurled but the reference to the incident that had kept him from dancing for months wipes the smile from Iyla's face and reminds him that he needs to get rid of this man, not encourage him with warm looks and smiles.

Turning away from his problem, Ilya hands over the vodka glass and slides in next to Rose; the seat she's on is slightly too small for two so it means he's pressed up against her.

She shifts to make room for him but they're still very close, too close for people who only just met. Normally he wouldn't take such liberties with someone's personal space but it's in a good cause so he allows it this once. It's bound to get a rise out of Hollander, either he'll object or Ms Landry will and then Hollander will defend her anyway.

Ilya waits, anticipating something from at least one of them. Unfortunately the only reaction he gets for his borderline inappropriate behaviour is a lifted eyebrow from Rose, she seems more amused by his antics than flustered or upset. There's a look in her eyes too that suggests she knows things he doesn't want her to know but she can't, can she? How could she possibly have guessed his plan to get rid of Hollander.

He looks deeper into her eyes. Actually he wouldn't be at all surprised if she had.

Then Rose Landry winks at him.

How on earth is Hollander involved with such an interesting woman? Girlfriend? Wife? He doesn't like those options at all. Sister?! He knocks that idea away, they look nothing like each other.

A client or maybe she works with him. It's an irritating puzzle that Ilya wants to solve very badly.

Refusing to back down from the mildly confrontational challenge visible in his guest's pretty eyes Ilya suspects his own face is too open for a woman who sees far too much when she looks. Sveta always says his love of mischief and causing trouble is written all over his face and the more he looks at Rose Landry the more he's sure she knows he's plotting something.

The quick glance he throws towards Hollander probably doesn't help keep his secrets secret either.

He really needs to stop looking at him like he's interested in his existence in any way. He's not. He just wants to make him disappear, perfectly understandable motivation, nothing suspicious about it at all.

Shane Hollander looks like he's very annoying and very boring, people must always be trying to make him vanish.

The man currently occupying so much of his thoughts is leaning against the wall busy ignoring him. He's staring into the middle distance looking gloomy but not particularly jealous. The mostly blank expression says bored with a pinch of annoyed more than anything else.

Ilya doesn't particularly like being ignored.

Deciding to up the stakes he slides his arm around Rose's shoulders and watches Hollander surreptitiously for a reaction. It's more than a little disappointing that the only thing that happens is Hollander's eyes drop to the floor.

She can't be his girlfriend then, surely Hollander or Rose would object if she was.

Forgetting to control his own expression his lips twist in annoyance before he can stop them.

A light snort of amusement moves a puff of air across his cheek and quiet words confirm his assessment of Miss Landry's observation skills.

"If you want his attention that badly I can just go..."

Damn it. He leans away from Rose with a cut off frustrated noise and a low accusation.

"I knew it. You are too hot to be his girlfriend."

Rose laughs, bright and delighted and achieves what he couldn't- Hollander's dark eyes snap up and he's frowning hard at them both. Ilya thinks the man might give himself a headache if he keeps it up.

Rose knocks back her vodka like a pro and continues.

"Well, technically I was, for about 6 weeks but we weren't compatible."

The way she says it makes Hollander sigh wearily but Ilya's not entirely familiar with the word.

"Compatible?"

This time he directs the question and his smile at Hollander who unlike his friend does blush.

"Rose isn't really my type."

Then Shane Hollander decides that going back to studying his feet is a good use of his time and as Ilya tries to work out what exactly that means, soft lips brush against the lobe of his ear again.

"We may not be compatible but I love him, he's my best friend so be careful, I've got the same skill set as him, but I'm not as nice."

He pulls away from her sharply, a little shocked by the tone. One look at her face confirms that she's deadly serious, there's no trace of warmth or amusement in her eyes now, even if she is still smiling.

"Just saying."

She blinks at his, face calm and impassive and Ilya finally knows; Rose Landry is Hollander's work partner. His best friend. Another bodyguard and most likely a dangerous woman to upset.

He doesn't know if he's pleased or not to have discovered the nature of their relationship is not romantic but he does know that he believes her when she says he should be careful about Hollander.

Ilya gets the sudden feeling he needs to be careful about Hollander in several different ways.

The sudden urge to stand propels him to his feet. He needs some space to think. This whole encounter is not going the way he expected it to. Unfortunately his movement catches Hollander's attention and then they're looking at each other again.

And it's really not fair is it, that he looks like that, the freckles especially. The stupid freckles are stunning and his mouth, his bottom lip... Ilya wants to bite it.

Hollander is looking right back at him and it might as well just be them in the room and for a moment nothing else matters apart from his eyes and his stupid, stupid freckles. Ilya throws out half a smile without thinking about it.

"Is lucky then that I am everyone's type."

It's outrageously flirty and probably a better start to making Hollander quit due to mild sexual harassment in the workplace than his pointless flirting with Rose.

Sadly he doesn't get a reaction from Hollander because a light lyrical voice he's very familiar with interrupts the moment.

"That is what he likes to tell himself anyway."

They all turn towards the doorway, but only he knows who will be there without looking.

She glides into the room, eyes assessing the situation.

"I personally know several people who would say my dear Ilyuska is an acquired taste."

Ilya stares at Sveta through narrowed eyes. She's not meant to be here yet. He told her to wait and he'd come to her tonight. He shouldn't be surprised though, she often ignores him completely and does what she wants

With the room silently filled with expectations he has no choice but to introduce everyone and hope Sveta doesn't work out what he's up to. She approves of the bodyguard plan very strongly and will be as mad as hell when he succeeds in getting rid of this one.

Crossing the room to stand by her side Ilya hooks his arm around his friend and partner's waist, pulling her closer.

"Shane Hollander, Rose Landry this is my oldest and most beloved friend, also my exquisitely talented partner; Miss Svetlana Vetrova.

Hollander steps forward to shake her already extended hand.

"Miss Vetrova your performance tonight was absolutely stunning. "

Ilya takes note of that comment with interest, so apparently Hollander *can* give compliments unprompted.

Svetlana receives the compliment with ease but as usual graciously shares it with him.

"Well having Ilya as my partner makes it easy to shine."

It's takes a little effort to control his face, he hates when she does that, they've talked about it more than once. Svetlana is a star all by herself, her talent is all her own and she deserves her

own adoration and awards, she doesn't need him to shine. She's magnificent and it is more true to say that without her he would not be nearly so good or so famous or maybe even alive.

He doesn't deserve her and it's a familiar instinct that has him leaning in to kiss her cheek. The affection earns him a small smile and a mouthful of her curls which are loose and falling around her cheeks now. She looks tired and must be ready for bed but she always likes to say goodnight to him first before she leaves. Sometimes they leave together, sometimes they spend the night together, although not like that, well not so much anymore, not unless one of them needs the company or comfort but even as their relationship has shifted and changed over the years he loves her more than anyone and he hopes she knows it.

He takes the opportunity to remind her.

"Я ничто без тебя"

I am nothing without you

The Russian words fall automatically from his lips and she laughs softly her own feelings for him clear.

"Это верно"

"This is true!"

Then she turns her laughing eyes towards their guests and lies smoothly, this time in English.

"He is of course claiming all the glory for himself, just as usual... a terrible man, so vain. I do not know why I keep him around..."

He has a girlfriend.

Shane lets go of Svetlana's hand, appreciating the strength in it as his fingers slip from hers, noting the callouses put there by hard work and dedication.

Of course he has a girlfriend.

Of course she is his girlfriend. She's gorgeous.

Shane ignores whatever feeling the arrival of Svetlana Vetrova has stirred up in his chest. Whatever the swirling sensation is, it's certainly not disappointment and it's definitely not anything resembling jealousy.

He pulls his eyes from the two of them smiling at each other. Svetlana Vetrova is as stunning now as she was earlier in the lobby and as impressive as she was on stage. Maybe he'd been mistaken when he thought Rozanov was trying to flirt with Rose only minutes ago, maybe he's just like that. Surely if Rozanov has this woman he wouldn't want anyone else.

The love and affection between them is obvious, even as he watches them Svetlana is smiling warmly at her partner and Shane knows that whatever she just said he said in Russian was not

the truth.

He suddenly wonders how you say I love you in Russian. From the way they're looking at each other it seems more than likely that's what Rozanov just said to her.

Tuning back into the conversation Shane realises it's slipped back into Russian again and whatever is being said looks far more serious.

The Russian words are flowing fast and Svetlana's voice sounds much sterner than it had moments ago. If he were to guess he'd say Rozanov was getting a warning or chastised; from the sullen way his pale eyes flick towards Shane it's probably something to do with the bodyguard situation.

Despite trying not to be curious Shane wants to know what they're talking about. Does she approve of him as a bodyguard or does she think he's not good enough? Rozanov looks unhappy so whatever is being said he can't like it very much.

Sadly for the Russian, his sour expression does nothing to change her attitude, in fact it makes her look even more severe and she speaks again, a little louder and firmer but still in incomprehensible Russian.

Shane considers the idea that maybe he should start learning.

At least he knows what да means so he knows that Rozanov has just agreed to whatever she wants. He doesn't look happy about it though. Shane bites his lip and looks away, who would have thought that this confident arrogant man would be kind of cute when he's grumpy.

Shane catches that off guard thought and stomps on it quickly, crushing it ruthlessly under his heel. Ilya Rozanov is not in any way cute. That is absolutely and totally a forbidden thought. He puts it in a pile with other thoughts about Rozanov he's already classified similarly.

Shane looks for something else to look at and unfortunately finds it.

Rose.

When he looks around she's already looking at him and with an expression that's hard to read but perhaps the closest word he has for it would be concerned.

She drinks what's left of her vodka without a blink. Shane is pretty sure it's strong and he'd be coughing and spluttering by now if he was drinking it. He's never been a big drinker and certainly not the night before a new job.

Rose walks towards him, lips parted to say something but whatever she wanted to say remains a mystery when her phone buzzes and she's suddenly distracted.

A frown and few taps of the screen precede another buzz of her phone and then she looks up at him, regret in her eyes.

"Sorry, gotta go..."

Shane studies her face; eyes soft, nose screwed up, lips twisted, he knows this one- regret.

She doesn't look particularly worried so it'll be one of her clients needing something "urgently." He doubts it's anywhere close to urgent.

Rose's warm, tight hug is brief as is the peck on his cheek. The look he gets after them is significantly longer.

Shane holds her stare with only a little effort, he thinks her frown is more worried than annoyed. It's easy to get them mixed up sometimes but he's pretty sure about it right now.

Rose studies him with narrowed eyes.

"You're leaving soon right?"

He nods, of course he will, as soon as possible actually, after all it was her who wanted to come backstage not him. He has no intention of staying more than a minute or two once she's left and he has no idea why she'd think he would.

Her eyes have got even narrower, probably not a good thing. He waits patiently for elaboration.

"I'd stay if I could but..."

The low humming coming from her lips is pretty familiar, she's thinking and really Shane has no idea why she's suddenly being so weird.

Rose speaks again, "Ok, just don't do anything... impulsive ok...and don't..."

She sighs, her frown deepening again when she takes a quick look over her shoulder.

"It's not a long contract is it?"

She's got him frowning now too, he's somewhat confused by the sudden change of subject but he answers her anyway.

"Six months."

Rose chews on a lip while she considers the information and finally she nods.

"Ok, that's not *too* bad, I'm sure you can both manage that long. You are both adults aren't you?"

She seems to be actually expecting an answer which is also weird. He nods silently, thinking less words might make this all less confusing.

Rose however doesn't look particularly confident in his response, which is kind of rude. He's more than capable of protecting a client, even an annoying and arrogant diva like Rozanov for that long without any incidents. He's done it before and for much longer. He's also had far more annoying people in his care, at least Rosanov's confidence is well earned. He won't be

quitting because the man is difficult and Rozanov can't fire him. It's not how it works, he's the subject of the contract not Shane's actual employer.

Rose's voice brings him back from his thoughts about Rozanov and contracts and how long they might last.

"Ok then; Don't be stupid... don't get dead."

He smiles back. It's a tradition, the way they say good luck at the start of a new contract, nodding he agrees to the terms.

"No stupid. Not dead, got it."

He follows Rose's gaze again, she's looking across the room at Rozanov. Shane looks too and realises that the man is on his own again, Miss Vetrova having seemingly slipped away unnoticed.

Rose returns her attention to Shane with one last and slightly weary sigh. He doesn't have anything to add to the conversation so he stays silent.

She leaves but stops by Rozanov on her way past and Shane watches her lean closer and say something he can't hear. Whatever she says stiffens the man's spine and his eyes widen slightly.

Shane rolls his eyes, she's probably threatening him or something, telling him to behave and be cooperative, as if he can't handle the games Rozanov no doubt wants to play to annoy and undermine his authority.

Rose looks back at him one last time then leaves. He had no idea why she's making such a fuss it's not like this is his first job.

Then the door closes and he's alone with Ilya Rozanov who looks at him and smiles, crooked and warm and far too appealing

When he winks and Shane's heart beats a little faster he suddenly understands what's making Rose so anxious.

Fuck.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for joining me on this adventure. I hope you've enjoyed this new instalment and if you have I'd appreciate it muchly if you dropped me a comment to say hi.

I'm horribly encouraged to write more by pleasant feedback - what can I say I'm a people pleaser

Hope you're all doing ok out there - stay safe and happy pride 🌈🌈🌈

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Ilya Rozanov, Principal dancer of the Boston ballet has invited his soon to be bodyguard Shane Hollander to his dressing room; for reasons...

For a while they'd had company, Rose, Hollander's friend and work partner and Svetlana, Ilya's childhood friend and dance partner but now both woman have gone and it's just the two of them.

Chapter Notes

Wasn't sure this would go out today but it's all done and I'm doing well with the story overall so I can share this little update.

I'm hoping to keep each chapt around 4-5 k but we'll see.

Hope everyone is doing ok out there. Take care of yourselves. 🤔💜

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

Ilya Rozanov just winked at him. Shane keeps his expression blank and tries to keep his breathing steady.

Fuck.

When he'd woken up this morning Shane had really not expected to find himself in such a highly charged moment with the client he'll be working with for months but here he is - heart racing trying not to react in any way that might hint at his attraction to the man opposite him.

"So, Mr Hollander, how does this work?"

With a crooked smile Rozanov takes a slow step closer and Shane has the ridiculous urge to reach for his gun which he doesn't even have on him or do something else to protect himself.

He feels like he's in danger, his heart is racing wildly, but he knows he's being stupid, he's perfectly safe and even if he wasn't he can handle himself gun or no gun.

Swallowing around the inexplicable nerves fluttering around his body he repeats the last word Rozanov just said - Rozanov, who's at least two steps closer to him now.

"Work?"

At least his voice doesn't crack, something he's horribly grateful for, he knows he's being stupid, he's a full grown fucking adult but Ilya Rozanov is undeniably the most attractive man he's ever seen, and if he's reading that look on his face right he's possibly interested in him, unless of course he's just fucking around to piss him off.

Either way he has to shut it down fast.

Shane remembers how Rozanov flirted with Rose and then there's Svetlana to consider too, with that evidence to think about it seems far more likely that the man is just trying to unsettle him. He can't possibly be trying anything.

The dash of realism helps stabilise Shane's mild emotional turmoil but only just, mostly because Rozanov's voice is still low and interestingly gravelly as he stalks closer.

Why does he have to be so fucking sexy.

"Yes... me and you... my ... bodyguard."

He watches Rozanov trace the back of a hand across his chest, emphasising the body he'll soon be guarding.

Shit.

Shane curses the heat he can feel rising on his cheeks and with his eyes averted dives straight into the business arrangements of the situation.

"Well, as you know I start tomorrow so I'll arrive early, meet you at yours. I have the address already. Then I'll just be around, in the background. I'll keep out of your way as much as I can but I will need to stay close to you at all times. "

A quick glance reveals Rozanov quirk an eyebrow at him when he says 'close'. Shane ignores it.

"But there will be a few days I have off each month, then I'll swap out with Hayden, Hayden Pike, he's my partner."

Rozanov's footsteps pause, then he pouts his beautifully shaped mouth and asks a question.

"Partner like boyfriend?"

Shane blinks, suddenly silenced by the look he's getting, it's a look that even someone Rose calls oblivious can tell is highly suggestive.

Then Shane hears someone answering the question, him apparently, and what he's decided to say is-

"No, I don't have a boyfriend."

Another crooked smirk hits Shane hard in the centre of his chest but he can take more than a punch or two and stay on his feet.

"Girlfriend?"

The 'no boyfriend' answer had started Rozanov's feet moving again so he's almost close enough to touch now.

And shit, Shane realises he wants to touch him. The thought fizzles through his blood like lightning.

Fuck. He will ***not*** be doing that.

No!

Absolutely not.

He's a fucking professional and Rozanov is just being an asshole. This is all pretend, it has to be. The alternative doesn't bear thinking about right now.

Regardless of mysterious Russian motivations floating round the room Shane hears himself answering the man's question again. Hearing the simple no on his lips infuriates him, he should have said it isn't anyone's business if he has or hasn't got a girlfriend, boyfriend either.

By now the unfairly attractive irritant is close enough that Shane decides it's best to step backwards to keep the appropriate distance between them, unfortunately there's not far to go and almost instantly his back hits something solid, making him gasp.

He catches the glimmer of amusement in Rozanov's eyes before he too stops moving. He's very close, but they're not actually touching and Shane is definitely not disappointed about that, he's relieved, yes definitely relieved, not disappointed.

He should move away, leave, go, (flee) but it seems that he can't even look away from Rozanov's mouth, let alone take a step, the way he licks his lips then bites the bottom one before he speaks is oddly mesmerising.

"So..."

The Russian accent is strong even in one word and that's just a thing he's noticing, nothing interesting about that at all.

"...what if I like this "Hayden" more than you, what if he is prettier than you? Can I keep him instead?"

Light eyes, long lashes fluttering right in front of him make it a little harder to think than usual but Shane thrives on a challenge and he rises to the occasion like a pro.

"Uh no... that's not how it works."

Despite his jumbled up feelings his voice remains calm and detached, thank fucking God!

It may be the idea of Hayden having to deal with Rozanov that helps sober him. Even from this brief interaction with their new client he's pretty sure Rozanov and Hayden won't get on.

And poor Hayden would be at a loss right now, dealing with heated looks and flirtatious questions as Rozanov puts his evil plans into play because Shane knows what he's up to. He's worked it out because it's horribly obvious. First Rose now him.

He's not fooled by this over the top flirting, Shane knows what Rozanov is up to and even if he's a bit flustered by his looks, because well, *hot is hot*, the Russian's plan to make him mad and quit won't work.

Shane feels a smug sense of satisfaction spreading through him at being in the lead in the competition that's obviously just started between them.

If Rozanov thinks he can sexually harass him into leaving he's going to have to try harder than provocative questions, a flirty look and a sexy saunter and Shane doesn't think this man would cross that kind of line.

He also doesn't think about the eager flip of his stomach at the thought of what a more thorough and serious attempt to seduce someone might look like from Rozanov. It's not his fault if the possibilities are fascinating, Rozanov exudes sex appeal, he probably just has to ask nicely and people fall into bed with him, there's probably a queue actually.

"No?"

The accent wraps itself around his ears and Shane refocuses on the conversation rather than the man and shakes his head to agree and elaborate.

"No, according to the contract, I'm your designated CPO."

That obviously unfamiliar acronym puts a frown on Rozanov's face.

"C-P- O? Ah like Star Wars, shiny, boring robot, very fussy. I remember him. Suits you."

Rozanov's eyes are sparkling, it's obviously a joke and it actually makes Shane laugh.

"That's C 3 P O, you idiot. Honestly who doesn't know that, gee I'd be embarrassed to be you right now."

He shakes his head but his smile gives him away and Rozanov looks far too pleased with himself for making him laugh.

"CPO" Shane explains further, glad to be getting back on track. "Close protection officer. The contract stipulates that's me, for at least 85% of the time but I do get some days off. "

Another pout and some thoughtful nodding occurs as Rozanov studies him.

"Hayden days?"

Shane nods "Maybe Rose sometimes too."

"Hmmm"

Shane funds himself being studied, the man is plotting something, that's obvious.

"Sounds like very professional arrangement, very organised. Impressive team working.

The scrutiny continues.

"You are good at job yes?"

He nods again, feeling much less flustered now they're back talking about work.

"Honestly yes. It might not sound modest but our agency is at the top of the field, and I'm the best we have. Trust me I'm very good at what I do. Disciplined, dedicated, discret. You'll be safe with me."

Rozanov's eye narrow, assessing him probably. Shane adds;

"You should be pleased, they've invested a lot of money in protecting you."

Unfortunately Boston Ballet's top star does not look at all pleased. He sulks prettily too. How unfair is that?

The sullen mouth moves once more.

"At least you are pretty I guess."

It's Shane's turn to frown.

"That's really not relevant to the situation."

All that gets him is a shrug and look that heats his blood by another degree of two. Shane is horribly aware that he's not doing anything to stop what would very likely be considered inappropriate behaviour between a bodyguard and his client by HR if his team had a HR department.

Rozanov continues to flirt shamelessly.

"Maybe, but is true, you are pretty and perhaps, actually, I will not mind you being around so much. Could be worse. Could be ugly like Hayden Pike."

Rushing to defend his friend's honour Shane responds quickly to the unfair insult.

"You don't even know what he looks like ."

Rozanov shrugs another shoulder then bites down on his bottom lip again, he looks like he's thinking about saying something else. Shane wants to lean in closer to hear whatever it is but locks himself into place instead.

Rozanov leans in anyway.

"Depends who you compare with..."

Then he leans back again, looking far too pleased with himself. Shane thinks he might hate him, just a little bit.

"So you are my bodyguard tomorrow."

Shane nods, he's feeling hot again.

"...but you are not my bodyguard tonight?"

"No..."

Aware that he should have said that louder, much firmer and far more assertively Shane can do nothing about the breathless quality to the word now. He compensates by saying the next part more clearly.

"I will be tomorrow."

Except his breath catches a little on the last word but fortunately Rozanov doesn't seem to notice, unfortunately his gaze is rather heavy and far too intense for Shane's peace of mind.

His Russian accent makes the next sentence sound positively sinful.

"Tomorrow is not today. "

Those words brush against the shell of his ear as Rozanov damn him, leans in even closer and whispers in a way that does strange things to his knees.

Fuck.

Shane locks his knees and stops the shiver that wants to run down his spine by the strength of his will power alone.

He doesn't know when he closed his eyes though, it's embarrassing to be reacting like this. He needs to pull himself together, this is absolutely insane behaviour, he never feels like this and especially not with an about to be client but this man is just so...

Rozanov deep voice interrupts his thoughts. His breath almost caressing his skin.

"Maybe... we could... not be so professional together, do something very unprofessional tonight? Maybe if you like it we change the bodyguard plan."

It's like a bucket of cold water in the face. One he's grateful for, thank god, that confirms his suspicions and despite his own treacherous desire for what Rozanov is tempting him with Shane is not an idiot.

This seduction attempt is just a way to get rid of him. If he slept with him or even kissed him now Rozanov would use it to fire him and there's no way in Hell that this guy winning.

The turbulent emotions he's been struggling with settle at once, Shane is calmer again now he's knows this is all a game and if it's a game then Shane can win.

His own voice becomes much cooler and much firmer.

"I sure I don't know what you mean."

Then he slides himself sideways reinstating the more appropriate and far safer distance between them.

"and if you think this routine is going to upset me and make me quit you've underestimated me."

The soft chuckle that calling Rozanov out elicits sounds quite genuine, almost as if Rozanov is pleased to have lost this round.

His tone of voice becomes quite different from a moment ago, much less sultry and far less provocative but still as far as Shane's concerned just as attractive.

A ripple of amusement runs through Rozanov's words.

"Very smart. Do not blame me for trying. I really do not want bodyguard bothering me but I see now you are too stubborn to change mind."

Shane's pleased to see the brief flash of respect in the sparkling eyes in front of him.

"Strong willed too, saying no to me, I am hard to resist."

Shane has to bite his lip so he doesn't smile at the astonishingly arrogant statement. He can't let that go unanswered, it's just not his style.

"Maybe you're just not my type or maybe you just have to try harder."

And that absolutely was not him flirting. He doesn't flirt. Certainly not with a client.

Except Ilya Rozanov is staring at him and he's staring right back and there's undeniably something in the air between them.

Something that shouldn't be there. Can't be there.

Rozanov makes a pleased, soft humming noise that Shane likes a little too much.

"We will see.."

Then Rozanov winks again and Shane has to remind himself that he's in this to win now and can't collapse at the first hurdle.

"I should go. Early start tomorrow. I'm starting work with a new client. I've heard he's quite difficult."

His newest client nods,

"Very difficult indeed. I heard he is big big problem."

Then Ilya Rozanov steps back and smiles but this time it's bright and open and more attractive than anything else he's done tonight, and in those most wretched of seconds Shane is cursed with the knowledge of what he wants and what he can't have.

He has no other choice but to run now and hide. He pushes the desire away and keeps his face blank.

Well mostly blank probably. Rozanov's smug little smile doesn't particularly help Shane's composure as he escorts him to the door, neither does the hand touching him lightly at the small of his back guiding him forward and burning him while it does.

It may just be a natural tendency to touch rather than anything else because Rozanov is using his normal voice still when he says goodbye, no more flirting.

"Goodnight Hollander, will see you in morning."

Shane steps out of the room into the much cooler air of the corridor and turns around to see Rozanov leaning against the door jam, loose and relaxed and oh so sexy as he smiles his crooked smile and says;

"... but Hollander, if tomorrow you want to look at me some more that is fine, I understand, I am very attractive, maybe I will be looking at you too, like I said you are very pretty."

It's such an unexpected comment now that the game is over it makes him laugh and silently curse his heated cheeks again.

Rozanov's eyebrow barely moves but it manages to express a surprising amount of information.

Damn him for being so ... well Shane's not sure he's got an accurate enough adjective yet but he will do soon. He huffs out another small laugh, quietly amused at the situation despite himself.

At least he can hide how he's really feeling, he's good at that and Rozanov will never know what his bodyguard might or might not want if he was free to choose.

Shane attempts to offset his laugh with a shake of his head and rolls his eyes for good measure, just to make it clear he's really not that amused or anything else by this man before turning around and walking away without any regrets, or at least any visible regrets.

Rozanov's voice follows him down the hallway.

"And if you ever want to quit stupid bodyguard job, just let me know. I will be ok with that."

This time Shane doesn't turn round, he keeps on walking and wondering how the hell he's going to get through the next six months in one piece if he has to spend everyday with Ilya Rozanov's looks and smiles and body and his sense of humour and his whole stupid personality.

It might help if he considers it a challenge, an ongoing competition Shane's willpower vs Roznov's various charms. Yes, that might work, Shane reminds himself that he likes challenges. He likes to push himself to the limit. It's good to test yourself every now and then isn't it and God knows Rozanov is going to be one hell of a test.

Shane keeps walking and each step that takes him further away from Rozanov helps to build his confidence and by the time he's leaving the opera house behind him he actually believes that everything will be ok.

*

His cab is pulling away almost before Ilya has shut the door, heading off into the night seeking its next fare. The driver's night just starting as Ilya heads towards his bed.

The taxi ride home was dull and uneventful which just proves Ilya's point that he is perfectly safe without a bodyguard. If he is safe tonight and yesterday then why does he need Shane Hollander tomorrow.

Ilya sulks about that as he adjusts his bag so he can open his front door more easily. The ache in his muscles is familiar but a little sharper than he's used to, it's been far too long since he last performed and despite his well structured physical training recovery program and the dedicated practice he commits to each day his body is protesting the reminder of what he does for a living.

A full performance is nowhere near the same as a practice routine or even a rehearsal.

He hopes Hollander was impressed with what he saw. Ilya catches himself and modifies the thought; he hopes the whole audience was impressed, Hollander was just a part of that audience wasn't he, that's why his mind had gone straight to the dark haired man he'd had no luck with removing from his life.

He trudges towards his home annoyed by the cold and the weight of his bag and the existence of Shane Hollander.

He doesn't want Shane Hollander in his life.

A slightly more honest thought invades his mind and demands his attention; he doesn't want him as a bodyguard. He might want a few other things from him, at the very least he wants to look at him some more. He was not joking when he told Hollander he was pretty. He is very pretty and Ilya would not mind kissing his freckles and possibly some other parts of him as well.

That will not be happening though. No kissing, no nothing, that was clear from how Hollander had behaved tonight. The man is obviously made of stone, or at least he has the most impressive willpower Ilya's encountered for a long while, because Ilya can tell when people want him and Shane Hollander had wanted him.

He's sure of it. Mostly sure anyway.

Hollander is just stubborn, denying himself pleasure. The thought is rather depressing but it's Hollander's loss, not Ilya's.

Almost at his door, the memory of Hollander's parted lips and flushed cheeks, makes him smile. The man had tried to hide it but he'd noticed those beautiful dark eyes trying to mask their hunger, he'd seen his pupils -blown wide and full of want, so at the very least Hollander had been curious about him and if they'd met in a bar Ilya feels confident he could have had Shane Hollander up against the wall of a bathroom if he'd wanted to. Quickly too. He likes that thought very much.

Having successfully unlocked his front door and stepped inside while distracted by thoughts of Hollander, Ilya is grateful to feel the warmth wrap around him as the door shuts and locks behind him.

His bag hits the floor and takes some of the tension in his shoulders with it. He's not worried about his safety when he's out but it is nice to be home and behind a locked door, although he'd prefer some company if he's honest, if only he'd persuaded Hollander to be unprofessional with him.

He is ridiculously attractive.

The idea of spending tomorrow and many more days after that with Hollander hanging around him suddenly does not seem quite so terrible even if he's still against the idea of bodyguards in general.

Thoughts of Hollander had distracted his mind from his surroundings but his body had been paying more attention than his mind. from nowhere the sharp sting of adrenaline rushes through him as his body reacts to an unexpected noise.

He freezes, something inside his house just moved, possibly a chair, scrapping across the floor, not that it matters what it is, what matters is that no one should be in here to move chairs at all.

Instantly alert, body tense Ilya turns to face the intruder hands up ready to defend himself he surges forward and almost crashes into his uninvited visitor.

They both scream at the same time.

Temporarily robbed of his voice he stares at a very familiar face. Considering how worried she's been about his safety you'd think she'd be more careful about giving him heart attacks but no!

She's just lucky his brain registered her perfume before he fully reacted to his unexpected guest and started punching.

"Sventlana!"

Her name is a breathless gasp that expresses his feelings very clearly. Svetlana meanwhile glares at him, one hand pressed to her chest.

He notices she's wearing one of his hoodies.

"Fuck! You scared me!"

She sounds outraged which is ironic. He stares incredulously at her.

"I scare you, this is my house! Why are you here?"

The glare escalates to one of her famous scowls and that suggests he's in trouble. He has no idea why though, at least not until she starts to explain and he realises he's in trouble.

"Oh, I see... you do not check your phone now? I sent a text, said I was coming over. What if it had been an emergency? What if I had sent a text to say Ilya help! Help I need you! I am being kidnapped by aliens. When would you be bothering to look and see my desperate cries for rescue?"

He snorts, managing to be amused even as he waits for his heart rate to calm. She's always so dramatic and he hopes she never changes. Walking towards her, hands open in a gesture of apology he asks for the answer he already knows; bare feet and hoodies do not speak of desperation or alien abductions.

"Was it emergency?"

Her pretty lips twist to one side, she looks annoyed that she has to say no.

Ilya slips an arm around her waist and pulls her closer, it's such a familiar feeling it calms him further, bending slightly he kisses her gently on the mouth, she smiles back, lips curving against his before she returns the kiss, the softness of her lips parting as her tongue reaches out and asks for a little more and of course Ilya is happy to oblige.

When they part he can't help grinning, he's fairly sure he knows what this is about now. It's been a while since she stayed the night, he's a little surprised but happy to go along with it if that's what she wants.

He teases her gently, checking he's right before he kisses her again.

"Ah I see, you were feeling lonely and you have come to play yes?"

His friend leans backwards to look up at him, strong warm hands that he knows as well as his own are settled on his hips, her touch is so familiar, just as it should be after all these years of dancing together but her expression is much less familiar. He's puzzled by the unexpected mystery in her eyes as she studies him.

His tone has been light and teasing, hers isn't, when she answers the question her voice is soft and strangely serious.

"Yes, I thought it would be nice, to spend some time together in case things start to change one day."

He frowns, concerned by the phrasing.

"Are you going somewhere?"

That gets him a roll of her eyes and the smile she uses when she feels sorry for him. He usually gets that look because he's not understood something simple. He has no idea what it could be this time. As far as he knows there isn't even anything to understand or misunderstand.

She doesn't elaborate for him but her hands release his waist and she cups his cheeks gently, a thumb running along his cheek bone and Svetlana speaks so softly he has to strain to hear her.

"No, I am not."

He gives her the truth in his heart.

"Good"

She smiles but it tinged with sadness and Ilya will admit that he's confused, he thought she'd come over for fun and sex but she looks so serious.

This kind of melancholy drama is new from her and rather concerning. He's not sure he likes it as much as her usual kind of drama but brushing off his worries he thinks it's wisest to laugh, move past the strange mood and make it a joke.

"Am I going somewhere?"

She laughs too but her eyes shine a little too brightly and he still doesn't understand what's happening.

"I hope not. I hope we will always be friends, partners, family to each other."

Then suddenly he does understand, this is about the threats and the attack and the bodyguard. Hollander starting tomorrow must have unsettled her, brought it all back. She'd taken the attack far worse than him. She had not left his side for days after it happened, alternating between ranting at him for carelessness and just holding his hand and looking heartbroken when she thought he wasn't watching her.

She looks and sounds far too serious again for his liking.

"Whenever you need me, whatever you need me for, I am here for you. You can tell me anything anytime. Understand? I love you my Ilyuska and I want you to find the happiness you deserve."

He looks away, it's all getting a little too real, too sincere and it's always been hard for him to accept her love and affection. He can never really believe he deserves it.

She's too good for him, she always has been. Ilya loves his oldest friend dearly but not in the way that means they could be a couple, make a life with each other and be happy. It's just not like that with them, which is ok, she loves him the same way he loves her and they have always had each other when comfort is needed.

Sometimes he wishes it was different between them, sometimes he wishes that it could have been her but it won't ever be.

Her hand drops from his face and Svetlana finds his fingers. She wraps her much smaller hand around his and squeezes tight. All this honesty and feeling is too much and he has to turn his head so he can hide for a moment.

She doesn't try to make him look at her because she understands how he works, sometimes better than he understands himself. He can't say the same about her, she has many more secrets than him and she keeps them well but that doesn't matter, he can give her what she needs now and neither of them have to be lonely when they need a friend.

She's on her tiptoes now as she tilts his face back towards her and kisses him again, it's familiar and soft, theirs is a friendship that's special and he values it greatly, which means he feels guilty that he thinks briefly about a different sort of body under his fingertips and lips of a different moving with his in the kiss.

He tries not to imagine a much deeper voice sighing and moaning and a much larger body arching into him as he slides his mouth lower to kiss the soft skin of her neck.

And it's not certainly not fair that when he opens his eyes, to pick her up and start them moving towards the bedroom that he's wishes for the first time that she had freckles.

Chapter End Notes

Welcome to the end of the chapter. Hope you enjoyed, if you did let me know, say hello, send an emoji or tell me what you liked and what you think might be coming up.

I remain eternally hopeful that someone will want to chat about the words with me.

Thanks for reading. I'll be back soon with the next part 

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Ilya and Shane have to deal with some questions.

Do they have satisfactory answers? Well they think they do.

The ladies asking the questions might be of a slightly different opinion.

Or

Rose and Svetlana have very enquiring minds and the boys are nervous

Chapter Notes

Chapt 4 and I'll be honest I'm finishing drafting Chapt 8 at the moment so we are heading for a Chapt increase but hey if you know me are we really surprised.

I've gone with 10 chapters for now ... Will it be a teeny tiny bit more 🙋 your guess is as good as mine. I'm not cursing myself by putting an upper limit on it but I'm sure it won't get too bad.

Anyway- this was a fun chapter to write I've enjoyed writing the lovely ladies of heated rivalry I like them and their best friends together very much.

Also going up to M rating because the boys are feeling it...

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

An impromptu sleepover with your best friend and excellent sex can do wonders for your mood. Ilya is relaxed and sleepy and perfectly content, at least until Svetlana steals the cigarette from his lips and after taking a drag says.

"That woman I met tonight, Rose Landry, I liked her she has good style. She was very pretty."

Fuck... Ilya tries to hide the tension in his shoulders, why is she bringing that up now? He can only think of one reason- she must know he's been trying to get rid of his bodyguard, but how, she wasn't there when he flirted with Rose and she'd left before he'd started anything with Hollander. He can only hope that it's just that and she isn't seeing anything more revealing about his bodyguard and his interest in this particular one.

Ilya sits up straighter and reclaims his cigarette without making eye contact even though he knows she's staring right at him.

He commits to a vague noise that might mean he agrees with her statement and rubs at his face but as he feared she wasn't asking his opinion, just using Rose to segue into the real topic of conversation.

"And the Hollander man..."

The pause she leaves is just bait and he's not falling for it.

He catches her smile out of the corner of his eye.

"Your new bodyguard yes?"

She must read his messages even if he doesn't.

"He is very pretty too."

It sounds like an innocent statement but it's not. He knows it's not. She's rarely innocent at the best of times. It's why he loves her so much.

He also knows he should stay silent but he can't, she'll just bully the answer out of him eventually, so sounding as uninterested as possible in the topic of Shane Hollander's beauty Ilya shrugs nonchalantly unfortunately aware that at the same time his face twitches its betrayal of the truth as he tries and fails not to swipe at his nose again.

He needs to get better at lying to her but sadly Svetlana already knows all his tells. At least he sounds pretty convincing;

"Is he? I did not notice."

Well maybe he's not that convincing if her peel of laughter is anything to go by.

"Ilyuska shame on you, telling lies to your friend. You noticed him plenty. I noticed you noticing him even before the performance and then later too."

"Is not true."

He ignores the fact he's sounds about 12 years old again. Svetlana bounces up onto her knees, the bed bouncing with her until she's facing him, her beautiful eyes alight with amusement at his discomfort.

"Did you kiss him?"

He actually gasps, how does she know his secret desires. He wraps his answer in his most offended tone.

"No. I did not."

He can't look at her so he studies the television screen flashing brightly over her shoulder.

"But you want to."

The sing song, teasing tone does nothing to improve his mood at having to endure this ridiculous conversation.

"I do not. I found out he is boring. Very boring."

She snorts and straddles his lap so he can't keep trying to ignore her, her fingers pinch his chin to keep him from turning away again.

"He is hot. You know he is. I liked his hands, very big hands, he looked very strong too... "

She pouts at him and shrugs far too casually so he can guess what going to come out of her mouth next.

"So... if *you* do not want him maybe I..."

Despite knowing exactly what this is all about he falls for it anyway, his voice much sharper than he intended it to be.

"No. "

She looks positively delighted by his abruptness, the gleeful smirking expression is pure victory. Svetlana's eyes sparkle with both her triumph and the light from the television screen as she hums at him.

"Hmmm, interesting... why Ilya? Why can I not play with the new bodyguard? You have always been good at sharing before."

That's true and honestly he's not sure why he reacted so quickly and with so much feeling. He won't be having fun with Hollander so why can't Sveta? She could fill him in on the details he can't get for himself.

The idea makes him feel slightly queasy. She calls his name softly but still teasing.

"Ilya... I am waiting."

He risks a glance at her, she's still amused but he sees now that it's tempered by a touch of sadness, maybe even sympathy. He does not want her sympathy.

With a sigh and a profound interest in the television screen again he gives her an answer that he hopes she accepts.

"Is not professional that is all, if you and him were to.... "

His hand waves around vaguely as his voice trails off, unwilling to say exactly what he doesn't want her to do with Hollander which is utterly stupid.

Fuck! What is wrong with him tonight? He has no idea but regardless he continues the weak justifications for his objections to Svetlana and Hollander hooking up and hopes it will be the end of the conversation.

"Is just that he will be working for me, being my bodyguard, would not be proper thing for *you*, my partner to do with him."

It's a terribly weak argument but she proves her love for him once again by accepting his reason and sliding off his lap, sitting by his side. She rests her head on his shoulder and he enjoys the sensation of being close to someone and the scent of her perfume. He also enjoys the warmth that spreads through him when she loops their arms together and snuggles up even closer.

They stay like that for a while; silent and close - the best of friends. When she speaks again her voice is hushed and serious.

"I'm glad he is here. You need him. Those letters scare me."

A glance down confirms what he expected, now it's her turn to avoid looking at him and he lets her have her privacy as she lets him have his.

He can hear her swallow before the next part. It's been hard for her, he forgets that sometimes.

"I do not want to see you on your knees, bleeding like that again. Not ever. He will keep you safe. I can tell. I liked him."

He stays silent, answering her with a kiss pressed to the top of her head.

He doesn't say anything because if he did he thinks he might say something like "I think I like him too" and that would be disastrous.

Whatever happens he absolutely can not start liking Shane Hollander in any way at all.

Unfortunately Ilya has the sneaking suspicion it might already be too late to stop that from happening.

Svetlana stays another hour before she kisses him goodbye and slips out quietly leaving him alone in his bed where he finally falls asleep trying not to think about Shane Hollander.

Rose checks in with him about an hour after Shane gets home. He sees the message come in but doesn't answer it straight away which seems to be a tactical error on his part for some reason because the next time he looks at his phone there are several more messages and while her first text just said

I'm home, you? x

The next one that had arrived five minutes later just said-

Shane?

And then the next one seemed a little more intense;

Shane??! Why aren't you answering me? Where are you?

And then there was the last one ...

Check in please.

That one had arrived around two minutes ago. He's still staring at all the words wondering where she thinks he could possibly be at this time of night and why she's so keen to hear from him when his phone starts to ring.

He answers it quickly because it's possible she'll be slightly less annoyed that way.

"You better be at home right now mister."

No hello just Rose's voice in his ear, a curious mixture of relief, censure and concern.

It's an odd way to start a conversation and Shane honestly has no idea why his friends are so weird sometimes, but as he resigned himself to that fact long ago he answers her simply and honestly.

"Yes. Where else would I be?"

Considering how urgently she needed him a minute ago her sudden silence is unexpected. The silence stretches and when she speaks again she sounds ... well he can't always tell but he'd say she sounds, maybe... a little disappointed and quite a lot surprised.

"What? Really? You mean he didn't try *anything*?"

Her voice fades away for a moment and when it returns she sounds confused.

"I really thought he'd try something."

Then Shane understands what the problem is; the *he* she's talking about is *him*.

The truth crashes down on him, his best friend left tonight thinking that not only Rozanov would hit on him but that he might possibly go for it.

"Well he didn't."

The words are out before he can consider the possible consequences of keeping secrets like that from your friend and business partner.

The lie, spoken smoothly is also unburdened with any trace of guilt. Normally Shane doesn't approve of lying but he feels quite confident that in this particular case lying to Rose is the best course of action for everyone's mental health.

His cheeks feel hot, but that's probably just from the phone he has held to his face. It's definitely got nothing to do with Rose speculating about his interest in Ilya Rozanov because even if someone has been thinking thoughts, she can't *know* anything.

It's fine, even Rose can't possibly *know* just how badly he'd wanted what she's suggesting he might consider.

She might be smart but she doesn't *know* anything and she doesn't *need* to know anything either.

No, absolutely no need for her to know that he wanted Rozanov far more than he should have, maybe more than he's ever wanted anyone before — no, that is definitely a secret that needs to be kept from your best friend ex girlfriend business partner who worries about you too much.

Rose is better off in the dark especially as what Rozanov did or didn't offer him tonight had mostly been fake.

Rose's voice fades into the background and he lets the part of his brain that can carry on a conversation with yeses and nos and vague sounds that fit the moment take over.

The other part of his brain has rather unhelpfully decided that now is the ideal moment to present him with a highlight reel of the time he spent alone with Ilya Rozanov in his dressing room.

Fuck.

He really can't be thinking about any of that with Rose on the phone. She'll go from speculating to knowing and he can't have her knowing things.

Vaguely aware of the sound of his own voice taking part in a rather one sided conversation Shane closes his eyes and tries to focus on her words but all he can see are Ilya Rozanov's lips.

Fuck

If he'd thought he'd meant anything by it he might have actually let the kiss happen. He might have let more happen.

Fuck.

It's a good job he saw through it so fast. A good job he'd been smart enough to resist the deepest cupid's bow he'd ever seen and the way his pink mouth had glistened and the brief glimpses of his tongue.

He smelt good too.

Fuck.

"Shane?"

"Rose."

It's an automatic response but it fools no one. She knows he's not been listening. She says as much.

"Really? You've not listened to a word I've said have you?"

He doesn't answer and chooses to ignore her exasperated sigh.

"Shane you need to be careful. I don't want you to get hurt."

It's sweet that she cares but he can handle himself and Rose isn't usually this concerned about him at the start of a relatively simple contract. They don't even have to cover nights. He thought that was a mistake but Boston Ballet felt that as long as Rozanov was tucked into bed by 12am and behind locked doors he'd be fine.

Shane reminds her of that gently.

"I don't know why you're so worried , it's not even going to be that difficult a job. He won't be that bad. I think it's mostly an act, he just plays up to the reputation he's got.

Temperamental artist type, diva, you know... I've taken on far more dangerous jobs and far more difficult clients. It'll be fine, he's just annoyed because his pride's been injured. He doesn't think he needs a bodyguard. He probably doesn't to be honest, but he's got to have one and I'm sure he'll warm up to me."

On the other end of the phone there's a burst of startled laughter.

"I don't think him *not* warming up to you is going to be our biggest problem Shane."

Unsure if he fully understood the double negatives and the unclear context, he dismisses her concerns confidently anyway.

"Look I know he's a bit arrogant and it might take some time to get used to each other but we'll be ok. I'm a professional and so is he. It won't be a problem."

She snorts again, clearly unconvinced. Her faith in him is inspiring! He tries not to sound annoyed about the lack of trust in his skills but he's tired and she's just making a fuss so he fails.

"Rose, honestly I can handle anything that comes with this job. The threats are vague, it's probably just some random fan of his who wants to feel connected to his idol."

"The man got stabbed Shane."

He smiles remembering what Rozanov had said about that.

"Only lightly."

Rose clearly isn't amused. She snaps back at him.

"What's that supposed to mean? He was in hospital for a week. It was serious."

Shane decides it's best for everyone if he stays silent, less chance of doing or saying something wrong that way.

Rose fills the silence for him.

"Shane, you need to take this whole situation a lot more seriously. All of it; the letters, the stalker *and* Rozanov."

Enough's enough now, he decides he needs to be firmer with her or they'll just be here all night and he really wants to go to bed.

"Rose. Stop worrying, I mean it. It's not my first contract is it?"

She replies, sullen but honest.

"No."

"And I'm actually damn fucking good at my job right?"

"Yes."

Again reluctant but honest.

It makes him smile, so she does have some faith in him.

"So we're agreed, I've got this. You don't need to worry about me . I'll be careful and keep him safe."

He expects another 'yes' or a reluctant 'fine' but all he gets is a dubious hum.

He sighs and although she can't appreciate it he rolls his eyes too. Honestly what is her problem about this contract?

His patience is disappearing quickly now so he knows he sounds sterner than he had moments before.

"Rose... stop it."

She doesn't exactly stop but she at least sounds resigned to the fact he's winning this argument.

"Fine. You promise then; he'll be safe and you'll be careful?"

"Yes."

"What about the other way round?"

He tries to work out what she means but he's so tired, and it doesn't make a lot of sense. Does she mean Rozanov needs to be careful in order to keep Shane safe? Maybe? He could see

how she might think that but that's not how it works and she knows that.

They go and do what the client wants, within reason. He can't keep Rozanov locked safely away all the time they'll be performances and practices to attend and probably some social events too. Rozanov doesn't look like the type to be careful.

He states the obvious just in case she really means that.

"That's not how it works Rose."

There's time for one more sigh before she hangs up.

"I know Shane, that's why I'm worried."

Twenty minutes later the strange phone call is still on his mind but he pushes his friends concerns aside and concentrates on brushing his teeth methodically, taking his time, making sure he does it right because he's tired and that means he might cut corners if he doesn't focus.

It's nice to concentrate on something so uncomplicated.

Shane often keeps his tired mind occupied with familiar routines, patterns of behaviour he can trust not to confuse or let him down. He's looking forward to his bed, he's showered and in his bedtime shorts, new socks on his feet to keep his toes warm because they're always freezing and his clean sheets are calling him.

Once he climbs into bed he reads briefly, only a few pages, just to help his mind stay quiet, then he checks his alarm to make sure it's set and finally he takes off his glasses and turns off the light.

In the dark Shane shuts his eyes and relaxes into his pillow. He breaths in deeply, pauses then lets it go again, repeats the process, it's another familiar routine that usually eases him into sleep.

And a good night's sleep is important, especially the night before you start a new job. He's already been kept up too late, he got distracted at the ballet. Rozanov distracted him. He shouldn't have gone back stage to see him. He shouldn't have stayed when Rose left.

He shouldn't be thinking about him now.

He is though.

He's thinking about his shoulders and his face. He's thinking about how he moved on the stage, the grace, the strength that was visible in his arms and thighs.

Shane opens his eyes with the hope that his ceiling will replace the images taunting him.

His ceiling fails in it's one job of being boring and reliable. Instead it becomes the backdrop for a movie starring Ilya Rozanov and all his remarkable assets.

Shane is helpless to stop memories of his dancing, of his amazing body, his voice; low and rough brushing against his skin, he'd almost been able to feel his lips, they'd gotten so close to each other.

Those lips were probably soft but firm. Talented like the rest of him. He wonders what a kiss from Rizanov would taste like.

He really shouldn't be thinking thoughts like this. The unruly thumping in his chest is following the same pattern it had when Rozanov had looked at him like *that*.

Shane's hand slides lower down his body, settles on his thigh as he wonders what that mouth would feel like on his skin, if he might use his teeth to nip and tease like he has with his own plush and pouting lip.

How would they feel biting into the flesh of his neck, just under his jaw. It would sting so nicely just before Rozanov would kiss the same spot, soothing the hurt away before kissing him again. Kissing him again and again; Shane can't help himself, he's imagining kisses moving along his chest, his stomach, getting lower and lower until that mouth found his thighs and then his...

He bites his own lip trying to keep the soft moan in as his fingers brush against his rapidly swelling cock. There's no one to hear him but he feels like he shouldn't be loud. If he's loud he can't pretend it's not happening.

It is happening and he's probably going to be loud anyway.

Shane moans again as his hands skim lightly over sensitive flesh, imagining what Rozanov might have done next if he'd fallen for his routine, if he'd let the heat he'd see in icy coloured eyes catch fire and burn him.

God he wanted to burn.

Shane's fingers keep moving without any specific instructions from him; up then down, slow and steady, he's enjoying the teasing touch far too much it goes perfectly with the picture he's creating in his head.

Rozanov's eyes were so pretty, his mouth too.

His body extraordinary, and you could see so much of it. Those tights left nothing to the imagination but even with the clarity created by skin tight clothing Shane wants to see more, see the real flesh beneath the fabric.

Touch it, kiss it, taste him.

He kicks back the sheet, to give himself more room.

Part of his brain is telling him to stop, that this will not help anyone in the morning. He knows if he carries on like this it will be a mistake but it feels too good to stop. He doesn't want to stop.

For once Shane allows himself the indulgence.

Instead of stopping he lets his other hand, the one not stroking himself closer and closer to the edge, slip lower. He cups his balls, tugging at them a little, then his fingers slide backwards, just to tease, to toy with the sensitive skin there. He hasn't got the energy to reach for any lube or a toy or even the time to do anything more than skim his hole, round and round in tantalising circles, but it still feels so good. He imagines Rozanov on his knees between his legs, his mouth taking the place of his own fingers.

The image makes his hips buck upwards and he moans a little louder, because why not, he's alone. He's allowed.

No one will know.

Seeing Rozanov on his knees would be so good. Shane can easily imagine that the man would be skilled at anything he wanted to do well.

Shane imagines him licking slowly at his rim, pushing against the tight muscle, reaching further and further inside him, driving him crazy then he'd probably abandon that pleasure and grin up at him before teasing the tip of his cock and then slowly lowering himself down.

The picture in his head is so clear and so very good.

Rozanov taking him down, so deep, swallowing around him, tongue rubbing against him making him feel so good.

Fuck.

He'd be so good at it, he so good at everything.

Shane pushes the tip of his finger in a little, just a little and lets himself think about the one thing he's been trying not to imagine.

Rozanov on his knees for him would be amazing but what Shane really wants is that cock, so big and thick, he's already learnt that from those damn tights, in his mouth.

Hips jerking erratically Shane desperately seeks his release and with his hand moving faster and faster all he can see is Rozanov, all he can hear is a low voice thick with a Russian accent telling him how good he is, that's he's so good, so good at sucking his big cock for him. A perfect mouth for a perfect cock.

Every second of his fantasy gets Shane closer to his climax. He needs to come but he doesn't want to loose the fantasy, even now almost delirious with all his needs and wants he knows he can't ever let this happen again.

He can't imagine this ever again.

It doesn't take very much longer until his needy moans turn into a stuttered out cry that might possibly sound like "Fuuck Rozanov" if he was coherent enough to hear himself.

He's not though and that's a definitely a good thing.

When his legs feel less like jelly Shane climbs out of his bed to shower again and change his boxers before he gets back into his bed and tries not to think about the fact that he just jerked off and had the best orgasm he can remember having for a long time to thoughts of his new client, the one who he'll be picking up for his first day at work in a few hours.

Shane groans. Shit... he's such a fucking idiot, but at least he's got it out of his system right? That's got to be good right?

He'll be fine by tomorrow morning, Rozanov isn't that hot anyway. He'll get used to him, it's just the novelty that's hot right now, the forbidden nature of it all.

It's all going to be fine.

Absolutely fine.

Shane rolls onto his side, eyelids fluttering and sleep crashing in on him fast.

It's only then, on the edge of sleep that his subconscious takes a chance and throws a brief statement of truth at him.

It's his last thought before sleep claims him and one he won't remember when he wakes in the morning, confident in his ability to handle Rozanov but right now it's bright and raw and honest.

Shane Hollander falls asleep with the secret knowledge that he wants to fuck and be fucked by Ilya Rozanov which no matter how hard he'll pretends it doesn't tomorrow means he's screwed.

So very very screwed.

The images are vague at first, only shapes and sounds, heat and pressure and pleasure, then there's more; soft strands of dark hair to play with and tug on, low desperate moans to listen to and a pair of broad shoulders to hold onto as he thrusts forward again and again.

The pleasure builds and builds, the man on his knees is good, so very good with his mouth. He knew he would be, his mouth was built for this, for Ilya.

Ilya tugs on the strands again, the man likes that a lot, it makes him suck harder, moan louder. Ilya does it again and groans but he wants to see his face too. It's such a pretty face. So many freckles to count, to kiss.

Ilya pulls on the soft strands teasing his thighs more gently. He murmurs the words needed to get him what he wants

"So good but look at me... I want to see you.."

The man's head moves and Ilya is looking straight into Shane Hollander dark eyes, his pupils wide with lust and hunger.

He's looks unreal on his knees, his mouth stretched out around Ilya's cock, a look of bliss on his face. He wants to pull him up higher and kiss those swollen puffy lips, taste himself on Hollander tounge.

He's so fucking beautiful Ilya's going to come all over his pretty face any second ... any second now...

He wakes with a gasp, body rising off his pillow, breathless and sweating. It's mostly dark in his bedroom and he's alone, alone and hard, so achingly hard.

Ilya swears and drops back onto his pillow.

Fuck. Fuck Fuck Fuck.

The dream had been so good, he'd been so close and now his poor dick is still so swollen so ready and jerking unhappily against his stomach.

Dreams are one thing, you can't really control those can you, but awake and alone with his imagination Ilya has no choice but to take responsibility for what's going to happen next.

It won't take long he knows that and then he can go to sleep and forget all about brown eyes and dark hair and plush soft lips that would make such a good tight mouth for him, that would feel so so good, so good.

Biting his lip helps hold in the noises he wants to make his hand moves quickly to where he needs it to be. He seem to have lost any self control he might have possessed earlier this evening.

Even with the way he's leaking his own touch is dry and rough compared with his recent dreaming and he'd much rather have the warmth and wet slide of Hollander's mouth than his own fingers but that's an impossibility so he pauses a second, fumbles for the bottle of lube he keeps under his pillow and improves the situation, helps him slide further into his imagination quickly.

It's so much easier to imagine certain things now that his hand is gliding so wonderfully smoothly up and down, just like the dream version of Hollander's mouth had been.

Ilya back arches, tension peaking in every muscle as the noise of his desperate wet movements fill the air and his own stuttered cries and moans match the frantic slipping, sliding sound until he's hissing and gasping for breath as he comes hard all over himself.

Ilya opens his eyes and stares at his ceiling. Fuck... that was ... it doesn't matter what it was it's over and he's got to see Hollander in a few hours so he needs to get over himself fast.

He twists and stretches for a tissue to clean himself up. He's made quite the mess despite his time with Sveta earlier. At least he should fall asleep quickly now, spent and exhausted with his dumb little fantasy out of his system.

His mouth twitches, it was good though very good.

In the dark Ilya laughs at himself, how fucking ridiculous- best orgasm for months and it's to a fantasy of some boring bodyguard who he can't have.

His hand drifts lightly across his chest and he can't help wondering what Hollander would do if you touched him like that, pinched his nipples, bit into his skin before you kissed it again and again. Maybe he could suck purple marks onto his flesh, his biceps his thighs. Ilya would enjoy that and he thinks Hollander would too.

Licking his lips and pinching his own nipple hard to his surprise Ilya feels his dick twitch.

Would Hollander be up to go again so quickly. He thinks about the body and firm muscles that belongs to the man, he must keep himself fit, he'd have excellent stamina , could probably keep going for hours.

The way his cock starts to fill again is as alarming as it is impressive. Hollander would be impressed wouldn't he. That Ilya could come down his throat and then minutes later be ready to fuck him.

God he wants to fuck Hollander. Ilya reaches for the bottle he discarded; one more time won't hurt anyone will it.

And it's not like anyone will even know anyway, he won't be telling anyone for sure and it'll be good to get it all out of his system now, to imagine each and every way he could have Hollander and how Hollander could have him.

Ilya closes his eyes and lets his imagination run free.

Tomorrow he'll be over this stupid little crush.

Tomorrow it will all be fine.

Chapter End Notes

You're here and I'm eagerly awaiting a sign that at least one person has read this- will you be my person???

Come visit my inbox and say hello if you would like to make me smile and speed up the words or even if you just wanna say chat 🤗🤗🤗

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Ilya values his allotted time in the dance studio; even when you're as good as he is, it's still essential to practice regularly.

He uses the time to keep himself limber and flexible, to stretch both his muscles and his skills and sometimes to have a little fun, try something new.

He used to be able to practice alone, but that luxury is in the past.

Now he has company.

He always has company and Ilya has opinions about that.

It turns out that having a near constant shadow for weeks and weeks is both not as bad and far far worse than he could ever have imagined on the day he met Shane Hollander for the first time.

Or

Shane watches Ilya dance while he thinks about what having a bodyguard like Shane Hollander has done to his life.

Chapter Notes

You would not believe how many times I've re read this and edited it! Honestly I'm my own worst enemy - always tweaking bits! No more!

It's done or we'll never move on. It's my own fault I've done this kind of flashback reflection on things that happened before and I always find it tricky but as I'm not wanting to write 100k worth of plot this time I'm using this plot device to show us how the relationship is moving forward so we can get to the good stuff sooner...

Anyway like I said it's done and I hope it's coherent and does the job it needs to do

If anything feels muddled up let's just say it the depth of Ilya's feelings confusing him

So with no more rambling from me ... chapter 5

Even though he knows the way to the ballet school's private dance studio perfectly well Ilya pauses and waits for the man walking almost but not quite next to him to go ahead and lead the way.

He'd been stubborn about it for a while, been as difficult as possible. He'd had sent sarcastic texts while standing right next to Hollander or from the other side of the room, texts that said things like

So scared .. can not see round corner, need big strong hero

Do not know way to bathroom. Send help quick!!

On no I am in cupboard all alone about to be attacked by broom. Save me

In great danger .. shoelace undone if only bodyguard was strong enough to fix for me

He'd actually had fun thinking of them and he'd liked seeing Hollander's lips twitch every time he read his stupid over the top texts. He even made him laugh out loud once.

So yes at first he'd been annoyed at being escorted everywhere, never being alone but now he's just accepted it. Hollander is always there, Hollander always goes first, it's just how things are now.

He doesn't like it, definitely not, it's just something that is.

At times he still fights against his new normal, when he's feeling irritated, or if he's in a particularly bad mood or if Hollander is looking particularly cute. He's not given up entirely on being obnoxious but he chooses his battles better than he had at the start.

So today, as usual Hollander goes first. He opens the door to the dance studio and looks around carefully. He even looks up which is fucking ridiculous if you ask Ilya .

No one has.

Hollander does his checks with a hand held out behind him to make sure Ilya waits before he'll let him into his *own* ballet company's *own* dance studio.

He may be used to it now but it's still fucking ridiculous.

Once Hollander is satisfied that the obviously empty room *isn't* hiding mysterious assassins (it wasn't yesterday either) he gestures for Ilya to enter.

So he does, he walks straight past his bodyguard without acknowledging the way he's holding the door open for him or the way he steps back, leaving him plenty of room, and he most definitely, very deliberately doesn't notice that Hollander is wearing the more expensive of his two colognes today. The one Ilya likes best. He knows what it's called too because he did some research on it, just so he didn't accidentally buy the same one ever.

Once he's fully inside the room Ilya turns dramatically, spinning in a full circle, arms outstretched, and as he spins he says ;

"So... no secret assassin today? Maybe they are under floorboards. Perhaps you should bring shovel tomorrow and check. Just to be sure."

He ends triumphantly with a scathing look and a questioning pout but as usual Hollander doesn't react to the sarcasm, whether he deliberately ignores it or it just goes over his head, is still a mystery Ilya's trying to work out.

There are times he thinks that Hollander can't possibly be as literal as he seems to be and he's messing with him on purpose, pretending to be oblivious to things most people would get at once. Sometimes he genuinely thinks the man thinks Ilya means exactly what he says.

Today Hollander's answer to his snarkiness is a deadpan;

"There isn't enough space under the floorboards. We checked the blueprints. Twice."

Ilya stares at him and Hollander look back, all big brown innocent eyes.

This is definitely one of those times Ilya thinks Hollander is being deliberately difficult. He stares at him a little harder trying to work it out. The words seem simple and clear but there's a tiny spark in Hollander's dark eyes that suggests maybe, just maybe, he's trying to be funny.

Ilya keeps staring, deeply suspicious and trying to decide if Hollander just made a joke or not.

Hollander looks away first. He does that a lot - looks away first, but Ilya never feels like he's won anything when it happens.

Giving up on knowing if it was a joke or not he turns away, it's possible, he does actually have a sense of humour something Ilya was surprised to discover.

Hollander sometimes answers his texts with some funny or smart quip.

On a good day, sometimes Hollander texts first, that doesn't happen too often but it happens a little more on the days Pike or Rose are working instead of him.

Ilya does not look forward to those messages nor does he smile when he reads them.

Ilya intends to die before letting anyone know that he's amused by his bodyguard's witty observations or comments.

Ok, sometimes the smile gets free because it's too hard to keep a straight face. Hollander always looks pleased when he spots the crack in his composure, when the disguise Ilya's taken to wearing slips a little.

That smile changes Hollander's face more than you'd think, it puts crinkles around his eyes in a way Ilya can't allow himself to think about too much or he might do something foolish.

So he's not thinking about it as he kicks off his shoes and discards them on his way to stand in front of the mirror.

He doesn't look back but he knows that Hollander has just bent over and scooped up those shoes and that he'll be heading to his preferred spot by the door with them.

Ilya's shoes have been the topic of several of their text message chains. Hollander is apparently very fussy about shoe maintenance and the right polish to use and how to lace the laces for different shoes and needs and what is the acceptable amount of holes and scuffs - zero .

Ilya is much less bothered and to Ilya's delight Hollander has opinions on that.

Strong opinions.

Sometimes Ilya will mismatch the colour of his laces or make them unequal lengths just so Hollander will text him to complain about it.

Today's shoes are absolutely fine so Hollander will just put them down, then he'll lean back against the wall, fold his arms and take up his post.

Silent and brooding and horribly sexy...as usual.

Making sure he doesn't look at Hollander in the mirror Ilya sighs, having Shane Hollander around all day every day has changed his original objection to having a bodyguard to an entirely different one.

A much worse one if you ask him and to make life even more unfair he can't even complain about it to anyone. Saying those types of things out loud would definitely not be a good idea. Svetlana is already looking at him far too suspiciously and far too often. She asks questions, ones he'd rather she didn't and *he* thinks that *she* thinks that she already knows the answers.

She probably does.

Svetlana probably knows all the answers to all the questions running through his head and some he hasn't dared ask himself yet.

Eyes closed, Ilya breathes; in and out, in and out. He does it three times, it helps focus his mind on why he's here — to warm up his body, to dance, to feel free and most definitely *not* to fixate on Shane Hollander in any way.

He takes another breath for good luck. It doesn't work.

It's isn't fair, you'd think he'd be used to him by now but he's not.

Ilya starts his warm up and his mind wanders backwards. It wanders all the way back to that first morning, when Hollander had arrived to collect him.

He'd been annoyingly punctual, just like he'd said he would be and there'd been no trace of any of the tension or want that had been simmering between them in his dressing room only hours earlier.

Ilya can still taste the bitter tang of disappointment he'd felt at seeing Hollander so cool and collected because that was not at all how he had felt, after Sveta went home, he'd spent the rest of his evening getting off to increasingly erotic images fuelled by his dream of what could have happened between them if Hollander hadn't been so boring and "professional."

He'd been hoping for a sign when Hollander arrived that his new bodyguard had been similarly occupied overnight; a blush, a stammer, a shy smile, something like that but he'd seen no such thing.

He'd looked very carefully too.

It was rather crushing.

All he got was a casual nod as the car pulled up and his new bodyguard had looked altogether too relaxed as he'd stepped out of the vehicle, pulled off his stupid sunglasses and smiled politely at him.

He'd of course responded with his very best scowl and had walked as slowly as possible towards him, praying that the hostile expression on his face hid every last lingering drop of attraction he had towards the man and highlighted his distaste at having to endure such a terrible thing as a bodyguard.

Hollander had acknowledged the warm welcome with amusement, an infinitesimal twitch of his lips right before he said-

"Don't worry, you won't even notice me being around."

That bold statement had made him frown even harder and he hadn't even known then what would happen, that as the weeks went past that one simple sentence would come to haunt him.

He's thought about that moment frequently because while occasionally it was true it was more frequently the worst lie Ilya's ever been told.

It had taken almost no time for that to become apparent, for Ilya's feelings and the core complaint about having a bodyguard to become way more complicated.

It had been easy at the start; originally he'd just been offended that people would think he needed protection. That was shameful, embarrassing. He was Russian and he did not need someone to watch him and keep him safe.

Now Ilya actually misses that being his reason, these days his objections to the man are much more complex and much harder to deal with.

It started in a restaurant; him, Svetlana and a few others had gone out to eat. Hollander, of course had been there because when was he ever not *there* and even after such a short time together he was driving Ilya insane with his eyes and his mouth and his freckles.

Honestly compels him to admit that it was not completely Hollander's fault that Ilya was acutely aware of him almost all the time, nature had blessed the man (and cursed Ilya) with a

face that took away the breath. How could you not notice it.

Despite his natural disadvantages Hollander tried his best to achieve an official background status in Ilya's life. He was very discrete, just like he'd promised, good at blending in, being quiet, being perfect.

On occasion he was so good that Ilya really did forget he would be there when he turned around.

Unfortunately when that happened it was always a shock, a bolt of lightning racing through his blood, when he did see Hollander again and was startled into remembering just what that face did to him.

Shane Hollander was the bane of his existence.

The face, the body, the freckles were more than enough and now he actually likes him as well.

It is terrible situation to find yourself in.

Despite all his intentions to be unimpressed by his bodyguard, Hollander really is the full package.

He almost sniggers at "package" because that's pretty impressive too from what he's noticed.

Snigger successfully subdued Ilya opens his eyes and with a modicum of effort stops himself again from searching for a face he likes way too much in the mirror opposite him.

Instead he studies his reflected form and posture while denying himself the pleasure of Hollander's face.

Pleased with his image in the mirror and certainly not anything he can glimpse beyond it Ilya wonders if he'll ever stop reacting to his beauty or to his other equally annoying attributes.

That night in the restaurant Hollander had been sat on a different table from them, not too close but not too far away either, with nothing but a glass of water in front of him.

His profile had been exquisite and Ilya remembered silently asking the universe what he'd done wrong to have been given such an extraordinarily handsome bodyguard to put up with.

He'd watched as subtly as he could as *his* bodyguard sat there like a guard dog, protecting his territory, protecting Ilya and to his horror Ilya had realised that it made his stomach flip and his dick twitch.

It still does.

Hollander had stood up whenever someone approached their section of the restaurant, tugging at his shirt and flexing his muscles in a way that was both hot and menacing.

The look on his face was steely, stern and also very, very hot.

Ilya has recently been giving some consideration to the idea that he's been cursed by a witch. He's pretty convinced he must have done something bad to deserve the eternal temptation and irritation of Hollander in his life.

Ilya had been worried a bodyguard would be loud and showy while he tried to relax with friends. He had been worried that it would draw attention to them and the “weakness” that meant a bodyguard was needed in the first place.

He needn't have been concerned, Hollander's plan to ensure he kept Ilya safe in the terribly dangerous restaurant had been simple and elegant - to glare at anyone who even looked like they were thinking of approaching the table and it had been extremely effective. For the first time in years a meal in public went undisturbed.

As the evening went on Ilya had realised Hollander was so focused on his mission to scare everyone away that he could allow himself to look more openly than he had since the man had started working with him.

So that was the night Ilya was forced to acknowledge that not only did he actually like the privacy a bodyguard could create for him but he also liked the way this particular bodyguard looked while he was creating that privacy, or standing still or breathing or opening a door. He liked the way he sipped his coffee too.

He liked it all very much, so much in fact, that he'd spent the next three days being particularly annoying and difficult.

Hollander had stayed calm and professional throughout that fun experience, which had just pissed Ilya off for an extra two days.

After that they moved forward slowly with a combination of minimal but fairly civilised communication and periods of silence.

However for reasons he couldn't possibly explain they'd also started texting each other, and it seemed to Ilya that sometimes those text messages belonged to two completely different people.

Hollander was apparently quite the gossip on the sly and would send Ilya questions and then observations about the new people around him. Ilya also being a gossip was more than happy to indulge him and answer those questions, he may have been amused by the observations too but no one needed to know that.

Hollander's dry and slightly wicked sense of humour particularly shone in those texts and Ilya liked that version of him too.

Eventually Ilya had to accept that maybe it wasn't *so* terrible to have Hollander around.

Although he still made the effort not to be too cooperative. He had a reputation to protect. He was a know diva, a difficult man to work with sometimes impossible. He'd hate anyone to find out he could be agreeable.

Then somehow as more time passed they talked more and Hollander smiled more, often when Ilya said something funny, which didn't mean anything, it just showed he had a good sense of humour that was all. It didn't mean anything either that Ilya liked it that he could make Shane Hollander smile.

Towards the end of their second month together they'd been an incident that had been mildly concerning for everyone.

The fire alarm went off in the theatre just before the evening performance. No one had been expecting it and it had quickly become a scene of chaos; noise and panic, too many people in a space suddenly too small for them, raised voices and scared expressions, a tangible wave of uncertainty about what to do and where to go.

The extra noise did nothing to help the situation.

No one knew if it was real or not and people were shouting, asking if they should leave or stay and "what about the show."

And obviously the performance was the most important thing to think about. Ilya's convinced that there are some of the company who'd perform even with flames flickering at the edge of the stage.

He's not one of them though, he loves to dance and he loves what dancing has brought into his life and of course that he just happens to be the best at it is useful but other things matter too.

His mother taught him that.

The golden glint in the mirror catches his eye. The cross that had once been hers flashes at him, his mother, with him always, fingers lifting he touches it lightly and as always the memory of her is coated with an aching blend of love and sadness.

So while ballet may not be *his* whole world the evening of the fire alarm it turned out the audience were not much better when it came to judging priorities than his fellow dancers.

The rising noise and confusion from front of curtain had added to the sense of panic building in the those gathered behind it.

It had the potential to quickly become a disaster and Ilya can clearly remember the fear that had started to creep through him. He'd started to believe that something truly bad would happen.

Panic was a natural companion to fear and confusion and it could be lethal even if there was no actual fire.

Once again though he needn't have worried, Hollander was of course there with him that night and Hollander had not panicked.

Hollander had not been confused.

Hollander had acted.

His whole demeanour changed in a heartbeat. The second the alarm sounded he'd moved, no hesitation, no uncertainty, and before Ilya realised it he was being escorted swiftly from the stage wings under the shelter of Hollander's strong arm. He'd protested but only long enough to say "Svetlana".

Hollander had sighed but let him go and followed towards where Svetlana was standing. She'd been with a few of the stage hands and some of junior dancers, Stefan and the twins if he remembers it right. One of the Laurence's was there too, trying to get them all to move but Cliff had been on the opposite side to them so Ilya had grabbed the only hand that truly mattered to him from the crowd and dragged her back towards Hollander who accepted his additional responsibility without comment, most probably because he knew Ilya would refuse to leave without her.

Ilya appreciated that silence more than he could hope to express, but he did try, he looked Hollander in the eye across the top of his best friend's head and hoped his gratitude was visible.

The flash of understanding he saw coming back at him made him think that it was. Hollander nodded once then returned to his focus to his duty.

They were outside before almost anyone else made it and only because Hollander had been fast and efficient, he'd known the way out, made no mistakes, took every turn confidently. He'd moved those who wouldn't move out of his way, used his body to physically make a path for them. When they passed through a crowded area filled with even more indecisive people standing around. Hollander had issued brisk, curt instructions very loudly, telling them to move and get out.

And people listened.

Against his will Ilya had been impressed by the overall aura of competency.

He'd felt completely safe with Hollander and confident in his ability to protect Sveta if that was required.

Afterwards he'd let himself spend around an hour being annoyed about being impressed. He'd almost rather Hollander had messed up during his first real emergency because then Ilya could have gotten him fired which was what he'd wanted more than anything obviously.

He was lying to himself and even back then he knew it.

Stretching out his leg and bending over Ilya hides his smile against his thigh and hopes Hollander is looking at his butt.

Afterwards the fire alarm had been labelled the fault of a broken circuit.

Hollander had been extremely unsatisfied with that conclusion, it having being made after what he called a "fucking stupid investigation"

Hollander's feelings on the investigation reached far and wide; mostly because he'd been very loud on the phone to Pike telling him among other things what a "fucking joke it was that the idiots in charge were satisfied with just looking in a fucking closet."

Ilya had been rather impressed with the depth of feeling that had turned the air around his furious bodyguard blue.

Hollander had told Pike they needed to start their own investigation and then after he'd hung up and Pike had presumably scurried off to do his boss' bidding, Hollander had rather surprisingly turned to him and continued to complain about the lack of standards in the "so called security team" and how it was "outrageous" and "irresponsible" and his personal favourite complaint, Ilya has to bite back his smile even now, because Hollander had seemed particularly upset about the "shocking disregard for *your* safety."

He'd said *your* like that meant it mattered more and he'd been looking Ilya directly in the eye when he'd said as well.

Eye contact was something that didn't happen very often between them and Ilya's stupid heart had leapt as Hollander's words faded away and left them just looking at each other.

Ilya knows he hadn't imagined the way Hollander's gorgeous eyes, alight with indignation had changed as they dropped to his mouth, burning with something very different for a moment. Ilya had held his breath and waited but then the king of self control wiped his face blank and turned away.

It had been an interesting moment and one he's thought about more than once since then.

Later that same day Ilya had watched discreetly while Hollander spoke in turn with the head of maintenance, 2 janitors and 6 of the junior dancers who'd been closest to the alarm that had allegedly been triggered by a fault.

Ilya watched as Hollander fully embraced his responsibility to keep him safe and tried not to feel things about that.

Hollander had been calm but assertive, polite but firm, there was no way he was going to be denied what he wanted and what he wanted was full access to the security cameras, the sign in sheets, cast lists and schedules, everything really and then he'd spent another hour on a call whispering to someone who was not Pike about something that no matter how hard he tried Ilya could not get close enough to hear.

Even while doing all that Hollander had kept looking his way, presumably to check he was still there and hadn't wandered off.

It was sensible to keep an eye on him, with Hollander busy and the reduced supervision Ilya could have easily left if he'd wanted to but he didn't. He'd stayed and waited or he followed him around as requested, happy enough to remain in Hollander's line of sight.

He'd justified the compliance by telling himself that the man had just saved him and Sveta from a dangerous fire (hypothetically speaking) and he was obviously genuinely concerned

about the security standards Ilya worked under, which was maybe a little pleasant to think about.

Ilya had tried to ignore the warm feeling that had spread through him. It was after all the man's job and if he now owed Hollander something for the rescue he wanted to pay him back quickly, the easiest way to do that was to make his job easier for a day or two.

Ilya smiles again, he might actually have believed that one.

He knows better now, prolonged exposure to his problem has revealed the truth; Ilya rather pathetically just likes being around his stupid, annoying, handsome, smart and completely unavailable bodyguard.

See he's cursed.

Luckily or maybe unluckily his warm up routine is so familiar it doesn't need much of his attention so his body moves and stretches without his guidance and that means he can keep thinking about Shane Hollander.

He really shouldn't but it's a lost cause, Ilya is acutely aware that he spends far too much of his time thinking about Hollander and those thoughts have lead to the unfortunate conclusion that he's perfect.

Which is of course unbelievably annoying but on the other hand if Ilya *had* to have a bodyguard, then a handsome, competent one would be the best type to have.

It was only fitting as Ilya had long ago decided he deserved only the best things in life.

The door behind him opens and Hollander is instantly alert and moving, positioning himself between the slowly opening door and Ilya.

Ilya pauses long enough to look over his shoulder. His bodyguard's shoulders are relaxed so everything must be ok yes?

A small knot of nerves twists his stomach.

He can hear Hollander's voice but most of the words are indistinct , he does make out a thank you though so it is clearly fine. Knowing he's safe, Ilya resumes his stretches.

That's another reason he's let his and Hollander's lives get more entwined because maybe, just maybe it was not actually that bad an idea to have someone looking out for him.

The letters filled with ugly words and threats are still arriving and if Ilya is honest with himself, he's becoming a little tired of being on edge, of looking over his shoulder.

It kills him to admit it but it's nice knowing someone has his back, is watching out for him, maybe even worries about him a little, that kind of experience has not been a regular feature of Ilya's life.

Even if Hollander is being paid to do it he makes Ilya feel safe, he makes him feel other things too but that's less relevant.

So you could say that his main issue with having a bodyguard is not that he has to have one but that he has to have Shane Hollander *specifically* as his bodyguard.

It means he's worried every day that he might do or say something stupid that reveals how much he likes him and embarrass himself, being around the man is basically torture.

Completing his warmup stretches he can see Hollander in the mirror, back in position leaning against the wall, arms folded, dark suit, dark glasses. He could be asleep or staring straight at Ilya. It's impossible to tell.

Well no, Ilya knows he's not sleeping, Hollander would never, ever sleep on the job. So he's watching and Ilya doesn't let himself hope that Hollander is watching with anything other than professional interest. The man is far too serious and boring and diligent and dedicated for such frivolous things.

After all a man who only gets two days off every three weeks isn't going to be indulging himself. He'd asked him once why he didn't have more time off and Hollander had looked confused and said he had more than enough time to unwind.

On those non Hollander days Ilya has to deal with Hayden Pike and he discovered quickly that there were worse things than having Hollander as his bodyguard.

Ilya does not care for Hayden Pike.

Hayden Pike is Hollander's best friend and he's bright and chirpy and annoying. He has a wife and a thousand children and he talks about them frequently and about Hollander and how they are such good friends.

He is very unattractive, unpleasant company and untalented and he's certainly no match to Shane Hollander in any way.

Hollander is due more time off soon and Ilya does not know if he can bear Pike again. He'll have to ask Hollander if he can have Rose instead. Ilya could get used to Rose Landry, he almost likes her but he will definitely not be liking Pike anytime soon; Pike who is best friends with Hollander and talks to him everyday and has him over for dinner and watches movies with him and probably wants to kiss him even if he did go on about his boring family all the time.

Eyes fixed back on his own reflection Ilya moves onto simple dance steps. He tries to concentrate on the movements and the way his muscles need to move, the next step to take, the pace he needs to keep.

It is better to think about dancing than Pike and Hollander's friendship.

Better to think about steps than if Hollander is watching him and liking what he sees.

Better to count the beat than think about brown eyes and dark hair and freckles.

Ilya cheeks feel warmer. Obviously that's from the exertion and not from the fact he is an embarrassing hopeless case and all he can do is think about Hollander.

It always strikes him as ironic that Hollander has done this to him because the first thing his bodyguard told him was that he would not notice him at all.

A familiar wave of irritation sweeps through him, makes his skin prickle- not notice him?

That was not true.

It was opposite, lie !

He should sue, yes, he'll sue - Hollander and his silly agency and especially Pike. He'll sue him twice.

He'll sue for false advertising, breach of promise because Ilya is thinking about him always and if they ever touch, deliberately or by accident then it feels like Ilya's skin is on fire and the invasive presence of his Hollander thoughts get even worse especially once he's alone in his home again.

Cursed.

Yes, he is sure of it, he is cursed. It is terrible and he has months left of this torture and then even worse to come after because Hollander will be gone from his life forever.

He's relieved he gave up on his plan to sexually harass the man out of a job. He'd hate to have even one or two more memories of Hollander's dark heated eyes and parted lips than he does from that first night they met.

He'd abandoned the vague plan he'd made because it wasn't in him to make people feel uncomfortable that way and he knows now it wouldn't have worked anyway. Hollander is stubborn and he likes to win. He wouldn't have quit and he wouldn't have given in either. Lose lose for Ilya. If he had carried on flirting he'd be the one suffering, trying to seduce him and getting rebuffed time and time again.

Ilya does not like to be rejected. He's not used to it and an ego is a delicate thing when you're harbouring secret feelings that refused to fade.

Probably the curse's fault again, he'd honestly thought his attraction to Hollander would wear off quickly. He's always lost interest in his hook ups and part time lovers before.

The words of that original promise repeat in his head.

Not notice him!

Fuck, he's almost all he can think about most days.

One particularly terrible evening Hollander had been escorting him to a random charity event the mayor had been hosting and as they were getting out of the car, Hollander first, of course, Ilya had taken his offered hand for support, only because his shoes were high fashion and unstable. Hollander had looked both pleased and surprised to have been allowed to help and Ilya was instantly beset by a terrible vision; Hollander, a movie star from the golden days of Hollywood, escorting his partner to fabulous glittering events, kissing him on the cheek before he waved to the crowds gathered to appreciate his talent and beauty. Ilya half expected to feel an arm around his waist pulling him close once he was out of the car but it didn't happen.

Instead Hollander smiled softly and stepped back respectfully so Ilya walked on alone and tried not to mind too much.

After that night Ilya found himself being guided more often with touch, a hand on his back, a tap to his arm, a subtle press of shoulders.

The steps of his dance flow into each other.

Yes he has decided.

He'll call his lawyer tomorrow- ask about the suing because at very least he's looking at breach of contract - he was promised! He was promised he would not and Ilya is noticing Shane Hollander all the time.

It's completely unacceptable.

Unfair.

Stretches and warm up completed Ilya is more than ready to forget about Hollander for a while at least dancing still gives him that peace.

The time for thinking troubling thoughts is over and it's time to empty his mind of everything except the next step, the next movement, how to lift his arms and leap forward, higher, make each move perfection.

He takes first position and for a few brief moments everything is blissfully quiet.

Chapter End Notes

Anyone want to cheer me up with a quick hello to the inbox?

Always enjoy having a little chat ☺

Hope you're enjoying the story - we'll be getting some of this scene from Shane's pov next chapter

Till next time have a wonderful week 😊💜😊

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Shane Hollander takes his duties very seriously, keeping Ilya Rozanov safe is his top priority but that doesn't mean he can't appreciate the opportunity to watch some top class dancing too.

It would be rude not to appreciate so much talent.

Ilya dances and Shane watches - chapt 5 from Shane's pov and then a little bit more

Chapter Notes

So now we get to see what's been on Shane's mind over the weeks he's been protecting Ilya.

I enjoy an alternative pov for the same scene so I'm indulging myself.

We get some of Ilya's pov too so fun for all.

Hope you enjoy the workings of our Shane's mind... he's a little bit confused

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

Most days there's a routine to follow which is both comforting and reassuring. Shane can cope just fine with the unexpected he'd just prefer not to have to.

Surprises on a job mean something's gone wrong and something going wrong has the potential to go wrong with fatal consequences and that is not something he will allow to happen. Not on any job of course but most certainly not on this one where he's become entirely too fond of the subject he's protecting.

He's still not happy about that fiasco of a fire alarm and the follow up investigation. Rose and Hayden had looked into it in more detail than the so called in house security team and still found nothing overtly suspicious but the incident sat wrong with him. He'd thought this job would just be nothing more than glorified babysitting but there's something in the air at the opera house and he doesn't like it.

He hasn't worked out what it is yet but he will. He needs to because Rozanov still isn't taking the threats against him seriously and Shane really wishes he would.

Stubborn idiot.

Right now the stubborn idiot is walking just ahead of him, but only by a few paces, it's a compromise they've reached without ever actually discussing it.

Rozanov is leading them towards the dance studio that's reserved exclusively for his use at this time of day but Shane will go through the door first. He always does.

Shane studies the broad shoulders and narrow waist sauntering casually onwards and wishes he could get Rozanov to be more careful.

That seems pretty unlikely at this point in time, but at least Rozanov is a little more cooperative than he was at the start of the contract, well he is with Shane. Hayden is not so fortunate.

His best friend complains furiously for days about Rozanov anytime he has to cover for Shane.

That shouldn't amuse him but it does, lips twitching Shane's glad Rozanov has his back to him so he can't see him trying not to smile as he contemplates his best friend's feelings about their client.

He can't get caught grinning again, Rozanov has spotted him smiling or trying to hide a smile more than once now. There's an ever increasing risk that he'll give himself away soon and he really, really can't let that happen. Shane's stomach tenses alongside his jaw, the sudden fear of being seen, of Rozanov knowing flooding his body with adrenaline.

Before the feeling can spread he distracts himself with a small victory.

At least he'd been right about Hayden and Rozanov not getting along; Hayden does not like Rozanov and the reverse is just if not more dramatic.

When Shane had returned from his first weekend off, Boston Ballet's Principal was in a foul mood and his tongue had been sharpened to a wicked point.

Rozanov had been on excellent form and the comments and insults, first directed at Hayden for existing and then at Shane himself for having time off and inflicting a bodyguard who "managed to be even worse than you Hollander!" on a "vulnerable handsome innocent international talent."

The words, wrapped in his accent and delivered with flare were magnificently over the top.

Rozanov made all kinds of dramatic statements about how he'd been put at unnecessary risk with "substandard care", and how at least he, meaning Shane, was only "*boring*" but Pike was "*boring and stupid*." He'd implied Hayden was unpleasant to look at which just wasn't true and that he was too slow and probably a poor shot (also not true) and if he ever had to shoot at "villains" who wanted to attack "poor innocent ballet gods" he would "miss like a toddler pissing in the snow for first time!"

Shane hadn't even been sure that last insult made any sense, maybe it was a Russian thing, anyway it had been a mesmerising performance.

Rozanov had declared it was hugely irresponsible of *his* bodyguard to take anymore days off. Ever.

Shane had listened but made no comment.

Then Rozanov had concluded his rant with a declaration that it was "reckless abandonment" and "dereliction of duty" if he was left with Pike again, which Shane still strongly suspected were phrases he'd gone to the trouble of preparing before the speech even started.

It had been a challenge for Shane to hide how entertained he was by such over the top behaviour or how pleased he was that Rozanov apparently appreciated his company- even if it was just compared to poor Hayden's.

A deep breath and a moment of fierce concentration halts the blush he can feel creeping upwards, stopping his face from giving him away is becoming a full time occupation, and even if he's doing a halfway decent job at it then he's nervous that it's getting obvious that even if he's not to everyone's taste, Shane actually really likes Rozanov.

He likes him a whole lot.

Not that he's denying that Rozanov can be a bit of an arsehole; he's demanding (but of himself as well as others) and he's a little arrogant (but that's only because he is actually the best) and yes, he can be a bit of a bitch- cutting and sarcastic (but his comments and observations are usually true and kind of funny).

It's safe to say that Ilya Rozanov has a strong personality and yes he can be harsh and unyielding and fucking obnoxious but Shane doesn't particularly object to any of those traits when there are reasons for them and there's so much more to him than that anyway, the parts he tries and mostly succeeds in hiding but it's Shane's job to watch and that's what he's been doing and so he's noticed things like how Rozanov gives praise when it's deserved or encouragement when it's needed. He sees the small acts of kindness in the man's life, carried out quietly and without any fuss, he sees the smiles and silly faces he pulls at small children that they pass and the smiles and waves he gets back. The way he goes soft for any dog that goes past them too.

He sees the worry and concern he has for friends in trouble, or struggling.

Shane sees it all because he's not meant to be noticed, his role is to stay in the background and that's ok because it means his own secret stays secret and he gets to watch Rozanov be bad tempered and smart and sly and funny and mean and kind. He gets to see him being excited and bored, annoying and annoyed. He gets to see how much he loves to dance.

Shane likes all of that; he likes him. He likes him a lot and sometimes he thinks Rozanov might like him a little too, like when he's talking about "reckless abandonment."

Despite the curious secret kindnesses as far as he can tell Rozanov doesn't that many people in his life he's really close to; Sveta and Marleau of course, he takes the time to support one or two of the younger dancers; he seems particularly invested in Luca Haas who's new to the company and the country and looks a lot like a startled rabbit most of the time, Haas looks at Rozanov like he's hung the moon and Shane can't really blame him but being new or young or giving out adoring looks doesn't mean Rozanov won't be a total dick to you. There's a few of the company and at least one of the costume team that Ilya actively dislikes. Shane can't say he minds that too much either. The victims of Ilya's disdain all deserve it one way or another; bullying, sloth, lack of talent and prejudice should not to be encouraged.

Another smile has to be ruthlessly subdued, it's become apparent over their time together that Shane shares similar attitudes in life with Ilya Rozanov, similar standards and work ethics. They have the same sense of humour and love of gossip. Early into the contract they started to text each other. He'd asked for info on the new people around him (research as much as anything else) and Rozanov had provided it, sometimes in ways that had Shane's eyes popping or face aching from his humour. That lead to more messages and then pictures that were silly or funny or just plain weird and sometimes they exchanged more casual everyday messages too.

Shane had found it nice to have someone to share the things he's seen or noticed, something funny, something stupid or annoying.

Hayden and Rose don't always get his sense of humour. Ilya does.

Him and Rozanov never acknowledge those messages and Shane thinks of them as part of a parallel universe version of himself and Rozanov. What they might do if they'd been friends.

He tries really hard not to think about other things they might have been able to do if they were friends or more than friends.

Shane pull his thoughts back from the fantasy, chastising himself for the moment of weakness. He can't allow those kinds of distracting thoughts to settle. Shane has no intention of relaxing his guard around Rozanov in more ways than one. He is heavily invested in this client's safety which means keeping everything firmly ordered and controlled and following the routines they've spent weeks establishing.

Because Routines (capital letter intended) are good.

They help keep control of everything and right now he really needs to be in control because its almost time for Rozanov to dance.

His eyes drop to the way the hips in front of him sway as they walk and he swears silently. He shouldn't have to put up with the torturous sight. He ought to be in front but he's not because it's part of the routine, a compromise they've silently agreed on.

Shane hangs back a little and let's Rozanov go ahead of him whenever he can.

The arrangement is unconventional but there are some benefits; one the view is pretty good from back here and two life is much easier for everyone if Rozanov doesn't feel too babied so

he gets to stay in front until they reach a door.

At that point the official rules kick in, Shane can be flexible, no matter what people say, and he can relax the usual expectations on occasion but if there's a door Rozanov knows that Shane will be going through it first.

He used to complain but he doesn't so much anymore. Sometimes Shane thinks Rozanov doesn't mind him being around anymore, sometimes he still very obviously hates it.

The door approaches.

Today they seem to be halfway between the two poles of Boston's star performer's moods.

Rozanov pauses and Shane takes point. He strides ahead and opens the door to check the room is clear in all directions before he gives Rozanov enough room to enter.

He does that with his usual dramatic flare and Shane controls his expression carefully, he can't reveal how much he enjoys the snarky comments. Instead he adds to Rozanov's irritation with his own words and a blank face until Ilya turns around to pose in front of the mirror and start his warm up.

Relegated to the back once again Shane pauses on his way to his designated spot to scoop up a pair of discarded shoes.

The man seems incapable of treating his day to day footwear with any degree of respect. Today they've been cast aside haphazardly, one on its side, one upside down. If Shane wasn't there to move them out of the way he's pretty sure Rozanov would have tripped over them and broken an ankle by now.

It's just one more part of keeping him safe, not all of a bodyguard's role can be glamorous.

Placing the shoes on the floor Shane settles in to watch over Rozanov, his back against the wall, the door only an arms reach away.

In front of him there are two Rozanovs, both of them stretching and bending in ways he really shouldn't be thinking about, shouldn't even be noticing but he is, he really really is. It's not his fault, he's only human and people literally pay hundreds of dollars to watch Rozanov move and here Shane is getting paid to watch him, he'd be stupid not to take advantage of the view.

So as he's not stupid he watches and both the man and his reflection are indescribably graceful, each movement smooth and strong, deliberate but graceful and fluid, it's a privilege to watch him and this is only the warm up, in a few more minutes he'll actually begin to *dance*.

The anticipation sends a small shiver down his spine. The time Shane spends with Rozanov in this room might just have become the favourite part of his week.

And the worst part.

Soon the delicious torture of watching the slow stretches will end and a new torment will begin; that torment being a front row seat to Ilya Rozanov dancing.

At least he doesn't need to guard his expression then, when Rozanov dances he becomes oblivious to everything else around him, including his bodyguard's presence.

It's nice just being able to watch him and not worry about what his face is doing for a while.

A quiet knock on the door distracts him from his thoughts. He's expecting it but he moves swiftly anyway. The rule is - you're always on your guard; everyday, every moment, because you can never take the client's safety for granted.

So the door is opened but cautiously; it is however exactly who he expected; he greets the younger man's now familiar face with a smile and takes the brown paper bag from him. Shane gives his thanks quietly and returns to his spot, the bag with water and fruit for Rozanov (because he never remembers to bring any with him) by his side.

Focused returned to where it belongs Shane waits patiently for Rozanov to begin. It's always a slow start then the warm up movements become actual dance steps and then, a few heartbeats later the dance becomes faster, more complex, utterly captivating until Boston's Principal dancer is breathless and sweating and beaming with joy through his pirouettes and pliés and tendus, chassés and jetés. Shane knows the words but he hasn't quite worked out which one goes with each step or leap, at least not at the speed Rozanov is going but then again he doesn't particularly care if he knows what bit is what, he just likes to watch. He might not

Even if he's seen him dance many times now Shane never minds watching again. Honestly, he could watch Rozanov dance for hours. He looks so happy when he moves, so free, joyful in a way he's not elsewhere and he's just so beautiful like that that it could take your breath away.

In fact it does quite often take Shane's breath away.

Strangely Rozanov is equally captivating when he fails to hit his mark, when he missteps or wobbles, then there are curses, often in Russian sometimes in English and then he tries again and again as often as he needs to.

Anytime he makes a mistake, even a small one Rozanov will scowl and mutter to himself and then try again and again with a look on his face that Shane thinks is just as beautiful as his smile. The fierce determination and focus is impressive. You can see why he's as good as he is, he pushes himself, works hard, demands excellence. Shane admires that immensely.

Sometimes he thinks Rozanov would stay in here for hours trying to perfect a move, forgetting that anything else exists, there have in fact been a few occasions when Shane has had to insist they leave to get to their next appointment on time.

That usually happens when he's working on this one part of a dance that even Shane can recognise now.

Rozanov just can't quite get this particular move, it's a complicated twisty turny leap combination thing that probably has some unpronounceable name that Shane should try and learn but while he might not know the right term he does know that Rozanov desperately wants to get it perfect and so far that hasn't happened.

He's stubborn though or maybe determined is more accurate so Shane knows he'll be trying it again today.

Rozanov takes a turn around the room while Shane remains stationary. He leans back against the wall and adjusts his sunglasses.

Shane loves his sunglasses, they've become his best friend, a vital piece of equipment that helps him and Rozanov get through the day safely, maybe the most important one actually.

They help him to feel properly "on the job" , they're part of the uniform; they say 'I'm on guard, I'm a professional, I'm ready for anything.'

Which he is, well almost anything.

Rozanov bends over to stretch and Shane swallows carefully. The dancer probably isn't even aware of the view he's creating for Shane from this angle.

Shane looks away for a second and returns his mind to the topic of sunglasses which is far safer than thinking about the shape and God help him, the feel of Rozanov's butt.

Sunglasses.

Some people might say he doesn't really need to wear them indoors but he does. For many, *many* reasons.

Firstly they actually do do their job, which is to stop glare, so even when they're inside, they give him better, cleaner, safer vision which is particularly helpful when it's your job to watch and be on guard constantly.

This dance studio for example is particularly well lit and very bright, mirrors everywhere, reflections everywhere, so for maximum surveillance capacity it's good not to be blinded even for a second.

Then there's always the possibility of unexpected bursts of light or flashes from cameras or whatever, that might distract or temporarily blind him, leave him and more importantly his charge vulnerable.

So it would be irresponsible to take them off.

And of course Shane knows he looks fucking good in them, which is pleasant to know. When you're around beautiful people all day long it's nice to know you look good too.

Rozanov had asked him about the sunglasses, in his usual way of course; after a week or two of almost constant wear. He'd said;

"Always sunglasses indoors? So you are very "cool" then?"

The speech marks he made in the air and his tone had not been complimentary, nor had the rest of the sentence.

"...or maybe you have constant hangover? Need to drink to cope with pressures of job, yes? Or is it weak eyes? Sunshine too bright, even in gloomy wintertime."

Shane had answered him simply with the truth, or most of it, that they helped him do his job. That he could see better with them and therefore protect him better because of that.

Rozanov had pulled a face and snorted so Shane had been unable to resist adding that it was ok if Rozanov was jealous because they made him look so fucking sexy.

He'd also said, "Don't worry, Roz, not everyone gets to look as fucking hot as me when they're working."

That had left the man temporarily speechless, mouth hanging open and Shane had bitten back his grin, pleased with himself.

On a roll he'd added casually that he'd be more than happy to help Rozanov shop for a pair if he wanted to try and look almost, but not quite as good as his bodyguard.

That had gotten him a glare but Shane had gotten the impression that Rozanov enjoyed the banter. It's wasn't the only time he'd had that feeling either.

So he'd pushed it a little more and taken his glasses off for a moment so he could wink at the end of a bold statement; 'Hey man, it's ok, hard to look cool when you have to wear those skinny tights all day.'

The snort the Russian made that time had sounded a lot like a laugh.

Shane had put his glasses back on quickly.

Yes his sunglasses are extremely useful. Invaluable. He doesn't think he could complete this particular contract without them, because the best thing about his sunglasses, the very best thing is that they hide where he's looking and where he's looking these days is often a problem.

Concealing the direction of your gaze is obviously useful for any bodyguard, it helps to be able to scan the scene, take note of potential dangers and watch without giving anything away, but that's not the only reason he needs to hide the direction of his gaze around his Russian menace.

Shane had hoped he'd be over his crush by now, his attraction to Rozanov was meant to be temporary- a brief infatuation that would be erased as he got to know him better and found he disliked him.

Except Shane found he didn't dislike him, not even a little, not even at all.

It's been a long time now and he's still waiting for his feelings for the principal dancer and the principal of his contract to go away.

He's beginning to worry that they won't but as Rozanov has started dancing again Shane stops thinking and lets himself indulge and enjoy the performance.

God he loves to dance.

Breathless and happy Ilya pauses to wipe the sweat from his face.

He's still not completely back to his former levels of fitness which aggravates him but just to be dancing every day again is a gift.

The slowly growing ache in his muscles is a warning that he should stop soon but he's never been particularly good at listening to warnings has he.

He'll keep going a little longer, just a few more minutes to dance and then before he leaves he intends to try to perfect that fucking impossible sequence that's been evading him for weeks.

He's so close, he just needs to keep trying.

Picking his spot Ilya throws himself into the spin, twirling round and round eyes snapping each time to the the dark shape in the mirror, using it to hold him steady.

He still thinks wearing sunglasses indoors all day is stupid.

Slowing down again Ilya takes the time to catch his breath before stretching out again.

Stretching feels good the pull against his sore muscles, arms high then flung out to the side, bending, twisting, making sure every muscle is loose and limber.

He needs maximum flexibility to do this right but he's confident that today is the day. Today he'll get it. He can feel it, and if Hollander is watching when he achieves his goal, well... Ilya would not be upset to have witness to his triumph.

Ilya waits patiently for the clamness he needs to settle around him. He breathes in deep and slow, eyes closed, focused on nothing but his own body and what he needs it to do, then he counts himself down and takes the first step....

Even watching the spinning makes him dizzy.

Shane wonders what Rozanov used as a spot to help him spin. A spot and years of training, that's what it said in his book, with those two things the brain would actually condition itself to be able to cope with the disorientation caused by spinning. Sometimes Shane is amazed by how remarkable the human body is.

From beneath the protection of his sunglasses Shane watches Rozanov's body slow down, yes bodies are truly remarkable; some more than others.

It's only after a brief pause and a little more stretching that Shane realises what Rozanov is about to do. He recognises the steps being performed as the first that lead to the move that has been causing trouble.

As the fluid movements flow into one another, his own shoulders grow tenser until his breathing pauses and he sends a silent 'please' into the universe that this time it's as perfect as Rozanov needs it to be.

In their last session he'd almost had it but he'd overbalanced in the last few seconds and his landing ended without the clean precision he required.

It had looked mostly ok to Shane but it wasn't good enough for the Russian, he'd turned the air blue with curses Shane couldn't understand.

Hopefully this attempt won't be ending in frustrated Russian expletives but it might, perhaps it's a little late in the session to be trying something so complicated.

Thankfully his beloved sunglasses help to hide his frown as he worries Rozanov is pushing himself too hard, that he's too tired to achieve his goal.

Except Rozanov doesn't look particularly tired as he glides across the floor, he looks alive, each precise and elegant step easing Shane's concerns and widening his smile.

Sadly his sunglasses are no help in hiding that but it doesn't really matter, Rozanov is too busy being brilliant to notice Shane grinning.

And he is brilliant.

That's just a fact based on evidence he's been collecting. He's watched every performance and every practice and the talent on display is undeniable.

At this point Shane is starting to think the man can do anything he puts his mind to.

Then mid movement Rozanov stops abruptly, it's the part that comes just before he hits his first leap. The drama of the unexpected halt and subsequent swaying brings Shane away from his wall and taking a step closer, as if he could help him. He's not needed of course, Rozanov stays upright even if he wobbles briefly.

Shane waits as with a deep scowl on his face the Russian dancer stalks back to his starting position. He isn't swearing but he looks to be at about a 7 or possibly an 8 on the delicate scale of being Rozannoyed.

The eponymous dancer had not been impressed when he'd found out about the scale Rose had invented. Although after considering it for a while he'd decided to make a game of seeing how many and how badly he could Rozannoy people.

Shane had pointed out it was a scale based on his own moods but he's replied he was reclaiming the slur. Shane had then explained that that probably wasn't how reclaiming a word should work, nor was it technically a slur. Those boring facts had been firmly ignored and Rozanov boldly declared he wouldn't rest until he driven Hayden to an 11 on the scale.

He hasn't quite managed it yet.

Now in the centre of the room Rozanov is resetting himself, ready to go again.

Shane watches; he's breathing slow and deep, his eyes are closed. He looks peaceful, confident but Shane wants to reassure him anyway. He wants to say; you're the best, everyone says it and I believe them, you can do anything, but he obviously can't, it wouldn't be appreciated, Rozanov hardly needs a cheerleader as well as a bodyguard, especially if the bodyguard is still working out what the difference between first and third position is.

Actually Shane does know that much, he's been reading up on ballet, all the terminology, the history. He's even practiced a little in the privacy of his bedroom, the starting positions are all he was tempted to try though, anything else was obviously way beyond his skill set, he's nothing like the man standing before him about to try the complex combination again, determined to get it right.

Rozanov stretches once more, shakes out his arms, muscles flexing as he does and with closed eyes and a deep breath that only accentuates his already impressive chest he lifts up onto his toes and takes a step.

Hollander is watching him. He can feel it. Even with those stupid sunglasses on, even with Ilya's own eyes shut he can feel the weight of the man's stare. He's been watching for a while.

Of course, Hollander is meant to be watching, that's his job, but maybe it is possible that Hollander watches because he wants to, because he likes to watch.

The immodest part of him says yes, obviously he likes to watch him dance, most people do, it is why Ilya is famous and popular and rich.

But then again his boring bodyguard is not most people and not particularly interested in ballet as far as he can tell. Maybe Ilya just *wants* to think that Hollander likes to watch him more than he should because Ilya likes him watching more than *he* should.

He shakes out his arms hoping to dislodge the grip Hollander has on him, bouncing on the soles of his feet until he feels ready.

He should be able to do this, it's ridiculous that he keeps failing. He lost his nerve only moments ago and that's unacceptable. Not again though, not this time, not with Hollander's eyes on him.

Ilya focuses on his breathing and the steps he can see so clearly in his mind.

This time - he'll get it this time.

Ilya lifts onto his toes and dances.

The whirl and fluid movement of limbs is astounding, Shane can't understand how someone can move that fast and with such precision. How does a body slip from one shape to another

with a seamless elegance that floods Shane's body with heat.

Rozanov is a big man; broad shoulders, thick thighs and his.... well his everything else is extremely impressive too, there's a lot of heavy muscle on display and you might think it wouldn't lend itself to gracefulness but you'd be wrong.

Within seconds Rozanov reaches the point of no return; commit or quit.

He commits.

There's barely time for Shane to gasp before the air is leaving him again in a rush of relief and admiration.

He did it, he landed perfectly and while moments before there was a blur of movement right now Rozanov could be a statue; carved from marble, posed for eternal admiration except for the way his shoulders rise and fall, his body rapidly reclaiming the oxygen it's consumed.

Without thinking Shane steps away from the wall, sliding his sunglasses into his pocket as he does. Everything seems so much brighter, more real, without them.

Rozanov lifts his head and all Shane can see is his joy at having succeeded.

Forgetting all the rules in the moment of shared pride Shane whoops and claps and keeps on moving with a broad smile he doesn't even try to hide.

It's stupid to feel so proud, it's not as if Shane had anything to do with the performance but he's so pleased for Rozanov and genuinely impressed.

Rozanov looks younger, his eyes bright and glowing, his smile wide and genuine. It's useless to deny he's beautiful. He just is. It doesn't have to mean anything that Shane can see that.

Shane smiles back and basks in the joyful expression shining his way while trying to deny what the fluttery feeling floating around inside him means.

He probably could have convinced himself it was just a natural admiration for talent except words he didn't know he was going to say burst out and reveal too much to both of them.

"Fuck! That was so good! I knew you'd do it. Didn't doubt it for a second, fucking amazing! You're absolutely awesome to watch."

The praise has Rozanov's smile growing and Shane feels his own lips stretch to match it and he's surprised to find out just how close together they are now but it's just a genuine enthusiasm for excellence that's carried him so swiftly into Ilya Rozanov's personal space. Nothing more.

"You are so fucking good!"

Fuck, now he sounds like a fan boy but then Rozanov's smile twists, morphing into the crooked one that always flips Shane's stomach and he bows a little to accept his accolades but

he doesn't look away which means Shane is caught; a moth, helpless to resist the light, except the light is the beaming smile of a man who knows just how good he is.

Shane swallows hard, tenses his muscles to keep control of them because he wants nothing more than to reach out and touch the face that's grining so wickedly at him.

He wants - with a fierce ache he's unaccustomed to.

He wants everything; to lean forward and press their lips together, to know what it's like to kiss him because Jesus fucking Christ this man is so fucking gorgeous it hurts not to kiss him.

It hurts and Shane can't stop looking at him, can't stop wanting him, and worse right now he doesn't even want to try and stop .

Something brushes against his hip and without looking he knows it's Rozanov's fingertips. Shane can feel the heat from his body, he can smell the sweat on him, still fresh and not at all unpleasant, it makes his mouth go dry.

Rozanov licks his lips slowly, head tilting ever so slightly to the side and his eyelashes fluttering; the combination should be illegal.

Experiencing a surge of lust that leaves him breathless, Shane really doesn't need Rozanov's low gravelly voice in his ear either.

"I am good at many other things too."

The rather desperate sounding bark of laughter he hears is definitely him and definitely involuntary. He manages to reply despite his dry mouth and somersaulting stomach.

"You would say that."

Rozanov's eyes sparkle with amusement but he just hums and worries at his bottom lip while looking at Shane's mouth. The fingers touching him press down more firmly.

It's not his fault, Shane sways forward then pulls himself back. He can't, he can't let this....

It's a mistake, a big one...

Huge....

Then a calloused thumb rubs across his bottom lip and pulls at it gently and all the reasons for no disappear.

He wants- he wants so bad so why can't he have?

Emboldened by the lack of protest Rozanov's other hand tugs at him, he lets it move him. Shane likes the firm grip, wants more of it, he hopes the fingers leave a bruise to prove later that this was all real.

It's far too real.

Rozanov's mouth is close. Shane can feel lips brushing his cheek as he whispers;

"Want to see? Want to see how good I am?"

His voice is enough to make Shane dizzy and Rozanov keeps hovering in his space, warming his skin with his breath, but he doesn't make the final move and he won't unless Shane says he can.

It's obvious that the other man is waiting to be stopped, probably expecting to be stopped and Shane should stop this, he really, really should.

With a shaky breath he makes the effort.

"This is a bad idea."

Except it's a weak effort, a pathetically weak effort, he knows that and so does Rozanov. It lacks any depth or conviction.

His voice is too soft, too breathless to convince anyone he doesn't really want what's about to happen to happen.

The way he's unable to look anywhere but at the soft pink mouth of a man he's been trying not to want doesn't help his case much either.

With a thumb on his lip Rozanov looks him in the eye and Shane knows he'll walk away if he says to, Shane knows that much about the man. He'll walk away and pretend this moment didn't happen.

"Maybe.. but do you want?"

The words make him shiver and there's no denying it; Shane wants nothing more than Ilya Rozanov's mouth on his, so in the middle of an empty dance studio Shane Hollander breaks all his own rules and answers with the truth.

"Yes I want."

And so he gets.

He gets exactly what he's wanted since the first time they met — Ilya Rozanov; insanely talented, beautiful and complicated tilts his chin up and kisses him.

It's soft and slow and gentle, much more gentle than he'd expected a kiss from this man to be, it's a press of lips and a sweep of his tongue, then it's repeated from a different angle and again, it's blissful and Shane wants to melt into his arms and beg for more but he doesn't he just moans softly and kisses back.

Everything is warm and wet and incredible. Rozanov even shudders beneath his own hands which are now pressed against his chest and face.

It's all so much softer and far more tender than anything Shane had let himself imagine and it turns his world upside down.

He's addicted from one hit and he wants nothing more than to do this forever so he has no choice.

He tears himself away, muttering an apology as he leaves the room as fast as he can.

He's texting Hayden the second the door slams shut behind him telling him to get the fuck over here right now because he needs a fucking break from Rozanov right fucking now.

Ilya stands perfectly still and a little dazed as the softest mouth he's ever kissed tears itself away from his and he watches Shane Hollander, his bodyguard do the unthinkable.

Hollander turns and as good as runs out the door. He abandons his post, walks away and leaves Ilya alone and he doesn't look back.

Chapter End Notes

So yeah... sorry about that

But if you're not too cros with me and hey it's cannon consistent so not really my fault if Shane bolts, come say hi- let me know you've read the update and I'll be a happy spot.

I'm giving everyone who's reading along while I post a big hug to say thanks for the support and encouragement. It really helps to know someone is reading what you're writing and a comment is the only way to do that.

Btw I don't get kudos emails anymore- turned them off a while ago so I couldn't obsess over the hits or no hits. It's been very freeing but I do still like to know if someone is out there 😊

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Shane left and now Ilya has to work out what to do about that.

The choices he makes are unsurprising to anyone who knows him and also potentially extremely unwise.

Ilya deals with the consequences of the kiss and makes his problems Hayden's problem.

Chapter Notes

So onwards we go... Shane ran as is his way and Ilya is pissed as is his... whatever might happen now??

I particularly enjoyed the Hayden and Ilya interactions in this one. Hope they brings smile to your face. Not that Hayden is smiling 😊

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

Many weeks ago the sight of Shane Hollander storming off, abandoning his duty and finally leaving Ilya alone would have delighted him.

It doesn't delight him today. Now that he's accidentally achieved the goal he'd set himself back then Ilya couldn't be more pissed off about it.

Fuck.

The door bounces several times before it finally shuts, such was the strength of the slamming.

Ilya finds that he's not exactly sure what to do next so he stays where he is watching a door that doesn't open again.

He watches it for a little while longer but Hollander doesn't come back through it and it's utterly ridiculous that Ilya isn't actually sure what to do next or even why his bodyguard has abandoned him so suddenly.

It's not like Hollander hadn't been into it. He very obviously had, he'd clearly wanted the same thing Ilya had. He'd even checked with him first, to be sure and Hollander had said yes.

He'd said yes damn it.

The shock is starting to wear off and it's being replaced with anger. Ilya had thought ... well he'd thought wrong obviously but...

Fuck.

Moving for the first time since a door slammed shut on him he stalks towards the mirror and sinks to the floor, back against the glass. It's the safest place to sit, he has no desire to see his face reflected back at him right now, isn't sure which of his varied emotions will be most the visible and doesn't really want to know.

So instead of looking at his reflection he glares at the door.

Is Hollander ever coming back? Is he supposed to wait here for him like an abandoned puppy?

Was that a resignation?

Is it even safe for him to go around without his bodyguard?

The last question catches him off guard and disgusts him. When did he become a coward who needed babysitter? When did he start to rely on Hollander to make him feel safe? When did he decide he actually needed a stupid bodyguard in his life?

Fuck that shit.

He's more than capable of keeping himself safe. He's been doing it for years. Fuck bodyguards and fuck Hollander specifically.

Is it Ilya's fault if idiot does not know his own wants and desires? No! Is not his fault at all. Stupid Hollander acting like baby just because he got kissed.

And it was such a good kiss too. Hollander had enjoyed it for sure.

So had he. Very much. Probably too much.

Ilya's eyes close as he pulls on the memory that hasn't had time to fade yet. He hopes it won't.

Hollander's lips had been soft, so warm and so pliant, that had been unexpected, as had the way he'd yielded to him, practically melting into the kiss and into Ilya's embrace.

The memory makes him shiver and to make it worse there's still the faint smell of Hollander's cologne lingering on his skin.

Fuck.

Ilya groans softly, what's he supposed to do? He doesn't want Hollander to quit, not anymore. He hates to admit it so blatantly but he likes the man, more than likes him if he's honest.

Ilya mostly avoids being honest about his feelings, it's most often the best course of action but right now the truth is slapping him in the face and even he can't ignore the gapping pit in

his stomach.

He hadn't meant to send him running. He'd just wanted to kiss him. He'd wanted it so much and he thought Hollander wanted him back.

Eyes closed head tilted back against the cool mirror glass Ilya curses himself and Hollander and their whole stupid existence.

He should go, try find out if Hollander is ok. Apologise maybe.

The idea annoys him. No he will not apologise - Hollander wanted to be kissed, he asked him, he checked so no, is not his job to apologise. Hollander should be one apologising to him.

That idea is much better.

Yes, Hollander should apologise, he should apologise for many things. He should apologise for being handsome and sexy and sweet and funny and most definitely for being stupid and running away.

The door to the dance studio swings open.

Hah! Here he is now- come to say sorry for being such a baby and running off after such a good kiss. Ungrateful boring Canadian.

Getting to his feet so it doesn't look like he was sulking or upset or anything stupid like that, Ilya is standing when Svetlana walks in.

She does not look happy. This is probably going to be another not a good thing in his day.

Ilya smooths his top down, a nervous habit from his youth he's never quite eliminated.

With narrowed eyes she strides towards him.

"Ilya Rozanov, why is Shane Hollander calling me and saying "go to Ilya. Why is he saying wait with him until Pike arrives."

So he's not coming back today. At least he knows now.

Sveta has paused for him to provide answers and when he doesn't she prompts him more sternly.

"Ilya? What did you do?"

Getting the blame is the last straw, his temper snaps.

"This is my fault yes? I see! I am the problem always? Why is it me who is doing the thing that is wrong? Causing the problems!"

The look he gets is more eloquent than any words could be.

It makes him laugh, but it sounds bitter because he is, the whole situation is entirely unfair. This is not his fault and he won't stand for false accusations a second longer.

He's done with all of them.

"Enough! I am going home till performance tonight. Send Pike there. Tell him to stay outside. I do not want to see him."

And with that Ilya storms out of the same door Shane Hollander had used to leave and he doesn't look back either.

There's a text first that he ignores. Ilya has no intention of making Pike's evening easy. Someone has to suffer with him so it might as well be Hayden Pike.

Another text arrives asking him if he's ready. He is but he doesn't tell Pike that. He'll have to get out of his car if he wants to find out.

It's petty but it helps.

Eventually there's a knock on his door and Ilya takes his time answering it. When he does he stares at Pike like he's never seen him before and says "Yes? Can I help you?"

His substitute bodyguard is not impressed.

"Don't piss me off Rozanov. And if you really didn't know who it was don't open the fucking door."

Pike waits for a response and doesn't get one so he carries on with his one sided conversation.

"Fuck you're annoying. I don't know how Shane's put up with you this long without punching you. You know he's been trying to convince me you're not that bad. What the fuck did you do to him today."

So Pike does not know what happened then. Ilya considers whether that is a good or bad thing and decides he does not know.

Maybe it is not the kind of thing Hollander would tell this friend but maybe he would tell his other friend. Ilya has Rose's number too. Maybe he should text her and find out.

No, that is stupid idea. He does not care who Hollander has told or not told about their kiss or what he has said about it. It is not that important to him. He will not be thinking about it again.

"Are ... you ... ready?"

Pike's words are slow as if he's talking to someone stupid. It just makes Ilya want to be more difficult.

He is ready, that's obvious to anyone looking at him it doesn't deserve an answer. Pike is stupid one not him.

Or maybe he is a little stupid to kiss Hollander and ruin everything, he needs him to come back to work he can not stand Pike in his life every day.

Ilya looks his second rate sub standard bodyguard up and down, no he really can not have this every day.

Pike is weak, he has no tolerance for adversity, he's already far too irritated. Ilya is glad to have annoyed him.

"Just get in the car..."

He doesn't move. That is no way to talk to a valuable client is it? A delicious idea occurs to him and he has to bite his cheek to stop his grin. Getting Pike to a Rozannoyed point 11 is after all a goal he's set himself and a good way to distract himself from his woes.

"Sir. "

Pike's eyebrows go sky high. It improves Ilya's mood slightly.

"You should say sir to me, or Mr Rozanov will do. I am not fussy but is more polite for bodyguard to speak with respect to valued client, yes?"

Ilya is delighted to learn that Pike is one of those people who gets a pulsing vein in his forehead when he's mad, that evidence, sitting alongside his flared nostrils and clenched jaw are a thing of beauty and it all makes Ilya feel much better about life.

Pike's lips stretch into the fakest smile Ilya's ever seen as he says through gritted teeth

"Mr Rovnov, sir, the car is ready to take you to the theatre. If you would please accompany me, we're running behind schedule now."

He gestures extravagantly towards the waiting vehicle.

Ilya sets his smile to match the one he's getting and says "Of course Mr Bodyguard. You know the way to opera house yes?"

The condescending pout on his face has brought better men than Pike to mindless rage but all that happens next is Pike's jaw clenches and his eyes glisten with deeply suppressed hostility.

He is, Ilya will admit it, a little impressed by Pike's self control .

He continues to provoke him anyway, enjoying the thought that Pike will complain about him to Hollander later and then Hollander will have no choice but to think about him.

"Would hate to be even later because the last option bodyguard is in charge tonight. I am assuming Rose was not available?"

"Get in the car....."

Ilya raises his eyebrows, waiting. It takes Pike a second to understand then another second to control his expression, pulling it back from murderous before he says through gritted teeth,

"Sir..."

It's enough to make even the broken hearted smile and Ilya feels more cheerful than he has all day so he nods, acknowledging the honorific and heads towards the car so swiftly it forces Pike to jog after him.

Like he said, it's petty but it helps, if he can't look at Hollander or talk to Hollander or kiss Hollander then at least he can ruin Hayden Pike's night too.

That seems perfectly reasonable if you ask him.

Thankfully, there had been no time to talk to anyone before the curtain lifted, he was actually very late by the time he'd arrived and gotten changed but now it is intermission and he is at much greater risk of interrogation from his friend.

It's looking like he might be safe though. He might actually make it all the way to curtain up without questions because Svetlana remains trapped on opposite side of wings to him. That is good because she knows that Hollander should be here not Pike, that Hollander's next scheduled time off is weeks away.

She may not be able to quiz him but she has been looking at him— well, glaring, and she has a very impressive glare.

Svetlana knows something has happened between him and Hollander and it's clear that she expects details as soon as she see him.

Ilya does not particularly care for the experience of being studied like a bug from other side of stage but it is better than inquisition even if it does feel a little like waiting for a noose to go tight around his neck.

Even if he escapes her now he'll be lucky if he can avoid her after the curtain drops. He needs to have thought of something good to explain Hollander's absence by then.

The most believable explanation would be to say he was bored and in horrible mood and had just been an asshole to Hollander and Hollander had been in bad mood too and overreacted and decided to take the night off.

She might believe that. It wouldn't be the first time he'd acted out and pissed someone off that much. Normally when he's in that kind of mood she'd suggest going out; dancing, drinking, hooking up with someone just to fuck the bad mood out of him.

She won't suggest that today, they haven't been to a club since the letters started. He hasn't been out in months, he hasn't fucked a stranger, hasn't gotten too drunk or high either.

Maybe though, she can be persuaded. He glances her way again, hoping to judge his chances. She's talking to Nooriya and Isla and Stefan is there too, trying to include himself in the conversation.

As if his day wasn't bad enough now he had to look at Stefan.

Ilya hates Stefan on principle, a boy with only teaspoon of talent but his father is rich and money is important in the arts isn't it. So here he is; a part of Boston Ballet a prestige he definitely does not deserve.

At least their artistic director keeps him on the sidelines as much as he can but Stefan's mere presence is an affront to Ilya's pride and work ethic. His biggest objection being that having that talentless idiot here is stopping someone with actual talent achieving their dreams.

No, Ilya does not like Stefan nor does he like for Stefan to be anywhere near Svetlana. Once he had had the nerve to ask her to be his partner, it was only for some charity performance they all did last year but the concept of her dancing with him is ludicrous.

She had declined of course and Ilya had laughed himself silly when she'd told him. Sveta had not laughed, she is little kinder than him but she had been offended by the offer. She agrees with Ilya that there should be no place for talentless fools here in Boston.

She's ignoring Stefan as much as she can but at least the girls are making her smile. It could be possible that if he asks nicely she'll agree to them all going out tonight. Safety in number might convince her. He catches her eye and smiles but the look he receives back is cool to say the least.

So she is still angry with him then.

He knows why, his childhood friend is extremely unhappy that Hollander is not at theatre tonight. She likes Hollander, trusts him. She likes Rose too but she has only met Pike once and Ilya admits he has not given her a particularly good impression of the man.

No, with her face set like stone it is very unlikely Sveta will cooperate with his desire to go out and get wasted or laid or both

They would all go mad at him if he suggested it; Sveta, Hollander, Pike and even Rose. Also the artistic director, the ballet mistress, his management team, the owners of the Boston Ballet, even his dry cleaner probably would all say go home, be sensible, be safe.

Boring.

On other hand the most recent letter was only two days ago and he does not actually want to get hurt again so he should not be stupid.

Fuck - Hollander's boring must be contagious.

Disappointed with himself he still accepts the fact that he'll be going home after the performance and not out to a club. It is what boring Hollander would want him to do and he

doesn't want to make things worse between them. Hollander will get even madder if he finds out Ilya went out partying; and he would find out.

The warning for the start of the second act rings loudly, alerting everyone and starting them moving.

Yes, he will go home then tomorrow when he sees Hollander it will all be ok between them. He will say the kiss was just a bad joke, that he is sorry and then things will go back to normal.

Hollander can have the night off, Ilya can have fun annoying Pike and tomorrow it will all be back to normal, he is sure of it.

Moving towards the stage to wait for his cue means he passes Pike who has been sitting on a bench during intermission, watching him and letting his eyes scan the area for threats.

He's obviously alert and ready to act if needed but he's not exactly maintaining the same vigilant energy as Hollander would be.

Ilya grins happily, it is very disappointing behaviour in one's bodyguard.

He makes a point of stopping in front of him, Pike looks up, eyes already narrowed and suspicious as he starts to rise. He doesn't get far, Ilya's hand on his shoulder presses him back down and despite his delight Ilya keeps his face serious.

"Noooo, do not get up Pike, you are right. Is good time to rest, why worry about mad killer after me who could be hiding anywhere."

Increasing the pressure from his right hand and adding the left as well to Pike's other shoulder, Ilya pushes down stopping Pike's efforts to rise.

"Nooo you must rest, am sure it is quite safe for me, no need to get up and use your manly bodyguard skills to protect. Would not want you to tire yourself out."

He pauses for the reaction he's looking forward to.

"Fuck you Rozanov. You know I've been watching the whole time. You're perfectly safe. No need to be scared."

Ilya ignores the scared comment.

"Yes of course, very safe and very tiring for you watching things. I can see why you need to sit."

"Rozanov I swear to god you are the most fucking ..."

The audience clapping the curtain pull wipes out the rest of the words. Ilya places a hand to his ear and frowns, shouting louder so Pike can hear him.

"Sorry can not hear, if need nap while I dance feel free. You need some beauty sleep anyway."

He grimaces to make his point clear.

Hayden's jaw is tight, his vein popping it's a beautiful image to leave with.

Ilya winks at him.

"Must go, audience love me, can not wait longer. I must give fans what they want. It is called being "popular" - you would not be familiar with concept.

Ilya grins again just to annoy him for one more second. Yes he can put up with Pike tonight and tomorrow it will all be fine again.

Tomorrow arrives and when it does it lets him down badly and Ilya is pissed off about it.

It was Pike not Hollander waiting outside his house in the morning and Ilya's day did not improve much from there.

His practice session went terribly, he tripped over his shoes and made far too many mistakes, Sveta wasn't talking to him, unimpressed by his poor explanation for why Hollander was still missing.

He had some random admin person nagging him for paperwork he was meant to sign a week ago and then he'd been trapped in costume with a giggling cohort of the newest baby ballerinas barely 16 and excited for their first costume fittings.

Actually their enthusiasm had at least made him smile even if he'd had to wait far too long to discuss the changes he needed made to his jacket.

By lunchtime he'd asked Pike four times if Rose was available instead of him and it was quite clear that the man would give into his very obvious desire to punch Ilya in the face if he asked him again.

It had been tempting but he hadn't pushed it.

Then after lunch while no one was watching him he reached a new low.

He sent Hollander a text.

He'd been thinking about doing it all morning and was annoyed with himself for giving into the impulse but not enough to stop himself.

It was innocent enough and a reasonable enough question. The message just said;

Have you quit?

He'd wanted to delete it as soon as it was sent but that was impossible so he'd sat and waited for a response feeling extremely pathetic.

An hour later one word came back.

No

And that was an hour ago.

Since then Ilya has been very careful not to examine the relief that swept through him at the sight of those 2 letters.

Having considered a wide range of possible replies he finally presses send on his final choice and the message is delivered.

Hollander will be reading his words any minute now. Ilya reads the words to himself again.

If you are really coming back better hurry up. I am almost liking Pike much more than you. Might not want boring bodyguard back, will maybe keep this one.

The response comes back much quicker than he expected.

Really? That's not what I'm hearing

Smiling at his phone screen Ilya types a reply straight away.

So what is Pike saying about me?

Hollander's next text is quick and a tension in Ilya's chest loosens as he reads it.

I shouldn't say - very unprofessional to gossip with the client

There's more humour in the words than you might expect considering how they parted. Perhaps Hollander was just a little overwhelmed in the moment perhaps he was not horrified or rejecting him.

He types and sends his next message before he can change his mind.

Oh so he says that I am very charming then? Handsome too? Pleasure to work with. Is very understandable. People love working with me.

He wonders if that will stop the messages. It doesn't.

No. That's not exactly what he said

No?

No

What did he say then?

Ilya can't wait to hear how Hollander phrases whatever bad mouthing Pike has been up to.

That you were an arrogant pretentious bastard who he wanted to punch into the middle of next week

Ilya laughs, causing Hayden Pike to glare at him from his position a few feet away. Ilya waves at him just to see the eye roll. He texts again.

That is fair

Hollander texts back.

I know

Ah so you want to punch me too

No

A pause of several minutes has his heart racing, then;

That's not what I want

Ilya takes a chance

What do you want?

And it's after that question that the messages stop.

There are no more text messages from Hollander but he half expects him to be back on duty when the car arrives to collect him in the evening.

When Pike knocks on his door he can't even be bothered to annoy him. He'd been so sure Hollander would be back he can't muster the energy to be a dick. He just follows his designated bodyguard of the evening to the car, silent and compliant. Which means he get suspicious looks the whole way to the opera house and as they get to his dressing room Pike frowns at him.

"Are you sick or something?"

He can't be bothered to reply with more than the simple truth.

"No."

Pike glares at him.

"You sure? You better not be about to have a stroke or something. I don't want to have to do CPR on you. I'd rather get you to a doctor now."

The warmth and concern is overwhelming. Ilya replies in a tone that matches Pike's.

"So kind, but no, I am fine. Do not worry about me."

Pike pulls face at him.

"Oh I'm not worried about you. I'm worried about us- doesn't look good if a client drops down dead and Shane will kill me if anything happens to you before he's back. He takes our reputation very seriously."

Ilya smiles, or at least he turns the corners of his mouth up.

"Can't let the boss down can we? Might get you fired, such a shame."

It's as snarky as he can manage and before Pike can respond he closes the door on him so he doesn't have to look at someone who isn't Shane Hollander any longer.

"Rose, it's me." Hayden hisses down the phone as quietly as he can.

The response is a sigh, followed by a weary question.

"What's happened?"

It's obvious she's expecting a problem. He's not surprised she always knows what's happening.

Hayden answers quickly even though he's so fucking embarrassed he could die.

"I lost him."

There's a pause and he winces in anticipation, then;

"Him who?"

Her confused question makes him realise that Shane hasn't told Rose they'd swapped over yesterday. Hayden frowns, that's weird, it's not like Shane, usually everyone is updated about a schedule change.

"Hayden?"

Rose's concerned voice brings him back to his current problem.

"Rozanov. The fucking bastard gave me the slip. Shit, I can't fucking believe it. Oh fuck... Shane's gonna kill me."

She hisses down the line.

"Ilya is missing? And you haven't told Shane yet? Then why the fuck are you calling me?"

Hayden's about to explain himself when Rose asks a second question.

"Wait, why are you with Ilya tonight? Why isn't Shane there?"

Preferring that question to the previous one Hayden answers it quickly.

"He called me yesterday, said he needed a break. Can't blame him can you? I only cover Rozanov 2 days at a time and I want to kill him."

Rose snorts down the phone at him.

"He's not that bad, you're just too easy to wind up. It's a game to him, one he's winning because you're such a push over and always give him a reaction."

The statement being true does nothing to lessen his irritation.

"Gee thanks Rose, exactly who's side are you on?"

Unsurprisingly Rose has no time for his complaints or his ego. She cuts him off.

"Don't be a baby Hayd, we have more important things to deal with, where and when did you lose him?"

Again she's right so he relays the information, albeit reluctantly.

"After the performance. He took one of those ballet dancers into his dressing room with him, told me to wait because he would be busy for "at least an hour".

The words come out with a Russian accent against his will.

"I didn't want to you know... so I just waited."

She sighs and he doesn't need her to make him feel any worse than he already does.

"And when you finally thought to check on him he was gone. Jesus Hayden! It's bodyguarding 101! Shane's gonna go mental."

He winces, he'll kill Rozanov for doing this to him.

"Yeah, I know, I know, I was stupid. I was just pleased I didn't have to look at him for a while. He pisses me off Rose!"

He'd vaguely hoped for some sympathy but her tone is far from that.

"Oh we know and and you don't think perhaps he was doing it on purpose so he could get away from you?"

She doesn't wait for an answer.

"Has he just gone home?"

"No I checked. He's not there."

"So he's out in Boston somewhere, on his own, unprotected and probably wasted by now. Fantastic."

"Rose...

"Stop taking to me and call Shane *now*. He needs to know. I'll start looking for Rozanov; and Hayden I really hope nothing happens to him before we find him."

Before he can say that despite his mildly homicidal feelings for the man, even he doesn't really want that, Rose hangs up and he has no choice but to call Shane.

It starts to ring, he's really not looking forward to this conversation. On second thoughts maybe he *will* kill Rozanov for putting him in this situation, well if his stalker doesn't get him first.

The flippant thought turns his stomach. Fuck, Shane is not going to be impressed with this fuck up.

His friend answers and the conversation goes exactly as well as Hayden had expected it to.

The music is loud, a pumping beat that wipes out everything that's been on his mind. It's perfect, just what he needs.

Several people will metaphorically kill him for this but as long as the one person who might actually really want to kill him doesn't turn up he'll be fine and what are the chances of that?

They have to be pretty small right?

Ilya pushes past hot, sweaty bodies that are thrusting and moving to the beat. He makes it to the bar and orders his first round. Three shots, all for him.

He downs the first and turns to look at his options for the evening's entertainment. He has a very specific goal in mind and that is to forget all about Shane Hollander for a few hours.

He spots a woman dancing nearby giving him the eye, maybe... another woman and her boyfriend grinding against each other, looking at him looking at them. Another possibility.

Ilya throws back the second vodka, it's not as good as he's used to but it will do the job he needs it to do.

The last shot disappears and then he moves back through the crowd towards the dance floor to let the music sweep away all his confusing thoughts and feelings for a little while.

The music is loud and Shane hates it. This would not be his idea of a fun night out even if he was here with friends and on purpose.

He hates the noise, the flashing lights the sweaty press of bodies getting too close to him.

He works his way through the crowd to stand at the highest point in the dingy nightclub with music pounding in his ears and searches for his target.

He should be easy to spot, not many people are built like Rozanov, he ought to stand out.

Shane looks around again. He can't see him and this is the second nightclub he's checked. Rose has been to another one and Hayden is sitting in a car, waiting outside Rozanov's house, just in case he goes back before they find him. Shane sent him there to do nothing but wait because he's furious with his friend right now and doesn't want to have to deal with him.

The whole point of them swapping for a few days was to keep Rozanov safe, to make sure Shane's inappropriate feelings for the man didn't interfere with his ability to protect him. He'd reckoned a few days away from him would be enough to cool his desires.

It might have worked but instead he's spent the last 30+ hours thinking about their kiss.

He'd torn a strip off Hayden for letting this happen and when he finds Ilya fucking Rozanov he's going to tear a strip off him too.

He peers into the gloom- fucking idiot taking a risk like this and why! What for?

Shane squints harder, desperate to see broad shoulder and curly hair somewhere out there and tries to pretend he doesn't know why.

It's no good, he can't see him.

He makes his way past more sweaty people kissing and writhing to a new spot to get a different view.

And the idiot better be ok when he does find him.

Asking around the junior dancers had given them three possibilities for Ilya's location. He couldn't get hold of Svetlana to ask her to confirm and he wonders if that means she's with him. He doubts it, she takes Ilya's safety very seriously and he suspects that when she finds out about this she'll be just if not even more pissed off than he is.

He'd been hopeful about this club, it was allegedly Rozanov's favourite but he still can't see him anywhere.

This is unfucking believable.

Shane can't decide if he's getting angrier or more worried as each new minutes ticks past without any sign of Rozanov.

The music is going to give him a headache and the tight knot of tension in his chest isn't a lot of fun either. Eyes searching sections of the club methodically Shane swears silently, he needs him to be here because if he's not then he's not really sure what he'll do.

Another sweep of the room gives him nothing.

What if he's already gone home?

Not great but at least he'd be behind a locked door.

What if he's already gone home *with* someone?

The take of bile fills his mouth, no- bad idea, terrible. Shane will murder him if he's done something that stupid.

A worse idea occurs to him;

What if he's gone to someone else's home?

Somewhere Shane has no chance of finding him.

No. That hasn't happened. That's unacceptable, utterly unacceptable, even Rozanov wouldn't be so stupid would be?

Would he? The images created by the thought make him even more nauseous but at least it also energises his search. He will find him and soon.

He looks around again.

Where the fuck is he?

He has to be here and Shane is going to find him. He needs to find him and to know he's safe and not with anyone else.

Fuck Rozanov for doing something this stupid; picking another section to search at random, Shane keeps looking and then as if he appeared out of nowhere he finally succeeds in locating the idiot his other idiot lost.

Shane's eyes fall on the tall, handsome figure of Ilya Rozanov suddenly illuminated by a spotlight that's sweeping across the dance floor and he can't move, all he can do is stare and try to remember how to breathe.

Rozanov is fine, more than fine by the look of it; he's with a woman who's pressed tightly into his side; her back to his chest. His hand is on her waist, fingers dipped below her waistband, her head tilted back onto his shoulder.

Even from here Shane can see her eyes are closed as Rozanov mouths at her neck. She seems to be enjoying herself.

Shane stares but not at her; at the man staring right back at him.

Rozanov has seen him too.

An unnecessary amount of confusing and conflicting feelings sweep through him and Shane can recognise at least one of them- relief.

He's safe. Thank God.

The next feeling waiting patiently to be acknowledged knocks to be let in. He opens the door without thinking and rage rushes in.

Ok he's safe, that's great, but he might not be for long because Shane is fucking furious and Rozanov is about to find out.

Without breaking eye contact with him Rozanov steps away from the woman. Shane pays no attention to what happens to her next, he can only see one man.

Shane takes a step, unsure if he wants to kiss him or punch him now that he's found him, honesty compels him to admit it's probably both but he clings to the hope that he'll have enough self control when he reaches him that he won't do either.

Ilya presses his mouth to warm soft skin with a moderate level of enthusiasm. He probably ought to be enjoying himself more considering the amount of shit he's going to get in for doing this but even if it's not as good as he hoped it was still an excellent decision to escape from Pike and dance Hollander out of his head.

This is what he needs; to get out, to get drunk, to forget Hollander's stupid boring face.

He'd like to say it was working. It isn't, but even if he hasn't forgotten enough, then at least he's been kissed and touched and danced. At least he's drunk more shots than he's had in months and is feeling the buzz of it and at least the woman in his arms is a reasonably acceptable companion.

Not what he wants but she'll entertain him until...

The flashing lights make it hard to see the people around him clearly but when the light hits one particular face, he sees him perfectly.

It's him; staring onto the dance floor like he's having the worst night of his life, their eyes meet and it's a bolt of lightning electrifying his blood.

Hollander is here.

How? Why?

He's pissed off too, the look on his face could strike you down in a heartbeat. It sends a thrill through him. Ilya is glad Hollander is here and annoyed, delighted actually.

Ilya gently pushes the woman he was holding into the arms of another dancer and waits for Shane Hollander to do something interesting.

He has no idea what is going to happen now but he's excited to find out.

7/10 she says - still looking pretty stable and while my hopes are modest maybe we'll hit the target on this one?!

Another cliffhanger I'm so sorry if you're reading with me but I'll be back as soon as I can with a remix of the nightclub scene with a very different ending 😊🤔😊

What does she mean???

Chapt 8 will reveal all...

Meanwhile to spur me on come say hello and possibly a few other nice things in my in box. Love to know what you might be thinking about it all

Till next time

Stay safe out there and have a good timezone of your choice 💜😁

Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

Shane has finally located his missing client; he's hot sweaty and drunk, dancing his heart out in a crowded nightclub and very definitely not in any immediate peril, which means Shane can stop worrying about him.

Unfortunately that means all the other messy emotions he's been ignoring want his attention and maybe a noisy overstimulating nightclub is not the best place to do that.

Trouble is, there's nowhere else to go.

*

Ilya hadn't expected anyone to care enough to look for him tonight but here he is looking at Shane Hollander looking at him.

It's unexpected and rather exhilarating.

Just how much trouble is he in? He doesn't know but he's looking forward to finding out.

Chapter Notes

We left our guys with Ilya trying to do something stupid and Shane determined not to let him and

I wanted to do something with the iconic nightclub stare and the vegas bathroom scene, so this is that with a twist.

It's a bit longer than the other chaps. Hope you enjoy it.

Btw my soul is too weak to face another read/edit so last time I looked it was fine. Let's hope it still is.

And yes the chapt count did go up. More on that next time

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

Shane stares across the crowded room and into the eyes of the man he's been searching for, he can't look away and he can't move. He feels like a stupid fucking cliché.

Around them the music changes, sliding into something with a stronger rhythm, he can feel it under his skin like an extra heartbeat.

From the other side of the dance floor Rozanov stares back at him, face blank, which is fucking annoying, he could at least try and look guilty for sneaking out, causing so much trouble and worrying everyone but no, he obviously doesn't care.

Fucking arsehole.

He knows he needs to go get Rozanov and drag him out of here before he runs off again but there's too much going on to let him think let alone move; Rozanov's eyes are piercing, so sharp it almost hurts to look at him and each thump of music feels like a punch to the centre of his chest.

The lights hurt too; flashing, swirling, changing colour, all too fast, all too bright and then there's the heat, the smell of bodies and perfumes and cologne all mixed together.

It's an assault on his senses but usually he could cope in a place like this for a while at least but he's also got another problem.

When he was younger he'd often feel overwhelmed by his environment or his feelings or both but with time he learnt to manage those situations better. Now he stays centred and calm; at the core of him a tranquil silent pool he keeps smooth and perfect that helps him breath when things become too much.

He's been like that for years now, making cool, rational, sensible choices, not wanting too much, or feeling too much, being what people needed him to be.

Except recently Ilya Rozanov has been throwing pebbles, making ripples in his smooth calm life that want to become waves that will wash all his control away.

That absolutely can not happen here so he needs to reduce the amount of things stressing him out . Shane can't leave the club and he can't take his eyes off Rozanov so he tries to control the one thing that's his to change.

It won't take long to calm the ripples caused by seeing Rozanov's stupid face. He can settle the overwhelming relief quickly and he doesn't even really need to think about the other stupid emotions that came just after it.

Taking the full thirty seconds he's allowed himself he sweeps all those messy confusing feelings beneath the surface of his innner pool of calm and waits for the water to settle again.

Ten seconds after that and he's feeling much better; he's fine. Absolutely fine, totally in control of the situation, of himself.

He's Fine.

Breathing carefully in and out helps him believe that. Another five seconds of deeper breathing helps a little more.

Perfectly fine, perfectly calm, perfectly rational... completely professional.

He's good; ready to move forward, metaphorically and literally and deal with his problematic client.

Who's absolutely ok and not in any danger at all.

As he takes the first of the few steps that lead down towards the dance floor, his brain recycles that one thought- Ilya is ok.

He's right here in front of him and he's ok.

Right here.

In one piece.

Completely ok.

Absolutely ok.

Shane can hear the word in Rozanov's stupid accent.

Okie

Ok is good.

A small bubble appears on the surface of his tranquil pool, the ripples make an interesting pattern as they travel.

Rozanov is ok and that's obviously a good thing. Shit, Shane is paid to make sure he stays ok.

And he is - ok; except Shane thinks, maybe Rozanov is a little more than ok, maybe he's been having a good time while Shane's been worried sick about him.

Maybe he's been having a very good time.

With the woman he was dancing with and probably lots of other women too, men as well.

As soon as Shane's feet hit the surface of the dance floor the abnoxious beat of music surrounds him completely; the increased intensity crumpling his face into a wince.

The noise, the heat, the smell is even more down here but at least it distracts from the violent pounding happening beneath his rib cage that's trying to create more ripples .

Rozanov's face disappears and reappears intermittently between the flailing limbs and movements of the people dancing between them but he's not moved away, in fact there's still no real reaction to Shane turning up at the scene of the crime to drag him away; fuck, he really is an arrogant bastard.

More ripples form and the first one breaks across the bank of Shane's formally tranquil pool.

Shane thinks for a moment that maybe he hates Rozanov and now he has proof that he's alive and well then it's perfectly ok to want to act on that feeling and murder him for all the trouble he's caused, just a little bit, as a treat.

That's probably the normal reaction to Rozanov actually. Hayden would agree for sure. His friend wants to murder Rozanov regularly. Why can't it be Shane's turn to feel vaguely homicidal tonight.

The pressure emanating from the centre of his chest increases, encouraging the pattern of turmoil inside him to spread.

How many other people has Ilya danced with or kissed tonight or.. Shane pushes firmly past someone who wouldn't move for him.

The ripples would look more like waves now if he took the time to look at them.

The most direct route to Rozanov is to continue across dance floor and not wanting to give his target the chance to flee Shane takes it, heading straight towards the root cause of all his current problems.

The pebble that was dropped into his life that's causing him all this trouble.

Ok, so it's maybe possible he hasn't completely dealt with his feelings about Rozanov yet, there may be a few things left slightly unresolved, that are disturbing his tranquility.

Each step envelopes him in more noise and chaos, each step accelerates his heart rate, each beat, each step another pebble causing trouble.

Half way to his destination he has to face facts; Shane can try and deny it but the truth is that he's furious and it's Rozanov's fault.

Shane tells himself he'll feel better once he gets to him and can yell, so to achieve that quickly he pushes his way past half a dozen couples engaged in various stages of public foreplay and finds it surprisingly easy to ignore the way his shoulders and hands bump against sweaty flesh or how at least one pair of hands tries to include him in their fun.

He has to stop, to remove arms that have been flung around his neck and redirect the woman who's latched onto him thinking he's the perfect dance partner for her.

She's extremely incorrect.

While detangling himself he keeps his eyes fixed firmly on Rozanov, still half expecting him to take off in the opposite direction, probably just before he gets to him.

He'd enjoy toying with Shane right before giving him the slip, except actually Rozanov doesn't look like a man about to bolt.

No, he looks like he's waiting for Shane to reach him. How fucking arrogant is that, who does he think he is, a king watching his subject approach?

Well fuck that. Fuck him!

Except Shane has no clear plan on how he'll demonstrate that sentiment and as he's going to reach him soon he needs to come up with a plan - something that's a giant fuck you to the Russian.

If only the music would stop then he could think clearly, but it won't and the noise combined with the turmoil inside him is shutting down all his reasoning skills.

How is he supposed to think with so much noise and with a heart that's beating too wildly, with the lights flashing above him and the tension in his body and the ripples of his feelings escaping their confines.

His jaw is so tight that his temples ache and he feels more overwhelmed than he has since he was a child.

It's a terrible state to be in. He wants to leave but not as much as he wants to stay.

For years Shane has prided himself on how he learnt to smooth out his feelings; keep himself calm and focused in any situation but that control started to falter the moment he laid eyes on Ilya fucking Rozanov and now it's all disrupted, possibly permanently.

Rozanov and his face and his eyes and his talent and his muscles and his whole stupid annoying personality have been pebble after pebble thrown at him relentlessly.

And of course the biggest damn stone thrown his way; that kiss, a kiss he can't stop thinking about, and honestly he's not even sure he's wants to stop thinking about it anymore.

He's tired from trying to calm all the feelings caused by Ilya Rozanov and his own treacherous desires.

It's too much. It's far too much and if the ripples are going to become waves he'll be knocked off his feet any second now.

He should call Hayden, or maybe Rose, have one of them come deal with Rozanov but he won't and he knows why.

He doesn't want *them* here. *He* wants to be here.

Shane needed to be the one to find him, he knew that the second he was told Rozanov was out on his own somewhere in Boston.

He's been so fucking worried ever since Hayden confessed what had happened so it's no wonder the overwhelming relief when he'd found him had knocked him sideways.

So relieved he could have kissed him so it's probably for the best that next to the relief there are now even bigger feelings generated by anger and its an anger about more than Ilya's escape act.

Anger feels like a much safer emotion than some of the other he could lean into so Shane makes an executive decision and throws his own stone marked 'fucking pissed off' into the chaotic water of his feelings.

The wave hits hard.

Fuck! What was the man thinking to come here? You'd have to be completely stupid or worse passively suicidal to sneak out when you have a stalker sending death threats your way.

Rozanov is a spectacularly stupid, inconsiderate idiot, an arrogant asshole!

A fucking fool!!

For a moment Shane rides the blunt honest feeling of rage with relief, it's good to be angry, it's clean and bright, uncomplicated but then it mixes with the sick feeling he has building in his stomach.

That one had arrived the second he's seen exactly *what* Rozanov was doing on the dance floor and with who.

Worry, fear, relief, anger, jealousy; it's not a combination designed for encouraging rational thoughts or actions.

Rozanov's lips twitch at the corner as he watches him approach. The bastard is amused, he's actually pleased with himself for causing all this drama. He thinks it's all a joke.

Doesn't he care about himself at all? Doesn't he care that other people care?

Shane's tight jaw and clenched teeth means he has to breath through his nose. He starts counting to help calm himself down because right now there's a 50:50 chance that Shane will be punching his client when he reaches him.

Of course there is a worse possibility — he could kiss him.

Punching or kissing would be bad but one would be worse and unfortunately even with a red haze in front of him he wants that one far more than the other.

The desire to seize Rozanov's mouth and make him forget any other person he's touched tonight is strong. Shane's not really sure he can be blamed for the impulse though, Rozanov looks so damn good standing there; smug, arrogant expression on his face, the buttons open on his shirt and the hint of chest hair and sweat that reveals.

If you let yourself take in the smaller curls stuck to his sweaty forehead, the parted lips or the way his chest is still heaving from the dancing you're left with the only one conclusion; the man should be kissed.

Rozanov is a stupid amount of sexy and he knows it.

Shane hates him so bad.

He comes to a halt, standing face to face with Rozanov; their chests almost touching and he neither kisses or punches. Instead Shane channels his inappropriate desires and frustrations into instructions; loud and clear.

"Get outside now!"

He has to shout to be heard. Rozanov frowns and shakes his head, pretending he hasn't heard when he clearly did.

He shouts louder, leans in to do it then retreats quickly.

"I mean it! The fuck you think you're doing here?! Outside! Now!"

The only reaction he gets is a shrug and pout, which pours fire on both his desires, the look in Rozanov's eyes isn't helping. His Russian foe looks like he wants to grab hold of Shane and push him to his knees and God help him Shane almost wants that bad enough to let him do it.

Then Rozanov leans closer and shouts one word in his ear.

"Bo-ring!"

Unfucking believable!

He's so close to snapping now that Shane has to do something with his hands or he's looking at charges of disorderly conduct and affray or maybe it'll be indecent exposure and lewd behaviour. Another 50:50 chance.

He grabs hold of a shoulder to tug his tormentor closer and shouts back

"Fuck you! You're going home. Now!"

There are more words yelled his way, it's loud all around them but he gets the gist; Ilya Rozanov is unsurprisingly being uncooperative. He shakes his head and mouths "No."

Acutely aware of how he's breathing, harsh and fast, nostrils flaring with each breath, he tries to find some sliver of calm. It's hard, Shane is holding onto his temper by a thread; a very thin, quickly fraying thread.

Rozanov returns to yelling.

"You are not my bodyguard tonight. You can not tell me where to go, what to do. Pike in charge but he is not here, so...."

Rozanov's insolent shrug activates a flickering muscle in Shane's jaw.

"I have to go now, busy... have arrangement with new gentlemen friend, in more private place maybe I see you after, teach you to dance."

He says more but Shane's brain whited out at gentlemen and private. He can not seriously mean that, then before he can react Rozanov spins around and zig zags his way off through

the crowd at alarming speed.

The crowd parts for him but Shane is frozen and speechless with the arrogance and stupidity of the man.

His last words filter through to Shane's brain and strike an icy blow.

That's it, he's done.

What Rozanov intends to do, in the not so private privacy of the men's bathroom with a complete stranger is definitely not happening.

He'll knock him out and carry him out of here over his shoulder before Shane lets Ilya Rozanov fuck someone in a public bathroom tonight.

No way on earth is Rozanov hooking up like that on his watch, not with a stranger who could be his fucking stalker.

It's stupidity at the highest level and Shane isn't about to let Rozanov fuck anyone he doesn't know tonight.

The thought that follows that one punches him in the gut and he could pretend to be shocked by it but he's not, not really.

It's a thought he's had locked down since meeting Rozanov but it's taken advantage of tonight's chaos and broken free.

He ignores it.

Well, as best he can. It's a very loud, very bright thought but he won't do that.

He can't do that.

But there's no way Rozanov is getting laid by some random guy, not tonight, not ever and that's an argument Shane is not losing.

Determined, but about what, he couldn't exactly say, Shane goes after Ilya Rozanov.

Ilya leans a little closer to deliver the message that will teach Hollander a lesson. The lesson being that if you do not want me there will be someone, many someones who do.

He expresses that nicely with words that leave the straight laced Hollander spluttering. He adds to his distress with;

"Goodbye Hollander. Hot guy is waiting, he will not be boring. Not like you, boring ex bodyguard."

Pleased with his victory Ilya spins and walks away, eyes casting around to find a bathroom while trying to look cool and confident.

He doesn't expect Hollander to follow him, his concern for safety and duty can only go so far right? Ilya must have pissed him off sufficiently by now to make Hollander leave him to his fate.

It's painfully obvious the man he's walking away from is beyond furious with him and would be far more interested in punching him than saving him.

He tries to feel pleased he's won but it's harder than he expected.

The glowing washroom light catches his eye and he makes a beeline towards it.

Who knows, he might even find someone in the bathroom up for giving him a blow job. It's not unheard of, just because he hasn't actually got an arrangement doesn't mean he can't get one. He's pretty sure getting his dick sucked would improve his evening. He'll hide out for a while let Hollander leave and then he'll go find some pretty mouth to help take his mind of what he really wants.

The door slams back into the wall in a very gratifying way when Shane enters the bathroom, startling almost everyone within it.

He doesn't know what expression is on his face as he scans the room but the man heading towards the exit looks like he wants to get away from whatever the situation is about to be in here fast.

That's probably wise. Shane stares at him as he goes past, happy to encourage his departure.

Another man finishes washing his hands and leaves quickly making no eye contact on his way out.

Shane pays him no attention, his eyes are on the back of Rozanov's head. Maybe Rozanov looked up when he came in but he's washing his hands now and the only other man in the room has chosen the sink right next to him. He's also glancing sideways at the Russian because who wouldn't.

Well fuck that.

He's far too close to Ilya so Shane figures that he must be the man Rozanov is meeting.

He has to fight the ludicrous impulse to growl and pull the stranger away.

His small forward motion is mostly involuntary, driven no doubt by his pure and noble desire to stop this nonsense and keep Rozanov safe.

It's his duty, that's all, nothing to do with what he does or doesn't want Ilya to be doing with his free time. He's paid to keep Rozanov safe so that's what he intends to do.

Ilya glances over his shoulder and away again but Shane can see him in the mirror. He's rubbing at his nose, eyes cast downward .

He doesn't say anything but Shane gets the impression he's surprised to see him.

Idiot.

What did he think his bodyguard would do? Just let him do what he wants regardless of the danger? Did he think Shane would let him risk his life with a stranger? Do whatever he wants, with whoever is handy? No. Rozanov should expect more for himself than that. He should expect someone to care about him and that he doesn't is kind of sad.

And that kind of thought is far too dangerous; it splashes water on his simmering rage and Shane needs to hold onto his anger for reasons.

He focuses on why he's mad; first the man's an idiot for planning this hook up. Reckless too.

Yes, fucking annoying as well, Shane pokes at his anger to keep it burning and keep himself safe.

Arrogant Fucking Idiot. Every capital letter earnt.

The hook up wanna be has turned and is casting nervous glances at Shane then Rozanov.

Shane sizes him up; he's tall, a big guy, lots of muscles on display thanks to a sleeveless shirt, a neat beard.

Shane hates his technically handsome face instantly and he needs him gone for everyone's sake.

"Out!"

The man stays where he is so Shane takes a step towards him, "I mean it.."

The stranger's eyebrows lift then collapse into a frown. He glances at Rozanov as if Ilya has a say in the decision being made.

Stepping closer, face twisting as he aims for control Shane gives the best warning he can, once he's loosen his gritted teeth.

"I said out. Don't make me make you leave."

The man's hands lift, trying to placate him no doubt and the quick flicker of caution is gratifying.

"Hey man. I don't want any trouble."

Shane smiles politely. It won't reach his eyes and most people don't like that much.

"Good. Then leave."

He indicates the door with a tilt of his head.

Hook Up looks conflicted, he glances at Ilya again who still has his back to them both.

"Look I would, like I said, I really don't want any trouble."

Shane interrupts him,

"Then go, or do you need me to hold the door for you? Maybe it's too heavy?"

The mild chirp makes him feel better.

Hook Up winces, indecision written across his whole stupid face and he looks as if he knows he's going to regret what he says next.

Shane would put money on the fact he's right. He'll certainly be sorry if he pisses Shane off even a fraction more than he already is and unfortunately that won't be very hard.

The man takes a nervous breath and goes for it.

"...it's ... just, I mean ... you're not like a hit man or something are you? You're not gonna kill him?"

Shane scoffs, almost amused by the balls on the guy, it's not what he was expecting him to say.

Some of the tension in his shoulders eases as the truth slips out.

"Honestly, I'd like to but no. Far too much paperwork if I do that and I hate doing paperwork."

A strange noise catches Shane attention. It's possible Rozanov just laughed but maybe not.

Hook Up's not laughing, his frown's gotten deeper.

"You sure? 'Cos you look real pissed off to me."

That's a hell of an understatement and Shane doesn't even try to deny it.

"I am. Very pissed off which is why you need to go. You're making it worse, your face is annoying me."

Another odd noise comes from where Rozanov is standing.

"I'm not going to hurt him, I'm his bodyguard and he's "

Shane finds it hard to find the word he needs, he considers the options available to him, what *is* Ilya Rozanov?

A pain in his butt, in so much trouble.

mine; mineminemine.

He's stupid, reckless, thoughtless and a fucking nightmare of a human that Shane wants to kiss more than anything else in the world right now.

He settles on saying ;

"In the wrong place."

The hook up risks a glance at Ilya as if to check his version of the story, which is probably very noble of him but unfortunately just makes Shane hate him even more.

He's had more than enough of this man's company and concern. His voice is flat and he's suspects his face has gone completely blank too. It does that sometimes when he's feeling too much.

"You need to go."

Then he moves fast, before anyone can react and has hands on the stranger's back and shoulder steering him forward before he knows it. He's not rough he doesn't need to be, Shane is strong and insistent and he knows how to make people move when he wants them to.

Ilya looks over at the man and nods and it's only then that he moves more willingly. Shane encourages that and aims him at the door.

"Ok, ok, I'm going but don't kill him when I'm gone."

Despite his bad mood Shane snorts at the simple request.

"I'll try but you don't know him like I do so it's not that easy, if I can't resist the urge I'll make sure I do it somewhere else. Don't want to ruin everyone's night do we."

He smiles but his reassurances don't seem to reassure very much, then again Shane doesn't actually care how hook up feels, what he does care about is that he's trying to look at Ilya again, nope- not happening, with a small encouraging shove forward he puts a stop to that.

One more encouraging push gets hook up out of the bathroom completely and the door shuts behind him.

It's a relief to have him gone. Shane turns around to find Rozanov leaning back against the sink, a crooked smile on his face that he's trying to hide and the question of kiss or punch suddenly seems very relevant again.

Shane Hollander came after him.

Ilya has no idea what that means but he likes it. He likes it a lot that Hollander followed him and he doesn't much care if it's to yell at him or punch him or drag him away. He came to find him.

He's also giving the poor random guy who just wanted to take a piss an extremely hard time which is fun too.

The guy seems pretty sweet, unwilling to leave a stranger alone with a possibly homicidal stranger. It's nice to see there are good people in the world even if he also has his own personal stalker lurking out there somewhere.

Ilya grudgingly confirms that Hollander isn't an insane serial killer and does actually have some cause to be mad with him so the man leaves with a little help from Hollander that Ilya shouldn't find so hot.

So now he's alone in a bathroom with Hollander who looks so fucking good quietly seething on the other side of the room. His shoulders and jaw are tight and his lips look very tempting as he glares at him.

Ilya waits and Hollander takes a deep breath, nostrils flaring but his voice is surprisingly calm .

"Come on, we're going."

Ilya doesn't move except to slouch a little more and fold his arms.

"If I go with you, you will murder me I think?"

Shane Hollander's face twists as he tries to keep whatever he's feeling under control and how is that fucking attractive too?

Hollander is struggling and he seems to think that biting his lips together will help. Ilya is not sure it's working judging by the strain in his answer.

"Maybe."

They lock eyes. It's a fascinating view. The jawline is saying angry... furious even but his eyes are saying something *very* different.

It's a compelling combination. Ilya stalls for time, he needs to see what this all means.

"Yes, murder. If I go to secondary location you will murder me. I have read things. I watch TV, I know how people get murdered in America. Stalker will not be my end, crazy bodyguard will. This is called irony. I know this too."

The tension in Hollander breaks with a strangled noise that's pure frustration.

Ilya almost feels sorry for him, he knows how difficult he can be. He's worked hard on it and he recognises that particular noise. It's the one people make when they're about to give up on him, or punch him; possibly both.

He's been expecting this ever since Hollander barged in to try and save him from himself.

Unexpectedly though there's no sign of imminent violence and Hollander isn't leaving either.

Ilya watches a little confused as Shane Hollander takes a few, almost frantic paces back and forth on the spot, his hand waving around. He doesn't shout but he is still mad...

"Just stop being so ***fucking** stupid!* What are you doing? What do you even ***want!***"

Ilya moves to lean against the wall, hoping to provoke him enough to end this one way or another.

"I want someone to suck my cock."

The frustrated noise returns wrapped around a curse.

"You are unfucking believable!"

Hollander paces again, his feelings spilling out into the room.

"You'll risk your life for a stupid fucking blow job with a stranger?"

He shrugs but Hollander's not even looking at him.

"If mouth is good enough, maybe worth it."

Hollander mutters something, shaking his head, Ilya thinks he's repeating "mouth good enough" then Hollander stops moving. His eyes close, he's taking deep breaths as if he's trying hard to control himself.

Ilya decides it's best to fill the silence with a question. Just for something to do and to keep provoking Hollander of course. He should be gone by now. Ilya kind of needs him to go or ... he can't let himself think about or...

"You don't agree?"

That gives Hollander his voice back, his eyes fly open.

"Of course I don't fucking agree! You fucking a stranger in a bathroom is bad enough! Fucking a stranger in a bathroom when someone actively wants to kill you is fucking insane, reckless...."

"Can be fun."

Ilya tries to talk over the rant but he sounds sulky and he knows it.

"... fucking stupid , irresponsible, dangerous..."

Ilya huffs and rolls his eyes, Hollander would say all that wouldn't he, so boring, if it wasn't for the stalker thing Ilya doesn't see what's so wrong with it.

"*Any* stranger is a bad idea. Fuck! They could take advantage..."

He objects to that.

"I am big man Hollander I can look after myself."

The statement makes Hollander scoff loudly which is rude.

"Fuck, you're such an idiot, just 'cos you look like that..." a hand waves at his body, " you can still get hurt!"

Then unexpectedly all the heat drops out of the angry voice in one breath.

"Not with a fucking stranger Ilya! You shouldn't do that!"

The surprise freezes him, he can't even breath for a second.

That was his name.

Hollander said his *actual name*. He doesn't know what it means and Hollander doesn't even seem to know what he just said, but he does sound genuinely upset at the idea of Ilya being with a stranger and the risks involved.

He wants to smile, kiss him to say thank you. It's actually kind of sweet, even though he can definitely take care of himself.

The concern, the look haunting a pair of dark brown eyes , what happened between them in the dance studio and everything else makes him curious.

And maybe, just maybe a little hopeful.

"Hollander? I have question."

"What?"

It's such a tired and weary response. Ilya almost wants to give him a break but he won't. It's now or never, Hollander is more open than he's ever seen him.

"Is it blow job or stranger you are objecting to for me?"

"What?"

That 'what' is definitely confused, it's adorable. He repeats the question more slowly.

"Is it blow job... or stranger you object to?"

Ilya bites his lips together, he might just like every expression that Shane Hollnder's face can make , even this constipated pissed off one.

"You.. honestly... I don't get paid enough for this shit. I could have played hockey you know. I was good! but it was too cold - I hate the cold."

Hollander visibly refocuses himself with a shake of his head.

"Urgh you drive me fucking crazy!"

Watching him drag his stupidly large hands over his face is fun.

Ilya finally loses his battle with his smile. Hollander is just so amusing. You'd never think it from just looking at him.

The answer to his question is still being revealed

"Fuck you Rozanov, get all the blow jobs you want just not in public or with a stranger. Ok?"

Ilya can't help but poke at him a little more.

"Sounds boring to me."

Shane Hollander moves so fast he's actually startled as he's grabbed by his shirt and pushed against the wall. Then they're so close their almost nose to nose.

Ilya expects to be yelled but the words he hears are horribly soft instead.

"It's not boring, it's safe and I need you to be safe. Please let me keep you safe."

Suddenly his chest hurts, a dull heavy ache.

This wasn't supposed to happen to him tonight. He was running from exactly this feeling. Ilya doesn't understand Shane Hollander; a pair of eyes shouldn't be allowed to do that, look all soft and shiny and pleading. It's the truth isn't it, Hollander really does want to keep him safe.

Perhaps he might want other things too, his eyes hint at it, but he's too stubborn and too professional to admit it, probably even to himself.

Ilya understands now why Shane ran away from him.

With their next heartbeat all the anger and frustration drains away from Hollander, leaving something far more dangerous behind.

Ilya doesn't know what to do with it. He doesn't even know if he wants to do anything with it. He tries to break the tenderness growing in the air and his own desire to lean in and kiss those stupid soft lips.

He lowers his voice, trying hard to be obnoxious again and return them to a place of safety.

"but I really wanted a blow job tonight."

Hollander's breath catches. It's humor and despair in one breath. Ilya can't help it, his own lips twitch as he makes a new suggestion.

"We can compromise, you stand outside. If I need help I will shout "Hollander I need you" I promise."

Hollander's eyes close and his head moves side to side, it's another gesture of exasperation but his lips are also pressed together and he's trying not to smile.

Hollander's voice stays soft too.

"You're impossible and that is so not going to happen."

"Or stay, you can watch if prefer."

The anger flashes back into those gloriously dark eyes as they fly open.

Ilya likes it, he thinks it means Hollander would be jealous if he had to stand there and watch Ilya get his dick sucked.

"No."

The no is flat and dangerous. Ilya likes the thrill the tone sends down his spine and hides that with more of his public persona.

"See, I knew you were boring."

Hollander doesn't seem particularly bothered by the repeated insult. He shrugs it off casually, the look in his eye changing yet again.

"I'm not boring. I just said no strangers."

With the words 'no strangers' Ilya finds himself looking into the softest pair of brown eyes he's even seen.

The 'no strangers' comment makes him think he might be more drunk than he thought, possibly even delusional.

Delusional or not he has to know; he whispers his next words, half scared, half excited.

"You are not stranger."

He'd been expecting a grin if he was right or an exclamation, outrage, indignation if he was wrong but Hollander's brows draw together and he just looks confused.

"No obviously I'm not. We've been working together for weeks."

Ilya's heart swells, he's so oblivious, it's horribly endearing.

He tries again.

"You are not my bodyguard tonight either."

Hollander takes a moment to think about it and Ilya watches him, slightly in awe of how he can be so smart and still miss the point.

"Well I suppose so, but what's that got to do with it."

Hopeless, he's absolutely hopeless. Ilya decides direct action is the only way forward and then at least things will be clear between them.

"I am saying you are not stranger - you are not bodyguard right now, so you could do it."

As he feared but mostly expected Hollander does not approve of the suggestion. His expression shifts to one of firm disapproval. Ilya pushes down his disappointment, well at least he knows.

Then Hollander says;

"Here??"

Ilya blinks, that really isn't the part he expected him to focus on. Hollander continues with a stern look.

"I said it's not safe here, I told you that already and it's filthy as well."

Ilya waits for more information but apparently Shane Hollander has nothing else to add. It takes a moment for Ilya to find his own voice after such a bizarre statement.

"That is your objection?"

Hollander looks conflicted for a moment and then he says one word.

"Yes."

Ilya can't believe it. He has to check Hollander actually understood what he was suggesting.

"You are saying if we were not in filthy public bathroom, then you would..."

"Blow you? Yes."

Ilya's mouth drops open.

"Fuck Hollander!"

He's already staring so he notices the way Hollander sways closer and the way his eyes drift towards his mouth then lift, all shiny and bright to meet his own and he sees the need in them, burning and real, far too real.

Fuck, Hollander wants this as much as he does.

Fuck.

He knew Hollander was attracted to him but he had not expected this turn of events and if this is his only chance to experience the delights of Shane Hollander's mouth and body then he'll take it.

Shane's eyes twinkle at him, and who has eyes that really twinkle anyway?

"And like you said I'm not even your bodyguard tonight."

Pink lips and brown eyes both smile at him, it's all a little shy but it's real and it seems there are two Hollanders in the world and it's only now, in this filthy bathroom that Ilya gets to meet this version of him as well.

He wonders how many others have ever seen this side of him. Not many. Not many will have seen this Hollander, the man that needs and wants and is willing, no enthusiastic about getting on his knees.

Then Hollander uses one of his most dangerous weapons; his big brown eyes. He bites on his lip and Ilya wants to die, of course it could be a trick to make him leave but he knows it's not, Hollander doesn't know how to pretend this way. This is real. There's no mistaking the look in his eyes when he says,

"So can we go?"

Ilya considers his options, Hollander is keen, it seems once he's made his mind up he just goes for it but... Hollander also thinks that he's won by getting Ilya out of the nightclub.

Well you can't have everything you want can you, it's an important lesson to learn. As is patience.

Ilya leans in, placing himself in the crook of Hollander's neck and he feels the weight of Shane's body as he sways into him.

With a smile on his face that Hollander can't see Ilya whispers

"No..."

He feels the gasp and the shock travel through the body he's holding; one hand pressed onto Hollander's hip now, one on his back.

"No. I will go out there, dance another dance, maybe two but all alone with you to watch and keep me safe.

After I will get in back of cab and you can sit in front, to make sure driver is not dangerous.

And then we go to your place so you can keep me safe *all night* and then, only then, maybe I will let you give me blow job and maybe if it is good, I will think of something to do to say thank you for keeping me so safe. Ok?"

Hollander doesn't speak but he nods into his shoulder. He leans back up and looks a little dazed. Ilya likes the look and wants to put it back on there later but for now he needs his "not a bodyguard" a little more alert.

He slaps his face lightly bringing Hollander back to himself. Hollander blinks at him slowly, eyes huge and shiny, lips parted and it just has to be done.

Ilya leans in and kisses him hard and fast sweeping his tongue in and around stealing the quiet moans Hollander makes to keep all for himself, taking everything he can for five seconds of pure indulgence.

Maybe he won't be allowed to kiss later. Maybe he won't let himself. Even the five seconds he just had was dangerous, addictive.

He needs to be careful, this thing can't go anywhere. How could it?

Ilya gently shakes Hollander's face with fingers tucked under his chin.

"Come Mr Bodyguard, is time to keep me safe."

They walk towards the door and he reaches out for the handle but he's stopped by a strong hand on his arm. He turns to look at Hollander, eyebrows asking what the problem is.

Hollander straightens his top and pants then steps in front of him. He opens the door and checks the outside is clear, then gestures for him to follow.

Ah yes he forgot- Hollander always goes first.

Ilya does as he's told, following just behind and wonders if Hollander will also come first.

Chapter End Notes

I'm very pleased by those last two lines; made me snigger in a very juvenile fashion 😊

So there you go; my bit of a twist of the classic nightclub scene/ vegas bathroom moment.

Come visit my in box I'd love to hear what you thought and any predictions for what's coming up, I haven't forgotten why Shane is with Ilya in the first place, some plot may turn up next chapter but I won't let it get away from us!!!

Till next time - and maybe I'll see you in an in box belonging to me soon 😊

Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

Ilya and Shane take to the dance floor.

Ilya dances
Shane watches

And thinks... he thinks many many thoughts

Chapter Notes

Yes I know ... it's 12 chapters now, it's not my fault I swear it.

We could have had 2 very very long chapters but I decided to go this way instead. Of course that does mean you have to wait for the spice to amp up but if Shane has to wait so do you 😊

You can be patient I believe in you. 😊

So this chapt is basically summarised by Ilya dances and Shane fights off lustful thoughts (with variable levels of success)

Enjoy!

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

Technically the music is just as loud as it was before he went into the bathroom but Shane barely notices it anymore.

He's got better things to pay attention to.

Much better things.

How can he be troubled by the noise or the heat or the crowd when he's watching Rozanov dance, compared to that the unpleasant sensory experience of being in a nightclub has faded into the background.

The music is still there of course, he can feel the beat vibrating through his chest bone, the heavy pulse matching the rhythm of Rozanov's movements, but now it's exciting, energising.

It makes him feel more alive than he has for a long time but the music doesn't effect his body the same way it effects Ilya. It doesn't compel him to dance.

Shane doesn't really *do* dancing but as he watches Rozanov's hips snake their way across the dance floor, it occurs to him that maybe dancing *with* Ilya is something he could get into.

Shane lets his eyes graze across the man's body and considers the intriguing possibility; the intimacy of being in Ilya Rozanov's arms is dangerously appealing, moving in time with him, feeling his hands press down firm and steady on his hips, guiding him, encouraging to feel the music the same way he does, to move closer and closer.

Shane imagines those hands sliding up and down his back sneaking lower each time and of course soft lips kissing him; on his mouth, on his neck while all the time they grind closer and closer together, like all those other couples on the dance floor tonight.

He barely manages to suppress the moan that wants to escape at the images building inside his mind. It's not like anyone would hear him if he did whimper a little at the pictures in his head but standards should be maintained. You can't go around moaning in public no matter how provoking the provocation.

Despite establishing certain standards for himself he's helpless to prevent the pleasant shiver that runs through his body as he admits silently that after careful consideration dancing with Rozanov is indeed something he could be *very* into.

Making sure no one else dances with him, is also something Shane is feeling quite passionate about. He doesn't want anyone getting close to Rozanov tonight.

Currently the man has no dance partner and it's staying that way. Shane's eyes trail up and down again. Fuck... he looks like a Greek god, like fucking Apollo, if Apollo was somehow dancing in a shitty overcrowded nightclub. It's a fucking ridiculous thought to be having but it's true.

Another shiver travels through him and settles between his legs. It forces Shane to examine the possibility that it's not just the music making him feel so alive.

Opposite him Rozanov catches his eye then crooks his fingers, obviously inviting him to dance. Shane refuses with a twitch of a smile and a shake of his head.

It's tempting but how coordinated would he be all hot and bothered like he is. He'd just end up draped all over him, a boneless sweaty, needy mess and Shane has enough pride left to want to avoid that... at least for now.

But it is tempting... dear God it's tempting because he really, really wants to be a desperate needy mess, he wants Rozanov to ruin him, to lie back and take whatever he'll give him and then say thank you.

Shane's tired of being in control, being sensible, he wants to let go, let someone else— no, he can't lie about this, not *someone* else ... him... he wants *him* and only him to be the one in control for a while.

Shane wants Rozanov to take him apart and put him back together. He wants... well now he's opened the floodgates on his desires it turns out he wants a lot.

The influx of feelings is making him feel somewhat hazy, like he's had slightly too much to drink, he's trying his best to hold onto a few coherent thoughts, like knowing who is around them but it's harder than it should be and his chain of thoughts and the current view mean thinking isn't the only thing getting harder.

Shane wonders what he looks like staring at Rozanov. If he looks like he feels; a man going slowly insane, a man burning up from the inside, desperate and dying and grateful for the experience.

He keeps on staring because he can't look away and Shane wonders how much of the hunger inside him is bleeding out onto his face.

Maybe anyone who looked this way could see how much he wants the man on the dance floor. They probably wouldn't be surprised either, Ilya's moving in a way that should probably get him arrested. It would certainly make him a desirable partner for the majority of people around them.

To prove his point Rozanov's hips do something wild as the beat drops.

Fuck...

If this carries on it's Shane who's getting arrested because the thoughts running through his head right now are positively indecent and if he forgets himself and acts on them it's all over.

He's happily fighting off a range of lustful thoughts when in between one heartbeat and the next Rozanov's head snaps towards him and they're suddenly looking right at each other.

And it's then that Shane knows precisely how much his face has revealed to the world; it's revealed everything.

If his desire for Ilya was a light he'd be illuminating the room, blinding everyone in it. Everything he's feeling is written all over his face and Rozanov can see it as bright as day.

Shane doesn't look away, doesn't try to hide, maybe he should feel embarrassed or ashamed by how much he wants but he doesn't. How could he, the look on Rozanov's face wipes away any possibility of that because yes, every wanton desperate thought and desire he has is on show but it's also quite obvious that the man staring at him, eyes wide and burning like wildfire likes what he sees.

The glow of Shane's desire is being reflected back at him, just as bright, just as real.

It feels a lot like it does when he's been punched in the stomach, all the air around him vanishes between one breath and the next.

His fingers tremble, just a little, as the sweet intoxicating thrill of being wanted tries to kill him; it steals the oxygen from his lungs and leaves his chest too tight and his heart pounding so hard it might break through his ribs.

Shane stares into a pair of beautiful eyes, made cool and colourless by the dim lighting, but still hot as flame and it feels like they're standing too far apart and too close together all at the same time and every second of eye contact with Ilya tightens the pressure around his chest.

The shared moment of truth lasts until the icy hot gaze burning into him drops to his mouth, then, still staring, Ilya starts to move and the distance between them begins to shrink in tantalisingly slow inches.

As he dances his way over, Ilya's gaze keeps flicking up and down; first on Shane's mouth then his eyes then back up and then even lower.

Chest burning Shane waits for him in a way that has his pride grumbling. It's not too happy about how his heartbeat is jumping around so wildly either. By the time Rozanov is almost close enough to touch Shane's pulse is going faster than the music.

But then Rozanov stops, deciding instead of coming any closer, to keep dancing on the spot mere inches from him.

The dancing was a lot even from a distance but now Shane has to deal with Ilya Rozanov up close and personal, hips swaying slightly, shoulders, head all in gentle motion, eyes still raking over him making Shane feel like he's on fire.

As he's trying to work out what he should say or do next Rozanov's lips part and he sways forward and for a insane second Shane thinks he's going to be kissed.

He isn't.

Rozanov sways out of reach again before Shane can blink. He barely had enough time to feel the heat radiating off his skin before he was gone.

There's no kiss, not for his cheek or his lips or his neck.

He's left feeling dizzy, mouth dry, breathing too fast and it's wonderful. Shane holds himself still as instead of a kiss he gets a smirk, all crooked and sexy and perfect.

Bastard. He hates him.

Heart still racing and everything else aching Shane thinks the tease tasted almost as good as a kiss would have.

Rozanov knows precisely what he's doing and Shane tries to keep breathing normally while the heated gaze slides up and down his body, hiding nothing of what Rozanov is thinking.

The response to all that heat washing over him is a heavy throbbing below Shane's belt. The sensation and sudden tightness of his jeans points out that they should leave before they cause a scene.

He doesn't mention leaving, he's too busy remembering how to complete the complex task of breathing in and out. He concentrates and manages to do it several times in a row which is impressive but he remains helpless to prevent the shivers that run down his spine.

Of course Rozanov notices that and his eyebrows twitch and his grin widens. It starts him dancing again, away this time, slow at first, body finding the beat of the new song playing but within seconds it's all hips and butt and twirls and devilish smile.

He's such a fucking tease and Shane loves it. It's not be the first time he's been captivated by Rozanov's dancing but it's the first time the dance is being danced just for *him*.

That's the kind of thing that makes a difference, as does the undeniable fact that the moves Boston Ballet's star dancer is performing are not the standard ballet approved steps that Shane is used to.

Watching, hypnotised and horribly turned on by the skillful blend of grace and sexuality Shane imagines he can see the music flowing through Rozanov, controlling his movements, his hips, arms, head all in effortless sinuous motion. He looks like sex, hips moving, eyes closed, lips parted, the way his head falls back, his neck an elegant curve of white in the darkness. It's practically obscene and totally gorgeous.

Who could look away from something so beautiful.

The flashing lights around them could make Rozanov look too pale or ghostly but instead they highlight the sharp angles of his face, the flex of his muscles as he dances his heart out, lost in music that Shane can barely hear anymore.

He truly can't take his eyes off him and he doesn't want to, not even to keep a proper check on their surroundings. It's not great bodyguarding he knows that but he's not actually the one on duty tonight so maybe it's ok.

Such a blantent lie gets attacked instantly by the small core part of his personality that never changes, no matter what might be happening around him.

The few brain cells he has left that aren't currently drowning in lust point out rather sharply that he's stupid if he thinks anything about this is ok.

His pre-frontal cortex screams the facts loudly - it's not ok because Hayden isn't *actually* here to do that particular duty.

It's a rather disappointing flaw in Shane's rationalisation of the situation but what was he supposed to do? Ilya wanted to dance so he let him dance, he wanted to be watched so he's watching. That might possibly count as guarding him.

In case it doesn't count (and he knows it doesn't) Shane has at least tried to compensate for the lack of quality bodyguarding currently available to his client. In choosing their dance spot he has at least taken some precautions. He's horny not stupid.

Shane made sure he guided Ilya to a place where he'd be as safe as possible. He's positioned the dancer so that 2 sides of him are automatically protected by the walls around them and the third by Shane's own body blocking both the view and the approach to his principal.

There's also an emergency exit nearby so at the first sign of trouble he'll have Ilya out of here in seconds.

He's confident there won't be any trouble though, no one is going to bother them. Not with Shane in the vicinity. He's spent years perfecting an aura that says — don't even think about it, and it's being put to good use tonight.

He's already seen more than one person turn and slide away from the section of the dance floor that he's secured for Rozanov. The message seems to have filtered through the crowd now that the Greek god dancing by himself is not to be disturbed.

They're all still trying to watch though. Eyes flicking back and forth, trying and failing not to stare; Shane doesn't particularly like it but he can't really blame them.

Rozanov seems to have no idea about the attention he's attracting. If he does know he's ignoring them, paying his wider audience no mind. Ilya is truly just dancing for himself and for Shane and he's trusting in Shane to keep him safe.

The thought has a smile pulling at the corner of his mouth. Ilya is happy; lost in the pleasure of dancing and of course teasing his bodyguard; the blissful look on his face is still there, arms high, fingers occasionally running through his curls and always his hips moving in a way that Shane is becoming obsessed with; basically he's fucking spectacular.

Even with his eyes closed there's no doubt Rozanov knows exactly what he's doing to him when he trails his hands down then across his body, when he moves them back above his head, through his hair and spins presenting his off duty, his *very* off duty bodyguard with a view to die for.

A rush of adrenaline hits hard when Ilya spins again and ends facing him, this time with his eyes open and once again Shane gets caught in his gaze, another crooked finger invites him closer. He shakes his head but it makes the ache between his legs twitch.

Shane shifts his weight trying to adjust himself as subtly as possible. He manages to get a bit more comfortable but Rozanov spots his squirming and grins like a wolf, staring directly at his crotch and wetting his lips before he performs a particularly suggestive move involving his hands sliding over his own thighs and crotch.

A jolt of lust hits Shane hard, sends more shivers down him.

Fuck. Fucking fuck!

He snaps his mouth closed as soon as he realises it's been hanging open, but not before his tongue is twitching past his lips, his subconscious telling the world what he wants more than anything right now.

Maybe Rozanov didn't notice, maybe his lips aren't too wet from the way he's been licking them, imagining they had something to taste.

He should be more careful, keep some things secrets but he can't seem to manage that anymore.

To be honest Shane's a little surprised by how easily he's accepted his fate. If you'd asked him a few months ago how he'd feel about losing all sense of reason in a random nightclub on a random evening sometime in his future, and incidentally breaking about a dozen of his self imposed rules at the same time, he'd have laughed and said it wouldn't ever happen so he wouldn't need to have any feelings about it.

In hindsight that would have been the wrong answer, the right answer is he'd be excited, and a little nervous and so turned on he could die.

None of this is like him so the only explanation for his behaviour is that being around Ilya Rozanov's unique personality for so many weeks has rewired his brain. He wonders if it's just a temporary insanity, has he been driven mad by lust or are the changes of a more permanent nature.

Opposite him Ilya spins again and finishes it with a stupid 'staying alive' move Shane recognises from his movie nights with Rose. It's absolutely the dumbest thing he's ever seen anyone do in public but also horribly cute and kind of sexy.

Shane fights off a stupid grin at such endearingly dorky behaviour. It's fine to think Roznov is sexy but cute, funny.. that's much more dangerous.

Ilya grins back, nothing seductive or sexy about it this time it's just a grin because he's happy and having fun.

It makes Shane's heart flutter horribly.

Fuck.

Then Rozanov wiggles his eyebrows suggestively as he shakes his hips in an exaggerated gesture that's nowhere near his usual levels of elegance.

Shane laughs out loud, a wave of fondness sweeping through him at the ridiculous antics.

Fucking idiot.

His heart aches so much it might never recover.

One song slides into another and Rozanov returns to his usual more seductive dance routine.

Shane is so fucked, even a deep sigh doesn't ease any of the ache inside him; permanently rewired then. Sadly the thought isn't half as alarming as you might expect it to be.

The casual acceptance must of course be because of the aforementioned insanity. Shane suspects the changes in his brain patterns have been too gradual to notice, slow and steady so he couldn't intervene and stop it. His neurons have been shifting sneakily changing shape, activating connections and forming new pathways to long neglected parts of his brain.

His treacherous brain cells probably started betraying him the second he saw Rozanov in that alley. Wretched things plotting behind his back from day one to get what he wouldn't admit he wanted.

Ilya Rozanov.

He should probably be upset about it but he isn't. He's actually grateful that Rozanov pushed him into losing control tonight, that the worry, anger and desire overwhelmed him and now he's patiently standing around, waiting to leave, almost drooling at the vision in front of him.

Fuck he feels like a puppy waiting to be given a treat. He'd be embarrassed if he wasn't so turned on. No one has ever made him want like this before and God help him he likes it...it's what's been missing when he's tried to start something with someone. If Rozanov asked him to drop to his knees right now Shane would actually consider it. It's not his fault, he just really wants his dick in his mouth.

He wants a lot of things.

He wants to keep Rozanov safe, he wants to kiss him and get on his knees for him. He wants to touch every single stupidly defined muscle with his lips and tongue and he wants to suck and bite and be bitten and to be fucked until he can't think straight. He wants Ilya's mouth in every conceivable way but who wouldn't because...

Shane's head snaps to the right, away from Ilya and towards the people dancing nearby.

Letting his instinct take over Shane doesn't fight the feeling that says something in that direction needs his attention. He lets his eyes roam, scanning each face, each couple and group he can see. Something about the space besides them suddenly feels wrong and he'd be beyond stupid to ignore senses that he's honed to a knife's edge over the years.

It's why he's got the reputation he has, even when watching what most would call a distractingly explicit display of dancing, a part of him had still been vigilant enough to recognise when something wasn't right.

It was an unconscious warning that snapped his head towards the potential threat but it's Shane, alert and fully aware of his duty that finds the person who caught his subconscious' attention.

A man.

Not dancing.

Quite young, maybe early twenties.

Standing far too still among the other bodies dancing.

He's not looking at Shane, like everyone else has done at least once this evening the man is looking at Rozanov. That's not what's strange about him. Shane has seen the people watching Ilya and the expressions on their faces are of awe or lust or they look slightly stunned by the

blatant display of sexuality and talent. None of that is on this man's face, this man looks.... cold, angry.

Apart from that he doesn't stand out in any way. He has the kind of generically attractive face, hair and build that means people might look at him for a moment or two but their gaze won't stay.

Shane narrows his eyes, taking a step closer and apparently he's not the only one alert to his surroundings, his movement catches the man's attention making him jump.

He's nervy too, which Shane considers highly suspicious. He keeps staring, not at all happy about this person being so close to Ilya. Everything else fades away but this potential threat. He needs to get them out of here now.

The man glances between Shane and Rozanov. Shane shifts his body again, ready to move shaking his head as a warning all the time looking, recording the details. It's surprisingly hard, the man has the kind of face that's easy to ignore or forget, mildly handsome but very ordinary at the same time. Shane fixes the dull details in his head.

The man frowns, obviously annoyed at being stared at. His suspect tries to hold his own and stare back but he fails quickly, eyes skittering away then down, seconds after that he turns and pushes past those closest to him and walks away.

Tempted to follow Shane knows better than to leave his principal alone and he stays where he is watching the space left behind until it's filled by new bodies. He keeps watching, scanning until he's confident the threat is really gone then he turns his attention back to Ilya.

His dancing remains as enthusiastic as the last time he looked, Rozanov is completely unaware that anything unusual is going on around him. Which is why he needs a bodyguard even if that bodyguard has not been providing the most diligent care tonight.

Despite the concern of only seconds ago the sight of Rozanov still so loose and free and so fucking sexy has Shane aching for privacy except now he has two reasons; he wants to get Ilya home so they can be alone and so he can ensure his principle's safety.

Actually what better way to protect Ilya tonight than to take him home and keep him busy.

Under Shane's gaze Rozanov's eyes open and gleam, obviously thrilled when he sees he still has Shane's full attention. He has no idea what Shane just saw or what he's worrying about.

Despite his concerns when Ilya smiles Shane has to try very hard not to smile back, Rozanov really doesn't need the encouragement, the man's an attention loving diva, soaking up the adoration and admiration in the air all around him. He doesn't need to know how much Shane likes his smile as well as his other assets.

Ilya pouts and blows an imitation of a kiss towards him and that's it, enough, time to go. No matter how much Rozanov wants to carry on tormenting him on the dance floor there's too many reason to leave now.

The now vanished stranger has made Shane more aware of how stupid this behaviour is. He can't keep Ilya safe here and if Rozanov wants his full attention and if Shane wants to give it to him then they can't be here any longer.

He might have made some questionable choices this evening but Shane is not going to let anything happen to Rozanov.

Ever.

His safety has to come before anything else.

Ilya Rozanov is not getting hurt, not again, not when Shane is here to keep him safe, he's being paid extremely well to take a fist or a blade or even a bullet for the man but there's no sense in trying to pretend that's the only reason he'd jump in front of him now.

Once more Rozanov is closing the gap between them and there's yet another gesture that says join me.

Shaking his head to reject the offer makes Rozanov roll his eyes and mouth 'boring' at him.

And it's a intensely stupid moment to experience an epiphany but watching Rozanov pull faces at him Shane realises he'd do anything and everything to keep Ilya safe whether he'd signed a contract or not.

He knows why too but he's not quite ready to admit that yet but a forbidden thrill runs through him as Rozanov reaches him, still moving his slutty hips in deliciously slutty ways.

They need to go but once again Rozanov is close enough that they could kiss and it's distracting. It's just like before, Shane only needs to tilt forward a fraction. He's pretty sure that's what Rozanov wants him to do. It's certainly what he wants himself but not here. He can't.

The firm weight of a hand presses down onto each of his hips, encouraging him to move them.

Shane locks his body into place mostly because he's stubborn but also because he can't encourage this any more. They need to go. He lifts an eyebrow and shakes his head again telling Rozanov firmly that he's not dancing with him.

He tries not to like the reaction to that. Rozanov pulls another face and grips a little harder to give him a shake. He leans in to make his voice heard over the music.

"Boring again! I thought we'd said goodnight to Mr Boring?"

Shane shouts back, aiming his voice directly into Ilya's ear, feeling the heat radiating off his skin.

"It's not boring."

Returning to his 'bodyguard' stance Shane controls his face as his accusation has Rozanov pouting in far too tempting a fashion. He tries not to judge himself for the impulse to say fuck it all and seize his mouth right there and then. It would probably surprise the hell out of Rozanov which would be fun but he won't risk it.

Rozanov's eyes snap to his mouth and his lips part with a look of undistinguished lust on his face.

Unfortunately that doesn't make it any easier to resist him. It's intoxicating how much he's wanted by this man but they have to go which is sensible not boring.

The boring accusation stings a little because it's unjustified. He's hardly boring if he's agreed to leave here with Rozanov and give him a blow job.

He's hopeful he'll get fucked too, which Shane is pretty sure puts him in the mildly interesting category at least.

About to say they need to go he gasps instead. It's because he wasn't expecting the finger that's slipped under the edge of his t-shirt to stroke his skin.

Fuck it's so much harder to concentrate when Ilya is touching him.

Rozanov's hand slides away from his bare skin which you'd think would be a good thing when trying to control yourself but they move upwards and start trailing lightly across his chest. Shane's wearing a thin plain t-shirt under his jacket having left to hunt down his prey in a hurry, so he's very aware that there's almost nothing between Rozanov's hands and his own skin.

A fingertip finds his nipple and even the brief touch has Shane's mouth dropping open, gasping in delighted shock at just how good such a small touch feels.

The desire on Rozanov's face flares hotter and the bastard does it again and adds a pinch.

It's too much effort now to keep his eyes open so he doesn't. Words brush his ear.

"Fuck Hollander, look at you... unreal."

It really has been far too long since Shane has had sex of any kind and now he's going to be with this man. He might not survive the experience but Shane can think of no one better to quench his raging thirst than the man in front of him, that thought must be transmitting itself loud and clear because Rozanov is looking at him even more intensely than before and all the humour has drained from his expression. His lips are parted and he's breathing faster than even his dancing can account for. He looks almost as desperate as Shane is feeling.

Shane had thought they were standing close already, Ilya (and really he *has* to stop thinking his first name like that, he's done it too many times already but at least he hasn't said it yet.)

Ilya, slides closer and Shane's heart might just burst out of the chest that's pressed right up against Rozanov's muscles.

For a second he knows he's going to be kissed but then once again it doesn't happen which leaves him with the insane and immature desire to scream in frustration.

No kiss, Rozanov only stares at his lips but his thumb does brush against his mouth and even that sends electric sparks through him and erases the memory of how to breathe.

They really have to go, this is unforgivably unprofessional in so many ways.

Thumb making lazy circles over Shane's mouth Ilya speaks slow and soft, his accent deliciously thick.

"Time to find a cab yes? Mr Bodyguard this is what you wanted? You wanted me to leave. Now I want to leave too. I was promised someone would suck my dick tonight."

Shane gasps as his own hand is placed discreetly over the hard line of Rozanov's cock. Mouth even drier than it was he nods and because he's a responsible bodyguard he wastes no more time and wraps his arm around Rozanov's waist to pull him tight, just so he can manoeuvre them out of the club together more easily.

He approves of the plan; get out of the club, into a cab and then into his own bed where Shane can keep a permanent watch on him and Rozanov will finally be safe.

Once he has him safely in his bed Shane can relax and concentrate on other things.

When you think about it, it's the only choice a responsible bodyguard could make right now.

It should always be safety first and if he backs out of the deal they've made and leaves Rozanov at his own home, well he might slip out again.

A quick but thorough internal risk assessment confirms it's highly likely, huge risk; after all Rozanov is an extremely unpredictable artistic type of person. Reckless, heedless, a danger to himself.

Shane pushes his way through the crowd, shoulder first, pulling his problematic crush along with him. He can call it a crush if he wants to and it's just common sense at this point to think that Ilya in Shane's house, in his bed, is the most responsible course of action to take, after all it's far better to be safe than sorry.

So they reach the street together quickly, the blessedly cool air a relief to Shane's overheated senses. There's a choice of cabs waiting so Shane has his man away from the nightclub efficiently and effectively because he is actually very fucking good at his job even when a little distracted by feelings.

The cab drives away with Shane in the front and Rozanov in the back like they said. The distance between them is good because Shane's not sure sitting next to each other in a semi private public spot will end well for anyone, especially an innocent cab driver who probably has no kind of desire to witness that kind of thing. The ride home also gives Shane time to cool down and collect himself a little.

Letting the cab driver's chatter wash over him Shane allows himself a brief moment to relax and close his eyes.

He's definitely fulfilled his duties tonight; finding Rozanov persuading him to be sensible about things and getting him to come home to safety.

He texts Rose and Hayden to update them again and say he's taking Rozanov home. He doesn't specify whose home. He also sends Hayden home to Jackie and accepts his apologies for the fifth time.

Rose texts back

Lucky you're so fucking good at the job right?

It makes him smile, he is fucking good. You'd have to be to deal with Ilya Rozanov.

Shane bites his cheek and refrains from texting Rose back something inappropriate but he wishes he could.

He wishes he could send a message to tell her that he is good at his job but that he's hoping to be just as impressive with another 'job' he'll be doing tonight. He has high hopes that he'll be good enough to get what Rozanov promised him but instead of inappropriate workplace texting he just sends Rose a heart and a goodnight.

Head back on the headrest, eyes closed Shane smiles to himself. He's pretty sure he's up to any job Rozanov could need him for tonight tomorrow or any other time he might need him.

Perhaps this could become a long term contract.

He might like that. He might like that a lot.

Shane Hollander might or might not be the best bodyguard in the business but he's definitely in the top three but neither of the other two on that list would have seen the dark shape watching as he escorted the man he was protecting into a cab.

Even the best of the best can't see into the darkest of shadows especially when those shadows are behind you.

So it wasn't his fault he missed it, even if he'll blame himself later and even if he'll be told time and time again that it wouldn't have made a difference anyway if he had seen the man watching them leave.

It was just an unfortunate coincidence that Ilya Rozanov had chosen that particular nightclub and that that particular man had been there too.

It was extremely unfortunate that his long brewing hatred had been fueled by what he saw and the disrespect on display, that it snapped a temper already worn thin and made him

decide that enough was enough and that it was time to solve his problem of Ilya Rozanov for good.

Chapter End Notes



This is one of those chapters I've re read and edited and re-edited until it was a re write and then edited one last time.

I am tired of this chapter and have no idea if it was good or not anymore so feel free to say something encouraging in the comments!

Ominous aside aside the next chapt is just them finally getting to have a good time.

Thanks for reading

Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

Shane Hollander's determination to keep Ilya safe has lead them from a nightclub, to a cab and now all the way to where Shane is staying in Boston.

Following Hollander into his home Ilya has no idea if his off duty bodyguard is actually going to go through with his promise but if he does Ilya isn't entirely sure that he will ever recover from the experience.

*

Right now keeping Ilya Rozanov safe is Shane's main goal in life so what he's doing is perfectly logical, if slightly unorthodox and nothing to do with the fact that he wants the man desperately.

If there are going to be some perks to committing 100% to close body protection tonight so be it.

Only one thing to worry about - making sure everything stays casual.

How hard can that be?

Chapter Notes

It's time for sexy shenanigans! And it's 10k - sorry? 😬 Or possibly you're welcome 😊

I was trying to keep the chapters 5/6k but this one just wouldn't cooperate. There was too much fun being had to stop 😊

I've kept the M rating and not quite gone to E cos I think (???)this is a little more subdued than a true E fic. 😬 I do find that decision hard though so just to say it's definitely spicy and somewhat smutty especially towards the end of the chapt but perhaps it's a little more descriptively smutty than explicitly??

All in all the boys have a very good time together.

If you think the rating is horribly wrong lmk!!

The cab pulls up outside what is presumably Shane Hollander's home, or at least the place he stays when he is in Boston, either that or Ilya really has been taken to a secondary location to be murdered.

He thinks it unlikely judging by the way things were between them in the club; the way Hollander's eyes were big and shiny and so fucking needy that it took every ounce of Ilya's will power not to pin him against a wall right there and then and give him what he so clearly wanted.

Except, there's no sign of that version of Hollander now. Ilya's stomach flips nervously as his bodyguard quietly gives his thanks to the driver, pays and then climbs out of the cab.

He should say thank you too but his mouth is too dry, he could really do with another drink, even if it's unlikely he'll be murdered he's still nervous. It's becoming increasingly difficult to believe Hollander offered what he offered or that he's going to go through with it now.

Sitting in the back of the cab Ilya can easily believe the things that happened in the club were just a fevered fantasy and the cool night air and has knocked some sense back into Hollander.

His pessimistic thoughts get disturbed when his cab door opens unexpectedly and only years of exerting firm and deliberate control over his muscles prevents him from jumping a mile high in his seat.

Russians do not jump. No. Russians do not get nervous just because the prettiest man with the prettiest mouth he's ever seen might be his very soon.

Hollander's head dips into view so he can see what's slowing Ilya down.

"Everything ok?"

The eyes and voice are soft and Ilya likes that far too much for what is going to be a one time hook up.

Hollander has to prompt him again.

"Roz? You ready? Think Mike here has had enough of your scintillating conversation."

"Mike" catches his eye in the mirror and gives him a nod and a little wave. He throws a small polite twitch of a smile back and ignores the smirk coming from Hollander, he probably thinks he's hilarious because they all know Ilya hasn't said a word since he got in the cab.

Hilarious or not, he is being annoyingly patient considering Ilya remains stationary. Shane asked if he was ready and the answer is he is not, but he'd happily die before admitting that so he mumbles a few Russian prayers under his breath and climbs out of the cab, giving his own thanks and farewell to Mike.

The second the door shuts the cab pulls away leaving Ilya standing awkwardly next to Hollander on the sidewalk. Neither of them seem to know what to do next but Hollander recovers first and shakes himself into motion. He turns around and starts walking towards his

front door. Ilya takes a second to grab himself a lungful of air then follows Shane Hollander to find out what actually is going to happen next.

At this point he wouldn't want to guess.

The door closes behind them with a very definite click. Hollander slips his shoes off without a word so Ilya does the same and stands there in his socks feeling slightly stupid while Hollander fiddles with what is presumably an alarm system.

When he's finished with his buttons Hollander turns around, half a smile on his face and confirms it.

"Security system. So I can relax. You can't be too careful, even off duty, you know, some people don't seem to like me very much at first."

Ilya snorts at the pointed tone, it's an obvious reference to how they started out but truthfully Hollander has probably pissed off many people in his line of work. He probably needs to be careful.

He should be careful. Ilya wouldn't like it if Hollander got hurt.

"My mom always makes sure the places we stay in are secure."

Despite the sudden and rather sharp awareness that he wants Hollander to stay safe Iyla can't let that comment slip past, he casts Hollander a condescending look.

"Your mom chooses house for you?"

Hollander sighs, it's almost as if he expected the comment. Ilya watches as he sticks his hands in his pockets then takes them out again before he shrugs. He doesn't sound particularly upset, probably too used to Ilya's ways by now.

"No... she just picks our out of town bases. I've got my own place back home and another place out in the country too, had it designed and built, it's my favourite place to be."

Ilya hums like he's impressed. Maybe he is.

"Bodyguards make good money then?"

A sneaky glance sideways reveals another smile on Hollander's face and a nod.

"I do ok."

Clutching to familiar habits like a security blanket Ilya pokes around to see if he can provoke any other reactions than sweet sincerity.

"So, does your mom pick out furniture too? Clothes?"

It would help him feel more normal to bicker but from behind him Hollander just chuckles.

"This place came furnished and yeah she does sometimes pick out clothes for me. Saves me time and I don't really care that much about how I look when I'm off the clock."

He turns to see Hollander with nothing but open honesty on his face, the corner of his mouth curling up a little, his freckles standing out against his flushed cheeks and his eyes flicking back and forth but never settling anywhere and certainly not anywhere near Ilya.

So Hollander is nervous too. Thank God. It makes him feel better and relieved that he's not the only one feeling things.

Ilya continues with his familiar routine of being mildly objectionable, giving Hollander's outfit of old sneakers, a plain white t-shirt and very poorly fitted jeans an up and down that ends in a disappointed wince.

"I can tell."

That gets him a snort and a "fuck off" so Ilya turns his head away to look around the rest of the room and hide his smile. Hollander is so much fun to tease.

The voice now coming from behind him and complaining sounds more fond than anything else.

"You're such an asshole, honestly I've no idea how you're even half as popular with women as you're meant to be."

The comment is a reminder of his reputation and inspires him. Hollander is right, he is known as skilled seducer so he might as well take advantage of that even if his heart is trying to beat it's way out of his chest. Shane will not know he is just pretending to hide nerves.

Ilya's unsure about why nerves are even an issue, he has no idea why he feels like this. It has never happened to him before. Sex is sex; easy, fun, casual. This thing with Hollander is not different from any other hook up.

Turning to face the man he plans on seducing Ilya makes his shrug as diffident as possible and he knows his face doesn't give anything away either, he is too good at hiding his feelings for that.

Tonight Ilya Rozanov, Russian's greatest dancer in two decades and Boston's finest ever is cool and casual, very confident and not even tiny bit nervous. If any one is getting flustered tonight it is not to be him.

Responding to Hollander's delightfully irritated words he moves closer, slowly, like tiger stalking prey and he sees the look in Hollander's eye darken.

"But I am, I am very popular."

He purrs the words and throws one of his more seductive smiles into the ring, delighted to see it having it's intended affect.

Hollander blushes right on cue. He takes another step.

"Talent is always appreciated Hollander; on stage, in bed, with ladies, with men... I am equal opportunity lover and good at everything."

He hears Hollander's breath catch. His stunningly beautiful bodyguard backs away as Ilya moves slowly forward and it reminds him of that evening in his dressing room.

Hollander stops when his back hits the wall, Ilya doesn't.

He inches closer, Hollander looks like that American cartoon deer... he studies his face, watches his breathing speed up...his pupils dilate, he is so very pretty...

Bambi, that is it...Hollander has Bambi eyes; big, pretty, desperate Bambi eyes; a new look for him but a good one.

Ilya is familiar by now with the various different sides of Hollander's personality. He appreciates the sly humour he wields in unexpected moments, he likes the way he simmers and glowers when he's annoyed, respects how he won't let go of a problem until he's completely satisfied with the solution. He likes his smile.

He knows all about his sharp single minded focus and the intensity he carries on his shoulders, he also knows how all that pressure is stretched taut over a barely restrained potential for action.

Hollander seems to live his life on high alert, always only a heartbeat away from carrying out his duties to protect or defend.

He's never met anyone quite like him or liked anyone quite the same way. Ilya truly enjoys all the parts of Hollander's personality, he respects him, enjoys his company; fuck, he's wanted to kiss him and more for weeks on end but this glimpse into another part of him is something else, something new and it's deeply intoxicating. Possibly addicting.

Bambi blinks at him, waiting for something to run from or to. Ilya needs to make sure it's one not the other.

Even just seeing this side of Hollander makes Ilya feel special. Shane clearly keeps this part of himself hidden from everyone, maybe even from himself and now for some reason he's choosing to share it with Ilya.

The significance of the gift is not lost on him and he intends to treat it with the reverence it deserves. That's if he's allowed to because his thoughts get interrupted by Hollander being Hollander.

"This is probably a really bad..."

Of course Hollander is trying to be sensible. Well this is no time for sensible. Ilya finishes the sentence as he closes the last inch of space between them.

"Idea?"

Now Hollander is pressed against the wall and Ilya is pressed against Hollander.

It's easy to put a hand on his hip, easy to slip his fingers beneath that terrible t-shirt and feel the heat of Hollander's skin against his fingertips, feel ragged breaths that catch and stutter.

Ilya stares at his pretty, nervous Bambi and reminds himself that this doesn't have to get complicated not if they're smart, and he's always considered himself very smart, so no problem there. His confidence is reflected in his voice;

"No, is good idea. You are keeping me safe so is very good idea."

Leaning back so he can see more of his face Ilya watches his hand brush against Hollander's freckles and notices the way a pair of liquid brown eyes keep dropping to look at his mouth.

Hollander's pretty lips twitch, his tongue just visible between them and the naked longing on his face is fucking hot.

It's not the first time tonight Hollander has looked like that.

The man wants to be kissed so badly.

And he wants more than that, so much more, Ilya knows that this gorgeous mouth wants everything it can get.

Fuck but being desperate suits this man. Who could have guessed. Ilya thinks Hollander would look even prettier on his knees, looking up at him, big brown eyes pleading silently for something he can't let himself ask for.

Ilya might make him ask, he thinks Shane would like him to.

He suppresses a shiver of anticipation, just knowing what Hollander wants astonishing but if the man actually asks for it tonight it might kill Ilya on the spot.

Watching his own thumb move, Ilya savours the feel of Shane's skin, the path to his mouth is soft and warm and just this first touch is making Hollander's eyelashes flutter. Shane can't seem to decide if he wants to lean closer or collapse back against the wall. He looks blissed out already and Ilya feels stupidly proud of such a small achievement. He can see Shane relaxing and getting more turned on every second. It's a beautiful combination. Ilya really needs to get him flat out on a bed to enjoy him properly but there's no need to rush this.

He feels even prouder when just a thumb pressing at the corner of Shane's mouth makes him breathe in, all sharp and high. His lips part easily when Ilya starts to stroke along the delicate damp skin. It's beautiful how eager he is to be touched and how much trust there is already. Ilya preens as more of the constant tension in Hollander melts away. He can't wait to see him once they've done everything else Ilya hopes to do tonight.

A soft small sound slips from parted lips and Ilya almost moans too.

Fuck, his lips are stupidly soft and so pliant, there's no resistance at all to his thumb and Shane seems to be trying to lick at it, get a taste of skin. It's just a tiny movement, probably mostly involuntary but it speaks volumes and it sends a surge of pure unholy want through Ilya's body.

This man... fuck.

Ilya watches his thumb slide slowly over lips becoming wetter with each stroke and enjoys Hollander's response immensely.

Poor little Bambi wants something in his mouth so badly.

Ilya wonders when Hollander last allowed himself something like this. Just as the thought drifts past, another soft low sound leaves Hollander's parted lips and a heady and terrifying thought hits Ilya hard.

Has he ever let himself be like this?

He'd assumed Hollander had been with many men before but now, as he looks at him, dark eyes hazy with desire, lost in just this gentle touch he's not so sure. Maybe Hollander has never let himself have this with anyone before.

As the implications swim through Ilya's mind, Hollander's head shifts slightly, his chin tilting up, it's such a small movement you might miss it but Ilya knows what he wants, Shane is chasing a firmer touch, he's asking for more, he needs more.

Fuck, Ilya might have heart attack from how fucking needy and sexy and perfect Hollander is.

His thumb moves again and this time he pushes it past Hollander's plush and pouting lips, and suddenly he's *inside* Shane Hollander, it's just his thumb...*just*— is there any such thing as *just* with Hollander?

Just a thumb, just his mouth, just nothing special and Ilya has to lock his knees in place as Hollander sucks instinctively, hard and firm, tongue wrapping around him, eyes drifting shut with another flutter. He looks like he'll die if Ilya moves so much as an inch or even thinks about removing his treat.

He'd intended to let Shane play a little longer but it's only a few more seconds before he gives into his own need; he can't help himself. Ilya leans closer and takes Hollander's mouth. He does it without removing his thumb because it would be too cruel to leave Hollander empty like that.

He kisses his lips, lets his thumb play with the firm wet pressure of his tongue before sliding it out and hearing a moan, (disappointed) then a much louder moan (not disappointed) when Ilya replaces his thumb with his tongue.

Hollander kisses back like he's suffocating and Ilya's mouth is his only source of air.

Even while lost in the kisses and soft noises they're both making Ilya can feel a hand brush against his chest. It's tentative at first, almost tickles then it gets firmer as it's owner becomes more confident and finds the meat of his pecs and squeezes, strokes, touches him ever more desperately.

Ilya can feel the way Hollander's body starts to fold, loose limbed and pliant. He kisses him again and again mouth, neck, chin mouth. It's perfect. He's perfect.

Then Shane confirms that with a soft happy sigh and a wandering hand.

The sound that leaves Ilya is completely involuntary. How could he stay silent when he suddenly has Shane Hollander's actual hand in his actual pants stroking him as best he can from the angle he's at.

Ilya can't help it, his moan is low and he sounds deeply grateful.

He is grateful for whatever he's done to deserve this night.

Hollander's hand is big and he has callouses too, they rub against his dick with a delicious flick of extra friction.

Then before Ilya can decide what he should do next Shane is ripping his mouth and his hand away and Ilya's heart breaks.

Fuck not again. Not now, please not now.

There's almost no time to grieve the loss because Shane hasn't left him he's just dropped to his knees.

He's seeking out just what Ilya knew he wanted- something in his mouth; more than a thumb, more than a tongue and Ilya discovers what those plush firm lips feel like pressed up against his cock.

It's more enthusiastic than skilled but that doesn't matter one bit. Ilya literally can't breathe as Hollander mouths and kisses at him, nuzzles in so close he worries that the man won't be able to breathe, then Shane pushes his shorts out the way and delivers on the promise he made earlier to provide a safe, bodyguard approved blow job.

The noises he's making only add to the intensity of the pleasure Ilya is experiencing. Hollander is loving this. The view Ilya has when he looks down is possibly the hottest thing he's ever seen.

He takes keeps looking unable to stop gapping in awe.

It is very good to be right, Hollander does look even prettier like this and he is clearly enjoying himself immensely. Ilya stares, tries to fix the image in his head for later, for when he's alone; he wants to remember the dark hair getting messier as his head moves up and down as Hollander sucks and licks and moans his little heart out.

It's undeniably hot and it's been quite a while for Ilya so if Hollander carries on like this things will be finished before they've really started.

As he most definitely does not want that he tugs on the soft strands of dark hair wrapped around his fingers, which does him no good at all, in fact it just has his knees weakening and his hand slamming against the wall to keep himself upright, because Hollander likes that

sharp sting of pain and moans particularly loudly, swallowing Ilya as far down as he can manage and almost choking himself in the processes.

Fuck fuck fuck; Ilya breaths carefully and holds himself back from matching the bobbing head with his own thrusts. It's no way to behave on a first date- not that this is a date, no this is just a hook up, maybe a favour or is it a deal they made. He really isn't sure anymore.

His gasp as Hollander gags is too loud, too revealing, a sound that's becoming both pleasure and frustration because it feels so fucking good but he also hasn't succeeded in stopping Hollander's pretty mouth, and he has to stop him because Ilya wants more from this encounter than a quick blow job up against a wall- he wants a lot more.

Unfortunately it's hard to force himself to interrupt the process because it feels amazing and also because Hollander is being stubborn and really doesn't want to be stopped. Is it really so bad that Ilya, being such a kind and generous soul, wants Hollander to have nice things.

He indulges them both for another few seconds before he starts to slow things down. It takes a herculean effort, Ilya slides his fingers into Shane's mouth and parts his lips just enough to pull out. He provides quiet reassurance for the disappointed whimpering by pulling Hollander up and returning to devouring his mouth.

He consumes those quiet whimpers as eagerly as Shane had sucked him off and takes his weight. It's obvious Shane's legs are far too unstable to fully support him now so Ilya presses him firmly into the wall that way Shane can pretend he didn't need the help to stand.

Pinned to the wall the gorgeous gift of a man is disoriented and hazy, waves of pleasure fluttering though him as Ilya kisses the taste of himself out of Shane's mouth but when hips start to grind together Ilya has to pull back because he's still on something of a knife edge himself.

While Ilya is catching his breath, and being sensibly restrained Shane has time to think, his wet glossy eyes blinking in confusion, his voice a little rough.

"Was that bad?"

Still too breathless to speak Ilya manages a quiet huff of amusement and shakes his head. He rubs at red swollen lips with his thumb again, a little in awe of Hollander's naive enthusiasm and baseless fears.

Ilya can't possibly look like what was just happening was bad can he? Not when opposite is true.

Fuck how has this happened to him? How has he found such a stupid, sweet, perfect idiot and why can't he keep him.

Shit, he really wants to keep him, doesn't he.

Ilya pushes that reckless, dangerous feeling down then down again and pulls on his usual disguise of casual carefree lover so he can say with a gentle smile.

"No, no, was very good, but I would like to see more of you first and maybe then you can practice your technique, always room for improvement yes? This would be ok for me. I am happy to let you practice because I am very kind."

Hollnder's mouth twists and he looks torn between being annoyed and amused so he balances the two with a heartfelt -

"Fuck you!"

The curse is pushed out past lips trying not to smile and he pushes against Ilya lightly, his hand landing in the centre of his chest. Ilya watches as the contact makes Hollander's face goes slack and his eyes glaze over and then Ilya is watching Hollander watching his own fingertips trailing across Ilya's chest exploring the muscle and heading towards his nipple.

Dead. He is dead now, killed not by stalker but by his own bodyguard. This does not seem particularly fair to Ilya considering how he was made to have bodyguard in the first place but on other hand if this is to be his fate then who is he to argue.

Maybe it is not the worse way to die under the hands and mouth of Shane Hollander.

Aiming to delay that inevitable death a little longer Ilya stops Hollander's hand with his own, pressing it flat against his chest and hoping Hollander can't feel how his heart is racing.

Keeping his voice low Ilya hides everything he's feeling with yet another comment designed to antagonise.

"I think you mean *fuck me*, and probably *please* ..."

Hollander's pupils are huge as his jaw drops and Ilya can't resist placing a finger in his pretty mouth again.

Ilya shakes his head slowly.

"... but no, not tonight Hollander. I can not fuck you tonight I would need much, much more time with you for that. "

He grins happily, enjoying his role and the look in Hollander's eyes.

"I am, what is word? Perfectionist yes? and I would want to make it very, very good for you. Have reputation to protect you see, so need time. Lots of time."

Hollander blinks at him twice.

The stunned expression is an absolute delight and Ilya has to kiss him quickly and lightly on the lips before pulling himself away, calling out behind him.

"Bedroom this way yes?"

Shane might die- Ilya's mouth brushes against his then vanishes too quickly to do anything about, mostly because Shane's a little dazed by the idea of maybe being fucked by Ilya Rozanov one day. It's something he wants fiercely but it's too big a thought for right now so he focuses on the blinding arrogance instead.

A Russian accent runs through his head; *Bedroom this way yes?*

Really? Arrogant son of a bitch.

His lips twitch and he automatically tries to hide the smile but Rozanov can't see him so it doesn't actually matter.

So Shane lets himself smile as he watches Rozanov saunter off even while he's feeling slightly embarrassed, mildly irritated and hugely turned on.

There's a rather urgent need to readjust his jeans which he takes care of as he stares up at the ceiling silently asking for guidance from the universe.

He doesn't bother to wait for an answer he knows isn't coming.

This is absolutely insane behaviour he knows that but you couldn't drag him off course now if you tried.

“Hollander.”

Ilya's voice calls out for him. It's not even a question it's a summons and Shane's cock twitches; fuck... he's so damn hard already and so fucking desperate for more.

Having Rozanov's dick in his mouth had been beyond his wildest fantasies, not that he's allowed himself to have any fantasies of course but maybe there had been the odd vague dream and you can't be held responsible for your dreams can you? Eyes closed he says a silent prayer for the death of his self respect before obediently following Ilya Rozanov to his own bedroom.

When he gets there Rozanov is already on his bed, his clothes are off and scattered on the floor except for his shorts. They're still on and probably displaying Rozanov's assets very clearly. That's the kind of thing that happens when you're reclining dramatically on your side against someone else's pillows.

Shane however isn't looking at the impressive outline of the very obviously hard dick on display so he couldn't possibly confirm the situation regarding anyone's assets.

Well, he does his best not to be able to confirm it anyway.

Eyes flickering around the room he stands awkwardly in his own bedroom unsure about what he's supposed to do next. Fortunately Rozanov fixes that problem for him quickly.

"Clothes off Hollander. I want to see you."

He does as he's told without stopping to think, stripping to his own shorts without comment. He does stop to fold his clothes as usual also without thinking. The decision elicits a small chuckle and a soft voice behind him saying.

"So neat."

Shane ignores the unhelpful commentary and takes a step towards the bed before Ilya's now much sterner voice stops him.

"No.. all of it...off."

The new directive makes him frown and gesture rather childishly towards his bossy guest.

"That's not fair you still have yours on."

Rozanov rolls onto his back, muscles rippling as his arms get folded up high behind his head.

Shane forces his eyes to stay firmly focused on Rozanov's smirking face and not his bulging biceps.

"True, but I am in charge. This is *my* blow job party, even if I have to have it in very bor-ing bedroom...."

Shane snorts, him and that word.

"It's a normal bedroom."

Ilya ignores that with another grin and Shane's getting less and less convinced that Rozanov actually knows what boring means or if he does, he kind of likes it.

The Russian menace happily continues his complaining.

"I could be in exciting club, visiting bathroom getting blown two, three times so least *you* can do is be naked for me, let me see you looking pretty."

Honestly Shane has no idea why he likes this man. Rozanov shrugs at him.

"You have good body, is nice to look at."

Shane gives his thanks in the most sarcastic tone he can muster while feeling stupidly pleased by the compliment and also removing his shorts.

He folds them too then turns to face Rozanov arms extended to invite comment.

The man on his bed lurches forward rather abruptly, a crease forming between his eyebrows. Shane's stomach flips nervously wondering what's gone wrong.

"Hollander... what ... is ... that?"

The words are slow and there's a finger pointing at his hip. His right one, where he has... oh shit- he always forgets about that one, stupid fucking thing. His first and worst.

It's only there because Hayden got him drunk and convinced him it was a good idea. The fucking dick didn't even go through with it himself, saying Jackie would kill him if he did.

"Hollander? That is tattoo yes?"

Squirming a little he nods because it is and it's not weird to have a tattoo is it?

"Of gun?"

He nods again and looks away embarrassed by younger Shane's decision making skills.

"Yeah, it's stupid I know. I was young, drunk, we'd just decided to open our own agency. "

Rozanov breaths in and out slowly, then gestures for him to come closer and once again Shane does as he's told without hesitation.

It seems to be the theme of his night, to do what Rozanov wants him to do. It doesn't bother him, not here, not now when they're in private, quite the opposite in fact.

It's kind of perfect that here, safe with Rozanov he doesn't have to think or be in charge for a while. Letting go like this isn't something he knew he needed until the blue eyed menace on his bed appeared in his life and showed him he could want this.

Could want him.

They're both at the same end of the bed now, one of them standing, one not and Rozanov is close enough to touch him if he wanted to. Sadly he hasn't yet; Shane is left looking down at the top of his curly head while Ilya is completely absorbed by the small dumb gun tattoo he's had on his hip for years.

"Is ok?"

Rozanov's fingers are hovering above the ink so Shane assumes he's asking for permission to touch, he swallows past his dry mouth and answers yes.

When Rozanov's fingers move Shane concentrates very hard on breathing, fiercely aware of how gentle the fingertip moving over him is and how close to other parts of his body Ilya is now.

He bites his lip and prays he doesn't do anything embarrassing like whimper. He tries to speak and only manages a breathless whisper.

"Stupid huh?"

The only answer he gets is a swift movement of sandy curls as Ilya shakes his head to disagree. Shane bites his lips together until they hurts. It's something else to focus on if nothing else.

"No."

Bright blue eyes stare up at him from around hip level.

“This is only one?”

Shane wishes he had something to hold onto. How is he supposed to survive this; the thicker accent, the pupils that are getting wider, eyes that are darkening even as Shane watches.

Rozanov looks less in control than he has all evening. Looks like Ilya Rozanov has a thing for naked men with tattoos.

From what he can see (which is most of him) Rozanov doesn't have any ink himself, perhaps it's forbidden for ballet stars to mark their skin like that? Shane might ask him later but for now he just answers the question.

"No."

Ilya breathes in sharply then pushes himself up, eyes now level with Shane's chest and says

"Show me."

The directive is firm so once again Shane does as he's told. He points out the bomb and the cherries he has on opposite arms. He shows the arrow he has going through his bicep and Hobbes who was hidden until now.

You'd think Ilya might have noticed the snake by himself but even though it's his largest and crawling around his elbow Rozanov seems to have missed it.

Shane holds his breath while Ilya runs careful fingers and eager eyes over each of his tattoos and while the interest and gentle touches are nice it's really not what he needs right now.

It beginning to feel like he might die of old age before Rozanov gets around to touching anything more interesting than his small collections of tattoos or lets him get back to the job he's here to do but then the touching stops and Ilya leaps backwards onto the bed with a bounce, settling with his hands fixed behind his head again, lounging insolently against Shane's pillows.

He looks really good there, like he belongs. It's a thought that could make Shane panic but the dangerous idea is dislodged when Ilya spreads his legs wide.

Fuck.

Rozanov notices his expression and cocks his head to one side then smiles his stupid, hot, crooked smile as he slides his boxers slowly down his legs, freeing his dick.

Shane knows it's rude to stare but he can't help it. He's vaguely aware his mouth is hanging open but he doesn't care. He fucking wants that in his mouth right now.

Rozanov is smirking at him, the evil fucker fully aware of the affect he's having on him. He ups his game with a few lazy strokes of his cock, it's a performance and Shane is heavily invested in the plot.

Bright heated eyes stay fixed on him while Shane tries to work out what to look at it's not fair, Rozanov looks far too confident, far too sexy.

Shane wants to hate him so badly but it's a hopeless ambition- hate is nowhere close to how he's feeling about Rozanov.

Mesmerised by the hand that's moving up and down Shane sways slightly towards the bed.

"You like what you see?"

He at least manages to roll his eyes and refrain from nodding desperately but as his eyes track the slide of Rozanov's fingers, the answer is obvious.

Ilya is scarcely even touching himself, he's just a giant tease. Shane suspects it's a tease for both of them. He wets his lips again, keeps staring but remains frozen where he is.

"You want?"

Finally there's a hint of tension in the Russian accent. Maybe Ilya is not as cool and collected as he wants Shane to think he is.

The question punches him in the gut - fuck does he want! Shane knows he's never wanted anything more.

Despite the answer being yes he can't get the word out, mouth too dry, words not working but that's ok, Ilya sees Shane like no one ever has. His eyes are soft even as he tortures him.

"Yes, I know, poor Hollander. So desperate for me. So keen to do well.

You like to be best, don't you, just like me. Best bodyguard and best dancer. We are same."

Then Rozanov fucking winks at him.

"Well, maybe I am better at *some* things."

The leer and glance at Shane's aching cock bobbing around useless and neglected loosens Shane's tongue.

"You're a fucking asshole."

Ilya looks thrilled by the reaction before he pouts. He's almost too pretty to believe in. His eyes darken and Shane shivers under his gaze.

"Maybe, but lucky for you I am generous man too. I will let you learn proper technique. "

That's fucking outrageous and Shane wastes no time expressing that.

"Let me?! Fucking arse..."

God he shouldn't be so turned on by this routine. Rozanov's sly grin stays in place as he interrupts him.

"Yes, yes I know, I am asshole, now do you want to come here?"

Ilya pats the bed and Shane doesn't even think, he climbs up and wiggles his way between Rozanov's thighs. It's a hell of a place to find yourself. Each leg is so fucking big and strong it's crazy.

Shane holds onto one of them, his fingers appreciating the size and firmness of the muscle, while on the other side of his body Ilya's left leg flops down to give him more room to work with.

Rozanov waves a hand above his obviously eager dick.

"Is all for you. Don't get shy on me now."

Shane nods absently, his attention all on the sight in front of him; he's touched, tasted but not see it yet and it's a very pretty cock if you ask him, thick and smooth, swollen and a little red around the tip, still wet, maybe from Shane's own mouth or maybe not- he can't decide what would be hotter. It's quite possibly a perfect dick, not that Shane's seen that many to compare it to.

He doesn't want to now; once you've had the best why go anywhere else.

He wriggles once more just to get comfortable, licks his lips and kisses the tip of the world's best ballet dancer's perfect cock. Above him even the mighty Rozanov can't hide his reaction, the gasp sends a shiver down Shane's spine, as does the way fingers reach tentatively into his hair. Shane takes a deep breath; maybe he's a novice right now but everyone always says he's a quick study and he intends to prove it's true once again.

Shane Hollander has tattoos.

Fuck.

Ilya's always loved strong arms and tattoos and now of course *he* has both as if he needs another reason to want to look at Hollander or touch him.

Once he spots the first one there's no choice but to slide forward and explore the marks on Hollander's beautiful body, with permission he touches all the places Hollander has ink and fights the urge to kiss each one, especially the stupid revolver. It is not sexy. Not even a little bit.

The stupid fucking folding clothes routine was fucking cute too. Ilya has no idea why that appealed to him so much but it did and it was another nail in his proverbial coffin.

He's so fucked; a very real concern has been forming in his head for some time and he can't ignore it any longer. He has to accept the truth — there's an extremely good chance that he's never getting over this evening, even this one time with Hollander is going to ruin him.

The Russian in him objects and rises to the occasion. He swears silently that if that turns out to be true he won't let it show.

So Ilya starts as he intends to go on and pretends to be cool and unbothered as he lays back on the bed and invites Hollander to start practising when really his heart is racing and his body aching to be closer to the man.

When Hollander settles between his legs with a curiously determined expression Ilya can't help but smile. He should be embarrassed about all this unnecessary happiness. Usually only Sveta can make him smile as much as this and even then it is somehow different to this.

He knows why even if he won't admit it and he knows he should wipe the stupid grin off his face.

He should do it right now.

The smile stays exactly where it is.

It doesn't matter, Hollander isn't noticing much right now, he's too busy studying his target with single minded focus. Ilya looks down the length of his body to find Shane Hollander very obviously thinking about how best to approach the task in front of him, clearly it was not joke when he said Hollander needed to be good at everything.

The man looks like he's working out a ten point action plan for how to best suck dick. He opens his mouth to say something sarcastic at exactly the same time Shane leans down and presses a small sweet and heartbreakingly gentle kiss to tip of his aching cock.

The soft noise that leaves his lips is embarrassing but he couldn't help it. Maybe Hollander did not notice.

Shane's mouth moves again, just as soft just as gentle just as remarkable an experience and Ilya can hardly breath. More kitten kisses are pressed onto his skin, lips part and the movements get firmer, more confident and much, much wetter. Ilya finds he has his hand in Shane's hair. He doesn't even remember moving but there's the feel of silk between his fingertips and the feel of heaven between his legs.

He listens to his own uneven breathing and the wet moans of Hollander's mouth as he's given the most focused and tender blow job of his life.

Somewhere along the line he remembers he's supposed to be teaching technique and keeping things cool. That doesn't feel important anymore, he can do that later, now doesn't feel like the right time for constructive criticism.

Another stupid moan sneaks past his lips as Shane's experiments continue. He's doing something interesting with his tongue and Ilya groans even louder, damn it.

There are probably things he could say, advice he could give, his breath catches on a particularly good slide up and down of Shane's mouth that ends in a firm tongue circling the head of his cock and some sucking that has Ilya's head swimming and his free hand gripping the pillow behind him. He fights with himself to keep his hips still but it getting harder not to move so it's no wonder that he can't be bothered to give Hollander a running commentary of what's working or not.

To be honest it's all working pretty well. No complaints, 10/10 for effort and enthusiasm

In a vain effort to show some restraint Ilya bites hard on his lips, keeping his mouth shut but the noises leak out anyway.

It's good, so very, very good and although he doesn't want it to be over the chances are building that it will be soon. He closes his eyes and lets his back arch up just a little.

It occurs to him in a blinding flash of brilliance that once he's come, an increasingly urgent need, he'll be able to take his turn with Hollander and get *him* squirming and moaning; even the score a bit.

Not that he's being particularly quite right now, Hollander is actually making the most delicious noises and is very clearly, very into what he's doing.

It's hideously hot. Ilya wants to be mad about how fucking hot it is but he can't. He's getting closer, can feel the pressure building inside him. It feels so fucking good it's insane. He needs to come, wants it so fucking badly.

He imagines being able to encourage Hollander, praise him, tell him how good he is, how pretty he looks sucking his cock, that his mouth is fucking amazing. That he needs to take him deeper, suck harder, make him come down his desperate needy throat.

On the edge Ilya's been avoiding looking down his body again, trying not to look at the dark head bobbing up and down between his legs, knowing exactly what it would do to him but now he has to see, he has to know so he opens his eyes and that's it; Hollander's head is moving up and down and he can see glimpses of his mouth, flashes of wet, puffy lips appearing in short bursts, flashes of the tongue lapping at him. He's so greedy, looks so needy. He's moving at a frantic rhythm now and what he's doing is turning Shane on as much as it's driving Ilya mad.

Abruptly the rapid movements stop and there's just his mouth on the tip, sucking at the head, running his tongue around it like it's a god damn lollipop. The delicious torture continues until the hand Hollander has on his thigh clenches tightly, just as Ilya's dick slides back into his mouth deeper again.

Shane moans loudly around his mouthful and holds on tighter, pressing his fingers down even harder and Ilya hopes he leaves fingerprints. He hopes he gets to see a part of Hollander still on him tomorrow.

Everything he's feeling, everything he's thinking rolls into one and ignites the slow burning, pulsing embers in the pit of his stomach. He recognises the sensation all too well and it means this is all coming to an end right now.

Grabbing the hair he's been stroking he tugs Hollander off him, he's responsive but reluctant to move at the same time. Ilya guesses that he probably wouldn't mind swallowing but he has not checked so it would be rude to just do it. Maybe next time.

He's so lost in the feeling he doesn't even worry about if there will be a next time or even if he wants that.

Having lost the gift of Hollander's mouth Ilya grabs hold of himself firmly, pulling and pressing Shane's head into his chest as he takes over the final moments of his release himself.

He's so close it doesn't take more than three firm strokes and he's hissing and arching, drowning in the most extraordinary feeling and barely aware of Hollander's slumped body next to him or his head lolling loosely on his chest.

Wasting no time he lifts Hollander's chin so he can kiss him before he loses the opportunity.

Hollander's eyes are hazy; glazed over and unfocused and they can't even stay open long. Ilya kisses him slow and hard tasting the way they're combined in Shane's mouth, the idea of them joined together in any way suddenly feels overwhelming so he pushes Shane back onto his back and rolls away to clean up.

"Fuck that was hot!"

Hollander's voice is low and gravelly and he sounds happily dazed. One of his hands is flopping around in the air and maybe it is possible he's searching for Ilya, looking for his touch again. Ilya makes sure he finds it, moving his own body so they connect and once Hollander's fingers close around his arm he covers it with his own now clean hand.

The next thing he does is take a subtle look down the bed and is delighted by what he sees; from the noises being made he'd thought Shane might have come while sucking him off and rubbing himself not very subtly against his leg. Ilya's rather impressed by his restraint, and very grateful, he would have hated to have missed that particular experience.

The hand on his arm is still there and a jolt of surprise sends prickles of electricity running through him when Shane's warm fingers start stroking across his skin absently, his voice still a little breathless as he mutters;

"...so fucking hot.."

Ilya agrees a hundred percent but will not be admitting that anytime soon. Instead he lets a small noncommittal sound push past his lips and follows it with a casual -

"Was ok... need little more practice."

Shane's hand lifts enough that he can slap at Ilya's chest weakly, but he laughs too and both things leave Ilya feeling soft and warm inside .

"Fuck off! It was good, you just want an excuse to make me to do it again."

Ilya smirks, pleased with the reaction, again Hollander is not wrong but the game is too much fun to stop playing so he takes the next shot.

"Ok, if you say so. I can go if you do not want my help."

He lets his hand flick towards Hollander's lower half as he deliberately shifts his weight, making as if he's going to sit up which makes Shane's eyes snap towards his. Ilya can't help notice how his grip tightens too and he firmly ignores the thrill that sends through his body.

Ilya lifts his eyebrows innocently, portraying a confusion he doesn't feel at being scowled at so beautifully, it's perfect, he's perfect. He really does lo... enjoy his expressions.

"Don't you fucking dare!"

Hollander practically growls the words at him, which is also very hot.

The obvious next move is to pout, he's hoping to convey the message that he's completely unbothered about either the weak threat or if he stays or goes. The pout nearly intensifies Hollander's look, so basking under the most adorable glare ever Ilya aims for a surprised tone.

"What? You want me to stay? But if you do not need lessons why should I?"

Hollander rolls towards him, it puts his mouth temptingly close. It takes a little effort but Ilya is a performer, a star performer actually so he can keep his face neutral even if Hollander is far too kissable for his own good.

"Ah.... is just to keep me here yes? All safe and boring and snug as bug."

The words come out slow like syrup and somehow Hollander's lips are a little closer to his. He has no idea how that happened but the scowl has vanished from Hollander's pretty face and his eyes are getting hazy again, he's looking at Ilya like he wants something.

Like he wants it badly.

He inches closer, voice low, taking his time, stretching everything out.

"Or ...is there something *special* you need from me... Hollander?"

"Fucker..."

Ilya tuts at the angry kitten next to him.

"Be nice Hollander..."

They're nose to nose, Hollander's bumping his in a way that seems to say please and unable to resist a second longer Ilya kisses him, far too softly, far too tender for what this is supposed to be. He shouldn't kiss him like this but once again Hollander melts into him, opens wider to let Ilya slip his tongue past those gorgeous swollen lips and stroke and tease Hollander's mouth and lips and tongue.

He pulls away as slowly as he'd approached licks his own lips to taste him again. Shane's eyes are closed and there's a tiny curl of a smile on his mouth.

Ilya heart skips a beat but he hides that and plays another round in whatever game this is now.

"Be nice Hollander or I will rethink my generous offer to return favour if you were good enough for reward..."

With his last whispered word he reaches down and strokes one finger along Shane Hollander's poor aching cock and is delighted with the full body shudder and the way his perfect body arches in response to such a small touch.

"Ilya..."

Shane is of course breathless but Ilya's own breath catches sharply too, not from pleasure or lust this time but at the whispered sound of his name. Shane has said it twice now and he doesn't even realise it.

Ilya swallows hard and focuses on the important things; giving Hollander what he needs. He doesn't think about why he wants that so much, why he wants to make it perfect for Shane.

"Hollander...? I am asking... do you want something?"

His finger trails up and down again. Shane's cock is as soft as it's hard, silky soft velvet over steel, and isn't that Hollander all over.

Ilya watches a pair of dark eyes try to open and focus on him, he shifts a little, swaps hands so he can press the desperately twitching hips down into the bed as well as stroke him, slow and steady and most importantly light as a feather.

"You can have if you ask nice."

That helps refocus his "off duty" bodyguard. Shane's head lifts off the pillow and the glare he sends down the bed is deeply sincere.

Ilya blinks at him innocently.

"Ah, I see, you do not want. Is ok. I will go."

He shifts his weight again as if he's leaving and a strong hand lands on his shoulder and presses him back down, sending another thrill right through him.

Hollander is strong. Hollander wants him.

He looks up to meet dark eye, hoping his own feelings are well hidden. Shane's eyes are narrow and Ilya likes that look too. So much like angry kitten. Is cute.

"You're a fucking asshole... everyone knows that but *I* know you're not going to leave me like this. You're just a fucking tease...."

It's true but he doesn't need to admit it, looking away he throws his nonchalance high into the air to see where it lands.

"Yes, maybe... maybe asshole, maybe tease, either way I leave if you do not say please."

The hips trapped under his arm twitch and again Hollander's strength is on display because Ilya's arm actually moves.

Not that that's particularly hot in any way at all. Unaware of Ilya's inner surge of lust Hollander sounds grumpy and annoyed.

"You just *want* me to say please..."

Ilya decides he likes this game very much and that Hollander needs to learn that he likes it too.

"No Hollander, *I* do not care... I can go, I can stay... but I think *you* want me to stay, I think you *want* to say please. "

Shane's breath catches in a truly delightful gasp.

"See... I am right..."

His fingers keep moving, up and down, just a brush of skin on skin as he carries on telling Hollander truths.

"You want to ask me so I can give you more of what you want. You like asking, you like being good and doing what you're told. Yes?"

A quickly silenced whimper answers his question.

"You want it so bad..."

Shane's cock twitches

"So hard... so hard for me.."

He lets his hand tighten for the first time since he started touching and that has Shane gasping and struggling to breathe.

Ilya hums happily, his chin now resting on Hollander's hip watching the show.

"So hard for me, just from sucking my cock."

The whimpers are less silent now and sound beautiful in the quiet of Hollander's bedroom.

He does various things for a few more moments that amp the whimpering up to desperate. Hollander's a vision all spread out for him like this, open and glowing and needy.

Ilya wants to bite and suck and kiss every bit of him but he won't unless Hollander asks for it. It makes him a little mean, makes his voice sterner.

"Tell me truth Hollander or I will stop."

The body he has trapped under him shudders.

"Fuck you."

It's a brave and impressive protest. Ilya could almost kiss his pretty, not so little cock. He doesn't. He doesn't stop his hand either, at least not yet... a few more strokes are needed first, he delivers them watching Hollander's mouth gape and his neck curve as his head rolls back into the pillow. Fuck but he's beautiful. He'd like to keep touching him like this forever but he can't so he lets go completely and Shane shudders and whines.

"Remember what I said. it is fuck *me*... please, please fuck me Il.. Rozanov."

"Jesus fucking Christ Roz, I hate you..."

But Shane looks more turned on than ever so Ilya does not believe him.

"No I do not think that is right. What do you want Hollander tell me or I am going home."

Ilya bites his lip to stop himself from grinning at the way Hollander is twisting himself into knots as he arches back on the bed in frustration.

"Hollander... just ask me for what you want and you can have it."

And just like that a switch is flicked, Hollander goes from difficult to compliant in a heartbeat.

"Will you fuck me... please...?"

The question knocks the air right out of Ilya but he recovers fast. He stays calm and cool even if he's fast becoming a mess on the inside.

"No. Not tonight."

The disappointed, disgruntled face is something else and Ilya hopes he gets to see that expression again but he continues to chastise Shane.

"I already told you that and that is question. *Ask- ask* for something I can give you."

The way Shane's hips are trying to move is driving Ilya mad, he's more than half hard again already.

He waits as Hollander fights himself and loses or maybe he wins, it would depend on his point of view at the time.

Desperate and breathy Hollander finally asks for something.

"Please, please suck my dick- touch me... make me come, please I want you... please ..."

Shane's eyes are closed by the end of that speech, arm flung over his eyes, trying to arch up again. He looks so pretty hiding away and Ilya thinks it is good he is like this because now Hollander can not see the look Ilya knows is on his own face.

His voice behaves better than that face so when he says; "Okie Hollander, I will show you how is done." , nothing is revealed.

He lowers himself to the task at hand and take Shane into his mouth in one long wet slow slide. He can feel every muscle he's touching clench and the cut off cries of pleasure coming from higher up the bed are music to his ears.

He slides up and down again enjoying the weight and the taste, taking his time but knowing Hollander is so wound up now it won't take long no matter how much he wants to do this forever. Taking what he can get he bobs happily licking, sucking, moaning. He brings his spare hand into play and strokes the base of his cock and rubs over Hollander's balls.

Hollander has not got as much control as Ilya he jerks up thrusting himself deeper into the warmth Ilya's providing with his mouth.

Ilya thinks he hears a distorted sorry before he swallows around his mouthful and Hollander's vocabulary gets reduced to one word.

"Oh fuck.... oh fuck oh fuck fuck fuck....."

Loving the sounds he's wringing out of his bodyguard Ilya hums happily, lets his fingers roam lower, smoothing and teasing his hole. That's probably pretty too knowing Hollander. Ilya wonders if he'll get to look. He hopes so.

Finger circling, mouth doing an excellent job of taking Hollander apart Ilya sucks harder. He probably shouldn't but it's too tempting. He does it again and feels fingers desperately clawing in his hair, the cage of the body surrounding him going tense.

"Fuck... fuck oh fuck yeah... fuck Roz... I'm gonna... "

The tugging gets more frantic but Ilya knows what he wants as much as what Hollander wants so he ignores the silent request and goes down one last time hard and fast and firm.

It makes Hollander's hips and back attempt to leave the bed at the same time as he comes hard and loud head thrust back in his pillow, his come sliding down Ilya's welcoming throat.

He keeps sucking licking because he wants every last drop, every last second. Hollander's legs are trembling on either side of his head.

Eventually he lets the hands in his hair pull him higher and accepts the kiss and embrace as Hollander calms himself and comes back from the climax Ilya is very pleased with.

He did good, they both did. Maybe so good Hollander will want a repeat performance. Ilya hopes so, maybe before he's sent home they can do something else. Maybe Hollander will ask to be fucked again. Ilya will not say no twice.

He feels lips brush his hair and forehead, strange tenderness coming from Hollander, no doubt it's just the afterglow of the amazing orgasm Ilya just gave him. He looks up and into Shane Hollander soft sleepy eyes. The man looks completely relaxed and it's another

expression that suits him. They stay close together and silent for another few minutes, Ilya expecting a dismissal with every heartbeat that passes.

He waits for it and prepares when he feels Hollander's chest move with a breath that means he's about to speak.

"Need shower. I'll go first... then new sheets... and we get some sleep ok?"

Not having much to contribute Ilya nods and waits to be told where he's sleeping.

Hollander sits up, swings his legs onto the floor. He looks back over his shoulder and Ilya knows what's coming.

"Stay here... I mean it... do not move, do not leave this room. I shower fast then you can take a turn but don't take forever, I want to get some sleep and I can't do that if you're lurking somewhere else. You're staying right next to me tonight.

Understand?"

Apparently he did not know what was coming. Ilya's not completely sure that he does understand but he doesn't seem to be being kicked out of bed which is a surprise.

He watches the muscles of Hollander's amazing butt and thighs tighten and relax as he walks towards what must be an en-suite. The bathroom door shuts and there's nothing to keep Ilya from leaving if he wants to. He could go home, go back to a club, go anywhere, Hollander would be pissed but he couldn't stop him.

Ilya stares at a closed bathroom door and after a few minutes the shower turns on.

Yes he could leave but why would he. Ilya closes his eyes and waits for his turn to shower.

He opens his eyes again when the bathroom door clicks again. He's in time to see the quick flash of relief Hollander hides before he's distracted by the low slung towel and the large expanse of damp skin above it.

He must be staring like an idiot because he's surprised when a towel hits him in the chest. He hadn't even noticed Hollander holding it.

Collecting it from the floor where it's fallen he goes to take his shower without speaking.

Ilya makes sure that under the stream of hot water he concentrates on washing and nothing else.

Eventually he comes out of the neat practical bathroom, clean, confused but oddly happy to see that Hollander has changed his sheets and is sat up in bed reading a book.

"You wear glasses?"

He sounds slightly surprised and nothing else. No, definitely nothing else.

Shane takes the glasses off and places them on the bedside table. It's so weirdly domesticated it sends a thrill of fear and want through him which is so terrifying he ignores it.

It's harder to ignore the way Shane smiles at him.

"Just for reading.... now get into bed."

A quick glance at the empty side of the generously sized bed reveals his spot to sleep is still neat and undisturbed. It's no surprise to Ilya that Shane Hollander stays on one side of a bed even when alone.

"Rozanov we need some sleep, now get into bed and don't go anywhere until I tell you you can."

Dark brown eyes lock on his, they're above a stern mouth and below a slight frown. He nods, things are apparently going back to normal with Hollander being in charge again. Ilya slips under the covers unsure if he's allowed to touch now.

The question is answered within a few moments when, lights out, Hollander rolls over and puts his head on his chest before he throws an arm over him.

Ilya almost forgets how to breathe. Shane's quiet words don't help much either.

"This way I'll wake up if you try and leave."

He nods even though it's dark.

"I see.. very clever. Excellent idea."

Shane already sounds sleepy.

"Yeah s'good idea, cos you're sneaky, got away from Hayd... won't get away from me."

Ilya moves his arm to wrap it more comfortably around Shane Hollander's shoulder as he falls asleep. He lets himself kiss the damp strands of hair tickling his chin.

"You are right. No way out I can tell."

There's a sleepy chuckle into his chest.

"S'right..

Ilya's fingers trace lightly up and down Hollander's arm as he falls asleep. It helps soothe him too and his last thought is hazy but no less true for it;

He is trapped. There really is no way out for him now and what's worse Ilya doesn't think he'd want one if there was.

Hello there!

So they've finally made it all the way to the bedroom... yay!!

Btw the gun tattoo is the whole reason this fic exists, a post on tumblr with the sneaky peak of Hudson's own tattoo and a few chats later and I'm inspired and 60k+ deep!

I think you know who you are- thank you for the inspiration 😊

Anyway....

So we shall leave these two here for a while to enjoy the peace and quiet before things get more complicated

It's probably going to be a 2 week break until chapter 11 - sorry but at least I didn't leave you or them on a cliffhanger this time. 😊

As always kind words and supportive comments cheer me on and inspire me to get the words out. Come say hi, I'm very friendly 😊

Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

Shane's plan to get Rozanov out of the nightclub and home where he belonged worked perfectly.

Now in the aftermath of the afterglow of some pretty amazing sex all he has to do is work out what to do next.

Which shouldn't be too hard, he's a smart, sensible, logical bodyguard skilled in close body protection which is lucky, because Ilya Rozanov has a body that Shane needs to stay very very close to.

Chapter Notes

Hello there

The dream of 12 chapters continues for another week its 50/50 at this point.

(Update- chapt 12 is at 8k and not quite finished so 13 chapters it is. I'm confident about that now. Trust me! Definitely 13)

Anyway... fair amount of things happen in this chapter ... so with lots of things to get through let's go 😊

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

The bathroom door shuts behind him and the first thing Shane sees is himself in the mirror.

There's no mistaking who it is looking back at him, he doesn't suddenly look different even though what just happened just happened.

It's definitely him but on closer inspection there are some slight changes to his reflection since the last time he saw it. To start with his hair is a complete mess, he tries and fails to flatten it before his focus shifts and falls on his lips; he licks them carefully, seeing if he can still taste Ilya Rozanov there on the swollen flesh.

He can, and as he watches the flash of tongue trace across plump skin still flushed with heat and blood he enjoys the shiver and the memory that goes with it.

There might even be a little stubble burn on his cheek.

He can't help smiling and doesn't know what to think about seeing such happiness reflected back at him.

The smile is another of the very visible signs of what happened only moments ago and it drives an even deeper flush of colour up his skin. Shane lets his eyes rove across it all; his flushed face, neck, even his chest. He pulls at the skin at the base of his neck to see better; yes the pinky purple mark is quite clear. He lets his thumb run across it and presses down, testing to see how sore it is and smiles again when it stings a little.

He wonders if there will be more bruises or marks to find as he showers. He hopes so. He'd like there to be proof that lasts more than an hour or two.

He keeps staring at the mirror, studying the smile that won't stay off his face. He should look more different than this, there should be more clues that something has changed but no one else would really notice anything.

He likes that; a secret, his secret, one he shares with Ilya Rozanov and that simple realisation of something they now share gives him a thrill too.

There's one part of the secret though that is just his and it will have to stay that way. He can't let Rozanov know about the feelings.

Hands resting on the cool solid edge of the sink Shane leans in and looks himself in the eye. He has a choice to make - freak the fuck out *or* accept that he wanted what he wanted and he got it (and that it was fucking unbelievable).

Shane turns the shower on and doesn't wait for it to heat up. His skin could do with cooling down anyway.

Under the flowing water he examines his thoughts and feelings on the subject of having just had sex with his client. Amazing sex. Mind blowing sex....

He waits for the horror or shame or even the embarrassment of it all to hit him but it's simply not there.

The water surrounds him, a cool soothing cocoon, he waits a little longer to be sure but against all expectations it looks like he's going with option number two — not freaking out.

The next thing to consider is why?

Maybe it's the endorphins, maybe he just feels like this because of the mind blowing orgasm he's just had. It could be that the freaking part will hit him later when the high has faded.

Another option is maybe his brain has been broken by the experience.

Can a good enough orgasm cause brain damage? Kill the brain cells that worry and overthink. The thought of conducting more experiments on the subject sends a swirl of desire through him. He probably owes it to science to find out.

Another option is of course that he's feeling ok because *technically*, you could say, *if* you wanted to- and he really does, that he's just doing his job.

He's glad he's not looking in the mirror anymore so he doesn't have to avoid his own eyes but it's not a completely invalid point of view, admittedly it would be considered an unorthodox way of doing his job, but his objective is to keep Rozanov safe and this new activity isn't in any way contradictory to that mission.

In fact, he reaches for a bottle and squeezes out a handful of soap, it's positively helpful. If Shane has Ilya watched and protected during the day *and* occupied during the night... well the chances that anything bad can happen to him have to drop significantly.

Technically it's a win win.

He ignores his brain pointing out that if you've used *technically* twice in a argument something is probably wrong.

Lathering up the shampoo Shane ignores that observation and embraces his excuse... reason.

He likes it. He's a genius. It's the perfect way to keep Rozanov close *and* safe. He should have thought of this weeks ago.

Rozanov needs metaphorical (and some not so metaphorical) stimulation in his enclosure, of course he does and people have casual sex all the time, fuck, *Rozanov* has tons of casual relationships all the time, if you read and believe the magazines then it seems like sex is no more serious to Ilya than a hug or handshake, it's just a fun way to spend his time. A hobby almost, or maybe a cardio workout.

Yes... that's the kind of attitude Shane needs to embrace. If he can combine amazing but very casual sex with his duties, well he's not going to complain and he doubts Ilya is either.

Casual.

He rolls the word around in his head.

Casual—he can do casual, people do casual all the time. How hard can it be?

It occurs to him as he ties the towel round his waist and pushes his hair out of his eyes that maybe he's not exactly "people" and nor is Rozanov and maybe the way he's feeling about the man who'd better still be waiting for him in his bed isn't strictly speaking casual.

It's just another too sensible thought passing though and not one he needs to pay particular attention to. It's not like it'll be a problem, even if he ends up being much less casual about this situation than Ilya will be, even if he catches feelings then it's only him that will maybe, possibly get his feelings hurt when it ends. Ilya won't care, no, not Ilya Rozanov the poster boy for casual hook ups.

The path ahead looks surprisingly simple as long as he makes sure his own feelings don't get involved.

Shane opens the bathroom door and Ilya is still lying on his bed. The hiccup of his heartbeat jumping is probably a coincidence and if he'd ever paid attention to metaphors he might have suddenly remembered the one about shutting stable doors after horses have bolted, but he didn't so he doesn't.

What he does do is ignore the irregular pounding of his heart and the feelings that rush through him; he ignores the relief that Ilya stayed, the awe that he still looks so fucking sexy, all messy and dishevelled and horribly relaxed against Shane's own pillows and he most definitely pays no attention to the sweet sharp surge of joy he feels when Rozanov opens his eyes and smiles at him.

Shane ignores all of that and sends Ilya off to shower and then he gets on with changing the sheets so that when Rozanov comes out of the bathroom Shane can be cool and calm and collected and ready to bully him into sleeping in the same bed as him.

Just so he knows where he is obviously. So he can't sneak out, put himself in more danger. It's the most logical decision at this point.

He's lucky he's such a sensible person and can see the best way to move forward in what could be an awkward situation.

Smoothing out the bedsheet Shane feels very confident that everything is going to be fine.

He's in bed and reading, well, more looking at the pages than reading, when Rozanov finally comes out of the bathroom, he hesitates on the threshold, looking a little uncertain about what he's supposed to do next. It's kind of sweet to see him looking lost for a change.

Shane allows himself a second or two to feel smug that he's the one being logical and sensible about this before he makes his expectations clear and is pleased with how easily Ilya accepts the plan.

Another satisfied feeling sweeps through him, look at how sensible and mature they're both being.

So Shane watches surreptitiously as the man he's responsible for protecting climbs into his bed.

On closer inspection Ilya looks like he might bolt at any moment so Shane does the next logical thing and curls up next to him. He slings his arm over Rozanov's body and explains the rationale behind that to his dubious suspicious brain.

It's fine; it's all very logical, responsible, close body protection work. Shane closes his eyes, happy that he's resolved the evening's events in such a practical, sensible fashion.

He shuts down the part of his brain that is trying to point out that most people would call this cuddling not close protection work and that he wouldn't do this with any other principles he's protected or that he'd lose his shit if he found Rose or worse Hayden snuggled up to Rozanov when they were on duty.

After a few moments of conflict that part of his brain surrenders, recognising the situation as a lost cause, it stops producing unsettling facts and observations and falls victim to the comforting rhythm of Ilya Rozanov's chest rising and falling beneath his cheek, to the strong steady heart beat he can hear and the fingers that are smoothing up and down his arm, they're tentative at first but more confident when he doesn't protest. Why would he, it's very pleasant but that's immaterial and quite secondary to the real reason he's where he is and not moving anytime soon — the security benefits that the position that *technically* could be described as cuddling offers is obviously the primary reason for this set up.

And after accepting that very reasonable rationalisation he falls asleep more quickly and more deeply than he has in months.

Which doesn't mean anything either.

Technically.

Ilya wakes first to find they've shifted positions in their sleep.

Before they fell asleep Shane's arm was flung across his body but now it's Ilya's arm draped across Hollander. His subconscious had probably been behind that, worrying that Hollander would disappear on him in the night.

Even now, with the warmth of Shane's body seeping into his he's half expecting to see a note somewhere saying Hollander has realised he had made a horrible mistake and is going back to Canada as soon as he wakes up.

In this scenario Ilya knows the note would also point out that he would have Hayden Pike as his bodyguard for the rest of time.

There is no note though. Hollander stayed, of course he did, in his house so where would he go?

It must be because he seems to have a chance of avoiding a life with high levels of Hayden Pike exposure in it that opening his eyes and seeing the curve of Hollander's neck has made him so happy.

It's perfectly understandable that knowing he might not have to see Pike's face everyday would mean he's pleased to wake up and discover Hollander being the little spoon right next to him, it also explains why he didn't mind being woken up by a twitching nose because soft strands of hair were tickling his skin.

Nose now tickle free and blinking in the early morning sunlight Ilya tries not to move. He wants Shane to stay asleep, he wants more time like this because waking up with Shane Hollander in his arms was not something he ever expected to happen to him.

Ilya breathes slowly and tries to fix everything about this remarkable moment into his memory. He wants to remember it.

When Hollander stirs, sadly only a few minutes later Ilya officially wakes up too, stomach clenching at what kind of terrible awkwardness, excuses or possible blame are heading his way.

"Good morning."

The words are soft and spoken in a sleepy but surprisingly normal tone of voice and bizarrely Shane doesn't pull away from him, instead he twists around so he can look up over his shoulder.

"Did you sleep ok?"

The unexpectedly polite question adds to his confusion. He has no idea what to say and considers pinching himself to check that he's really awake.

Hollander is also doubting his wakefulness.

"Rozanov? You awake?"

With the words Shane moves again but he stays in the cradle of Ilya's arms and they end up face to face.

They're so close that Ilya could kiss him without even moving - if he wanted to, which he doesn't, that kind of thing was ok last night but now it is morning so things have to be different.

Hollander will want him to leave. Hollander will want things to be normal again. Hollander will want to forget all about the way they kissed and touched each other last night. Hollander will want a lot of things and not one of them will be Ilya.

He prepares to look and sound unbothered by his inevitable dismissal, except ... Hollander doesn't look in a hurry to move or like he's ashamed or embarrassed or angry, in fact he looks quite relaxed and almost kind of happy. Faced with that Ilya doesn't really know what to say so he doesn't say anything.

Shane does.

"Hey if I knew having sex would shut you up I'd have suggested this sooner."

The casual reference to their evening's activities doesn't do anything to help him feel more normal. He can hardly believe Hollander said it so plainly.

Knowing he has to say something soon or it will get weird, he falls back on a classic. His voice sounding low and gruff, far too Russian this early in morning.

"Am not morning person."

It's not not true so it'll do as a response.

He watches Hollander's lips twitch and enjoys his low chuckle as he nods. "Kinda guessed that."

There's a pause as they lie there quietly and Ilya's perfectly happy to stay where he is for the rest of the day but slowly Hollander's face loses its relaxed glow, when he takes a breath Ilya just knows something sensible is going to come out of his mouth. He's right-

"We should get up. Get you to work."

It's predictably boring of Hollander but it does at least seem to suggest something positive;

"Does this mean I do not have to put up with Pike anymore? You are coming back?"

Hollander's lips twitch and Ilya presses his together so he doesn't do anything stupid.

"Yes I'm back, don't want Hayden quitting on me or having a stroke from the stress of dealing with *you*."

The humour dancing in Hollander's dark eyes makes it impossible not to smile proudly at the compliment. Of course Hollander probably does not mean it as compliment because he rolls his eyes, but Ilya is not fooled, Shane is trying to pretend he's irritated at his annoying friend's recent treatment, but he is not. His next words and the twitching corner of his lips prove it.

"You know I think you Rozannoyed him all the way up to a 12. New record. Congratulations."

Shane has that familiar twinkle in his eye so Ilya decides it is safe to continue his campaign against Pike.

"Ah thank you but can not take all glory. "

The statement puts a suspicious look on Hollander's pretty face and Ilya's more than happy to explain his reasoning.

"Must give Pike some credit ... he is very easy to annoy."

Ilya's thrilled with the guilty snigger that escapes Shane and he beams even more proudly. Ilya would bet Pike can not make Hollander giggle like that.

Shane attempts to look serious as he reproaches him.

"You could be nicer you know he's a good guy. You'd like him if you got to know him better."

Ilya doubts that and anyway this is not about Pike, Ilya just wants his proper bodyguard back. He shrugs in response to Shane's optimism.

"Do not need to, I have best bodyguard again now."

The next words just slip out.

"I like *him*, am glad he is back."

The confession startles a sharp breath out of Hollander and Ilya considers biting his tongue off to prevent anything else stupid escaping his mouth but after a few nervous heartbeats it seems that perhaps he does not need to worry too much because Hollander's response is a smile and a quietly pleased

"Yeah?"

And why does he has such pretty eyelashes? The way they're fluttering is entirely unfair, as is the glimpse of white and the imprint of those same teeth on his stupid pink lips.

It's all so pretty and inviting that Ilya is forced to examine the idea that Hollander might not mind a little flirting so he repeats what Shane said, just as softly.

"Yeah."

It's risky but he can't help it, he's starting to have "hopes" and having hopes is dangerous, but then he's always enjoyed a bit of danger.

Shane is talking again, avoiding eye contact, but he's smiling.

"Good, because I think *this*..." Hollander's finger taps against both their chests in turn, "...is gonna have to continue."

This echos like a gunshot in his head and Ilya forgets how to breath for second.

This is not at all what Ilya had imagined moving on from last night would look like. It's such an unexpected twist that all he can manage as a response is a rather breathless-

"Oh?"

He has no idea what that is supposed to mean? What does Hollander think "*this*" is and what does "continue" look like?

Surely Hollander can not want to "continue" in the same way Ilya would like. How is a person supposed to check these things without embarrassing self?

Fortunately he doesn't need to ask questions because it only takes another heartbeat for Hollander to offer more, but maybe his English is bad this morning because it can't mean what he thinks it does.

"Yeah... think you're going to be stuck with me 24/7."

The most ludicrous question races through his head- does Hollander wants this too?

It's an intoxicating thought but because he is stubborn and stupid and more than a little scared Ilya argues against what he wants.

"But you do not have to now. Is not necessary, I am safe. You rescued me from very dangerous bathroom and also terrifying dance floor. Kept me safe when in much peril on cab drive home."

He doesn't mention the other things Hollander did last night after the cab ride.

"You have banned me from adventures in blowjobs from strangers. Doomed me to a dull life of ballet and nothing else! Practice and sleep, nothing to live..."

Shane interrupts him with a snort..

"You're so dramatic you know that right?"

Hollander sounds amused so Ilya makes an offended noise and refuses to acknowledge the question.

"Is fine, can look after myself when at home. Am adult, very good at adulting, have had long time alone to practice."

He ignores the quick look of concern that flashes over Hollander's face. He does not need or want sympathy. What he wants is for Hollander to be clear and say it is not because he *has* to stay close but because he *wants* to.

Is it too much to hope for declaration of truth and to hear Hollander say that he wants Ilya like Ilya wants him?

Apparently it is because what Hollander decides to say is-

"Nice try but I just can't trust you out of my sight anymore. Sorry Rozanov- you blew it last night."

Hopes and disappointment aside the gift of innuendo can't be ignored; Ilya puts on his best poker face and nods wisely.

"Ah yes this is true, I did blow *it*, but you blew first, so can not really blame me for that."

It takes a second before Hollander gets it then his cheeks flare hotter than ever and Ilya gets the usual response.

"Fuck off.."

He laughs and rolls onto his back when Shane shoves him away, a protest against his crudeness.

Still laughing Ilya tries to placate the angry kitten scowling beside him.

"No seriously, I will be good, I promise. Will be best behaved star in ballet world ."

Hollander doesn't reply but the disbelief is written all over his face, which is outrageous. Ilya puts on his most offended face.

"You doubt? I am Russian! Promise is serious thing, I say will be good so will be good."

Hollander rolls closer, lifting up on his elbow so he's hovering above him. Ilya likes the view even if or maybe because the expression on his face makes his feelings on that dramatic declaration very clear.

Hollander says; "Really....?" in the flattest, most unconvinced tone Ilya has ever heard.

He tuts sadly expressing his dismay.

"Hollander where is trust? I am hurt!"

Hollander rolls his eyes at that but his mouth is twitching again.

Ilya holds back his own grin but it's a challenge because bickering with Hollander is such wonderful fun.

"Hurt. I am hurt!"

He makes the new protest even more dramatic, throwing a hand onto his chest to cover his heart, it makes Shane's mask slip so while Shane is laughing at him Ilya puts his other hand on Hollander's hip to stop him moving away.

"I don't believe you for one second. You're a menace."

Ilya pouts up at his faithless bodyguard.

"No! Hollander that is not fair. I will be good!"

All that gets him is another dismissive snort but then Hollander mutters something under his breath.

"I don't think you know how to be good."

The words are oddly affectionate and challenging at the same time. Ilya finds he likes the combination, it generates a sudden bone deep pulse of desire that heats his blood again, making him want things; making him far too many things.

The rush of unfiltered need loosens his tongue and something unintended slips past his lips, the words coated with the desire building within him.

"But I was so good last night."

The sharp gasp from Hollander is deliciously tempting, as is the way his eyes are focused like lasers on his mouth. Ilya watches Hollander watch as he moves his tongue over his lips in a slow wet swipe of anticipation. It's a clear invitation but the man has remarkable levels of restraint, Hollander wants him that's obvious and his voice is low and husky the same flavour as Ilya's was but the message is different.

"We need to get you to work."

Fuck he's stubborn, but fortunately Ilya is persistent.

"I am often late..."

The glaze of lust is momentarily replaced by irritation.

"Yes I know- you're not meant to be..."

Ilya puts his hand somewhere daring and the lustful expression returns instantly.

"I am not meant to do a lot of things but I still do...."

Shane groans when Ilya moves his hand but he doesn't protest. The only change is in his breathing and his voice.

"See that's why I can't let you out of my sight.

"Can't or don't want to...?"

"Fuck you.."

Then Shane kisses him hard and fast and a little desperately. When he pulls away he's wide eyed and breathless and Ilya tightens his arms to make sure he doesn't run. He doesn't he just swears again, but more breathless, more dazed.

"Fuck you..."

Big brown eyes all wet and confused blink at him and if Ilya lets Shane think for one second this will be over. So he does what he does best and annoys his bodyguard with a smirk and a jibe.

"You keep getting that wrong..."

Shane Hollander's pretty mouth opens no doubt to swear at him again but Ilya takes advantage of the opportunity and pulls him into a kiss, rolling them both over so Shane is under him again.

Thirty seconds after that Hollander has nothing more to say and Ilya gets to be late for work after all.

Shane opens the door to Ilya's dressing room. He's been in here to many times to count now since that first night.

He does the usual checks from the door way looks in, up and around. None of the various items he has set up as subtle checks of intruders to Ilya's privacy have been disturbed.

The room is as empty as it should be.

Behind him Ilya is crowded up close to him. Closer than he should be but Shane allows it because he likes the warmth of his body more than he should and he's selfish enough to take any opportunity to experience it.

Neither of them are sure if his contract will be extended so this situation and these opportunities to be close may be over soon. People seem less worried about their star performer these days, there have been no new letters with threats for a while now and nothing unusual or suspicious has happened to rouse Shane's own concerns since the nightclub.

It looks like Rozanov's stalker/hater may have moved on. Maybe it was that guy in the club and Shane scared him away. He still keeps an eye out for the man he saw in the nightclub over a week ago. The guy had been suspicious but there are creeps like that everywhere and he's not seen him before or hanging around near Ilya's home or the opera house since. He's staying alert but so far nothing has set off his alarms.

Another sweep of the room secures the safety and privacy of his principal so he steps inside and Ilya follows him, the door shuts quickly and back still to Ilya, Shane tries not to smile or anticipate what might happen now they're alone.

He can make a educated guess because the same thing has been happening everytime they're alone but it's not good to get used to anything or to want it.

Rozanov will no doubt get bored of him soon enough and want a new toy to play with. The idea makes him feel a little sick and Shane's stomach churns at the level of pathetic he's achieved in only seven days, he ought to have some pride and stop this thing now before he gets hurt but he won't, he doesn't want to.

He's accepted his fate and it'll be ok eventually... probably ... maybe.

He has his doubts now because what he feared would happened has happened.

Feelings... can't ever trust them to behave.

Hands grab hold of his waist and before he can do anything to stop it (not that he wants to stop it) he's spun around and his back is hitting the door with a thud that knocks the breath out of him and opens his mouth on a gasp, something Rozanov takes advantage of instantly and Shane is being kissed. He always expects it to be less tender than it is but Rozanov kisses softly and slowly every time. Not that it doesn't get more intense but the mouth taking him apart is always so gentle. Shane wishes he didn't love that as much as he loves the sex.

"Roz... we should not be doing this here.."

It's really not a particularly convincing statement considering he's grinding himself against Rozanov's thick thigh muscle and ending the sentence on a low moan.

Fuck he's so unprofessional- he needs to stop this now.

Teeth graze his neck while he's being pulled closer encouraged shamelessly to take what he needs.

He does, pressing up against Ilya even harder, now can be later can't it?

In his ear, warm words are being whispered and teeth nibble at his lob, he doesn't whimper - he really doesn't, it's just the thick Russian accent is not hot.

"You keep saying that and yet here we are... again."

Ilya freezes in his arms, horribly still and Shane wants to cry when the kissing stops and Rozanov leans away... he looks far too pleased with himself and Shane hates him so much.

"Ok I will stop but when you are begging me for more of this....I will say no Hollander you had your chance. No more sexy fun at work for you."

"Arsehole."

Ilya tuts "No very polite words for office."

"We're not in an office."

Ilya snorts and rolls his eyes

"I know. We are in my dressing room. Door locked all safe and protected. No one to bother us... "

A hand slides down his body and presses against the hard line of his cock which is betraying him once again.

"Very private... maybe we can bend rules a little? Yes?"

"Maybe.." He gasps the word out grateful for the contact of Ilya's hand. Fuck it feels so good to be pinned between the wall and his body, being tortured by slow strokes up and down.

Ilya hums in his ear again, presses small kisses against his skin and whispers..

"So hard already, so needy... but I can stop..."

Shane knows he doesn't mean it, it's just an excuse to let him ask for what he wants . Only a week and already Rozanov knows what he wants better than anyone else.

"Don't you fucking dare..."

Rozanov is not the only one with teeth. Shane sinks his into the meat of Ilya's neck just where it meets his shoulder and rejoices in the shiver that runs through the man he's holding onto. He keeps the game going...and he means it- although he meant it last time too.

"...but this is last time at work.. we need..."

They both know it probably won't be, but it should be ... it really should. He's not wrong when he says this is unprofessional it is...so so unprofessional but it's too hard to keep thinking when he has hands and lips and thick muscles pressing into him. He groans again

and his head makes a loud thud as it connects with the door as he arches back in response to the teasing strokes being given to his aching dick.

..need to..."

"What do you need Hollander?"

Fuck he loves Rozanov's voice. He answers far too honestly.

"You ... I need you."

He feels the tremor and unsteady gasp that runs through Rozanov's ridiculous body and it makes him feels powerful that he can do that with his words.

"Fuck Hollander..."

Shane likes the shaky breath Ilya needs before he can speak again. He likes what he says with that breath too.

"On your knees."

It doesn't even take a second for him to fold, knees bending on command and honestly as he nuzzles in closer Shane thinks there's no other place he'd want to be right now.

Close protection seems to have taken on a whole new meaning for him.

The noise of his hand hitting the door isn't nearly as loud as the sound Hollander's head had made a few moments ago. It's much easier to stay on his feet with his hand braced up against the wood. So what if he needs some support, who wouldn't? Anyone would feel dizzy and lightheaded if the man they'd fallen for dropped to his knees for them so fast.

On your knees.... the words were barely spoken before he was down. Hollander did what he was told in a heartbeat, in a single breath and with remarkable levels of enthusiasm and now Iyla can't breath at all.

Looking down he's captivated by the way Shane's dark silky hair looks against his own skin, the pretty contrast of the soft strands wrapped around his pale fingers as he holds onto a tiny piece of a man as extraordinary as Shane Hollander.

Ilya gasps at the feel of his lips and mouth, nuzzling their way closer, at the hot dampness spreading across his crotch.

The man is a quick learner and very talented.

Holding onto the door he breathes through the sensation and tries not to move too much.

The sensations and feelings coursing through him are difficult to separate and process, he can hardly believe any of this is real.

To guard a body you must get close yes but he never imagined they would get this close. He never imagined Hollander would want things as much as he does. He's magnificent, a true gift and Ilya knows he has to find a way to keep him. He may not be able to go on without the man in his life.

A week. This insane situation has lasted seven days. Ilya can't actually believe it. Seven days of Hollander in his arms and in his bed at night. Hollander kissing him and smiling at him. Hollander acting like he might actually like him.

It's too good to be true, dangerous too. The feelings he's been holding back are getting stronger everyday and he's in no way sure that Hollander is in this for anything more than sex and to keep Ilya out of trouble.

Hollander's clever fingers have worked his buttons open and now his pants are down so Ilya stops thinking and lets himself enjoy the moment before everything inevitably goes wrong around him.

Shane's phone rings. It's not the first time that name has flashed up on his phone in the last few days. It's getting late and Ilya is in the shower so he could just answer and get it over with. If he's not careful she'll just show up at work tomorrow to check on him.

Talking to Rose is honestly the last thing he wants to do right now but he doesn't really have any other options left. The text messages that go between the phone calls make it clear she's running out of patience. The last one had threatened to bring his mother into it.

Hitting green he braces for impact.

"The fuck you think you're playing at Hollander? Dodging my calls, texting me back with stupid fucking emojis."

There's no room to answer the question and the angry voice has him wincing in anticipation of what's coming next.

"I know where you are. Where you've been all week! What the fuck are you doing?!"

This time there's a pause which he uses quickly.

"Hey Rose. I'm good thanks."

"Why are you with Rozanov 24/7?"

There's an easy answer for that although he doesn't think she'll go for it. He tries anyway.

"I'm his bodyguard Rose, I'm supposed to be with him. It's my job."

"Yeah? Your job, that's what you've been doing? When you're supposed to clock off at 9. Overtime is it? Just how much of that body have you been guarding and how much have you been fucking?"

"Rose!"

Genuinely shocked he can't manage anything else- he knows she's a good detective among other things but how she knows what they're doing well enough to so boldly state it as fact is a mystery. He knows they've been careful, no one has seen them together together. He knows she can't *know*. He considers denying it but then she says;

"Don't lie to me on top of this. You said you'd be careful, you could've waited a few more weeks. He's not that hot! Fuck him all you like after we're done here. You can not be doing this and working the job too! You know that!"

He does know that. Which is why he gets stubborn.

"I'm fine I just can't risk him running out again, getting in trouble, getting hurt."

"Bullshit!"

"Rose it's fine. I'm fine. I'm being careful."

The next question she asks punches him in the stomach.

"Are you in love with him? Is that what this is about."

Is he? He isn't, obviously, because that would be mind numbingly careless ,but is he? While his brain flounders his mouth covers for him.

"Of course I'm not fucking in love with him! Jesus Rose! I'm not stupid."

But that's not true is it, he really might be that stupid and he really might actually be in love .

Love... is it love?

Is that why he feels like this? Like he can't breath when he's not around Rozanov. Has he fallen not just in lust but in love with the man?

Shane already knows the answer, he's just been ignoring it for a while now.

"Shane?"

The anger has dropped from Rose's voice.

"I'm worried - about you both."

"Don't be, I've got it under control."

Rose's sigh tells him she doesn't believe him, which is no surprise, he doesn't believe him either.

"Let me do days then, until the end of the contract, it's not that long and you can still stay with him at night, you can still... "

He interrupts her because the thought of someone else being with Ilya all day watching out for him makes him feel queasy.

"No I need to be with him make sure he's ok. I need to..."

He doesn't really know what else he needs to.

Rose's voice is too gentle now, he'd rather she was yelling and swearing at him if he's honest.

"You can trust me with him Shane."

"I know.. but I just need to be here. I don't have long left. Just ... it's fine Rose, there hasn't even been a letter or threat for weeks now.

"Let me help."

"I have to do this .. I ... he's..."

His shaky sigh conveys the rest.

Rose's less shaky more exasperated sigh travels though the phone, he can imagine her with her eyes closed shaking her head.

"I know, that's why I should take over."

She sounds sad and worried and he's sorry for that but he's not changing his mind .

"Does Hayden know?"

Rose's snort says more than what any words could.

"That you've moved in with his nemesis? Yes. That you're sleeping with him? No, I don't think Hayd could imagine anyone wanting to be with Rozanov 24/7 so you're safe enough for now. I do want to be there when he finds out though."

The thought of telling Hayden makes him wince, but his best friend should know if it's Rose interrupts his thoughts with another plea.

"Shane... please let me.."

"No." He shuts her off before they can go through it all again.

"It'll be ok, don't worry. I'm being careful I promise."

She's silent so long wonders if she's given up on him and hung up, then...

"Don't be stupid ... don't get dead."

He smiles, even is she can't see it she'll hear it in his voice.

"I won't."

"You better not.. call me if you need me, ok? Promise?"

He can do that much to ease her worries so he does.

"Promise..."

She mutters one more thing before she hangs up.

"Yeah right... "

She really does know him well.

The door was open and Hollander was not being particularly quiet so how can it be his fault if he heard the conversation.

It is not, and if not his fault then it does not count as eavesdropping.

Shane has said goodbye to Rose Landry now but Ilya stays where he is, leaning against the wall, trying to settle the churning disappointment currently creating havoc inside him.

Blinking too fast, chest too tight, he takes a deep breath. Of course Hollander does not love him, he did not think he did.

Except hearing the bluntly stated fact hurts a little. Well more than a little if he's honest.

Despite the last week together he knew Hollander couldn't possibly love him but judging by the ache in his chest he had begun to hope that maybe he could. Is very disappointing he'd thought he was smarter than that. He should have been smarter than that to even have a little hope.

Of course Hollander does not love him, why would he? This is nothing more than sex for his bodyguard. Sex and a way to keep his annoying charge busy and out of trouble.

Ilya wishes knowing that made a difference to his stupid heart because it starts bouncing around his rib cage, an excited unruly puppy crashing into walls as soon as he walks into the bedroom and Hollander smiles at him.

Usually so in control of his body Ilya discovers he can't take more than a few steps into the room. His chest hurts and his eyes are stinging too much. He knew this had to end but he wasn't expecting it to happen right now.

"Hey?"

Hollander is still smiling at him but there's a glimmer of worry on his face as he slides off the bed and his stupid feet, still in stupid socks because he gets cold, hit the floor.

"You ok?"

Nodding but still not moving Ilya answers him.

"I am good."

He's really not, he wants to cry but Russians do not cry so he will not. Ilya forces the words he needs to say out of his mouth.

"I am so good in fact that I think you do not have to stay tonight. I am tired."

He smiles to add the necessary casualness to the story, "

"You have been wearing me out. I promise I will sleep not party, and have early practice session tomorrow, you will distract me in morning make me late. I am already too lazy."

The familiar criticism of his father and various instructors he'd had when he was younger falls naturally into the air but Shane who was already frowning at him is now scowling. Hollander interrupts before Ilya can say the rest of the speech that will send Shane away.

"You're not lazy... why would you say that? You, you work so hard.. I see it everyday.. you're dedicated and passionate, you keep trying even when you're exhausted. You always want perfection and you work hard for it."

There's a heartbeat of silence then nothing but horrible sincerity in Hollander's voice.

"You're not lazy."

Fuck... he'd wanted to cry before but now it's almost impossible to keep his face blank.

Looking away, mouth twisting he doesn't notice Shane has moved again until his hands are touching his face and turning it back towards him.

"Hey.."

Wanting to die, he tries to ignore the gentle thumb removing the tear from his cheek.

"Sorry."

The word is fractured, broken like his heart.

Shane kisses him softly on the cheek and it's far too caring for what they are to each other. Hollander does not care - he said so, Ilya heard him. He can't understand any of this anymore. He really needs to end it but Hollander is making it too difficult.

Sniffing too loudly and wiping his own tears away he tries to understand at least something about what's going on between them.

"Why are you being nice. You don't even like me."

Hollander's breath catches.

"I do. I like you a lot."

He sniffs again. It's pathetic. He's pathetic.

"You don't.."

Warm hands cup his face and the softest of kisses is pressed against his mouth. It doesn't help with the crying situation.

Hollander pulls away from him. Eyes soft and a tiny sad smile on his face.

"Ilya... I do like you. I do and I'm not going anywhere tonight. I'm staying. Ok? It's not because I don't trust you. I want to stay. Ok?"

It has to be lie but it doesn't feel like one and he must be more self destructive than he knew because he nods with another stupid sniff and too much accent.

"Okie..."

Then Hollander smiles again and hauls him into bed and arranges them so Ilya's head is on his chest and once he's comfortable fingers start to smooth through his damp curls.

It's nice - far too nice and Ilya hates himself for accepting the crumbs of Hollander's kindness.

Hollander doesn't love him but maybe he does actually like him a little, maybe for Hollander this is like it is for Ilya and Sveta enough for this, enough for a few more weeks of fun.

Breathing in the scent of Hollander's body wash mixed with his own sheets Ilya closes his eyes and decides to let himself have one more night. He'll end this part of their relationship tomorrow but for now it's too late for him to do anything but soak up whatever he can before he makes himself break his own heart.

It will be ok, he'll still have Sveta and ballet, he can go on like he did before, drinking and hooking up and being fabulous and famous and live with a broken heart, which is lucky because it's not like he has a choice.

Ilya pauses and waits for the man walking almost but not quite next to him to go ahead and lead the way.

The routine is comforting after the emotional turmoil of last night.

The dance studio is his for the whole morning and he really needs to practice today, loose himself in dancing, clear his mind. Find some fucking peace for five minutes.

He's hungry and tired and upset. His morning has been bad; he'd had no appetite for breakfast, run out of coffee at home and couldn't find his favourite jacket.

Shane had rolled his eyes and said they could stop and get coffee on the way but he'd sulked and said he didn't want any now. That sophisticated argument hadn't mattered because Shane had gone across the road to get him coffee anyway. They'd argued about it because Ilya had refused to go with him, which annoyed his bodyguard but not so much that he didn't go anyway, a relaxation in his usual strict rules but maybe he wanted to get away from Ilya's

mood. Hollander did order him to stand in the doorway of the opera house so he could see keep watch on him through the window and it wasn't until Shane was heading back to him that it occurred to Ilya that he could have just left, but he could see Shane watching him through the store front window, smiling that same sad worried smile he had last night and Ilya had stayed where he was. It would be better if his stupid bodyguard stopped trying to be nice to him. It's pissing him off.

It had also pissed him off that the queue for coffee was long enough that he had to greet various members of the corp and orchestra as they arrived for work. Not many people stopped to talk apart from Cliff and Luca who arrived together and that meant Stefan had an excuse to join them when he walked past. The idiot had taken to wearing a baseball cap constantly recently; fucking ridiculous. Sveta cheered him up slightly when she hugged and kissed him on her way in - telling him off for not having called her all week. She too had been caught by Stefan who Ilya noticed lurking around obviously waiting to talk to her inside the building.

Then his locker door got stuck which annoyed him as did the fact Hollander was able to get it open when he gently pushed him aside and tried the lock himself.

His mood had not improved and he's aware that Hollander is noticing. He's going to ask about it soon and then Ilya will use that as a reason to break off the sex part of their relationship, maybe tell Hollander to leave completely and accept that his punishment for falling in love like an idiot is enduring Hayden Pike for the last weeks of the contract.

Infront of him Hollander does his usual checks with a hand held out behind him to make sure Ilya stays back, as if he doesn't know that by now, and waits impatiently to be let into the dance studio.

The fuss is still fucking ridiculous.

Once Hollander is satisfied that the permanently empty room still *isn't* hiding the mysterious assassins it never has or never will he gestures for Ilya to enter.

He walks straight past his bodyguard leaving him plenty of room between them, something he hasn't done for months and for days now he's been crowding Hollander at every doorway, stealing a kiss or more once they were on the other side. Not today. Not anymore. He has to start protecting himself. He has to end this.

Ilya kicks off his shoes and doesn't care if Hollander picks them up or not.

He aims to get straight to dancing but that doesn't happen because Hollander decides he wants to talk about why Ilya is in such a spectacular mood.

The conversation descends into an argument instantly, words he hadn't meant to say slipping out, his stupid hurt feelings wrapping around each word. It makes him feel a little better to see Hollander getting annoyed, to see him flounder and maybe even get a little upset.

It's for the best... it's what needs to happen, he needs to break away from this closeness that's killing him. He has to make Hollander hate him, he has to make him want to walk away so Ilya doesn't have to do it himself.

The row continues, he throws even worse words at Hollander but they still both notice the door open.

Ilya sees it move out of the corner of his eye and Shane's head twitches towards the noise, he tells the kid to leave it on the floor but he doesn't fully turn, too busy glaring at Ilya.

It's not like they don't know what it is; the usual delivery of water and snacks that Hollander always orders for him.

Even while saying the worst things he can think of Ilya notices the moment Shane goes unnaturally tense but he's still not prepared for what happens next.

Hollander's eyes go wide but he's not looking at him anymore he's looking past Ilya's shoulder and he swears loudly as he moves fast.

Without any warning Shane barrels into him, shoulder first and the floor greets Ilya with a solid thump that's going to leave a bruise.

The noise of glass shattering fills the air at the same time he realises he's on the ground and the brittle noise makes Ilya flinch beneath the shelter of Shane's body. There's a sharp stinging in both his feet and the parts of his legs not covered by Hollander's body.

Then the weight of Shane is gone and there's just noise and confusion, feet scrabbling on the floor, too loud and scratchy for what should be a smooth surface, Ilya hears cursing and a bang that sounds just like a gunshot does on television and it's only then that he understands what's happening.

Someone has tried to shoot him and now Hollander is gone and that means he must be chasing after someone who not only has a weapon but is happy to use it.

Getting up adds to the pain in his feet as he cuts his hands on the shards of mirror glass covering the floor. His reflection is all around him reflected back in the hundreds of fragments scattered across the floor, some still big enough to show his face.

Ilya barely glances at the pale wide eyed faces on the floor as he hops and leaps forward attempting to miss the worse of the glass as he heads towards the door to look for his bodyguard.

He finds him only a few moments later a crumpled motionless heap at the bottom of a flight of stairs and Ilya has never been more scared in his life when he calls Shane's name and gets no response.

Lurching forward and stumbling down the last few steps gracelessly Ilya ends his journey on his knees next to Shane Hollander's body shouting desperately for someone, anyone to come and help him.

Yes I know a cliffhanger again, to be fair to me you probably ought to be expecting it by now if you've read this far or anything else I've written.

So told you lots was going to happen... tried to work some cannon lines and vibes into it all for fun but with an au twist. Hope you enjoyed.

Leave me a comment if you're still here and would like to make me smile. It really does help me keep going with the words to know they're getting read.

Special hello and thanks to the regular readers who cheer me up after each update with a hello 🤗

Till next time which may be the penultimate chapter but then again may not. I promise nothing in either direction



Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

Ilya has been the focus of an unknown stalker sending threatening letters and plotting even more for months. Now that stalker has made their move and life moves in several unexpected directions.

Chapter Notes

Little jump back in time at the start for Shane's pov and then on we go into action movie territory. Things are happening but not yet wrapping up, chapt 13 awaits us all.

I've tried to update the tags but I'm not so good at that so expect general movie type shenanigans with a bit of peril swearing and action, perhaps a splash of blood and tension too... couldn't possibly comment

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

The pissy mood Rozanov is in is starting to rub off on Shane.

He's got no idea what's wrong with him. The only thing he can think of is that he's embarrassed about being so vulnerable last night. It had been a surprise to see him like that, and he'd had no idea what might have caused it but Shane hadn't minded the new level of intimacy between them and he'd really thought things were ok for Ilya by the time they went to sleep.

He must have been wrong because Rozanov has been in a foul mood all morning.

Right now, as they head towards the dance studio, the sullen dancer is a dark shadow hovering behind him. He's tried to improve his mood with coffee and conversation but the lack of interaction eventually shut Shane down and he hasn't spoken to Ilya since he'd pinged his locker open for him and Rozanov had growled an insincere thank you.

It's confusing and he's annoyed about it but he's also worried. He'd watched Rozanov through the coffee shop window and wanted desperately to be able to help him somehow.

At least the bad mood hasn't been purely directed at Shane, Ilya hasn't seemed particularly happy to see anyone, not Marlow or Haas and he could practically taste the distain rolling off him when another man joined them while Ilya waited impatiently for his coffee. Shane hardly blamed him, the baseball hat - formal overcoat combo the guy was wearing looked utterly

ridiculous. Maybe he can cheer Ilya up by encouraging some bitchy gossip about whoever it was later.

Rozanov did at least smile at Svetlana when she arrived but even before their short conversation ended he was looking miserable again. When she walked away something else pissed him off almost immediately because Shane caught him glaring fiercely towards the opera house.

Now his gloomy companion lurks in the background while Shane opens the door to the room Ilya uses for dance practice. He does his usual checks and steps back as Rozanov sweeps past him silently. It reminds him of their first few weeks together.

Then Rozanov kicks his shoes off with a particularly high level of vigor and they end up halfway across the room.

Shane's unimpressed glare is wasted, Ilya hasn't bothered to turn around. Honestly he's acting like a child this morning and Shane has no idea why but he's going to find out. The time they have left together is dwindling and he doesn't want to waste any of it with fighting. It's going to break his heart to say goodbye so he'd like to have more good memories than bad.

He tries to catch the dancer's eye but Rozanov is posed in front of the mirror, his head twisted down and away so there's no chance of accidental eye contact.

He probably should wait but he's too agitated for that, he needs to get to the bottom of this. Not understanding something has always frustrated him so even knowing it's probably not wise Shane starts the conversation he wants to have anyway.

"Hey... I know you're upset. Can I help?"

The answer is short and curt; unfriendly might be the right word.

"No."

Shane stares at the muscles popping across his shoulders as Rozanov lifts his arms and for once doesn't feel anything but annoyed.

"Ilya?"

It's not the first time he's used his name but most of those have been slips, apart from when they're in bed together. Then he's allowed to say it. Then he lets himself say it and hope Ilya hears what he can't say with other words.

Unfortunately Rozanov doesn't react well to his name in this new context. Spinning around to face him Ilya's eyes blaze bright with something too complicated to understand in the brief second it's allowed to burn.

"Do not *Ilya* me now Hollander. Now is not time for "Ilya" like we are friends. I know. I know I am just job for you. I know this and I know I am only "Ilya" when you need to distract me, keep me prisoner!"

The word shocks him. Prisoner? What the fuck! He'd known Rozanov was in a foul mood but this is ridiculous and coming out of nowhere, he'd thought ...

"Such a clever bodyguard yes? Such a good idea, very smart to find a way to make your fake job easier."

Shane stares blankly as the vitriolic attack continues. Fake job?! He can't understand. What has changed between last night and now. Last night he'd had Ilya in his arms and...

He repeats the last bizarre accusation.

"Fake job..."

Ilya sneers at him. Shane's not seen that expression in months.

"Yes... fake.. you just stand around, do nothing, very fake, very boring. No danger ever, months and months of nothing but boring boring bodyguard who just stands around in stupid sunglasses making me do boring things. You might as well leave now. Do not need you for last few weeks of no danger."

Confused and starting to feel genuinely hurt Shane asks the only question that matters to him.

"Why are you saying this?"

That pauses the soliloquy, puts a strange expression on Rozanov's face. His words are so angry, the gestures exaggerated but something doesn't fit, Rozanov's eyes aren't angry, not even a little bit. He looks.... Shane tries to work it out; sad scared unhappy?

An idea occurs to him, is Ilya trying to distract him from something, maybe he's got another letter and is upset about it. The thought makes his muscles go tense and his eyes sweep the room automatically even when he knows nothing is wrong. He checked. He always checks.

But why wouldn't Ilya... Rozanov tell him if there was another threat?

Feeling confused and increasingly annoyed he challenges the strange confrontational attitude and cruel words.

"I thought we'd moved past this. You know everyone just wants to keep you safe, people care about you. I care about you.. I fucking.."

In the heat of the moment he almost said it outloud but he's saved from himself by Rozanov interrupting him.

"No! No one is caring! I am not stupid. I am not here to be liked or popular I am here because of skill, my talent! I make money for them, I bring glory to Boston ballet! Talent like no one else for years! I am useful that is all! And **you** , you do not *care*, is lie... to say you do, you just smile and keep me busy... with big brown eyes and.."

Ilya's hand waves up and down he seems to be indicating Shane's whole body... does he mean... he can't, he can't think that Shane would be sleeping with him just to ...

"... to distract me and make your boring job easier. So easy you can do lying down now."

Yes he does. He actually does.

Shane feels like he's been punched in the stomach. His eyes prickle with tears a combination of rage and hurt.

"Fuck off!"

Rozanov laugh isn't like his usual one it's much more bitter. Shane hates the sound of it, he can't believe he thought he knew this man.

"You you think I'd fuck you ... just....just"

Words fail him. It hurts far more than he thought it would to find out Rozanov could think that about him.

Another sneer reinforces the message.

"What? Do not pretend to be sad, like you care for me. Is not what you said last..."

The movement comes from the mirror, the sound from behind him. It's just the door opening. Shane's not where he should be to collect the delivery and he's too mad to move or take his eyes off Rozanov so he shouts out to just put the package on the floor.

Breathing hard he tries to pick up the thread of his furious thoughts while caught in Ilya's bright angry sad glare but it's too hard to hold his gaze. It hurts too much so he looks away, past Ilya's shoulder and into the mirror behind him.

And everything that happens after that is instinct.

He moves before he can think, knocking Ilya down and covering him with his body. Fulfilling the literal definition of his purpose in Ilya's life.

The sharp crack Shane's expecting to hear is followed by a shattering sound that makes Ilya flinch underneath him. Shane flinches too as the glass cuts him but he welcomes the pain because it means whoever just shot at them missed Ilya and hit the mirror instead, but that doesn't mean Ilya is safe.

Wasting no time Shane gets to his feet just in time to see the door slam shut and without a second shot into the room thank god.

He scrambles across the floor slipping on broken shards and cursing as his hands hit the floor and his palms get cut. There's no time to worry about that as he reaches for his gun with one hand and pulls the door open with another. That's when the second shot sounds out but it misses him completely. The moment he takes to duck means the shooter has disappeared around the corner by the time he's upright again but there's only this one hallway leading away from the studio, if he's fast enough he can catch the bastard that just tried to kill Ilya and put an end to his threats for good.

It's because he's moving so fast he makes the mistake, and maybe it's also because he's angry, his heart pounding with fear for Rozanov and how close it was, of what could have happened because he was distracted, because he let Ilya distract him; stopping abruptly at the top of the staircase leaves him off balance as he desperately scans the lobby to locate his target.

It just takes one quick shove from behind to move him and it's only when he's tumbling far too quickly down the staircase that Shane remembers noticing the closet in the hallway that in retrospect he really should have stopped to check.

With nothing but his regret and fear for Ilya to cushion his landing Shane hits the floor at the end of the ornate staircase and everything goes dark.

Rose Landry is intimidating woman but Ilya knew that after having met her only once, every other encounter with her including today has only solidified the opinion.

He tries to avoid her eyes and the silent questions held within them.

He remembers the night they met she'd warned him to be careful with her friend, she'd said she had all the skills Hollander had but that she was not so nice. He believed her then, he does not need proof today, not when he is scared and worried sick about Shane—who no one will tell him anything about.

He's asked and asked but no one has any news and the ignorance is forcing him to imagine all kinds of terrible things; multiple broken bones, paralysis, coma, amnesia, deadly bullet wounds or even dead.

Shane could be dead and no one is telling him anything!

With all that in his head he does not need Landry appearing in the doorway of his hospital room to glare, not when the shame of how he behaved just before the attack and the last things he said to Hollander are on repeat in his head.

Not when he's terrified that they may be the last things he ever gets to say to him.

The time between finding Hollander a crumpled lifeless heap at the bottom of the stairs and arriving at the hospital is nothing more than a hazy blur. Ilya knows he only got here himself because of Sveta; she'd not been the first to find him shouting for help but she had arrived quickly when the news of the attack spread through the building.

Once the ambulance took the terrifyingly still body of Hollander away she'd bundled him into a cab and held his hand all the way to the hospital.

She's gone now, while his injuries were being seen to she'd noticed how he was dressed or rather not dressed and announced she'd go to his place to fetch clothes more suitable for public appearances than ballet tights and more importantly get him some shoes. It was only then he'd noticed that the ones he'd put on this morning were still in a room filled with shattered glass and blood, fortunately considerably less blood than there might have been

because somehow neither of them were shot and Ilya barely has any cuts on him, Shane's body had kept the worst of the broken mirror shards off him.

Even though he knows that he's still haunted by the knowledge that there could have been so much more blood; his or Hollander's or both. In his mind the dance studio is painted red but there was no blood; he is perfectly fine but Shane is not... he is unconscious and god knows where in this hospital, all alone.

Rose should go find him and not be standing here staring at him. *He* is fine, Shane isn't, for fuck's sake it's embarrassing, only four of Ilya's cuts had even needed stitches. The last one had just been pulled shut when Rose had arrived.

After that the nurse left and now it's just him and Landry.

Ilya isn't surprised to see her even if he has no idea who'd let her know that Shane was in hospital; maybe Sveta had her number or someone at the opera house did, maybe Rose was Hollander's emergency contact, maybe she tracks him... who knows.

Having become bored with just staring at him Landry takes two steps closer and without even a single question Ilya finds all the awful details about the attack and finding Shane unconscious flowing from his lips.

He's in darkness by the end of it all, his eyes squeezed shut, hiding from her judgement and his own. At least she'll be gone when he opens them, why would she stay now she has the information she needs? He's wondering if he should have asked her to send him message with news of Shane when a pair of strong but gentle arms close around him accompanied by the scent of a soft floral perfume.

The unexpected hug freezes him. Why? What is she doing?

Rose's voice brushes against his ear, soft and warm and honest enough to make him want to cry.

"I'm glad you're ok."

Arms heavy and hanging limp by his side Ilya has no idea how to respond, the words and embrace feel like a comfort he doesn't deserve.

How can he be given any grace when this is all his fault; for distracting Hollander with pointless fight, for being stupid and childish, for not taking the threat against himself seriously.

And worst of all for being so fucking hated that someone wants to kill him but had instead hurt his Shane.

No, not his Shane, never his.

In Rose's arms, guilt weighing him down Ilya confesses a few of his sins but he expects no absolution from Hollander's best friend.

"Is my fault. My fault he is hurt."

She laughs, a quick bark of humour and it's a odd noise in the otherwise silent room, it contradicts the kindness of her embrace but with them cheek to cheek like they are he can feel the quick twitch of her smile and she squeezes him tighter. It is confusing experience.

The smile is gone by the time she leans back and gives him a look Hollander must have stolen from her or maybe they worked on it together.

"Bet you a hundred dollars he says the same thing when he wakes up."

Her certainty, not only that Shane will wake up but that he won't blame Ilya for his injuries feels like a band crushing his chest. Why can't he believe that? Shane Hollander is not an unkind man, this he knows. Shane Hollander is not like him, someone who lashes out when he is hurting.

Somewhere nearby a phone buzzes, they both ignore it.

"Ilya..."

His doubts and fears must be horrifyingly obvious because her voice becomes even more gentle than before. Ilya turns away, unable to face her compassion or he might embarrass himself even further.

"Ilya, he's going to wake up and he's going to be fine."

She sounds so very sure and he desperately wants to believe because then he at least gets to apologise to Hollander before they go their separate ways.

Rose's voice shifts towards humour, a light thread weaving through her words.

"You know this isn't the first staircase he's been pushed down, or the first time someone tried to shoot him."

Her words might be meant to comfort but they do the opposite, eyes wide and horrified his head finally snaps round to look at her.

"That does not make it better."

Rose Landry's expression says she agrees, it also says something else and Ilya knew he should not have looked at her.

She knows too many things now but she politely ignores what she's seen in his face or at least she doesn't name it out loud. Instead she just agrees with him.

"Yeah, you're right about that, he's a fucking nightmare. It's going to be nice to have company next time he gets himself hurt."

Her eyebrows lift as the knowledge that she knows he knows she knows hovers between them.

The look makes Ilya very glad that Russians do not blush and that his cheeks are only hot from the unexpected rise in temperature in the room or maybe it's the heat of her body still holding onto him.

Feeling too hot and far too seen he squirms uncomfortably and she releases him from the unexpected embrace without comment, but it doesn't make any difference, she still knows exactly how he feels about Hollander and yes she is right about that but she is also wrong - he will not be here with her the next time Shane gets hurt.

Ilya ignores his phone buzzing again from where it's resting off to the side next to Sveta's scarf, it is the same shade of blue as Rose's eyes, she must have forgotten it when she'd left for his place. He probably should go look, see who is calling but it is most likely just Svetlana, asking what he needs from home. He does not care that much so she can decide by herself, he is too busy being humiliating seen by Rose Landry.

Which reminds him to clear up a few of her incorrect assumptions.

"No. Is not true. I will not be here, he does not want me..."

She makes a very undignified noise, like pig in mud snorting. He had not expected such a noise from someone as beautiful and elegant as her. She follows the awful noise with a selection of very firm words that sets his brain spinning.

"You really think that, after he's broken every rule he has to be with you? When he won't let you out of his sight... when he's always talking to me about what an amazing dancer you are, how you work so hard and how much he admires that and that the press had it all wrong and that you're a great guy, so funny... so kind... when...."

Ilya can not listen to such things, he interrupts her loudly, talking over his phone which is once again buzzing.

"You know he does not l... want me. This thing we are doing ... it is just part of his job... Hollander probably filled in spreadsheet to work out what to do. Probably has title, "The pros and cons of fucking your client" pros - keep busy, out of clubs, good workout for abs, fantastic orgasms."

A nurse stops to stare as she walks past the room they're in. He throws her a fake smile.

"Cons... having to pretend you like asshole client...changing sheets constantly ... less sleep and reading time with stupid glasses on."

Rose interrupts him this time, the kindness fading and being replaced by annoyance. He much prefers that, he knows what to do with annoyance.

"Fuck! You are an asshole aren't you! Good job you've got other skills babe, cos your dumb as shit."

His phone is the only noise in the room as they stare at each other. He glances that way, what does Sveta want to know so badly?

The calls and texts are just the excuse he needs. He jumps down from the bed he's been sitting on.

"Excuse me... "

Scowling at him she steps aside.

"Must check phone..."

But Rose grabs his arm before he can take more than a step.

"Stop pissing me off... I'm worried and annoyed and you have to know how he feels is real..."

He looks away again trying to hide his hurt because she knows the truth as well as he does and he knows she's just trying to make him feel better with lies while Hollander is hurt. He's pulls away but her grip is stronger than he expected and he doesn't actually move.

He's about to try again when Rose makes a noise.

"Ohhhh...."

The soft sound pauses his escape and he risks a quick glance back at Shane's best friend. She's smiling but it's a sad looking thing.

"....you heard him. Yesterday on the phone to me."

She sounds like she's just solved a puzzle, but instead of looking pleased her eyes roll and her head shakes, gestures of disbelief that don't fit the situation.

"Well if he fooled you he certainly didn't fool me, he's fucking crazy about you. I've never seen him like this with anyone, Ilya you have to believe me. It's at least one of the reasons you drive Hayden so fucking crazy all the time. Hayden knows too even if he pretends not to, fuck you're an idiot ... Shane really does lov..."

"Stop."

He can not hear the word, the lie. He pushes the words out even if they're painful and embarrassing

"He can not. He does not, would be stupid and Hollander is not stupid."

Rose snorts loudly at that statement too. Ilya ignores her and continues with his self flagellation.

"I am stupid one, falling for someone I can not have. Making fool of self thinking maybe, maybe he might but yes I heard so I know better now. Will apologise for fight and injuries when he wakes up, then you and Pike can take over contract with me. I will behave for rest of time. Is promise. Shane will not need to worry about anything else to do with me."

His speech, noble and self sacrificing especially the promise about putting up with Pike puts an odd look on her face, she's amused but also very obviously unimpressed by his breaking heart.

Her arched eyebrow at the end of it all is particularly cutting.

"I was told you were a dramatic bitch."

Feeling insulted because only Sveta can call him that he reaches out for his phone for something to do and distract himself with Sveta's messages about socks and shoes.

Behind him Rose sighs, he keeps his attention on unlocking his phone. She's talking more to herself than him now. Which is good he is done with words.

"Whatever..this is Shane's mess, he's gonna have to fix it even if he's got concussion number seven when he wakes up."

The ridiculous number catches his attention even in the context of his embarrassment and heart break it's a number that needs comment.

"Seven? Really?"

She nods sadly.

"Yup."

He frowns, seven is many many head injuries. Rose seems to be waiting for another comment. He lowers his phone again.

"He is very careless, he should be more careful with head."

She nods in agreement.

"I've told him that many times, but maybe he'll listen to you."

That's too close to something he wants and can't have so he returns his eyes to his phone screen; missed calls and text messages from his best friend are waiting.

For something to do he listens to the first message on speaker, so not to be rude. It will be Russian anyway so will not matter.

Sveta's voice fills the room complaining about how his socks are unmatched and why would anyone need so many. He explains her words to Rose.

"She says I have too many socks."

Rose smiles, her eyes lighting up at Svetlana's criticism of him. He should have known-women! They always stick together.

The next message is about shoes. He braces himself, if Sveta was upset about his socks she's going to have serious things to say about his shoe collection. He likes nice shoes and he can afford it so he does not see why problem to have so many.

He's just explaining the new issue to Rose when Sveta's Russian complaints change to English.

She says hello and it's obviously a question. The kind of question people ask when they think they are not alone.

Breathing suddenly becomes very much harder and he's aware arise has taken a sharp gasp of air too.

The version of Svetlana trapped in the past n his phone repeats the greeting a little louder. Then her voice gets quieter, as if the phone has dropped away from her mouth. He can hear her footsteps on his bedroom floor. The click of he heels. It's easy to imagine walking slowly towards the noise she heard frowning, looking around for whatever it was.

Back in the room with him, Rose steps closer and supports the hand holding his phone, stilling the trembling that's started.

In English still, Svetlana says 'Who's there?' The words are louder but only because she's raised her voice, the phone is still banging by her side.

The short scream and clatter makes him jump and Rose gasps too before she adds a hand to his shoulder to steady him.

The next thing he hears is Sveta swear but she sounds more annoyed than anything else.

"Fuck! You idiot! You scared mewhy are you here? Ilya did not invite you I know that, he does not even like you...you need to go."

Then she hangs up.

There's one more message recorded, it's much longer than the other two but it's just alternating silence and muffled voices he can't make out. One voice is obviously Sveta's buy the lower toned one is hard to make out. He can't recognise it. Who the fuck is in his house and why?

The message keeps playing, silent and useless until there's nothing left to hope for, the voices are not coming back. Sveta has gone. He can't move for a second; frozen with fear at the idea that someone is in his house- no is worse than that, someone is in his house with Sveta and only hours after a someone tried to kill him.

He doesn't know what to do but fortunately Rose does.

"She's smart, she made the call and left the phone somewhere so we could hear anything useful. Pity he moved her away from it. Check the texts that came in before that message."

Rose's voice is calm and she catches his phone when his shaking hands fumble it in his haste to open his friend's messages.

Once Rose has his phone she's in action. His own heart pounding Ilya berates himself silently. He should have looked at his phone sooner. He should have answered her calls.

Rose's voice cuts into his panic. She's making a phone call to someone. That's not important though because he needs to go, get home and see if Sveta is still there and she has to be because he won't know what to do if she's not.

"Ilya..."

He's just not sure how to achieve his goal. Rose still has his phone, he has no money or even shoes.

"Ilya!"

He manages to focus on the here and now of his problems as she shakes his shoulder. Rose's face is tense, serious but calm, it's the face of a professional who knows what to do, once again it's an expression she shares with Hollander.

"Ilya! I know it's been a rough couple of hours and you're in shock but I need you to focus. Hayden is on the way here for Shane. I'm going to your place. We think the man who shot at you went there. I phoned the police but it's not a priority for them without any evidence. I don't think whoever it is will hurt her but I need to get there now."

He nods blankly.

"These are the messages she sent, do they mean anything?"

He blinks down at his phone, the first texts are very normal and he just scans them

I know you've been shot at but answer phone!

Why have phone if don't answer

good job aliens did not come back told you they would get me

Ignoring your oldest friend again. Fine I bring any old shoe and sock with holes. do not complain at me

but then they change

Fuck that idiot is here. Scared me

Then

You offering lessons? I do not believe it...you hate him

And worse follows that; typos and short phrases that alarm him deeply.

thik this bqd. Legtdrs.. Iz him.

Stau away Not saf

Wolll deall

He keeps staring at the words, the sick feeling in his stomach building while Rose waits impatiently for him to say something.

"Ilya? Does it make any sense? What am I walking into?"

His brain is slow, too many feelings too much fear to think clearly. Who is in his house? Who does Sveta think is dangerous but can deal with herself? Who do they know who could hope to be believed about lessons from him? Who is bad dancer that Ilya hates... technically several dancers from other companies but here... here only one name comes to mind...

"Stefan."

Rose frowns and takes her a moment to match the random name to something relevant.

"Stefan Muller? I know the name... from your company? We ran checks on everyone. He didn't stand out."

The rumbling rise of rage colours his words; he can hear it in his voice.

"No he would not. He is a no one - no talent, no personality. An embarrassment to have on stage. Bad dancer, weak man... must be jealous, turned him crazy. How dare he ..."

Emotions start to cloud his mind, months of worry and it was that nobody behind it all? Fuck... he was stabbed because of that stupid talentless fucker and now he is in his house with Sveta! And he tried to shoot him today! To kill him or ruin his career? It does not matter and he could have shot Shane... he pushed Shane down the stairs he...

He flinches at the gentle touch on his chest, Rose's hand makes him aware of how fast he's breathing, how tight his muscles are. She's very aware of all that too, her voice is pitched to soothe him.

"Ilya... I need you to stay calm. We know who it is now and we know where he is... you need to stay here while I go deal with this."

She doesn't react to his protest, just listens passively as he rants and swears.

"No ... fuck that! How dare he... if he hurts Sveta I will... no I need to go find this mother fucker and..."

"Ilya I will deal with this ok. That's why me and Shane and yes even Hayden are here."

She's very clear that this is not a discussion and in a way she's right.

"Do not need you... he is small and pathetic I can handle him."

Her eyebrows sky high Landry doesn't waste anymore time arguing about his prowess just jumps straight to the real reasons he shouldn't go.

"I'm sure you can "handle him" but he has a gun and he's probably panicking- not thinking straight; that's not a good combination at the best of times, I really don't think we need to gift wrap his target, put a bow on it and deliver it right to him. Do you?"

Luckily Ilya has never considered someone being right to be a barrier to what he wants to do.

"No. You are too small. You will need me."

She snorts and punches his arm. It hurts more than he expected.

"Oh fuck you! You should be careful, your sexism is showing! Fucking too small!"

She mutters the last three words in disgust.

He mutters back.

"You are tiny- is not my fault."

"Yeah but I have skills Ilya- many many skills and if it comes down to I have a gun and I'm betting I'm a much better shot than Stefan is."

She stares up at him, fierce and determined and with a finger pressed to his chest says;

"Stay here."

Then Rose Landry turns and walks away from him obviously expecting him to listen and do what he's told.

Ilya stares after her. Well if she thinks that's going to happen she obviously hasn't believed a word Hayden Pike has told her about how very difficult Ilya can be when he wants to be.

His best friend is alone and in danger, the man he's reluctantly admitted(at least to himself) that he's in love with is hurt and Ilya's career has been threatened and interfered with by a pathetic arsewipe of human, a useless want to be dancer who's only asset is family money.

The no shoes may be a bit of an issue at some point but it's not enough to stop him, there's no way he's being left behind.

Angry and determined Ilya charges forward to follow Rose. He's been told many many times that he needs to stay with a bodyguard so technically he's just doing what he's been told to do.

How can they complain about that?

She's surprisingly fast for a person in heels and she obviously knows the layout of the hospital better than he does even if he's local and she's not. As he retraces his last wrong turn Ilya wonders if that's what bodyguards do for fun - study floor plans of buildings they might

be visiting. Probably - it sounds suitably boring anyway, boring or not Ilya wishes he'd studied the hospital floor plan at some point because if Landry gets to her car before he catches up to her he's going to be pissed off.

Fortunately he catches sight of her auburn hair just before she gets to an exit. Speeding up he reaches her before she makes it out of the hospital.

She greets him as enthusiastically as Pike would but Ilya is undeterred by the decidedly chilly reception. She walks away and he trails after her, matching her speed despite his cold feet and allows her to put forward various arguments for why he can't go with her, these vary from, keeping Ilya safe, the distractions caused by incompetent civilians, the fact that the incompetent civilian in question has no shoes on, that people who are still suffering from shock should stay in hospitals and the fact that she won't actually need his help in any way shape or form.

She even resorts to saying they shouldn't leave Shane alone when they both know Pike is probably already by his side and Shane is in no danger if the person after Ilya is at Ilya's house.

In the end it comes down to who is faster, Rose unlocks the car door quickly obviously hoping to get in and lock it before Ilya can reach the passenger side and climb in. He, however is both smart and fast and instead of wasting time aiming for the passenger side he just opens the trunk and climbs in over the back seat and then into the passenger seat next to her, feeling particularly grateful for how flexible he is.

He'd like to think that her cursing sounds at least a little impressed. She should be, his stealth and cunning is remarkable but judging by her face perhaps she is not.

Seatbelts on they glare at each other, both narrow eyed and stubborn. Ilya suspects she's wondering if she can lock him in the car at the other end of their journey.

Well she can try and but she won't succeed.

He smiles sweetly as she turns the key and reverses out of the parking spot.

On the journey Ilya sits quietly and spends his time working out various ways to get his car door open faster than she can lock it.

Keeping one eye on Rose in case she makes a dash for it Ilya looks at his house through the windshield of Landry's car. It looks completely normal from the outside, no hint of homicidal maniacs to be seen. Inside the situation will be different, behind those walls is someone who's been sending him threats for months, tried to kill him twice and is now holding Sveta hostage.

The simmering rage that's been rolling around inside him burns hotter, if Stefan has done *anything* to hurt her, scare her, Ilya will not be responsible for his actions.

Sat next to him, quiet and thoughtful Rose is studying the house, lips pursed and brow furrowed but there's nothing useful to see from where they are. They need to move and he points this out, just to be helpful. His assistance gets him a scathing glance and proof that's she's the smartest of the three bodyguards he's had to endure.

"I assume there's no point in telling you to stay in the car."

Ilya smiles grimly, not quite trusting her yet. It could be a trick. She looks like she could be tricky.

"Nope."

Rose sighs and he just catches the 'fine' she mutters under her breath before she opens the car door and walks towards his house without waiting for him, or locking the doors.

Once again Ilya scrambles after her trying to keep up and not step on any rocks at the same time although his feet are so fucking cold now they don't actually hurt that much. He just hopes he isn't doing any permanent damage. He guides Rose around to the back of the house and towards a window that might give them some clue about what's happening inside.

The first window he chooses, one looking into the kitchen, shows nothing useful. Rose points to suggest their next move should be to go round to the kitchen door and presumably try to get inside that way but Ilya shakes his head and, staying crouched low heads towards the living room window.

Rose hisses his name as he shuffles away bent almost double, but he ignores her, he just needs to see, to know Stefan hasn't taken Sveta someplace else. If she's not here he won't know what to do.

Those worries are put to rest as soon as he peers over the windowsill because there on his couch, just like he's prayed for, is Sveta.

The relief leaves him weak and he sags, collapsing to the floor like a puppet until a squeeze and gentle jiggle on his leg brings his head up off his knees. Rose has followed him and her grip is warm and firm as she studies his face. The hand is meant to be a comfort, a reminder that he's not in this alone but her eyes remain cool, calculating if he's up to the task ahead of them.

The scrutiny clears his head, Ilya Rozanov has never and will never need an understudy to step in.

He nods, a firm answer to the question on her face even as he tries to steady his racing heart and quietly thanks god for his kindness in keeping his Sveta safe.

Rose moves carefully onto her knees, taking in the scene for herself and Ilya twists too until they're both looking into his home.

Sveta is on his couch, her arms folded, ankles crossed, face stern. She does not look happy, it is her famous pissed off face. People have learnt to be wary around that expression for good

reason, even he gets a little worried when he sees that look directed at him. It's a look that usually means he has to buy her two bottles of good vodka to apologise.

He almost smiles at the reminder of how wonderful she is. He should have known she would not be scared but annoyed and scornful. If he were that idiot inside right now he would be very worried and just let her go, then make a run for it.

But no they are all being forced to watch his embarrassing melt down instead . Sveta's lip curls with disgust as the "brains" behind the attacks disrupting their lives paces up and down, waving his arms (and gun) around erratically.

Stefan's mouth is moving constantly, talking talking talking but the window is too thick to hear anything.

Each time Stefan looks directly at Sveta she wipes away the scorn. Sometimes she tries to smile politely but it is too much to ask, even from great performer like her, and all she can manage is a blank face with empty eyes. Stefan will notice soon and Ilya doubts he will be happy.

At least Sveta is still trying to hide what she feels but Ilya, watching her wary eyes track the erratic movements of the man keeping her prisoner, can see her plotting and it scares him.

He trusts her ability to cope in difficult situations but that does not mean he does not want her out of danger as soon as possible. Preferably before she loses patience with the situation. She will try, he knows that but his darling Svetlana is not known for her serene temperament and things could go bad very quickly. He needs to get inside soon.

Sveta probably would welcome some help anyway, *she* is not stubborn or proud. Unlike some people. Unlike him.

Ilya forces his eyes to move from Sveta to the man causing them all this trouble. Although honestly , "man" is too generous, weasel is more accurate but then that is unkind to weasels. He does not hate weasels and he is sure that the majority of the tiny creatures are vastly more stable than Stefan is right now because Stefan looks like he's seconds away from a complete breakdown.

The idiot is barely hanging on and Ilya desperately wants to run in and help him lose his grip so the bastard falls right out of their lives for good but he knows he has to be more cautious than that.

A nudge to his side gets his attention and Rose tilts her head back towards the kitchen again. She's holding her gun now, which causes a sudden spike in his heart rate. Ilya's not particularly used to weapons that aren't prop swords so it's a bit unsettling to be so close to one now and know it's probably about to be used.

Still he'd much rather Rose fire her gun than Stefan gets to shoot his.

She points to her chest and towards the kitchen again then mouths 'front door' at him.

He knows what she wants him to do, he watches movies just like everyone else so he nods. He can easily provide a distraction for her.

He nods when she holds up five fingers and mouths at him again then with separate jobs to do they head in different directions as quickly and quietly as possible.

When Ilya makes it to his own front door he counts and waits patiently, then after a quick prayer he presses down long and hard on his doorbell, hoping it scares the shit out of Stefan.

He presses again only a second later and then once more before he drops low and heads around back to join Rose. He's assuming she'll have found a way in and she has. He'd been expecting broken glass or something but the door is just open.

Apparently breaking and entering is one of her many skills.

Being as quiet as he can he pushes the door and crawls inside, keeping low. Now he's inside he can hear Stefan shouting at Sveta about who is at the door.

Getting closer he still can't hear Sveta's response but he feels confident it will be something about not being able to see through walls or doors.

Reaching the turn from kitchen to hall he looks around and sees where Rose is standing, listening and waiting to make her move. It had better be soon, Stefan is losing it fast.

Rose looks his way and her head moves a fraction of an inch left to right and back again. The disconcerting gun is close to her chest, ready to use. One more fierce look his way conveys the very clear message that he is *not* to do anything stupid.

His response puts a wide eyed expression on her face, she's surprised he's agreed so easily but right now he does not object to being told what to do. He is mostly scared that anything he does will make things worse so for once he is happy to listen to a bodyguard.

Stefan's voice, previously just irritating background noise demands more of his attention, the nonsensical ratings becoming louder and clearer even if they still don't make much sense.

"Don't you see... it's meant to be. You, here with me, this is how it should be. How we should be! You don't need him. You never did!"

There's a pause - a soft murmuring which is presumably Sveta saying something too quiet to hear.

Whatever it was Stefan of course has more to say,

"I was trying to help you, set you free. We don't need him. You should be free to choose. It's gaslighting ... you think you need him but you don't! He doesn't appreciate you like I do.. he doesn't deserve you! You need someone who loves you like *I* love you."

The words have Ilya blinking in confusion. Surely this fool can not be that detached from reality to think...

The volume and pitch of the ranting continues to rise, Stefan is most definitely losing his grip on everything.

"Just pick me and everything will be ok again. I'm right here. Everything I've done was for you."

Ilya can hardly believe what he's hearing.

As if a woman like Svetlana Vetrova would ever consider a man like Stefan for *anything*. Even if she did not have Ilya for her dance partner, even if every other dancer in US and Russian would be fighting over her if Ilya suddenly disappeared from world.

If every man in room did not desire her as soon as she walked in, she would never look towards that useless pile of crap for friendship let alone romance.

The mere idea is insulting, ludicrous. Ilya wonders just how irrational the talentless arsewipe prick has become to think she would ever consider him.

The answer to that is 'very' ... and that is becoming clearer with every unhinged word escaping into the wild.

"You don't understand he doesn't love you like I do. He has other women, other men! You should have seen him dancing for that bodyguard. I would never do that to you. He disrespects you! He doesn't let you shine!"

Rose shakes her head again from the other side of the hallway, another clear warning not to act on any impulses he might be having.

It takes some serious effort but he stays where he is and trusts in Rose. Shane trusts her so he can too but how dare that fucking useless waste of space pretending to be a dancer suggest such things to his Sveta.

There's more garbage words pouring into the air, getting more unsettling every second. Stefan insults, he begs, he threatens and Ilya has had enough and he is not only one.

In between one heartbeat and the next his beloved Sveta's patience snaps and her voice becomes fully audible for the first time and not only is it louder but it's full of undisguised disgust and loathing. She calls him several extremely bad words in Russian then launches into a furious monologue.

"Hah! As if I would *ever* choose *you* for *anything*! Never! Not one of us would! You"

Her scathing laughter makes Ilya wince but not because he's sympathetic to Stefan's ego, but because he's worried how he'll react to her obvious scorn.

"You have no talent! No presence! Nothing!! Who would ever look at *you* when they could have *my* Ilyuska? He is star! There is no one who dances like him. He is best! He lifts me up and makes me shine!"

Ilya heart aches; a combination of joy at her love for him and sudden desperate fear for her safety and she not even finished yet.

"He is my partner, my friend, my family and I am his in every way that matters, nothing will ever change that. Certainly not *you*!"

It's truly a wonderfully heartwarming speech but it's also worryingly short sighted, considering the current circumstances. It is no surprise though, she has always spoken her mind and honestly he's impressed she's lasted this long before snapping like twig.

The list of Stefan's failings and shortcomings continues, sometimes she slips into Russian but too many words are clear and each one makes Ilya fear for her more.

Rose agrees, her concern is radiating across the room and there's a subtle shift in her posture as her muscles tense ready to move. Ilya holds his breath, scared for them all now.

Furious words the loudest yet rattle round his home and make him jump.

"Stop it! Stop it Stop it Stop it!! Stupid bitch! Why won't you love me!"

Stefan finally snapping does two things - first it shuts Svetlana up mid sentence and secondly it means Rose makes her move.

She steps out, shouting a warning, gun pointing away from where Ilya's standing and towards his friend and her captor. He cannot see what is happening so he moves towards them.

There's more shouting, male and female voices all mixing into incomprehensible noise. Rose's voice is loudest, instructions about what she expects to happen next; mostly that Stefan should drop his weapon and lie down.

Ilya startles again, heart rate spiking when two shots ring out one after the other in quick succession. From one gun or two he can not tell. The sharp snap of gunfire is followed by shouts and screams and more noises which can only be his furniture being knocked over.

He lurches forward, desperate to help but he's already unsteady and he doesn't get far before something solid knocks him further off balance. Trying not to yell out too loudly his shoulder hits the floor hard and fucking hurts, grunting in pain he looks up and the first thing he notices is the spreading red stain on Stefan's sleeve.

The second thing he notices is the hatred etched onto a usually bland and boring face.

"You.."

The word sounds like an accusation, it's vicious and hateful, venom spat into the world with an intense loathing that Ilya can almost taste. He expects a blow and braces for more pain but Stefan has no time for such things because Rose is moving and Ilya watches as the coward turns and runs.

Rose rushes past and Ilya might as well not be sprawled out on the floor the way she barely glances sideways at him but he hasn't even had time to get up before she reappears. Even

from his spot on the floor he can see her furious expression and for a second he doesn't know why she's letting Stefan get away but when she rushes past him again he realises it's because she has responsibilities here.

And so does he; Sveta.

It's much harder than it should be to get himself up off the floor and he's disgusted to find that the attempt has his legs shaking, hands too, as he tries to rise.

It's slow work but he's not hurt, just bruised and dazed and he can admit to himself at least that maybe the chaos and worry of the last few hours is hitting him now as the adrenaline crashes out of his system.

Fortunately the wall is just where he needs it to be for a more dignified second collapse, he leans into it and lets it support him as he slide down slowly. The solid ground beneath him is very welcome but he's glad the ladies are not witnessing his embarrassing collapse.

That small mercy is taken from him quickly. He opens his eyes when his name is shouted.

"Ilya!"

He knows both the voice and the tone.

" Ilya! She will not let me move. Where are you?"

Dredging up the energy to move he gets to his feet, he should probably appreciate the fact everything aches as a sign he's still alive.

He doesn't, feeling suitably ungrateful for such charming benefits of living he limps forward and finally sees Svetlana. The knocked over furniture around her tells a story as does her disheveled appearance. Her hair looks out of place and her sleeves are torn. She has lost a shoe.

A new rush of adrenaline and rage moves him faster and he drops to her side reaching out to hold her hand. He can't hold the rest of her because Rose Landry already has an arm wrapped around her pulling her close. His second favourite bodyguard looks oddly protective and he doesn't miss the way Sveta shifts to lean more heavily into her embrace and lets her head rest back on Rose's shoulder.

He suddenly wonders just how well his Sveta knows Ms Landry or maybe how well she wants to get to know her.

It is not his imagination either when he notices a twitch of a smile on his friend's face as Rose's fingers slide across Svetlana's hair to soothe and offer a little more comfort.

Gripping her hand, unsure if he'll ever be willing to let go, he slips into Russian

"Ты в порядке?" (Are you ok?)

She answers in Russian too "Да" Before switching back to English.

"Of course I am fine. I am Russian yes and ballerina! Who is stronger person than that! Stupid American frat boy douchebag dick head is nothing. I find him myself and kick his arse. How dare he think that I... I..."

Rose interrupts her "Shush, you're not doing anything to anyone and you're not being left alone either. You're coming home with me after this."

Anyone who knows Svetlana might think she'd object to being coddled by a woman several inches shorter than her but she does not look too distressed to Ilya. She looks... pleased, almost smug. Sveta catches him looking at her and winks before she closes her eyes and sinks a little more into Landry's embrace. Rose has to sit back and wrap the other arm around her to keep them stable.

Svetlana whispers dramatically.

"Maybe you are right Rosie.. I should not be alone."

The tension leaves him alongside his laugh, which may sound a little hysterical, but who could blame him. Thank god for her. She is indeed fine and plotting. Poor Rose Landry, he reconsiders, actually it's lucky Rose Landry.

A quick glance confirms what he expected and Landry is blushing furiously. She and Shane are very similar. He wants details from his Sveta but it is not the time for questions however as soon as it is his beloved Svetlana better have some interesting answers.

He's tempted to say Svetlana can stay here with him but he is not so cruel.

The knowledge that Rose will be leaving soon and taking Svetlana with her does mean that his own trials are not over Ilya does the maths reluctantly, if Shane is in hospital and Rose is watching over Sveta then there's only one bodyguard left for him.

As if his day hadn't been bad enough. The only consolation he has is that Pike will be even more pissed off with the news that they're spending the night together then he is.

Chapter End Notes

How was that? Action scenes can be tricky to balance so hope you felt the tension and thrills I wanted for everyone.

A little hint of Rose/Sveta too and I'm tempted to write an extra scene for them at Rose's house later 😊 never done anything like that but they tempt me ...

Anyway we're hurtling towards the end for sure and I'm looking forward to sharing it with you, I am on a bit of a holiday this week so we're probably looking at a 2 week break again but once again at least it's not a cliffhanger 💜

Come see me in the in box to chat and say hello, let me know you were here and will be back.

Take care out there 

Chapter 13

Chapter Summary

Accidents happen but failed shootings and plummets down staircases are less common so moving on can be complicated, especially when everyone is being stubborn and people aren't talking or listening or doing either.

Rose tries, Svetlana tries and god help him even Hayden gives it a go (although he'll hate himself for it later)

The question is just how stupid and stubborn can two men be?

Chapter Notes

They tell me 13 is an unlucky number so what could I do?

Who wants 13 chapters very unappealing if you ask me. 14 has to be better right?

Yeah you knew it was going to happen didn't you... one more chapter one more time.

So.... drumroll please....

I give you 10k of what is very much not the last chapter but.... but....it's looking distinctly possible I'll manage to shut myself up in another 10k and 14 chapters will be it.

EDIT- it was not enough! 15 and we're done though and I've almost finished it so I'm sure I'm sure this time.

15 is a good number. It pleases me.

Hang in there guys, we're nearly there. Will in come in under 100k - I really really hope so!

Wish me luck.

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

Rose hasn't said anything to him for seven minutes and 23 seconds, possibly a new record.

Shane risks a glance while he ties his shoelace and what he sees does not bode well. She's the perfect picture of displeasure; arms folded, thin lips, a furrowed brow and a glare that's made stronger people than him fold.

For no particular reason tying his other lace now requires his full and undivided attention. Shane carefully adjusts the two ends, aiming for the appropriate level of perfection while bearing the weight of her silence for a few more moments. Eventually though, even he can't mess around with the his laces any longer and he has no choice but to say something, so he does;

"Stop staring at me, I'm fine."

The stare and the silence try to drag him under but he manages to maintain semi defiant eye contact for around 4 seconds before he looks away.

She can glare at him all she likes but it's not like he's lying to her, he is fine. His mother's voice in his head reminds him she expects him to be truthful so he modifies the thought. He's fine, except for the fact that the smell of the hospital is making him nauseous and the headache, but that's to be expected isn't it, as are his various aching body parts so technically he's fine for someone who's recently been pushed down a staircase.

There's no response to his declaration of good health except a slightly louder silence. It's one of Rose's many skills, he's never been able to work out how she manages to increase the volume on her silences but she does.

Of course the ongoing silence isn't a surprise, she told him 8 and a half minutes ago that if he was going to carry on being stupid and stubborn and keep lying to her she wasn't going to talk to him.

Rose in turn showed no particular shock when he did indeed carry on being stupid and stubborn and lie to her.

It's such a familiar situation that Shane almost feels comforted by it, but only almost - no one even vaguely sensible would feel comforted by one of Rose's silent stares.

Mostly for something different to do he stands and stretches. The sudden movement was probably unwise but at least it allows him to assess the range of the discomfort running through his body. Most of it is from the fall and truly not too bad, but the pain beneath his ribcage is different, that ache is from something else entirely and is much harder to bear.

Joints popping, muscles protesting, Shane stands up as straight as he can, horribly aware Rose is watching like a hawk for any sign of weakness.

He makes sure there aren't any, he refuses to spend another night in hospital, one was more than enough. He is fine, no matter what Rose thinks, it's not even a proper concussion, they said mild and that doesn't count. Everyone knows that.

Giving into a rather foolish impulse to look at her again leaves him chilly. Under the scrutiny he squirms a little and hopes she doesn't think it's a sign of physical discomfort.

If she does she doesn't say anything, she's probably just collecting evidence and waiting for enough that she can use it against him in one fell swoop.

It's a annoyingly successful strategy. It's worked on him more than once and he's spent several extra nights in hospitals that he remains sure he didn't need.

Not this time, he'll be stronger this time and resist her silent demands and intimidating eyebrows.

Unfortunately a mild wave of dizziness decides now is a good time to harass him and if he has to stay standing up much longer he might be in trouble. Taking a slightly trepidatious step towards the uncomfortable hospital bed he refuses to sleep in again Shane reaches out to subtly steady himself. He's smart enough to pretend to be checking the overnight bag Rose brought him yesterday with Svetlana in tow and to make sure it doesn't look like he *needs* to sit on the bed.

The only hitch in his plan is when his weight shifts, then he instantly regrets his decision to sit because there's a particularly big bruise on his butt cheek that hurts like hell.

Fortunately he's good at keeping his face blank and the contents of his bag could be endlessly fascinating and explain why he has to keep rummaging through it. Searching his bag for a vague something helps to avoid... well everything and there's an awful lot of everything that he wants to avoid right now.

He really doesn't need to be thinking about too many *things* while in this horribly over stimulating public space.

If he did start thinking about *things* he'd have to acknowledge the fact that he's not really "*fine*", not physically and not ... well he's just not fine but that's irrelevant; he's good enough and so he might as well be not fine at home where he can be alone.

At least at home no one will ask questions or look at him and he can pretend to be ok in private and if he pretends hard enough for long enough then maybe he'll end up actually being ok. It sounds perfectly plausible to him.

Maybe he won't hurt this bad for too long.

Shane tries to pretend the hurt he's worried about is physical as he zips up the bag with a careless sigh that Rose can't possibly have missed.

"If you're parents weren't in Europe ..."

He's been expecting his parents to get used against him at some point. It's not the first time she's tried to guilt him with his mom and dad.

It usually works but he's really not in the mood to think about his folks, and what they'd say to concussion (mild) number seven so he snaps back, sounding more annoyed than he should be for someone who's "fine."

"Well they aren't are they so that won't work this time. Nice try!"

Unfortunately that may not be the best approach to take if he wants to convince her he's ok to be discharged.

That flash of regret doesn't stop him from overreacting to the lifted eyebrow and judgy expression on her face, the 'I told you so' written all over her does nothing to improve his attitude, so more snark slips out.

"And I thought you weren't talking to me anyway."

Wonderful, he sounds like a five year old, it's really not going well. He might as well unpack his pyjamas and get into bed.

He takes a breath and resets, reminds himself he's a perfectly sensible adult, capable of making his own choices in life and she is technically not in charge of his any of his decisions.

Unfortunately Rose has also decided to act like she's five.

"Well you don't deserve my silence. Acting like a baby just cos I'm mad at you. And who would be! You brought this on yourself and you're being a dumbass!"

He meets arched eyebrow with arched eyebrow. Baby? Dumbass?! Fucking rude!

While he processes the words Rose continues to tell him off like he's in preschool.

"You're reckless! Six concussions Shane! Now seven! That's not normal! You don't look after yourself. What is it? Do you think you're unbreakable? You take risks, make stupid choices, don't ask for help!"

He's momentarily struck dumb by the sheer injustice of the accusation, it's a step too far from his partner and friend. As if she's any better when their roles are reversed. In fact *some* people might say she was even worse at looking after herself, taking risks and being stubbornly independent.

While he's staring open mouthed, outraged at the levels of hypocrisy on display she has the grace to turn pink. It's a welcome sight, she knows she just fucked up and he'll call her out on it.

And anyway what's wrong with him wanting to go home? Now he think about it *she* checks herself out of hospital whenever she wants.

Any previous inclination to give in and be accommodating disappears and the glaring becomes a two way street. Regrettably however eye contact has never been his strength while Rose is an expert. She can glare and glower like a champ and under far worse circumstances than being caught in hypocrisy and countering a tired scowl from her best friend.

Shane holds the stare for another rather dismal three seconds before he has to look away. He needs a new approach or he'll be spending another night in that awful bed.

There has to be a different way to get out of here without just walking out or arguing with her. He takes a breath and hops the fence to operation break out of hospital plan B.

"Ok I'm sorry. And I'm sorry you're mad. I know I scared everyone but I really am .."

She interrupts him;

"Yes I know ... 'fine'"

She scoffs at the end of the last word and plan B vanishes, suddenly he's too tired to fight anymore. He just wants his own bed and some space and most important some quiet to think and process everything that's happened.

All of that makes it's way into his quiet, weary bid for freedom.

"Rose, I promise I'm ok to go home."

He hopes the downgrade to ok will convince her to let him leave. He tries a smile too and the truth.

"Look, I just want to sleep in my own bed, I need some space, nothing bad is going to happen to me. I was careless, got a bumped around a bit. We both know I've had worse accidents."

A reluctant huff confirms that she does indeed know that. When he looks at her again her mouth is twisted, it's only half of a very dubious smile, but it's progress.

He waits, daring to feel a little hopeful that she'll agree with him now, what he doesn't expect is what she says next.

"So does Ilya owe me 100 bucks or not?"

The name startles him. He'd thought they'd all tacitly agreed they weren't mentioning *him* again after everything was arranged and agreed on this morning.

The new plan for Rozanov's safety is behind much of Shane's desire for solitude. Shane had suggested it himself and then hidden how unhappy it made him. Hayden on the other hand had not hidden how *he* felt about it and God knows what Ilya feels about it now he's been told but it wasn't like they had many options. Shane just couldn't see him again after he'd let him down so badly.

Rose hadn't given her opinion at the time, she'd just said she was fine with however he wanted to handle it.

Well *want* is not the term he'd use but it's how he has to handle it and that's that.

So with Ilya's name ringing in his ears and his heart pounding faster every second he says the only thing he can think of to say.

"Why would he owe you money?"

His question puts a tiny frown on her face and her answer puts a bigger one on his.

"Because we had a difference of opinion on cause and effect. I thought he'd have told you about it."

It's only then that Shane realises she thinks they've spoken to each other but they haven't so that's obviously what he has to say next.

"No, I haven't spoken to him."

He suddenly wonders if he should say yet. The word stabs him in the chest; is it- he hasn't to him *yet* or is it he hasn't spoken to him and won't ever again.

Shane wishes he knew. He wishes it didn't hurt so much to think about it but it does so the only way past the hurting is to push it aside and ignore it.

Rose steps closer, a strange intensity to her next question.

"About that, or at all...?"

She pauses but he says nothing.

"You have spoken right? He came to see you or you called him?"

There's no other answer to give her but a shake of his head. It makes him feel stupid to admit he's been too stressed and embarrassed and worried to talk to him.

Ilya did send a text. Maybe he should have replied to it but he hadn't been at his best last night and then he'd decided what he'd decided this morning and it seemed like a bad idea to text back. A clean break would be much better for everyone.

"He didn't come to see you? Or call?"

Rose sounds annoyed but not at him. It's a pleasant change of tone. He watches her gaze go narrow and distant, so now Ilya is in trouble as well. He should be relieved but he's not. All this Ilya talk isn't helping his head and heart much. Ilya isn't his responsibility anymore. Ilya isn't his anything anymore. Hayden is watching over Rozanov now. It's what they decided. What *he* decided and Hayden told Rozanov about it today and he must have accepted it just fine because there have been no complaints. Shane kind of wishes there were but his phone has stayed silent.

Which answers the other questions he had about them.

"He sent a text."

The statement sounds a little like he's defending Ilya and he has no idea why he feels the need to lessen her annoyance with Rozanov.

"Wow, a text."

She sighs and shakes her head, nose pinched between her manicured fingers, maybe Rose is getting a headache too, see hospitals are bad for you.

"What did it say?"

He could just tell her but he doesn't understand why they're even talking about this so he asks a question instead.

"Why?"

He ignores her 'why do you think idiot' face because if he knew he wouldn't be asking would he. She gives him a second to work it out then gives up on him.

"Duh.. maybe dumbass because I want to know what the text message Rozanov sent you said."

Maybe his head is worse than he thought because this conversation is making less and less sense by the second, why on earth would Rose be that invested in what Rozanov is texting him.

He tells her because there's nothing to hide in the short message he received.

"He said he'd behave with Hayden and he said he was sorry. I don't know why."

For some reason, that perks her up but she mutters something under her breath too. It's probably an insult and Shane wouldn't like to guess if it was directed at him or their client.

He doesn't bother asking. Rose smiles at him and it's so bright and fake that even Shane can tell it's not real. It's possible her patience with him is running out.

"Do ya think *maybe* he said sorry 'cos he thinks it's his fault you got hurt?"

Her tone implies it's an obvious conclusion. He considers it.

No, he hadn't thought that and to be honest it doesn't make any sense now that he is thinking about it. Why would Il.. Rozanov feel like that when it was Shane who'd failed in every way imaginable not him. When ...

"Shane?"

He looks up and judging by her expectant expression it seems quite likely that she's called his name more than once.

A lack of anything sensible to say leaves him silent so she prompts him again.

"Well?"

He's still considering the odd idea she just put in his head but she's waiting and not very patiently so he answers as best he can.

"But it's *not* his fault is it, and anyway even if it was that would be ok, I'm meant to get hurt instead of him. That's literally my job. He knows that."

For just a second Rose's expression shifts around flashing from one thing to the next. It's confusing- he catches dismay, exasperation and maybe just a little bit of satisfaction eventually her face settles into something he might call resigned.

"Annnnd.... you told him that did you?"

It's another weird question but again he answers it. Maybe eventually she'll run out of odd questions and take him home.

"No."

It's quiet but he still catches the "pity" or maybe it's "pitiful" that she mutters under her breath, not that he particularly cares anymore, he's too tired and sad for all this nonsense.

"Rose, what are we talking about?"

His friend sighs and as he watches her wipe her face clear of the confusing blend of emotions and switch to a smile that is a little more sad than happy.

"Nothing."

He gives up trying to understand.

"Can we go home now?"

His best friend has clearly given up too because with a weary shake of her head to show she still doesn't approve she says yes.

Ilya drops to the floor in one smooth motion and once there stretches his legs out. It's an elegant and controlled collapse but no one is watching to appreciate his grace which is a shame.

They are not due back on stage for another 13 minutes, so here he is, waiting in one of the various oddly shaped nooks and crannies of the opera house. There are many and they get used for set and costume storage and various other activities. This one is quiet enough to be private but not too quiet that his bodyguard will disapprove of his choice.

He reaches for his toes to keep his muscles loose. It's pretty dull waiting these days, he's become used to waiting with Sha ... with Hollander and talking but he can not do that any more so he just focuses on the stretching.

A pair of ankles he'd know anywhere appear in his peripheral vision, maybe they'll continue on past him but his hopes aren't high.

His pessimism proves well founded when Svetlana's ankles and unsurprisingly the rest of her pause in front of him.

"And how is keeping busy every second working out for you this week ?"

To say her voice is cool would be an understatement but he is not easily intimidated so he lifts his head bravely and meets her steely, inquisitive glare choosing not to take the very clear bait she's dangling in front of him.

He knows she wants him to talk and while he the question could have been a reference to the unpleasant fact Stefan has not been caught yet it is not.

Svetlana does not much care about that. She is more invested in Ilya's personal life and is asking about something very different. Something he is trying very hard not to talk about and even harder not to think about.

Her raised eyebrow and pursed lips repeat the question silently. They've already had several "conversations" about how he is dealing with things. There have been delightful lectures given on the subject and so far it's only been a week and half since "the incident" as he likes to think about it.

Ilya strongly suspects those conversations have been workshopped by Svetlana and her new "special friend" Ms Landry. He ignores the jealous stab of bitterness that thought creates.

He is trying very hard not to mind that Svetlana and Rose spend so much time together when he has lost what he has lost.

He's still annoyed she got the good bodyguard. Ilya tries to remember a time when he would have been ecstatic to not have Shane Hollander tagging along everywhere and fails. He'd do anything to have his bodyguard back, although even though Hollander is no longer in his life, he technically does still have a bodyguard, one who is never very far away.

Right now Pike is on behind Svetlana, guarding the entrance into this tiny space they're in.

At least he has the sense to stay on outside of the alcove, it's crowded in here even without Pike's bulk, it is small and being made even smaller by the piles of scenery rolls and props now sharing it.

Ilya is sure it was not so messy last week but there seems to be more and more stuff leaning against walls every day this week and now a costume rail has turned up. It is complete mess, everything pushed to the side and under covers but still taking up space.

Maybe he could get Pike to tidy up while he lurks, give him something useful to do, is not like he has to actually protect anyone.

Probably would not be good idea to ask but someone should sort it out, maybe he should mention to stage manager or prop guys, with everything leaning and balancing so precariously it is dangerous. It might fall on them and he can't risk another accident, dancing is all he has to focus on now. Dancing and keeping Sveta safe even if she's mad with him.

Tonight Sveta is Pike's responsibility as well. They don't double up the bodyguarding unless they're outside, it's only then that Rose appears and takes over for Sveta.

The unfairness of the situation wells up again and washes over him. Is so unfair that she gets Rose and he gets Pike. One thing that helps is that as Svetlana is in more danger than him now he does grudgingly accept it is preferable that she has more competent, scarier guard, but it is still a noble sacrifice on his part; if he can't have Hollander, and he can't, then he would much prefer Rose.

Despite everyone emphasising that it is she who is in more danger from low life scum Stefan Sveta does not seem overly worried.

Initially she was very dismissive of the idea Pike should watch over them, said she did not need it and provided many of the same arguments he had all those months ago but then his pretty little diva had changed her mind. He actually saw the lightbulb go on over her head as she declared that actually if she needed protection so badly she should have one to one guard 24/7 and that the one to protect her should be Rose.

Ilya strongly suspected ulterior motives at the time and now he has no doubts.

Poor Rose is probably trying to be extremely professional but his beloved Sveta is hard to resist and she's stubborn and not above using sneaky tactics to get what she wants and he is sure now that what she wants is Rose.

He has not asked because Sveta will tell him when she is ready but he is 99% sure their arrangement is already leaning towards an intimacy that he would never, ever want with Pike.

He welcomes the shudder that runs down his spine - any kind of intimacy with his substitute bodyguard is an upsetting concept but on other hand provoking mild nausea is a good way of keeping his mind off the intimacy he has lost with his former bodyguard.

Ilya hasn't seen Hollander since that day, hasn't heard from him, not a text, not a call, nothing. He had hoped to say sorry face to face as well as apologising in the one text he'd been brave enough to send but so many days later that text still remains unanswered.

Rose has told him more than once that Hollander does not blame him but if that was true then why has he not been in touch.

Ilya knows why.

Hollander hates him now and Ilya understands it. The things he said before the accident were unforgivable. The way he behaved was crude and uncalled for. It is very sensible choice of Hollander's to cut ties and send Pike to do his job so Ilya is trying to live with consequences of his actions.

He is on best behaviour like he promised and Pike is doing the same. There's a lot of polite in the air. Ilya is polite to Pike and Pike is polite back. They say maybe fifty words to each other a day.

To make everything just a little bit worse Hollander is still working the contract, now extended another month and including Svetlana but Hollander is now on night shift

It's new addition to their work; his and Sveta's nights are protected now, which means Hollander sits in car outside Ilya's house from 9pm till 6am. Ilya watches the car sometimes. It's pathetic but he still does it— standing in the darkness of his bedroom, unsure if he wants to be seen or not. He can never see Hollander but he knows he's out there.

Hollander won't be looking up to check if someone is watching him. Hollander will be keeping his professional bodyguard eyes on the surroundings and the screens in his car that show the feeds from the new security cameras they've installed all around his house.

No sightings of Stefan have occurred and Ilya hopes that means he is gone for good. He must be on the run or hiding someone, maybe a hotel, using his family's money.

If it wasn't Svetlana in more danger than him now he would have pushed for bodyguard trio to move on but being free of them all has a zero probability until Stefan is found. He will not risk his friend.

After the shooting and the events in his home everything was discussed and dissected by Hollander and his team and it was reported back that Ilya was never true target of the maniac who had attacked him twice.

Rose broke it to him that Stefan only wanted to remove Ilya to clear his path to Sveta, apparently he was obstacle not target. It is not very flattering when you think about it.

Stefan was delusional fool to even dream of Sveta but now is different situation because Svetlana made her feelings about those unwanted affections very clear and now Ilya is scared for her.

Men like Stefan do not take rejection well but he holds to hope that the fuck weasel rat boy has gone out of state.

Probably.

Maybe.

If true then nightmare could nearly be over, maybe Texas or Florida police will pick him up soon and save Ilya from the daily torture of spending his time with Pike and not Sh... not Hollander.

So while Ilya might wish certain bodyguards gone so he can get back to his life they all have to stay until police find some sign of Stefan and arrest him.

Svetlana does not feel same about bodyguards. He sees her smiling at her phone and staring into the distance as if she is thinking about something nice.

He remembers feeling like that too. Typical they should both have a thing for bodyguards.

The constant ache in his chest flares sharply. He ignores it, he's getting very good at that particular skill.

It would be nice for Sveta if things worked out with Rose. He hopes it does, one of them should be lucky in love and as it not going to be him it should be her.

“Ilyushka...”

She crouches down to look him, he had forgotten she was even there. Svetlana tries to catch his eye so he avoids her by reaching fully over in his stretch - hands to toes knee to nose.

“Do not hide from me.”

He holds the stretch until she huffs loudly with annoyance and stands again.

“It does not have to be like this. You are both so stubborn and stupid and if you would just talk things would be better.”

He address his comments to his knees.

“There is nothing to talk about. Things are good. Everything is fine.”

She snorts again loud and derisive.

“Yeah fucking fantastic I can tell.”

His stretches takes him to the other knee without lifting his head so he doesn't see the questioning look Pike throws her way or the shake of her head that gives him the answer.

It's almost three weeks post incident when Pike snaps. There's no warning, one second his bodyguard is acting like a sane normal human and then he is not and if you ask Ilya the tantrum is entirely uncalled for.

He blinks in surprise as he's surrounded by the storm of Pike's feelings.

This is very unfair. He has been on very best behaviour - very good, extremely polite, practically perfect in fact.

How was he to know Pike would not like this. Yes he knows Pike is stupid but he had not expected this much stupid in one person.

Who does not like people being extremely pleasant?

Well to be fair, he doesn't, is one of reasons why he likes Svetlana and Shane so much because, no. He stops that line of thought quickly and continues to be polite to Pike, or at the least politely passive as Pike continues his litany of complaints .

Listening carefully Ilya decides he very much does not deserve the passionate attack against his person.

Firstly all he'd done was walk through the door Pike was holding open and say thank you.

Then he'd taken his shoes off and placed them to one side of the newly repaired studio. Very well behaved again, and then when he'd turned to go start his practice he'd walked right into Pike who for some unknown reason was right behind him.

Ilya had caught a look on his face that was both awkward and reluctant just before he'd crashed into him but that expression is gone, replaced by the ridiculous rant.

It is not like he did not apologise for the collision, he did.

Although maybe the politeness is what Pike is upset about. It is hard tell with so many words going past so fast.

A finger pokes his chest, an emphasis for Pike's last point and Ilya almost wishes he could be bothered to react but he lets Pike poke at him because what does it matter really.

Again wrong choice apparently, his lack of reaction escalates Pike's bad mood, his volume increases by about 10%

"See this is what I mean! Why are you just standing there, letting me poke you."

He does it again and a small flicker of annoyance flutters inside Ilya chest but not enough to ignite anything.

"It's it's... weird- unnatural. Stop it!"

Just wanting to start his practice Ilya tries to defend and soothe at the same time.

"Am not doing anything. Am just standing. I can stand over there if you prefer? If better for you?"

Pike makes a odd kind of screech which doesn't sound at all right coming from a man his size.

"Fuck! Jackie told me to be patient. Rose told me to stay out of it but I'm done! Done! Do you hear me? You are driving me crazy! You're the same as each other which is so fucking annoying . I hate it! He's gone monosyllabic and you're being uber polite and cooperative and everyone's walking on eggshells all the time. It's exhausting! And just 'cos both of you want to be all "noble" and do the right thing and be as stupid as fuck!

Well if Rose won't help and neither of you will do anything then I'm gonna have to do it and do you know how fucking mad that makes me?"

The next weird noise leaving Pike's mouth has Ilya frowning and wondering if he's having that stroke Hollander was worried about.

"No of course you don't, but like so mad! So so mad! I can't stand you man, and now now!! I've got to do this! Fuck my life! Fuck you! Two stupid fucking idiots! Why wasn't there anyone else? Had to be you didn't it?! Fuck! Honestly."

The words continue, and if he is understanding things right, and he is not entirely sure he is because Pike is speaking very fast and the words blur into each, then Pike is upset because he, Ilya, is being polite and he would prefer it if someone else could do his job.

Ilya does not disagree about the job part. He would be very happy for someone else to do Pike's job but nobody is getting what they want anymore so what is he supposed to do about it.

Pike is stuck with him and he is stuck with Pike, it is what Hollander wants and at least Ilya is keeping his promise to Hollander.

Some people ought to be grateful about that and complain less.

Grateful, however is the last thing Pike seems to be. He truly does not seem to appreciate the huge effort Ilya is putting in. It seems that even when being good he can not be good enough.

Most of the words he's being accused of being have been familiar; quiet, normal and civil and he will have to check because he thought these were good traits but according to Pike are terrible way to behave.

"It's unnatural! Weird! I can't take it anymore."

Maybe Ilya should add it to his resume as new skill; 100% of bodyguards reject him as a client. Maybe Sveta will have to give up Rose after all. There are no more options left for Ilya

Ilya wonders if Rose would hate him too by the time they're done. Probably.

Hayden Pike is still talking at him even though Ilya's mind has drifted.

He tunes back into;

"... patient man but who could put up with a pair of fucking maudlin bitches looking like someone stole their puppy every fucking day."

Watching Pike's arms flap around like some kind of disappointed duck while he complains Ilya makes a mental note to look up maudlin. It is obviously not a compliment and he wonders how offended he should feel by the accusation then remembers again that he doesn't care that much.

Pike complains a little longer then with a dramatic noise that he probably thinks sums up his frustration turns his back and walks away to wait by the door leaving Ilya to finally, blissfully loose himself in dancing.

Sitting at his kitchen bench not eating his dinner Shane closes his eyes when the sharp staccato of Rose's heels announce her arrival.

She's let herself in again, she stopped waiting for him to open the door sometime last week because he often didn't.

He loves her, he does but that doesn't stop his heart from sinking, but maybe today she won't want to talk about it.

A sad and detached part of his brain is mildly impressed by his ability to hang onto that much optimism considering the facts. Rose hasn't *not* wanted to talk about the situation they're in since he got home from the hospital almost three weeks ago.

It's one of the reasons he much prefers to be on his own at the moment. Everything is a lot easier that way. No questions, no pitying looks or subtle suggestions, or not so subtle ones. No patient explanations that he did nothing wrong when he knows he did.

He did so many things wrong but the biggest mistake was that he took his eye off the ball and almost got Ilya killed. The more he's thought about that day the worse he's felt. It was just luck that the bullet missed Rozanov. It might not have and then he would have lost him.

Even now Shane feels sick when he thinks about what might have happened, sometimes he wakes up sweating with the sound of shattered glass and a second shot ringing in his ears before the dream turns red.

After all those months together, of being so careful he let himself get lazy and self indulgent. He let himself get distracted and fall in love and then he let himself be hurt and upset by Rozanov's odd behaviour instead of being alert like he should have been when on duty.

Shane can't forgive himself because when it mattered most he forgot why he was here in the first place, what his purpose in Rozanov's life was and it nearly ended in disaster.

It's unforgivable. He broke the rules and now he has to pay the price. Which means he can't let his emotions get involved in his decisions anymore and so he can't be anywhere near Ilya Rozanov.

Shane is self aware enough to know that if he sees Ilya and Ilya still wants him there will be nothing he can do about it because he's hooked on the man, so in love it hurts every second they're apart, but it doesn't hurt as much as it would if he fucked up Ilya's, or worse Svetlana's protection a second time.

If anything happens to the woman Ilya loves Shane knows he'd never be forgiven.

So it's a logical decision; the best, the only way he can protect everyone is to stay away from Ilya . This way he can stay alert, stay detached and objective.

He'd hoped it might help protect his own heart too, let it heal but that seems unlikely at this point. Three weeks on the heavy ache beneath his ribcage is just the same, it hasn't changed, it hasn't gone and Shane has no idea if it ever will.

The clicking heels stop and the refrigerator door opens. He can smell her perfume now. It's the one she likes to wear on dates which is weird. She'll be leaving to pick up Svetlana soon and take her home while he drives to Rozanov's house and switches out with Hayden.

The fridge door shuts and that's followed by the quick snap and hiss of a ring pull opening what better not be his last can of ginger ale.

"Wow... doing even better today then."

He opens his eyes and smiles a greeting and ignores the comment. Rose's arrival means two things; he gets to pretend he's not lonely and heartbroken for a while and that it's almost time for him to leave and endure the torturous experience of spending the night outside Rozanov's home; too close to him but nowhere near him all at the same time.

"Just swap with Hayden and go talk to him."

He closes his eyes again.

"Shane, you're miserable. So is he."

The heels click again and then the warmth of her hand cups his face. That hurts too, when you've fucked things up this bad you shouldn't get comforted.

"Baby, you don't have to be so sad. We can make it work. If you want to be with him, we can do that and keep him safe at the same time. Me, you, Hayd... we're a team and we can keep Ilya and Sveta safe and still..."

He interrupts her before she can finish.

"You know why I can't do that."

Her sigh is so horribly sad it makes his eyes sting.

"No, I don't think I do."

He knows she can't understand so he pulls himself away, shaking off her kindness and the hope being offered alongside it.

Rose sighs once more but doesn't bring it up again. They sit and chat about nothing that's impossible or painful until they leave for the night shift, lock up, walk to the cars.

"Shane?"

Car door half open he turns to face her. She's about to get into her own car but she's paused to call his name. He recognises the expression on her face and swallows nervously. It's the face you see when her patience has run out.

Her voice is crisp and firm.

"Ok, I give in, be miserable if you want, tell yourself you're staying away from him because it's the right thing to do to "keep him safe".

Go ahead and play the noble self sacrificing hero card but we both know that's not what's really keeping you away from him."

It's at times like this he hates having a best friend who understands him so well. She proves it by seeing the truth in his own face and smiling sadly and her tone softens.

"Yeah babe, I know. Believe me."

Her laugh is softly sad too and he doesn't really understand why.

"I know, how scary it is to be falling in love but you're so fucking scared of losing him, of fucking things up or doing it wrong that you won't even try and be with him."

He wants to look away but he can't.

"Shane, honey, you didn't fuck up then no matter what you think, you kept him safe, you saved him, you did your job. That idiot could have attacked anytime, anywhere and you'd still have saved Ilya, because that's what you do. You're the best and nothing, not even being in love with an equally stupid self sacrificing idiot who doesn't think he deserves love can change that."

Shane frowns, trying to work out what that last part means.

Why wouldn't Ilya think he was worth loving?

Something shifts inside his chest, is Ilya ok?

Does Ilya miss him as much as he misses Ilya? Is Ilya hurting because Shane won't talk to him.

Rose's voice cuts into his thoughts.

"Just think about it please. We're all tired of seeing you both so unhappy."

And with that she gets into her car, slams the door and drives away.

Shane usually parks around the corner until Hayden drops Rozanov off, gets back in his car and texts that they're ready to swap.

Tonight he did something different. Tonight he's parked closer, he shouldn't have but he just wants to see him, even if it's only his back as he walks into his house

That might help him a little, all he's seen of Rozanov since the day they fought and he failed him and he fell is the shadowy form of the man in his bedroom window. It's not nearly enough, he wants more and he wants it so much. So very much.

Rose's words have been rattling around his head on the drive over and, as he considers them again, his phone rings.

It's her, of course it is. He considers ignoring it, reluctant to allow Rose to chip away at his walls any more tonight. He stares down at her name, but what if it's important. He can't make stupid mistakes again because of feelings.

With a sigh he answers and it's not Rose after all.

"*You* might have decided you can live like this but what about him?"

The accent gives it away. Rose has picked Svetlana up and had her phone stolen.

"Does he not get say in it?"

There's a few highly passionate words spat down the line in Russian, no doubt extremely uncomplimentary, but then she switches back to English, Shane understands, no point in insulting someone if they don't understand you.

So Rose is not the only one at the end of her patience with him.

"You turned up in his life and changed everything, made him think.... and then you walk away? From him?! Him! Best man I know. Kind man, a man already so... no! No! You do not get to do this one day longer. You are breaking hearts and if you do not fix soon I will break your knees! Yours!"

He can hear Rose's voice hissing her name in the background. He thinks she says something like "we don't go around breaking our friends knees Sveta" because more clearly he hears - "is not *my* friend" as the reply.

Nice. Shane groans softly to himself, if he's brave enough to talk to Ilya soon and can fix things he'll have to work much harder to win Svetlana back to his side. He's really not looking forward to dealing with that particular challenge.

When he realises what he just thought his breath catches and his heart thuds, making far too much noise in the quiet of his car.

It's a shock to realise a part of him is already thinking and planning about how he could maybe try and make things work with Ilya.

At the other end of the phone Ilya's best friend has finished arguing with his best friend and returned her attention to the attack.

Shane lets her vent because he deserves it and it's kind of nice she's so upset because it means Ilya has someone on his team. That he's not all alone.

"So... you listen or there will be breaking and other things, bad things, Hollander, very bad. I am tired of seeing my Ilyushka hurting. He is not himself, even your Pike does not like it. It is not right. Fix it Hollander or I will find you."

"Ok babe that's enough, we get it."

Rose's voice becomes louder with each word, Shane imagines her prising the phone out of Svetlana's grip before it's her voice in his ear.

"Hi, it's me... don't worry about that, she's uh just... "

In the background he can hear Russian, loud and angry then "I know where you live!"

Rose ignores her so he does too, Svetlana leans towards the dramatic and Rose won't let her out of her sight anyway so he doesn't need to worry about his knees. Tonight.

"... emotional, apparently it's been a bit of a day."

Regardless of Svetlana's current distance from him Shane checks the locks on the car door, just because it feels like a sensible thing to do and waits for Hayden's car to roll into sight.

He doesn't have to wait long.

After Pike's little break down this morning Ilya hadn't heard a word of complaint from him. He was practically normal the rest of the day and strangely involved with his phone while they all waited in silence in the stupid untidy little alcove he has to wait in with Sveta before they go on in the second half of the second act. Tonight Svetlana spent the whole time waiting glaring at him. They had argued again about how he was dealing with his feelings and for not calling Hollander but he is not thinking about that.

It has not been the best day. He is tired and he wants to go to bed more than anything.

In a minute they'll pull up outside his house just like they do every night and then Pike will get out of the car, check the street, walk slowly around the car to open his door and escort him to his front door.

After that Pike comes in, does a sweep of the building declares it clear and leaves. Then Ilya showers and tells himself he won't look out of the window and when he does he tells himself it's because he wants to check Hollander and his team are earning their money.

The car stops and Pike does his part as usual but on the way to his front door they both see Hollander's car. It's never been here first before. He's never seen Shane arrive, he always waits till Pike has left and Ilya is inside before he takes up his position.

The surprise has him tripping over his feet but Pike had seen Hollander too and rather surprisingly anticipated his stumble. Pike's hands catch hold of his elbow providing enough support to keep him steady before it's noticeable.

Ilya glances at Pike and for the first and possibly only time feels grateful for his company. He would not like to fall in front of Hollander.

Before the gratitude can settle Pike sighs and rolls his eyes, and the muttered "for fucks sake!" helps Ilya feel much more normal about his company again.

Pike's grip on his arm tightens. It's as if he thinks Ilya will run over to Hollander's car.

"No... I'm not doing this tonight. Inside... now. "

Ilya does as he's told and waits for his house to be checked and cleared and for Pike to leave and then he showers and stands in his bedroom window and Hollander is no more visible

than he's been any other night so after five minutes of staring into the darkness he turns around and goes to bed.

It's just like yesterday and tomorrow will be the same.

Deliberately ignoring the feelings screaming for his attention Ilya lies in the middle of his bed and stares at his blank ceiling for far too long before he finally falls asleep.

Tomorrow arrives as it usually does after a restless nights sleep and although he has very little desire to get out of bed he has to, so with a sigh Ilya's feet hit the cold floor and with nothing but his discipline to drive him on gets out of bed and ready for another day of hiding his broken heart.

He's drinking juice when the knock on the door startles him, making his juice slosh over the side of his glass and onto his shirt. Swearing he pulls it off and quickly runs it under tap water hoping it doesn't stain.

It can not be Pike banging this early. The man keeps to a routine and it's almost twenty minutes before he usually arrives and then he sends a text before he collects him. It is their routine, Pike would not change for no reason.

Frozen in his own kitchen Ilya feels stupid for feeling unsure. He probably should not open the door. That would not be wise but then again, what if something has happened. The new worry has his feet moving.

But...

What if it's Stefan come to finish him off? Unlikely and not a particular concern. He can't handle that fucker.

What if something has happened to Sveta? Also unlikely, especially with Rose with her.

What if Hollander was attacked in the night and he's crawled to his door to ask for help, bleeding and dying and begging for one last kiss?

Extremely dramatic, possibly tragically romantic and also highly unlikely.

What if it's just Shane, come to finally talk to him?

Probably the most unrealistic of all his ideas.

He speeds up and at least has the sense to look through the peephole first.

It is Pike. Standing so close all he can see is his stupid ugly face. Ilya swallows his disappointment.

Just Pike, annoying as usual but for variety he has decided to annoy by being horribly early and extending their time together today. How nice.

Pike knocks again, face getting even closer to the door.

"Open the fucking door Rozanov."

Pike's head turns away for a moment and Ilya can't imagine what he's looking for.

He raises his voice instead of doing what Pike wants.

"You are early! And pissed off with me already. This does not make me want to open door."

Pike bangs again.

"Open the fucking door, enough is enough."

His head turns around again and he temporarily goes out of sight of the peep hole as he moves.

He's back in seconds and maybe now this is a little bit interesting, maybe Pike is early because there is news, maybe fuck weasel Stefan is finally caught and Hayden has come to hand in joint resignation.

Ilya does not know how he feels about that so to distract himself from the uncomfortable feelings he opens the door, temporarily forgetting his promise to be well behaved.

"This had better be good enough to have to put up with you for extra 15 minutes."

Pike moves to the side and Ilya does not know if the trouble he has brought to his door is good enough to have to see his face so early in morning or if it is something so terrifying that he wants to run from it.

Shane Hollander tries to smile at him and fails horribly. His stupid freckles stand out against cheeks that are too pale and his eyes look dull and tired, dark shadows under them.

But he still looks beautiful and Ilya hates him for it.

He hates Pike more though because he pushes his friend towards Ilya's house with one hard shove and says something incomprehensible.

"I've called you in sick today. I'll be outside in the car and I swear to god if I see or hear anything... I mean it *anything*! I'm leaving you both to get murdered. Draw the fucking curtains and keep the windows shut. I'm serious. The girls will call later and you better have sorted this all out or you'll be talking to them next."

Hayden steps back shaking his head. He looks like someone has asked him to swallow bowl of nails.

"I mean it, no details not one, ever."

Ilya stands there frozen as Hollander walks past him without a word, entering Ilya's home at least partially of his own free will.

Pike is still muttering.

"Fuck I hate my life. This better be worth it or I'm fucking quitting. Rose is going to..."

Ilya shuts the door so the rest is lost to him but he's too nervous to turn around, his heart is pounding as he tries desperately to crush the hope that Hollander being in his house means something good. It could mean opposite.

It all depends on what Hollander is going to say. Ilya reminds himself he is brave and Russian and a star and turns around so he can find out once and for all and crush the stupid hopes and dreams in his heart for good.

The first thing he notices is that Hollander's eyes are wet and glassy. Is that good or bad? How is he supposed to know?

Shane takes a deep breath and Ilya holds his.

Shane can't even look at him which is probably bad.

"I think we need to talk."

The words hit him directly in his already fragile heart. That is simply terrible way to start a conversation, does Hollander want to kill him with stress? He might achieve goal if he doesn't make it clear why he is here; to say goodbye or...

He manages to nod. Jaw tight, heart already breaking because he knows what's going to happen next he walks past Hollander and gestures for him to follow. He might as well be sitting down on his couch when his heart finally shatters.

Reaching his destination far too quickly Ilya sits while Hollander remains standing.

He looks nervous, it is probably uncomfortable for him to be breaking bad news. Ilya tries to help out by easing the way for him, at least if it looks like he does not care too much then he will not be too embarrassed.

He aims for a smile but it's probably ends up more like a weak grimace, with a shrug he says what's necessary.

"Is ok. I understand. You do not have to explain. I got you hurt, I behaved badly said things I did not mean. I do not expect ..."

Hollander steps forward and talks right over him.

"No, you don't understand ... you don't, you can't because I haven't told you anything. I should have, Ilya I'm sorry. I thought I fucked up, I thought I had to stay away. I thought I couldn't love you and keep you safe. I kind of still do but I'm not sure I care enough now which is terrible but I missed you and .. it hurt, god it hurt so bad not to see you and talk to you and I just .. I just needed to ..."

"You love me?"

It's the only bit he needs to understand for now.

The rest can be talked about later, discussed later, actually he doesn't even care that much about any of the rest. He just needs to hear it again.

Hollander obliges instantly.

"Yes I do. I love you. So. Fucking. Much."

It's too hard to breath but two words manage to slip out, they reveal everything.

"F Fuuucck Hollander."

He wants to cry. His stupid voice is too thick, too full of his heart. It is embarrassing. He has to blink furiously to keep the tears at bay and fails, they start to fall, stupid fat embarrassing tears rolling down his cheeks.

His only option is to close his eyes, stop them that way. That choice means the sudden weight in his lap is a surprise. A surprise that has his eyes flying open and his mouth dropping as Hollander, Shane, climbs into his lap and gently wipes his pain away. His hands are warm and maybe he's crying too but Ilya's doesn't know, his eyes have closed because Shane is kissing him.

Kissing him and holding him, rocking them together, a slow gentle comfort that Ilya hadn't ever dared hope for.

He has it now.

Ilya kisses back, holds on tighter, pulls Shane closer. If he really has him back he won't be letting go again anytime soon.

The softness of the kiss slowly shifts to something needier; more heat, more want, more everything. He gasps as Hollander slips his tongue inbetween his lips and strokes gently. He moans when Hollander's hand fumbles between them and in an impressive display of multitasking keeps kissing him while he unbuttons two pairs of pants and gets them both out and into his fucking perfect huge hand.

Hollander kisses him; kisses his face, his lips, his nose, his ears, everywhere, rubbing his lips across every part of Ilya that he can reach and all the time he's stroking them; firm and rough, over and over again, it's so fucking perfect Ilya could die right there on his couch perfectly happy.

Shane's voice is rough and hot in the shell of his ear.

"You gonna come for me baby?"

He almost does, there and then, practically on command which is as hot as it is embarrassing but he manages to hold back. He should make Hollander work for it, at least for a few more seconds.

He barely recognises his own voice when he answers;

"Fucking make me."

Hollander's gasp is beautiful, the hand driving him crazy pauses which was not the plan but then Ilya understands because Shane has his hand out, an invitation he accepts without thinking.

It's even better when Shane's hand returns, wet from Ilya's spit and does the job it was meant for.

"Come."

The word is barely there but it's hot and heavy and irresistible. Hollander bites and licks and nuzzles in as close as he can.

"I want you to come. Please... Ilya... come for me baby."

The noise he makes would be embarrassing if he was aware enough to think about it. He isn't though, he just asks again for what he needs.

"Make me...fucking make me. Do it..."

He's shaking all over, barely able to get air into his lungs.

He feels Shane smile against his skin as he does as he's asked, enthusiastically and quickly and when Ilya finishes gasping his pleasure in hot wet breaths directly into Hollander's mouth it's only seconds before he feels the heat and pulse of Shane's release spill onto his stomach.

The passion of moment already over Ilya immediately worries what will happen next. Is Shane about to regret everything? Was this just a goodbye fuck?

His hands tighten, holding onto Shane's waist, unwilling to let him move away but Shane doesn't even try to leave him. He burrows his head into the crook of Ilya's neck and sighs happily. Ilya pulls them down and once they're arranged in a more comfortable position Shane settles himself heavy and warm across Ilya's body.

It's not how Ilya expected his morning to go but he is not complaining. He is happy to stay here for as long as he can which is lucky because it doesn't take very long before Hollander's night shift catches up with him and he gets even heavier and a slight snore starts to rumble across Ilya's chest.

Ilya has no objection to a nap. He has not been sleeping good these past few weeks. He closes his eyes and runs his fingers through the soft silky strands of hair that he's missed so much and he breathes in the scent of Shane Hollander that's he's missed even more.

There are still problems to deal with he knows that but for now he doesn't have to worry about them, for now he has Shane Hollander back in his arms and it's everything he needs.

Chapter End Notes

They're back together.... Awww cuddles on the couch. Someone will be complaining about feeling gross later but he has been up all night so a quick nap is understandable.

A few cannon references dotted around for fun and now onto the finale.

Come say hi and cheer me on in the comments, the last bits are always the hardest for me to motivate myself through. I'm aiming for next chapter update in a week but I promise nothing.

Hand in there, we're on the home stretch and then I can go do something else with my life 🥳

Chapter 14

Chapter Summary

Shane needed a little push to get him back together with Ilya and while it broke his heart to do it that's what best friends are for; Hayden Pike sometimes hates his life.

He hates it a whole lot more the day after and his week only gets worse from there.

Not all their troubles are behind them and sometimes being a bodyguard can be confusing and dangerous.

Good job there's three of them on this job.

Chapter Notes

It's kinda a long one- as if anyone's surprised at this point!

Here for your entertainment is 10k of love, mystery, action, drama and peril!

Just like a trip to the movies 😂😂😂

Well that's the idea anyway.

Enjoy..... 🤔

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

Almost three weeks of unenthusiastic nightly experimentation has lead Shane to the conclusion that the comfort level of any car seat is inversely proportional to how long you have to spend sitting in the damn thing.

He tries to disprove his own evidence by shifting and squirming but it's no good. At least he's only got about twenty minutes left before Hayden arrives. Not long until his friend waves as he goes past to collect Rozanov for the day and then Shane will start the car, before they come out, drive home and maybe get a few hours sleep if he's lucky. He's not been sleeping particularly well for weeks, probably the shift from the day to night work but perhaps it also has a little something to do with sleeping alone, it might only have been a handful of nights that they'd had together but falling asleep next to Rozanov seems to have ruined Shane's ability to fall asleep alone.

Another shift of position eases nothing, Shane totally detests the night shift but Hayden hasn't been complaining about his days or Rozanov as much as he did last time. In fact he's hardly complaining at all and Shane isn't sure how he feels about that.

At least if Hayden was complaining he'd get to hear about Ilya, know what he was doing, things he was saying. He might even know more about how he's feeling. Svetlana's phone call last night is probably the most detailed information he's had for weeks and he hasn't been able to stop thinking about it.

Is Ilya really that upset that he's not around? That they aren't talking anymore? Or texting, that there's been nothing between them for weeks.

Does Ilya miss him as fiercely as Shane misses Ilya? He desperately wants the answer to be yes but knows that's weak and unkind. He should hope Ilya is fine and not missing him at all.

Fuck, he hopes he's miserable.

The decidedly uncharitable thought gets knocked out of his head with a start when someone bangs on his car window.

He's reaching for his weapon before he registers he knows the face peering through the glass and calms down.

Hayden is early and Shane greets his friend with an unfriendly, "What the fuck man?" through the window.

Shane checks the clock. He's almost twenty minutes early and he's not smiling, his heart rate which had been decelerating spikes again — what's gone wrong? Where's Ilya? Is he ok?

He's opening the car door before Hayden can step back so his friend stumbles a bit.

Their greetings overlap;

"Hey, careful!"

"What's wrong? Is Ilya ok? Where is he?"

His friend looks unimpressed by the rapid fire questions. He doesn't bother to answer but starts a cheerful monologue instead.

"Hello Hayden, how are you? Haven't seen much of you lately. How's Jackie? How are the kids? Nice of you to pop in and say hello to me on this bright and freezing morning at the crack of fucking dawn!"

The tension slides off Shane's shoulders. Thank fuck, nothing bad has happened.

"Sorry man, just tired, you know how it is. Missed you bud. You ok?"

He gives his oldest friend a quick one armed embrace and a tired smile as an apology. Hayden hugs him back with both arms which is nice but he's still not sure why he's here nor

is his response particularly illuminating.

"Oh I'm having a fantastic time. Rozanov is a fucking delight."

Having just been thinking about how little Hayden has complained about Ilya the comment is unexpected because even Shane can tell that's sarcasm.

"I thought he wasn't being difficult for you this time."

Hayden's tight smile gives little away.

"He's not, he's being extremely polite. All the time. Every day. Every. Fucking. Day, Shane. Like some kind of fucking Russian Stepford ballerina clone."

"It's principal dancer Hayd, not ballerina that's for the girls."

Hayden's eyes close a second too long to be a blink which Shane knows means he's taken something too literally again. Hayden smiles though so Shane doesn't mind too much when he says;

"I know that man. I also know it's a fucking nightmare being around him when he's like this. I can't stand it. No one can. They're all looking at him like he's a bomb about to explode or implode. No one knows what would be worse or what to do about it. We've all had enough, you have to fix him, put him back the way he was, it's fucking disturbing man, I'm not joking. He walks around being quiet and like nothing matters to him anymore."

Shane tries to imagine that and doesn't like the image of a subdued and sad Rozanov that appears in his head. Hayden continues to build on the picture he's creating.

"I don't like the guy but it's not good. It's really not good and I think he's getting worse. Rose is right, we can make it work. You just need to decide what you want. What you will make you happy. "

Hayden pauses with a grimace and grits his teeth like he's in pain. It sounds like it hurts him to say the next words

"And fuck me Shane, I fucking hate to say it, but I think it's him that makes you happy and I think you do too, so stop wasting time you fucking idiot and go talk to him."

It's what Shane wants more than anything and if even Hayden thinks he should then wouldn't he be stupid to keep fighting his heart?

With his hopes building he looks towards the house Ilya Rozanov is in, he's probably already up and moving around, brewing coffee or drinking juice and waiting for his bodyguard to arrive.

Shane lets himself imagine that the bodyguard in Rozanov's life could be him again and it makes him feels better than he has for weeks but just because Hayden thinks Ilya misses him (and Rose and Svetlana too) doesn't make it true. What if they're all wrong?

Rose was right about love being scary, it's fucking terrifying, but is she also right about Rozanov? Is Hayden? Is he going to take a chance on a maybe?

"Shane?"

Hayden's grip on his arm is warm and firm.

Caught between fear and hope he shares his fears with his friend.

"What if I'm too late? What if he won't even open the door to me? What if he doesn't want me anymore?"

Hayden's face is set in a grim, determined expression.

"Like hell! Who wouldn't want you man, you're fucking gorgeous, hot as hell! Man if I ..."

Hayden stops talking suddenly with his cheeks flushing pink in the cold dawn air and Shane thinks about what a strange morning he's having.

"If... " Hayden restarts his sentence slowly. "If that fucker doesn't want you I'll get on that stage tomorrow night and dance a congo in those tights of his!"

The laugh that bursts out of him is entirely unexpected. Hayden smiles back and Shane is very aware of how lucky he is to have the friends he has.

"Jackie might enjoy you in tights but I'm not sure anyone else would."

Hayden pouts and looks down at his own legs.

"Fuck off, I've got calves to die for and don't even get me started on how good my butt is."

They share another other smile then Hayden asks a question and Shane takes a deep breath and says yes, yes he does want to go and talk to Ilya Rozanov.

On the walk over to Ilya's house Hayden's is significantly less supportive, muttering to himself and not particularly subtlety either.

"No fucking taste at all, I'm embarrassed for you man, really I am. Guy like you could have anyone and you pick fucking Roz."

Shane wishes Hayden understood better but he doesn't have the right words to say why Ilya is it for him but he tries with the words he has.

"But I don't want anyone. I just want him."

Hayden sighs again as he stops right in front of the door and bangs hard with the palm of his hand.

"I know, it's fucking tragic."

The next thing he does is yell at Ilya to open his door. Shane stays behind him and wonders if it's too late to change his mind and leave.

That's not an option though because Hayden is looking out for exactly that kind of panic attack and glares at him twice before the door finally opens. He hears Ilya voice just before that and is terrified and excited in equal measure.

Then when Hayden steps aside Shane gets to see the man he loves for the first time in weeks.

Ilya is standing just a few feet away, tall and beautiful. He looks shocked which is fair and for some reason he's topless - which is less fair from Shane's point of view.

It's all a little overwhelming so when Hayden pushes him forward he's grateful for the assist.

But then Hayden is gone and he's on his own and staring at Ilya's broad tense shoulders while he leans on his closed front door. Shane waits with his heart in his throat and tears in his eyes.

Ilya turns around and the desire to rush forward and kiss him has to be firmly squashed. They need to talk so that's what he says.

"We need to talk."

Shane holds his breath because he could be about to get kicked out. His heart might be about to break.

He isn't, and it doesn't, not yet, Ilya just nods and walks past him towards his living room, so for once Shane follows and Rozanov leads and he dares to hope that they can fix this.

Shane has no idea how long he's been sleeping on Ilya's couch or more accurately sleeping on Ilya on Ilya's couch but he's feeling more rested and 100% better in every way since before he got pushed down a staircase.

"Hello."

The sleepy tone, thickly accented means Ilya has been napping too and that makes Shane happier than it probably should, that they could both relax together enough to fall asleep is nice.

The sex probably helped too.

He hopes Ilya can feel him smiling against his chest but in case he can't he kisses his pec lightly and smooths the soft skin beneath his fingertips gently. He'd only want to leave such a comfortable spot for something important but as he has something very important to do he wiggles around until he's able to look up at Rozanov and return the greeting.

"Hi."

The smile on Ilya's face is tentative and although he still looks sleepy and soft and so very beautiful there's the tiniest bit of tension around his eyes; a little doubt, a little fear. Shane

understands why it's there but he wants it gone as soon as possible and he hopes he knows how to do that.

Slowly, so not to startle him Shane lifts his head and slides himself further up the warm bare chest he's been resting on and whispers hello again; this time he's close enough to Ilya's parted lips that his own brush against them. The delicate touch causes a tiny tremor to run through the body pinned under him and Shane can feel the ragged breath Ilya takes and releases against his skin and it's gesture of pure relief.

After the shiver comes the quiet echo of his own greeting, pressed softly onto his lips and it sounds and feels like little like a heart breaking, Shane understands why; he feels it too. What they nearly missed.

It's only in that moment, with an aching heart buried beneath his chestbone and Ilya's pain on his lips that he finally, truly understands what they've done to each other so he makes the kiss as soft as he can and tries to press every drop of his hurt and regret and hidden love into it to soothe them both.

He thinks he achieves his goal when Ilya relaxes and mirrors his kiss and the bitterness of all the damage they caused each other melts into something sweeter, something that helps heal the blows they struck without understanding what they were doing.

Dazed and so in love he could die Shane's heart sores when Ilya's smile is wider when the kiss ends. His eyes look brighter too and more hopeful as he opens his mouth and says;

"You are very heavy."

Shane snorts, the romance is overwhelming, smiling like an idiot he agrees proudly.

"I'm a big guy."

Ilya's eyes light up but for once he refrains from innuendo and instead pouts his stupidly beautiful lips and nods his agreement with a smirk.

"Yes you are."

It takes significant effort on Shane's part not to lean in and bite at his sexy pouty mouth and start kissing him again.

The joy dancing in Ilya's eyes says he knows exactly what's on his mind. Ilya drags his thumb slowly across Shane's skin and down towards his very obviously eager mouth.

"I like it."

Shane shivers this time, fuck the accent really does do it for him, he's missed it. He's missed everything about this man.

Ilya's eyes hold his gaze with an intensity Shane usually can't bear but with Ilya he doesn't seem to mind at all. There's so much to try and understand within those eyes that he could look forever.

"I like you Shane Hollander."

It's so stupid to be so happy about such a simple thing but he is. He can't help it.

Ilya loves him, he's worked that out but he likes him as well and that is special. Shane hasn't had the experience of many people in his life actually liking him just the way he is.

His beaming smile hides nothing of his joy and delight at the statement. He wants to give back what he was given.

"I like you too. So much Ilya, so fucking much."

And that seems to please Ilya Rozanov as much as it did him, perhaps they've both been very lonely for a long time but not any more and never again.

Unable to stop smiling Shane wonders what romance Ilya will bring to their reunion next. It's as good as he expected.

"So, I am not asshole anymore then?"

The question makes him laugh as does the squeeze around his waist as Ilya grabs him and tries to tickle him.

Laughing and squirming, trying to escape but not so hard he actually manages to break free he replies with the truth.

"Oh you definitely are, you are such an asshole but.."

He gets hold of Ilya's hands for long enough to stop him for a second or two.

"I like that about you too."

It's obviously not what Ilya was expecting, he can tell by the surprised double blink and silence and because Shane likes him so very much he saves him from having to think of an answer

" but, if you ever tell anyone I said that I'll deny it. Officially I like nice men and you're a statistical anomaly."

Ilya frowns at him and it's just too cute.

"What is "a- noom- lee"."

Shane kisses him one more time just because he can and who wouldn't if they could before he answers.

"It means something so rare, so amazing that you can hardly believe it's true."

The changes to Shane's work life balance over the last three days have improved everyone's situation. Svetlana is thinking about thinking about forgiving him, Hayden is thrilled to be officially downgraded back to bodyguard number 2 and the backup role and Rose is walking around like she contributed to the Nobel peace prize.

Shane now spends his days and nights with Ilya and Hayden is on call, in case he's needed, which he isn't, because Shane is focused and professional now that everything is settled between them and out in open.

Anyway the current threat level is low, no one has seen or even heard anything about their missing wannabe ballet star stalker or fuck boy weasel scum as Ilya likes to refer to him. The police have declared the situation low priority again and told them to call if anything changes.

So far nothing has officially changed but something in Shane's gut is nagging at him to be careful. It's probably just his natural concern for Ilya and of course Svetlana but he doesn't intend to ignore his instincts.

It's at the opera house that he feels most on edge, it's their most vulnerable location and that means they've arranged it so when their two Russian dancers are performing Hayden stays backstage with both Ilya and Svetlana while Shane watches from the audience's side of the curtain and Rose patrols the hallways and monitors the entrances and exits.

Considering there's no direct threat it might seem like overkill but Shane can't shake the feeling something is going to go wrong when they're here. Rose is taking his feeling seriously but tonight she did mention that he might be just a little hyper vigilant due to his emotional involvement in this job and they may need to rethink the plan in another week if there is still no sign of Stefan.

He took her comments seriously, it is entirely possible he's overthinking, overreacting and being overprotective but he isn't changing anything about the set up yet.

It's the evening performance that makes him feel the most jittery, he just doesn't know why and it's pissing him off.

Ilya and Svetlana have just gone off stage. It's the longest break they have together. Shane smiles to himself, Ilya will be annoying Hayden by now in that pokey little waiting area they all sit around in. His friend is probably less than 24 hours away from wishing he'd never asked Shane to "fix" Rozanov's personality.

Without Ilya's dynamic presence on stage Shane is far less interested in the performance. He uses this time to scan the crowds and check no one suspicious is lurking around or getting out of their seat when they shouldn't be. He probably looks like an over alert usher but he doesn't care.

Shane scans the dim aisles and velvet seats again and is satisfied that the patrons of Boston ballet are appropriately enthralled and that there's nothing particular to be worried about.

Sitting back stage Ilya is sure that the spot they have to wait in is even more cluttered tonight than it was yesterday.

There are extra stacks of boxes fighting for space with the set dressings that are still leaning up against the walls, add the costume rails and for some reason several piles of useless worn out pointes that should already have been thrown away and it's a disaster. He tries to count the shoes but gives up. The ladies go through pointes like Pike goes through those packets of mints he's started sucking. Ilya suspects it's because he recently mentioned that peppermint makes his nose itch.

Pike is happily sucking on his stupid sweet while he blocks the entrance to their private little rest area. He has a good view of anyone approaching, so at least he is being vaguely useful. While Pike is extremely visible to anyone who cares to look Ilya is happy to have a few moments of peace and sit out of sight. He's more visible than Sveta though, all you can see of her are her feet. She'd been standing behind some boxes, leaning over them and complaining there was no room for her but now she's sat on the floor, legs stretched out in front of her. Her feet are flexing up and down helping to keep her muscles warm and loose but still allow her to rest.

There have plenty of time to do that, due back on stage in around eleven minutes. The score drifts through the air and the orchestra sounds particularly good tonight. Ilya closes his eyes to listen better and also because he is maybe be a little tired. On one hand he is sleeping much better with Hollander in his bed but on other he is sleeping many less hours than he should. Time in bed is not always best used for sleeping.

He hopes Pike notices him smiling and guesses what pretty images are floating around in his head; yes, so many better things to do in bed than sleep.

The music continues and he listens until the movement that means it is time to go to stand in the wing and be ready for entrance.

He stands and does a few knee bends and stretches expecting to see Sveta's head above the boxes again bobbing around as she does the same but he does not.

It is odd. Sveta is always very committed to warming up properly. He calls her.

"Svetlana?"

There is no reply. If she had fallen asleep because her nights are busy too he will tease her for weeks. He raises his voice again and starts to move closer but his stomach has gone tense and tight. His heart is starting to pound.

"Sveta? We must go. What are you doing?"

He strides forward until he can see behind the mess of boxes and when he does his pounding heart stops.

What he is seeing is not possible. Pike is annoying but he is competent enough and Ilya has been sitting right here too, so it is impossible.

"Hayden!"

The pain and panic in his voice is recognised because Pike responds instantly without hesitation or complaint. He stops abruptly almost banging into him, his hand on his gun holster but Ilya knows guns will do no good now.

"Fuck!"

Pike swears then knocks over boxes as he looks around for what is not there.

Ilya doesn't move. He can't. He is due on stage right now but he is not there. He will not be there.

Neither will Svetlana.

People are calling him. He can hear his name, has been hearing them calling for a while actually, but now it is Amir himself shouting, looking for him; a stage manager furious because he is unable to understand why his stars are not where they should be.

They are always where they should be.

Pike is on the phone. He is loud but not shouting. He will be telling Shane or maybe Rose because they will need to know and what they will need to know is that Svetlana is gone.

Ilya stares at the empty space.

Gone.

The ballet has been stopped.

The police have been called and no one is leaving the Boston Opera House anytime soon.

The shock wave from the unexpected halt of the performance is reverberating through the audience and the company.

Technical difficulties was the official reason given. Out front people are not happy but backstage the rumours are flying.

Svetlana Vetrova is dead.

Svetlana has quit in a terrible temper. No one knows why.

Svetlana and Ilya have fought.

Svetlana, no Ilya has pushed, been pushed downstairs by the other. A broken leg. No two broken legs.

They fell together, so four broken legs.

Svetlana and Ilya were caught fucking backstage and have been fired on the spot.

Ilya is refusing to dance with Svetlana ever again because she was having sex with the bodyguard.

The one called Holland.

No the other one.

No the woman.

Svetlana was refusing to dance with Ilya ever again because *he* was having sex with the bodyguard.

The woman, some kind of flower, Poppy or Rose. No it was Lily wasn't it?

No not her, it was the really hot guy that just got back from somewhere. Wayne. Definitely Wayne.

No it was the other man, the one called Mike.

Ilya lets it all wash over him as he sits and waits for Pike to tell him what Shane says they need to do next.

Shane will know. Shane will know and then he will get Sveta back for him. He has to because Ilya can't imagine a world without her in it.

Shane will know what to do.

"What the fuck do mean gone?! How the fuck is she gone Hayden?!"

Shane's heart rate had spiked the second he'd seen Hayden's name on his phone at the exact same moment Ilya did not appear on stage with Svetlana.

On the other end of the phone Hayden is swearing too. Apparently he "doesn't fucking know!"

Eyes closed Shane takes a breath.

"Ilya?"

He knows Ilya is there, Hayden would have lead with that if he was gone as well, what he means is how is Ilya doing. Hayden understands, his voice lowers.

"In shock I think... he's just... I don't I don't understand where she went. I swear to god Shane it's not possible. I'm right there, no one can get past me and Rozanov never left either. No one could have taken her.

"Well someone did and we know who. We just don't know how. Rose?"

That's his next question but again he knows, Hayden phoned him first.

"Not yet, but she's rung me twice. She'll know the performance has stopped and she won't leave her post yet but she knows something is wrong by now. She's going to be freaking out Shane."

He nods even if Hayden can't see him. She will but she'll stay on the exits until he tells her to move.

His brain is whirling, pacing helps a little so he allows himself the movement.

He wants to go to Ilya, it's almost a physical pain to stay away but he needs to think. This is what he's missed, the way Stefan could have gotten to Svetlana right in front of both Hayden and Ilya. He knows that now but he can't see the how of it yet.

"Call Rose."

"Me?!"

Hayden sounds almost more alarmed than he had when he'd shared the news Svetlana had been abducted.

"Yes you- I need to think. I'm missing something. I need you to stay there, call Rose. Tell her to stay where she is, watch the doors and if I call either of you take the fucking call."

He hangs up trusting his partners to listen and do what he's said.

How is she gone? How did it happen?

Shane closes his eyes.

He viewed the spot where Ilya waits off stage. He checked it out. He pulls up the memory; one way in, small, cluttered. Ilya has been complaining people kept dumping things in there.

So it's a small space, made smaller recently by someone but why?

Why? Why there? Why now?

Ilya's been dancing here for years, using the same space and now they start to fill it with junk? Coincidence? Maybe, but maybe not. Far too many things in there now after so many years, is it someone being lazy or...

He thinks. He's studied this building, he knows it inside out. The different ways you get from A-B or O-T while avoiding R.

He's seen the blueprints. He memorised them. He likes blueprints, maps, patterns, he always has.

In his mind he pulls up the blueprints for that part of the building and zooms in.

It's small. Low ceiling.

Shane looks more carefully at the blueprint in his mind; three walls and an opening facing the main corridor. Small, closed off. Not possible.

He superimposes the clutter into the mental picture he's built of the room. The clutter matters. It's there for a reason. It's there to hide. To allow this to happen.

What is it hiding?

He looks at his blueprint walls again and he sees it at once. Of course, it's not even clever. It was already hidden at the back, people must have forgotten about it, Stefan just hide it better and built himself a personal route in and out of a place he knew everyone would think Svetlana would be safe in.

Fuck.

Hayden picks up on the first ring. There are no greetings exchanged.

"There's a door. Right hand wall at the back. It connects to another alcove like the one you're in."

Hayden doesn't doubt him for a second.

"Ok, so where do I start looking?"

Hayden's instinct to start searching for Svetlana is understandable, but it's not what's needed.

"You don't."

Hayden's protest comes down the line exactly as he expected.

"What? Shane *I* lost her I need to find her."

He gets that but it's not about what Hayden needs.

"No, stay with Ilya. Keep him safe. I have to work out where to go. I'll let you know."

Shane hangs up on Hayden while he's still arguing with him.

His friend won't be happy but he'll do as he's asked, Hayden knows this isn't about what he wants or what Shane wants. It won't matter that Rose will want to tear the place apart looking for Svetlana. None of them are here to do what they want they're here to do whatever's necessary to ensure the safety of their clients.

If Shane *could* do whatever he wanted, he'd be heading backstage right now to check on Ilya himself but he's not. He's found a quiet space and has stopped there. He has to focus, he has to think and work out what the next move for them is everyone is counting on him.

Breathing slow and steady he quiets his mind, blocks out all the static and considers his problems and what he knows that could help.

Svetlana is missing.

There was no blood, no noise when she was taken. Hayden would have said. She's not hurt. Not yet.

Stefan has her because he still wants her. Still "loves" her.

Thoughts start running through his head, the various options Stefan could be considering to keep Svetlana for himself.

Shane considers the escape route, the exits he could take, the corridors he might creep down.

He reviews the parts of the old building thinking about what he'd avoid and which parts he might head for. What would give him freedom and what sanctuary?

Has Stefan already made it outside with Svetlana or is he holed up and waiting for things to quiet down?

Will he stay or will he leave?

Has he hidden her somewhere nearby or is she being dragged around with him?

Did he drug her? Knock her out? Threaten? Did she go if he promised not to hurt anyone she loved?

The ideas all flash through his mind like lightning strikes.

Time is limited, they need to act and soon but a few moments thought means their chances of getting Sveta back quickly will be higher.

In his head Shane takes a step back from the blueprint of the building he's visualised and looks at the bigger picture.

The opera house is large. He'd forgotten that, having become so familiar with it, first from the floor plans and blueprints he studied and then from being here, walking around the actual hallways and rooms.

It's become safe and familiar, the company all speak of it fondly even when complaining about the electrics or the peeling paint and backstage doors that don't open and windows that don't shut.

With all that catalogued and stored Shane considers his target; Stefan - what kind of man is he? And what kind of choices does that kind of man make?

Will Stefan hide or run?

The facts line up for his consideration:

The man isn't brave, he isn't confident.

He ran from the nightclub and he paid someone else to stab Ilya. He shot at him himself but he didn't take a second shot, didn't see it through. He ran and he hid and then he attacked from behind.

He's scared to act but then acts impetuously. Childish.

He wants praise and admiration without any of the work required to earn it and he hates those around him who have what he wants.

He thinks he's owed what they have just because he wants it; glory, fame, love.

He's entitled and not used to effort, a jealous and bitter man.

Angry, arrogant, stupid.

Lazy.

Shane's eyes open.

He's still here. They're still in the opera house. Now did he go high or low?

Shane considers again; the layout of the building the personality of the man.

High or low? His gut says high. Stefan would want to look down on people if he could, see the chaos he's created, gloat silently that he's won.

He starts to move at the same time he lifts his phone, the number already dialing.

"Rose?"

He's pretty sure he knows where they're hiding.

"Move."

"No."

Ilya was of course expecting that to be the response but he is not at all impressed by Pike's attempt to assert his authority.

"No is not option. I am leaving."

Pike widens his stance, stabilising his body, obviously preparing for the trouble Ilya is about to give him.

"No you're not. Shane wants you to stay here. So you stay here."

Ilya has fantasied about punching Hayden Pike more than once since he met him but he doesn't *actually* want to do it. He will though, if that is what it takes to get past him and start

looking for Sveta.

Shane will be hearing exactly what Ilya thinks of his "stay here" plan as soon as he finds him. He is not impressed, what is Hollander thinking, trying to keep him from search! No is not happening!

"Rozanov, for once in your life just do what you're told. Shane needs to concentrate and he can't do that if you're wandering around out there."

Pike responds to his furious silence with more excuses.

"Look, I'm not exactly happy about it either. Don't you think I want to go look for her! I'm supposed to be the fucking bodyguard who was keeping her safe and he got to her when I was right here! I want to find that fucker as much as you!"

Frustration and shame is rolling off Pike and to his surprise Ilya hears himself say;

"Was not your fault. I was here too. We could not know what he had planned. He has been waiting, watching us. That fucker is smarter than we thought."

Pike laughs but it's got a bitter flavour to it Ilya understands.

"Yeah, well Shane is smarter."

Ilya looks at Hayden Pike, his faith in Shane is absolute. He's completely certain about him and Ilya wants to believe that more than anything, but it's hard when he's stuck here with no information, no idea what's happening and just his fear and imagination to keep him company. Pike does not really count as company.

The reluctant doubt growing in him must show on his face because Hayden's body relaxes a little as he steps closer. Ilya doesn't even object when Pike's hand grabs hold of his arm in a show of support.

"He really is, Roz, there's no one like him. He'll find her. He will. He just needs me to stay with you, keep you safe while he does it. Ok?"

He's about to agree when he hears the words again and stops himself.

"That is what he said? You had to stay *with* me?"

"That's what I just said isn't it?"

Hayden's face is slipping back towards irritation but Ilya suddenly feels charitable, again, it is not Pike's fault, he is not the smart one.

"He did not say we had to stay here? He just told you to stay with me?"

Comprehension dawns on Pike's plain dull little face.

"Rozanov...."

His name is stretched out slowly, it's a warning and a threat but Ilya thinks he can hear just a hint of interest in it too and he knows he has won.

He already admitted it- Pike does not want to be stuck here either, he will consider a loophole and give in quickly but regardless of his personal feelings Pike tries to be loyal to the spirit not the shape of Shane's words.

"You know that's not what he meant."

Pike glares at him, conflicting emotions in his eyes and Ilya smiles back.

"No I do not know anything. I only know that you say he said to stay with me so if I go somewhere then..."

"Roz! Don't..."

The words are a token effort because easily persuadable Hayden Pike doesn't stop him when Ilya pushes him aside and walks out into the opera house to find his boyfriend or his best friend, whichever one happens first does not matter at this point. He will be with them both again by the end of the day if he has to tear the place apart to do it.

Behind him he can hear Pike's voice but also his footsteps.

"Rozanov we should not be doing this!"

But they are and with his back to Pike Ilya keeps walking, a grim smile on his face that Pike won't get to see and who would have ever thought the two of them would be a "we".

It is of course only temporary, a truce until Svetlana is found. Once she is, things can go back to normal. He has far too much fun annoying Pike to give it up for long. In fact the status quo is already starting to slide back into place because before he can get too far ahead of him Pike grabs his arm and hauls him backwards.

"I am at least going in front."

Pike's finger waves around in the air. Ilya lets him have his moment.

"And you listen to me, do what I say, no questions, and when Shane finds out about this I'm telling him it was all your idea. I'm not getting yelled at if something happens to you."

Hayden turns and starts walking away, his voice trailing behind him.

"Get shot and it's on you."

Having got his own way Ilya doesn't mind being generous about it.

"Of course."

"Stabbed and I'm not taking any responsibility."

"Obviously."

"And don't get blood on me."

"I would never bleed."

Pike snorts and continues washing his hands of any potential injuries Ilya might acquire on their mission.

"Get pushed down the stairs. Don't take me with you."

He stays silent for that one- no promises there.

"Out a window. I'm not helping pick up the pieces."

He nods cooperatively when Pike looks back over his shoulder.

"Very understandable. Would be big mess."

Being agreeable still makes Pike give you the evil eye but they keep going forward so Ilya does not particularly mind.

Another mental viewing of the opera house blueprints consolidated Shane's opinion on where to go and he's already on the way there when he calls Rose.

"Plan. Now."

It's not a question. Rose's voice is tense but she doesn't sound panicked. She has complete faith that he has a plan.

Fortunately he does. He explains what he's worked out and where he's heading and what he's hoping to find when he gets there.

Rose listens and when he's finished she makes a suggestion.

"I'm closer. It'll be faster and then we know for sure sooner."

He's not thrilled but it makes sense to let her go.

"Ok text me when we're sure. I'll go wait in the lobby or he'll get suspicious."

Just as he says it Shane enters the lobby. It's full of people waiting to see what they're supposed to do next, he scans the area and spots Rose exiting the building on the other side.

She's gone just in time too because the police turn up seconds after she's disappeared and they're not going to let anyone go anywhere.

Shane slides into the crowd and tries to blend in. He wanders around putting on a show of looking at people and checking who's present and he doesn't look up at the large circle of

stained glass set into the wall above the balcony he saw Ilya and Svetlana on that first night.

If he's right and he is, he knows he is, then that's where they are; behind the glass in yet another one of the small empty spaces built into this building. He can't look to check, can't risk giving any warning but he'd bet the entire paycheck he's earned on this job that right this second Stefan is staring down at them smug and amused that he's got the upper hand.

Shane can't wait to prove to him he hasn't.

It's just a coincidence that he looks out of the window at the right time to see a woman run past 2 floors below them.

He recognises her hair and the dress. She had FaceTimed Sveta earlier tonight in their dressing room. Rose has a pair of fairly sensible heels in her hands as she races past.

"Pike!"

His bodyguard stops.

"What?"

"Rose is going that way in hurry?"

Pike looks out of the window. He frowns as he catches his friend disappearing around the corner.

"Why is she leaving?"

Pike checks his phone for any updates and Ilya assumes there aren't any due to the scowl on his face.

"We can ask, if we catch her. Those stairs back there go to fire exit, come out way she is headed."

Pike nods and they run.

The next time Ilya sees Rose Landry she's swearing at him and pointing her gun in his direction. He does not much care for the experience.

"Jesus Christ Rose!"

Pike curses at her seconds after they burst out of the fire door and are welcomed by her weapon waving between them.

"Fuck Hayd! I almost shot you! Why are here? Why is he here?! Shane's gonna go fucking mental. You're in so much trouble, Jesus!"

She's already walking away looking around for something. Ilya does not know what she is expecting to find to help them out here at back of an opera house.

"He is doing job he was given. Staying with me, I am here so he is here too. Is what Shane said, we are doing nothing wrong."

She doesn't even look at them.

"Oh fuck off. You know that's bullshit. You are so not getting blown for a month!"

The disgusted noise Hayden makes is almost worth the burst of panic her threat ignites in him.

"Fucking Hell Rose! Do you have to! I fucking mean it, gross! That's my best friend, urgh!"

"Mine too babe and I know what I know!"

Next to him Hayden gags again.

"Three days max. If that!" Ilya interjects, there is no way his Shane would last a month without...no way.

Rose ignores him because she's jumping into the air, arms extended.

She swears as her feet hit the ground again. He watches her do it again but this time she stays suspended in the air for a second before she falls. It takes a second before his brain makes sense of the sight.

Crouched down Rose swears even louder and winces at the pain in her hands from losing her grip on a fire escape ladder that is stuck.

Pike strides towards her and makes the same leap, being taller and stronger he makes it first time the ladder moves an inch but that is it.

"Don't you lot have a maintenance team round here?"

Pike drops to the floor directing his question Ilya's way.

He snorts at the implication that he would know such things and expresses the same sentiment firmly.

"Do I look like I know who fixes ladders round here?"

Before the argument can escalate Rose speaks up and reminds them to focus.

"Boys, just get it working."

Pike jumps up again and this time Ilya wraps his arms around his legs and pulls hard. The ladder moves slightly and Ilya decides he is going to find out who fixes or rather is supposed to fix the fire escape ladders round here.

The ladder loses the fight in a sudden burst of movement that has Ilya on the floor and Pike sprawled on top of him. Is not a lot of fun. Pike obviously agrees, he scrambles around trying

to get up even as Ilya pushes and kicks at him to make him move.

Rose doesn't wait for them to be out of her way, she steps lightly on Ilya's leg on her way to Pike's shoulder blade and then up onto the first rung of the ladder.

"Rose, what are we even doing?"

She doesn't stop climbing but she does answer Pike.

"*We* aren't doing anything. *I* am checking to see if Shane's right about where Sveta is. Now stop bothering me."

She's gone up another five rungs before she looks back down again and issues a warning.

"And for fuck's sake Hayd - don't let anything happen to him!"

Then dismissing them both she continues to climb.

On the sidewalk looking up at her they both seem a little lost.

"Do we follow her?"

Ilya can't believe he's asking Pike for advice.

"No. Shane has a plan, we don't want to fuck it up. We wait here, for now at least. I'm the back up and you're a just a fucking nuisance."

Pike's attention is still focused towards the sky and where Rose is climbing higher.

"Go stand against the wall. It'll be slightly harder for you to get hurt over there."

He sounds worried but it is not concern for Ilya, it is because Rose has just stepped off the fire escape and is making her way, very slowly along a narrow ridge, heading towards a small pair of windows set into the exterior wall of the opera house. Ilya squints up and tries to work out what would be on the other side.

They're behind the building and that means it is lobby directly opposite them and what?... Ilya pictures the lobby in his head, it's grand entrance, plush carpets and pillars, the staircase and the balcony. Rose is higher than that. She's as high as... in his mind he finally puts it together. The stained glass window. Ilya had a tour years ago, his first week here. He did not have much English then, couldn't understand what he was being told but he remembers the room behind the glass and he remembers the staircase that leads up there too.

When he looks again Rose has discovered whatever she was sent to confirm, she's moving back towards the fire escape. He watches with Hayden, heart in throat and when she is safe again she pulls out her phone. She's texting Shane that much is obvious.

Ilya glances at Pike who is still looking up. He has not had a message yet. Backups have to wait.

There could be a plan. No, there is definitely a plan. Hollander makes plans. Ilya considers his options, if he does anything reckless he might ruin the plan but if he doesn't do anything..

He takes a step backwards, edging slowly towards the corner of the building.

"If you take one more fucking step I swear to God I will knock you down and sit on you. And if that doesn't work I'll break your fucking leg. I am not joking. You are not calling the shots right now, he is and he wants you out of it."

Hayden Pike turns around during his speech and Ilya experiences a brief moment of surprise when he is in fact mildly intimidated by the look on his face. He stops moving.

"Yeah. Don't push me Rozanov. I am not in the mood."

Shane reads the text Rose sent and holds in a sigh of relief. It's not that hard actually he's still fucking worried about how this is going to go down. They might know where Svetlana is but they still have to get to her and get her out without anyone getting hurt. That isn't going to be easy. There's only one way in or out and that involves a long narrow staircase. One that probably creaks every other step.

Shane has had his fill of staircases and has no desire to end up being pushed down another one.

He leaves the lobby, making sure not to rush or look like he's heading somewhere specific. Rose is on her way to him. She said she had a way in where she won't get seen.

He should check in on Hayden too but he can't think about Ilya, he has to trust that Hayden can deal with him.

Rose knows where to go so Shane heads to the rendezvous spot. They reach it at the same time.

Rose opens and shuts her mouth when she sees him. He gets the impression she was going to tell him something.

"What?"

She shakes her head, and says "nothing" in a very unconvincing tone. The unhappy worried expression doesn't fade but who wouldn't be worried and stressed when the subject they're protecting is in danger.

"How much did you see?"

She's all business instantly, giving him what he needs.

"Not much, windows were dirty but she's up there, she looks ok. Small space, beams along the top and sides."

She makes the pattern with her arms. Shane listens and as she continues thinks her "not much" is quite a lot.

"She's tied to one of the vertical beams. I think he has her hands tied together too and I couldn't see her feet. They might be tied too. She won't be able to help us. She's going to be so fucking pissed off. If he's touched her I'll kill him."

Shane studies his friends face and something finally clicks. Oh. Rose is oblivious of his scrutiny and epiphany as she reports back to him.

"There's a mattress, a shitty chair and he has water and food because the floor was covered with crap like chip packets, empty bottles that type of shit. He's been living up there."

It's all useful but there might be more. He prompts her.

"Anything else? The door?"

She nods, closing her eyes.

"Sveta is about three feet from it, right hand side as you come in, face on to the door. Door is small, maybe 4 foot. Narrow but you'll fit. You'd have to bend over though."

"The window?"

She winces.

"Big, dangerous, nothing between you and it. The smaller windows are too high to worry about."

She opens her eyes.

"That's it."

He reaches out and holds onto her shoulder with a smile, her hands find his waist and he gets the feeling her grip is tight because she needs to hold onto something.

"Not much huh?"

She laughs but it's tired and worried. She yanks him towards her and hugs him tight.

"Can you go get her now? Please?"

He kisses the side of her head, sorry for her worry and pain, she's a lot more together than he'd be if Ilya had been taken.

"Yeah, I think I can do that."

Ilya remained by the wall as requested for longer than Pike deserved. He wasn't happy about it and he planned to make Pike pay for his current cooperation with anarchy at some point in

their future.

He feels restless, jittery, too much adrenaline running through his body. Sveta is above him, Shane is inside and he is out here with stupid Pike doing nothing. He does not want to be doing nothing but Rose and Pike decided outside was best place for him at least while Shane and Rose were working inside to get to *his* best friend.

Well he is tired of waiting around now. Tired of worrying and being useless and of having cold feet. Hayden gave him his jacket to stand on but it seems his feet are always cold when these things happen.

"Pike?"

He calls out and when Pike looks at him Ilya knows this won't even be that hard.

"I am going inside. If you are following instructions to stay with me then better come too."

Pike's face twists, trying to hide his feelings but it's obvious he wants to go inside too. Pike is no happier out here away from action than Ilya is and he is probably cold now too.

Hayden Pike stares at him, Ilya waits, silence is sometimes best option. He's rewarded with Pike's deep sigh of defeat.

"Fine, but nothing stupid ok?"

That gets the look I deserves and Pike can not complain about insults when he gives such easy opportunities.

"I am not stupid one so that is fine with me, but can not guarantee stupid will not follow me."

He shrugs, gives Pike a look up and down that he hopes make it very clear what he's saying.

"If stupid follows me around is not my fault."

Pike glares but it's nowhere near as good as Sveta's glare or even Rose's. Weak effort in fact. Sad.

At least when Shane scowls at him, he is cute like angry kitten, Pike looks like constipated turtle.

Pike tries hard to intimidate though so he can have some points for effort.

"You stay with me, you listen and don't get involved or hurt."

Ilya decides it is better to say nothing than lie so he just smiles as he walks away and Pike has no choice but to follow him.

They go in the way they came out and head towards the lobby. Keeping himself hidden Ilya looks up at the balcony and then higher to the stained glass. There's no hint of what's behind

it but he knows. He's possibly standing there gloating, taunting his Sveta with his supposed victory.

He feels Hayden's hand on his back, he's trying to guide him over to the side. Pike wants him to wait back in his alcove or a similarly out of the way place. Well he is about to be very disappointed. Ilya strides away from the guiding hand and into the full light of the lobby. He's spotted almost straight away and greeted enthusiastically by a round of applause that he graciously accepts.

Smiling widely and shaking hands he makes his way slowly across the foyer, he hopes scum bag fuck boy is watching him and hating every minute he has to witness Ilya's fame and popularity. He hopes that if he is focused down here it gives Sveta some peace or maybe it can help Shane in some way.

Ilya chooses his path wisely and without it looking like it's where he wanted to go in the first place he ends up on the bottom step of the staircase waving to his adoring audience again. He has of course got Pike in tow now, because the man takes his word seriously and is fucking loyal to Shane if nothing else. He will stay with Ilya, watching like a hawk until Shane gives him the all clear.

Ilya takes the stairs one at a time, waving, smiling, bowing, making a scene until he's on the balcony overlooking the lobby. Once there he waves one last time and blows a kiss or two before stepping away and heading towards the place he's sure the staircase to the window room is.

He moves fast half expecting to be tackled to the floor by a furious Pike before he reaches his destination but he isn't.

He slows down once he can see the door, fear creeping into his bones, he's not so reckless or so stupid to barge in, he needs to think first. He might even, regretfully need Pike's help, probably not but it is a possibility and he can't take any risks with Svetlana or Shane's safety.

Shane is around here somewhere, Rose too and he does not want to piss either of them off by being stupid.

Reluctantly he turns to ask Pike for a contribution to Svetlana's rescue plan. Pike is approaching swiftly and Ilya should say something before he gets the chance to lecture him again.

Neither of them get the chance to say anything, an outrageously loud noise has Ilya's attention snapping back towards the door.

He steps backwards, at the loud thud that ends the racket, his heart racing but when nothing happens he reverses his direction.

"Rozanov. Do not."

The warning is from Pike, a quick glance his way reveals he has his gun out and it's pointing towards the now absent noise.

Feeling like he might get tackled to the floor any second Ilya takes another step closer to the door anyway.

"Rovanov I will shoot you if I have too."

He rolls his eyes. Pike is truly stupid if he thinks that is even vaguely believable.

"You will not shoot me."

Pike's voice is overflowing with frustration.

"I might.."

Ilya takes another step forward, eyes on the doorway to the stairs he thinks someone just fell down.

"You won't and you would probably miss me anyway. Terrible shot."

Ilya is aware that now is not the time to wind up his only support but it is too easy, too natural. Pike isn't above bickering either regardless of the tense circumstances.

"Fuck off I'm an excellent shot."

The tension is high but he really can't help it, he makes a noise that indicates his lack of faith in any and all of Pike's skills. Out of the corner of his eye Ilya sees the gun lower.

"Fine, I won't shoot you but I might punch you. Wanna try me?"

Ilya doesn't get to answer and he doesn't get to test Hayden's patience on the likelihood of bullets vs punches turning up in his life but he does get knocked to the floor and he hits it pretty hard - just like the last time he was caught up in a collision with the man.

The breath knocked out of him Ilya gasps as he looks up into the wild eyes of the man they've been looking for.

He's just burst out of the door they'd be staring at and Stefan does not look good. His mouth is bleeding, his clothes disheveled and torn, his eye is already bruising and it's obvious he just lost a fight, hopefully with Shane and definitely with a staircase, even down on the floor Ilya grins, pleased karma has had its way with the fuck weasel.

It takes a second for Stefan to recognise who he's run into and when he does his face transforms; pure and utter loathing pulsing across it.

"You... fucking you , it's always fucking you ruining everything. I hate you I fucking hate you!"

Smile falling off his face Ilya tries to move because he's just seen the gun in Stefan's hand.

Fortunately the fucker is lost in his venomous hatred and not thinking about using it.

Yet.

“So fucking much!”

"Yeah? You think that makes you special?"

Behind him Pike's voice is cold and calm.

"Think you're the only one? He's a fucking asshole, nothing special about hating him, join the queue. I can't fucking stand him."

Ilya glances at Pike. His gun is held up again, steady and pointing right at Stefan's chest.

"Put it down. It's over man."

Still on the floor all Ilya can think is if he has to be grateful to Hayden Pike for saving his life he's going to be fucking furious.

Then eyes back on Stefan Ilya sees how it's all going to end and that doesn't mater anymore.

He sees the moment the sick fucker decides to die and that he's going to take Ilya with him when he goes.

Suicide by bodyguard.

It doesn't feel real, he's scared but not as much as he should be. It really looks like he's about to die but his brain doesn't seem to think it is real.

Because he can't die - he needs to know that Sveta is safe and he wants to see Shane again.

Fuck he wants a whole life with him.

If that is being taken away from him right now he should be fucking furious not numb and paralysed on the floor like this.

Ilya looks for the rage that losing Shane should provoke in him and finds a flint of fury.

He just found Shane it's not fair. It's not right that this man gets to win.

No. It is not fair and it is not happening. Stefan does not get to win.

Fuck this fucker.

Ilya is going live, somehow, maybe he can move fast enough to save himself. He'd even take Pike saving the day at this point.

"Put the fucking gun down or I shoot."

Hayden's instruction is clear but Stefan is past caring. He's lost everything and he knows it.

Well, whatever happens next Ilya has something to say to the dumb fucker standing there with hate rolling off him in waves.

"Stefan."

He has his attention in a heartbeat which is what he wanted.

He stares into the eyes of someone empty of talent or the desire to learn and too full of hate and envy to ever change.

There's something a man like that needs to know, even if it costs him.

Ilya takes a breath;

"Even if we are both dead I will still be better than you and she will never love you. I will still be greatest dancer and you will still be nothing."

Somewhere in the background Hayden swears and Ilya thinks his name is a part of the cursing.

He's expecting to either die in the next few seconds or owe Pike his life and neither option fills him with joy.

Except rather unexpectedly neither of those options happen.

Something blocks his view of Stefan at the same time the crack of a gunshot fills the air. Ilya flinches, eyes closed rolling to his left.

Curled up on his side at first he thinks he's hearing an echo but then he realises it was two gunshots, fired in quick succession.

Ilya opens his eyes and rolls back over, then he tries to understand what he's looking at.

Apparently neither bullet reached its intended destination.

It takes a moment to understand everything he's seeing and somehow his body knows the truth before his brain can catch up; the coldness of dread and fear creeping through his blood, warning him and leaving him colder than he's ever been.

The ice touches his heart just before he truly sees what he's seeing.

Stefan has failed in his efforts to kill him but at what price?

Limbs trembling Ilya stares at what's in front of him.

The bullet meant for him has gone into the floor, only an inch or two from where he'd been lying a moment ago, he can see the hole in the floor.

The second bullet, the one Pike must be responsible for missed too and has gone through the body of the man who appeared out of nowhere to save him.

A man with dark hair and broad shoulders who must have deliberately thrown himself into Stefan and changed the trajectory of the bullet meant for him.

His heart is too cold to hurt but maybe it starts to crack anyway.

Stupid fucking bodyguards.

What kind of job is that anyway.

Fear gripping him tight and stealing the breath from his lungs Ilya scrambles closer to the motionless form of Shane Hollander; his bodyguard his boyfriend, his world.

The man who just saved his life is sprawled over his would be murderer, pinning him to the floor, a pool of blood slowly spreading around them.

Chapter End Notes

If you're not expecting a cliffhanger at this point I don't know what to tell you.

Good news though - next chapter will definitely definitely be the last one!

Let's all cheer together that my plot has finally reached its conclusion and 15/10 chapters are confirmed and finalised. 🎉🎉🎉

Be back soon with Shane's half of the adventure, whatever has he been up to to get in such a pickle and what could possibly be left to do to them ??? 😊😊

Leave kudos or love in the form of a comment - be it long or short it'll make my day and tell me someone is reading this damn thing! 😂😭

Stay safe out there 💜

Chapter 15

Chapter Summary

Shane and Rose prepare to rescue Svetlana.

It's going to be risky and Shane needs to concentrate so it's a good job Ilya is somewhere else, safe and sound with Hayden.

He's not sure hot blooded Russian dancers will help the situation.

He's not wrong but he's not completely right either and he's forgotten he has more than one hot blooded Russian dancer to deal with.

Chapter Notes

Surprise!

It occurred to me that a 12k chapter could very nicely be split into two, and if I did that then I could ask forgiveness for the oops I may have shot Shane cliffhanger.

So once again I make a list of myself but not really because it's still the same amount of words you just get 50% of them sooner.

I hope that's a yay I'm hearing ! 🥳

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

It's easy to locate the door they need. The blueprints are crystal clear in his head. They reach their destination quickly and there's no one around but them on this floor so they don't need to explain their slightly suspicious presence to anyone. The noise of the audience still wandering around floats up from the lobby and reminds Shane that the police will interfere soon and if they don't act fast they'll lose their chance.

He can feel Rose's eyes on him, waiting to follow his lead. He gives her a nod and then twists the door handle that will hopefully lead them to Svetlana and her captor.

It's locked, which is inconvenient but not a significant problem considering he has Rose by his side, an old door with an old lock is no challenge to her skills.

His partner in crime drops to the floor as soon as he steps aside and it takes less than a minute for her to work her magic and for the door to click and open.

They look up; at the top of the staircase is another door. Shane knew it would be there but now he knows it's locked too.

He'd been contemplating vague hopes about leaving Rose down here but he'll need her now to open the door and to be honest she was never going to let him make her stay behind anyway, without needing to discuss anything two sets of shoes are discarded and put aside. Rose goes first and Shane follows her.

He knows there are 31 steps up - or down, depending on your perspective.

Rose is on step two while he's still on the first so he has to tug on her wrist to get her attention. When he has it he signs the number of steps to her. The three of them did a sign language course a few years ago. It's been a useful skill ever since when they need to be quiet.

She signs yes back and also a warning to be careful; the stairs are old and look like they know it. He nods, they need to be as quiet as possible.

The light in their little stairway diminishes abruptly once the door shuts behind them and so they wait another minute until the stairs are more visible again before moving on, the plan is slow and steady, one step at a time until they reach the top.

Steps 6, 11 and 15 and more alarmingly 21 and 25 make variably unpleasant noises and creaks and each time it happens it makes Shane wince and hold his breath. If the door above them opens at any point they're sitting ducks and with Rose in front it means Shane has to accept she'll be taking point if anything goes wrong, for someone who likes knowing everything that might happen and being in control of it too it's a bit of a challenge.

The summit is finally achieved and Rose bends to peer through the key hole before she kneels and starts to pick her second lock of the evening.

Behind her Shane waits as patiently as he can. He thinks he does a good job but he's restless and on edge and it's an effort not to fidget. He spends the time clearing his mind of distractions and picturing what will be waiting on the other side of the door - where Svetlana will be and the possibilities for where Stefan will be too.

The best scenario would be Stefan lying on his mattress, they already have the element of surprise in their favour but if Svetlana's kidnapper has to scramble to his feet when they enter Shane won't be complaining.

If he's not lying down then maybe he could be looking through the stained glass and down towards the lobby. That would mean his back is to Svetlana and the door, Shane likes that possibility a lot, it would be really convenient.

On the other side of the door the indistinct sound of a man talking loudly filters through to them. The words aren't clear but the voice is obviously unhappy. Svetlana is having to suffer not just imprisonment and abduction but listening to the imagined slights injustices and injuries Stefan's suffered.

The lock clicks, making Rose flinch. She looks around and mouths sorry at him but honestly it's far too quiet to have been heard even if they both startled as if she'd rung a bell.

Rose takes a deep breath and blows it out slowly, waiting for her pulse to slow. In the dim light Shane fumbles for her hand and threads their fingers together, she squeezes back, firm and steady even if she has every reason to be nervous.

She takes another breath and then the handle twists as slowly and quietly as possible. Shane watches and prays the hinge doesn't squeak as he pushes carefully.

Luck is on their side, the door moves under his fingertips and the silence remains undisturbed.

They know the plan; his focus is Stefan and Rose is to go straight for Svetlana, get her out as soon as possible. That shouldn't be a problem as long as she's been tied up with rope and not anything metal. Rose hadn't been able to tell from the window. It's the one thing that could cause her a problem, both of them carry a small blade but not bolt cutters.

The door has glided open enough for them to hear more of Stefan's complaints.

"... idiots... .. simpering idiots. Fawning over him like he's something special..."

"He is."

Svetlana's voice is clear too and as defiant as ever. It makes Shane smile but Rose's hand twitches as she passes him a small hand mirror from her bag. He politely ignores it.

The mirror, once deployed reveals that Sveta is just where Rose said she'd be and Stefan has his back to them staring out of the beautiful stained glass and down into the lobby.

"Disgusting! Flaunting himself, begging for attention."

It's as good a scenario as Shane could ask for. Stefan is extremely distracted, bitching and moaning about something.

Svetlana's cold tone flows through the dim light towards them.

"He does not beg, they give. They give because they want to. You would not understand. You are nothing like him."

Hearing the words seem to cause Rose some distress and while he appreciates Svetlana's loyalty and love for Ilya he also agrees with Rose and wishes she'd shut up and stop antagonising her captor.

Because he is antagonised. Stefan's voice rises.

"Why do you care about him! Why defend him?"

Shane tries to tune out the ranting as he looks into the room again, using the mirror. He focuses on where the voice is coming from and the reflection shows him Stefan who's as

good as plastered himself against the decorative glass .

"You're missing and he's taking fucking encores down there!"

The phrase 'down there' catches Shane's attention, who exactly is "down there"? Shane wonders who exactly is he looking at and doesn't like the options his mind provides.

"God damn fucking arrogant cocksucker posing and strutting around like he's god's fucking gift!"

A chill runs down his spine and Shane forces himself to ignore it. He narrows his focus to here and now because he has a uncomfortable feeling that he'd understand more than he wants to about what Stefan is looking at if he gave it even a seconds thought.

He can't do that. He needs to get Svetlana out but there's a tension in his jaw that wasn't there a moment ago, if Ilya... he stops the thought, no, he can't, not now, not when Stefan is looking away and it's as good as time as any to make their move.

Another gentle push and the door swings all the way open. It blocks them from Stefan but also the other way round. It doesn't stop his voice.

"Gonna fucking kill him. Going to enjoy it.."

The inside of the room revealed shows them Sveta immediately. She sees them at once and her eyes grow wider but that's it, not a sound escapes her lips to reveal her shock. Shane's impressed with her control.

He steps past Rose and pauses for her to move too, she does, inching forward towards Svetlana. Shane takes a step forward too in the other direction. Stefan's ranting continues, he remains oblivious to what's occurring behind him. Shane looks around, he must have that gun here somewhere, the one he tried to shoot Ilya with. Shane would much prefer it if he knew exactly where it was.

"Oh right yeah.. stand there like you're someone fucking important why don't you?"

Shane glances at Svetlana and mimes a gun as a question. Rose is already working on the rope that binds her but she tilts her chin towards the window to indicate that the gun is in that direction.

"Who do you think you are? Fucking president of the world?! "

Shane wishes he'd shut up but in the other hand when he does he'll probably turn round so maybe he should just keep talking forever.

Eyes still searching around for the weapon his heart sinks, if the gun is close enough for Stefan to reach it means this all just got a lot more dangerous.

Of course he has his own gun and so does Rose but guns only escalate a situation and he'd rather not if he doesn't have to.

"A King... bet you think you're a fucking King don't you..."

With a mixture of relief and dismay Shane spots the gun. It's discarded on the floor a few feet from the lunatic talking to himself. It's not good and is fucking poor gun control if nothing else but it's better than in Stefan's hand.

Seeing it out and readily available Shane decides it might be a good idea to reach for his gun after all which is of course when Stefan turns around with a sneer on his face and bitterness in his voice;

"Is that what..."

He sees them. No one moves for a microsecond before all hell breaks out.

At the edge of his vision he catches movement, it's Rose putting her body in front of Svetlana. He hopes by now she's works on the last of her bonds. Once that's done she'll get her gun but she won't beat Stefan, he's dropped to his knees and aiming to scoop up his weapon.

Shane lurches forward, blocks the line of sight to the women behind him and gives Rose a few more seconds to get Sveta free.

Stefan however is more interested in getting to his gun than thinking about his captive and fortunately the man who's caused them endless trouble is not exactly cool under pressure. When Shane moves towards him Stefan fumbles his grip on the gun and drops it.

That mistake could be disastrous in itself but they all get lucky and it doesn't go off, instead Stefan knocks it with his foot and it slides in completely the wrong direction for either of them to grab easily. The loss of his gun leaves Stefan hesitating. He looks towards the weapon and then the way out and it's clear which one he want to go for, proving Shane's previous deduction correct. The man's a coward and he's going to run again .

Even if his personality hadn't already dictated that, Shane notices the way his muscles tense and telegraph his choices as much as his eyes flitting towards the exit.

Well not this time. He doesn't get away again.

Shane does what he can and uses his body as a weapon. He dives forward taking his opponent down. They start to roll around the floor immediately battling for dominance.

One of the girls screams out behind him, a warning to be careful and with sudden dread, Shane remembers the window. Rolling across the floor punching and being punched he's horribly aware just how close they must be to it. There's no way it would survive the weight of two large bodies crashing into it and he'd much rather not end up a mangled mess on the lobby floor.

The image is sharp in his mind as his foot hits glass and shatters it.

That's bad, very bad. Kicking and punching he tries to get himself further away from the window but Stefan isn't small and even if he's a bad dancer he's still fit and strong so he's

fighting back with a determination Shane could do without.

In between punches Stefan's arms are flailing around, trying to reach out and find his gun and that can't be allowed. Shane lets go of the arm he's been pinning down and takes another blow to the face because of it but the sacrifice is worth it because he's able to reach for and knock the gun further away.

There's the vague chance Rose might move and get to it but he can't afford to look and see if Svetlana is free or what Rose is doing.

He swears when teeth, actual fucking teeth sink into his arm. What a nasty little fucker this guy is. Shane grabs a handful of hair and slams Stefan's head onto the floor.

Seconds after that a knee connects with Shane's stomach and the blow winds him, while he's spluttering and trying to catch a breath Stefan wriggles out from under him and crawls on all fours, like a rat towards the door.

He's going to run again, of course he fucking is and if he does then Ilya and Sveta will never know peace.

Determined to prevent that Shane rolls onto his back and reaches into his jacket for his gun. Which means he doesn't see the precise details of everything that happens next.

He does hear the start of it though.

Russian; loud and furious as Svetlana Vetrova presumably now free and launches herself forward.

Looking up from his spot on the floor in horror Shane stares, helpless because he can't shoot now, not with Svetlana between him and Stefan. On the other side of the room Rose is similarly frozen and she looks even more upset than he feels.

Svetlana's fury is understandable but not ideal in this particular moment. He watches her and is forced to reconsider. This unexpected development might not be too much of an issue because an enraged Sveta is a vision to behold.

Stefan himself looks particularly stunned; first by the volume and ferocity of the verbal attack but then because she punches him. Well technically she slams the base of her hand into his nose but the effect is the same. His head snaps back and there's blood flowing instantly from his nose and to his mouth. That's never fun.

That's not all she's got either, with her next breath she slams her heel into his instep and when he's off balance she kicks his knee—hard.

Shane watches him go down with some satisfaction and thinks that a kick to the knee from a primaballerina is not something he'd every want to experience.

Down but not quite out Stefan visibly rethinks his escape plan and now seems to think that going for his gun might be worth the risk.

His thought process is painful to witness, there's no stealth, just desperation as crouched double on the floor his eyes stare and his body twitches in anticipation of making a grab for the weapon.

That is not an option. Shane needs to stop him but the fucker is fast and he's too close to it anyway so he gets hold of it.

He has it in his hand in seconds, freezing Shane in the half crouch he'd managed to achieve. He's half expecting the gun to go off immediately and Shane's genuinely surprised when Stefan retreats instead, edging backwards towards the doorway. He's limping, shouting; throwing out warnings that he'll shoot, but Shane doesn't quite believe that now. He'd have done it if he was going to, studying his frantic features Shane guessed that right now Stefan's fear and desire to run outweigh his motivation to for revenge and to shoot. That may not last much longer though.

The way out of this mess is temptingly right behind him and he knows it. He wants to try again, live to fight another day as it was and a sneering confidence returns to his bland ordinary face. The gun starts to lift and it's going to be pointed at Shane.

He consider again if he can reach and fire his weapon, force Stefan's hand but probably not. He's going to try anyway though because Stefan might just shoot at him to distract Rose from following and Shane has no desire to die. He needs to see Ilya again, kiss him, do so many things to him and with him. He can't get shot now, that's would be extremely unfair. To get shot and die just as he and Ilya have worked things out.

As Shane stares across the room it occurs to him that life is very often horribly unfair.

Still he has a fighting chance doesn't he, his hand twitches, but does he go for his gun fast or slow? What would be best?

Shane doesn't have the time to decide though because someone else moves before he can.

Another loud and furious burst of Russian enters the world as Svetlana, her face burdened with her contempt and disgust for this man, lifts a powerful leg and kicks at the man who thought he was owed her love.

It's strong and firm and it more than enough to send him into the darkness of the stairway waiting behind him.

The descent is noisy and Shane hopes it hurts like hell, it's only a pity he didn't shoot himself on the way down but there's no shot so he can't have.

Sagging back down onto the floor, Shane allows himself a moment to catch his breath and calm his heart. He watches the way Rose watches Svetlana opposite him while he breaths slowly but he stops watching quite quickly because people deserve privacy in those kind of moments.

Deliberately keeping his focus on the floorboards Shane carefully manoeuvres himself back up onto his feet in slow, painful stages.

Once there he limps to the top of the staircase to study the crumpled form lying at the bottom, he's down there, slumped against the shut door. If he hasn't managed to shoot himself on the way down perhaps he broke his neck, that would be handy.

Adrenaline leaving his bloodstream fast the door frame becomes a useful support for Shane's sore and aching body. It feels like it's a good time to wrap things up up here and go home. The urge to find Ilya and tell him everything is ok burns brighter with ever passing second. At least all they have left to do is round up the broken heap waiting at the bottom of the staircase and hand him over to the police.

It occurs to him that nothing is stopping him from doing that beyond his own fatigue so he pulls himself together and stands unsupported, ignoring the weariness in his body to tell Rose he's going downstairs.

Her response is an absent minded nod, his friend and partner is far more interested in running her hands over Svetlana's arms and body, her face and checking she isn't too badly injured.

Svetlana's is obviously her top priority and not her poor battered partner and best friend. Shane doesn't mind.

However while Rose is as good as ignoring him Svetlana looks his way.

Her face doesn't reveal a lot, she's a little bruised and slightly battered but still regal and proud; the Queen to Ilya's King.

She looks him up and down and then graces him with a smile. It's not a big smile of course, she clearly wouldn't want him getting the idea he's forgiven for the crimes against her beloved Ilyshuka's heart he's committed recently but she can at least seem to bend enough to acknowledge that he's been slightly useful to her today.

"Thank you Shane Hollander, for finding me and for letting me kick that worthless piece of shit down stairs."

Her lips twitch at the corner and it gives Shane the confidence to offer her a compliment.

"It was impressive."

Her eyes gleam with a calculating light that has a flutter of nerves running through him and her smile is definitely more of a smirk now as she agrees with his assessment of her skills

"It was wasn't it."

He watches her eyebrows lift and the mildly menacing smile grows wider.

"Remember that Shane Hollander."

The only possible response to her poorly veiled threat is a polite nod. He most definitely will be remembering that but her threats, fuelled by her love for Ilya only makes the ache in his own chest more noticeable. He loves him too and he needs to see him, hold him and soon.

Shane just hopes he can locate him quickly because if Ilya's actually stayed away from the action and with Hayden it'll be a miracle. Shane strongly suspects his boyfriend ended up in the lobby at some point. It would definitely explain the distraction and cursing of Stefan when they first arrived. Only Ilya can piss someone off that much just by existing.

Fuck, it suddenly occurs to Shane that Ilya's going to be insufferable if he knows he broke the rules and still helped.

It's a positively tragic sign of how smitten he is that that makes him smile but it does, so still smiling Shane turns and takes the first two steps down before the smile dies on his face and he realises something is very very wrong. He freezes, hoping it's a trick of the light and knowing it isn't.

Down at the bottom of all those steps the door is now open but the more important thing to notice is that the crumpled body at the bottom is gone.

There's shouting too, coming from beyond the door. Shane is pretty sure he recognises the voice but Hayden is meant to be waiting somewhere safe with Ilya.

Fuck.

Fuck fuck fuck.

He doesn't think, he moves, needing to be there as fast as he can. He's not even halfway down when he hears Hayden's voice more clearly.

"... or I shoot."

By the time he's close enough to dare hope he can help his blood is ice in his veins because that's Ilya's fucking voice he can hear now, escalating the situation — fast.

"...and you will still be nothing."

Fuck!! Why can't the man ever shut up. He's always pissing people off. Hayden swears loudly as Shane falls out of the door just in time to see Ilya lying on the floor and the gun in Stefan's hand.

Again no conscious thoughts are involved in his actions, just a wave of feeling; protect, save, mine.

His momentum is enough to get him where he needs to be — in the path of whatever is about to happen.

The sharp crack of a gunshot doesn't startle him, he was expecting it but the acidic smell of metal and smoke surrounding him and confirms it anyway.

He doesn't hear the second shot that goes off but he knows there was one. The proof for this stunning piece of deductive reasoning is the sharp pain slicing through the muscle of his arm.

He's been shot- at least a little bit. Hayden must have fired his weapon too.

Fuck it hurts.

There no time to worry about that because the fall he initiated when he threw himself between Ilya and harm ends abruptly with all the air knocked out of his lungs as both him and his target hit the floor together.

There's far too much noise around him and Shane doesn't particularly care for it. It's mostly distant; indistinct and fuzzy but he can also make out two specific voices. It sounds like they're arguing. He'd like to tell them both to shut up but it's too much effort. His arm hurts and he's bruised in various other places too. He might of hit his head again at some point too, it's aching now and it hadn't been before.

At least he's lying down but he's not comfortable and after the night he's had is it too much to ask for a little peace and quiet and something comfortable to lie on. He wants his bed and some privacy and preferably Ilya's arms around him. He really shouldn't have to put up with all this nonsense.

He just wants to leave and find Ilya. He tries to move to go do just that but finds that he's already moving. It's rather unexpected and definitely not something he's in charge of.

Shane's a big man and he's not used to being moved like he weighs nothing but someone manages it — Ilya. He knows that because there's a stream of incomprehensible Russian, surrounding him as he's pulled off Stefan's body.

The events of the last few seconds catch up with him; Stefan, yes, that's right isn't it he jumped onto of him. That seems to have worked out better than he's expected. He's not dead, someone did shoot him though. His arm is wet and throbbing fiercely.

Hayden.. that explains the arguing then.

Shane finds himself held tightly in a pair of very strong, warm arms which is definitely an improvement in his circumstances but he's only given a brief moment to enjoy the sensation before he's unceremoniously dropped back onto the floor.

Once he's flat on his back a pair of hands start to press down on him in various places, and not particularly gently either. Eyes closed Shane makes the assumption Ilya is looking for injuries rather than attacking him for no particularly reason. A particularly firm poke to his chest leaves him feeling that the manhandling requires some comment.

"Ow!"

It sums up his feelings on the situation nicely but the response from Ilya is rather disappointing.

"Ow? Ow? You are shot and you say ow!"

After that it's just more over excited Russian to deal with. Shane considers opening his eyes but once again lacks the motivation to do it, Ilya is clearly not happy with him which is ironic

because *Ilya* is not even meant to be here. *Ilya* is meant to be safe somewhere far away from here.

Another firm poke into his side provokes another, ow, and it's slightly more irritated this time.

Instead of the increased sympathy he feels is deserved considering his heroic acts and wounded status the answering tone remains curt and annoyed but Shane recognises fear when he hears it.

"You are crazy. Jumping into danger. Idiot! And you, Pike, you shot my boyfriend!! I said you were terrible shot! Terrible!

Then the Russian is back and Shane makes a mental note to start learning as soon as possible.

After a few probably atrocious insults, the Russian muttering starts to shift back into slightly more comprehensible English.

"Gets shot and ow! He says ow! Blood everywhere and ow."

He decides he should probably open his eyes after all. When he does he can only see the top of his head, curls bouncing around as he moves.

"Ilya, people usually say ow when something hurts."

His explanation for the very reasonable, ow is ignored.

Then Hayden lands heavily on his knees right next to him swearing furiously.

"Shit shit shit...fuck man! I'm sorry. Is it bad? Fuuuck!! Shane? Jesus, I'm so sorry. It was... you were just... and then, fuck, shit! I'm so so sorry."

Shane opens his mouth to reassure his friend but Ilya speaks faster.

"Call ambulance idiot! He is bleeding to death."

Fairly sure that he isn't Shane pushes himself up so he's more sitting than lying. His arm stings like fucking crazy but that seems to be it for new injuries. It's really not that bad.

On either side of him Ilya and Hayden are too busy arguing with each other to be interested in his opinion but he tries anyway.

"I'm not bleeding to death. Guys, it's just a flesh wound."

His efforts to calm fail so he raises his voice.

"Ilya I'm fine, it's not serious."

Ilya obviously isn't particularly reassured by the statement judging by the glare.

"Is bullet wound! Is blood and blood is everywhere. Pike, you did this. You are worst shot ever!"

"Ilya..."

Shane tries to stop him from blaming poor Hayden while Hayden is contradicting himself by apologising to Shane and defending himself to Ilya at the same time.

He understands the excess of emotion, but there's something more important he needs his people to focus on than his health. He raises his voice above theirs to bring the matter to Hayden's attention.

"Stefan?"

The question only increases Hayden guilt and his face falls comically fast as he realises they haven't cleared the scene yet. Comprehending of the threat silences both men and as one their focus turns to where Stefan had fallen.

Unfortunately their attention to detail comes a little too late because while Stefan hasn't crawled away this time he's also not unconscious. He's moving and he's almost on his feet.

Looking up Shane can begrudgingly admit it's almost impressive. The will power to get up must be enormous because Stefan doesn't look at all good. The man is unsteady and swaying alarmingly from side to side. Shane's eyes are drawn to his arm hanging loose and limp by his side and the blood soaking through his shirt. The brilliant red spreading fast reveals the final destination of Hayden's bullet. Ilya will have to apologise, Hayden's aim was good, the only reason Shane is bleeding too is he got in the way.

Assessing the potential danger they're now facing two things stand out for Shane; first Stefan's face — it's distorted, no longer even blandly handsome but twisted up into a ghastly mixture of pain and anger but that's nothing compared to the loathing pouring from his eyes and all of that hate is being directed towards Ilya, who's still kneeling beside Shane.

The second thing he notices is the gun.

The gun in Stefan's hand - the gun that's shaking as it rises but is most definitely pointing straight at Ilya's chest. Shane's muscles tense, ready to move again, if all he can do to protect is put his body in front of Ilya then that's what he'll do.

The next ten seconds are a blur.

Stefan swaying on his feet.

Hayden springing to his.

Ilya frozen, except for where his fingers tighten to bite into the flesh of Shane's leg, strong and tense. Shane thinks they may be trying to hold him down.

No fucking way.

Shane tries, he reaches for his weapon because despite the instability and blood loss Stefan is fucking determined. The man pushed to madness now keeps his gun on it's target and spits out;

"I fucking hate you. So - fucking - much. Just fucking die."

And that bitter, hateful declaration, is followed by a single gun shot.

The crack echos in the silence that follows.

No one screams. No one moves.

It's never like it is in the movies.

Standing only a few feet away from Shane and Ilya, Stefan blinks. He looks surprised, and Shane wonders what he was expecting to happen if he tried to shoot anyone.

No one moves; not him, not Hayden and for a moment not even Stefan. Ilya is motionless and Shane thinks he might have stopped breathing. He's certainly stopped talking but looking down the barrel of a gun will do that, even to Russians.

The unnatural stillness breaks when Stefan staggers forward.

He might be surprised by what's happening to him but Shane isn't, so when the man's body starts to fold and crumples in on itself Shane just watches and doesn't flinch when he hits the floor. Ilya does and Shane covers his hand with his own.

They all stare at the body. It doesn't move again.

Now *that* is what Stefan should have been expecting to happen if he tried to shoot anyone. Shane feels no sympathy for the man behind the months long disruption to Ilya and Svetlana's lives.

Finally it's safe to assume it's all over and so he can leave the rest to the others, now the threat has ended Stefan's fate is of no particular interest to Shane, he turns his attention to what does matter, the man still gripping hold of him like his life depends on it.

He's never seen Ilya so pale. So quiet. Ignoring the discomfort from his wound Shane makes it up onto his knees coming face to face with a stunned and disturbingly silent Ilya Rozanov. He tries to move slowly so not to startle him. He's probably in shock, Shane cups Ilya's face gently and calls his name.

"Ilya?"

The blank stare is unsettling. There's usually so much going on behind his eyes but now he looks lost.

"Ilya sweetheart?" Shane strokes his cheek. "Look at me, it's over baby."

Ilya remains silent but someone else responds.

"Damn fucking right it is."

The statement is delivered firmly in a no nonsense voice that he knows well, it's a voice he loves dearly but it's no surprise to hear her, he knew she was there the second the gun went off.

He looks up and locates Rose quickly, she's standing just a little way behind Ilya, calm and steady, the doorway to the staircase frames her like a painting, the gun she fired already lowered to her side.

Shane's always appreciated Rose's strength, her beauty but never more than in this moment.

Behind her Svetlana looks less serene, her pale face visible from where she waits just one step higher up than Rose.

His friend looks at him and the brief nod she sends his way says "job done" and she's right, it is, but because Rose is always through she walks straight past him to clear the scene.

There's no doubt in Shane's mind that everything is under control but he also needs to see, wants to know for sure, so he allows himself a brief diversion from watching Ilya to watch Rose.

It takes no time at all for her to arrive at her destination and then she stops and looks down at the man she just shot. A poke with her still bare foot provokes a low groan from the prone form.

Shane can admit he's disappointed about that, but at least he's been stopped and even if he's alive right now with two bullets in him his chances of survival probably aren't that great. Regardless of if he lives or dies they'll deal with whatever happens next next, and together, they're a team, a family and they always will be. It's just got two more people in it now.

Next to him Hayden squeezes his leg then stands to go join Rose.

Shane turns his attention back to Ilya, but just behind him, leaving the safety of the staircase is Svetlana. She walks towards them, limping slightly, and now he has the time to notice he sees her swollen lip and blackened eye. She's also on her way to join Rose but she stops by Ilya first.

It feels right to drop back onto his heels and make room for her, it feels like a private moment but he can't make himself look away from the two of them.

Svetlana looks down and tilts Ilya's chin up so very gently it makes Shane's chest ache. She holds it until he's looking at her and then Ilya blinks slowly, recognising her face and maybe what's been done to her but maybe not because he doesn't look angry yet, and he will be when he understands. Svetlana smiles down at him, soft and sad. Shane hasn't seen that look on her face before .

Her fingers run lightly through Ilya's curls. The gentle intimacy of it could perhaps make him jealous but it doesn't, he understands that what's between them is special but very different than what Ilya has found with him.

Love comes in so many different forms.

As the two dancers, partners, friends look at each other Shane's grateful to see a glimmer of colour and animation return to Ilya's face and so is Svetlana, her smile widens and with tears in her eyes Sveta bends to kiss his cheek.

Her voice is quiet as she says something that Shane can't understand in a language he's going to learn and Ilya blinks some more, his own tears starting to form and roll down slowly his cheeks. As he watches they share another moment of love and affection and then her gaze shifts from Ilya to lock onto his eyes instead.

The appraising look makes Shane deeply nervous but he holds the eye contact and nods, not completely sure why but knowing it's the right thing to do.

Apparently satisfied by his response Svetlana stands gracefully, returning to her full height, towering above them both where they're still slumped low on the floor.

Before she leaves them she touches Ilya's hair one more time, trying to straighten an impossibly disheveled curl. The task is abandoned after only a moment's effort and she's still smiling that sad melancholy smile when she moves on to go stand by Rose.

He watches her go and once there Hayden moves out of her way. She slides her hand into Rose's and looks down at Stefan, judging by the ice cold expression on her face Svetlana doesn't particularly care if the man on the floor lives or dies either.

Shane doesn't blame her.

Time is passing and Shane is once again becoming aware that the noise around them is increasing in volume, soon there will be more people here and more chaos to deal with.

He's proved right as a paramedic team and a police officers appear at the top of the grand staircase leading to the lobby.

There's bound to be more on the way too. Shane sighs, this bit always sucks but it's part of the job, dealing with the police and the paperwork. God he hates the paperwork.

Rose sees them arrive too and sighs, she holds out her arm and hands her weapon over to the first officer to approach her without comment. She knows she'll get it back later. They've learnt to cooperate politely with any police investigations that follows the conclusion of a job. It's easier that way.

"Shane?"

His head snaps round instantly, Ilya's voice is quiet but surprisingly steady for what he's just been through, however one look at him reveals that he's only just holding it together.

His lower lip trembles, just a little but it makes Shane want to whisk him away instantly, hide him away from the world for as long as he needs before he's ok again. It's no wonder he's shaken, it's not exactly been a typical day in the life of a ballet dancer has it and the adrenaline crash will hit hard any minute.

They need some time and space together but privacy and real comfort will have to wait, Shane only has a moment to pull Ilya in closer and hold on tight before the emergency services get to them.

As soon as he has him in his arms the trembling of Ilya's muscles spreads and Shane takes his weight and helps settle them more comfortably on the floor. He kisses the side of his head and rocks them a little, whispers soothing words Ilya probably doesn't even hear. Shane uses the last few seconds of their privacy to soak in everything about holding Ilya tight to his chest. It's as much for him as it is for Ilya, the way he's feeling right now, Shane might never let the man out of his sight again. He just wants to take him home but before that can happen there are statements to give and questions to answer.

The vicious sting in his arm and continuing sticky wetness of his sleeve suggests very strongly that he'll have to go to the hospital too. There are going to be stitches in his future . He fucking hates getting stitches.

As if to prove his point a detective being followed by two paramedics marches directly towards them. They have, or at least Ilya has, been recognised. Shane reluctantly releases Ilya's body but keeps their fingers twisted together.

"Shane Hollander?"

He nods at the detective when she stops in front of him.

"I'm told you're the one to talk to?"

One of the paramedics is already on his knees and starting to examine his arm, cutting through the fabric. The other one is crouching by Ilya. He lets them get on with it and answers the first of many questions from the detective.

"Yes probably."

A glance around shows him the others are similarly engaged with other officers or medics.

"And you are Mr Rozanov's primary bodyguard?"

He nods again but the question makes him think, he was but is he now? The danger is gone so he's not needed anymore.

The thought is unpleasant.

His grip on Ilya's hand starts to loosen but Ilya's grip stays tight. Shane likes the feeling of Ilya holding on to him.

The vice like hold makes it clear that Ilya isn't planning on letting him go anytime soon. A stupidly pleasant wave of joy sweeps through him and Shane squeezes back.

It's going to be ok. Even if Ilya doesn't need a bodyguard anymore, it doesn't mean he doesn't need or want Shane anymore. Shane studies the strange new concept like it's a shiny new toy

he gets to play with. The simple fact that Ilya wants him is easier to accept than he ever thought it would be.

Ilya wants him to stay. Ilya loves him. Shane knows that with a surety that should scare but instead makes him think about rings and forever and warm mornings together and late nights in each others arms.

This is it for him and he's confident Ilya feels the same.

So Shane keeps holding Ilya's hand as he answers the questions he's asked and he even cooperates with the paramedics and agrees to go to the hospital because he knows that the sooner he does all that the sooner they can go home - together.

Chapter End Notes

That's the action all done. No more cliffhangers no more peril just some hospital based shenanigans of the fun sort to wrap it all.

Be back on Sunday with chapt 15b or as ao3 insists I call it chapt 16 but I prefer to think of it as chapt 15 because then I wasn't wrong last time 😊

Come say hi in comments or on tumblr I love to chat and hear what you're thinking about all this silliness.

I'll never even know you were here and smiling if you don't, and wouldn't that be sad 😞

Chapter 16

Chapter Summary

With all the shocks and dangers over with you'd think a hospital room would be the perfect place to find some peace and quiet.

You'd think that but you'd be wrong, a hospital room can get quite a bit noisier than you'd expect... for various reasons.

Chapter Notes

Tah dah!!! As they say after 118 worth of words gets finished

That's really quite long isn't it! 😬😬

Well we got here eventually and if you joined me on the journey and cheered me on along the way please know you were very much part of the process and I have appreciated your company hugely.

And if you're here now it's finished or even two or five years after that then thank you too for reading. I'd still love to hear from you and see what you enjoyed about the words.

Now enough of that ...onto the chapt! It gets a little bit steamy - tags have been updated as best I can.

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

A quick glance around has Shane confident he can achieve his goal before anyone notices. His feet slide towards the edge of the bed and almost make it to the floor before he's caught.

"What are you doing?"

He freezes, Ilya does not sound impressed but it's not like he was planning on going very far so he should be fine.

"I was just going to get some water?"

He indicates the jug and cup sitting on the table next to his bedside, hopeful that will be an acceptable destination but he finds himself looking at the pursed lips and defiant gaze of someone looking for a fight.

On the way to the hospital Ilya had gone from shocked and shaky to belligerent and intractable without any inbetween. Shane is putting it down to the fact they haven't been alone yet and Ilya is suppressing the hell out of everything and hiding most of what he's feeling from the others.

"Water? Why? Why would you be choosing to do this?"

Shane would have thought that was fairly obvious but if it's not he can explain easily enough.

"Because I'm thirsty Ilya."

The simple explanation however does not seem to soothe his boyfriend's concerns.

"No."

The answer is flat and quite final. It's spoken very calmly but there's no mistaking he means it. Ilya pushes Shane gently back onto the bed and sets out some extremely clear expectations.

"If you are thirsty you tell me and I will bring water. If you want anything you tell me. I will do. You are injured. You will rest."

Aware it's likely to start another argument Shane says it anyway.

"I'm fine..."

One of the girls hisses like she's in pain in the background, chances are that it's Rose.

"Fine?"

Ilya's voice goes up an octave, it's trying to catch up with his eyebrows.

"You are fine? Yes? Then why are we waiting for stitches and I think...?"

Ilya looks around, rather dramatically if you ask Shane, for confirmation from the room and gets it from Rose when she nods.

"... yes... another scan for brain. I think they are needing to check is still there."

Over in the corner it's definitely Rose who sniggers. He might be having to undergo another scan at some point but she doesn't have to look so smug about it, sitting over there in her comfy armchair with Svetlana while he's on this awful bed.

The smile on Ilya's face, is particularly sharp, he's seen it before in their first few weeks together. It felt like he was being stabbed by pins then and it still does.

Shane looks across the room at Rose trying to catch her eye. He'd really like a little help with his current Ilya problem. It doesn't feel like an unreasonable expectation to him; help, compassion and a bit of sympathy from your friend, is that too much to ask?

Currently the chance of getting even one of those from Rose appears to be ridiculously small. She flips the next page of her magazine serenely, totally ignoring him.

This is her revenge for all the times he's given her trouble in hospitals.

Next to her Svetlana smirks and continues to play with strands of Rose's hair while she pretends to read the magazine over her shoulder.

Shane gives up, some help they are, Hayden would be on his side if he was back but he's not so Shane is forced to defend himself alone.

"They said that the scan was just a precaution."

His very reasonable argument gets twisted and used against him. Ilya's eyebrows lift to almost comedic levels.

"Yes! Yes, because concussion number 22!"

Shane corrects him with a frown.

"Seven."

"And only 2 weeks ago. Brain still all scrambled!"

Ilya makes the relevant gesture next to his head and suppressing his sigh Shane calmly provides the right information again.

"Four weeks ago Ilya, not two."

The look he gets for that simple statement of fact is cold enough to put ice cubes in the water that he still hasn't had. A different problem he mentions now.

"Can I maybe get my water now?"

He starts to put his feet down again.

"No."

Shane rolls his eyes but stays put and watches Ilya carefully pour him some water then accepts the cup while trying not to smile at the fuss he's making. He doesn't like it but it's not terrible having someone care about you.

"Drink."

Shane sips as instructed, happy to be making Ilya happy.

"See much better to listen to me. You will learn soon when I am right. Which is always."

Over in the corner someone snorts. Shane doesn't see which one of them it is this time but his money is on Svetlana.

He watches Ilya glare at the ladies, also trying to work out which one of them doesn't believe he's always right. Judging by the look on her face as she stares him down Shane was right and it was Svetlana.

Keen to get Ilya's attention back he say;

"Are you always this bossy?"

Ilya's head snaps round and Shane looks up at his fussy, worried boyfriend and tries not to look too much in love, unfortunately it's a challenge that he's just not up to.

Ilya takes his glass away and puts it down for him. It's ridiculous and sweet and annoying and just his luck to have fallen for someone who fusses about his injuries more than Rose does.

"You would prefer me to let you run around fetching water until you collapse?"

The hand gestures make it look like Shane would be running a hundred meter sprint in a circle rather than taking two steps towards his water jug.

"This is what good boyfriend does?"

Shane opens his mouth to say something but apparently Ilya isn't finished.

"So, Hollander, this is what you want? For me to be seeing you hurt on floor again. Bleeding from fatal head wound? No! Twice unconscious on floor is too many times."

Now that one *is* unfair. He complains more loudly than last time.

"Hey, I wasn't even unconscious this time."

"Pah!"

Ilya waves a hand dismissively in the air.

"You stand, you faint, dizzy from blood loss and I will have to see you there! On floor."

Ilya points down to his feet.

"My heart can not take again. Is this what you want?"

Behind Ilya both the women are watching now, thoroughly amused by the performance.

Ilya stares at him and Shane stares back trying very hard to control his twitching lips and facial expressions.

"Jesus, were you always this fucking dramatic too?"

"Yes."

The answer comes in stereo from the ladies.

"Dramatic?" Ilya looks outraged. "***I*** am dramatic one? When there is so much blood and you are one bleeding it."

Shane could say there wasn't that much blood but that would be pushing the truth he had bleed quite a lot from the flesh wound. Something that Hayden is feeling absolutely terrible about.

"And why are you even bleeding?"

The question can't be as obvious as it sounds, Ilya was right there and was in fact delighting at making Hayden feel worse about the why of it all.

Shane decides it's a rhetorical question when Ilya doesn't pause for an answer but continues his heated lecture.

"I am thinking now is not *me* who needs bodyguard is you, of two of us you are only one getting hurt."

Ilya turns to face Rose.

"I hire you to protect him."

It's a good job he's put the water down or that would have had him choking on it. No way is this conversation happening, it's a step too far, Shane sits up and glares at them all.

"Fuck off. I don't need protection."

Rose looks up from her magazine but she's looking at Ilya not him.

"How much?"

Swinging his legs down and on his feet immediately, Shane takes control of the room back, ready to prove everyone wrong.

"Enough! Rose you are not taking money off Ilya."

She pouts and returns to her magazine.

"And Ilya, I got hurt because that's my job. I'm the one who gets hurt protecting you. It's literally in the job description."

Ilya folds his arms and looks so adorably sulky that Shane has to fight the urge to kiss him. He sounds sulky too and he's slunk over to stand with the girls obviously hoping for backup.

"So you say but Sveta can be kidnapped with no bleeding. And this is her first time at abduction."

Svetlana beams proudly at her partner.

But this time Rose is much less amused by the observation. The magazine on her lap closes and a frown usually reserved for him or Hayden when they're annoying her gets direction at Svetlana. The beautiful Russian dancer he's still a little scared of instantly wipes away the smile and attempts to look appropriately contrite.

"Last time too."

Sveta nods demurely but Rose isn't fooled. She glares a little longer but Svetlana's pout is ultimately the winner in that particular argument.

Sensing a way back to his topic Ilya returns his attention to his former bodyguard.

"Seems very careless to me that professional bodyguard, "best there is"" he adds the quote marks, in Shane's opinion to be extra annoying, "ends up bleeding and making mess of my very expensive costume."

That comment hits harder than the others because Shane does feel pretty guilty about ruining the elaborately beaded, time consuming to make and very expensive costume.

"Hey, I said I'm sorry about that."

Sensing his advantage Ilya walks towards him and Shane gets kissed softy and pushed back down onto the bed at the same time which is fucking diabolically sneaky.

Ilya's hand slides down his body until they're holding hands.

"I am kidding...about costume, was not your fault. Was Pike's."

Shane laughs then winces because he is actually quite sore in several places

"Stop blaming Hayden. It wasnt his fault and anyway I've only been *lightly*shot."

Shane wonders if Ilya will get the reference from their early days together. It doesn't seem like it because he looks displeased and says;

"You can not be 'lightly shot' Hollander that is stupid."

Delighted to be able to make his point he smiles smugly and replies with his best gotcha voice.

"Ah, but *you* said you were lightly stabbed. If *you* can be lightly stabbed then *I* can be lightly shot."

His satisfaction at winning the argument is short lived because Ilya just changes the rules, calm as you like he shrugs and says;

"Well I was lying, was very hurty stabbing, very bad. So bullet hole must be much worse."

Shane snorts, the man is absolutely ridiculous, biting his lips together doesn't stop them from twitching, it's far too hard not to be amused by him. Impossible not to love him because of it.

"Hurty?"

Ilya has his 'don't bother me with the details' face on.

"Yes hurty . Is word I am sure. And this..."

He actually pokes just below the wound on his arm to make his point and Shane is annoyed for himself for wincing and embarrassed by the squeak he makes.

"...is very hurty bullet hole. You will need many days to recover I will need to look after you. Hospital will check you out soon then I will take you home. You will stay in my bed. I will take care of you. Anything you need. No arguments. I have decided."

On one hand that's extraordinarily presumptuous and bossy and unnecessary but Shane considers the possibilities in that declaration for a second and decides there's only one possible response.

"I suppose it is a bit sore."

The laugh is from Rose this time. She's looking at him now having finally decided he's slightly more interesting than her magazine but probably not as interesting as Svetlana.

"Oh I see, *now* you decide to be a model patient. Can't imagine why. Never did what I told you to do."

"Hollander will be good for me. Hollander is always good for me. Yes?"

Ilya is looking at him with an intensity that has Shane feeling alarmingly hot all of a sudden.

He can't seem to make his mouth work. His chest is tight and breathing seems more difficult when Ilya's fingers hold onto his chin and tilt it upwards. There's a spark in his eye that Shane recognises and it does very little to help him control his temperature or the hot burst of desire flooding his body.

Ilya's voice drops lower and Shane manages not to shiver.

"You will be good for me won't you Shane?"

Shane wonders what he looks like; far too pink probably, despite the "terrible" blood loss, Ilya is so worried about. He suspects his eyes are revealing everything and his mouth has definitely gone slack. He should probably feel embarrassed but he doesn't.

Ilya's eyes drop to his mouth in obvious appreciation.

"Oh for Fuck's sake!"

Hayden's voice cuts through the building tension like a bucket of cold water.

Shane's cheeks feel even hotter but it's from embarrassment this time. He's unsure if that's better or worse.

Ilya drags his eyes from Shane and towards the door. Once he's registered who it is he grins, obviously delighted to be disturbing his nemesis with their sexual shenanigans.

Hayden looks unwell. His lip curls as he looks at Ilya.

"Right here man, we're right here. Get a room"

Ilya shrugs.

"Have room."

Hayden doesn't look any happier about that.

"It's a hospital room you asshole. Have some fucking class!"

Ilya folds his arms and Shane just knows this is going south fast.

"I have much class. Was whole article on it last year. I can show you. Said Rozanov brings new level sophistication and class to his performance."

Shane tries to hide his face behind his hand. Ilya pauses, looking as if that's the final word on the subject of class. It is but apparently not the final word on the subject of Hayden.

"Do *you* have article?"

The second pause, pout and eyebrow combination from Ilya puts a fierce scowl on Hayden's face. Ilya is right, his friend is far too easy to wind up and Hayden's impotent silence obviously pleases his menace of a boyfriend greatly.

"No... I did not think so. So I have class and you need class, to learn to shoot better and not shoot at wrong people so often."

Shane is reasonably sure Ilya will never let this drop and if his job doesn't kill him one day these two idiots will be the death of him with their bickering.

Hayden doesn't take the comment well.

"Fuck you! You know that wasn't my fault... Shane knows it too. Shane tell him..."

Hayden however does not wait for Shane to do anything of the sort, preferring to continue his attack on Ilya instead.

"You're just being a dick 'cos you didn't do anything to help."

It's like watching a particularly unpleasant tennis match. The ball lands on Ilya's side of the court, with an outraged and offended hiss.

"Help? I did not help? Then who pulled down fire escape?"

Shane lies back on his pillow. This could go on for a while.

"We did that together you dick, and I could have managed on my own anyway."

"And who distracted dumb fuck weasel when *Shane* saved Svetlana."

"Excuse me?"

The new voice sounds pretty pissed off too. Wonderful. Rose has taken offence now.

Maybe it will be easier to ignore them all if he closes his eyes.

"And I was not saved! I kicked fucker down stairs myself."

Svetlana has an opinion as well, of course she does. She scoffs scornfully.

"Was not rescued like weak damsel rescued myself with help of beautiful bodyguard lover."

Well that clears that up at least and Rose isn't bothered by the declaration, but she still isn't happy about previous comments.

"Thanks baby and if we're deciding who saved who, I think you'll find I was the one climbing fire escapes and picking locks and shooting the bad guy in the nick of time"

"Yes, I think my Rosie was star of rescue."

"Yes Pike just shoots good guys."

"I fucking told you Rozanov..."

Voices overlap, eyes closed Shane considers moving to a different room while they all argue. He'll have to work on their relationships at some point. They're all going to be spending a lot of time together.

The noise continues until suddenly tired of it all and wanting to be alone with Ilya more than anything Shane's eyes snap open and he raises his voice so he's heard above the clamour.

"ENOUGH!"

The noise stops instantly and a quick assessment of faces reveals most of them looking at least mildly repentant to be disturbing his peace.

He gives them his mom's best I'm disappointed in you look.

"We are in a *hospital*. Be quiet."

He's fully prepared to endure at least ten more minutes of their nonsense but is pleasantly surprised when Hayden agrees with him.

"Shane's right and anyway I've got better things to do than argue with you Rozanov."

Hayden switches his attention from his tormentor to Rose. He deliberately turns his back on Ilya to do it which is not the most mature choice but Shane will take that over the arguing.

"Rose, they said we can go whenever we want."

Hayden looks over his shoulder to confirm what Shane already knew.

"Shane buddy, sorry but it's going to be another hour for you at least."

The extended stay in hospital doesn't thrill him but if everyone is leaving at least he'll finally be alone with Ilya so on this occasion he can live with it.

Rose is already collecting her things. She walks over and kisses the top of his head as a farewell.

"Sorry babe, I'm going ...you know I hate hospitals"

And because she's a terrible person she winks at him.

"Sure Rozanov can find a way to keep you entertained."

Hayden makes a gagging noise that Shane prefers to ignore. From the door his friend calls out his own farewell.

"I'm gone too man. Call you later."

Hayden throws him a salute then disappears out the door. Rose and Svetlana say goodbye again and then finally he's alone with Ilya and even being stuck in hospital doesn't matter when Ilya crosses the room silently and climbs up onto the bed with him. Shane wiggles sideways so Ilya can get closer and curl himself up next to him, as close as he can get and for the first time in hours Shane feels ok.

The press of Ilya's body next to him and the peace and quiet while they lie together is wonderful. Shane allows them almost ten minutes to enjoy it before he faces the fact that, once again, they need to talk. He's about to start the conversation when Ilya beats him to it, his voice directed firmly into Shane's chest.

"I was scared."

He already knew that but that doesn't stop the wave of relief crashing over him when Ilya admits it out loud. Staying quiet in the hope there'll be more Shane responds by tightening the curl of the arm around Ilya and pressing his lips into his curls.

He's rewarded with a few more words.

"You scared me. I thought..."

He can't see Ilya's face but his voice and the abrupt silence tells him how hard the evening has been for him even if he's been masking it well for hours.

"I thought... "

Ilya twists in his arms and burrows his face deep into the neckline of the rough hospital gown Shane's wearing, trying to hide from what he thought.

He lets him, leans his cheek against the top of Ilya's head to wait with him and traces his fingers slowly along his spine.

The rhythm of his hand moving up and down, combined with Ilya's weight and warm breaths against his neck lull him into a sleepy haze and his eyes are closed by the time Ilya speaks again.

When he does Shane doesn't feel particularly sleepy anymore.

"He was going to do it. He was going to shoot me."

Ilya's head lifts from its hiding place but their eyes don't meet, Shane pulls back so he can try and see him better. They should be looking at each other for this, he knows that.

Ilya however doesn't want cooperate. His eyes remain elusive.

"and then... he didn't, and it was you on floor."

It hurts to see the memory being revisited and buried on Ilya's face. The way Ilya can't look at him, the way his eyes crease at the corners and the tension in his face. Shane wants to wipe it all away, kiss it better, but Ilya's not looking back at him and Shane's scared he might not ever want to again.

He calls his name softly but all that happens is Ilya squeezes his eyes shut. Shane tries again, he'll keep trying until it works.

"Ilya?"

It doesn't work yet but even if he won't look at him Ilya has more to say.

"Was so angry with you... for leaving me out of everything and then for leaving me..."

The quiet, calm confession makes his heart hurt more than any other part of him. The pain of the bruises and the cuts fade away leaving only the ache in his chest. He can't stay silent a second longer.

"I'm sorry. I know tonight has been a lot and I'm really really sorry I scared you. I wish none of this had happened to you. I just wanted to keep you safe."

Shane whispers the apology across the space separating them, he curls his fingers into the short hairs at the nape of Ilya's neck and scratches lightly. Hoping it will make him open his eyes. It doesn't.

Shane is sorry, he really is, but he'd also do it again without hesitation and Ilya needs to know that too.

"I'd do it again."

That has Ilya's eyes flying open. He stares at him and Shane nods, confirming he meant it.

"Ilya, he was just hate and jealousy at the end and he was going to shoot you. I wasn't going to let that happen. Even if I didn't love you so fucking much I'd have stopped him."

A shudder runs through Ilya's body and he collapses back down onto Shane, face hidden again. Shane holds him tighter, rubs his arms and back, tries to put some warmth back into his body. He's shivering now. It's been a lot for one night; for more than one night actually. It's been a lot for months; the threats, the first attack against him, the pain and recovery after that. More attacks, abduction right under his nose and the fierce worry about Svetlana. Then his own life in danger and watching his boyfriend get hurt.

Threats and hate and danger are a part of Shane's life but not Ilya's.

Shane can't imagine how it would feel for someone living a normal life like Ilya to one day find themselves looking up at such pure hatred directed at them and knowing that hate had consumed enough of a person that they'd be willing to die because of it.

Would watching them get shot and die make it better or worse? Ilya must have learnt the answer to that now because Stefan had not made it to the hospital.

Helpless to know what else to say Shane says nothing and hopes just being close to each other will help make things a little better.

Hiding himself again against Shane's chest at least helps Ilya with his words even if he's still shivering.

"He hated me, I know that and I did not want to die. I wanted to see you again, be with you. I wanted to love you for many years, have whole life together. Then... then I watched and you fell and I did not know if you were gone forever, if I had lost you."

Arms tighten around him and Ilya must forget about Shane's injuries for a second because the hug is little too tight to be comfortable but Shane would rather die than reveal that. He squeezes back just as hard.

A small voice makes its way out from the depths of Shane's shoulder where Ilya has buried himself.

"Shane?"

That voice might just break his heart one day but Shane doesn't care. He'll listen to whatever Ilya has to say forever.

"I love you. I do not ever want to be without you."

He should say something, swear that will never happen but the words get stuck, caught in the same cage as his wildly fluttering heart.

He hopes the kiss says it all for him.

The kiss he's about to place on Ilya's lips.

To do that though, he has to get him to look up, so, fingers twisted into his curls Shane tugs gently, there's no resistance and Ilya's face, when revealed is open and raw and so full of all his complicated feelings that Shane might die if he can't kiss him right now.

He loves him so fucking much.

And suddenly he has words again and those are the ones he uses - I love you. So fucking much.... just before he presses their lips together and kisses the man he's lucky enough to love and who loves him back with every single wonderful, annoying, kind, frustrating part of himself.

Ilya's lips part for him with a quiet grateful gasp of air. It's filled with all the love they share and Shane slips inside him with careful, gentle strokes of lip and tongue until the last of the fear and tension has been soothed away from Ilya's body and he's leaning into the kisses and Shane's taking as much as giving.

The kisses continue, slow blissful things of joy and Shane lets himself relax and sink into the feelings Ilya always brings to the surface in him. He even forgets that they're in a hospital until Ilya's kisses slide down his neck and he realises the awful hospital gown has become undone and his chest is exposed allowing Ilya unbridled access, which he uses to start stroking his fingertips over muscles and soft skin and nipples.

It feels wonderful and Shane arches up into the sensation without thinking about it, a small but very grateful moan escaping his lips as Ilya bends his head and sucks lightly on the always sensitive nub of skin.

There's no need to think anymore, he just enjoys the feeling, lost for who knows how long to the physical manifestation of the love they share. He only starts thinking again when fingertips slide lower and are inevitably followed by Ilya's lips.

Trying to make his brain and tongue work together to say something he has to admire Ilya's technique. He's clever, a skilled seducer, moving slowly so Shane hadn't noticed for a while but each kiss is dropping on his skin an inch or two lower than the one before, moving towards his obvious destination - Shane's traitorously thickening cock.

It's masterful and toe curlingly good but with Herculean effort Shane twists his fingers into Ilya's curls again and this time pulls to put a stop to his slow teasing decent because someone has to be sensible.

Ilya's almost halfway down the bed, and Shane's body now, when he looks up his eyes are glazed, lips and cheeks flushed with heat and blood and desire. His mouth is a little swollen and gorgeously wet. Ilya's lashes flutter in his direction, eyes big and bright and Shane wants to die — being sensible sucks.

It's not fair they're still in hospital, if they weren't he'd happily let Ilya do exactly what he so clearly wants to do to him but they are, so he can't. That however seems be clear to only one of them.

"Ilya."

He puts the obvious 'no' into his name but Ilya fakes ignorance, more blinking and a tiny frown saying he has no clue what Shane is referring to. He concludes the act with a innocent question.

"Shane?"

Not for the first or last time the word 'nightmare' crosses his mind in relation to Ilya Rozanov.

Delivering a 'don't give me that innocent routine' glare Shane finds his voice and says, firmly —

"We are not doing that. Not here."

Ilya pouts and looks like the world's saddest puppy being denied a treat. Shane's heart skips a little at the gorgeous vision looking up at him.

Fuck. He tells himself to stay strong.

"We can't."

The statement sounds a lot less certain than his first bold declaration did. Shane tries to hold firm to his principles but it's hard when the hesitation is immediately spotted and jumped on by the evil seductive genius he's managed to snag all for himself.

He's so fucking lucky.

Shane bites his lips together to keep from smiling- the man does not need any encouragement.

Ilya licks his lips slowly and bats his pretty eyelashes again as if that will get him what he wants.

Shane wishes he could say it won't but he has serious doubts building, still he has to keep trying doesn't he, for decency's sake.

Ilya wiggles down the bed a little more and presses another soft wet kiss just below his bellybutton. It doesn't make Shane whimper or twitch but the second touch of his mouth in the same place does.

He cuts off the soft hum of appreciation that was already half way out of his mouth without his permission and replaces it with a breathy -

"Ilya, no.."

This time it sounds more genuine. Shane's quite impressed with himself, he sounds as if he almost probably could mean it.

Obviously he does mean it, or at least he wants to mean it or rather he should want to mean it.

He might not mean it.

It doesn't particularly matter anyway all his moderately firm 'no' gets him is a pouty protest and another set of kisses that are confusingly both far to close and far too distant from where he wants them to land.

Around the kisses Ilya is muttering words into his skin.

"I think it is Ilya yes. I think you want this. I think you can not lie to me."

Shane will concede (silently) that Ilya has a point, it's hard to be particularly convincing that you *don't* want with a rock hard erection between your legs.

As it seems denial isn't working Shane picks another route.

"That's not the point, I'm not letting you give me a blow job here."

Ilya however remains undeterred.

"Will be good for you- orgasms very good for healing. "

Shane gapes, the war between caution and lust momentarily pushed aside, honestly the nonsense that comes out of the man's mouth sometimes is unbelievable, even hard and aching and trying to be appropriate in a public place he can't let that go.

"Really? You got some evidence for that?"

Ilya's evidence is apparently a single word.

"Endorphins"

He looks so smug it's adorable. Shane keeps his expression serious with a considerable amount of effort.

"Endorphins."

He corrects his beautiful, optimistic boyfriend gently.

Ilya shrugs carelessly.

"Is what I said."

He really doesn't care at all does he and that makes Shane smile and that obviously gives Ilya hope and a renewed enthusiasm for his mission.

He presses kisses against Shane's increasingly sensitive skin again and again, the same cunning strategy of getting lower each time.

Ilya holds him down and toys with him mercilessly and Shane lets him, going boneless and embracing the amazing feeling of being powerless to resist the wet kisses roaming but not

actually reaching the places he aches to be touched. Ilya's letting the anticipation build, letting Shane discover that he wants, needs what he's saying he can't have.

They should stop, he knows that, any minute now someone might walk through the door. He wants to say that - make it a warning, a reason to stop but the idea of being caught just makes his heart beat faster and his breathing goes erratic, even more uneven than it had been, it's certainly no good for making words, but it can still make sound, it's not moaning, not really but it's getting close.

Shane arches back, head pushing into his pillow, fuck he wants more and as if he can read his mind that's when Ilya makes his real move.

A stunned grateful gasp of pleasure echoes around the room as he writhes even more on his awful uncomfortable mattress, it's the only possible reaction to Ilya soft full lips brushing against the tip of his cock. Fuck... his mouth is just perfect. It's unfair to have to try and resist it.

Does he have to try and resist it?

Ilya's perfect, perfect tongue laps gently over his cock tormenting him in delicious waves of pleasure.

He sighs, eyes closed, fingers twirling in Ilya's hair.

"We really shouldn't..."

His protests don't even sound halfway convincing anymore. It's embarrassing how desperate he is and how obvious that desperation is, he's about to give in but of course Ilya decides that it's the perfect moment to call his bluff.

"Ok. We stop then."

Breath catching in disappointment Shane's heart sinks. Ilya leaves him confused and overheated for another few seconds, before a tiny kitten kiss to the crease of his hip makes a liar out of him. As do the other tiny teasing touches that follow it and have Shane holding back another moan.

Well most of another moan.

"Is ok. Is private room."

Ilya's mouth slides over his skin in a way that has Shane hissing his response.

"Not private enough."

His complaint ends in another breathy gasp.

"Ilya we can't."

The wonderful feeling stops which is both what he asked for and terribly disappointing. Feeling lightheaded he looks down and the view does nothing to help his disappointment or self control. The wonderfully filthy view of his cock hovering near Ilya's open mouth, wet and shiny with spit is stunning but more than that is Ilya's expression as he looks up at him - once again his heart is in his eyes and it's bleeding out.

"Please Shane, let me... I need..."

The honesty and desperation goes straight to Shane's cock making it throb and he knows he'll give Ilya anything he wants, anytime any place he wants it - now and forever.

He hardly recognises his own voice when he replies.

"What... what do you need?"

Shane feels dizzy, lost in the raw emotions on Ilya's face. He's not hiding anything; the need, the love and lust, the fear and hope are all swimming in his eyes.

Ilya said he needs and he does... it's written all over him and it's utterly intoxicating and overwhelming to be the focus of all that. He repeats the question, reaching down to put his fingers in Ilya mouth and watch his lips twitch around them. He's so pretty.

"What do you need?"

The answer drives Shane to the edge of his self control.

"You."

His cock throbs again almost touching Ilya's lips by itself. The temptation is too much for his beautiful Russian, he mouths at the head of his dick, almost without realising he's doing it. While he nuzzles and strokes himself against Shane's skin he bears his soul.

"Need to feel you, taste you, have you inside me. Know. Know you are alive, warm, real — mine."

His heart might burst any minute it's going so fast.

"Need to know you are safe and here , with me. With me... please?"

Please Shane?"

Then Ilya waits, even with the raw desperate need for proof of life pouring off him he waits. What the hell is Shane supposed to do about that but give in, give them both what they need. He doesn't waste another second.

"Fuck, yes...I need that too. Ilya... please... do that. I want that."

Even burning up with desire he can't quite let go of sensible, maybe one day but not today.

"want it so bad baby but we gotta be fucking quick. Gotta be quick and quiet, need to be quiet."

Permission finally given Ilya licks a long slow stripe down the full length of Shane's now desperately swollen, aching hard dick.

He makes a grab for the bedhead as he groans around the pleasure Ilya's giving him.

Ilya's voice has become amused and somewhat embarrassingly muffled.

"Is not me who is noise problem."

Shane gasps again, far too loudly and proves Ilya's point for him. He shoves a fist into his mouth to try and help him maintain a more appropriate volume while his other hand holds on tighter to the bed.

In between sucking and kissing his cock Ilya says;

" Do not worry moya lyubov you will be quick."

Something about the phrasing irritates Shane even as he's dying from the sensations flowing through him and from the effort of trying to keep quiet.

"I'll be quick?"

Shane prides himself on his stamina and yes Ilya is doing excellent work but he has his pride. He's not seventeen anymore.

The confidence positively radiating off the smug bastard he's in love with is outrageous.

"Yes, I am very good and you like it like this. In public, maybe caught, maybe seen. Two minutes is all I need to make you come, make you say my name, make you forget yours."

The flash of lust that rushes through him at Ilya's words is insane. He could almost come from the image in his head of being caught. Fuck who knew he was into that kind of thing.

Somehow knowing just how right he is Ilya sinks back down on him with a smirk, taking his cock all the way to the back of his throat in one fucking insane and delicious glide.

Shane gasps and his grips on the bed frame tightens again when his back arches off the bed. He grits out his objection to Ilya's over confidence.

"No way, I can last longer."

The declaration is undermined by the way he moans at the end of it. He's getting close. It's so not fair. Why is Ilya so good at this. Why is this so fucking hot.

Ilya takes a deep breath and then sets a new and frantic pace for a full fifteen seconds and Shane is panting desperately by the time Ilya breaths again, still trying to control himself and prove himself right and Ilya wrong .

Forcing his eyes open Shane has to face the swollen mouth and delighted expression of his fucking annoyingly hot talented boyfriend.

"Maybe less than 2 minutes. Maybe they hear you Shane, hear what I do to you, how much you love it. Love me..."

It shouldn't turn him on so much but it does. The warm spiraling sensation inside him starts spinning faster.

"Fuck yes... I fucking love you so much Ilya. Make me come, please baby... wanna come in your mouth. Need it."

Ilya growls and returns his focus to the task at hand and when Shane does start to come seconds later and Ilya swallows him down desperately, moaning far too loudly himself Shane doesn't even mind that the beautiful smug bastard is fucking right.

Less than two fucking minutes.

Shane yawns in the vague hope the extra oxygen will help keep him alert. It's a stupid amount of late now and they're still waiting to go home, still waiting for a nurse to come to stitch him up. His low priority for medical attention supported his argument that he was practically fine but he would kind of like someone to fix him up before his next birthday.

He also hadn't much minded the delay for a while because it meant they had time for Shane to demonstrate to Ilya that he wasn't the only one with a desperate need for intimacy and proof of life.

Of course it had to be done quickly and quietly and Shane proved his mouth was just as talented as his boyfriend's by beating Ilya's time by almost three seconds, not that it was a competition, and not that it mattered that he would have won it if had been, it was just a random fact to think about.

The small but satisfying victory had been pleasing and a distraction from their endless waiting but now he does really want to get out of here and go home.

He wants to go home with Ilya because he can. He wants to sleep in a real bed, hold his man tight in a bed big enough for both of them.

Another yawn stretches his jaw almost painfully, the short naps he keeps waking up from aren't particularly restful.

Opening his eyes again after the yawn he finds Ilya's looking at him from the spot he's settled into on top of Shane's chest, apparently the man can relax anywhere - like a cat, which is annoying but Shane still feels happy just looking at him. Ilya's eyes are soft and content but there's also a look there that says he's got something on his mind.

Shane smiles and can't help running a finger down his perfect nose and tapping the tip when he gets there.

"What you thinking about?"

Ilya takes a deep breath and for a second Shane might feel a tiny prickle of worry twist in the pit of his stomach but the soft smile slowly spreading across his face reassures him and he knows - there's no need to be worried. Ilya reaches out and strokes his fingertips gently across his cheek and Shane can't help himself he melts into it, eyes closing again. Ilya's voice and accent are as soft as his touch.

"I am thinking that having crazy stalker was not fun, especially tonight but I am glad for it to have happened. It was worth all trouble and hurt, to have you here now and for Sveta to have met Rose."

He opens his eyes to smile and agree and finds a certain look on Ilya's face that he's learning to recognise, and Shane is pretty sure he knows what's coming next. The man just can't help himself.

"But am not so sure having to know Pike is worth it."

Shane rolls his eyes and keeps his resigned sigh to himself, yup ... that was what he was expecting. Ilya must be feeling better if he's back to insulting Hayden so casually. It's practically a hobby for him at this point.

Ilya's face scrunches up as he continues to consider the idea.

"Not sure even *you* are worth seeing Pike *every* day."

Ilya puts the point of his chin on Shane's chest so he can look him in the eye.

"Please tell me I do not have to see him everyday. "

Shane snorts, impossible man. He couldn't fall in love with a nice guy could he? Although if you ask him Ilya is a nice guy, the perfect guy or at least he's perfect for him.

Then his perfect, nice guy pulls a disgusted face and continues his campaign against poor Hayden.

"Everyday Shane? Would be very much Pike to tolerate. I do not know if I can do it."

Trying to look stern and knowing he's failing Shane takes a breath and tells his boyfriend how it's going to be.

"You're a nightmare you know that. The highest maintenance drama queens on the planet have nothing on you."

Ilya actually looks proud of that, which just proves the 'nightmare' label! Shane refocuses, he refuses to be derailed from his point.

"No, you won't have to see him *everyday* but he is one of my best friends and so is Jackie and I love their kids so you're going to have to see him probably more than you want. Live with it, no complaining."

Ilya's mouth opens and Shane preempts the obvious comment he's going to make.

"From either of you. I will be talking to Hayden too. I mean it. Seriously you both need to behave, the Pike's, Rose all of them are my family."

The teasing look on Ilya's face has faded and Shane knows that he understands he's serious about this. He also understands that Ilya will keep annoying Hayden because he's still Ilya but not too much and maybe not too often. They can all live with that. He has the feeling Ilya's going to love Jackie and that Jackie will adore him right back and the kids will be besotted immediately. Shane hasn't forgot how good Ilya is with kids. Maybe they can have their own someday. The thought is a surprise but not unpleasant in any way. It's kind of exciting actually. A family with Ilya, he'd like that, maybe they'll get a dog too. Ilya looks like a dog person.

Unaware of Shane planning a possible future for them right next to him Ilya just responds to his last comment.

"Sveta is my family."

Shane nods, that's become very clear.

"I know, so she's mine too now." He blows out a noisy gust of air. "If she doesn't poison me or something first."

Ilya laughs. "Oh she will not poison you..."

He's about to feel relieved but holds off judgement for another second, wisely it turns out because Ilya goes on to clarify his beloved friend's opinions on murder by poison.

"She says poison is weak and pathetic way to murder. She believes you should be more hands on."

That's such a reassuring thing to hear about your boyfriend's best friend. Shane manages a vague attempt at a smile, there's a possibility he's joking but probably not.

Ilya's eyes sparkle with a mischief Shane is going to have to learn to live with.

"She is really very sweet woman. I love her very much. Your Rose is lucky to be with her. She is major catch."

He can smile and nod about that, she is very beautiful and she does sound like Rose's type and she does seem to have fallen hard for his friend. It's nice their family is growing, which reminds him.

"I can't wait for you to meet my parents."

That doesn't get the reaction he's expecting. The blood drains from Ilya's face leaving him even paler than usual.

"Parents? You want me to meet your parents?"

Ilya looks more scared than he had at the opera house earlier tonight. It's weird, his parents are great. Why would Ilya be nervous about meeting them?

"Yeah of course, as soon as they get back from Europe. They're going to love you."

Ilya is silent for a heartbeat or two but before Shane can really worry he smiles.

"I hope so. I would like that very much Shane Hollander, to meet your parents and be your boyfriend and spend my life with you. I would like that very much."

Shane smiles back, it's almost too good to be true but it is true and real and his.

"Me too."

He kisses Ilya again, soft and slow and as he does something fun occurs to him, pulling away slowly with a few more small kisses before he talks he shares the thought.

"Hey I was right you know, that day we met."

Ilya doesn't know judging by his confused frown and subsequent question.

"What are you talking about?"

Shane's delighted all over again that he's the winner at something else. There's a brief twinge of guilt at that conceit but it's not his fault he's competitive, he gets it off his mother. It's probably a good job the hockey thing didn't work out. He might have gotten a bit intense at times and of course he wouldn't have met Ilya, or maybe not; now he thinks about it Ilya probably would have been excellent at hockey too. He pushes the silly idea of them meeting on the ice away even if it is a fun thought.

"Don't you remember, the day we met, what you said to me? You said... *"I do not want bodyguard. I do not need bodyguard!"*

Shane says it in a terrible Russian accent that has Ilya looking horrified and amused in equal measure.

"That is terrible accent. Terrible. I do not sound like that. Is not true."

Shane grins, "Fine, my accent might be a bit shit but you still said it."

Ilya pouts thoughtfully, maybe he's remembering the first time they saw each other too. Shane wonders what he thought about him that day, did he feel something then too? The look on his face says maybe he did.

"That is what I said huh?"

Ilya doesn't look particularly upset about being called out on his very inaccurate prediction. Shane would however prefer to hear him admit defeat out loud.

"I think we can say you were about as wrong as you can get. Don't you?"

He already knows Ilya loves him but this moment really proves it. Ilya sighs and admits defeat.

"Fine, this *one* time I will admit that I was wrong. I need bodyguard."

Ilya gives him a deliberately lascivious look that has Shane blushing.

"I *want* bodyguard."

It's probably a joke but Ilya looks like he's considering proving again just how much he wants, when the door to their room finally opens and a nurse appears to stitch him back up and finally get them on their way home.

Shane is extremely pleased to see her because once they leave here and get home Ilya can show him properly just how much he needs and wants a bodyguard and Shane can demonstrate the significant advantages of having very close, very personal protection in your life.

Chapter End Notes

Goodbye!!!

I'm done and I'm outta here 😁😁

The words are finished and I'm off to rest. I have books to read and shows to watch and all kinds of things to do.

I think I'll be gone from the writing world for a while, maybe a few months, maybe longer because I haven't really got any other things I'm planning on writing at the moment.

I love sharing words with you all but with fandom interaction dying around us I'm sad to say that my fandom fun has dwindled and my motivation to write suffers alongside it. 😞

But I'd hate to just disappear into the void so I'll just say, in case I'm not back, that I'm proud to have shared so many words with so many lovely people and I've written 1,575,539 of them so that's not too bad 😁)

I've been lucky to get to talk to some regular readers and other lovely people in the comments over the years so thank you for being friendly or brave and coming to say hello and brightening my days.

I've had so much fun these last five ish years and can't believe what I'll be archiving here will be around for as long as Ao3 is. That's pretty cool.

Take care out there wonderful fandom people and keep spreading joy and love and support as much as you can ❤️💜

Remember to tell the people who make things you love that you love the things they made.



End Notes

If you're here you have to let me know by pushing that kudos button. Go on... it won't bite and it'll make me very happy

Leave a comment too if you're feeling daring. I'll love anything nice that you choose to drop in the comment box from an emoji to actual sentences.

Thanks for reading I'll be back asap 🥰🤔💜

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