

Glittering Gold

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/85242116) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/85242116>.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Heated Rivalry (TV) , Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov , Svetlana Vetrova , Gilbert Comeau , Joe Shane Hollander's Figure Skater Friend
Additional Tags:	Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics , Figure Skating , Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence , Alternate Universe - Different First Meeting , Bad Parent Grigori Rozanov , Homophobic Language , Anal Sex , Oral Sex , POV Alternating , Boston Bears Boston Raiders Player Shane Hollander , Figure Skater Ilya Rozanov
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2026-05-20 Completed: 2026-07-04 Words: 52,029 Chapters: 6/6

Glittering Gold

by [kaijuerotica](#)

Summary

In 2008, Ilya Rozanov won his first World Figure Skating title. That same year, Shane Hollander was selected first overall by the Boston Raiders.

In 2014, both are chosen to represent their countries in the Sochi Olympics.

A lot can change in two weeks.

Notes

Updates Fridays, probably

I've been thinking about this concept for ages but put it off in order to finish my previous fic. But it's here now! This fic is complete aside from editing, so the chapter count is somewhat flexible as some chapters may still be combined or split.

Just a quick note, this fic makes some mention of Russia's anti-gay laws but no mention of the doping scandal or the invasion of Crimea. We're just saying if it wasn't mentioned in the book/show, it didn't happen.

This is mostly show-canon but I'm messing a bit with the timeline and giving a lot more backstory in some places.

A few quick thank yous to [@ottawa--centaurs](#) for helping me with the figure skating research and terminology and [@deanmonlover](#) for being the beloved fridge I throw spaghetti against to see what sticks.

I'll try to include any necessary rules/procedural explanations in the fic itself but I may include some additional explanations in the chapter notes along the way.

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

Chapter 1

“You're not supposed to smoke here.”

Ilya looked up from where he was squatting, hands cupped around the lighter with a cigarette between his lips. Who was speaking to him in English? “What?” he asked after a moment, responding in the same.

“Cigarettes,” the man said, with a gesture like someone who had clearly never smoked anything before. He had dark hair and was leaning over the half wall Ilya was using for cover from the wind. “You're not supposed to smoke in the Village.” He then pointed to a sign posted nearby which listed the prohibition in English, Russian, and with a helpful pictogram.

Ilya eyed him up and down while he brought the cigarette back to his lips for a drag. He had broad shoulders, covered by a cozy looking jacket with a familiar red maple leaf on it. Canadian. Ilya rose to his feet to look at him properly. He was a few inches shorter than Ilya and seemed surprised by that realization, if the way his eyes widened momentarily was anything to go by. Up closer, he had a better view of the man. He was broad, with a strong jaw and a smattering of freckles across his cold-flushed cheeks. Attractive. Cute.

He held the man's gaze a moment longer and then brought the cigarette to his lips again. “Okay,” he said, then took another drag. He saw the man's eyebrows twitch, something in the realm of annoyance or disbelief.

They kept staring at each other for a moment longer. Ilya was polite enough to blow his smoke away from the other man but kept his eyes on him as he did it. The man opened his mouth to speak when a voice called out a ways away. He looked towards the voice, then ducked his head and looked back at Ilya. “Just. Thought you should know.”

Ilya couldn't help but smile around the cigarette and nod back. “Thanks.”

The guy turned awkwardly and waved with his hand still in his pocket, then started walking off towards two other burly men in matching Team Canada jackets. As if on cue, Svetlana walked up wearing his own Team Russia jacket and holding two coffees. «Were you talking to Shane Hollander?» she asked.

Ilya took the coffee with a grateful nod. He was pleased when the man turned back from his teammates to look at Ilya, then quickly turned back when he realized Ilya was still watching him. «Who?»

Shane had learned two things since he'd arrived in the Olympic Village the previous night. Well, probably more than that. He had learned his room number and to always wear his credentials on him when he was out and about and where the pickup was to take the team to the arena.

But today he had learned that there was a Russian skater named Ilya Rozanov and that Ilya Rozanov was an asshole.

Actually, he'd learned those facts in the opposite order. He'd learned that some Russian athlete was kind of a dick and liked to smoke underneath very clear "No Smoking" signs and had planned to go about the rest of his day in peace. He'd learned his name later that evening.

Shane was late getting to dinner. Even with signs and maps, the Olympic Village was large and a bit overwhelming to navigate. There were a few shops and cafes scattered around, with everything from souvenirs to fancy pastries. But tonight, he was eating in the cafeteria. It was buffet style, with tons of tables and individual food stations featuring food from all over the world. An adventurous eater could find something completely new and unfamiliar for each meal.

Shane got chicken and vegetables. Double chicken for the protein.

He sat down across from Joe with an apologetic mumble about his tardiness but Joe waved him off easily.

Joe was an old friend. Well, "friend" in the same way your next door neighbor from childhood was a friend. Joe was his age and grew up in Ottawa. Joe had been on Shane's Timbits team way back when, but he'd changed to figure skating pretty early on. Still, they ran into each other around the rink pretty often as kids. They even went to the same high school before Shane went to juniors and wound up billeted in Kamloops. They'd reconnected once they were both named to Canadian Olympic teams. Ottawa was very proud to have some homegrown Olympians favored for podium spots. If everything went to plan, Shane was certain there would be a parade.

"You see much of the Village yet?" Joe asked around a bite of chickpeas. He was wearing a red zip-up jacket with "Team Canada Figure Skating" printed down the arms.

"A bit," Shane said with a nod. "It's overwhelming. A lot of people." Shane was used to large crowds, but he was also used to being held apart from them. Behind tables or plexiglass or metal barricades. Even in the locker room, as loud and hectic as they could get, his teammates knew not to jostle him. Hollzy needed his space, and Hollzy was the best so he got it.

"You can say that again," Joe said. "See anyone cool?"

Shane made a face. "Cool?"

Joe shrugged back. "All the best winter athletes in the world gathering here. You didn't get star-struck by anyone?"

"Uh, I don't know. I'm not the best at recognizing athletes." *Outside of hockey*, he didn't add. A small smile touched his lips. "I met this Russian guy, I guess."

"Russian guy?" Joe asked. "Hot. What sport?"

Shane looked down, hoping he wasn't blushing too obviously. He'd known about Joe since they were thirteen, when Joe had dragged Shane along to see some movie and gushed to him after about how hot Brad Pitt was. It had sent a scary sort of thrill through Shane when he first heard Joe say the words "I'm gay." They hadn't talked about it since. Shane certainly hadn't told Joe about his own preferences, or his suspicions about them. He'd mostly stammered through an awkward response about how he was fine with it and changed the subject to whether he thought the Cens would be making a Cup run that year or not. (They didn't.)

"Um, I'm not sure," Shane said. "He had curly hair. He was smoking." Shane made a face when he said it. He was so careful with his body, treating it like a well-oiled machine and putting only the best fuel in the tank. He didn't understand why any athlete would jeopardize performance and lung function with cigarettes. He remembered another detail and tapped his cheek. "He had a mole right here."

"Wait," Joe said, fishing his phone out of his pocket and tapping at it for a moment. Shane looked down and methodically cut his chicken into pieces while he waited. "This the guy?" He turned the phone back and there he was, unmistakable. The same man from before. His tawny curls were tamed, pushed back from his face instead of flopping around messily like it was when he saw him. The picture was a candid shot. His clothes were tight fitting, all black with a smattering of blue and silver rhinestones across his broad shoulders. His face had a smug expression of someone who knew he was at the top of his game.

"Yeah, that's him." His eyes darted down to the skates on his feet. Black and sleeker than the chunky hockey skates Shane had spent his whole life in. Bright yellow laces stood out against the dark uppers. He was on his edges, entire body angled as he took a steep curve. "Who is he? Figure skater?"

"Shit," Joe said, turning his phone back to look at it. "Yeah. Ilya Rozanov. World champ two years running and making a run for a third next month. People treat him like the second fucking coming to the figure skating world." He set the phone down and picked his fork back up. "What was he like?"

Shane considered as he chewed a green bean. "Kind of a dick."

Ilya stepped onto the ice as his name was called out by the announcer. He tuned out the sounds of the crowd as he focused on the feel of the ice beneath his skates. The venue was brand new. *Everything* was brand new. The paint was fresh and the boards around the rink had only gathered a couple small scuffs so far. The zamboni had just resurfaced the ice and his blades were freshly sharpened. The first step from the rubber mat onto the ice was like the first full breath into his lungs in days.

He didn't have too much planned for this training session. It was public, hundreds of spectators looking on from the stands as he took lazy laps around the rink. He didn't like to do these public sessions. He had too many eyes on him as it was. But the Olympics were in his own country this year. The Olympic Committee had made him a face of the games, splashing his photo over every ad campaign they could manage. As reluctant as he was, he'd been *strongly encouraged* to take part in the public training sessions.

That didn't mean he needed to push himself just because he was in the public eye, though. He started another lap and threw in a single toe loop as he built up speed. The clip of his skates was familiar and the movement was easy, almost lazy as he landed back on the ice. There was scattered applause for his jump, as if that wasn't a jump any junior skater could land in their sleep.

Ilya continued like that. He enjoyed the feel of his skates beneath his feet, the cut of his edges into the new ice. Every so often, he practiced another jump to keep his muscles warm. Never more than a single rotation. They would have to wait for that.

It was towards the end of his time slot, as he was practicing his step sequence, that he noticed him. He was rounding a large loop, skating spread eagle with his arms out and skates facing opposite directions. His eyes scanned the crowd and for the first time he really looked. Took in the scattered people, some wearing clothes that marked them as athletes while others seemed to be spectators and enthusiasts. And there, near the gap in the seats for the tunnel to the dressing rooms, was a familiar Canadian. He was wearing a different Team Canada jacket this time, a deep burgundy red, but his face was unmistakable.

Shane Hollander was watching him.

Ilya felt a smile come to his lips. Sveta had threatened to skin him for not recognizing Hollander the other day. He'd received a whole lecture about his stats and career. Captain of the Boston Raiders, who'd singlehandedly turned them around from a bottom-tier team to a serious contender for the MLH Cup. Captain of Team Canada, despite the wealth of older, more experienced players competing beside him.

And now he was here, watching Ilya skate. He finished rehearsing his step sequence. His time was almost up anyway. He could already see the next skater waiting by the gate, Team France jacket still zipped over his athletic-wear. Unable to resist, Ilya did one more pass, building up speed before thrusting himself into the air for a picture-perfect triple Axel.

The reaction from the crowd was immediate. Gasps, cheers, claps. A few whistles here and there. Feeling cocky, Ilya gave a flourished bow to one side of the arena, then the other. Then he wound his way towards the gate. He gave one final wave to the crowd and accepted his blade guards from his coach.

«That was unexpected,» Evgenia said. She had a pursed look on her face that Ilya had long since stopped trying to read.

«Keeping everyone on their toes,» Ilya said. She was more than used to his antics over the years. Svetlana was standing nearby and snickered.

She just nodded and Ilya started walking towards the dressing rooms. As he went, he turned his head and looked at Shane Hollander in the stands. He was looking back at Ilya. Ilya arched one brow at him and waved.

Rozanov left the ice at the end of his allotted time. His chest was heaving and his hair was matted to his head with sweat. Shane saw an older blonde woman and the same curly-haired

woman waiting for him to hand him his blade guards. The older one said something and Rozanov just shrugged. The next skater was already out on the ice, starting his own practice drills, but Shane couldn't stop staring at Rozanov.

Rozanov nodded in response to something the other woman said and started walking towards the tunnel when he stopped and looked up towards Shane. Shane froze, feeling like he'd been caught. He felt exposed like this, like he was doing something he wasn't supposed to do. Rozanov held his gaze a moment longer, then his mouth quirked into a crooked smile and he gave Shane some sort of half salute, just a small flick of his fingers in his direction. *I see you*, he was sure it was saying. *I know you were watching*.

Shane flushed, and then immediately felt ridiculous for reacting like that. It was a public event. He barely knew the guy, anyway. He could watch if he wanted.

Whatever. His phone buzzed again from Joe, who said he would just meet him in the cafeteria. When Shane glanced back up, Rozanov and his entourage were gone.

Shane's first practice on Olympic ice was the next day. He was glad to get back into the rhythm of hockey. Strapping on his pads, feeling his edges cut through the ice, breathing through the exertion of familiar drills. He knew all the guys on the team by reputation, if not personally. He was the only player for the Raiders to be selected for Team Canada so playing with most of them was a new experience. He'd seen a few of the other guys at All-Star games, and played against them of course, but it was still a bit awkward. A room full of players he barely knew and all of them looking to him for leadership.

There were two phases of the Olympic hockey tournament. First, all the teams were separated into divisions and would play a series of games, winning points based on wins and point differential. The points would determine seeding for the tournament phase, where single elimination would begin. It meant these first games were lower pressure. Winning was important, but a loss wouldn't necessarily mean they were immediately out of the running.

The first game was against Austria. It was a thorough routing, with Canada nabbing a 6-0 shutout. He'd known to expect this of at least some of the games. All countries had players from professional leagues but some were better positioned than others. Canada's team was made entirely of MLH players, the best of the best. Austria only had a couple players from the MLH, neither of them superstars. The evidence of Canada's domination was clear just from looking at the ice. At the end of each period, Austria's defensive zone was carved and gouged while Canada's ice was nearly pristine.

Shane was riding high when he finally stepped off the ice, followed only by the goalie who clapped him on the shoulder in turn. It was a good fucking game. Their lines were working well together, their passes connected. Shane had nearly nabbed a hatty with two goals and an assist. Admittedly, they were heavily favored to win the matchup and these were just the easy early games. Qualifiers before moving onto single elimination. Still, it felt good to start with momentum. Felt good to hear the crowd scream for him after a one-timer sailed clean home over the opposing goalie's shoulder.

Shane was following his teammates down the tunnel when a familiar mop of curly hair caught his eye.

Ilya Rozanov was standing above him, leaning against the railing with a practiced nonchalance. His red jacket accentuated his shoulders while his track pants hugged his hips in a way Shane was steadfastly *not* thinking about moments before heading back to the locker room. He was once again standing with the same curly-haired woman.

He considered stopping. Saying hello. Asking him why the fuck a Russian figure skater was watching Canadian hockey. He even slowed down. Then his winger was bumping shoulders with him and saying, "Good game, Cap," and Shane let himself be swept down the hall towards the dressing room without a look back.

Shane didn't have to wait long to get his answer. He ran into Rozanov again outside the arena. He was alone now, leaning against a bollard and smoking a cigarette. The red cherry glowed in the fading daylight. As much distaste as Shane had for it, he had to admit the man looked good.

"So what brings a Russian figure skater to a Canadian hockey game?" Shane asked. He felt bold asking it.

Rozanov sniffed and flicked his cigarette butt to the side. He relaxed when he saw Shane and plastered an easy smile on his face. "Sveta wanted to watch you play. I just tag along."

"Sveta?" Shane asked, mind conjuring a picture of the woman he'd seen three times now. Light brown skin, perfectly manicured curls, tall and willowy. Were they together?

"Mm." Rozanov nodded. "Svetlana. She likes hockey. She likes you." Rozanov eyed him as he said it, gaze moving up and down.

"Is she a skater, too?" Shane asked. "Like you?"

He snorted and shook his head. "*Nyet*. Her father is Sergei Vetrov. You know him?"

Shane's eyes widened in recognition. "Shit, yeah. I mean, not personally. But Vetter's a legend. He got three MLH Cups with the Raiders back in the 80s. His fucking jersey is hanging in the rafters back home." Boston had struggled as a franchise for a long time but Sergei Vetrov's name was still muttered in some circles with reverence.

Rozanov's mouth quirked into a smile at that. "Ah, she told me you play in Boston. He is coach now. Um, not...big guy. Under, um. What is word? Helps?"

"Assistant coach?" Shane offered.

Rozanov nodded and pointed. "Yes. Assistant coach. Sveta lives in Boston but came back for Olympics." His smile turned wry. "Says she came along to keep an eye on me."

"You need someone to keep an eye on you?" Shane asked. He found himself taking a step closer to Rozanov. He was taller than Shane. Tall enough that he had to tilt his head up to meet his eyes. Shane didn't usually like to meet people's eyes, at least not continuously. But there was something in Rozanov that kept him looking.

"I like trouble," Rozanov said with a sly smile. Then, "She worries." Something in his tone made Shane think he was admitting something a bit deeper than what it seemed on the surface.

A million questions ran through Shane's head. What kind of trouble? What was she worried about? Who was she to him?

Was she his girlfriend?

Instead, Shane heard himself asking, "Do you want to get dinner?"

~*~*~

When Shane had asked, he meant finding some food in the Village. Maybe the cafeteria, maybe one of the little cafes that served sandwiches.

Rozanov had agreed and asked him to wait right there for a minute before dashing off. Shane thought he was running up to get changed or something. He was pretty sure they were near one of the dormitories housing athletes. He pulled his jacket closer around him and leaned against a bollard while he waited.

What he wasn't expecting was for a Porsche to pull up in front of him. It was bright yellow, gaudy and almost bug-like in the way the forms came together. Like a poisonous creature, brightly colored as a warning to stay away.

The tinted window rolled down to reveal Rozanov's grinning face. "Get in."

Shane gaped at him. "...Okay." He got in the car. Shane had hardly closed the door before Rozanov was taking off, speeding through the streets and banking corners harder than Shane preferred. He looked around, taking in the sleek interior of the car. It was all black leather, the buttons and dials glowing blue in the evening light. It was high tech, expensive - as if that hadn't been plainly obvious from the exterior. The screen had scrolling Cyrillic text which Shane assumed was the rap song currently playing low through the speakers.

"So...where are we going?" Shane finally asked.

"To dinner," Rozanov said. He flashed Shane a grin. "Where else?"

They had passed out of the Olympic Village and the surrounding area now. "I guess I just assumed we would hit the cafeteria," Shane mumbled.

Rozanov shook his head, making a face. "No, food there is no good. I take you to much better place."

"Oh, okay," Shane said. Distantly, he knew this was probably a bad fucking idea. He barely knew the guy, for one. They'd only had two conversations and the first had been Shane scolding him for smoking. No one knew where Shane had gone, either. He slid his hand to feel his phone in his jeans pocket. He could text one of his teammates, maybe. Berky was one of the alternate captains for the team. Shane liked him well enough. A simple *'Went to dinner with a friend. Be back later.'* wouldn't be too weird, would it?

Before he could make up his mind, Rozanov was pulling up in front of a hotel and rolling down his window to talk to the valet. Shane could only guess at what was said, but then Rozanov was handing over some bills and Shane took that as his cue to unbuckle and get out of the car.

“Wait,” Rozanov said. Shane waited while Rozanov reached into the space behind Shane's seat. He pulled out a black Adidas jacket and handed it to Shane. “Less conspicuous than a big maple leaf on your chest, yes?”

Shane looked down at himself, then nodded and took the jacket quickly. “Should I...” he started, holding the article and looking around.

“Leave it here,” Rozanov said, getting out of the car himself. “I drive you back to Village later.” Shane nodded again and then got out of the car, pulling the jacket on against the chill night air. It fit nicely and smelled like tobacco and expensive cologne. He fought the urge to pull it over his nose and breathe it in. He usually hated the smell of cigarettes, but something about the combination when it came to Rozanov was...nice. He tried not to think about that too much as Rozanov led him away from the ornate doors of the hotel and started walking down the street.

It seemed to be a busy area. At least, for a Friday night. People milled about on the sidewalk, a bar nearby showed raucous patrons inside and the ring of music when someone opened the door. Rows of matching light poles lined either side of the street, giving it an old type of charm. Even in the February chill, the entire area seemed warm and inviting. Like something out of an old movie.

“This way,” Rozanov said, and Shane realized he had stopped walking to look around. “Is not far.” Shane fell in next to him. Rozanov walked confidently, leading them down the street and then turning into an alley. Shane almost hesitated. He remembered that moment in the car, reaching for his phone and deciding against sending that text... And then Rozanov was walking up three steps and opening a door. “After you.”

Shane walked through tentatively and was surprised to be greeted by a restaurant. He almost laughed, unsure what else he was expecting. A group of Russian thugs waiting to mug him? The mafia trying to take him hostage? He watched too many bad movies.

The restaurant was small, with low lights and long table linens. A waiter in a waistcoat was moving between tables which largely seemed to consist of couples dressed up nicely. Shane glanced down at himself, wearing jeans and a borrowed Adidas jacket and felt suddenly underdressed.

“I could have worn something nicer if you had told me,” Shane said self-consciously.

Rozanov shook his head and gave him a dismissive flick of his hand. “Why? You look fine.” The host came up to the stand and Rozanov stepped up, speaking in quick Russian. Shane heard Rozanov say his own lastname, then the host glanced down at a sheet of paper in front of him. A moment later, the host nodded and grabbed two menus, then led them further into the restaurant. They wound up at a booth in the back corner. It had high walls and candles on the table, creating an atmosphere that was cozy and secluded.

“Did you have a reservation?” Shane asked when they sat down.

“Of course,” Rozanov said. “This place is very exclusive.”

Shane thought the restaurant seemed kind of sleepy. He certainly doubted they would be getting much attention here. “You didn’t even know we were getting dinner together tonight,” Shane said.

Rozanov shrugged. “I tell them table for two. I do not tell them the name of my date.”

Shane’s mouth opened and closed a few times. He wasn’t sure if Rozanov was making fun of him. But he also couldn’t deny the way the word *date* made him feel warm inside. He glanced around surreptitiously, pleased by the privacy the venue offered. There were two tables in view, and only one was occupied by a much older couple. And with the low lighting, neither would be particularly notable. He thought back to the car, to Rozanov making him change jackets so he wasn’t announcing to the world he was an Olympian. The conclusion he came to was that Rozanov was just as careful about his public image as he was and was used to taking the steps to protect it. It made Shane relax a bit. He still wasn’t sure what they were doing, but he knew Rozanov had just as much to lose as he did. More, maybe.

Rozanov was perusing the menu when Shane looked back at him. “What do you drink? Red? White?”

Shane realized he must be looking at a wine list. His stomach churned and he said, “I, uh, I don’t drink. Not during the season, anyway.” He chewed the inside of his cheek as he waited for Rozanov to respond.

“Boring,” he finally said, but there was a smile on his face that made Shane think it wasn’t actually a rebuke. “What do you drink, then?”

Shane considered mentioning the ginger ale, but he wasn’t even sure if they had that in Russia. He should have looked that up before coming. “Um, water is fine. Really.”

“Boring,” Rozanov said again, drawing out the word with a smile on his face.

“I take it you do?” Shane asked. “Drink, I mean. During the....season.” He hated how much he was stumbling over his words. “Is there even a figure skating season?”

“Yes,” Rozanov said. “And yes, there is season. Starts in July. World Championship is in one month.”

Shane nodded, realizing how closely it mirrored hockey. Maybe he shouldn’t be surprised. Winter sports and all that. “So you drink. And you smoke. And you’re a competitive figure skater.” *Competitive, not pro.* Joe had chirped him about that mistake a couple months before. After they’d both been named to the Canadian national team, Joe had gotten Shane’s contact info from his mother and they had been texting ever since.

“Is there a question there?” Rozanov asked.

“Just seems unusual,” Shane said. “For an athlete of your caliber.” Shane knew plenty of his teammates drank like fish. He even knew some guys in the league who smoked cigarettes. Still, most of the guys looking at long careers, the stars, the lifers either quit long ago or never started in the first place.

Rozanov just shrugged. He looked entirely at ease. “I drink. I smoke. I win. Why change if it is working?”

Shane laughed at that, quick and genuine. “Can't argue with results, I suppose.” Rozanov was still smiling at him as he said it, a slight furrow to his brow that Shane couldn't parse. Shane looked down instead, flipping his menu open to look at the options. He immediately realized his mistake. “Shit- Rozanov, I can't read any of this.”

Rozanov started laughing immediately. “*Rozanov?* Fuck, you really are hockey player.”

Shane flushed bright red, but he couldn't help grinning. “Oh, fuck off.”

“No, no, I play along,” he said. “What do you like to eat, *Hollander?*”

Shane shook his head, still smiling. “I'm, uh. I'm pretty boring when it comes to food.” He resisted the urge to say the word *macros*.

“Do you like salmon? Grilled?” Rozanov asked. “With...um. Is vegetable. Green with puffy top? Makes you pee funny? *Sparzha?*”

He snorted. “Asparagus.” Rozanov nodded and pointed. “Yeah, that sounds good. Is there a sauce on it?” Rozanov frowned and said a Russian word but Shane realized he recognized it. “Balsamic? Oh, yeah that sounds delicious.”

Rozanov nodded proudly. He opened his mouth to speak when the waiter arrived. He was a short man, slightly stocky with a waistcoat and freshly shined shoes. He looked between them and said something that sounded like a greeting. He and Rozanov conversed in easy Russian while Shane tried to look attentive. Rozanov gestured to the menu as he spoke, seeming to ask a question and listen intently to the answer before making a decision.

“Hollander,” he said suddenly. Shane focused back on him. “Your water. You want, um. Bubbles?”

“Sparkling water?” Shane asked. Rozanov nodded. “Uh, yes. Yes, please.” Rozanov looked back to the waiter and said something. Then the waiter took their menus and slipped away.

“Thanks, Rozanov,” Shane said.

“Ilya,” he said.

“Shane.”

Ilya liked talking to Shane. That was one of the first things he realized during their date. He was tightly coiled, careful and controlled. He looked at Ilya like he was trying to solve a

puzzle every time he spoke. Still, Ilya kept catching glimpses through that facade. Small scraps of something.

“How is your food?” Ilya asked after Shane had taken a few bites.

“Delicious,” Shane said. “You have good taste.”

“So I've been told,” Ilya said with a smile. He let his gaze linger on Shane's lips for a moment.

“So, did your friend drag you to the game earlier?” Shane asked. “Svetlana?”

Ilya chuckled and shook his head. “No, I drag her. I wanted to see what all the fuss was about.” He paused. “It did not take much convincing, though. She is Boston fan.”

“First time at a hockey game?” Shane asked. Ilya noticed the way some larger pieces of mushroom had been pushed aside on his plate.

“No,” Ilya said with a snort. At the questioning look, Ilya said, “I spend my whole life in skates and my best friend's papa is famous hockey player. No, this was not the first hockey game I attend.”

“So you wanted to see all the fuss about...?” Shane said, trailing off. His eyes flashed up to meet Ilya's.

“You,” Ilya said. He waited a moment, watching the way understanding came over Shane's face. The corners of his mouth twitched upwards. He looked smug.

“Me?” Shane asked, the amusement carrying into his voice now. He had such a tight, controlled way about him. Every reaction he showed was intentional, measured. And sometimes Ilya felt like he was catching a glimpse under it. Like now, he was wearing the same humble, unselfish mask Ilya had seen on other hockey players over the years, but he was also clearly enjoying the attention. Fishing for a compliment, even.

Ilya would bite.

“Yes,” he said, like it was obvious. “Sveta says you are the best.” He waited again, seeing the satisfaction flash in his eyes before sinking in his claws. “I tell her she is biased because she lives in Boston. She says no, she is biased because you are the best. I decide to see for myself.”

“What's the verdict?” Shane asked. He was holding his glass, tilting it side to side and looking down at it.

“You score two goals today,” Ilya said. Shane's hidden smile got just a hair bigger. “And you could have scored three.” Svetlana had pointed that out to him. An opportunity to shoot when Shane had opted instead to pass to a teammate.

Shane laughed. It was short, clipped. “Maybe. We still won, though. That's what matters.”

“You skate circles around everyone else out there,” Ilya hummed, then grinned as he added, “Maybe even around me.” Shane smiled at him. It was bright and vibrant, a little bit teasing. Breathtaking. “Maybe. Maybe we find out some day.”

It was hard to tell in the low light but Ilya was certain he was blushing. It made his freckles stand out so beautifully. “Maybe...” Shane conceded. “What are... What are you doing after the Games?”

Ilya considered. “I go back to Moscow. Keep training. Worlds is coming up and I have title to defend.” He smiled as he added the last part. No medal was ever guaranteed, but he knew his competition well and knew he could easily take gold again. “You?”

Shane shrugged. “Back to the grind. Regular season goes through April and then playoffs after, if we can keep our spot in the race.”

“How long are playoffs?” Ilya asked.

“Depends,” Shane said. “Start to finish, about two months but most teams get knocked out earlier.”

“Do you think you get knocked out?” Ilya asked. “Or do you think you will win?”

“So much can change game to game,” Shane said, after considering for a moment. “There are a lot of awesome players in the league, a lot of guys who want it just as bad. But we're looking really strong this year, we're all healthy. Just gotta keep our heads down, take it one game at a time... We gotta...” Shane trailed off. He got a strange look on his face and looked up, meeting Ilya's gaze with an odd intensity. “Yeah. Yeah, I think we're taking it all this year.” He smiled as he said it, like it was a weight off his chest.

Ilya smiled back and lifted his own glass of sparkling water. “To both of us winning our titles.”

Shane was still smiling as he clinked his glass against Ilya's.

The waiter came by not long after, clearing their plates and offering them dessert. Ilya declined easily and asked for the check. After the waiter left, he turned back to Shane.

“What are your plans for the rest of the evening?” Shane asked.

Shane felt the air buzzing between them as they walked back down the street. He wasn't naive, he knew exactly what he'd proposed to Ilya when he asked about the night.

“How far is it to your hotel?” Shane asked. Their shoulders brushed as they walked.

“Not far,” Ilya said, leading them back towards where he'd left his car. They rounded the corner and Shane saw the valet standing next to a podium, looking at his phone. Shane started walking towards him, then stopped when he realized Ilya was walking towards the door to the hotel.

“Where are you going?” Shane said, scrambling to fall back into step beside him.

Ilya gestured to the door. “I told you, is not far.”

Shane laughed as Ilya flashed a card and a doorman let them through. “You planned this? Dinner right by your hotel?”

Ilya grinned back at him, showing rows of white teeth. Straight on top, just a bit crooked on bottom. “I make dinner reservation by my hotel because I think restaurant is good.” He looked far too innocent as he said it, before his eyes took on a devilish glint. He leaned in closer as they approached the elevators, dropping his voice. “I invite pretty boy because I want to see him more.”

Shane bit his lip, hiding a smile and being sure to maintain just enough space between them to avoid scrutiny. Another couple walked up while they waited, a man and a woman. She swayed drunkenly, gripping the man's arm for balance and said something to him that Shane couldn't understand. He laughed but his reply was cut off by the chime of the elevator arriving.

Shane felt every inch of space between him and Ilya as they stood in the elevator. He slipped his hands into the jacket pockets for lack of anything better to do with them. They got off the elevator first and Ilya immediately turned to lead him down the hall. Shane took a moment to remember the number as Ilya stopped to unlock it.

1410

Inside was a large suite, ornately decorated with a large bed. Through gauzy curtains, Shane could just make out the lights of the city and a balcony with wrought iron rails.

“Nice room,” Shane said. He looked over and saw Ilya removing his own jacket. He was wearing a tank top underneath, revealing broad shoulders and muscular arms. Shane's lips parted as he let his eyes wander over him, not making any attempt to hide it. They were alone now, and Ilya had just as much heat in his eyes as he walked closer to Shane.

Shane took a step back, and another, until he was pressed back against the wall next to the door. Ilya took another step, so that Shane could smell the same intoxicating blend of tobacco and cologne that clung to his jacket. He had to tilt his head up to meet Ilya's eyes and thrilled as they dipped to look at his lips.

“Is this a bad idea?” Shane asked. He wasn't sure why he was asking. Maybe some kind of reality check. Maybe the craziness of the situation was catching up with him.

“Probably,” Ilya said, with a lopsided grin that made Shane's stomach flip. “I like bad ideas, though. Makes it more fun.” And then his mouth was on Shane's and oh *fuck*.

Shane responded immediately, sliding his hands over Ilya's stomach and around to grope his ass over his jeans while Ilya slid his tongue into his mouth. Ilya was demanding when he kissed, one hand cupping Shane's jaw and turn his face just so. Shane didn't resist, didn't even think of it. He just allowed himself to be pressed back and kissed breathless.

This wasn't the first time Shane had kissed a man. That had been at a drunken post-season party back in Kamloops. It wasn't even the first time he'd had sex with a man. His mind briefly pulled up the hazy memory of sinking to his knees in a bar bathroom on his 21st birthday. He was in San Francisco and the Raiders had just clinched the second round of playoffs in 5 games. He'd been drunk, because Canada didn't care about 21st birthdays but he'd been drafted to an American team so people gave a shit about it. He remembered the smell of his sweat, the salty taste on his tongue. He remembered thinking he kind of looked like Anakin from Star Wars.

He remembered thinking after that it hadn't quite scratched the itch he wanted it to.

Ilya's hands were at work, drawing him back to the present. One hand slid the zipper of his jacket down and the other slid inside to wander over his chest. Ilya gripped his pec appreciatively and Shane felt the bite of his teeth as Ilya grinned into the kiss. It made Shane shiver. He liked what he found.

Almost unbidden, Shane's hands pulled around to start unfastening Ilya's fly. Ilya didn't break the kiss, though he angled his hips back a bit to make space for Shane's hands. Ilya's own hands had slid up under Shane's tshirt now, rucking it up and moving over smooth plains of muscle. Ilya's hands were warm, a bit rough. Everywhere he touched left a ghost of the sensation burning into his skin.

He forced himself to focus enough to undo the zipper on Ilya's jeans, then slid one hand past the waistband of his boxers. He felt the hair there, short and trimmed, then grinned into the kiss as he felt the base of Ilya's cock. He was half hard already, skin warm and velvety. Eyes closed, mouth still being plundered, he imagined it as he slid his hand down over it. He didn't wrap his fingers around it yet, just slid his fingers up and down a few times, touch featherlight. Ilya's breath caught in his throat.

As his hand slid down again, cupping the head, he realized Ilya was uncut. It sent a weird thrill through him. He'd never touched an uncut cock before. He'd seen them in porn, caught glimpses of them in the showers. This was his first touch. He wrapped his fingers around the shaft, stroking slowly as he felt Ilya's cock filling out. Felt the delicious slide of velvety skin. He wanted to taste it. Fuck, he wanted it so bad.

Ilya broke the kiss without warning, but his tongue was quickly replaced in Shane's mouth with two fingers. Shane blinked and sucked around the fingers, which Ilya thrust repeatedly. It was messy and desperate. Ilya's eyes burned as they watched him.

His knees buckled and suddenly he knew he couldn't stay upright any longer. He dropped to his knees so fast that Ilya almost fell over before catching himself on the wall above him. Shane hardly noticed, too focused on his current objective. He tugged Ilya's jeans down by the belt loops, leaving them around his thighs and pulling his underwear down with them.

And then he was face to face with his prize. He was thick, nestled in a trimmed patch of tawny hair. The head was a delicious shiny pink where it peaked out of the foreskin. The shaft had a dark mole on the left side. Shane gave it another stroke, watching the way the foreskin withdrew to expose the head. He felt transfixed, stroking it again before leaning in to press his mouth to the base. It was gentle, open mouthed with the barest trail of his tongue.

He kissed up the length just presses his mouth to his length over and over. Shane took the head into his mouth and suckled, keeping his hand wrapped around the base while he swirled it on his tongue. It tasted salty, a bit bitter and musky.

He flicked his eyes up to Ilya as he took a bit more in his mouth. It was hard to see much with the angle but Ilya's expression looked hungry. His eyes were burning as he watched and his mouth fell open. Shane closed his eyes and took more in his mouth, sucking and pulling back to tongue at the head again. Ilya was the perfect size in his mouth, just this side of too thick. Just enough to make him strain a bit. He lost himself for a moment, bobbing his head. Ilya groaned above him and slid his hand into his hair. Not pushing, not even guiding. It was a grounding presence. Shane was surrounded by him, the feel of him, the smell of him.

All at once, Ilya was hissing, "Wait, stop."

Shane pulled back and blinked up at him. It took him a moment to focus his eyes. He got to his feet, wiping at the spit coating his lips. "Was that...okay?"

Ilya grinned and leaned in to kiss him. "Yes," he said, lips brushing Shane's as he spoke. "But there is more I want to do to you and I won't last with you doing that."

Shane smiled and kissed him again. He let himself be pulled further into the room. They kept kissing as they went, his own hands sliding under Ilya's shirt to feel the smooth plains of muscle. He was solid, muscles thick and toned. Ilya started tugging at his own shirt. Shane hated having to pull back in order to get his shirt over his head, but then he had Ilya's hands sliding over his chest and got to see that hungry look up close as Ilya's eyes trailed over his body.

"Fuck," Ilya hummed.

Shane smirked. It wasn't exactly the first time he'd been told he had a good physique. He worked out enough and after enough underwear commercials, he was pretty used to being ogled. But this was so much headier, seeing Ilya's eyes dart up and down while his hands slid down to undo Shane's fly and free his own erection.

"Excited?" Ilya asked as he palmed Shane through his underwear.

"Fuck off," Shane groaned, leaning in to mouth at Ilya's neck. He'd been hard since the moment he got Ilya's cock in his mouth but he didn't exactly want to admit that just now.

"I think more like fuck *you*," Ilya said.

It took a moment for the words to catch up to Shane and then he pulled back suddenly. Ilya's hand stilled on his cock.

"Um," Shane said. "About that."

Ilya blinked at him, looking confused. "You want to fuck *me*?" He didn't look particularly enthused by the idea.

Shane groaned. "No. I mean, no not like... Fuck. I have morning skate tomorrow." Ilya still looked confused. "And I've never... I mean, not like..." He hated this so fucking much. He let his head fall back so he didn't have to see Ilya's face as he said, "I can't be limping tomorrow, okay?"

Ilya started laughing after a moment. Shane was about to pull away, to glare at him, but then the hand on his dick was moving again and Ilya's mouth was on his neck and he was saying, "So I don't fuck you tonight. More ways to have fun."

Shane smiled as Ilya continued sucking at his neck. "Really?"

Ilya's hand kept stroking him over the fabric of his boxers. He pulled back to grin at Shane, hand still moving. "Mm." He let his eyes trail over him again. "Get undressed."

Shane shuddered and stepped back out of his reach. He didn't know where his shirt had landed but he removed and folded his pants and boxers one by one. Ilya's eyes never left him, trailing over him hungrily.

Shane turned back after setting his clothes in a pile on the chair. He wasn't usually shy about his body but he felt exposed like this, standing in nothing but his socks. He fought the urge to cross his arms over his chest. "Now you."

"Me?" Ilya asked, feigning innocence.

"Take your fucking clothes off, Rozanov."

Ilya laughed and stripped quickly, tossing his clothes aside and laying back on the bed. He was fucking gorgeous, long legs and a broad chest. He was pretty sure figure skaters didn't usually have that kind of chest definition but fuck he was not going to complain. "Come here," Ilya said. He held out one hand, beckoning him.

Shane knelt on the bed and crawled towards him. Ilya was spread out on the bed for him, the hard plains of his body on display. He let himself look, let himself take in every inch of him. The moles on his face extended down much further, scattered across his chest beneath the fine layer of body hair. There was one right at the crest of his hip that drew his attention and Shane couldn't resist dipping down to kiss it. Ilya's cock was still hard, still inches away from his mouth, but Shane ignored it. He moved up higher, kissing the side of his stomach, then his pec, then he was laying on top of him while he kissed Ilya hungrily.

Ilya let him do as he pleased until their lips met. As soon as Shane's mouth was on his, Ilya's tongue was sliding into his mouth and his hands were moving everywhere. Up his back, down over his ass, gripping his hips and guiding him so that he was straddling Ilya now.

"Fuck," Shane groaned when the adjustment made their cocks grind together.

Ilya didn't say anything, just hummed against his mouth while kneading Shane's ass. They continued like that for what felt like an eternity, kissing and grinding and letting hands explore as they liked.

Eventually, Shane couldn't stand it anymore. He gave no warning before darting down and taking Ilya into his mouth again. Ilya swore in Russian, hand flying down to cradle the back of Shane's head. Shane liked that, liked the weight of him on his tongue with the large hand carding through the short hair at the nape of his neck. His eyes fell closed as he hollowed his lips and sucked him. It was like he was in his own world here, just him there with Ilya dominating all of his senses. The murmured words above him became more frantic, slurred English and Russian mingling together. He chased that. He could tell he was falling apart above him. His own hips ground into the bedsheets.

Ilya's hand fisted in his hair and pulled him off. Shane made an indignant sound but was immediately treated to the sight of Ilya fisting his own cock. He made low, desperate sounds as he stroked himself hard and fast. He came moments later, angling his cock away from Shane's face just a moment too late. Most of it went onto his own stomach but the first bit caught Shane in the chin.

"Fuck," Ilya said. His chest was heaving and he sounded breathless. "Fuck, your mouth." He looked down and smiled at him, then noticed the mess on his chin. "Sorry. Did not mean to get you."

Shane felt wild. Every nerve in his body was on fire and Ilya's eyes on him just made him burn hotter. Without thinking about it, he reached up to wipe the come off his chin and licked it off his finger.

Ilya swore again in Russian. Shane didn't know what it meant but he loved the way it rolled off Ilya's tongue. Then Ilya was hauling him up and kissing him, tongue invading his mouth like he wanted to taste himself there. Shane opened up for him easily, like he was made for it. Every inch of contact between them was buzzing, electric. Ilya rolled them over so he was pressing Shane down into the bed then kissed his way down Shane's body. Shane missed the weight of him but couldn't help rolling his body up into the contact with each press of his lips against flushed skin. He forced his eyes to focus, to watch as Ilya took his cock into his mouth.

Ilya's mouth was hot and slick and he started bobbing his head quickly. It was obscene to watch, the way his full lips wrapped around his length. The dark burning hunger in his eyes when they flicked up to meet his own. The way his curls fell into his face, mussed and released from the careful styling Ilya had at the start of the evening. Shane groaned as he reached down, tucking the curls back into place and sliding his fingers into Ilya's hair.

"Fuck, Ilya," he gasped. It was soon, far too soon, but Ilya was sucking him with a desperation. He could feel it coiling in his stomach, pulling tight in his balls. "I'm close, fuck." Ilya kept going, no hesitation as he kept sucking him down. "Fuck. wait, I'm gonna..."

Shane came with a groan deep into the tight heat of Ilya's mouth. Ilya sucked him through it before pulling off with a comical sigh of satisfaction. Shane couldn't help but laugh, feeling light and buzzy while the last waves of his orgasm washed over him.

"Fuck," he finally said, slightly out of breath.

Ilya chuckled and moved back up to lay on his back beside him. “Good?”

Shane nodded. “Better than.” He closed his eyes and took a deep breath, then glanced to the side for the time. Almost 10 o'clock. “Fuck.” The day was catching up to him. The hockey game he'd played earlier that day, the date, the thrill and excitement of finding himself in a hotel room alone with one of the most gorgeous men he'd ever seen.

“Somewhere to be?” Ilya asked beside him. Shane turned his head back as Ilya rolled onto his side and slid his hand up and down Shane's chest.

“It's late,” Shane said. “And you have to drive me back still.” Shane supposed he could get a cab. There were plenty of them around, especially with the Olympics, and the hotel could probably call it for him. Still, part of him wanted that last bit of time with Ilya before returning to real life.

“Why go?” Ilya asked. His voice was low, rough. “Stay here tonight.” He punctuated his words with a kiss to Shane's shoulder, then another, and another moving up his collarbone towards his neck. “I drive you back tomorrow.” His voice was low, rumbling in his ear. And it was so fucking enticing. He felt warm and loose. He could fall asleep right there. But-

“We have...ice time in the morning. At 9.” Any practice time was at a premium here, with so many teams and events vying for time on limited ice.

“Can't you skip?” Ilya asked. He sat up, looking down at him with a pout.

Shane laughed. “I'm the captain. Not a great look.”

Ilya dropped back down to bury his face in Shane's neck and let out a long groan. “Stupid boring good boy Canadian,” he grumbled. He stayed there a moment longer, then pulled back again. “We do this again?”

Shane smiled at him, feeling warm. “You wanna?”

Ilya's hand slid down to rub his hip. “Mm. You held out on me tonight.”

Shane laughed again, slapping at his hand. “I told you, I can't fuck up my skating like that.” Even if it felt like a flimsy fucking excuse just then.

“Fine,” Ilya said. “Like I say before, more ways to have fun.” He punctuated his words with a kiss to Shane's throat. “What if we make a deal?”

“A deal?” Shane asked, stretching his neck to give Ilya better access.

“A deal.” Ilya nipped at his pulse point. “I win gold, I fuck you. *You* win gold, I fuck you.”

“And if neither of us win gold?” Shane asked.

“Then we will both leave here disappointed.” Shane laughed and let Ilya keep kissing his neck. “We shower first then I drive you back?”

He sighed, knowing this night had to end eventually. “Fine.”

Showering was managed with only a small amount of groping from Ilya. Before they left the room, Ilya handed Shane his own phone with a ‘New Contact’ page already open. “Give me your phone number.”

Shane took it. The keyboard had been set to English but the labels in the text boxes were still in Cyrillic. He did his best to navigate it, entering his first name and his number before handing it back.

He was walking back to his room in the Olympic Village before 11. Inside, he found his roommate laying on his own bed holding up an iPad.

“Hey,” Gilbert Comeau said, glancing up as Shane entered. Shane didn't know the guy too well. He was a year older than Shane and captain of the Montreal Metros. The Metros had been struggling for a while now, a series of bad draft picks and failed rebuilds resulting in a team with some individually good players and a whole lot of articles titled “Where the Metros Went Wrong.”

“Hey,” Shane said, nodding to him. He walked to his bags and dug out some sweats and his favorite hoodie to change into.

“Thought you had a Reebok sponsorship “ Comeau said.

“What?” Shane straightened back up and started changing into the pajamas. He glanced over and saw Comeau eying Shane's jacket. Glancing down, he realized he was still wearing Ilya's black Adidas jacket. “Oh. Um. It was a gift from my, uh. Mom.” It sounded weak and awkward but Comeau didn't seem to care enough to dig in further. He just went back to looking at his iPad while Shane settled in for the night.

When Shane plugged his phone in, he noticed a notification. A text from an unknown number.

Unknown: Let's do that again 🐱

Shane smiled to himself, hoping Comeau wouldn't notice as Shane smiled around the hoodie string he was chewing. He saved the contact as just ‘Ilya’ and sent a text back.

Shane: If you're lucky.

Chapter 2

Ilya awoke the next morning to someone pounding on his door and the click of a key card being inserted into the reader.

«Of course, you're still in bed,» Svetlana tutted as she came in. Light flooded the room as she opened the curtains. «How do you make it as an athlete with this schedule?»

Ilya squinted one eye at the clock on the bedside table. It wasn't even 9:30 so he didn't understand why she was getting on his case like this. «Good morning to you, too, Sveta.»

Svetlana leaned against the small table in the corner and crossed her arms, looking at him. Ilya knew exactly what she saw. Hair mussed, sheets thrown around everywhere, the other pillow rumped. «Looks like you had quite the night,» she said.

Ilya's sleepy grimace turned into a satisfied grin. «Maybe,» he said.

She laughed. «Well, you owe me breakfast after blowing me off for dinner last night,» she said. «*And* I'm expecting all the details.»

Ilya forced himself to get out of bed. He was wearing underwear but wouldn't have objected if he was completely nude anyway. She'd seen it all more times than either of them could count. «I never agreed to giving details.»

She shrugged, tapping at her phone now. «Call it interest on the meal you owe me.»

Ilya rolled his eyes and started pulling on clothes while Svetlana decided where they were going for breakfast. She picked a place about twenty minutes away and made Ilya drive. As she was opening the car door, he realized that there was still a cream-colored fleece jacket sitting in the passenger seat. One of the sleeves was sitting on top, proudly emblazoned with a bright red maple leaf. Fuck.

He grabbed it quickly, stuffing it behind the seat just in time for her to get into the car. She gave him a weird look when she noticed him lunging for something but didn't say anything as he started the car and pulled out of the parking garage.

The restaurant they wound up at was a small place with a few breakfast options, far enough from the Village that they saw less traffic from the Olympics and Ilya could hopefully be more anonymous. He kept his hat pulled down low anyway just in case. It was cozy, with worn tables tended by a single waitress and menus sticky and smudged from various spills. Svetlana ordered coffees for both of them, extra cream for Ilya, while he looked through the menu and eyed the *blini*.

«So,» Svetlana said once their coffee had arrived and Ilya had finished fixing it the way he liked.

«So what?» Ilya asked.

«So, she didn't stay over?» she asked.

«Who?» Ilya asked, feigning ignorance. He sipped his coffee.

Svetlana gave him a sour look and pursed her lips. He could read her well enough to know exactly how long to keep up this charade. The answer in this case was 'not much longer.'

«Ilyusha, I've known you since we were both in diapers. I know when you cancel on me for a date.»

He knew she wasn't upset about him changing the plans. He also knew she wouldn't stop pushing until he told her *something*. «I didn't go out with any girl last night.»

«Ilyusha-»

«It was a man.» He dropped his voice ever so slightly and saw the surprise register on her face. She knew he liked men, too. It had never been a secret between them. There had even been one drunken night when she had fallen into bed with both him and Sasha. Still, he was far more likely to take a woman back to his room for the night. Especially at an event like this with so many eyes on him. *Especially* with the law Russia passed the prior year codifying what many already felt. «And he does not want the attention, either.»

She nodded easily, the surprise falling from her face and leaving behind a familiar curiosity. «Okay, I won't ask his name. Or...I suppose he's another athlete?» Ilya wasn't sure how much he should say. Svetlana was highly perceptive and could probably put the pieces together on her own. Hell, she'd rattled off Shane's statistics with ease after she walked up on them a few days prior. Two wrong words and she'd probably guess it was him. He just shrugged at her in response instead of risking it. «Did you like him?»

Ilya bit his lip to hide his smile. «Obviously.»

«And are you seeing him again?» she asked.

«We don't have firm plans,» Ilya said. «But I think so.»

The conversation moved on as they ate their meals, focusing on the upcoming competitions. After, they headed back to Ilya's hotel so he could get changed, then headed over to the Olympic Village. Svetlana didn't have much going on that day. Russia's hockey team had practice so her father was busy but Svetlana wasn't needed. Ilya had a day of press engagements and interviews lined up and she was tagging along to keep him sane.

His first interview was with some American sports outlet. Ilya's English was mostly passable. He understood better than he spoke and he hated how much English-speakers treated his accent like he was a supervillain or something. Either that, or they took his choppy sentences and treated him like an idiot. Still, these sorts of one-on-one interviews were infinitely easier than a press conference, with questions coming in multiple languages from around a large room.

The interviews were being conducted in a press area within the figure skating arena. It was bare-bones, just a hanging backdrop with the Olympic rings splashed across it. A pair of ice

dancers were being interviewed together on the other end, but they were far enough away that Ilya couldn't hear them.

"Ilya, thank you so much for taking the time to talk with us today," the interviewer said. She was American, Erin something. Ilya had seen clips of her interviewing other skaters at past competitions but couldn't remember if he had done any interviews with her himself.

"Is my pleasure," Ilya said, smiling at the camera. He was holding a comically large microphone with the Sochi Olympics logo on the side.

"How have you been settling in?" she asked.

"It has been very exciting," Ilya said. "So much going on all the time. Many people. Lots of events. Hard to know what to pay attention to."

"Now, this isn't your first Olympics, correct?" she asked.

Ilya shook his head. "No, I went to Vancouver in 2010. I was still young, though. I miss the podium."

"And how are you feeling about this time around?"

He smiled. "Well, there are many good skaters here. Competition is fierce. I feel very good about my program, though. I will not make it easy for anyone else." He knew fairly well what all the other skaters had prepared. Most of the skaters were familiar faces from other competitions throughout the year. The full picture of who was bringing what programs wouldn't be known until they actually skated but as far as Ilya knew, his program had the highest technical score. He just had to execute on it and make sure his artistry and execution brought in a high component score.

"I know training schedules are tight," Erin said. "Have you had any chances to catch other events?"

"A couple, yes," Ilya said with a nod. "I see Canada and Austria play hockey yesterday. Was good game for Canada."

"Do you watch a lot of hockey?" she asked.

Ilya shrugged. "Not usually, but I have, um. New interest." He grinned again and winked at the camera.

"Well, we can't wait to see what you can do out there," she said. "We know you'll make your mother proud. Thank you again for being here."

Ilya's smile tightened at the mention of his mother. "Yes, um. Thank you for having me." His face fell once the camera was turned off. He had another interview already getting ready and he tried to focus on that. The next one was supposed to be in Russian, so at least he wouldn't have to focus on translating the whole time.

The next interview went well. It was easier to express himself in Russian and turn on the charm he was known for. They covered the same sorts of topics. How he was enjoying the Village, if he had seen any other events, if he had any encouraging words for young skaters dreaming of one day competing in the Olympics. Then once again, towards the end, the interviewer just had to bring it up. «Of course, we all remember watching your mother skate back in Sarajevo.»

Ilya forced a smile. «Yes, I've seen her routines many times.» His mother had been 18 when she took her first gold medal, 22 when she got her second. He'd lost track of the number of times her record had been brought up in interviews. «She was an amazing skater.»

«We're all sure you'll make her proud,» the interviewer said.

«I'll do my best,» Ilya said.

The next interview was more of the same. A few good questions about himself, his training regimen, his routine, and an inevitable segue into talking about his mother. He loved his mother, of course he did. He missed her every day. He didn't love the way his entire career was compared to hers just for being her son.

He was relieved when the third interview wrapped up and he could walk back to where Svetlana was waiting for him. «How'd it go?» she asked, looking up from her phone.

Ilya rolled his eyes. «Let's find some lunch.»

Morning practice was weird. Shane was still adjusting to the group, and they still hadn't solidified their lines despite already having taken one victory. They were mixing up the combinations all morning, trying to find the perfect lineups to guarantee victory. Shane thought he was best with a forward from the Nomads on his wing but the coaches kept putting him on other lines to try different matchups. It didn't help that one of his skates felt off somehow, the angle cutting oddly when he dug into his edges.

The ice time was too little and far between. Too many teams and not enough ice sheets. It felt like as soon as he started to feel the ice under him, his coach was blowing the whistle and telling them to hit the showers before gathering for a team meeting.

Shane stopped on his way down the tunnel, feeling his skate against the rubberized flooring. His blade still felt odd, like it was loose or misaligned. He'd pushed through it while practicing and it was certainly usable in a pinch but he made a mental note to talk to the equipment manager about it and see if they could get it adjusted.

Shane still felt stiff. He rolled his shoulders as he sat down in his stall, dissatisfied. He hated feeling like this, especially when he had just been on the ice. That usually left him feeling loose and warm. Even the hot shower against his muscles did little to loosen him up.

“Hollzy,” his coach called. “Got a minute?”

“Yeah.” He tugged his shirt down over his chest and headed off to meet with the coaching staff. It was brief, just some notes about the projected lines, but it was long enough that the equipment team had already gathered up his gear by the time he returned, swept away to the storage space so the next team could use the dressing room after them. He didn't have time to talk to them before the meeting started. He made a mental note to flag them down after and show them what was wrong with his right blade.

Shane made his way back to his room after the meeting. He felt weird, tightly strung. The MLH schedule was grueling at times, especially with the game schedule getting condensed to account for the Olympic break, but it meant he was used to strapping on skates most days of the week. Add in a high end home gym making it easy to roll out of bed and immediately get a workout in and it left him feeling entirely out of sorts here. Maybe he would do some yoga later. That should help.

He was meeting Joe for lunch in an hour so he had a bit of time to relax. He did his best to sprawl out on the narrow bed, throwing his elbow into a couple of the lumpy spots for good measure. It didn't help.

Shane let his mind wander, replaying the previous night. He was still having trouble believing any of it happened. His only other experiences with men had been quick and sweaty in bar bathrooms when he was feeling especially desperate. And while his attempts with women had mostly been in beds, they'd also mostly been disasters. But then there was last night with Ilya. It was so different with him. Even if it had been a hotel room hookup, it had felt almost...romantic. Ilya's fingers running through the short hair at the back of his neck while he sucked him, the way he'd kissed Shane after swallowing his own come...

He squirmed, cock stirring with interest at the memories. He glanced at the door, knowing Comeau could be back anytime. Probably not worth the risk to jerk off now. He forced his thoughts into a different direction, but they didn't go far.

Shane opened his phone, flipping back to the text thread with Ilya. The man hadn't responded since Shane texted him last night. His fingers hovered over the keyboard, trying to decide if he should send something. Would it be too soon? He knew he heard his teammates talk about waiting to text after a hookup. Was it three days? Or was that just waiting after he got someone's number? And he was sure they said something about texting twice in a row. They all talked like there were some unwritten rules about these things. Shane had never been great with unwritten rules, especially around dating. And hell, did this even count as dating? It was one date and some good sex - great sex - and Ilya had said he wanted to do it again. Shane ran his hand over his face and tried not to spiral.

His mind wandered back to watching Ilya skate. He knew it was just a training routine. Even to Shane's untrained eyes, it seemed like Ilya was taking it easy. His jumps looked clean but most of the other skaters seemed to jump higher and spin faster. All except that last jump which had made everyone gasp, including Shane.

Unable to resist, Shane pulled out his laptop and pulled up YouTube. He hesitated for just a moment before typing ‘Ilya Rozanov’ into the search bar. Immediately, dozens of results popped up. There were a couple interviews and some compilation videos. Shane selected one

from a few months before which claimed to be his full short program from the Grand Prix, whatever that was. It sounded official enough.

Shane watched as Ilya skated to the center of the rink. His costume consisted of black pants and a tight fitting shirt that slowly turned icy blue as it moved up to his shoulders. He glittered under the bright arena lights. His hair was carefully styled, pushed back from his face. Two commentators, a man and a woman, spoke over the footage as Ilya came to a stop in the center. Shane noticed the yellow laces standing out brightly against his black skates, same as in the picture he'd seen before.

"Next up is Ilya Rozanov from Russia," the woman said. "Rozanov, of course, coming off back to back Worlds gold."

"An incredible skater to watch," the man said.

Ilya settled into a practiced pose, one leg crossed in front of the other. His arms were down in front of him with his fingers touching, palms up, head bowed. It was graceful, making his broad body look long and lithe. He stayed like that for another long moment. There was no sound. Shane almost held his breath.

The music began and so did Ilya. It was a flowing piano piece and Ilya's skating mirrored it. He was elegant, beautiful. He shifted his weight between skates with ease. He made wide loops across the ice, easy in the way he worked his edges.

"Here comes the first jump, planned to be a triple Axel," the woman said. No sooner had she spoken than Ilya was launching himself into the air, arms raised above his head. It was too fast for Shane to track the rotations but it looked beautiful. "Absolutely perfect Axel with Rippon arms variation."

A graphic in the corner popped up with numbers and abbreviations. The numbers were in green and slowly raised as Ilya continued skating.

"Next element is the combination," the man said. "Planned quad Lutz and double toe loop." Ilya was skating backwards, building up speed while somehow still managing to look sleek and graceful. The combination turned out to be two jumps performed in rapid succession. Ilya had barely brought his second skate down to the ice before he took off again.

"Beautiful combination," the woman said.

"You know," the man said as Ilya began a complicated sequence of footwork, "it's moments like this that I can't help but remember watching his mother skate."

Shane's ears perked up at that. Ilya's mother was a skater? He supposed that wasn't too surprising. Some sports tended to be passed down in families. His own father played hockey when he was younger. He never made it past college level but Shane grew up seeing his own medals and trophies filling in shelves beside his father's.

"Absolutely agree," the woman said. "He skates just like her, too. He has so much of the same grace and lyricism Irina brought to the sport."

“Her legacy is certainly safe in his skates,” the man said.

Shane's brow furrowed as he kept watching. Ilya was still skating, completing jumps and spins along with the music but it was like the commentators had forgotten to narrate it. A score was displayed in the corner and it seemed to be going up but Shane didn't know what any of the abbreviations meant.

Shane hated when commentators did this. He'd been watching a hockey game a few weeks prior when the broadcasters suddenly started talking about how two players for the Nomads had lost brothers the previous year. They'd gone on and on about it, speculating about how the two players must have supported each other through their losses. Shane had just gotten more and more frustrated. It had boiled over when they failed to explain a whistle, “Can you talk about the fucking hockey?” spilling out of him at a yell.

“Camel spin,” the man said as Ilya began rotating in place with one leg out parallel behind him. Shane relaxed, hoping they would actually get back to explaining the routine now.

His hopes were quickly dashed when the woman began talking again. “Rozanov has already been named to the Russian Olympic team for Sochi this February. No doubt, he's hoping to continue his mother's legacy with a gold medal of his own.” Ilya completed another jump as they spoke. The graphic in the corner flashed 4S and a score in green. Neither of them commented on the jump.

The performance came to an end with Ilya back at center ice, arms raised and chest heaving. The video cut off as he was bowing to each side of the arena.

Shane felt restless after the video ended. His leg was bouncing and his fingers tapped over the keyboard without typing anything. Finally making a decision, Shane entered ‘Irina Rozanov’ into the search bar. Nothing especially relevant popped up. A few social media profiles, some random news articles that had nothing to do with figure skating at all. He tried a couple different spellings of Irina, but ‘Irena Rozanov’ was similarly fruitless. He even tried changing the spelling of the last name, remembering when his juniors team got an import from Russia who told him women's last names were spelled differently. ‘Irina Rozanova’ still turned up no relevant results.

Giving up on that train, Shane typed ‘Ilya Rozanov’ into the search bar. The results appeared immediately. Videos, news articles about the Olympics, and right at the top: a Wikipedia article. Shane clicked it immediately.

A wall of text appeared, with a photo of Ilya skating on the right side of the screen above a block of basic biographical info. It listed his birth place (Moscow), his birthday (about a month after Shane's), and then his parents. His father wasn't named but there she was, Irina Rozanova listed with a blue underline. Shane clicked the link and immediately learned several things in quick succession.

First, he couldn't find her before because she competed under her maiden name. When the page loaded, the name at the top was Irina Belova.

Second, he learned that Ilya looked like his mother. Like, extremely like his mother. The photo on the side of the page showed her standing atop a podium in a yellow dress, bouquet in her arms and gold medal around her neck. The caption identified it as the Sarajevo Olympics, 1984. Quick math told Shane that she must have been 18 years old. She had the same sharp nose and pronounced cupid's bow as her son. She had a mole just above her eyebrow and another below her lip. She even had the same curly hair, riding the golden line between blonde and brown.

Third, he learned that she was dead. The article listed her death date simply as 2003 and when he scrolled down to find more information, all it said was that her death was ruled accidental. Whatever that meant.

He was startled by his phone chirping with a reminder that he was meeting Joe for lunch. "Fuck." He threw on a Team Canada hoodie and ran out the door, mind still reeling.

He met Joe in one of the cafes set up throughout the Village. The offerings weren't nearly as broad as they served in the cafeteria, where it was buffet style and designed to appeal to the tastes of athletes from all over the world. Here, there were just a few sandwich options. Shane got a chicken wrap and a serving of chicken salad, then added a bottle of sparkling water on the side. It was nice here, far less hectic than the cafeteria with the sea of tables and nonstop babbling of hundreds of people.

"Congrats on the win yesterday, by the way," Joe said around a bite of his own sandwich.

"Thanks," Shane said. "Did you watch?"

Joe shook his head. "Nah. I saw your goals in the highlight reel, though." Shane smiled and nodded at him, but it felt forced. He knew Joe wasn't into hockey, hadn't been since they were kids and he stopped showing up to practice. Still, it would have been nice to have a friend there watching.

Ilya watched. The thought drifted through his mind unbidden.

"You go out to celebrate with your team?" Joe asked, unaware of the confusing swirl of thoughts in Shane's head.

"What? Oh, no." He paused. "Um, I mean I didn't go out with my team."

Joe looked at him, eyebrows raised. "Oh?"

Shane shook his head. "Just...got dinner with a friend."

Joe frowned, then smiled at him. "Boring. You should call me next time. We can go have a good time." There it was again, the weird disconnect with Joe's response. There was nothing Shane could say was wrong with it but something about it felt...bad. He didn't know what Joe wanted from him but he felt like he wasn't living up.

Shane shrugged. "Maybe. I don't party much."

“We can fix that,” Joe said, leaning towards him. “One of the Austrian skaters told me about this club-”

“Hollander,” he heard someone say behind him. The voice was familiar, deep and accented.

Shane turned in his seat to find Ilya standing there. He had to crane his neck to meet the man's eyes and he was immediately certain he was blushing. “Ily- Rozanov,” Shane said, catching himself partway. It felt weird somehow to call Ilya by his first name in front of others. Like it was private information. “What the fuck are you doing here?” He meant for it to come out like a chirp but he immediately thought it sounded harsher than intended.

Ilya put his hand over his heart as if wounded. “You hear that, Sveta? First he doesn't want me to smoke in the Village and now he doesn't even want me to eat.”

Shane opened his mouth to reply when Joe beat him to it. “You're not supposed to smoke in the Village.” They all turned to look at him. “There's signs everywhere.” He pointed out the window where one of the signs was visible next to the sidewalk.

Shane turned back to Ilya just in time to see him purse his lips. “Sveta, have you met Shane?” His eyes were locked on Joe as he said it.

“You know I haven't,” she said. Shane was surprised to find she had very little accent. Maybe the barest hint of one on some of her vowels but not nearly as strong as Ilya's. She held out a hand to Shane as she said, “Svetlana Vetrova.”

Shane smiled politely as he shook her hand. “Shane Hollander.”

She grinned at him. “Oh, I know who you are. Let's go, Raiders!” She gave a small fist pump as she said it.

“Vetrova,” Shane said. “Vetter's daughter?” He already knew the answer, but it was an easy segue in the conversation.

She nodded. “The one and only.”

“She has season tickets in Boston,” Ilya said. Svetlana immediately elbowed him, saying something in Russian that sounded like a scold. Ilya just grinned. “Well, Hollander, we'll leave you. If it is okay with you I get lunch?”

Shane smiled and rolled his eyes. “Fine by me.” He gestured towards the counter. Ilya and Svetlana moved aside to go order food and Shane turned back to Joe. The man had an unexpectedly sour look on his face. “What?” Shane asked.

“That was weird,” Joe said.

Shane replayed the interaction, stomach churning. “What do you mean?”

“Rozanov is usually a dick,” Joe said. “Since when are you buddies?”

Shane shrugged, trying to seem casual as he focused on his sandwich. “We're not. I mean, he came to the game yesterday with Svetlana. I guess she's from Boston.”

“She's pretty,” Joe said. “Svetlana.” There was something in the way he said her name that put Shane's guard up. He hit each syllable hard when Ilya's accent usually rolled over it easily.

“I guess,” he said.

Joe gave him a searching look. “You're not interested?”

“I just met her,” Shane said. Sure, she was attractive. Tall, pretty, deeply into hockey. Whatever the hell he was, he could see that Svetlana was gorgeous.

“Most guys would be jumping all over her as soon as they saw her,” Joe said. It felt like half an accusation coming from him. *I'm not interested in her*, he seemed to be saying. *Why aren't you?*

“And she's probably with Rozanov,” Shane cut back. “Can we drop it?”

“Whatever,” Joe said. He held up his hands in defeat. “I have tickets to curling later, you want to come?”

Shane found himself shaking his head without even considering his schedule. “No, thanks. I'm, uh. Gonna try and hit the gym.” He was finished with his food and started clearing his trash. “We play Norway tomorrow and I feel way too fucking stiff. Another time?”

Joe nodded, looking disappointed. “Sure. And don't forget, I'm skating day after tomorrow.”

“Wouldn't miss it,” Shane said, then left.

He spent the next several hours at one of the smaller gyms available to athletes, trying to figure out why he felt so frustrated and trying to take out that feeling on a stationary bike. He ended his workout with stretching and yoga, focusing on the tension in his shoulders. It helped a little.

After showering and grabbing a late dinner, Shane headed back towards the dormitory. He was halfway there when his phone buzzed.

Gilbert Comeau: need the room for a bit

Shane rolled his eyes and groaned. Fucking of course. He knew a lot of athletes hooked up at the Olympics. Hell, hadn't he done the same? But come on, in a shared fucking room?

He found himself sitting on a bench as the evening closed in around him. His leg bounced as he tried to decide what to do. He didn't want to keep sitting out in the cold. Calling Joe felt weird somehow, especially after turning him down for curling earlier that day. There were a couple guys on Team USA he was buddies with from All-Star games but that didn't seem like the right move, either.

When the idea finally hit him, he didn't let himself think too hard about it. He pulled up his text thread with Ilya and sent a message.

Shane: What are you doing tonight?

Shane insisted on taking a taxi this time, even though Ilya offered to pick him up. A bright yellow Porsche wasn't exactly subtle and he didn't want to deal with questions if anyone happened to spot him.

He told Ilya it was just because he didn't want him to go through the hassle.

Ilya: See you soon.

Ilya was surprised to get the text from Shane so soon after their first...date? Something about that label felt weird to him. It had certainly been a date, but *first* date implied *dating* and Ilya couldn't remember the last time he'd done more than hook up with the same person a few times when he was in town. Still, Shane seemed a bit desperate and annoyed and Ilya kind of wanted to see what that looked like in person. He tidied the room quickly, kicking a few articles of dirty laundry into the closet. On a whim, he turned on the tv to a replay of the cross-country skiing event from earlier that day, volume turned down low.

The knock at his door was tentative. Ilya took his time crossing the room to open the door. Shane was standing on the other side, in a red hoodie with a much more modestly sized maple leaf over the left breast instead of the massive one on the jacket that still sat in Ilya's car.

Shane seemed a lot more hesitant tonight. His shoulders were tight and his posture was coiled. Ilya didn't like it. "Thank you for letting me come," Shane said. "I mean- You know."

Ilya chuckled, walking closer to him. "Not often someone says *thank you* after," he teased.

A smile spread across Shane's face and he shook his head. "Fuck off."

"You don't have anything else to say?" Ilya asked. He didn't give him a chance to answer before he kissed him.

Shane responded instantly, hands sliding up into Ilya's hair. It was hungry, desperate. He sucked Ilya's tongue like he wanted something more substantive. Ilya walked them back towards the wall, pinning him there. He had a sense of déjà vu, Shane Hollander once again pressed against the same wall, rolling his hips against his swelling cock.

He broke the kiss, breathing hard. "What do you want, hmm?" He brought his hand up to brush Shane's lip with his knuckle. "Do you want to suck my cock again?"

Shane's eyes were blown wide and he gave a jerky nod, like he couldn't help but to say so. Ilya grinned. "Maybe I let you. Maybe I have other plans." He kissed him again, then pulled away entirely, walking further into the room. "Get undressed."

Ilya loved how easily Shane obeyed. He tugged the hoodie over his head immediately. Ilya eyed him appreciatively as it pulled his tshirt up with it, riding high over his abs. He'd gotten more than an eyeful of Shane's body the night before but he found he just wanted more. Shane set the hoodie aside carefully, adding his shirt on top of it and then he started removing his sweatpants. Ilya was stripping, too, tossing his clothes aside in a much more haphazard manner. He didn't want to take his time. He wanted to touch him.

He kissed Shane again as they fell back on the bed. Shane was so responsive to his touch, arching up into his hands as they swept down over his obliques to grip his hips. Shane was so *solid*, muscles thick in the way that only came from years as an elite athlete. His hands were massive where they roamed over Ilya's chest and tangled into his hair.

Ilya broke the kiss only to start kissing down Shane's body. He nipped at a freckle on his neck, sucked at a mole on his shoulder, then pressed open-mouthed kisses down his sternum. Shane seemed to be chasing every point of contact, every press of heated flesh. Ilya almost felt bad to have to pull away. Almost.

"Stay here," Ilya said. He sat up and leaned over to the nightstand, pulling out a bottle of lube.

Shane sat up on his elbows when he saw what Ilya was holding. His eyes were wide, fixed on the bottle. "Ilya, we can't-"

"I don't fuck you tonight," he said, then grinned. "But maybe we still have some fun?" He couldn't help the way he let his eyes roam over Shane's chest, the position accentuating his pecs and shoulders. Two strips of athletic tape curled across his shoulder.

Shane looked uncertain and Ilya lowered himself down over him again. Shane shifted, spreading his legs around Ilya and pressing up against him. Ilya rubbed his flank, dipping back to dig his hand into his ass. "Have you ever?"

Shane bit his lip and looked to the side. When he turned back, his eyes were focused on Ilya's shoulder. "Does silicone count?" Ilya's brows knit together, trying to make sense of the response. Shane seemed to notice his uncertainty because he groaned and said, "I have a-a toy back home. But no, no one has fucked me there."

Ilya wanted to lean into his throat and bite down. He wanted to bite and suck and leave marks over every inch of him. He wanted to sink so deep inside him that Shane would be thinking of him for years. He took a breath, trying to quell the hottest of the flames licking under his skin. "I want to make you feel good," he said when he could trust his voice to come out even. He leaned down and placed his lips next to his ear. "I want to suck your cock and feel you come on my fingers."

When Ilya pulled back, Shane looked torn. He turned his head to the side and bit his lip, then grabbed Ilya's hand. He held it up where he could see it and Ilya helpfully put up two fingers, pressed together. He bent them a few times and grinned when Shane rolled his eyes.

Ilya pressed his mouth to Shane's throat. Shane hummed, the sound vibrating against Ilya's lips. Ilya let his teeth graze his skin. He was careful not to leave marks but he loved the way

it made Shane shudder. "Okay, but just...just two."

Ilya gave him one more kiss on his mouth and then slid down his body. "We go slow. Tell me if is too much."

Shane was already hard, the head of his cock pink and flushed. He loved Shane's size, thick and curving just a bit to the left. A thick vein wound its way up the side. Ilya wanted to run his tongue down it, tracing its path from tip to where it disappeared in a nearly trimmed thatch of hair.

He took Shane into his mouth, sucking lightly and keeping the pace slow as he bobbed up and down. He would take his time tonight. Neither of them had anywhere to be. Shane's game the next day wasn't even until later in the afternoon. He didn't want to rush this, just wanted him to relax into it.

Ilya kept sucking him, hand snaking up to squeeze his pec. Shane's breathing was ragged. He grabbed Ilya's hand over his pec and squeezed it back. "Fuck."

Ilya pulled off and stroked him slowly while looking up at him. Shane was flushed and breathing hard above him and Ilya couldn't help but grin. He poured some lube on his fingers and spread it between them. "Tell me if is too much, yes?"

Shane nodded, eyes fixated on Ilya's hand. Ilya flexed the two fingers and then took Shane back in his mouth. He returned to the same slow pace as before. He stayed there for now, working him up and down on his tongue. He let Shane relax into it, soft sounds falling from his lips. He brought his fingers up to circle Shane's hole. He kept the touch light, not pushing in yet. He didn't want to rush this.

Ilya pulled off his cock and replaced his mouth with his hand, continuing to stroke him. He wanted to see what he was doing. Shane scrunched up his face and covered his eyes with his arm. Ilya continued teasing his hole, pressing a bit harder with his middle finger and threatening to press inside.

"Fuck," Shane groaned.

"Good?" Ilya asked. He slid the tip of his finger inside and withdrew it. "Tell me."

Shane took a shaky break. "Yes. Good."

He pulled his hand off Shane's cock and reached up to him. "Don't hide. Give me your hand."

Shane uncovered his face and reached out towards him. Ilya took the hand and slid it into his own hair. Shane seemed to get the message, tangling his fingers into his curls but stopping short of pulling. Ilya sank back down around him and slowly pressed one finger into Shane's hole. It slid in with some resistance, muscles clenching lightly around it. Ilya kept his mouth moving over him and started thrusting his finger in and out with the same slow, languorous rhythm. Shane's breathing was becoming more labored above him.

He waited until Shane felt loose and relaxed around him before pressing the second one in. It went in easier than the first, the ring of muscle welcoming in the intrusion. Shane was leaking precum into Ilya's mouth, hips canting upwards ever so slightly. Ilya kept going, chasing every gasp and moan Shane made.

“More,” Shane whined. “Fuck.”

Ilya closed his eyes, faltering in his rhythm. He wrapped his hand around Shane's cock again as he pulled off, licking the head to gather more of the pre gathering there. “You want another?”

Shane nodded. His face was flushed, eyes blown wide. He looked completely drunk with lust. It was a very good look on him.

“Not tonight,” Ilya said. He pressed a kiss to his shaft, right over the vein. “You have a game tomorrow.” He didn't give Shane a chance to respond, just swallowed him down again and continued bobbing his head. He thrust his fingers deeper, searching with each plunge. He could tell the instant he found Shane's prostate, the man arching up and nearly choking Ilya on his cock.

“Fuck!” Shane gasped. Ilya pulled off, coughing and trying to regain some composure. “Fuck, sorry. Shit.”

Ilya cleared his throat again and shook his head, grinning. “That good?” He wrapped his hand around Shane's cock, stroking slower. His own hips were grinding into the mattress, chasing the friction against his own leaking cock. Shane was intoxicating, the closed-off facade falling away to reveal someone who was so open with his pleasure.

“Shit,” Shane groaned, dropping his head back into the pillow. Ilya kept stroking him with one hand, thrusting his fingers with the other. Shane was able to contain himself to small, aborted thrusts of his hips when Ilya found it again. Ilya zeroed in, focusing only on overwhelming Shane with pleasure.

Ilya kept thrusting his fingers and stroking him until Shane came with a gasp, spilling across his abs as his stomach twitched. He moaned through it, face contorting as the waves of pleasure washed through him.

Ilya crawled up to straddle him, hand fisting around his own dick and stroking himself quickly. He didn't focus on putting on a show, just fucked into his hand until he moaned, his own come mixing with Shane's on his chest.

Ilya stretched out beside Shane as he came down from his orgasm. He felt light and loose and couldn't help the way a satisfied smile crept across his face. He looked sideways at Shane.

“I'm a fucking mess,” Shane grumbled. He lifted his head to look down at himself and made a face.

Ilya craned his own neck and hummed. “You look pretty like this.”

“Fuck off,” Shane said. There was no heat behind the words. He was completely relaxed against the plush bedding. “Can you get a washcloth or something?”

Ilya hummed again and gave him a quick peck on the lips, then rolled out of bed to walk to the bathroom. He could feel Shane's eyes on his ass as he went. He let him watch.

Shane left not long after, saying he would kick his roommate's date out if he had to. Ilya gave a half-hearted effort to get him to stay over, but he could tell it would be futile. Shane wouldn't want the questions about where he stayed that night. Ilya called down to the front desk to arrange the cab for him and kissed him a final time at the door to the hotel room.

Ilya was busy the next day while Shane was playing against Norway. He had training time scheduled in a private rink. He was more disappointed to miss it than he thought he would be. Svetlana said it was supposed to be a good game, that Norway was a much better team than Austria had been. Ilya contented himself with checking scores during his rest breaks. Evgenia snapped at him more than once to focus and put his phone down.

The game went to Canada, 3-1. Shane got 2 assists. Ilya texted him while watching the highlight reel.

Ilya: Good game

Shane: Thanks :)

Ilya: Don't forget our deal... 

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

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

Shane was sitting at a table with a cup of fat free mango frozen yogurt and his headphones in, watching a recap of some of the events he'd missed from the Games so far. Canada was doing well and one of their alpine skiers had outperformed expectations and won gold that morning. She was giving an interview, gold medal hanging proudly around her neck.

A pair of large hands grabbed his shoulders and shook him. "Hollander! What's up, motherfucker?"

Shane tugged one earbud out and stood up, grinning when he saw Scott Hunter and Carter Vaughn standing there. They were buddies of Shane's, running into each other at the MLH Awards every summer and playing together at All Stars for a couple years in a row. He'd been happy to see them both selected for the American Olympic team, even if he knew they were formidable on a line together. "Hey, boys!"

"Holy fuck, can you believe Russia?" Vaughny asked. Russia had lost to Latvia the previous day. It was a blowout, 8-1.

"Be nice, Vaughny," Scott said. He wasn't that much older than Shane or Vaughny but he'd perfected the fatherly warning tone. Shane wondered how often he had to bust it out with the Admirals rookies.

"Be nice?" Vaughny asked. "They lost to fucking Latvia. Did you see that game?"

"Yeah, it was a straight up shit show," Shane said with a chuckle and a grimace. He watched some clips that morning. Russia's defense had completely collapsed and at one point it looked like their top line wingers were about to swing on each other. It was embarrassing. They weren't eliminated yet but competition was fierce and if it came down to a tie for a playoff berth, no one wanted to be carrying that point differential.

"A debacle," Scott agreed.

"Guess that means Canada has this in the bag," Shane said.

Vaughny was already shaking his head. "Uh-uh. It's USA this year, baby. We're fucking coming for you!" Team USA hadn't won Olympic gold since the 1980's but their team this year was tough. They wouldn't make it easy.

"You look great in silver, Vaughny," Shane said. "Don't even stress."

"Uh-huh, good one," Vaughny said. He elbowed Scott. "Come on, Cap. Froyo time!" He somehow dragged the word "time" out to have two syllables as he and Scott made their way to the dispensers.

They settled in together after they returned, chatting a bit but mostly just sitting on their phones in a group. “Does your room have that smell?” Shane asked. He'd noticed a damp smell as soon as he entered the athlete dormitory.

Scott was nodding before he even finished the question. “Yes, yes it does.”

“Is it black mold?” Shane asked. “‘Cause that's what JJ thinks it is.” JJ was a d-man from Montreal, one of the few members of the Canadian team with true French fluency. They got on well enough and he was probably the closest Shane had to a friend on the team.

“He's probably right,” Scott said. “The good news is, we're not gonna be here long enough to-”

“Alright so tonight, we can do men's short form figure skating?” Vaughny asked, not even noticing he'd cut Scott off.

Shane perked up. “Yeah, my buddy is in that. We trained together.” He'd told Joe he would try to make it. “Would you guys be cool to do that? I'd love to show up for him.” Hockey players weren't exactly known for embracing the more artistic side of skating.

“Hell yeah, man!” Vaughny said with an emphatic nod. “I'll show up for any dude who's that brave.”

Shane had a mouth full of yogurt when he asked, “What do you mean?” He felt like he was wading into dangerous territory.

Vaughny leaned in and dropped his voice. “Well, I'm assuming your buddy might be gay?” Shane shifted in his chair and made a noncommittal noise. “Fucking brave for a dude to show up to a place like this and be like, ‘Hey, here's me!’ Russia is not safe for folks like that.” He was shaking his head as he said it. “Fucking balls of steel, man.”

Shane kept his eyes on his yogurt cup, mostly empty now. His stomach was churning as Vaughny's words rolled around in his mind. He'd known Joe was gay since they were kids and he'd never made a move to hide it. Was he scared to be here? He hadn't said anything about it but maybe he was putting on a brave face.

And then his thoughts drifted to Ilya. Joe was just here temporarily, but Ilya lived here. Ilya wore the Russian flag on his chest and had his face splashed across every Olympics ad in the country. Was Ilya scared?

Should *Shane* be scared? He wasn't sure... what he was. Gay or whatever. He'd been with women and it was fine, mostly. He hadn't exactly come here planning to make a Grindr account. But he'd also hooked up with a man twice since he landed. And he was pretty sure he was gonna do it again.

Fuck.

He struggled to focus back in on Scott and Vaughny as they talked about plans for the evening but his mind was across town in a hotel room.

The figure skating arena was full when they got to their seats. They were good ones, Shane thought. High enough to have a clear view of the ice but not so high that they couldn't make out details. They were seated opposite the judge's table, just to the right of center.

The skaters were split into groups with breaks for the zamboni to clear the ice and some brief warmups in between. Shane wasn't sure exactly how the groups were determined but figured it must be seeded based on skill because all the names he'd heard mentioned for gold medal contention were in the final group. Joe was first to go in the group. Ilya was last.

"Which one is your buddy?" Vaughny asked. He had a program in his hands and was looking it over.

"Joe Pedretti," Shane said.

Vaughny nodded. "Oh yeah, I think I saw that presser you did with him." Shane had hated doing that presser. It was actually his first time seeing Joe in person since he left for juniors and suddenly he was being asked what it was like growing up with him and now competing for Canada together. Scheduling it meant he'd been held back in Ottawa an extra day after playing against the Centaurs but then a snow storm meant he almost didn't make it to Miami for the game against the Cougars. At least he got to spend some extra time with his parents. That was nice.

"You grew up together, right?" Scott asked.

"Hmm," Shane said, not really wanting to get too far into it. It had felt weird with Joe recently and he didn't exactly know why. He was chalking it up to nerves and the weirdness of reconnecting with an old friend in such a far flung place but there was part of him that still wasn't sure what to make of it. As he watched, the zamboni rolled off the ice and down the tunnel. The entire arena was buzzing with anticipation of the upcoming skaters.

Joe was announced first for the warmups, with applause throughout the arena. Shane could see a block of red hoodies down closer to the rink which he was pretty sure were the rest of Team Canada's figure skaters. He saw hand-written signs mixed in with the crowd, too. Shane smiled and cheered, glad to see his friend had support this far from home. His costume wasn't nearly as flashy as some other ones Shane had seen, a silky navy blue shirt with a waistcoat and fitted pants.

Two more skaters were announced as they emerged from the tunnel. The first was American, tall with dark hair and a clean shaven face. His costume was flashier, silver and almost looking like a suit of armor from where Shane was sitting. He had a similar level of applause, though the block of star-spangled jackets one section over from Shane were especially loud in cheering for him. The next was a skater from Japan who received the same treatment of waved flags and lifted signs. His costume was more similar to Joe's, a deep red blouse and pants. It could have passed for street clothes, though Shane was certain he'd never be caught on the street dressed like that.

An air of anticipation fell over the arena as the final skater was about to be announced. It buzzed through the crowd, electric and thrumming. The announcer spoke first in Russian, then a voice repeated in English.

“Our final skater, representing Russia, Ilya Rozanov!”

The entire arena erupted. Everywhere he looked, Shane saw flags and signs and people on their feet. Shane wanted to join them, but Scott and Vaughny only clapped politely beside him. His stomach felt like lead as he stayed in his seat and moderated his own applause. He was here to see Joe, he reminded himself. He'd promised.

“Popular guy,” Scott hummed when the applause died down.

“Home ice advantage,” Vaughny said with a confident nod.

The four skaters set to their warmup routines. Each skated around, languid and graceful. A jump here, a spin there. Joe seemed to be keeping to his own section of ice and hardly even glanced at the other skaters. He was focused, blocking out all the noise and the competition. Ilya was watching all the others as he practiced some complex footwork. His eyes tracked the other skaters as they crossed his path, then scanned the crowd. Shane could see the line his skates carved into the ice, smooth and flowing as he looped around. Ilya was amazing to watch. Shane was mesmerized.

Shane couldn't have said how long the warmups were. His eyes were glued to Ilya the whole time. He'd seen figure skaters before, of course. On tv, around the rink as he grew up, at some ice show his mom dragged him to as a child. He'd attended the training event a few days prior. This was the first time Shane had ever really *watched*.

At the end of the warmup, the other skaters were called off the ice. Joe remained behind, skating around and scanning the surface. He bent down to inspect something, then made his way to the center of the Olympic rings logo in the middle of the rink.

“Is this for the medal?” Vaughny asked. He had his phone out, clearly less enthralled with the warmups than Shane. “Like are they awarding it today?”

Scott was already shaking his head. “No. Team event, I think.”

“Yeah,” Shane said. “Medal gets awarded tomorrow. I think.” He added the last part a beat too late, feeling self-conscious now about how much he'd looked into it.

Scott was right that it was the team event. It was a new addition for these Olympics, a combination of all the other events. Skaters earned points for their country based on their ranking in each event and the medals were awarded to the countries with the most points at the end. Ilya would have multiple performances to earn points, with the short program today and the free skate tomorrow.

Joe has two chances, too, he reminded himself. *I'm here for Joe.*

Glancing to the side, neither man seemed to notice Shane's nerves. Vaughny was scrolling on Instagram and Scott seemed to be reading a text message.

Shane pulled out his own phone and opened his texts with Ilya. His fingers hovered over the keyboard. He wanted to say...something. What was he supposed to say before an event like

this? He knew you weren't supposed to say good luck before someone went on stage for a play but was it the same for figure skaters? Or Russians?

Another wave of something akin to guilt washed over him. He backed out of the thread with Ilya and scrolled down to find Joe's contact. Unsure what else to do, he sent a thumbs up and locked his phone. That was good enough, right?

Instrumental music played over the speakers and Joe began to skate. He was controlled and graceful as he moved, mirroring the music. Shane still didn't know enough to recognize specific elements but he seemed to be skating well. He landed his first jump easily and Shane caught sight of the grin on his face after.

"Fuck yeah," Vaughny said beside him. Shane wasn't sure he'd ever heard Vaughny say anything without swearing.

Joe's next jump was a combination. The first jump was high and tight, landed easily, but Joe tripped on the landing of the second. He kept his skates underneath him but Shane could see the hiccup in the smooth line, the extra step that had people around him murmuring, the frustrated set of Joe's brow as he tried to get back into the flow.

The rest of the routine passed without any issues that Shane could see. Joe came to a stop back at center ice and the arena erupted in applause.

"Man, your buddy fucking killed it!" Vaughny said.

"Fuck yeah, he did!" Shane agreed with a grin.

They all clapped and cheered as Joe bowed once to each side of the rink and then skated towards the gates. He stopped to give one last flourish to the crowd and took the blade guards from his waiting coach.

"When do we find out how he did?" Scott asked.

Shane was about to reply when Vaughny cut in, pointing to where Joe was being led to a small area with a few chairs and low barriers around it. "In a couple minutes," he said. "They make them sit there while they wait. It's called the fucking kiss and cry because I guess those are the only options."

"How the fuck do you know that?" Scott asked with a laugh. Shane was wondering the same thing.

"My sister used to skate," he said, shrugging and slightly defensive. "I went to a few competitions when we were younger. Trying to meet girls," he added, elbowing Shane with a wink.

"And how'd that work out for you?" Scott asked.

Vaughny laughed. "If you'd ever met my sister, you would fucking know that it didn't," he said cryptically. Shane didn't have time to ask further before the announcer was booming

through the speakers again. Joe was introduced again, in English and Russian, and then after a beat of anticipation the score was announced.

“From Canada, Joe Pedretti!” the announcer boomed, waiting a moment for applause. “The final score is 47.04.” More applause from throughout the arena.

Shane didn't know if that was a good score so he looked down at Joe to see how he was reacting. He was hugging another Canadian skater sitting beside him and laughing. It must have been a good, then. Up on the overhead screen, the standings updated. Joe was currently in the lead for the short program event, while Russia was still in the lead for the overall team event.

The next skater was the American. The cheering for him was especially energetic, with Scott and Vaughny letting out a few whoops next to him. When Shane gave them an amused look, Vaughny just shrugged and said, “Team USA, Hollzy!”

He seemed to do well. Once or twice, he heard gasps and groans when seemingly nothing of consequence had happened. He was in second place as he left the kiss and cry but his posture seemed tight. Shane cheered for him and kept an eye on the standings up above. Joe was still in the lead for the event but the USA was creeping up on them for overall points in the team event. It would be tight.

The buzz of anticipation returned after the Japanese skater left the ice. He walked to the kiss and cry with a smile on his face. His score was still yet to be announced but all focus seemed to shift to Ilya even though he wasn't even visible yet.

The Japanese skater did well and let out a triumphant yell after his program ended. Shane glanced up at the standings again once his score was announced. Joe was still in the lead, with less than a point between him and the Japanese skater, and then the American currently sitting in third place.

It was Ilya's turn. He took to the ice with roars of applause and made a lazy loop around the rink, eyes scanning. Once, he slowed and bent down to pick up a chunk of ice left by a prior skater, tossing it over the boards and skating on. He was facing away from the judges as he skated into position in the center. His face lifted and Shane was certain his eyes stayed on Shane for a long moment before Ilya turned and struck a pose. Arms down, head bowed, hands clasped in front of him. The entire arena quieted as they waited for him to begin.

Shane recognized the pose half a second before Ilya began skating. He recognized the music, too. He supposed he shouldn't be too surprised that Ilya was skating the same routine as the video he watched. The upload date had been early December and learning an entire new choreography in the two months since probably wasn't a smart use of training time. It was even the same costume, black turning into glittering blue swirls with gaudy yellow laces on his black skates.

Shane leaned forward in his seat and grinned as Ilya did his first jump. It was gorgeous, skates pulled in tight and arms raised above his head. He landed it like nothing had happened at all, like he hadn't just jumped half a meter in the air.

The routine continued from there. Ilya landed each jump well, though Shane wasn't sure the combination had been the same as he saw in the video. The first jump hadn't seemed as high, the rotations didn't seem as fast.

He came to a stop with the music back at the center of the Olympic logo. His chest was heaving as he turned to each side of the arena and gave a flourished bow. Young skaters were already on the ice, collecting flowers and plushies that were being tossed.

Shane thought Ilya seemed frustrated as he skated towards the gate. Neither he or his coach smiled as she handed him his blade guards and led him to the kiss and cry.

The score was announced soon after. Even from the distance, Shane could tell Ilya wasn't happy with his 46.81. Shane glanced back up at the standings just in time to see them update with the final standings from the event.

1. Joe Pedretti (CAN) 47.04
2. Ilya Rozanov (RUS) 46.81
3. Sumi Kenta (JPN) 46.33

The standings for the individual countries were different. Russia was currently in the lead, ahead of Canada by one point with the USA and Japan tied two points behind. France trailed by even more points, and so on down the rankings.

Joe was celebrating with the figure skaters that night so Shane wound up getting dragged along with Scott and Vaughny to dinner with some of the other Team USA guys. He knew the rest of them about as well as anyone else, mainly from playing against each other and All-Star Games.

It was far from anything fancy, just carving out a table in the cafeteria for the group of them. There were three other players with them, a d-pair from Houston and a goalie from Vancouver.

“Seriously, Vaughny, no way you spent your day watching figure skating,” one of the d-men was saying when Shane got back to the table with his food. Something Wilson. Shane couldn't remember his first name and they were in different conferences so they only played each other twice a year.

“Why would I fucking lie about that, Willy?” Vaughny asked. It was garbled through a mouth full of food.

“The *men's*?” Wilson asked. He sounded like he thought the entire concept was a joke. He turned to Shane as he sat down. “Come on, Hollzy. No way that was your idea to go.”

Shane glanced around the table, then down at his food. “Uh, I mean, I had a buddy competing that I wanted to support.” He stabbed at a few rotinis with his fork. “But it was Vaughny who suggested it, I think.”

Wilson looked back to Vaughny with an incredulous look. “Have you seen what those fuckers can do?” Vaughny asked. “What's your vertical jump like? In *skates*?”

“Drop it, Willy,” Scott said. He pulled out the disapproving dad voice again. “And get more carbs in there, we have a game tomorrow.”

“Against France,” the goalie said, earning snickers from the d-pair. “I think we can take it easy.”

Shane glanced over at Scott, recognizing the same disapproving look he got whenever his team went out drinking on a back-to-back. Scott met Shane's eyes and gave him the barest hint of a scowl and an eye roll. Shane went back to eating his pasta.

Shane didn't text Ilya that night.

It weirdly felt like a decision not to. Nevermind they'd only known each other a few days or that most of their texts were them coordinating meeting up at Ilya's hotel. Ilya had definitely been looking at him during his performance and it felt weird not to acknowledge that. Still, the uneasy feeling from dinner had settled low in his stomach. He opened his text with Ilya several times.

Shane was pulled out of his thoughts when the door to the room flew open. He bit back a remark about how Comeau could be a bit quieter coming in, knowing it wouldn't do much beyond earn him an eyeroll. Shane looked back to his phone, content to ignore his roommate while he changed into a worn Metros shirt with the collar cut out.

“Heard you spent some time with Vaughny and Hunter,” Comeau said, the first to break the silence between them. Shane grunted, still staring at the text. “And you went to watch that buddy of yours skate.”

Shane took a deep breath before turning his head to look at the man. “Yeah?” He kept his voice flat, unfeeling.

“Just seems odd, the three of you,” Comeau said. He shrugged but it had a practiced feel to it. Putting up a front. “You sure you're playing for the right team, Cap?”

Shane didn't know what to say. The knot in his stomach coiled tighter, sitting like a hunk of granite deep in his gut. Everything he thought of saying sounded like a confession. He chose to say nothing and let the comments die in the air between them.

He turned back to his phone just in time to see three typing dots disappear.

Shane didn't attend the Team Free Skate the next day. It just didn't work out in his schedule. He needed to get to the gym and maintain his conditioning and then he had press availability.

He wasn't sure he would have gone if he had been available. His stomach was still churning, replaying the previous day. He probably shouldn't be surprised it was so widely known how he'd spent his day. A place like this, all the cameras in the world pointing at all the top athletes in the world. Hell, the events were televised. For all he knew, they zoomed in on him during one of the breaks.

Not for the first time, he was glad he never got into social media. His accounts were all professional only, run by his mother and his publicist. He was in enough of a fish bowl without also having to put up a front whenever he opened Instagram or whatever.

He spent extra time on yoga in the afternoon, breathing slowly and willing the tension out of his shoulders. Something about this place felt like he was floating in a bubble, so far away from home and all the noise that came with it. It had its own noise, yes, but it felt different. Not quite real. And he didn't want the bubble to burst yet. He wanted to enjoy this without any of the comments from stupid asshole hockey players. He got enough of that back home.

Shane went back to his room after dinner and changed into sweats and his favorite hoodie. He pulled the hood up around him, enjoying the way the well-worn fabric muffled the world.

He needed to check the results from the team event, he reminded himself. The free skate had concluded several hours earlier and was immediately followed by the medal ceremony. He pulled out his laptop and pulled up the standings. Joe had come in first place in the free skate, with Ilya several points behind him in third place. After all the points from the teams were calculated, Canada won gold, Russia took silver. Canada only won by 1 point across all the scores.

Just below the standings were some headlines covering the event. The top one caught his eye. The thumbnail was Ilya sitting down on the ice in a gold sequined top. The headline read *Russia Falls Short*. Shane chewed his lip as his cursor hovered over the article, finally clicking on it. It brought up a dry write-up about the team event with a video at the top. The video was short, showing Ilya skating around in the middle of his routine. He geared up for a jump but evidently something went wrong. His skates landed awkwardly and then he was down on the ground. He recovered quickly, back on his feet and in the flow again, but Shane felt his heart sink as the video ended.

He knew he should be excited for Team Canada, and he was. He really was. But he couldn't deny the disappointment that curled in his chest. With how tight the results were, he knew he would be blaming himself for the results if he was in Ilya's place.

Shane was pulled from his thoughts by a knock at the door. He got up and went to open the door, then stepped back in surprise.

"Joe!" he said. "Uh, congratulations!"

The man was standing in the doorway, still wearing his fleecy red jacket with a gold medal around his neck. There was a wide grin on his face as he stepped into the room. "Thanks. I've always been told I look good in gold."

Shane laughed. "Guess I better get my own, then."

Joe smiled and nodded. He took a step towards Shane, who had his hands shoved in his hoodie pocket. There was an odd energy between them. It was making Shane nervous. "I didn't see you at the free skate," Joe said.

“Ah, schedule conflict,” Shane said. He felt like he should take a step back but somehow that felt like an admission of something. Or an invitation.

“Then I expect to see you there for the singles event,” Joe said. There was something in his eyes that felt like a challenge. It made Shane's heart beat faster.

Shane opened his mouth to reply but didn't get a chance because suddenly Joe was kissing him. His mind went blank, struggling to make sense of what was happening, but his body responded immediately. He tilted his head, kissed back, pressed his hand to Joe's chest. He hadn't ever kissed anyone with a full beard before and he liked it. He really fucking liked it. His lips parted, his tongue slid against Joe's. A hand slid up into Shane's hair, catching on a tangle, and somehow that broke the spell. His eyes flew open and he shoved Joe back.

“What the fuck are you doing?” Shane hissed.

Joe looked dazed, still trying to catch up with the sudden change in mood. “I-I was just-”

Shane's heart was beating fast. “Listen, I don't know what...signals you're misinterpreting but-”

“Misinterpreting?” Joe asked, with an edge of a laugh in his voice. “Did I just misinterpret your fucking tongue in my mouth?”

Shane took a step back, then another, holding up his hands. “I didn't... I... I'm not like you.”

Joe held up his hands, too. “Hey, look, I'm sorry. I just...thought I caught some signals. I heard some rumors about you and...”

“Rumors?” Shane asked. His entire body went cold. “What rumors?”

Joe took a step back, shaking his head. “Forget it, Shane.”

“No, what fucking rumors, Joe?” Shane was on the verge of yelling now. He tried to remind himself that other people might hear if he got too loud.

Joe turned and pulled the door open. “Forget it.”

And then he was gone. Shane was left standing there in the middle of the room. His entire body felt like ice and his face was still tingling from the scratch of Joe's beard against his skin. He flexed his hands open and closed repeatedly, trying to get a handle on his breathing. He clenched his fingers until they cramped, then pushed through the pain to straighten them again as the cramp subsided.

“Fuck!” he yelled, kicking the bed. It left a deep dent in the compressed cardboard leg.

He had the lights turned out and was rolled onto his side facing the wall when Comeau came back to the room. Shane didn't know what time it was when he returned but he knew it was later than he liked considering they were playing Finland the next day. Shane didn't say anything, though, and Comeau either assumed Shane was asleep or didn't care.

Shane laid there late into the night, eventually being awoken by his alarm with no memory of falling asleep.

There was a text from Ilya when he woke up.

Ilya: Have a good game today

Shane ignored it.

The Finland game was rough. Olympic hockey was always weird because most teams tapped any MLH players they could, but it meant some countries had slimmer pickings than others. Canada and the USA had easily filled the ice with nothing but MLH superstars, while teams like Latvia and Austria were lucky if they had 1 player from North America on their teams and the results reflected it.

Finland had also pulled together a team entirely made of MLH players, with a big fucker named Matti Jalo wearing the C. They took home bronze back in Vancouver and were obviously eager to improve their standings this time around.

Finland scored early in the first period, putting Canada in the hole as they tried to catch up. Shane was no stranger to chasing a lead and had managed his fair share of comebacks in his career but this game felt different. His passes weren't connecting, his d-men weren't where he needed them to be. Three separate times, his shots deflected off the goddamn post. Some kid from Edmonton tied it up with five minutes left in the third, which led into even more intensity as both teams fought to clutch out one more goal.

The game ended in overtime when Comeau sank a shot five-hole on a breakaway. 2-1 Canada. Shane didn't even get an assist.

The team was energized as they left the ice, even despite the fatigue that came from playing a tense game into OT. Finally, a fucking challenge for them. And at a vital point, too. They were undefeated in the qualifiers and had just earned themselves a by into the quarterfinals while the rest of the teams in their group fought it out in a playoff round.

Shane got pulled for media availability before he was even in the tunnel. He answered all the usual questions in English and French, highlighting the achievements of his teammates and what it meant to be here representing Canada.

"Shane, you broke your point streak tonight," one of the reporters said.

Shane paused a moment, waiting to see if there was any followup. "Um, yeah," he finally said. He wasn't even sure which reporter said it. "As much as two games could be considered a streak." He waited another moment. "Is there a question there?"

"Is there anything you think kept you from scoring?" a different reporter asked.

Shane's brow furrowed and he tried not to laugh. "The other team's defense?" There were a few scattered laughs. "It was a tough game. We knew that going in. Jalo wasn't going to make it easy for us." It felt like the d-man blocked half of Shane's shots and hit him hard into the

glass more than once. Shane already knew he would be making an appointment with PT soon. His shoulder was not happy.

The press scrum ended soon after and Shane made his way to the locker room. It was a rowdy scene as soon as he entered. Guys laughing and shoving each other, someone playing music way too loud. Shane slipped through the chaos and made his way to his stall, removing his shoulder pads and jersey before sitting down. He still had his breezers around his hips and his skates were still on his feet, though the laces were untied. He needed to get up, to strip out of the rest of his gear and shower away the sweat and frustration.

“Great game, Cap,” a familiar voice said. Shane looked up to see Comeau standing over him. Shane could hear in his voice that he was about to be a dick, could see the smug glint in his eye. He still had a puck clutched in his hand. It was scuffed and gouged. A strip of masking tape wrapped around the side with GWG scrawled on it in black sharpie.

Shane knew he should do the captain thing, congratulate Comeau on his game winning goal. Tell the team they played well and to keep their heads on straight heading into their next game. They were heading into elimination rounds now and the intensity was about to ramp up. Instead, what he said was, “Fuck off, Comeau.”

Comeau didn't fuck off. He dropped into the stall next to him. “Aw, don't be like that, Hollzy.” Shane had never hated that stupid fucking nickname more than when it came out of that man's mouth. “You coming out to celebrate with us?”

“Wouldn't count on it,” Shane muttered.

Comeau laughed. “Meeting up with that figure skater instead?”

Shane's head snapped up. “What the fuck is that supposed to mean?”

He shrugged, holding up his hands. “Everyone know's you're hanging around that faggot instead of the team. Fucking weird, man.”

“We're friends,” Shane said. He hated how defensive he sounded. “We grew up together.”

Comeau gave a dismissive flick of his hand. Shane wanted to hit him. “Yeah, we all know the fucking story about you and twinkle toes. I'm talking about that Russian cocksucker.”

It took everything in Shane to keep his face blank. He couldn't fucking give anything away. “You got something to say?”

“Just that people talk, Cap,” Comeau said. “You might get a reputation.”

Shane kicked off his skates and stood, busying himself with removing the rest of his gear. “You can keep that bullshit to your fucking self.”

Shane stormed off into the showers, scrubbing away the grime and trying to block out everything else. He needed to get the fuck out of here. He needed...he didn't know what.

Some of the other guys had already started making their way out by the time Shane was changing back into his street clothes. He zipped up his jacket and shoved his phone in his pocket, then was out the door and down the hallway. He made it around one corner before-

"Come on, Cap," an annoying fucking voice called from behind him. Shane froze, whirled around. Comeau was standing there again, grin on his face. "You coming out to celebrate with us or not?" It was cajoling. Patronizing.

"Not tonight," Shane said. "Maybe next time." It fell flat between them and Comeau took a step forward, looking like a shark after the water had been chummed.

"Gonna call your boyfriend?" he asked, dropping his voice in a way Shane knew was not designed to be kind or discreet.

"Fuck off," Shane said through gritted teeth.

"Not a no," Comeau said with a laugh. "Tell me, do you take turns fucking each other or do you just bend over every-"

Shane swung on him. A right hook right to the cheek. It surprised even Shane that he did it. He'd never been in a fight off the ice, and he'd only dropped his gloves twice during games, if you counted one his first year of juniors. It felt good, though, feeling his fist connect and hearing the man start swearing immediately.

"What the fuck, Hollander?" Comeau demanded, hand cradling his face.

"You need to learn to shut the fuck up," Shane spat, then turned on his heel and stormed off. He knew Comeau wouldn't follow him. He wouldn't do anything about it, either. Attacking a teammate like that could easily lead to a suspension, maybe even getting barred from future Olympics. But Comeau knew they wouldn't win without Shane and he wanted that gold badly enough to keep his mouth shut.

Shane made his way out of the arena, putting his earbuds in and playing whatever the fuck to try and drown out the noise in his head. Something loud and angry. His blood was pumping in his ears and he just wanted it all to *stop*.

It was still light when he got outside. It was an early afternoon game, ending just after 4pm. He had just passed through the doors outside when he felt a tap on his shoulder. He turned and ripped out his earbuds, ready to swear at whoever not to touch him, when he came face to face with Ilya. He was smiling, looking surprisingly at-ease for someone who'd just lost out on one of his gold medal opportunities.

"Ilya," Shane said. His voice refused to catch so the name came out as a sigh. He was frozen in place, looking sideways at him in shock.

Ilya's smile spread into a grin. "Good game."

"No, it wasn't," Shane said. "What are you doing here?"

Shane could see the confusion in Ilya's eyes, the hint of annoyance. "I watched your game, thought you might want to get an early dinner after."

The door behind Shane opened and he stiffened, turning to look back at it. A woman in an event staff tshirt was leaving, not even sparing a glance for the two of them as she passed. Shane looked back at Ilya and then shoved him to the side, into the small alcove next to where the entrance jutted out from the building.

"No, really, what the fuck are you doing here?" Shane hissed.

Ilya held up his hands, looking upset now. "I tell you. I want to see if you want dinner."

"With you," Shane said.

Ilya nodded. "Yes? What is wrong, Shane?"

"You can't fucking be here," Shane said. "Do you realize what would happen if anyone found out about..." He shook his head.

Ilya's eyes turned icy and he dropped his hands. "Because you are only one taking risks? You are only one with something to lose?" Ilya shoved him back half a step. "You know two men can eat food together without being gay, yes?"

"Fuck you," Shane said. He needed to get some new material.

"I think maybe not," Ilya said. Then he turned and stormed off without a look back.

Ilya took a deep breath and straightened his bowtie before knocking on the door to his father's hotel room. He made sure his medal was laying flat as well, the Olympic rings facing outward and the ribbon not twisted. Everything was silent for a beat. The door swung open, revealing a portly man with a bald head and a gap in his teeth where his lower incisor should have been. He was wearing the uniform of a police colonel, rows of ribbons and medals adorning his chest.

«You should have been here ten minutes ago,» Grigori Rozanov said. He opened the door wider and walked back in, the only invitation Ilya received.

«Sorry, father,» Ilya said. He fought the urge to glance at his watch. He knew what it would tell him. He was exactly on time, years of reprimands teaching him not to keep his father waiting.

Grigori muttered something Ilya couldn't make out. Rather than ask, Ilya stood in the middle of the room and looked around. He'd been relieved when his father booked his room in a different hotel. Ilya's hotel was trendy and close to the Village and the competition venue. His father's hotel was further away and the height of old luxury. The suite was massive, ornately decorated in a style more reminiscent of an earlier time. All the furniture was dark wood and the four-poster bed stood imposingly in the middle of the floor. Ilya felt like he was standing in a tomb, all earthly pleasures packed in like a pharaoh.

His father wandered over to the bureau and began pouring clear liquid into glasses from a crystal decanter. Vodka, Ilya was sure. «You're wearing the wrong color,» his father said.

Ilya looked down at himself. He was wearing a black tuxedo, impeccably tailored. His shoes were shiny and the pants crisply pressed. «What?»

His father walked over and handed him one glass, then flicked the medal hanging around his neck. It rang clearly in the quiet room. «You bring me silver when I tell you to win gold.»

Ilya forced himself not to grimace at the comment or the bile rising in his throat. He didn't even want to wear the stupid fucking medal tonight, but the invite to the gala had specified in the dress code that medalists were “encouraged” to display their medals.

«I'm sorry, father.» There was no point in reminding him that it was a team event. He'd ended top three in both his routines while the ice dancer pair had fallen out of their twizzles and landed in fifth place.

«The minister still wants to meet you tonight, despite everything,» Grigori said, not acknowledging Ilya even spoke.

«It would be my honor,» Ilya said. His voice was flat, automatic.

«You should be honored,» his father continued. «You fell out of your Lutz. You embarrass the entire nation. And yet, you drink.» He made a face like he wanted to spit out something rancid. «How could you let that happen? How are you not ashamed?»

«I'm ashamed, father,» he said.

«Not nearly enough,» Grigori said and Ilya had the sudden fear he was going to hit him to teach him the lesson. He hadn't done it in nearly a decade, not since Ilya hit his growth spurt and could finally meet his gaze level. He knew he wouldn't, but the tone of his voice was all it took to make him expect the blow. «Evgenia teaches you no discipline. Your skating has always been sloppy. The real shame is squandering the promise you showed when you were young.»

Ilya bit his tongue to keep from sniping back. His father hadn't cared about any promise or potential when he was a child. At least, not about skating. The loudest fight he ever heard his parents have was when he'd asked to switch from hockey to figure skating. His mother promised him he could but his father was staunchly against it. She won out in the end but his father had never truly accepted it.

As an adult, he wondered why his mother had ever married his father. None of his happiest memories of her included Grigori. She seemed at her best when he was far, far away. Her skating career ended the moment she'd gotten pregnant with Alexei. Whether any of that was her choice, he'd never know. She died before he was old enough to ask more complicated questions like that.

He kept his eyes cast down, tamping down on the roiling emotions bubbling up in his chest. This was why he was always happier away from Moscow. As much as he loved his city, its

people, the old rink where he learned to skate, the park bench where he and his mother sipped hot chocolate to ward off the biting cold. As much as he loved Moscow, it also came with this. Shrinking back to the size of a 12 year old boy who no longer had a mother to hide behind when his father got angry. Strapping on skates 10 years and eight sizes too small. And even now, hundreds of kilometers from the imposing stone of his father's house, Grigori brought it all with him.

«I am a better skater now than I have ever been,» Ilya said. «Competition is fierce. I fell out of one jump. What about the rest of the team? I will still win the singles gold by myself.»

«Always looking for someone to blame,» his father said. «Ever since you were a boy.»

His father kept looking at him, letting the silence stretch out between them. It felt heavy and fragile. Ilya wondered who would break it first. He didn't need to wait long. «Who tied this for you?» his father asked, eyes fixated on Ilya's bowtie. Ilya looked up at him in confusion. He was sure his tie was straight, but his father had already reached up to start adjusting it. «Your mother? She doesn't know how to do this properly.»

Ilya's heart sank. He'd been seeing signs for a while now that something was wrong. Even when he was traveling to competitions, he noticed things. Small things slipping his father's mind, events remembered out of order. He called Alexei when his father asked him to bring home bread while Ilya was in Japan for the Grand Prix a few months prior, but Alexei only swore at him and told him not to waste his time with stupid questions. Then he asked for money. Same as always.

«No, father,» Ilya said, voice hesitant. «Mama is dead. You remember?»

Grigori gave him a slack look, eyes searching. After a moment, he sniffed and looked away. «I meant your step-mother, Polina.»

«Where is Polina?» Ilya asked. He knew the answer but he needed to ask. Needed to hear what his father would say. «In Moscow?»

«Of course.» His father wasn't meeting Ilya's eyes now but he couldn't tell if it was confusion or something else.

Grigori finished adjusting Ilya's tie. «We should go,» Ilya said. He didn't have it in him to watch for confusion in his father's eyes, so he just continued. «To the gala. So I can meet the minister.»

The party was even duller than Ilya expected. It was a mixture of athletes he didn't know and bureaucrats wanting to be photographed with them. As if being seen sipping champagne with the fastest cross-country skier on the continent would assuage the fact that they lost their breath walking from their car to the elevator in their office.

Worse, all anyone wanted to fucking talk about was hockey. And not the way Ilya wanted to. No one wanted to talk about a beautiful freckled Canadian. No, everyone was talking about the great disappointment that was the Russian team's loss to Latvia the previous day. Even if

it was still technically possible for Russia to pull through and make it to the medal game, most were treating their loss and humiliation as a foregone conclusion.

Ilya's father was leading him around, introducing him with a pride that was just a bit too forced. He stuck by Sergei's side which meant everyone coming up to them just wanted to talk about hockey. Ilya zoned out as yet another man in an identical suit approached and started throwing out words like "penalty kill" and "zone entry." Ilya did his best to stand there, look polite, and not draw extra attention.

«Too much talking,» a familiar voice said, breaking through his trance. Ilya blinked, realizing Svetlana had walked up beside them and rested her arm on her father's shoulder.

«But you love talking about hockey, my angel,» Sergei said.

«Only when we're winning, Daddy,» she said with a sweet smile that Ilya had always been able to see right through. «And you know Ilyusha doesn't care about it. I'm taking him with me to the bar. He clearly needs another drink.» She grabbed his hand as she spoke and started pulling him along before anyone could get another word in.

«Thank you,» he said as soon as they were out of earshot

«I'm an angel,» she said with that same faux sweetness. «It would be great if you could remember that.»

«I want a drink,» he said.

«I have something more fun in mind.»

He followed one step behind her as she led him down the stairs. They passed the bar and walked into a bathroom that was probably the size of his entire hotel room. There was a vanity with a granite counter on one end, another with an ornate bathroom sink on the other, and a monolithic bathtub in the center. As they entered, a lanky man in a colorful silk shirt rose to his full height after finishing a line of coke. He rubbed his nose as he said, «Long time, Ilya.»

Ilya recognized him immediately, of course. He'd known Sasha since they were both kids. His dad was a youth hockey coach so they had both spent hours and hours bored at ice rinks as kids. Sasha waiting around for his dad and Ilya dragged along to one of Alexei's games. It had been nice, once. Another boy his age who knew how to skate and didn't give a fuck about hockey. The facility had two rinks side by side and sometimes they could sneak onto the other one while Alexei played. It had gotten a bit more exploratory as they got older, of course. Smoking, drinking, drunken make-outs eventually leading to sober hook-ups.

«Long time, Sasha,» Ilya replied. His shoulders were stiff.

This seemed to be what Svetlana had in mind for the evening. Sasha produced a bottle of champagne and sprawled out in the tub, long legs splaying over the edge.

«I don't think you skated that badly,» he said, pouring another glass for Svetlana.

It was an olive branch, Ilya knew that. He didn't want it. «I'd say thank you, but I know you didn't watch anyway.»

«I saw a clip,» he offered. Ilya fought not to roll his eyes.

Svetlana rose and went to lean against the sink. Ilya was perched on the vanity opposite her, another bottle of champagne sitting on the counter beside him. «Ignore him,» she said. «It doesn't matter for you, anyway.»

Ilya bristled. «How do you figure that? My father-»

«-is an asshole who never got over his dreams of having star KHL sons,» she said. «What he has is a star figure skater with the highest planned technical score in men's singles. So ignore what he says and skate. This was just the team event and no one even knows what the fuck that is.» She was right, on both counts. None of his competitors could even touch his technical score and these games were the first to include the team event. This was just the warmup round. The real show hadn't truly started yet.

Ilya fidgeted nervously. «I don't like you like this.»

She snorted. «Like what, nice to you?»

«Yes,» he said with a grin. «You're supposed to tell me to get over myself and do my fucking job.»

Svetlana blinked. «So get over yourself and do your fucking job.»

Sasha laughed, reminding them both he was still there. His head was laying back against the tub rim and he was rocking one foot side to side. «Careful, she'll just start talking about hockey again.»

«Oh, Ilyusha likes hockey now,» Svetlana said with a teasing grin. Sasha looked between them, unconvinced. «What was it you said, Ilyusha? *'A new interest?'* » She looked over to Sasha and held up two fingers. «I've gone to two hockey games with him this week. I think he's becoming a Raiders fan. We're taking home the Cup this year, you know.»

«You just say that because you live in Boston,» Sasha said.

Svetlana shook her head. «No, I say that because we have Shane Hollander.» Ilya raised an eyebrow at the pointed look she shot him. «He's a generational talent, you know. Future hall of famer. Isn't that right, Ilyusha?»

He shrugged, keeping his face blank. «It's a new interest. Like you said.»

Sasha seemed to grow bored and fished around in his pocket. He held up a small plastic baggie filled with something white, waving it enticingly towards Svetlana. She shook her head. «No, thanks. It's bedtime for me. I have to look perfect tomorrow.» She was helping her father with press engagements and would likely wind up on camera herself in the process.

«You always look perfect,» Sasha insisted. As he said it, he waved the baggie at Ilya in offering. He just shook his head, not bothering to explain that fucking of course he couldn't do coke while *competing in the Olympics*. They were drug tested rigorously and he doubted 'Sorry, I was having a rough night and wound up in a fancy bathroom with two of my fuckbuddies' would be an acceptable explanation.

«True,» Svetlana said. She rose and walked around the tub, squeezing Sasha's shoulder and coming over to kiss Ilya on the cheek. «But you boys also need to catch up.» She left after that, closing the doors behind her.

It was quiet for a moment.

«So?» Sasha asked from the tub. Ilya took another drink from the bottle and looked at him. «'How is Paris, Sasha?' Oh, it's great, thanks. I fucking love it there. The clubs are insane. The girls are hot.» He paused with a devilish grin. «And the boys.»

Ilya didn't speak, just stared at him. He was having a strange feeling of putting on an old jacket and realizing it didn't fit right anymore. A knowledge that there was a part of his past he didn't want to carry into his future despite it staring him right in the face in his present.

Sasha was still talking. «Well, you've seen French boys, right, Ilya?» Ilya shifted, looking down at the marble floor to avoid looking at Sasha. «Oh, my god. Nothing?» His carefree exterior finally cracked and he sounded annoyed. He rose to his full height and stepped out of the tub, walking towards Ilya. «You don't do coke, you don't make jokes, you don't flirt back...» He was right in front of Ilya now. He loomed over him. Ilya remembered when they first met. Sasha was so small, short and scrawny. Then when they were fifteen, he'd shot up over the summer.

He braced his hand on the counter by Ilya's hip and stroked his thigh. «You used to be fun, Ilya.» He pressed a kiss to his jaw. «Remember?»

Ilya leaned back when Sasha tried to press their lips together. «Here? Really?»

He was undeterred. «Danger used to get you going, if memory serves.» He dropped his voice, aiming for sultry but Ilya just found the entire performance grating.

«We're not kids anymore, Sasha.» He was trying to be firm but Sasha was undeterred. He always loved a challenge.

«You're right about that,» he said. The hand on Ilya's thigh started rubbing him over his pants. Ilya kept his face blank even as the stimulation had his cock stirring.

«Stop,» Ilya said. He pushed him away.

«Okay,» he agreed. «Let's go somewhere.»

Ilya crossed his arms and shook his head. «No.» He hoped that would be it. He wanted this entire night to be over. He wanted to go back to his hotel and get drunk. He wanted to walk out into the snow until the cold made his ears sting.

He wanted to see Shane.

Sasha finally seemed to accept that this wasn't going to happen. He extricated himself from where he had Ilya pinned against the counter and sniffed. «Fine, I'm gonna find a party.»

«Okay.» Ilya didn't know what else he was supposed to say. He looked down and pulled out his phone for something to do with his hands.

Sasha stood there another moment before leaving. «Bye, Ilya.»

Ilya pulled up his texts with Shane and stared at the last message again. His thumb hovered over the keyboard but he didn't type. Would it be too pathetic to text him? Did he care? «Nice to see you, Sasha.»

Chapter End Notes

I try to make sure the Olympic events are explained in the fic but some of the language gets to vague and weird so I wanted to take a second to explain how the different events and scoring works here!

Figure skating:

- Skaters are scored based on the elements (like jumps and spins) they perform and their artistic ability. Jumps have a base score based on the jump type and number of rotations and skaters can get plus or minus to their score based on how well they execute it
- In 2026, skaters can earn +/-5 based on their execution of an element but back in 2014, scoring used +/-3 so the scores listed in this fic are in line with scores given in Sochi but might not match up with what scores skaters receive today
- The Figure Skating Team Event has skaters from all the individual events (men's and women's singles, pairs, and ice dance) compete as a team for their country. Each performance gets a score and then that ranking determines points for the team (first place gets 10, second place gets 9, etc) and the combined score based on THOSE points determines the medals.

Hockey:

- Teams are separated into groups and play a series of qualifier games within that group. Teams earn points based on wins, losses, and overtime.
- The top teams in the groups get a "by" which means they're automatically in the quarterfinals
- Lower ranked teams go to a round of single elimination playoffs and the winners play against the teams who got a by into the quarterfinals
- If two teams are tied, the team with the better goal differential moves forward. So, in the Russia v Latvia game in this chapter, Russia has a -7 goal differential while the Canada v Finland game gives Canada a +1.

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

sorry for no update last week! and for a slightly shorter chapter this week. this chapter unexpectedly gave me some trouble and most of my time to edit was taken up by dealing with car repairs, but I should be back on track now with weekly updates

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

Shane couldn't sleep that night. He was antsy, tossing and turning with way too much energy burning under his skin. He wanted to go to the gym and work out. Back home, it would be as simple as heading downstairs to his home gym and hopping on the stationary bike. The Olympic Village was set up to accommodate varied athlete schedules, with gyms open at all hours, but the closest one was down the street from the Team Canada dormitory with a stretch of snowy Russian cold between the two buildings.

The one bit of respite he got was that Comeau didn't come back that night. Shane didn't know where he slept but the other cardboard bed against the opposite wall stayed empty well past when Shane finally gave up on sleeping and started pulling on socks and a jacket. The gym was a five minute walk if he hurried.

The Village was quiet at night. It hadn't snowed more than a dusting since the Olympics began but there was still a fair amount of it blanketing the landscape. The street lamps cast a warm yellow glow. Inside the cafe where Shane ran into Ilya and Svetlana, the chairs were turned upside down on top of tables but Shane could see a cooler inside still illuminated through the glass door.

The gym was empty, aside from a tired-looking attendant at a desk. She looked up when Shane entered, then back down at her book when he scanned his credentials and passed through the gate. Shane selected the bike furthest from the door. He ramped up the resistance, turned up his music, and closed his eyes while he rode the bike. It felt good, the burn of his thighs as he focused on keeping his breath even. This was easy, familiar. Pushing his body for performance. The steady rhythms of the pedals and his heartbeat finding some kind of synchronicity and helping to clear his head.

It was well past midnight when Shane showered and returned, pleasantly sore and loose. Comeau's bed was still empty. Probably for the best. Shane didn't regret throwing the punch but fuck, he did not want to deal with that while he was just trying to go to sleep.

He slept in later than usual the next day. He didn't have anything scheduled anyway. Team Canada had gotten a bye into the elimination tournament and the quarterfinals while the playoff rounds ensued to determine final seeding. Press was all focused on the playoffs and

ice time was tied up by other teams. People would care about him again in a few days but for now, all eyes were on the other teams still fighting for slots in the tournament.

Joe hadn't texted him since the incident a few nights before so he didn't have lunch plans with anyone. He didn't even feel like going to the gym, figuring his late night bike trip probably counted for his daily cardio. He stopped in the lobby of the dormitory, realizing he wasn't sure where he was going. He just needed to go out.

He knew where he wanted to go. He could still see Ilya's face in his mind, the way his eyes had gone icy and his mouth pinched. The hunch of his shoulders as he walked away.

Fuck.

The cab picked him up in five minutes, dropped him off less than 10 minutes after.

Shane stood in front of the door, looking at the engraved metal numbers while trying to make himself knock. He knew he needed to do this but he wasn't sure if he would be given a chance to make things right.

Shane lifted his hand to knock but didn't get a chance. The door opened and suddenly Ilya was there. His eyes widened when he realized Shane was standing there and his mouth fell open. The silence stretched between them for what felt like hours.

"Hi," Shane finally said. "Can we talk?"

Ilya paused for a moment, then took a step back and nodded. Shane walked into the room and glanced around. It was messier than it was last time Shane was here, dirty clothes in a pile by the closet and some takeout containers on the table. It wasn't trashed, but he certainly hadn't been expecting company.

"Were you about to leave?" Shane asked. His hands were shoved into his pockets, unsure what to do with them.

"Ah, yes," Ilya said. He looked a bit uncertain, clutching a small duffel bag on one hand.

"Fuck, sorry," Shane said. "I can be quick, I didn't mean to... I just... I'm sorry. About last night." He probably should have rehearsed that.

Ilya shrugged and set the bag down, then crossed his arms. "Is fine. Nothing to be sorry for."

"I need to say it anyway," Shane said. He didn't like Ilya like this. He was used to him being sly, self-confident. Mouth in a crooked smirk, eyes like a live wire. This Ilya's entire demeanor was flat. Guarded. "I know I'm not the only one taking risks. I know you have just as much to lose...more, maybe. You just caught me at a bad moment and I..." He ran his hand over his face. "I'm really sorry, okay?"

Ilya looked at him with an expression Shane couldn't read. He was quiet for a long moment, Shane's words hanging heavy between them. Finally, he walked over and took Shane's hand between his own. He held it gingerly as he flipped it over to look at Shane's knuckles. They were red and bruised. "What happened to your hand?"

"I, uh. I punched a guy." Ilya looked up at him in surprise. "One of my teammates. He was saying some shit and I just...swung."

"What did he say?" Ilya asked.

"He was just talking shit," Shane said. Ilya kept looking at him. "He said people were talking. About me and figure skaters and-" Ilya straightened his back, looking more concerned now. "He doesn't know anything," Shane assured him quickly. "Just...typical hockey player bullshit. Trying to get a rise out of me." He sighed. "Guess it worked."

"Will he do anything back?" Ilya asked. "Report you or hit you or...?" Shane probably should be more worried about that. There were definitely cameras in those back tunnels in the arena. Someone would just need the time and location to find a video of him sucker punching his own teammate. But even now as he tried to reach for the anxiety about what it meant for him, his future with international hockey, he couldn't find anything but satisfaction. Comeau had deserved the punch and it felt good to give it to him.

Shane shook his head. "Nah, he knows he won't win gold without me. He might try some shit when we get back to the regular season but my teammates don't take shit." Shane may not fight much, but his winger, Cliff Marleau, loved to drop the gloves and had done so in defense of Shane more times than he could count. And if Marly had to sit in the box for a bit after roughing up Comeau, well, Shane was lethal on the penalty kill anyway.

Ilya looked like he was fighting a smile. "So this teammate, this is why you said what you did?"

Shane nodded, looking at Ilya's shoulder to avoid looking at his eyes. "Yeah, he confronted me on my way out the door and then you were there and I just...I freaked out. I'm sorry." He felt like he was saying that a lot but he didn't know what else to do about that. "So, uh. Yeah. I'll let you get going now. Maybe we can get dinner again sometime?"

Ilya chewed his lip like he was considering something. "You tell me before you don't like your ice time, yes?"

"Yeah," Shane said. "Or, the lack of it, at least."

"I have time scheduled at private rink. Just me, no coach today. Was just leaving for that." Ilya hesitated and Shane let his eyes flick back up to meet his. His face was still a flat mask, but his eyes were warming up. "You could come with me if you want."

Shane smiled at him. "Yeah, I'd like that." He paused. "I won't be in your way? If you're practicing your routine or whatever?"

Ilya shook his head and smiled back. "No, I tell you if you are in the way."

Shane nodded quickly. "Okay. Okay, um. Shit, my skates. They're at the practice facility by now."

"You know where they are?" Ilya asked.

Shane thought back to when the trainers led him to the equipment room to inspect his skates. He nodded. “Yeah.”

“Then we make a detour.”

Twenty minutes later, Shane was walking through the practice facility towards the storage space assigned to Team Canada. He had to retrace the path from the dressing room but he found it soon enough. He had a whole story planned in case he was stopped, about how he needed his skates for something relating to a brand deal. No one stopped him, though. A few people gave him second glances but none seemed to think twice about him being there. Apparently there were some benefits to being Shane Hollander, Hockey Player. If he was in an ice rink, he was probably supposed to be there.

He located the equipment room and slipped inside. All the gear was neatly packed into stackable crates and carts. Near the front was a cart with two shelves lined with skates. It was easy for Shane to find his own sitting right on top.

They were completely custom, the CCM logo on the ankle guard scuffed and wearing away in places. The tongues were embroidered with a crisp gold #24 on each and his parents’ names were carved into the white blade holders underneath. David on the right, Yuna on the left. The blades themselves were custom profiled, a multi-radius profile which gave him the perfect mix of speed and agility. It had taken Shane years to hone in on the exact customizations for his skates.

If Shane was being honest, they weren't actually his favorite skates. He preferred Bauer's fit over his heel and around the ball of his foot, but CCM had offered him more money for exclusivity on all his gear so he made do. They were still really fucking good.

He grabbed the skates and made his way out, climbing into the passenger seat of the yellow Porsche. He set them on the ground between his feet and buckled the seatbelt. They grinned at each other as Ilya pulled out onto the street and exited the Olympic Village.

“This feels like in a movie,” Ilya hummed. He was driving fast.

“What?” Shane asked.

“Like. Stealing but sexy?” Ilya said. “With ropes and lasers.”

Shane laughed. “A heist?”

Ilya pointed to him and nodded.

The rink wasn't far and soon enough they were making their way inside. Shane tightened his laces and took to the ice while Ilya was still completing his stretches.

Shane did a couple quick laps to get acquainted. Figure skating ice had a slightly different feel to it. It was warmer than hockey ice, softer when his edges dug in. Harder ice meant more speed, vital for the sprint-pace of hockey. Softer ice absorbed impacts from jumps and

rougher maneuvers. He pushed himself to his top speed but still felt a bit sluggish on the softer surface. He skidded to a stop, shaving the ice and producing a shower of snow.

"You are carving up my ice," Ilya called to him. He was skating around now, taking a lazy pace with his hands clasped behind his back like a speed skater. He was wearing the same skates as always, yellow laces on black uppers.

Raiders colors, Shane noted, though he was sure that wasn't the reason for it.

"Sorry," Shane said, grinning at him.

"No, you're not," Ilya said. As Shane watching, Ilya lifted his left leg and held it out parallel as he glided in a graceful circle.

"Okay, maybe not." Shane kept watching him. Ilya set his other foot back down and pushed off in a new direction. He threw himself into the air for a quick jump. Shane wasn't sure how many turns he did, maybe two? It seemed leisurely compared to some of the jumps he'd seen Ilya do before but no less graceful.

"So what's with the yellow laces?" Shane asked.

"You don't like?" Ilya asked. He skated on one foot, holding the other out in front of him to admire the neatly tied canary yellow laces.

"They're...bright," Shane offered.

Ilya just laughed. "Do you want fun answer or the real one?"

Shane considered. "The real one?" He was standing in place now, shuffling his skates back and forth.

"My Mama used to skate," Ilya said. "And she always wore yellow when she competes. Now I always wear yellow, too. Even when I am not."

Shane thought back to the Wikipedia articles he'd skimmed. The photo of her at 22, gold medal resting against a dandelion yellow dress. Reading it felt like an intrusion now, even if it was publicly available information. *Belova's death was ruled accidental*, that was what it said. "And what's the fun one?"

Ilya laughed. "One time when I was still skating in juniors, judge could not count my jump rotations right. Tried to score me six points under. Now with bright laces, is easy to count on video." Shane snorted, imagining a young Ilya irate at being underscored, angrily ripping out black laces and replacing with yellow.

"How long have you been skating?" Shane asked. He started moving again, following along the curving path Ilya had carved into the ice.

"As long as I can remember," Ilya said. "You?"

"Same," Shane said. "My parents met through hockey. My dad played in college."

“Makes sense,” Ilya said. He picked up speed, looping around Shane and passing close enough for Shane to feel the gust of air.

“Did you always want to go into figure skating?” He paused. “I mean, I know your mother skated, too. Did she get you started with it?”

Ilya shook his head, smile tight. “Um, I guess I always want to skate. At least, did not want to play hockey.”

“Hockey?” Shane asked with a grin, aware he probably seemed like a dog who just heard the word ‘walk.’ “What's hockey have to do with it?”

Ilya laughed. “Well, my mother skated but my father wanted us in hockey. Me and my older brother. Papa played as a kid and put Alexei in.”

“But not you?” Shane asked. He lifted one of his legs and tried to balance like he'd watched Ilya do. His balance on skates was good but this wasn't a position he was used to. He wobbled and had to put his foot down quickly.

Ilya laughed again. Shane liked the sound of Ilya laughing. It bubbled out of him like he wasn't expecting it and echoed around them on the hard surfaces of the rink. “Oh, he tried.”

“Oh?” Shane asked. He was grinning at him.

“Mm. They tell me I kick and scream and cry until Mama says I will do figure skating now.” He did another jump, one Shane was confident was a single. There was a crispness to the sound of his skates against the ice.

“And what does he think now?” Shane asked. Again, he immediately had the feeling that he shouldn't have asked. The question hung between them like lead while Ilya continued in a lazy arc around the rink. The only sound was the scrape of their skates over smooth ice.

“So was it always hockey for you?” Ilya asked after a long moment. He smiled over at Shane as he said it, dispelling the awkwardness.

“Pretty much,” Shane said with a grateful nod. “My mom would have you believe my first words were ‘puck’ and ‘net.’”

Ilya came to a stop and started spinning. His arms were out at first but as he pulled them in and lifted them above his head, he spun faster and faster. He blurred with the speed before he exited the spin as gracefully as he entered. Shane watched carefully for any hint of a wobble but Ilya's legs were stable underneath him, his movements sure.

“How do you not fall on your ass every time you do that?” Shane asked, skating along behind Ilya.

“By falling on my ass a lot when I was a kid,” Ilya said. He glanced back and grinned. “I get tired of bruises on my ass. Not very sexy.” Shane was sure it was intentional, the way Ilya jutted his ass out as he said it. Drawing his eyes down to watch appreciatively.

“Think you can show me how to do that?” Shane asked. He stopped and did a poor impersonation of Ilya's spin, skates shuffling all the way.

“Not if that is any sign,” Ilya said with a laugh.

“Then teach me,” Shane said, starting another loop. “What am I doing wrong?”

“Everything,” Ilya said. He skated over and moved Shane's arms up. “These are the wrong skates for this but we will see. Skates closer together.” Shane did his best to follow the instructions. “Shift your weight.” Shane did, and felt the spin getting smoother. “Push off again. Arms in.” Shane pulled his arms in close and felt the spin get faster. Realistically, he wasn't spinning that fast at all but the wave of dizziness came over him quickly. He tried to shift his weight again and caught one skate against the other, and then he was tripping. Strong arms wrapped around him and then he was enveloped in Ilya's firm embrace.

“Shit, sorry,” Shane said, but he was grinning up at him. The dizziness was fading and he had his skates firmly under him again but he didn't make any move to pull away. “How was that?”

“Good,” Ilya said. “For a child. Or a hockey player.”

Shane just shook his head, still smiling up at him. Ilya didn't release him and he didn't try to pull away. The bright light of the rink brought out the gold in Ilya's hazel eyes. His tongue snaked out to wet his lips, drawing Shane's gaze down. His skates gave him just a bit of extra height compared to Ilya's, which gave him just enough boost to stretch up and press their lips together.

This wasn't the first time Shane had kissed Ilya, but this was a different kiss entirely. The others had been heated as they fumbled to remove clothes, or messy and out of breath in the afterglow, or lingering at the door before returning to the real world. This one was sweet, romantic even. Ilya's hand came up to cup his face and the press of his tongue against Shane's was soft, tentative. Shane wanted to stay there forever, letting Ilya dominate all of his senses, but he eventually broke away to look up at him again.

Ilya had a look in his eyes like he was considering something very carefully. “What is it?” Shane asked.

“I think,” Ilya said, very slowly, “you are getting in the way of my training now.”

Shane shoved at his chest. “Fucker!”

Ilya laughed and returned to his languid laps around the rink.

They wound up back at Ilya's hotel room by the evening. Shane had tried to tell Ilya he could be alone if he needed to focus and prepare for skating the next day, but Ilya shook his head.

“Stay. Please.”

Ilya immediately set to tidying the room as soon as they got back, dirty clothes going into the closet in a pile and several takeout boxes from room service getting stacked on the counter beside the sink.

“Are you hungry?” Ilya asked. They were stretched out on his bed, both showered and Shane wearing some of Ilya's clean clothes to get out of his own sweaty ones. Shane looked good in his clothes. The sweatpants were too long so he'd rolled the waistband over but now it kept slipping down over his hips. The hoodie was from a charity event he volunteered at, Cyrillic text fading where it stretched across Shane's chest. Ilya was in jogger pants and nothing else. He ran hot and usually went without one when he was at home. He fought not to puff out his chest when he saw Shane eyeing him appreciatively.

The tv was turned down low, showing the replay of a curling match from earlier in the day. Neither of them really cared about curling, but if the Olympics were happening then curling was on air and it was good for background noise.

“I could eat,” Shane said. Ilya grabbed a laminated menu off the nightstand and handed it to him. “Uh, I think you're forgetting I don't read Russian.” Ilya just pointed to the menu. When Shane looked down, he realized the menu was in English. “Oh. Did you get this for me?”

Ilya shrugged, trying to look nonchalant. He'd requested the English menu after Shane came over the second time. The hotel had a good mix of international guests and they were more than prepared for those who didn't speak Russian.

Shane selected a chicken pasta dish, asking for an extra portion of chicken on top. Ilya nodded easily and rolled over to pick up the menu and order. “Um, do they have... Do you know what ginger ale is?”

Ilya thought for a second. “I think so. Is like ginger soda? No alcohol?”

Shane nodded. “Any chance they have that here?”

“I ask.” Ilya picked up the phone and ordered food for them both. They watched another set of curling while they waited for it to arrive. There was an ease to laying around with Shane that he wasn't used to. At least, not with anyone other than Svetlana, and that ease had been built over the course of years. They weren't exactly cuddling, mostly just laying near each other. Still, there was always a point of contact between them, even if it was as simple as a cocked knee against a thigh.

Shane pulled out his phone and Ilya recognized the layout of the Olympics website. “Checking scores?” he asked.

Shane nodded. “Yeah. Playoffs were today.” He clicked through a couple pages. Ilya knew Russia hadn't made it past qualifiers and Canada was already through but didn't know much else. “Oh, looks like we're playing Latvia next.”

Ilya grinned. “Good. Score a million goals and avenge my country's great shame.”

He laughed and locked his phone to focus back on the tv. They were quiet for a while, comfortable. Shane looked over at Ilya, who had started running his fingers in a circle over his knee. "What?"

Ilya slid his eyes down Shane's body, then back up. "Nothing."

Shane smiled and shook his head, settling deeper back into the pillows. He crossed his arms over his chest. "Our food is going to be here any minute."

"I can be fast," Ilya said, rolling on top of Shane and leaning in to nose along his jaw.

"How romantic," Shane hummed. He tilted his head up to give Ilya better access, eyes fluttering closed. Ilya liked how he said that. *Romantic*. They hadn't exactly talked about what they were doing, what either of them expected. Ilya just knew he liked having Shane around and Shane seemed to like to be there. He grazed his teeth along the sensitive spot just below his ear.

There was a knock at the door.

"*Blyat*," Ilya swore. "Are you sure you need to eat?"

Shane laughed and shoved him off of him. "Go get the food, Romeo."

"It is pronounced *Rozanov*," Ilya nipped playfully at his neck and then padded over to the door. He rolled his shoulders as he went, feeling Shane's gaze on his back.

Even though the angle of the door meant the staff member couldn't see the bed, Shane had pulled the hood up around his face when he came back. He looked cute like that, cocooned in the soft fabrics. Ilya came back with the food helpfully packaged in grey boxes. "Pasta, no cheese and extra chicken," he said, walking across the bed on his knees and holding out the box.

"You don't want to move to the table?" Shane asked skeptically. He looked down at the white sheets stretched out around him.

Ilya shrugged and flopped down next to him. "Don't make a mess." He handed over the can, which Shane took gratefully. He looked it over for a moment, probably unfamiliar with the label and Cyrillic text, before he opened the can and took a sip. He seemed to find it acceptable and took another, then set the can on the nightstand.

Slovakia was beating Japan in curling as they finished their dinner, both naturally gravitating back together as soon as the take-out boxes were set aside. Shane laid his head on Ilya's shoulder and Ilya turned his head sideways to press a kiss against his hair.

"Do your teammates not wonder where you are?" he asked suddenly. He knew Shane didn't have a game that day, and must not have practice, but he must still be missed, right?

Shane hummed and gave half a shrug. "Maybe. Probably not." Ilya looked at him, waiting for him to say more. "I dunno. I'm not really close with any of them."

Ilya hummed and nodded. "You are the only player here from Boston, yes?"

"What? Oh, yeah." He nodded. "Only one."

"So all your friends get to sit around at home while you go to Olympics," Ilya said with a smile. "They must be jealous." Shane was quiet, eyes focusing on the screen. They were resetting between ends so no one would be throwing for a few minutes. "Shane?"

"I guess," Shane said. There was a reluctance in his voice that Ilya couldn't quite make sense of. "We aren't really... I'm not very close with any of them. My teammates back home."

Ilya was quiet, letting the full meaning set in. No friends on his home team. None on his national team. "You have other friends in Boston, then?"

Shane shrugged again. He felt stiff against Ilya. "My schedule is pretty full. Travel, brand deals. Hard to meet anybody."

"Sounds lonely," Ilya said.

"Maybe," Shane said. "I dunno. It's... weird sometimes. I dunno."

"Weird?"

Shane was quiet. His eyes were still fixed on the tv but Ilya didn't think he was paying attention to it. "I'm... the best. Yeah? Generational fucking talent." There wasn't a hint of boast in his voice. He was simply stating the truth. "I worked hard to get to where I'm at but it means... I guess I just don't make room for anything else. Or never had anyone who made me want to."

"What would make you want to?" Ilya asked. His voice was low and even, like he was worried he might scare him off.

Shane chewed his lip. "Everywhere I go back home, people know who I am and what I can do. I can't even remember the last time I had to introduce myself to someone in Boston. And I'm not complaining, right? So many people would kill to get to where I am. But it means everyone already has an idea of who I am and then how disappointed are they gonna be if I can't live up to that?"

"Why do you think you would disappoint them?" Ilya asked. He couldn't imagine Shane ever disappointing anyone.

Shane looked down at his hands, clasped in his lap and tangling his fingers together. "I guess it just feels like... everyone knows who Shane Hollander is except for Shane Fucking Hollander."

Shane was quiet for a long time and Ilya figured he was probably done speaking. He pressed a kiss to the side of his head and flipped the channel to a biathlon recap. "Can you believe this is real sport? Skiing and shooting."

Shane snorted and relaxed into him. "As if you could do that."

The tension eased between them with the chirp and Ilya pulled Shane in closer, resting his hand low on his hip with his fingers beneath the rolled over waistband of his sweats.

It was Shane who started sliding his hand up Ilya's leg, a slow glide of fingers up to his hip and back down. Ilya looked over at him and smiled, letting Shane repeat the motion. "You want something?"

Shane looked up at him, a smile playing on his lips. He leaned in to kiss Ilya's shoulder, right over a mole here. "Don't you?"

Ilya laughed and rolled on top of him, kissing him deeply. He could taste the pesto from Shane's pasta with just a hint of sweet ginger. He chased the taste and was rewarded with Shane sucking his tongue. Hands moved up to roam over Ilya's chest. Soft touches that made his muscles twitch and skin break out in goosebumps.

It took so little for Shane to open up beneath him. He responded to Ilya readily, moving exactly where Ilya wanted him even without words. He spread his legs and pressed up against Ilya like he craved every millimeter of touch he could get.

Ilya slid his hands up under the hoodie. Shane's skin was smooth and warm, soft over the hard plains of muscle. He felt those muscles twitch and contract against his touch and slid his hands higher. Shane sighed against his lips.

One hand found Shane's nipple and started rubbing it in teasing circles. Shane seemed to like having his chest played with, gasping and moaning when Ilya had squeezed his pecs before. Ilya was more than happy to oblige. He loved a nice chest on anyone. He wondered if Shane would let him motorboat him.

Probably not.

His other hand slid down to rub over Shane's crotch. He was half hard already just from Ilya kissing and groping him. Shane rolled his hips up into the contact but Ilya kept his touch light.

Ilya kept teasing him, mouth at his throat to feel his moans against his lips. His right hand kept stroking his cock through his clothes while his left roamed everywhere. He wanted to learn every inch of this man's body. Wanted to find every sensitive spot, every ticklish corner, every mole hidden between his toes. He wanted all of him.

Unable to resist any longer, he pulled the bulky waistband down just enough to free Shane's cock. Shane was beautiful everywhere, especially here. He was thick, with a fat, rosy head. The vein that snaked up the side was just starting to pop through the thin, velvety skin. He wasn't leaking yet but he would soon if their previous encounters were anything to go by. A layer of neatly trimmed hair spread up towards his belly button, emphasizing the cut of his muscle.

Ilya dragged his tongue up the underside of his cock and suckled the head. Shane sucked in a breath above him. Ilya kept one of his hands up under Shane's hoodie as he started bobbing his head. Shane was so alive underneath him, muscles twitching and breath coming fast.

He kept his pace even as his jaw started to ache. Shane was leaking now. He was all Ilya could taste. Shane's breath was getting more ragged, catching in his throat. Ilya wanted it, wanted to taste him as he came apart.

"I'm gonna..." Shane gasped. Ilya didn't falter, just squeezed his pec in encouragement. "Fuck!" Shane came and Ilya swallowed around him, unwilling to lose a single drop. He pulled off after a moment and leaned down to kiss his hip.

Ilya pulled the waistband back up and tucked Shane's cock away after a moment, then sat up on his elbows to look at him. Shane was smiling at him, closed-mouthed and supremely satisfied. His eyes were still a bit glassy with pleasure. He'd seen Shane naked, run his mouth over him, heard him come apart with pleasure, but somehow this was the view of Shane that really caught him. Warm and loose, wearing Ilya's borrowed clothes. This was how he wanted Shane always.

Ilya's cock throbbed at the sight and he leaned in to kiss Shane hungrily. Shane's hand immediately slid into his hair, twisting in the messy curls. Ilya pressed his tongue in to let him have a taste and Shane seemed eager to have it. Shane let him keep control a while longer, then shoved Ilya's shoulder until he broke the kiss and rolled onto his back.

"My turn," Shane said, then started kissing down Ilya's body with a clear destination in mind.

They curled together again after. As much as Ilya liked looking at Shane naked, there was also something very satisfying about him exactly like this. Wearing his clothes, surrounded by cozy fabrics and pillows, eyes still slightly glassy from coming down Ilya's throat. It settled deep and warm in Ilya's chest.

A wave of want rolled over Ilya. Not the kind that made his dick throb. Something softer, warmer. He wanted this again. Wanted this more. He wasn't sure he was allowed to want that. They were on borrowed time here. Closing ceremonies were less than a week away, with the most intense competitions stretching out in between. And after that... Ilya didn't know what happened after.

"Shane, I have a question," Ilya said. His voice was hesitant. He didn't want to break the silent spell between them.

"Hmm?" He shifted his head where it was laying on Ilya's pec to look up at his face. "What's up?"

Ilya ran his fingers up and down Shane's spine. "There is a gala after figure skating competition is over."

"A gala?" Shane asked. "Like a fancy party?"

Ilya chuckled and shook his head. "No, is just what they call it. Is for skaters. Is a performance but without judges. Um, I don't know the word."

"Exhibition?" Shane offered.

Ilya nodded. "Yes, that. Exhibition."

"Oh, cool," Shane said. "Are you skating in it?"

Ilya nodded again. "Yes. But is different from competition. No rules. Can pick different music. Skaters get to have fun."

Shane settled his head back on Ilya's chest. "Sounds fun. What did you want to ask me?"

Ilya kept stroking up and down his back. "Well, I need a partner for my routine."

"Partner?" Shane looked up at him again. "I can't figure skate, Ilya. You saw me fall out of that spin earlier."

Ilya laughed. "Nothing like that. I just need big strong man to stand there while I skate around. Maybe even look annoyed. Light won't be on you most of the time." He'd done this same routine at other exhibitions in the past and it usually went over very well with the audience.

Shane sighed. "I don't know. Seems like a lot of pressure..."

Ilya was already shaking his head. "No, no pressure. Is point that there is no pressure. I will not be the only one using pretty boy as a prop."

Shane snorted, burying his face in Ilya's chest. "When do you need your answer?"

"Day of the gala. Is no choreo so I can ask another skater if I need to."

Shane hummed. "I'll think about it."

"Okay." Ilya pressed a kiss to his hair. He looked over at the clock. Almost midnight. Shane felt pliant and warm beside him and Ilya was surprised he hadn't started talking about leaving yet. "Do you need to get back?"

Shane groaned against his chest. "Not sure there's any point."

"What does this mean?" Ilya asked, smiling down at him. Shane was so cute when he was sleepy. He wondered if he was the same in the morning.

"Remember the guy I punched?" Shane asked.

"Mn." Ilya hummed.

"I'm rooming with him," Shane groaned. Ilya couldn't help but laugh. "It's not funny," Shane said, face still buried in Ilya's chest. He didn't sound all that upset, despite the rebuke.

"You picked a bad person to get in a fight with," Ilya said.

"I didn't exactly plan it," Shane grumbled. "He didn't come back last night, though."

“So stay here tonight,” Ilya said. Shane looked up at him, unconvinced. “Either he comes back and you have to deal with him or he doesn't and he doesn't know if you're there or not.” Shane started to protest but Ilya cut him off. “I get you back in time for hockey. Stay.”

Shane looked uncertain, his thoughts playing across his face like an open book. Ilya saw the moment resolve solidified behind his eyes. “Okay.”

Ilya grinned and leaned in to kiss him. “Okay.”

Chapter End Notes

A couple people have asked about Ilya's yellow laces and I wanted to explain that a bit here. It's actually a reference to Alex Ovechkin, who's one of the main inspirations for Ilya. He's been wearing yellow laces on his skates for his entire career. AFAIK, his reason for wearing them isn't the same as Ilya's in this fic so that's me doing my own thing. Also if you saw me mention yellow laces and thought of Ilia Malinin at Milano-Cortina, Ovi was actually the one who gave him those laces! :)

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

the chapter count has updated! I originally intended to have chapter 6 end the Olympics and chapter 7 to be an epilogue but decided to combine them both. They're just about finished being edited so the final chapter will post next Friday

Side note but I realized the last chapter officially marks 100k words of Heated Rivalry fic that I've posted! I don't think I've ever hit that milestone in a fandom before, especially not within 6 months, so that's really exciting for me! Maybe take a look thru my fics if you're looking for something else to read? :)

Shane couldn't remember the last time he slept so well. Certainly not since arriving at the Olympics and being crammed into the small cardboard bed. Sure, some of it could probably be chalked up to the ridiculously comfortable bed of a very fancy hotel. Even more, he was attributing it to the warm, solid body pressed up behind him, arm draped over his waist and snoring gently in his ear. He didn't even mind that he was slightly overheated, that his skin was sticky with sweat where it pressed against Ilya's, that he definitely hadn't brushed his teeth the previous night.

Careful not to wake him, Shane reached out to check his phone on the nightstand. 5:50. Ten minutes before his alarm went off. He closed his eyes and settled back in, soaking in every moment he could.

He knew it couldn't last, this bubble created by the Olympics. It was like he was suspended outside of his normal life. Adrift away from home, hockey shrunk down to the truncated tournament for Olympic gold. It would end soon enough. Closing ceremonies were in five days, with the fiercest stretch of competition for both of them in between. He would return to Boston, to the playoff race and hopefully a run for the Cup. Ilya would go back to training and try to defend his Worlds title in Japan. And they...

He pushed those thoughts out of his mind. He wanted to float a while longer in this warm bliss.

Ilya stirred behind him, nosing behind his ear and grumbling, "Stop thinking." His voice was rough with sleep and Shane felt it rumble through his chest against his back.

"Make me," Shane said. He felt Ilya's grin against his neck and received a nip at his earlobe. Shane turned his head to kiss him properly. It was an awkward angle, both craning their necks to reach the other's lips and unwilling to pull away while they shifted into a more comfortable position. They got there eventually, Shane on his back with Ilya propped up

above him. He tangled his hand in Ilya's curls and sucked greedily on his tongue. He loved kissing Ilya, loved the way he managed to dominate every one of his senses.

Ilya's hand slid from his neck down to paw at his chest. He kneaded and squeezed Shane's pec, then slid his thumb over his nipple. Shane gasped into his mouth and grinned when Ilya repeated the action.

"So sensitive," Ilya said. Shane caught a glimpse of the devilish look in Ilya's eye before he was ducking down to take one of Shane's nipples in his mouth. He sucked lightly and swirled his tongue around it while his hand played with the other. Shane hummed and let his eyes fall shut as he focused on the sensation. He already knew Ilya's mouth was talented and he didn't disappoint with this, either.

Ilya spit in his own hand and reached down to wrap his hand around Shane's dick. He was half-hard already and quickly swelling in Ilya's hand. It was dry and a bit rough and fuck it felt so good. He kept his eyes closed as he let Ilya's hand stroke him to full hardness.

"Fuck," he groaned. "Fuck." His lips must have stayed open because then Ilya was sliding his tongue into Shane's mouth. Shane kissed him back with a gasp and rolled his body up against Ilya's. Ilya was so fucking big, taller than Shane with shoulders broader than any figure skater needed to have. If it was vanity that had Ilya in the gym doing chest presses, Shane would never be the one to complain about it. He was pressing Shane down into the plush mattress, enveloping him in the warmth and the smell of him. "Ilya--"

"Beautiful," Ilya murmured against his cheek. It made Shane's face heat, not used to such an intimate comment but he couldn't focus enough to find a protest. The last vestiges of sleep were gone from his body, replaced by the buzz of arousal.

Shane came with a groan, spilling into Ilya's fist and across his own stomach. He was breathing hard after, feeling the last sparks fizzle through him as he came down from it. He opened his eyes and grinned up at Ilya. He opened his mouth to speak, but-

His phone started chirping on the nightstand.

"Fuck," he said, slapping blindly for his phone and silencing it. "My alarm."

Ilya laughed and dropped his face into the crook of Shane's neck, humming and kissing there. Shane stretched his neck to the side, wishing however fleetingly that he could just bite down without having to worry about who would see.

Ilya took a moment to breathe, then sat up again. He lifted his hand, still smeared with Shane's own come. Shane watched as Ilya lifted his hand to his mouth, licked Shane's come off his finger, and wiped his hand on the bedspread.

Shane wrinkled his nose. "You're gross."

Ilya gave him a baffled grin. "What? Is not gross if I suck it straight from your--"

"Okay!" Shane covered Ilya's mouth with his hand before he could keep going.

Shane could see the smile in Ilya's eyes as he just looked at him until Shane decided to remove it. After a long moment, Ilya asked. "Do you want to shower before you go?"

Shane nodded. "Yeah. Yes." Between the mess on his stomach and the sweat from sleeping plastered against Ilya, he really needed to clean up.

Ilya nodded and said, "Hit the showers, Hollander!" He said it in his best semblance of an American accent, though it sounded comical. Each word was precisely enunciated with the vowels rounded out in unexpected ways.

Shane laughed. "Who the fuck taught you that?"

"My best friend is American hockey nut," he said, falling back into his usual cadence. "And I see American movies. I pick up a few things."

"Whatever, Rozanov," Shane said. He glanced down to where Ilya was still hard against his hip. "Want me to take care of that first?"

Ilya looked over to the bathroom, then back down at Shane with a sly grin. "Multitask?"

«I would have shown you hot hockey players a long time ago if I knew that's what it would take to get you to go to a game with me,» Svetlana said as they sat down in their seats. The players for Team Canada and Team Latvia were on the ice in front of them, stretching and warming up. Some American pop song from the previous summer was playing over the speakers and everywhere he looked, Ilya saw Canadian and Latvian flags.

«But why bother looking if I know I can't touch?» Ilya said with a smirk.

«Oh, does that mean you're allowed to touch now?» she asked, voice teasing. He hadn't told her who he was seeing during the Olympics, and she hadn't pushed. But Svetlana was perceptive. She had easily figured out it was a hockey player. If she didn't know it was Shane yet, she would put the pieces together soon enough. Still, he would leave that unconfirmed as long as he could, if for nothing else than Shane's own privacy. He trusted her more than anyone in the world but wouldn't make that choice for him.

Ilya didn't respond, just sipped his drink and watched the ice. He easily picked Shane out from the back of his jersey. He was on the other side of the rink, on the ground doing a stretch that had Ilya leaning forward in his seat to get a better look. Shane was on all fours, hands braced on his stick for traction while he slid his knees out and stretched his hips. Ilya knew the stretch well, did it himself before practice most days. He couldn't really see Shane's ass beneath all the pads, his entire body bulked out into the generic shape of a hockey player, but watching him still made Ilya's mouth water.

«Does he know how bad you are at being subtle?» Svetlana asked. She had followed his gaze and could see exactly who and what he was watching.

Ilya just grinned, not taking his eyes off Shane. Another player strayed into his eyeline, a fellow player for Canada. His jersey said Comeau on the back and there was a white A over

his left breast. But what really caught his attention was the bruise under his eye. It looked new, maybe a couple days old. Long enough for the purple-black hue to set in but not enough for any of the other sickly colors that came with healing. «What do you know about him? Number 73.»

Svetlana looked for a moment. «Um, Gilbert Comeau. Forward. Captain of the Montreal Metros.» She didn't add anything else, and Ilya gave her an unimpressed look. «What? Are you planning to fuck him, too?»

He rolled his eyes. «I heard that maybe his...teammate is the one who gave him this,» Ilya said, tapping his own cheek.

Her eyebrows raised at that and turned back to watch him. «His *teammate* isn't much known for fighting,» she said, looking impressed. «Um, well Montreal and Boston are rivals, first of all. It goes back years and people get pretty intense about it. Both teams were looking to rebuild a few years ago. Boston got Hollander and they've been improving ever since. Probably making a Cup run this year for the first time in ages. Montreal hasn't been so lucky.»

«What do you mean?» Ilya asked.

She shrugged. «Depending who you ask, some people think the team has been cursed since the 90's. They keep signing these really promising players and then none of them work out. Actually the year Boston drafted Hollander, Montreal got second pick. That guy, Kerogyi, blew his knee out in his second season. Career ended at 21.»

Ilya's hummed, considering. «And that player, Comeau, is the team captain?» He knew Shane was captain in Boston as well as for Team Canada, had a vague idea of what that actually entailed. He doubted they gave the role to just any player.

«Yeah, probably the best player on the Metros, not that that counts for much these days,» she said. «Montreal only has two guys here, unless you count one of their minor league prospects who's here with Denmark. But they didn't even make it past qualifiers, anyway.»

Ilya hummed again, processing the information. It painted a clear picture. A promising hockey player on a failed team watching a younger, more talented player lead his country at the Olympics. It made sense why he had it out for Shane.

The subject was dropped as the players lined up for the opening face-off. Shane was doubled over, holding his stick close to the blade while some Latvian guy with hair so blond his eyebrows disappeared mirrored his posture.

It was a tight game. Latvia scored first, but Canada responded less than a minute later to tie it up. The announcer said that Shane got a primary assist. Ilya couldn't help but cheer at that, ignoring the all-too-knowing look from Svetlana.

«I like him for you,» Svetlana said while the game paused for a TV break.

«Like who?» Ilya asked, eyes wide with feigned innocence. He could only keep it up for so long under her knowing gaze. «How do you know if he's good for me?»

«He has a good reputation,» she said. «A bit uptight, maybe. Doesn't party. But he takes hockey as seriously as you take skating. And trust me, you cannot escape ads showing off his abs anywhere in Boston.»

«Who says I take skating seriously?» he laughed. Svetlana shoved his face away and focused back on the game as the players reset for another face-off.

Shane scored early in the third period, giving Canada the lead that would carry through until the end of the game. Ilya and Svetlana were both on their feet cheering as they watched the teams line up to shake hands. As the players all exited the ice, Shane cast his eyes up to meet Ilya's gaze with a grin as he passed.

The locker room was rowdy, as it usually was after a win. Shane felt good. Scoring the game winning goal in the Olympic quarterfinals was good enough for any player. He'd been pulled for press availability as soon as his skates left the ice but it had only taken ten minutes or so, the questions easy and expected.

“Hollzy!” a voice called from behind him. He was standing in front of his stall, pads in a pile and sweat-soaked compression shirt still tight around his chest. He turned and saw his coach holding up a hockey puck. Shane held out his hand and caught it easily when it was tossed to him. It was a regular game puck, printed on both sides with the Olympic rings and the logo for the Sochi Games. It was scraped and gouged from being played, half the rings entirely gone on one face. There was a strip of masking tape on the side, labeled in black sharpie. #24 CAN V. LAT GWG. The puck he'd scored the third period goal with.

“Great job, Cap,” his coach said.

Shane nodded and held up the puck with a grateful smile, then turned back to tuck it into his bag with his spare socks and phone charger.

“Yeah, great job, Cap,” Comeau said behind him. Shane straightened and turned to face him. Comeau was still pink-faced and damp from the shower. Shane waited half a beat to see if this was an olive branch or if Comeau was back for another round, but he didn't say anything else.

“Uh, thanks,” Shane said with a shrug. “You know how it is. Nice assist in the first.” He turned back to his stall and started peeling off the layers of sweaty clothes.

Comeau sat down in the stall next to Shane's. He glanced up at the nameplate on the upper shelf, reading *McMANN #74*. A winger from Toronto. He was probably still showering and wouldn't be mad about Comeau sitting in his stall for a few minutes but Shane would rather not have this interaction happening at all.

“Can you believe Russia lost to those fucks?” Comeau asked.

“Yeah, crazy upset,” Shane said. He didn't look over as he spoke. Could this guy take a fucking hint?

“Guess we shouldn't be surprised,” Comeau said. “Bunch of cocksuckers like that.” Shane looked at him, face flat. “What? I'm just saying there's clearly a reason they all come to North America to play.”

Shane considered pointing out that half the players on the Russian team were from the MLH. Hell, the only Russian player who'd scored in their game against Latvia had been Comeau's linemate. Instead he just said, “I gotta shower,” and walked off without waiting for a reply.

He knew what Comeau was doing, trying to smooth things over. They wouldn't be the first teammates to throw a couple punches and go out for drinks a couple nights later. But Shane really didn't want to spend any more time with Comeau than required. They could share ice time and exist next to each other on the bench but even knowing Comeau had been back to their shared room while Shane was staying with Ilya was closer than he'd like. Fuck.

Despite his protests, Shane was dragged out to a bar with his teammates that evening. Celebrating beating the team that beat Russia, they said. He managed to wave off most of the shots with a few stern, captainly warnings about keeping their heads on straight and representing their country when they were all covered in maple leafs head to toe. He nursed a beer and a half for a few hours, instead. It was getting late when he excused himself, stepping outside to get some air. The cool evening felt heavenly compared to the overheated air of the bar. He pulled out his phone, seeing several unread texts waiting for him. There were a couple from his teammates from Boston, one from his mother. Everyone was congratulating him on the win. And there in the middle of all of them...

Ilya: Great game. Come over and celebrate?

It had been sent nearly 2 hours before. He felt a bit bad not replying sooner but he hoped Ilya would understand. Shane started to type a response, then he paused. He wasn't sure if he should. Spending every night with Ilya would definitely start to raise some questions. And Comeau was clearly trying to ease the tensions between them after their altercation. Still, the idea of going back to the cramped bed, to the tense silence as they moved around each other in a space where Shane should be able to relax, of hearing the snowboarders who had just moved in next door drunkenly shouting again...

He hit the call button. Ilya picked up on the second ring.

“You are keeping me waiting, Hollander,” Ilya said. His voice was deep, rumbling in Shane's ear through the phone speaker. Shane couldn't help the way the smile came to his lips, the heat spreading under his skin despite the chilly evening.

“I had to celebrate,” Shane said. “Big win tonight.”

Ilya laughed. He sounded comfortable, relaxed. He was probably sprawled out in bed or something, getting ready to go to bed. “Could celebrate some more,” Ilya said.

Shane's eyebrows rose. “Yeah? Don't you have a competition tomorrow?”

“You think you make me too tired to skate?” Ilya asked. “Such a high opinion of yourself. Should really learn to be humble sometime. Nobody likes bragging.”

Shane laughed, leaning his head back against the wall behind him. “Oh, fuck off. You really want me to come over?”

“Mm,” Ilya hummed. “If you want to. Could be fun.”

Shane bit his lip. “Let me, uh... Let me swing by my room and grab some stuff. Be there in an hour?”

“I be waiting.”

Shane knocked on the hotel room door 55 minutes later. He was pulled inside by his jacket and pressed back against the door, Ilya kissing him hungrily. He kissed him back until his hands came up and felt what Ilya was wearing. He looked down and laughed when he saw the white, fleecy material. “What the fuck are you wearing?”

“Was left in my car,” Ilya said. “How does it look?”

Shane let his eyes wander. He realized Ilya was shirtless underneath, plains of muscle and a trail of tawny hair disappearing into his low-slung sweatpants. He looked good, soft and cozy. Shane didn't say anything, just leaned up to kiss him again, then pushed him back towards the bed. “Keep it on.”

Afterwards, sweaty and breathless in the afterglow, Shane turned to him. “How did you know?”

“Know what?” Ilya asked. His hair was a mess and his cheeks had a nice flush.

“About me,” he said. “That I was interested. In you.”

Ilya chuckled at that. “You weren't subtle, Hollander.”

Shane's eyebrows knit together. “The fuck does that mean?”

Ilya looked at him, face fond. “You flirt with me first.” Shane gave him a confused look. “That first day in the Village?”

Shane blinked, thinking back. “That first day... The smoking thing?” Ilya nodded. “I thought you were a fucking asshole, I wasn't flirting with you.”

Ilya laughed. “Okay, and when you come to watch me skate after that?”

“I was there to see a different skater,” he said. He was grinning now. “You thought I was there for you?” Ilya just grinned back and shrugged, nodding at him. “Jesus fuck.” Shane leaned in to kiss him, still smiling against his lips.

Ilya folded the jacket and set it next to Shane's bag when he got up to take a piss.

“No, keep it,” Shane said. He was still naked himself, wrapped up in the sheets. He wasn't a fan of how the microfiber material felt against his skin, anyway. Ilya made a face but picked up the jacket. “What's that look?” Shane asked with a laugh.

“Some gift,” Ilya said. “Is for your country. Cannot even wear it outside.” He was grinning as he said it, clearly teasing.

Shane rolled his eyes and walked over, digging through his bag. “Fine, how about this?” He pulled out the puck from the game earlier and handed it to Ilya, who regarded it skeptically.

“Is a hockey puck.” He flipped it over to look at the scuffed printing. “A used one.”

Shane grabbed it back and turned it so Ilya could see the side with the masking tape label. “You're holding the puck that scored the goal that eliminated Latvia,” he said. “I avenged you or whatever.”

Ilya took the puck again, regarding it carefully. “Is kind of ugly.” Shane tried to grab for the puck again, feeling suddenly silly, but Ilya clutched it to his chest. “No, is mine!” Shane laughed and shook his head. “Is one more thing I want, though.”

“Oh?” Shane tilted his face up to Ilya and kissed him back when Ilya pressed their lips together.

Shane was sitting in the crowd of the figure skating rink the next day, excited to see Ilya skate. It would be the same short program as before, or close to it, but he was excited nonetheless.

“He should be in the next group,” Svetlana said beside him. The zamboni was making lazy laps around the rink. Shane had been a bit nervous about sitting with Svetlana, but the singles figure skating seats were in high demand and Ilya had an extra seat. He had met her very briefly with Ilya and he knew she was from Boston, but it still felt a bit awkward.

The final four skaters were out on the ice now, running through their warmups. It was a similar group to the final group from the team event, with Joe and Ilya on one side of the ice. The same Japanese skater was currently holding the blade of his skate behind his head and spinning. The American skater had gone in the previous group, though. Instead, a skater from Kazakhstan was currently practicing a jump near the center of the rink.

Shane glanced repeatedly between Joe and Ilya, feeling an odd, anxious guilt deep in his stomach. He still didn't think he'd done anything wrong, but the entire situation was so mixed up now. It felt even weirder now when he saw Joe glancing at him a couple times. He knew Shane was here and was clearly unsure why, considering how their last conversation had ended. Shane fought the urge to sink down in his seat, hoping he wasn't somehow throwing off his focus just by being there. He would try to reach out sometime after the Olympics ended, he decided. Clear the air between them.

“So, you live in Boston?” Shane asked, trying to focus on anything other than the ice.

“Yeah, where are you from?” she asked, holding her inquisitive look for just a moment before breaking into a smile that said she was teasing. “Yeah, I’m from Boston.”

“How do you know Ilya?” he asked. “I mean, Russia's a big place, right?”

“Our dads are old buddies,” she said. “From before my dad was in the MLH. My dad liked to go back to Russia every summer, which meant I got dragged along when I eventually came along. We just kind of stuck.”

Shane smiled, imagining her and Ilya as kids. It was a nice picture, the two of them knob-kneed and gap-toothed. Two heads of curly hair bobbing along and digging for worms.

“What do you do in Boston?” Shane asked.

“I’m in sales,” she said. “Cars. Mainly foreign imports.”

“Oh, nice,” he said. Shane had never been especially into cars. His car in Boston had been bought for practicality, getting around in the winter and hauling gear. A couple guys from the Raiders were into sports cars, he knew, but he never saw the appeal of a garage full of fancy cars he never drove.

“So, you and Ilyusha...” she said. Her voice took on a stronger accent as it rolled over the syllables of the name. *Ilyusha*.

“Yeah?” Shane said, hoping he sounded casual. He wasn't sure how much Svetlana knew, about him or even about Ilya. A wave of anxiety roiled in his stomach.

“You're not the usual kind of person I would expect him to be...friends with,” she said. She was looking back at the ice now, eyes tracking Ilya as he performed a quick jump.

Shane hummed, mulling over her words. “Is that...bad?”

She shook her head. “No. No, I think you're good for him, actually. I told him so.”

“Yeah?” Shane liked the sound of that, and then felt weird about liking the sound of that. He and Ilya hadn't talked about...anything, really. What they were doing or what they would be once the Olympics ended. They were floating here, in a beautiful bubble with the rest of the world on pause.

“Yeah,” Svetlana said. She turned back to look at him, grinning. “My Ilyusha deserves the best. And you're taking the Cup this year, so that's you.”

Shane laughed at that. “You really think we're winning the Cup this year?” he asked. “Or are you just saying that because you’re a Raiders fan?”

“Little of A, little of B?” she said with a laugh. She put her hand on his arm. “I mean it, though. Both things.”

Shane ducked his head and smiled. “Thanks.”

They were interrupted by the end of warmups. The skaters left the ice, leaving only Joe out there getting ready to perform. Shane watched intently, still feeling the weirdness but hoping nonetheless that he did well. He was Canadian, he was from Ottawa. And even with the mess that was this situation, he was still an old friend of Shane's. Maybe even could be a friend again.

Joe skated well. The crowd cheered and clapped after different elements, he didn't fall, and everything looked clean to Shane's eye. He bowed to each side of the arena as flowers and plushies were thrown onto the ice. Shane cheered with everyone else, throwing out a few whoops for good measure.

Joe headed to the kiss and cry after he left the ice. The Kazakh skater took to the ice while they all waited for the scores to be announced. The noise in the arena dropped to a low murmur in anticipation.

"Representing Canada, Joe Pedretti," the announcer boomed. "43.37." Shane tried to read Joe's posture to see how that measured up but he couldn't tell anything from the distance.

"How much do you know about figure skating?" he asked Svetlana as the next skater began. He had to lean in a bit to talk over the music.

"What a complicated question," she said. Shane gave her a confused look. "Well, most people on the street wouldn't know anything other than that Michelle Kwan is someone who exists so compared to that, a lot."

"And compared to people in this room?" Shane asked.

"Moderate," she said, wiggling her hand. She gestured towards the kiss and cry, Joe and his coach now absent. "His score was good but not as good as the team event. He had a quad he landed in the team event which he dropped down to a triple this time. He's in the lead right now but knows he's probably missing the podium. He's back there hoping for someone to break an ankle or something."

Shane snorted. "I don't think he has that in him."

"They all do," she said, with a certainty that Shane couldn't really argue with.

The next two skaters did well. One of them fell while the other skated well to Shane's eye but one maneuver had people around him letting out disappointed "oooh" sounds so clearly something went wrong. He felt out of his depth watching figure skating but Svetlana leaned over regularly to explain different elements and rules.

Ilya was the final skater, taking the ice as the score was announced for the Japanese skater. Japan was now in first place, with Kazakhstan in second and Canada in third. The medal wasn't being awarded yet, Svetlana reminded Shane as he chewed his lip. That would happen the next day once the scores from the short program and free skate were combined. Shane just nodded and kept his eyes glued on Ilya.

He looked comfortable as he skated to the center. Ilya rolled one shoulder, then the other as he meandered to a stop. It was the same costume Shane had seen him in before, black turning into icy blue at the shoulders. From the distance, the swirling design became less distinct and it reminded Shane more of frost creeping across a dark window. Down below, the same yellow laces stood brightly against his skates.

Ilya seemed at ease when the program began, moving through familiar motions with his signature flourish. His first jump was clean and Shane could see the pleased smile on his face as he continued his routine. The combination went similarly well. The clip of his skates against the ice was crisp and clear. Ilya continued on, building up speed as he went into the step sequence.

There was one more jump coming and Shane leaned forward in his seat when he heard the music swell. Ilya looked strong approaching the moment, arms swinging at his sides to gain momentum. He jumped, spun three times in the air. As his skates came down to the ice, something twisted out of alignment. There was a stutter and he took a large step to maintain balance. He kept his skates under him, he didn't fall, but it clearly broke the flow of the element. Shane's heart broke as he realized what he'd witnessed. There were murmurs and groans from spectators around him as they came to the same realizations.

Ilya's routine ended soon after and Shane could tell from the set of his shoulders that he was upset even before Ilya turned to bow to Shane and Svetlana's side of the arena.

Ilya made his way to the kiss and cry alongside his coach. Shane could see him shaking his head as he sat and waited for the score. It came after a tense wait.

"Representing Russia, Ilya Rozanov," said the announcer. "46.24!"

Shane looked up at the screen to see it update. Ilya was in second place behind Japan and Joe was out of the top three entirely.

"I should go find him," Svetlana said. She didn't wait for Shane to respond before she was weaving through the crowd.

Shane didn't know what he was supposed to do. The scores were tight, with Ilya less than half a point behind. Still, he knew he wouldn't have been happy with the performance. He wanted to talk to him but Svetlana had left before he could offer to come with her.

He decided to wait a few hours and make his way to Ilya's hotel after dinner. He nodded to the doorman and walked the now-familiar path through the lobby to the elevator. Shane was still sure to leave or cover any of his Team Canada clothing and pull a hat down over his face. It was an easy enough explanation that there were a lot of athletes staying in this hotel and the Olympics were known for spawning friendships that crossed borders, but he would still rather not deal with the questions about it at all.

He knocked and waited a moment for the door to open. Ilya looked surprised to see him. His hair was a mess and his shirt was rumpled. Shane was suddenly uncertain. He hadn't exactly texted ahead that he was on the way. He hadn't even checked with Svetlana to see if she would be here.

Ilya stepped back to let him in without a word.

“You looked good out there,” Shane said. He reached for Ilya and pulled the man's arms around his shoulders. Ilya felt stiff against him.

“I looked like shit,” Ilya said.

“You’re half a point out of first,” Shane said.

Ilya stepped back, out of Shane's reach and scrubbed his hands over his face. “I fucked up my quad. I missed gold in team event. This is my last chance and...” He swore in Russian.

“Hey, hey,” Shane said. He reached up to touch Ilya's cheek, making him meet his gaze. Ilya's eyes were wild, desperate. “What can I do?”

“I need...” Ilya took a shuddering breath. “My brain...too loud. Need to shut it off.”

Shane didn't need to hear anything else. He sank to his knees, looking up at Ilya through his lashes in a way he hoped looked seductive. He reached up to cup him through his pants. He was soft, but Shane was confident he could fix that.

“What are you doing?” Ilya asked, as if it wasn't perfectly obvious. Shane leaned in to nuzzle against his crotch, mouthing lightly against the fabric.

“You need to get out of your head,” Shane said. He looked up at him again as he pulled down the waistband of his joggers. He nosed at the outline of Ilya's cock in his underwear. He smelled good, like detergent and musk.

“And you can help me with that?” Ilya asked.

Shane looked over to the armchair in the corner. “Take a seat.”

Ilya stepped away immediately, shucking his pants and underwear together and tossing them vaguely towards the closet. Shane took a moment just to watch him walk. Ilya's ass was something to behold, filled out in a way that only a lifetime in ice skates could provide. Ilya tossed his shirt aside, too, leaving him naked as he sank into the chair. “Coming, Hollander?” Ilya asked and Shane realized he was still on his knees.

Shane rose and walked across the room. Ilya tracked him all the way, craning his neck to look up at him as he came closer. He leaned down to kiss Ilya's slack lips, then kissed his chest, and dropped to his knees again between Ilya's spread thighs.

Ilya's dick was still soft when Shane leaned in to nuzzle the soft hair on his stomach and wrap a hand around it. He was gentle, kissing his stomach as he coaxed him to hardness. It was already working, Ilya's cock stirring in his hand. He looked down and pressed a kiss right at the base, then another to the mole on the side of the shaft. Then he took him into his mouth, taking him to the root while he still could without choking. Ilya groaned above him, sliding his hand up into Shane's hair. It felt good and Shane let his eyes closed as he set an easy rhythm. He wanted to take his time, to take Ilya apart with only his mouth.

Ilya was getting louder above him, moaning in English and Russian. The hand in Shane's hair tightened several times, and Shane wished he would just grab his hair and pull but wasn't sure how to communicate that without taking his mouth off of Ilya and that was absolutely not an option. Instead, he just focused on every gasp and moan that fell out of Ilya's mouth, trying to make him lose control.

He could tell by the sound that Ilya was about to come. He didn't pull off, just kept sucking him through it. Shane swallowed around Ilya as he came, then pulled off with a satisfied grin and a lick to his lower lip. It was the first time he'd ever swallowed after sucking a dick, the few other times ending in his hand or one time on his shirt. He hadn't thought he would like it but something about it with Ilya made his skin buzz and his mind go fuzzy.

Ilya was still breathing hard when he looked down at him and said, "Get up here."

Shane grinned and slid easily into his lap. Ilya let his hands roam up under the hem of his shirt. Shane felt on display like this in a heady way. Fully clothed, not even removing his hoodie, while Ilya was completely naked. It made him feel wild, like his want was so extreme he couldn't even take the time to remove his clothes. Maybe it was. He leaned in to kiss him while Ilya's own hand moved to paw at him where he was hard in his own pants.

"I only do that for winners, you know," Shane said, practically against his lips. He wasn't sure where the words were coming from.

"Oh?" Ilya said. He looked dazed. His eyes were glassy as they looked up at him.

"Yeah," Shane said. "So you're gonna go out there tomorrow and bring me a gold medal. And then I'm gonna go win mine." He placed his mouth right beside Ilya's ear. "And then you're gonna fuck me until I can't speak."

Ilya groaned loudly. "Get on the fucking bed, Hollander," he growled.

Ilya was the last to skate. He knew he could take gold if he wanted to. His starting technical score was the highest by far. He'd taken a hit to his points the prior day but multiple falls and upsets earlier in the Free Skate event left him in a good position. All he had to do was execute. He skated to the center of the ice and dropped his head.

His costume was different for this program, new and custom for the Olympics. It was the same silhouette as his short program costume but the blue had been replaced. It faded in a steady gradient up to his shoulders, glittering gold. It gave the illusion that he had been dusted with powdered gold.

With me, Mama, he thought.

The music began. It was a faster paced song than the one he used for his short program and the routine matched it. Immediately, he was flying, skating backwards down the length of the rink.

The free skate was longer than the short program, with more required elements to match. It was as much an endurance contest as an artistic effort. Anything in the second half of the routine was even awarded a bonus to account for the fatigue skaters would be experiencing by then.

Ilya's first jump came quickly, a triple Axel. The same jump he'd done at the public training event to show off to Shane. It was a difficult jump to execute. Two different skaters that day had struggled to complete the 3 ½ rotations necessary and more than that hadn't even attempted it.

As soon as his skates left the ice, Ilya could feel that this was a perfect jump. The way his skates pressed together, the feel of the cold air rushing across his cheeks.

The entire arena faded out from there. He fell into the flow of the performance. He always found at the end of performances that his best ones were ones he barely remembered. All his rehearsing, all his training meant he only noticed errors in his performance. A step out of a jump, a sloppy spin, a lag that meant he was rushing to keep up with the music. None of that happened this time. His jumps were crisp, his footwork precise. He was perfect.

The music stopped and for two rapid beats of Ilya's heart, the entire arena was silent. Then applause exploded and Ilya fell to his knees, vision blurring with tears. Spectators were on their feet and flowers and plushies were raining down upon the ice around him.

He'd done it. He'd skated the entire routine cleanly, beautifully. He could feel it in every cell of his being. He'd done it. He was so fucking sure he'd done it.

Had he done it?

He was led to the kiss and cry in a daze. His coach was at one side, Svetlana materializing at the other. He'd finished his part and now he simply had to wait for the score. It felt like the longest wait of his life.

His coach leaned closer to him, covering her mouth to hide what she was saying from the cameras. «You need 89.34 or above to win.» Ilya nodded, eyes focused on the screen, as if he might miss it if he took his eyes away for a moment.

After approximately three eternities, the announcer came over the speaker. “Representing Russia, Ilya Rozanov has earned a score of 92.70!” The screen updated as soon as the words were out and there it was confirmed. His name at the top of the standings.

First place.

Gold.

Ilya let out a yell and immediately turned to grab Svetlana in a tight hug. She was laughing against his neck, slapping his back and gripping him back. He felt kisses pressed to his face over and over, smearing the tears streaming down his cheeks.

«Congratulations, Ilyusha.» It was a woman's voice in his ear but he couldn't be sure it was Svetlana's.

The medal ceremony was a blur. He stood on top of the podium with a skater from Japan on one side and Kazakhstan on the other. He received his medal and a small plush rabbit which he held awkwardly, not sure what to do with it. He took photos pretending to bite his medal and listened to the Russian anthem ring through the arena. It all happened like he was watching it from outside, a spectator rather than the center of it all. Years of work, nearly two decades of dreaming. Promises made to himself in the mirror while clutching his mother's cross around his neck.

Fuck.

He spoke to a few press outlets briefly after the ceremony. They all asked the same questions. How does it feel to win gold? What does this win mean to him? Does he think his mother would be proud? He tripped over his words in both English and Russian, his heart rate still just as high now as it was when he first finished his routine.

Finally, he was able to walk down the hall towards the dressing room. The sweat had dried on his brow and into his hair and he desperately needed to wash up. As soon as he entered, he saw Shane stand up from a chair, thumbs hooked into his pockets like he didn't know what to do with his hands. He grinned when he saw Ilya. As soon as the door closed, he was walking up to Ilya and kissing him. “You did it.”

“Yes,” Ilya said, grinning against his lips. Then, “How did you get back here?”

Shane shrugged, arms around Ilya's neck. “You think people stop me when I'm in an ice rink?” He paused. “Also, Svetlana told me where to go and got me in.”

Ilya laughed and nodded, then kissed Shane again. “We are going out to celebrate. Me and Sveta, some of the other Russian skaters. Come with? Most of them speak English I think.”

Shane thought for a moment. “Probably not a good look for me to be celebrating with you after Canada just fell off the podium entirely.” Ilya pouted at that. It wasn't his fault Shane's friend didn't medal. “But you remember what I said about winners?” Ilya's scowl immediately disappeared and he nodded. “Let me know when you're back in your room?” Shane's hand slid down to stroke over the medal around Ilya's neck. “I want to get a closer look at this in private.”

Ilya and Svetlana wound up at a bar with the other skaters but Ilya waved off most of the shots they tried to buy him. He didn't like to turn down a party but he also had some ideas about how he wanted that night to end and he wanted to be at least somewhat clearheaded for that.

It was nearly four hours later that Ilya was walking through the hotel lobby, already pulling out his phone to text Shane.

Ilya: You come now 🐈

Ilya pulled him into the room by his shirt when he arrived, pushing the door closed by shoving Shane against it. He kissed him roughly and Shane responded immediately, sliding both hands into Ilya's hair.

“How's it fucking feel?” Shane gasped against his lips.

“Wouldn't you like to know?” Ilya was tugging at Shane's clothing impatiently, pulling his shirt over his head before pressing in for another hungry kiss. He wanted everything at once, hating to give even enough space for Shane to remove his clothes.

Shane rolled his hips against Ilya's and gasped. “Where do you want me?”

Ilya dropped his head against Shane's shoulder, sucking at his neck while his hands slid down the back of his pants to grip his ass. He savored it, then finally straightened up to look him in the eye. “On the bed. Get undressed.” He punctuated it with another kiss, more a nip to his lips than anything else, and then reluctantly pulled away.

Ilya turned and started stripping as he walked to the bed, then flopped down easily. Shane was still undressing, leaving his clothes in a neat pile on the bureau. He knee walked across the bed to Ilya, cock half hard already. Ilya pulled Shane on top of him and kissed him hungrily. It was desperate, messy. The adrenaline still hadn't stopped thrumming in Ilya's veins and every soft hum and gasp was driving him wild. It had been hours of him thinking about this.

“What do you want?” Shane asked. He shifted on top of Ilya, legs spreading to straddle him.

Ilya grinned, big and sly. “I want to fuck you.”

Shane paused. “I still have to win my own medal.”

Ilya shook his head. “Trust me?”

Shane nodded, no hesitation. It made Ilya's heart stutter. He kissed him again, then said, “On your side. Face the window.” Shane slid off of him and faced away from him, craning his head to look back. Ilya slid in behind him and kissed Shane's neck, hands sliding over him. Shane pressed back against him with a groan. “I fuck you like this,” Ilya said, running his hand over Shane's flank. There was a bruise there and he was careful not to press too hard on it.

“Ilya-”

“I don't fuck you here,” Ilya said, sliding his hand down to ghost over Shane's hole and then further down to the seam between his thighs, just below his taint. The skin was soft and smooth here, less hair than further down on his legs. “I fuck you here.”

Shane gasped. “O-oh...” Ilya slid his hand in deeper, twisting and teasing his taint and balls.

“Is okay?” he asked. Shane nodded and Ilya kissed his neck again. “Cross your legs for me.” He pulled away and turned to grab the bottle of lube from the nightstand. Shane did as

instructed, crossing his top leg over the bottom. It was a beautiful view, accentuating the curve of his ass and the width of his shoulders. "Fuck, Shane," he groaned.

"You gonna fuck me?" Shane asked.

Ilya responded by opening the bottle of lube, drizzling it into his hand and sliding his hand around to wrap around Shane's cock. He was already hard and thrust his hips forward into Ilya's hand. Ilya pressed hungry kisses along Shane's shoulder and neck. Shane shuddered and pressed back against him. Ilya kept stroking him, pace slow and languid.

He took his time with it, grinding against his ass while he stroked Shane. Shane could be so responsive and Ilya delighted in finding every noise he could get from him. Shane's face flushed and he craned his neck back for a kiss.

"Fuck me," he said again, lips sliding against Ilya's.

Ilya drizzled more lube on his hand, then slid the hand between Shane's thighs from behind. His skin was hot, and now it was slick. He thrust his hand in and out to spread it fully. Shane clenched his thighs around Ilya's wrist, the feeling making his dick throb.

He slicked his cock for good measure, then lined up and slid in between Shane's thighs. "Hold your legs a bit tighter," Ilya said, giving a couple experimental thrusts. Shane obeyed and tightened the gap. Ilya moaned and adjusted his angle, then started thrusting in earnest.

Shane felt so fucking good around him, hot and slick and soft. Shane gasped as his cock slid along his balls and nudged his cock from underneath. He rocked his hips back against Ilya as best he could with the angle and threw his arm back to hold onto Ilya as he continued to thrust.

Ilya stroked him in time with his rhythm, chasing each gasp and whimper Shane gave him. He loved knowing that Shane was enjoying this, even as Ilya took his own pleasure from his body.

The room was filled with slick sounds and grunts. They moved together with an increasing desperation.

"So fucking good," Ilya groaned.

"You gonna come?" Shane asked. He was breathless, voice barely catching. Ilya nodded against his shoulder and adjusted his angle. "Give it to me."

Ilya came with a groan, spilling between Shane's thighs. He buried his face in Shane's neck as he rode out his orgasm. It felt fucking incredible. He kept stroking Shane's dick as best he could, rhythm faltering only briefly. Shane came soon after, spilling into Ilya's hand.

They stayed like that for a long time after, both breathing hard. "Fuck," Ilya finally said, the first to break the silence. They were both sweaty and overheated but Ilya didn't want to lose the closeness, not yet.

Shane was the one who finally pulled away. He laughed and rolled into his back. "Fuck," he agreed. He let his legs splay and looked down, scrunching up his nose. "Fuck, I'm such a mess."

Ilya laughed, too, and sat up. Shane wasn't wrong. The mess of lube and come between his legs was obscene, sticky and glistening in the lamplight. Most of his own come had wound up on Ilya's hand but a few drips were smeared across his belly, too. "Mm, I like you like this." He doubted Shane would let him take a picture but he committed the sight to memory.

"Fuck off," Shane said. He sounded sleepy and reached up to rub his face. "Go get us some washcloths or something."

Ilya leaned down to kiss his shoulder and squeeze Shane's pec, then walked to the bathroom to help them both get cleaned up.

Wiped clean and underneath the blankets, Shane pressed close to him as they settled in to sleep. He loved Shane like this, warm and pliant. He had such a stiff set to his shoulders whenever he showed up and seeing it drop away when he was around Ilya made him feel settled somewhere deep in his chest. Ilya fell asleep feeling with their fingers intertwined.

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

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

The arena was already buzzing with anticipation when Ilya and Svetlana made their way to their seats. The semifinals were facing Team USA and both teams were fighting hard. It was do or die. Whichever team lost today would go to the bronze medal game against the loser of Sweden vs. Finland. They would still have a chance for a medal, but Ilya knew they were all like him and Shane. Anything less than gold was failure.

«You didn't have to wear a Team USA jacket,» Ilya said, leaning over and elbowing Svetlana. She was wearing a black zip up hoodie with U.S.A. across the chest in glittery letters. Much like the figure skating finals, tickets for these games were hard to come by. Shane had managed to get two of them together in a section dominated by Team Canada fans and athletes.

«I think if I had shown up wearing a maple leaf, they would revoke both of my passports,» she said, taking a sip of her drink. Ilya just laughed and checked his watch. Puck drop would be any moment.

The game was somehow both intense and boring as hell. From the moment the puck hit the ice, it was clear both sides were fighting for it with a vengeance. It seemed like every time the whistle blew, players were shoving each other, angling for fights that the refs broke up before any proper punches could be thrown.

«Why do they stop them?» Ilya asked. It was halfway through first period and one of the Americans had just been sent to the penalty box for roughing. It had looked fairly mild to Ilya, though. Even with as much as he tried not to pay attention to hockey, he knew that fights were common.

«Different rules,» Svetlana said. «All of these guys are used to the MLH but the Olympics will eject you from the game if you throw a punch.»

Ilya hummed, focusing back in on the game just as the timer ran out and the American player hopped out of the penalty box.

First period ended with no score and a large scrum breaking out in front of the Canadian goal with Shane right in the middle of it. The refs all rushed over, tugging them apart and putting themselves between opposing players. Ilya laughed as one especially young-looking American player was pulled back by his padding, still yelling all the while. He looked like a kitten getting scruffed.

«The guy he's yelling at is his linemate from back in San Francisco,» Svetlana said. Ilya gave her a confused look. «I told you, they're all MLH. They all play with each other or against each other. It's probably why no one can score.» The crowd was finally broken up, with players from both teams heading down their respective tunnels looking frustrated.

«So what happens when they all have to play on their own teams again?» Ilya asked. The zambonis were circling the ice now while the camera on the jumbotron searched the crowd for the dance-cam.

Svetlana laughed and shook her head. «This happens at every international tournament. They'll be best friends by the time the Olympic break ends next week.»

The second period started with the same intensity. It felt like every time Ilya blinked, the players were racing to the opposite end of the ice. It was hard to even track the puck but Svetlana kept up an ongoing commentary for him.

«Alright, Hunter has it. He's lining up and...oh, that one was close. Now Erikson has it. Where's the defense- Shit, Comeau got it. No, idiot, that shot obviously wasn't going to work. Oh, Hollander's back on.» Ilya tracked Shane as he raced down the ice, radiating power and control. An American had the puck, speeding down the boards towards the Canadian zone, when suddenly Shane was there, slamming him into the glass. Ilya was sitting one section up, but he could still hear the sound clearly and he could have sworn Shane's eyes flicked up to meet his own. And then he was off, puck in his possession.

«Hollzy has it,» Svetlana said. «Breakaway. Oh, fakeout. Dangle. Oh!» The stands erupted as Shane Hollander wrapped around the goal and tucked the puck right past the line. Ilya was on his feet immediately, shouting as loud as he could. Svetlana was a bit more subdued with the big U.S.A. emblazoned across her chest but she got to her feet and clapped, too.

Third period started with a vengeance. Team USA was behind now. They had 20 minutes to tie it up for any chance to progress to the finals. Their desperation was matched by Canada closing ranks, playing close and hard in a way that even Ilya could see. There was a hunger on both sides, increasing as the seconds counted down.

«Not looking like they'll repeat the miracle,» Svetlana said dryly as an American player took a shot that went well wide and banged against the glass. Another American passed it to his teammate who hammered a one-timer towards the goal. It was easily intercepted and the ref blew the whistle as soon as the Canadian goalie caught it.

Ilya laughed. «Americans win one hockey game and call it a miracle for 40 years.» Svetlana just smiled and shook her head, eyes tracking the puck as the ref dropped it for another face-off.

With four minutes left, Ilya saw the American goalie skating towards the bench. The rest of the players were all down in the Canadian zone but Ilya still looked between them all anxiously. «Where is he going? Is he hurt?» It was hard to tell if the sluggish movements were from pain or from wearing so much padding.

Svetlana glanced up at the clock and raised her eyebrows. «Oh, they pulled him early. Watch, another skater is about to come on.» Sure enough, a player with VAUGHN on his jersey skated out, joining the fray. He immediately received a pass and shot it at the goal. The puck went wide, bouncing off the wall into the possession of one of his teammates. At Ilya's confused look, she said, «It's a last ditch measure. Pull your goalie to have an extra skater and try and score. It doesn't always pay off though, because it means...» She trailed off.

watching as a Canadian player stole the puck and immediately shot it down the ice towards the American goal. «That.» Players from both sides took off after the puck, Americans trying to stop it and Canadians trying to defend. The puck missed the goal by inches and the refs blew the whistle. «That's icing. It's coming back down this way.»

Ilya's eyes were wide, watching each moment closely. Years of being dragged to games and this was the first time watching hockey had ever felt like this. Like he couldn't get a full breath until the clock ran out, like he was waiting on each moment to know if his heart was allowed to beat. He looked up at the clock anxiously. One minute left.

As the clock passed the 15 second mark, a low roar started to run through the Team Canada fans. It rose as the seconds ticked down, people stomping their feet and clapping.

5...4...3...2...1

The horn blared and Ilya was on his feet again, hauling Svetlana up beside him. On the ice, all the Canadians were gathered in a blob as they celebrated. He caught a glimpse of Shane somewhere in the middle, grinning widely.

Shane felt like his stomach was in his throat. He couldn't remember the last time he was this nervous. Probably the day of the draft. Maybe the day of his first MLH game. But this was completely different. He knew what to do the day of the draft, knew he was all-but-guaranteed a spot. He knew how to play hockey. He didn't know how to...

“You can still back out.” Ilya's voice was deep in his ear, one large hand sliding up to grip the base of his neck. They were standing behind the partition which shielded them from view of the rest of the arena. The pressure was reassuring, grounding.

Ilya looked good, curls carefully tamed back from his face. His outfit was somehow more and less gaudy than his competition costumes. There were no sequins but the top of the outfit was a flowy cheetah print blouse with black pants on the bottom. When Shane asked about the outfit, Ilya just said Shane didn't get it.

Shane grinned and shook his head. Despite the nerves, his voice was strong. “Not a chance.”

Ilya smiled and glanced around, ensuring they were truly alone. Moving fast, Ilya leaned in to kiss his cheek. “You need to listen to the song again?”

He shook his head. “No. Um, you said the spotlight will only be on me during the chorus?”

Ilya nodded back. “Yes, is on me the rest of the time. You don't even have to skate. Just stand there and look pretty.” Shane laughed and shrugged. He was in skates and his Team Canada jersey. Red with a white maple leaf on the chest, name and number emblazoned across the back in case anyone didn't already recognize him. He knew he'd be asked about it, probably chirped to hell and back about it back home. Somehow, he didn't care.

Ilya was announced soon after and they emerged from behind the screen to roaring applause. Shane had caught a glimpse of the arena before but he got a better view of it now. The lights

were down low, even on the ice. Swirling purple shapes were projected down onto the surface and a spotlight followed them as soon as they stepped onto the rink.

Shane and Ilya skated out to the center of the ice, Shane in his hockey skates and Ilya in his figure skating ones. Shane could hardly see the audience. He knew Svetlana was out there, probably Joe and the rest of Team Canada's figure skaters. And then the cameras broadcasting it worldwide. Shane still couldn't quite believe he'd agreed to this, but Ilya had shown him a routine from a previous Exhibition Gala which seemed to be some sort of slapstick routine in addition to a figure skating program. It made him laugh and also reassured him that it wouldn't be *too* weird for him to be involved. Hell, he'd even seen a speed skater he was pretty sure took bronze waiting with another skater for a later routine.

The center of the rink was marked by the Olympic rings painted beneath the ice. Ilya led him out to it and stopped. They both turned away from each other and Shane crossed his arms, leaning back against Ilya while they waited for the song to start. Shane's stomach had time for one more flutter before the music started.

He could hear Ilya saying the words out loud when it did.

"Yo, I'll tell you what I want, what I really, really want!" Ilya turned towards Shane, gesturing with his hand.

"So, tell me what you want, what you really, really want!" He leaned away, smiling as he mouthed the words.

"I'll tell you what I want, what I really, really want!" Ilya was grinning now, his eyes bright.

"So, tell me what you want, what you really, really want!" Shane tilted his head as he said it, like he was challenging Ilya.

"I wanna, I wanna, I wanna, I wanna, I wanna really, really, really wanna zigazig, ah!" Shane always laughed at that line, and then Ilya was off.

He practically flew around the rink, spotlight following him and leaving Shane almost completely in darkness. Ilya did a few turns and then launched himself into the air for a jump. He landed it easily, catching himself on one foot and continuing the same graceful line across the ice. Then, almost faster than Shane thought possible, Ilya was back by his side and they were repeating the same lines again.

It went on like that, Shane turning to watch Ilya skate. It was breathtaking to see from this vantage point. The crowd faded away and he was the only thing in the room. Shane had no doubt he'd be commanding all attention even if he wasn't under a spotlight with every camera in the arena trained on him. He was magnificent. He was beautiful.

Ilya skated through his entire routine looking calm and comfortable. He took his jumps with confidence and went through a step sequence so complex Shane couldn't quite keep track of what he was doing, blades flashing in the spotlight.

The song was just over three minutes and it was done before Shane thought possible. All at once, Ilya was back and Shane was posed next to him as the Spice Girls sang one last repeat of “If you wanna be my lover...”

Ilya was breathing hard, sweat beading on his face, and then the entire arena was erupting in applause. Shane waited until Ilya moved to drop the pose. Ilya let out a laugh and bent over at the waist for a moment, then turned to hug Shane tightly. Shane hugged him back, slapping him in the back a few times, before Ilya pulled away and started bowing to each side of the arena. He elbowed Shane, who immediately bowed as well, following Ilya's lead.

They skated off together, the crowd still cheering until they dipped back behind the partition again. Shane couldn't stop smiling.

Shane was sitting in the locker room the next day, earbuds in, playing white noise while he blocked out all the chaos around him. He was half in his pads already, skates on and not yet tied. He was surprised that the comments about the gala were limited to a few mild chirps, but there were a couple comments about Svetlana as well which maybe explained it. Some of the sports gossip pages back home had posted photos of the two of them together at the figure skating finals. She was identified soon after and the story quickly became rumors of a romance. A few of them called her Boston hockey royalty because of her father. One story had even described it as a “fairytale” and quoted unnamed sources that Shane was certain were entirely made up for clicks.

As ridiculous as the reporting was, most of the guys seemed to buy that there was at least some truth to it. And if she was such good friends with Ilya, then it made sense why Shane would be willing to help him with the gala performance. He didn't love having to lean on that lie, using Svetlana that way, but he also didn't do anything to convince people otherwise. He hoped Svetlana would understand. He'd buy her a drink or something when they were back in Boston. She'd insisted they keep in touch after the Olympics, after all.

He tried once again to put all that noise out of his head. This was the big one, the gold medal game. The USA had bested Finland the day before in the bronze medal game and today Canada was facing Sweden. Sweden was another team dominated by players from teams in North America so while it meant Shane knew what to expect, what he was expecting was a hard fight for gold. Every player in the two dressing rooms were already medalists, but only one team would be leaving as the true winners that day.

If the semifinals against the USA had been a hard fought battle, the finals were a victory lap. The Swedish defense crumbled, the offense never materialized at all. Shane was curious to see what the o-zone possession time looked like because he was sure it was pitiful.

The one true saving grace between them and a thorough routing was their goalie. It was a shooting gallery from Canada but he was a brick wall in net. Shane knew he would be watching replays of some of the seemingly impossible saves the guy made.

Canada was up 3-0 by the end of the second period and Canada had more than double the shots on goal. One of the goals was Shane's, and he'd grabbed an assist as well. The locker room was loud and excited when Shane got back from talking to reporters at intermission.

The current state of the game gave his teammates a sense bravado. They were acting like the medals were already in their hands.

“Alright, keep your head on straight,” Shane told JJ when he threw an arm around Shane's shoulders and shook him.

“Aw, come on!” JJ said. He more yelled it, really. “Hey assholes! Cap says no fun allowed!”

A chorus of laughs and boos met JJ's declaration and Shane just shook his head and grinned. “No fun *yet!* We still have a fucking game to win. It's a 3 goal hole, don't fucking let them dig out of it.”

Third period started with a vengeance. The Swedish team had clearly refocused during the intermission and the right wingers on their top two lines had swapped places. Shane could see the hunger and desperation in his opponent's eyes when they lined up for the face off.

It did make a difference. Canada was held out of their offensive zone for long periods, languishing in the neutral zone and digging out of their own defensive zone more than Shane would like. Sweden started making up for their lagging shots. It was brutal.

It wasn't enough. Not for Sweden, anyway.

The Swedish goalie was pulled with just under three minutes left and another forward joined the fray. That wasn't enough either.

Shane didn't need to look up at the clock to know the period was almost over. A roar started to spread through the arena as the clock ticked down.

The horn that signalled the end of the game was the most beautiful sound Shane had ever heard. It was immediately drowned out by every single teammate on the ice and the bench surrounding Shane and screaming as loud as they could. Shane was screaming, too.

They fucking did it. *He* did it. Gold medal with a fucking C on his chest.

Both teams lined up to shake hands soon after. It always made Shane feel like a little kid when he did this. They didn't shake hands after games in the MLH, not outside of playoff games at least. It was hard to see the defeat in the faces of the Swedish players, the knowledge that they had gone all the way and fallen short at the very end.

The medal ceremony started as soon as they cleared enough space to roll out carpets across the ice. Sweden stood on one side, faces stoic and heads held high as they were presented their medals and a small plushie by the officials. Then it was time for Team Canada to get their medals. Shane could feel the procession moving closer without even looking, like a pressure wave moving across his consciousness.

The medal was lighter than he expected. He was vaguely aware that he was supposed to shake someone's hand and say thank you and he tried but every neuron in his brain was focused on the medal.

His gold medal.

What the *fuck*.

Everything was a blur after the game. They celebrated on the ice, took photos, and finally returned to the locker room where there were already beers and bottles of champagne being cracked open. Shane might not drink much during the season, but even he couldn't resist this. When other fucking time was this much cause to celebrate?

Shane remembered the rest of the evening in flashes. Drinking with his team, doing a couple press interviews in which he was absolutely sure they could tell he was drunk and somehow he just didn't care. He was a fucking gold medalist. He could do whatever the fuck he wanted.

They wound up at a club. Someone had slapped down a black card at the bar and shots kept being shoved into his hands. Most of them tasted like paint thinner and battery acid to Shane but he was well past the point of caring. One of the last things he remembered from the club was a pretty girl with curly brown hair sliding in next to him and asking him to buy her a drink in a thick accent.

Ilya was getting ready for bed when someone started pounding on his door. He looked at the clock, confused who the fuck could be making that kind of noise at nearly 1am. He walked over and yanked the door open.

«What the fuck is- Shane!» He barely even had time to register who was in his doorway before Shane was pouring himself into Ilya's arms and leaning heavily on him. He was wearing a full Team Canada tracksuit with his gold medal still around his neck.

“Ilyaaaaa!” Shane said in a sing-songy voice. Ilya laughed and pulled him further into the room, kicking the door closed. Shane wrapped his arms around Ilya's neck and started nuzzling into him, giggling. Ilya didn't need to smell the alcohol on him to know he was drunk but the smell of tequila and beer was strong.

Ilya had never seen Shane like this. Even when he came over after being out with his teammates, he'd been sober and clear-eyed. *Good for him*, Ilya thought. He deserved to celebrate.

Against his neck, Shane's nuzzling had turned into kisses and teasing bites. His arms tightened around his neck and Shane pressed tight against him.

“Okay, okay,” Ilya said. He walked them backwards towards the bed. “Let's get you sat down.”

“Ilya, I won,” Shane hummed.

“I saw.” He couldn't help grinning and tried to extricate himself from Shane's hold. Shane released his neck after some reluctance and flopped down on the bed, then wrapped his arms around Ilya's waist. “*Solnyshko...*”

Shane scrunched his nose and looked up at him. “What did you call me?”

Ilya chuckled and shook his head. "Don't worry about it." Shane didn't look like he would, just beaming up at him still holding tight onto him. Ilya decided to change tact. "Can I see your medal?"

"Oh, yeah!" Shane immediately dropped his arms from around Ilya's middle and removed the medal from around his neck. It got caught around his head and left his hair tufted and sticking up in the back. "Hereeeee you go." He handed it to Ilya like a child handing his mom an art project. Ilya couldn't help laughing again. He was so fucking cute like this.

"Oh, wow," Ilya said, exaggerating his response a bit. "Very nice." He flipped it over to look at the backside. It looked identical to Ilya's, with a gold ring around the outside and a silver patchwork design in the middle. The only real difference between the medals was the engraved event name on the backside.

"Where's yours?" Shane asked. His voice was slurred, the words coming out more like *wursyurs*.

"Packed away right now. Have you had any water?" He didn't wait for an answer, turning away and setting the medal carefully on the side table. He grabbed a bottle from the fridge and handed it to Shane. "Drink."

Shane seemed to think it was a good idea, grabbing the bottle and draining half of it in one go. As soon as he replaced the cap, Shane collapsed backwards on the bed, legs still dangling off the side while his arms stretched up. He let out a laugh. "Can you believe we both did it?" He laughed again. "We both won gold. Both the best."

"I knew we would," Ilya said with a satisfied hum. He sat down on the bed next to Shane, looking down at him fondly. "I did not know you would turn up at my door like this after."

"Like what?" Shane asked petulantly.

"Very, very drunk," Ilya said.

Shane giggled. Ilya had definitely never heard him do that before. He liked drunk Shane. "M not drunk."

Ilya couldn't help but laugh. "If you say so."

"I'm nooooooot," Shane insisted. "And I am here because you made me a promise."

"Did I?" Ilya asked, raising his eyebrows.

Shane smiled, closed-lipped and incredibly smug. "You said if I won gold, you'd fuck me."

Ilya ran his tongue over his teeth. Shane had no idea what it did to him, hearing him say that so bluntly. "I did say that."

"And I am here to collect," Shane announced. He splayed his arms out. "Have at me."

"Shane, you are drunk," Ilya said again.

“I'm fine,” Shane insisted, eyes closing. ““M all here.”

Ilya smiled to himself. “Okay.” He leaned down to kiss him. Shane's lips parted immediately, tongue sliding clumsily into Ilya's mouth. He tasted like cheap beer and tequila. Ilya kissed him a moment longer, cupping his jaw. “Get undressed for me. I have a surprise for you.”

Shane's eyes popped open. It took a moment for his gaze to focus on him. “A surprise?”

“Mm,” Ilya hummed. “I want to make tonight special.”

“What is it?” Shane asked. He sounded like a kid with a birthday present.

“Is a surprise,” Ilya repeated. “I can't tell you.”

Shane grumbled and started trying to get up. “Where is it?”

Ilya looked around. “Is in the bathroom. I will get it but it might take a minute.” He leaned down to kiss him again, keeping it a bit more chaste this time. Open-mouthed but his tongue stayed in his own mouth. “Get undressed. I will be back with your surprise.” Ilya got up and Shane immediately started tugging at his clothes, tossing them around the room. “And finish the water.”

Ilya walked into the bathroom and closed the door, taking a moment to laugh to himself. This man was so fucking ridiculous. He stared at himself in the mirror for a minute before setting about getting ready for bed. He took his time brushing his teeth, washing his face, applying a spot treatment to a blemish that was forming on his chin. He stayed in there another couple minutes after he was done, making sure enough time had passed.

Shane was asleep when he finally emerged. He was laying on top of the blankets in nothing but his underwear. He was snoring softly, limbs splayed out around him like a starfish. Ilya just smiled to himself, stripping down to his own underwear. He turned off the bedside lamp and climbed into bed. Shane stirred and rolled towards him.

“Under the blankets,” Ilya murmured. He tried to keep his voice low so he didn't wake up any more than necessary. It took a bit of prompting but eventually Ilya got him under the blankets and pulled him close. Instead of trying to insist on Ilya giving him his surprise or whatever, Shane just curled close and was out again in moments. Ilya pressed a kiss to his temple and settled in to sleep himself.

Shane woke slowly. He didn't want to wake up, not really. He was warm and cozy. There was a firm body behind him, a solid arm wrapped around his waist, a large hand splayed across his stomach. He had the hint of a headache on the periphery, the only thing marring the perfect, floating feeling. He wasn't sure how long he stayed like that, just on the edge of consciousness, before he finally surfaced.

The sun was shining in through the windows behind the gauzy privacy curtain. Ilya was still asleep behind him. He was blazing hot, even with the blankets shoved down around both

their waists. He wanted to stay there, bask in the morning, but he really had to pee. As soon as he was aware of it, it was all he could think about.

It took another minute for Shane to gather the motivation to get up. He slipped out of Ilya's arms, feeling the cool air against his overheated skin, and wandered off to the bathroom. He only took a real look at himself once he was washing his hands in front of the mirror. He looked rough. Bags under his eyes, hair sticking up in all directions, creases from the pillowcase pressed into his cheek.

He thought back to last night. It had been a wild one, him and his teammates drinking well into the night. He remembered leaving while the party was still going on, getting a cab and trying desperately to tell the driver what hotel he wanted to go to. Stumbling down the hallway and triple checking the room number while it seemed like the numbers on the engraved plaque were swimming around.

Things got a bit hazy after Ilya opened the door. He looked at himself closer, at his body. He didn't feel especially sore, at least no more than could be expected after a hockey game. His shoulder ached a bit from a rough hit from some Swedish d-man but there were no unexpected bruises or marks on him. He wasn't in pain in any intimate places. Hell, he was still wearing the same underwear.

Nothing happened, he decided. He also decided Ilya probably deserved a big apology for putting up with him drunkenly invading last night.

He took another few minutes in the bathroom, splashing water on his face and wetting his hair enough to tame the cowlick on the back of his head. He brushed his teeth, infinitely grateful for the spare toothbrush Ilya had gotten from the little shop next to the hotel lobby.

When Shane emerged, Ilya had rolled onto his stomach, face buried in the pillow. Shane took a moment to look, appreciating the hard plains of his back. He had broad shoulders, defined traps, a smattering of dark moles over warm skin. Ilya turned his head to look at him, a sleepy smile on his face.

“Like what you see, Hollander?” Ilya asked.

Shane considered chirping him, or denying he was looking. “Yes,” he said.

Ilya's smile widened and he rolled onto his back, blankets twisting around his waist. His hair was a mess but he didn't seem to notice or care. He held out his hand to Shane. “Come here.”

Shane obeyed easily, walking over and taking his hand. He allowed himself to be pulled into Ilya's lap. He was straddling him over the blankets while Ilya's hands fell easily onto his thighs. “How's your head?” he asked.

Shane considered. He felt fine, mostly. A bit groggier than usual and like he desperately needed to eat something green and leafy, but there was no pounding headache or feeling like he was going to throw up. “Fine, I think.”

“Surprising,” Ilya hummed, closing his eyes. “You were very drunk.” His accent was thicker in the morning, sleep still clinging to him around the periphery.

“Had a lot to celebrate,” Shane said.

“How does it feel?” Ilya asked. He rubbed Shane's hip as he said it.

“Feel?” Shane asked. He looked down at Ilya, then around the room, as if there were hidden clues he had missed. Surely, he couldn't mean what it sounded like. “Ilya, what the fuck did we do last night-”

“Nothing!” Ilya insisted quickly. His hand tightened reflexively on Shane's thigh. “I give you water and put you to bed.”

Relief flooded through him. Of course, Ilya wouldn't have done that to him. Good. Good. “Oh.”

“I mean, how does it feel to have gold medal?” Ilya clarified.

“Oh,” Shane said again, then thought for a moment. It was surreal. He'd dreamed about it his entire life and now he'd accomplished what he set out to do. “Um. Weird. Like, it doesn't feel real yet. The fuck do you mean, I have a gold medal?”

“What would make it real?” Ilya asked.

Shane considered. This entire experience felt strange, disconnected from everything back home. He felt like a different person here than he was back in Boston. Freer, maybe. More open. “I don't know. Showing my mom?” He was trying to make a joke, but he remembered about Ilya's own mother as soon as he said it. A spike of anxiety shot through him, wondering if he'd misstepped.

Ilya just laughed and nodded. “She must be proud.”

Shane smiled, looking down for a moment. His parents told him all the time how proud they were. He saw them whenever he could, making time to get dinner with them whenever he played in Ottawa or Montreal. He spent at least part of each summer up in Ontario, decompressing at the cottage they'd had since he was a kid. “Yeah,” he finally said. “They both are.”

They stayed like that for a while, just looking at each other in the morning glow. It softened Ilya. The hard plains of muscle, the chiseled cut of his jaw. All of it sanded smooth into the soft, pliant man beneath him.

Ilya broke the spell first. His mouth spread into a grin and he said, “Come here.”

Shane leaned down to kiss him. Ilya's arms came up to encircle him immediately and Ilya rolled them over. It was awkward, tangling the blankets around them, but Shane didn't care. He focused on his lips, his hands, the feel of his weight above him pressing him down into the mattress.

They lost quite a bit of time like that. It was lazy and indulgent and so fucking perfect. Shane wanted to stay there forever, but he knew he couldn't. He sighed, looking over at the clock. It was nearly 10am. "Fuck."

"Hmm?" Ilya sounded relaxed, sleepy even.

"I have to go soon. Press stuff." He buried his face in Ilya's neck as he said it.

Ilya wrapped his arms tighter around him. "Skip it. What more is there to say? We win the games. We play better. They can do it without you."

Shane laughed and let himself be squeezed. "I'm the captain, Ilya. Can't skip it."

Ilya grumbled. "What about later?"

"Later?" Shane asked.

"Later," Ilya repeated. He placed his mouth next to Shane's ear. "I think there is still a deal we need to settle."

Shane felt his cheeks flush. "Oh, um... Yeah, of course." He hadn't forgotten, of course. But everything was still catching up to him. He'd crossed the seemingly impossible hurdle and now he felt oddly unmoored on the other side of it.

Ilya pulled back, looking concerned. "You don't want to?"

"No!" Shane said, a bit too fast. "I mean, I want to. I really do. Um, I'm supposed to be at Closing Ceremonies."

Ilya threw his head back and groaned. "I can't believe I want to fuck such a boring man." Shane laughed and Ilya looked at him again. "You are not flag bearer. No one will miss one Canadian. You are too short to be seen in crowd, anyway."

Shane snorted. "Fuck you."

"Yes, that is literally what I am trying to do." Ilya grinned down at him. "Skip it. We miss it together." He pulled Shane's hand up to kiss his knuckles. "Go do your boring press conference and whatever else. Then meet me back here tonight. I will make good on our deal."

Shane smiled, feeling warm and happy and just a bit horny. "Yeah?"

Ilya grinned and nodded. "Yes. I cannot leave before I get to fuck Shane Hollander."

Shane laughed again and kissed his mouth, then sat up. "I'm gonna shower first." Ilya started to speak. "No, I really do have to go and you'll make me late if you join in." Ilya pouted up at him, but gave it up when Shane kissed him again. "Later."

Shane was only scheduled for press for a couple hours, but it was grueling. Closing Ceremonies started in the evening and all reporters would be covering that. Some athletes

would be leaving immediately after, so any interviews were being scheduled beforehand. Shane would have lost track of which outlet he was talking to at any time if not for them all having branded microphones or hats. He had definitely lost track of the number of times he was asked “What does it feel like to be a gold medalist?” and “Who was the first person you talked to back home?”

“What's next for you?” a reporter asked him. He was from some sports outlet Shane vaguely recognized. The question was funny, in a very not-funny way.

“Same old, same old,” he said, resisting the urge to fidget. The chair he was sitting in was on a swivel and he had to remind himself to sit still. He wouldn't want to hear it from his mother if every interview he did had him twisting back and forth the whole time. “The MLH schedule starts up again next week. We're top of the division right now but that doesn't mean we can coast.”

“Anyone special you're planning to share this achievement with?” the reporter asked. The question seemed weird to Shane, too personal.

“Uh, my teammates, my family,” he said. “My parents are gonna come visit soon so we can celebrate.”

“There's been a lot of reporting about your social activities since arriving in Sochi,” the reporter said.

Shane fought to keep his face blank as he realized exactly what the reporter was getting at. He took a deep breath as he tried to formulate a nice, neutral response. “It's true that I have made some new friends while I was here,” he finally said. “That's always what the Olympics have been about. Cooperation and friendship across borders. I don't think I'll be saying anything more about this.”

The reporter clearly wished she had gotten something more out of him but she let the subject drop and the interview ended soon after.

Shane grabbed a late dinner in the Olympic Village, aware that this was likely his last meal here. He was leaving the next day and would probably eat breakfast with Ilya. Aside from coming back for his bags, he had no reason to linger and a flight to catch around noon.

He called a cab and tried to ignore the way his heart beat in his ears. Shane wasn't nervous, exactly. There were certainly nerves. His face felt hot as the cab dropped him off in front of the hotel and his stomach was in knots. He was excited, though. So fucking excited.

And okay, maybe a bit nervous. He'd never done this before. Not with another person, at least, and the toy in his drawer at home wasn't the same.

He'd imagined a million ways this could go down. Back home, he could never quite conjure up a face when he imagined actually fucking someone. Could never decide if he wanted it to be a nameless hookup in a bar where people didn't know anything about hockey or if he wanted to find someone, something real. Now when he thought about it, the fantasies were accompanied by tawny curls, a smattering of moles, a sly mouth in a crooked smile.

Ilya was already shirtless when he let Shane in, like he usually was when he was relaxing in his hotel room. He kissed Shane as soon as the door was closed. It was easy, sweet. Hands on his waist and the barest hint of tongue. He didn't push for anything else. It was just a hello.

"How was the press?" Ilya asked. He smiled at him and didn't pull away.

"Endless," Shane said with a groan.

Ilya chuckled and kissed him again, then stepped back and walked further into the room. Shane followed, shedding his jacket as he did. Ilya wasn't subtle about the way he let his eyes drag over Shane, even though he was just wearing jeans and a tshirt.

The room had been tidied and Ilya's suitcases were sitting near the door, clearly mostly packed up. The television was on with the volume turned down low, currently showing some Russian-speaking analysts as they prepared for the start of Closing Ceremonies.

"Do you want something to drink?" Ilya asked. "I got more of those ginger ales."

Shane smiled and shook his head. "No, I'm good," Shane said. "Um..." He glanced around, feeling suddenly unsure.

"You want something else?" Ilya asked. He stepped closer to him, a smug grin on his face.

"And if I do?" Shane asked.

This time when Ilya kissed him, it was demanding. The hands returned to his waist and started tugging at Shane's shirt. They broke apart long enough for Ilya to tug the shirt over Shane's head and then they were kissing again. It was addictive, the taste of his mouth and press of bare chests.

Ilya sat on the edge of the bed and Shane kicked off his pants before climbing into his lap. As soon as his weight settled on top of him, Ilya was sliding his hand into Shane's hair and pulling their mouths back together. There was a low simmering heat beneath the kiss, both of them filled with want but neither of them in a rush. They had all night. One last night in Sochi and they were spending it together.

Shane's underwear did little to hide how hard he was. He hadn't even been touched yet. Ilya's hands on his body and his mouth against his own were enough to make his body burn with need. Ilya's hands kept moving, feeling, groping. They settled on Shane's lower back and pulled him in closer before flipping them over so Shane was on his back and Ilya was looking over him. Shane gasped at the sudden change and grinned up at him.

"How do you want me?" he asked.

Ilya sat up a bit and let his eyes wander. There was an obvious lust in his gaze and Shane suppressed a shudder. "Move up," Ilya said, gesturing to the pillows at the head of the bed. Then he snapped the elastic band on Shane's boxer briefs. "These off."

Shane did as instructed, moving up the bed and shucking off his underwear. He let his legs splay open as he looked up at Ilya. He tried not to focus on how exposed he felt, instead

watching the hungry way Ilya's eyes dragged over him and down between his legs. Ilya seemed reluctant to pull his gaze away as he reached for the lube sitting ready on the nightstand.

The first press of fingers into Shane was slow. He took a deep breath and forced himself to relax. His eyes were closed as he focused on the sensation. Even if he had a dildo back home, he didn't use it that much. He wasn't used to taking much inside him like this. His mouth fell open as he gasped and immediately Ilya's tongue was sliding into his mouth. He kept his eyes closed and kissed him back hungrily.

"Is good?" Ilya asked. His finger was thrusting slowly, just one of them. Shane knew he would need to take a lot more before Ilya's cock could fit.

Shane nodded. "Yeah. Yes." He turned his head to press against Ilya's temple as Ilya crooked his fingers inside him. "Yes..."

Ilya kissed him once, deep and filthy, then moved down the bed. He kept his finger inside him as he adjusted so he was laying between Shane's hiked up legs. When Shane looked down, he could see Ilya's eyes trained on his hole as he thrust in and out. He looked entranced. Shane didn't even have it in him to feel embarrassed because of the waves of arousal rolling through him with each press of fingers deep inside him.

Ilya slid a second finger into him. Shane couldn't help but smile at the stretch. It felt so fucking good, like he was meant for this. He adjusted his legs to spread them wider and let his head fall back against the pillows. The pace was slow, langorous. Shane thought he could live for a thousand years in the slow slide of those fingers.

"More," he gasped.

Ilya pressed an open-mouthed kiss to his inner thigh. "Are you sure you're ready?" There was a teasing edge to his voice that Shane had learned to pick out over the past two weeks. It curled around him, made him want to squirm.

He also didn't have it in him to chirp back just then. All he had was honesty and a painfully hard cock. "Yes, I need it," he said. He refused to call it a whine, but it sure sounded like it.

Ilya kissed his thigh again, then his hip as he thrust his fingers. Shane whined again when he felt Ilya's hot breath against his cock. Part of him wanted to feel Ilya's mouth around him. Part of him knew he absolutely wouldn't last if he did that and he was pretty sure he would die if he didn't come with Ilya inside him.

Finally, he felt another finger press into him. Shane cried out at the stretch. It stung, brought tears to his eyes, and somehow it still wasn't enough. He wanted more, wanted everything.

"Fuck," he gasped. "Ilya."

"*Solnyshko*," Ilya breathed. Somewhere deep in Shane's mind, he recognized the word Ilya had called him before. He didn't know what it meant but it made him feel warm, made him smile even through the haze of desperate need. "I fuck you now, okay?"

“Please,” Shane gasped. “Need you.”

Ilya swore in Russian and pulled his fingers out. Shane hissed at the sudden loss, hole clenching around nothing. He craned his neck to watch Ilya as he crawled across the bed to retrieve a small colorful packet from the nightstand. Shane couldn't help but laugh when he recognized it.

“Ilya, what the fuck is that?” He propped himself up on one elbow and held out his hand until Ilya handed it over. It was silver and square, a few centimeters on each side. A condom packet. And printed right in the center was the fucking Olympic rings. He laughed again, turning it over and handing it back.

Ilya laughed, too. “What? They were free. Safe sex is very important, Hollander.”

Shane just shook his head and grinned as he watched Ilya roll the condom down over his dick. Shane was almost disappointed to realize it was just a plain condom, not somehow polka-dotted with Olympic rings. Ilya gave his cock a few pumps after the condom was in place, eyes raking hungrily over Shane's body and down to his slick hole.

“Fuck me?” he said.

Ilya grabbed the lube again and spread more over his cock, then moved between Shane's legs again. “Tell me if is too much, yes?”

Shane smiled, recognizing the same words Ilya had said to him another night. He nodded and laid back as Ilya lined up. The blunt tip of his cock felt impossibly huge against his entrance but Ilya didn't give him any more time to think about it. He started pressing into his body bit by bit. Shane gasped and fought the urge to clench around him. “Fuck.”

“Relax,” Ilya said. His voice was deep, soothing. Shane took a deep breath and nodded. Ilya kept pressing in deeper, deeper. Impossibly deep. It felt like it was in his stomach by the time he felt Ilya's hips pressed against his ass. He stayed like that as Shane adjusted, clenching lightly around it and gasping. He was right that his dildo wasn't the same. He felt full to bursting.

“Move,” he gasped. “Please. You have to move.”

Ilya drew back and thrust back in, setting an easy pace as he fucked into him. Shane gasped with each stroke and Ilya took advantage to lean down and kiss him hungrily, tongue sliding into his open mouth. Shane did his best to kiss back but it was messy. He clutched onto him as Ilya fucked into him faster. He rolled his hips, angling them until Shane cried out then kept fucking him deep. Shane was seeing stars behind his eyes and he forced his eyes open again. He wanted to see Ilya above him. Face sweaty, curls a mess, vein popping out on his forehead.

It was a beautiful sight, the need playing out so openly on Ilya's features. All the other times he'd seen Ilya come apart but this was different. They were joined together, moving together, both hurtling towards the same edge together. Shane wanted this, more of this. Wanted him now and next week. Wanted him bathed in light and in his own bed. His mind conjured up an

image of Ilya spread out naked on the dock at his parents' cottage, soaking up the sun. It was impossible, a world and 20 hours on a plane away.

Shane was suddenly overwhelmed, breath coming fast and ragged as a sob threatened to tear out of his throat.

"Shane?" Ilya asked. His thrusts faltered and he stilled inside him. A hand stroked Shane's cheek as he struggled to get his breathing under control. "Too much? Are you hurt?"

Shane shook his head and closed his eyes to try and collect his thoughts. What could he even say? He knew it was an impossible thing to want. Too messy, too complicated. But he wanted it. "Sorry," he said. "Just...a lot."

Ilya kissed his damp forehead, then his cheek where the tears were threatening to fall. "No. No sorry." Ilya's mouth pressed against his own, kiss surprisingly sweet considering Ilya's dick was still fully sheathed inside of him. They stayed like that until Shane's heart and breathing evened out again.

"Thank you," Shane said, trying not to be embarrassed.

Ilya shook his head. "No thank you, either." He kissed him one more time, then started to pull out. Shane panicked and hooked his heels around his waist.

"What? No-" he started.

"Shh, trust me, *solnyshko*," Ilya said. Shane hesitated, then dropped his legs so Ilya could pull out all the way. He winced at the empty feeling, hope clenching around nothing. "Turn over. On your side." Shane turned over and looked back at Ilya who slid in behind him. Ilya adjusted Shane's legs, hiking one up and running his hand over Shane's flank repeatedly. Shane squirmed a bit to get comfortable and Ilya leaned up to kiss him as he thrust into him again.

Shane loved this angle, loved feeling Ilya's hands roaming over him as he fucked him hard and deep. He clutched back at him and threw his head back. It was good, so fucking good.

"Close," he gasped. "Ilya-"

"Yes," Ilya said. "Same." His voice was thick, accent rough. He sounded so far gone. "Do you need...?" Ilya's hand slid around his hip near his cock but Shane shook his head. It would be too much when this was already so perfect.

Shane came with a cry, shooting across the blankets in front of him. Ilya kept moving inside him but his pace was growing more erratic, his breath ragged. He came with a rough swear in Russian and buried his face in Shane's sweaty shoulder.

They both stayed like that for a long time, breathing hard. Ilya let his hands roam like he couldn't stop touching him anywhere, everywhere. His chest, his hip, his collarbones.

Shane mourned the loss when Ilya finally slipped out of him. He felt sore in all the best ways, flushed and sweaty. He rolled onto his back when Ilya sat up to tie off the condom and toss it

into the trash can. He grinned up at him and tugged him down to kiss him breathlessly.

They eventually hopped in the shower together, a slow process of getting cleaned up interrupted with a lot of kissing and ass slapping.

“What time do you leave tomorrow?” Ilya asked once they were back in bed. They were both still naked and curled up under the blankets together with Ilya pressed to Shane's back.

“My flight is at noon,” Shane said. “And I still need to stop by my room in the Village to pick up my stuff.” His chest felt tight as he said it.

Ilya nodded and pressed a kiss to his shoulder.

“I'll miss you,” Shane said after a long stretch of silence between them. “I...” Shane stopped. He thought again about that image he'd conjured. Ilya back home. Ilya beside the lake in the sun. Ilya slotting into his life back home like he belonged there.

Lips pressed to his shoulder again, then his neck. Ilya nudged him so Shane rolled onto his back and looked up at him. The room was dim, illuminated by only the lamp on one bedside table. Ilya propped himself above him and stroked his cheek. “I miss you, too.” He leaned down but stopped just short of kissing him. Lips brushing Shane's, he said, “I will miss how boring you are.”

Shane laughed and shoved him, then pulled him closer again.

Leaving Sochi felt like leaving a dream. He'd been in this contained little bubble, hundreds of athletes nearby and the facilities and staff to support them. So much of his focus had been on the competition that it felt weird and unnatural coming back to real life. Two days ago, he was focused on winning gold. Now he was in the airport, collecting his possessions from the security bin and getting his shoes back on. He had time until his flight took off and decided to buy a coffee from a kiosk before sitting down at his gate.

He didn't have to look too hard to spot other athletes. All around him, he saw others in their own team gear. Someone he vaguely recognized as an American snowboarder, someone else with a Team GB jacket. The Olympics were really over and now it was time to go home. Shane settled in at his gate and considered starting to watch a movie on his iPad while he waited to board. He had a few of them downloaded. Maybe that new Rose Landry thriller...

The schedule back home wasn't very forgiving coming off the Olympic break. He got into Boston late, only had enough time to dump his dirty clothes in the hamper and fall into bed before an early flight the next morning. They were heading to San Francisco for the start of nearly 2 weeks on the road. It was a nice change of weather compared to Russia but it meant three more hours of time change to get used to, as well.

Shane hadn't texted Ilya since he left the hotel. Ilya hadn't texted him, either. No “have a safe flight.” No “text me when you land.” Of course he hadn't. That wasn't what they were. He knew that. Still, he couldn't help opening his text messages every now and then, just in case he had somehow missed...

Shane decided to skip the first game back. He hated it, hated seeing his team take to the ice without him there. He needed it, though. He was so fucking jetlagged. His team was top of their division, anyway, and the Missionaries were in another conference and at the bottom in the Pacific. It was as close as he would get to a breather until they clinched their playoff berth. So Shane agreed to take the night off, holing up in a hotel room in San Francisco for some much needed sleep.

He woke around 8pm to a grumbling stomach and a missed text.

Ilya: You didn't play tonight?

Shane really should have been embarrassed at the flutter that went through him when he saw the message. It was stupid, but it was also the first contact he'd had with Ilya in a couple days and he liked knowing that he was watching.

Shane: Isn't it like 1 AM there?

The reply came two minutes later while Shane was looking up what food delivery was available near his hotel.

Ilya: 3 AM actually

Ilya: am very tired but stayed up to watch hockey :(

Ilya: last time i do that

Shane laughed and hit call, unable to hold back any longer. Ilya picked up on the first ring.

“Hi,” he said. His voice was deep, soothing. Shane could hear the smile in it.

“Hi,” he said back.

And that was it. They started talking regularly after that. Not every night, but when they could find time. The time difference was hell, and both of their hectic schedules didn't make it much easier. Ilya kept him updated on his training and all the preparations for Worlds the following month. More than once, Shane woke up to a text from Ilya about the previous night's game. *Nice goal* or *Crazy fucking fight huh?* Usually it just meant Ilya had watched the highlight reel but it still made Shane grin every fucking time.

They didn't just talk, either. Shane quickly became acquainted with facetime, staring at Ilya on his phone screen while they both stroked themselves to completion. It was good, but it wasn't nearly enough. Not when he'd gotten used to having the real thing.

It didn't help that Ilya liked to play dirty, either. Sexts sent when he knew Shane was in the middle of doing press, talking about how he would touch Shane “next time” when they were both out of their minds with want. One time Shane even checked his phone after practice to find Ilya had sent him a fucking nude.

Well, nude implied no clothes. Ilya had at least one item of clothing on. Shane's fleecy Team Canada jacket, unzipped to show off his abs above his hard cock. He was kneeling on a bed,

legs spread wide to give Shane a nice view. It was framed so his head was cut off, though Shane could still see a mole on his neck that made his mouth water.

He jerked off to it the second he was alone, then sent Ilya a text demanding to know why he would send that when he knew Shane was in practice. Ilya just sent back a wink in response.

Just over a month after the Olympics, Shane woke up at 3am to watch Ilya defend his title at the World Championships in Japan. He skated essentially the same routines from the Olympics, and he skated them beautifully. Not a mistake in sight.

Watching his grinning face receive a medal on his tv screen, Shane pulled out his phone.

Shane: congratulations, baby

He stared at the message for a long time after he sent it. He hadn't ever called Ilya that before, didn't really know where it even came from.

He decided he didn't care.

Just over a week later, the Raiders clinched their playoff berth. Mathematically, they could lose every game for the rest of the season and they would still be making a run for the Cup. It felt fucking incredible, his first year as captain and the Raiders were the first team in the league to clinch playoffs. Now he just had to make sure they kept their spot at the top of the division and got top seed. It was their year. It was finally their fucking year.

The next game was a home game against Montreal. The Metros were struggling to maintain a wild card slot and had been looking worse and worse since the end of the Olympic break. There were rumors of Comeau getting traded in the off-season, preparations for yet another rebuild. The entire team seemed disheartened. Shane didn't even have the heart to respond to what Comeau snapped at him during their first face-off.

The air was electric in TD Garden. It always was, but especially when the Metros were in town. The rivalry between the teams was legendary and the Raiders were on the upswing. It whipped up the crowd, made them scream all the louder when Shane scored a goal in the first period.

They called a TV break after that, pausing the game while the broadcasts went to commercials. Shane skated over to the bench and squirted some water in his mouth while he listened to the details of his goal be announced to the cheering arena. Assisted by Connors and Marleau, his 45th goal of the season. It felt fucking good.

The jumbotron flipped to crowd cam after that, finding individual fans in the stands, usually people with signs or silly outfits. He glanced up curiously, wondering if they would show Svetlana. He knew she was planning to attend, as she often did when she was in town thanks to her season pass. They'd talked a bit since he got back from Sochi. He apologized for the enduring rumors about them and she assured him that she didn't care as long as he didn't expect her not to be seen out with other people. They would just quietly let the story of their supposed romance die.

She'd texted him a few days prior, letting him know she was in town and asking if he wanted to celebrate after the Montreal game. He'd agreed to meeting up, though he was a bit concerned about what she might mean by "celebrate." Ilya had told him a few stories about going clubbing with her that made him wonder how they both made it out alive.

He was inspecting the tape on his stick blade when players around him started elbowing each other and pointing. Shane tried to ignore it, focusing on his own game, when Marleau clapped him on the pads.

"Hey, Cap," he said, "isn't that your girl with that skater?"

"What-" He looked up at the jumbotron and his breath caught. That was Svetlana, alright, standing up and waving. Curly hair under a black and gold toque, oversized Raiders hoodie hanging off her slender shoulders.

But beside her was a tall man with a familiar mop of curly tawny hair. And he was wearing a Raiders jersey, the black sweater making his broad shoulders look *massive*. Ilya grinned and waved, too, as a banner under the video stream popped up with his name. Then he turned around and pointed to his back.

It was Shane's name. Shane's number.

Ilya was here. Ilya was here and he was *wearing Shane's fucking jersey*.

He turned and looked up at where he knew that box was. He couldn't make out any details at that distance but he needed to see the real thing, know it was true. Ilya Rozanov was in Boston.

Shane played the rest of the game like a demon, nabbing a hat trick and nearly getting a dick trick if the last fucking goal hadn't been called back on an offsides challenge. Every time he scored, he made sure to look up to the box. Ilya was jumping like a child, grabbing onto Svetlana and laughing. Fuck, he wanted to see him so bad.

He showered as fast as humanly possible after the game and rushed out with his hair still damp. Svetlana had texted him where they were at, and he had responded with instructions for where to go to get to one of the back hallways, away from prying eyes. It was a storage space off an access hallway. Shane leaned against a cart and stared at his phone while he waited for them.

"Look who turned up at my door," Svetlana called from behind him. Shane turned immediately and grinned at Ilya beside her. Maybe it was rude to be so obviously staring at Ilya and ignoring her, but Svetlana wasn't the one who was supposed to be in fucking *Russia* right now.

"How the fuck are you here?" Shane demanded, pulling Ilya into a tight hug. He smelled the same, musky cologne and tobacco. Had he always been this broad? Of course he had. "What the fuck?"

“Is summer,” Ilya said with a shrug. “For me, at least.” He was unshaven, with a mustache and a dusting of hair along his jaw creeping up towards his sideburns. The facial hair somehow served to make him seem more boyish. It softened his jaw, made him look far more at ease than he had in Russia, in the thick of the competition. His hair was unstyled, a loose mess that made Shane want to bury his fingers in it. Fuck, he was really here wasn't he?

“And you just decided to pop in on Svetlana?” Shane asked.

Ilya shrugged again and Svetlana patted his shoulder. “I'll leave you boys alone.” Svetlana started to walk away, before calling back, “Hey. Hollzy, I drove him here so he's your responsibility now.”

Shane hadn't taken his eyes off of Ilya. He still couldn't quite believe he was seeing him.

He couldn't resist anymore. He grabbed Ilya roughly by the jersey and yanked him in. He didn't resist and leaned down to kiss Shane hungrily. He tasted like beer and hotdogs and it was fucking perfect. He kissed him again, and a third time for good measure before shoving him back. “How the fuck are you here?” he asked again.

Ilya shrugged. “Skating season ended. I won. I had some free time.”

“You couldn't shoot me a text?” Shane asked. “Or tell me on the phone.”

“I keep getting distracted,” Ilya told him, eyes sly.

“Fuck off,” Shane said, looking away. “How long are you in town?”

“Couple weeks at least,” Ilya said. “I, uh. I did not just come here to see Sveta.”

“Oh, I hope not,” Shane said, trying not to look too smug.

Ilya laughed and shook his head. “No, I mean is not just social.”

Shane's smile fell a bit. “What do you mean?”

Ilya stepped back to him, sliding his arms around Shane. “My coach is retiring. Evgenia. I am meeting new ones before making decision.” He paused but Shane still didn't understand. “Some very good coaches in North America.”

Shane's eyes widened. “You'd move here?”

Ilya held up a hand. “I would *maybe* move to North America. Would depend on the coach. One I am meeting is in California. Another in Texas. But...”

“But?” Shane prompted.

“But one is closer.”

Shane grinned wide enough that it hurt. This was it, the impossible dream. Ilya was in Boston. They might even be in the same timezone now. Then his entire face went blank as he

remembered the rest of it. Something he'd wanted to ask but didn't know how, not over the phone.

“Will you come to my cottage this summer?” he asked. The words tumbled out of his mouth before he even realized he was saying them.

Ilya blinked. “What?”

Shane blanched. “I mean, um. It's not mine. Or. It belongs to my parents. It's a cottage up in Muskoka? It's a couple hours outside Ottawa? We used to go there every summer when I was a kid. I spend my summers there now and, um. I mean you could come with me? If you want.” He paused. “Could just be you and me for a week, maybe two.”

Shane felt suddenly like he'd given away too much, been too vulnerable. He and Ilya had never talked about this, about any kind of future. They never made plans. But now here Ilya was, offering...something. Maybe. Possibly. And he wanted that so fucking bad, whatever it was.

“This cottage,” Ilya said. “Is it full of baby pictures and junior hockey trophies?”

“No.” *Yes.*

Ilya pouted. “Is a shame. I would love to see that. I guess I can live without.”

Shane raised his eyebrows. “So you'll do it? You'll come to the cottage?”

Ilya grinned. “Maybe.”

His eyes said yes.

Chapter End Notes

All roads lead to the cottage! 🙌

And that's it! Thank you so much for coming on this little adventure with me, I had so much fun with it.

On a side note, I wanted to include a couple examples of what the gala performances look like. These are both from the Milano-Cortina Olympics but they're great examples of what they were talking about with the vibe of some of the gala routines. Here's Niina Petrokina skating the Cell Block Tango and using several other skaters as “murder victims.” Here's Mikhail Shaidorov as Kung Fu Panda and doing some real slapstick nonsense with another skater in his performance as well.

End Notes

Comments and kudos are always appreciated!!

Yap with me on [tumblr](#).

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