

sold out

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sold out

by [shaneverse](#)

Summary

Shane gestured helplessly at the empty space Wyatt had just vacated. “Rozanov. What are you doing? This is for charity.”

Sliding a heavy, matte-black credit card across the counter, Ilya didn’t even blink.

“I know,” he murmured, his blue eyes dropping directly to Shane’s mouth. “I’m being generous.”

When Shane Hollander is drafted into working the hospital’s Valentine’s Day kissing booth, he expects awkward kisses and a miserable afternoon.

What he doesn’t expect is Ilya Rozanov buying every single ticket.

Notes

[twitter](#)

Shane Hollander hated two things: the lukewarm sludge the hospital called coffee and *Ilya Rozanov*.

Ilya was an infuriating anomaly, moving with a grace that suggested he'd never been told "*no*." While Shane ran himself into the ground juggling clinical rotations and two part-time jobs, Ilya emerged from thirty-hour shifts smelling of cedarwood, entirely unbothered by the family name etched above the surgical wing.

Shane had a list of reasons to dislike him: the way Ilya sat in lectures, bored while maintaining a perfect GPA; his steady hands; the low voice that always sounded amused.

But mostly, he hated the way Ilya's accent curled around *Hollander*, turning his last name into a challenge.

"It's obviously a classic presentation of Hashimoto's," Shane said, crossing his arms and glaring across the table.

A profound, soul-weary sigh echoed through the room.

They were supposed to be co-presenting a simple pathology seminar. Instead, this was already the third time they had argued in under ten minutes.

"Only if you deliberately ignore the elevated serum calcium, which you conveniently are," Ilya shot back, leaning farther back in his chair and lazily spinning a silver pen between his fingers. "It's a parathyroid adenoma. You're looking at the symptoms and ignoring the blood work. Try to-"

"Okay, gentlemen, let's call it a draw before someone throws a stethoscope," Dr. Scott interrupted, rubbing his temples with the exhausted resignation of a man who had been dealing with this exact argument for four years. "Before we dismiss for afternoon rounds, Rose has an announcement."

Shane shot Ilya a withering glare, already planning several highly illegal ways to kill him once class was over.

Rose cleared her throat and stood at the front of the room.

"As you all know, next Friday is Valentine's Day," she announced, tapping her clipboard against her palm to get everyone's attention. "The faculty is hosting our annual charity fundraiser for the pediatric ward. This year, the council has officially brought back the kissing booth."

A collective murmur of amusement rippled through the room.

Shane immediately tuned out.

He dropped his gaze to his notes, already mentally reviewing flashcards for his afternoon shift and paying absolutely no attention to whatever student council nonsense Rose was about

to announce.

“Participation is randomly drawn,” Rose continued, unfolding a small slip of paper. “And the lucky volunteer spending Friday afternoon in the kissing booth will be...”

She glanced down.

“Shane Hollander.”

The room erupted.

Kip completely lost it, wheezing into Svetlana’s shoulder. Across the table, Troy let out a bark of laughter loud enough to make several people turn around.

Shane’s brain flatlined.

For one long second, the room dissolved into meaningless noise.

“Wait. No,” Shane blurted over the laughter. “Rose, I can’t. I have a surgical rotation-”

“It’s for the pediatric ward, Shane,” Troy called out, grinning broadly. “You hate sick kids?”

“I don’t hate sick kids! I just don’t want to swap saliva with half the hospital staff while I’m supposed to be learning how to perform a laparoscopic appendectomy!”

That only made everyone laugh harder.

“It’s a tradition, Shane,” Dr. Scott said gently. “I will excuse you from the first two hours of your rotation. Class dismissed.”

Shane buried his face in his hands with a strangled groan.

He was going to contract mononucleosis, fail his boards, and die.

Around him, chairs scraped across the floor as people gathered their things. Conversations immediately exploded throughout the classroom.

Someone was already asking how much tickets would cost.

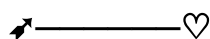
Someone else was taking bets.

Then, perfectly synchronized with the chaos, there was a sudden *snap*.

Shane peeked through his fingers and turned around.

Ilya was staring straight ahead at the whiteboard, his expression perfectly blank. The silver pen he’d been twirling was broken completely in half.

Dark ink bled slowly over his fingers.



On Monday morning, Shane walked into the campus library running on barely three hours of sleep and a dangerous amount of caffeine, already planning which table he was going to collapse at- only to stop short when he saw Ilya sitting there.

Not just anywhere, of course. *His* table. *His* chair. The exact spot Shane had been claiming, with quiet stubbornness, since freshman year.

For a second, Shane just stood there, staring, like if he looked long enough Ilya might evaporate out of sheer inconvenience.

No such luck.

He dropped his bag onto the table harder than necessary. "Move."

Ilya didn't look up. "The library is public property, Hollander."

Shane let out a short, disbelieving breath. "You are sitting in my chair. There are at least forty empty ones in this room."

"This one has better lighting," Ilya replied, as if that settled the matter entirely.

"It's nine in the morning. The sun is literally everywhere."

"And yet," Ilya said smoothly, finally glancing up, "I chose this one."

They went back and forth for a few minutes- about seating etiquette, personal boundaries, and, for reasons that neither of them could probably explain, differential diagnoses for pulmonary embolisms. Shane wasn't even sure how they got there, just that at some point Ilya had said something confidently incorrect and Shane had taken that as a personal challenge.

Eventually, the argument burned itself out, mostly because Shane needed to sit down before he passed out.

"Unbelievable," he muttered, dropping into the chair beside Ilya and pulling out his notes with more force than necessary.

Ilya, infuriatingly, just went back to reading.

For a while, the only sound between them was the quiet shuffle of paper and the occasional turning of a page.

It should have been easy to focus- Shane had done this a hundred times before - but instead he found himself rereading the same line over and over, the words blurring together until they stopped meaning anything at all.

Because, despite his best efforts, his attention kept drifting.

It started small.

A glance, easily justified. Then another.

And then he noticed the way Ilya's brow pulled together slightly when he was reading something more detailed, the faint crease forming between his eyebrows.

Shane's gaze lingered longer than it should have, tracing absent-mindedly down to the sharp line of his jaw, where a light shadow of stubble softened what would otherwise be an almost unfairly composed face.

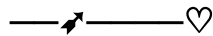
At some point, Ilya pressed his lips together in concentration, then dragged his teeth over his bottom lip in a slow, absent motion, like he didn't even realize he was doing it.

Shane's brain stalled.

Completely.

The thought came out of nowhere, uninvited and deeply unhelpful: *Are they soft?*

He blinked hard, like that might reset something, but all it did was make him more aware of the sudden heat creeping up the back of his neck.



By Tuesday, the entire cohort seemed personally committed to ruining Shane's life.

Started in the student lounge, where their study group had claimed the low table by the window.

Kip was tossing a tennis ball against the wall with the kind of focus he never seemed to apply to actual coursework, Svetlana was calmly highlighting her notes in color-coded precision, and Ilya sat in the corner armchair, reading a medical journal like the rest of them simply didn't exist.

Shane had almost managed to convince himself that, if he stayed quiet enough, no one would bring it up again.

That illusion lasted less than thirty seconds.

"So," Kip said, catching the ball and glancing over with entirely too much interest, "how much are tickets on Friday?"

Shane let his head fall forward until it hit the table with a dull thud. "Five dollars," he muttered. "Please don't."

"Five bucks?" Kip huffed out a laugh. "Oh, I'm definitely going. I might even buy three. Really commit to making it weird."

The sound of a journal slamming shut cut cleanly through the room.

It was sharp enough that everyone froze, Kip included, the tennis ball dropping uselessly into his hand.

“If you have that much disposable income and free time,” Ilya said quietly, each word precise, “you could consider repeating your pharmacology module. You barely passed.”

Kip blinked, clearly not expecting this before ten in the morning.

“Right,” he said after a second, holding his hands up slightly. “Okay. *Noted.*”

Shane lifted his head, turning just enough to stare at Ilya, who had already picked his journal back up like nothing had happened, his jaw set in a tight, controlled line.

For a moment, Shane just watched him, trying to make sense of it.

Then he looked back down at his notes and spent the next hour understanding absolutely none of them.

Why is he so mad? The thought kept circling, persistent and distracting. And, more confusingly *why does he care?*

By lunchtime, the situation had escalated beyond anything Shane could reasonably handle.

He’d heard about the kissing booth at least six times, all from different people, none of whom he particularly wanted to have this conversation with.

A second-year he’d never spoken to before stopped him by the vending machines to ask, with alarming sincerity, if the rumors were true. Someone had taped a neon pink paper heart to his locker in the residents’ changing room, complete with a badly drawn smiley face that felt more threatening than cute.

Shane was in the cafeteria, aggressively stabbing at a slightly bruised pear with a plastic fork, when a surgical intern dropped into the seat across from him like this was a completely normal interaction to initiate.

“So,” the intern said, leaning forward with a grin that immediately set Shane on edge, “what flavor are you wearing on Friday?”

Shane froze, his fork still embedded in the fruit. He stared at the intern, his throat tight, blinking as he tried to process the audacity.

“Excuse me?”

The intern only looked more amused, like this was exactly the reaction he’d been hoping for.

And then, suddenly, someone collided with the side of the table.

It wasn’t hard enough to knock anything over, but it was enough to jolt Shane’s arm and make the intern’s drink slosh dangerously close to the edge.

“Oh- watch it,” the intern snapped, already turning.

Ilya straightened from where he’d stepped into the table, one hand still resting briefly against the edge as if to steady it.

“Apologies,” he said, voice even, though there was something distinctly unconvincing about it. “I didn’t see you.”

It was a blatant lie.

Then the intern exhaled sharply through his nose, grabbing his cup and standing up. “Right. Sure.”

He didn’t look at Shane again as he walked off.



Thursday was the day the joke stopped being funny.

Shane was sitting on his bed in the dorm, absentmindedly scrolling through his phone when he opened the fourth-year group and immediately wished he hadn’t.

Someone had set up an anonymous poll, and the results were glaring right back at him from the screen.

Who are you buying tickets for tomorrow?

Bake Sale

8

General Donation

7

Shane Hollander ✓ voted

84

He kept staring at the number as if it might change if he looked long enough.

His phone buzzed in his hand, snapping him out of it.

Ilya

Pathology lab. Now. You left your slides.

Shane grabbed his jacket and left almost immediately.

The lab was dim when he pushed the door open, the overhead lights low enough that the metal tables reflected only a dull sheen. He stepped inside quickly, still a little distracted, and didn't notice how close he was to the nearest table, or the person standing beside it, until it was too late.

He walked straight into Ilya.

The impact knocked him slightly off balance, and before he could recover, a hand closed firmly around his arm, steadying him with an ease that made it feel almost automatic.

Shane's own hand came up without thinking, pressing briefly against Ilya's chest as he caught himself, and for a moment he became acutely aware of how close they were, of the warmth under his palm and the way Ilya hadn't moved away.

"Sorry," he said, clearing his throat. "I wasn't looking."

"You saw the poll," Ilya replied, as if Shane hadn't spoken.

It took him a second to catch up. "Yeah," he admitted.

Ilya released him then, but only to set the slide box down with more force than necessary.

"You could not go," he said. "Call in sick."

Shane let out a short, incredulous breath. "You want me to fake an illness to get out of a charity event?"

"I could write the note," Ilya said without hesitation, his tone completely serious. "Something contagious. Visible."

That almost made Shane laugh, even if it came out a little strained. "You want me to show up with *impetigo*?"

"Yes."

"That's insane."

Ilya stepped closer as he said it, not abruptly, but with enough intent that the space Shane had just created disappeared again, leaving them standing within arm's reach.

"Do you have any idea how they are talking about you?" he asked, his voice lower. "Half the surgical rotation is planning their breaks around it. They are treating you like something to be passed around."

Shane forced a small shrug, even as the words settled uncomfortably under his skin. "It's just a joke, Ilya. Nobody cares."

"It is *not* a joke to them."

Shane held his gaze a second too long before looking away.

"Do whatever you want," Ilya continued after a beat, his expression closing off again, that familiar distance snapping back into place. "Let them line up."

Shane's breath caught slightly, though he wasn't sure why.

"See if I care," Ilya said, already turning away.

He picked up his bag and walked past him without another word, leaving the room feeling colder in his absence.

That night, Shane lay in bed staring at the ceiling, which was unfortunately not interesting enough to distract him from his own brain.

Apparently, his thoughts had decided this was the perfect time to pull apart every single interaction. The way Ilya had caught him in the lab or the way he'd stayed there a second too long, his grip lingering on Shane's arm.

Shane rolled over, scowling into his pillow. *Fine*. People were capable of momentary lapses, of being off-balance or strange.

Except, Ilya didn't do "strange."

He was bored or quietly judgmental in a way that made everyone else feel slow. He never fumbled.

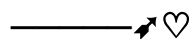
Which was exactly why this felt so off-kilter, making Shane drag a hand over his face, frustration and something far more dangerous tightening in his chest as he tried to ignore where his thoughts were heading.

Because once he followed it through - actually let himself think it all the way to the end - a final realization settled in, one he couldn't brush aside or laugh off, no matter how much he wanted to.

If it came down to it, he wouldn't pick anyone in that poll.

He'd-

Oh.



Shane had spent the entire morning failing to stop thinking about what he'd realized the night before.

Every attempt at distraction just looped him right back to the same place - Ilya's hands, the way he'd looked at him, and the deeply unfortunate fact that in a few hours, Shane would be sitting in a flimsy booth while half the hospital lined up to kiss him like this was normal.

When he reached the student union, it was already aggressively decorated: red and pink crepe paper, balloons, the whole nauseating spectacle. The booth sat right in the middle, slightly crooked, with a banner that read *KISSES FOR THE KIDS! \$5 A TICKET!* in a font that felt way too cheerful for what was his public downfall.

He took his place behind the counter, adjusting the dark button-down he'd actually ironed (a mistake, in retrospect), and tried not to think about the logistics of what was about to happen.

Rose appeared beside him, clipboard in hand, already in full command mode.

"Basic rules," she said, ticking them off. "No lingering, no tongue, hands stay on the counter. If anyone gets weird, you signal me and security handles it."

"Great," Shane muttered. "Love that security is part of this."

She moved on before he could say anything else, which was probably for the best.

Because there was a line.

An actual line, stretching past the student life office and out the doors.

Shane made the mistake of recognizing people. Cliff from cardiology stood near the front looking entirely too prepared, Harris was clutching multiple bills like he'd planned ahead, and a group of surgical interns were whispering in a way that made it very clear they thought this was the highlight of their week.

For a second, Shane just stared, something cold settling under his ribs.

Eighty-four votes hadn't been a joke.

"Alright, everyone, listen up!" Rose's voice cut through the noise. "The booth is officially open!"

The first person stepped forward, bright-eyed and far too enthusiastic.

Wyatt Hayes.

"Ticket for one," he chirped, dropping a five-dollar bill onto the table.

"Right this way," Rose replied, cheerful.

Wyatt stepped up to the plywood counter, leaning in.

Shane swallowed hard, planting his hands flat against the wood as if that might somehow ground him.

Just a quick kiss, for charity.

Wyatt leaned closer, eyes already slipping shut, lips puckered with alarming confidence.

Shane barely had time to think *this is happening* before he braced himself, closed his eyes, and leaned in.

Their lips met. A simple, closed-mouth press.

One second. Shane kept his eyes tightly shut, reminding himself that this was for the pediatric ward.

Two seconds. Wyatt smelled like wintermint gum and hospital-grade sanitizer, and Shane's hands were gripping the plywood so hard he was going to get splinters.

Three seconds.

Wyatt started to pull back, his eyes fluttering open. A delighted, victorious grin was already forming on his face.

"Oh, man," he breathed, looking genuinely impressed. "You taste like strawber-"

He never got to finish the sentence.

A heavy hand clamped down onto his shoulder.

"Excuse me."

Wyatt let out an undignified yelp as he was physically yanked backward, completely lifted out of the way as Ilya effortlessly stepped into his place, blocking Shane from the rest of the line with the sheer width of his shoulders.

Immediately, the courtyard erupted in outrage.

"Hey! No cutting!" someone yelled from the back.

"Are you kidding me? I literally traded my lunch shift for this!" an exhausted-looking intern complained loudly.

Wyatt, finally regaining his footing, gestured wildly at Ilya's broad back. "Dude, what the hell? I paid my five bucks! We were having a *moment*!"

Shane gestured helplessly at the empty space Wyatt had just vacated. "Rozanov. What are you doing? This is for charity."

Sliding a heavy, matte-black credit card across the counter, Ilya didn't even blink.

"I know," he murmured, his blue eyes dropping directly to Shane's mouth. "I'm being generous."

Ilya ignored the chorus of complaints echoing behind him, turning his gaze to Rose, who was holding the portable card reader.

“I would like to purchase a ticket,” Ilya said cleanly.

“Uh. Sure. That's five dollars,” Rose replied, blinking rapidly.

“Actually,” Ilya corrected, holding her gaze with absolute calm. “I would like to purchase *all* of the tickets.”

Rose stared at him, her pen hovering nervously over her clipboard. “Rozanov, there are at least a hundred people in this line. That is going to cost you five hundred dollars.”

Ilya looked at Rose, his expression completely blank.

“Type it in.”

Rose swallowed hard. Her fingers hesitated for a second before she slowly punched the numbers into the keypad.

She turned the terminal toward him and Ilya tapped his card against the reader.

The machine let out a cheerful *beep*.

Rose looked down at the tiny screen.

“...*Approved.*”

The line went very, very quiet.

“Ilya,” Shane said, lower now. “There are people waiting.”

“*Mm.*” Ilya leaned one shoulder against the booth, effortless, like he had every right to be there. “Unfortunate.”

A guy from the line - Luca, Shane thought - let out a disbelieving laugh. “No, man, that’s not how this works. We’ve been standing here for-”

Ilya didn’t even look at him.

He just reached into his coat, pulled out a second card, and placed it on the counter.

“Run it again.”

Rose made a small, strangled noise. “I- are we allowed to?”

“Rose,” Ilya said, almost gently. “*It’s for charity.*”

The machine beeped again.

“Okay,” Shane said, and this time his voice cut cleanly through the noise around them. “No. Absolutely not.”

Before anyone could argue, he rounded the counter, grabbed Ilya by the heavy lapels of his coat, and pulled him away from the booth with more force than strictly necessary.

The crowd groaned in unison, but Shane barely registered it.

He didn’t stop moving until they were down the hall and inside the first empty seminar room he could find. Shane shoved the door closed behind them, the heavy click echoing too loudly in the sudden quiet.

“Explain,” he said, already pacing, his thoughts tripping over each other. “You just hijacked a hospital charity event.”

Ilya stayed by the door, but the effortless composure he’d worn outside was gone. His chest rose a little too quickly, his jaw locked tight enough to show the tension in his face, and when he finally spoke, his voice carried none of that earlier calm.

“You *kissed* him.”

Shane stopped pacing and stared at him, disbelief flashing hot and immediate. “What? It’s a kissing booth, Ilya. That’s literally the entire point.”

“He said you tasted like strawberries,” Ilya shot back, the words edged with something sharp and ugly, like he was repeating them against his will.

“It’s chapstick,” Shane snapped, throwing his hands up. “I don’t even like strawberries. Rose handed it to me five minutes ago. Why do you care?”

“He put his mouth on you,” Ilya said, pushing himself off the door and stepping forward. “In front of half the hospital.”

“It was one second. For charity.”

“It was repulsive.”

“You’re insane,” Shane fired back, stepping closer without thinking, four years of frustration finally spilling over. “You just spent a thousand dollars to shut down a pediatric fundraiser. Why? To spite me? Because you can’t stand seeing me do anything that doesn’t involve arguing with you over lab results?”

“Do not flatter yourself, Hollander. I found the entire spectacle offensive to public decency.”

“Bullshit,” Shane said immediately, closing the distance until they were nearly chest to chest. “You’ve been acting like a complete psycho all week- snapping pens, threatening interns. If you hate me so much, why not just let it happen? Why do you care if Wyatt kisses me?”

“Because I wanted to put my fist through his jaw,” Ilya snapped, the words breaking out of him before he could stop them.

“Why?” Shane shot back, just as sharp.

“Because I am in love with you, you absolute idiot.”

Shane froze.

Ilya looked like he immediately regretted having a mouth at all.

“Since first year,” he continued, his voice dropping, rough and frayed. Ilya was speaking more to the floor than to Shane. “Since you yelled at me over a scalpel like I had committed a federal crime. I have been dealing with this for four years.”

Shane didn’t move.

“Oh.”

“I did not know how to-” Ilya exhaled sharply, visibly frustrated. “You are not easy to approach.”

“I am not...” Shane started instinctively, then paused. “Okay. Maybe a little.”

A breath of something almost like a laugh escaped Ilya, quick and immediately gone.

“And instead of just asking me out,” Shane said, the shock burning off into something reckless, “you decided to spend four years making my life miserable and then execute a hostile takeover of a kissing booth.”

Ilya scowled, his jaw tight. “That is not what happened.” Then, much quieter: “I did not think you would say yes.”

Shane didn't overthink it. He just closed the distance between them.

“You’re an idiot.”

“I have a 4.0 GPA.”

“You’re *still* an idiot.”

Shane grabbed the heavy lapels of his coat, pulling him down and Ilya didn't hesitate for a fraction of a second.

His hands came up fast, like he’d been waiting for permission for years, settling firmly at Shane’s waist and pulling him in with a desperate grip that felt far too tight to be casual.

“Hollander,” he said, low, finally meeting his eyes.

“It’s five dollars, right?” Shane murmured, leaning in just enough to feel the heat of Ilya’s breath against his mouth. “That’s the rate.”

“I paid significantly more than that.”

“Yeah,” Shane whispered, a small, triumphant smile pulling at his lips. “You overpaid.”

And then he kissed him.

Ilya kissed exactly like he did everything else: completely taking over. His hand slid up the back of Shane’s neck, pulling him in with a grip that bypassed confident and landed straight on desperate.

Shane let out a broken breath against his mouth, his own fingers tangling hard into the thick hair at the nape of Ilya’s neck. He tightened his grip just enough to draw a sharp reaction from him- a low, wrecked sound that only made the fire spark deeper in Shane’s chest.

They shifted without thinking, bodies pressing closer until there was no space left to negotiate.

Everything narrowed down to heat and contact and the frantic way Ilya’s hands refused to stay still; gripping, pulling, anchoring Shane against him like he was terrified this might all disappear if he loosened his hold for even a second.

When they finally broke apart, it was only enough to breathe. Their foreheads rested together, the shared air between them still sharp and uneven.

Ilya didn’t let go.

His thumb brushed along the sharp line of Shane’s jaw, slow, tracing the skin like he was still confirming he was real.

“You taste like strawberries,” he murmured, low and irritated, his fingers flexing at Shane’s waist to pull him impossibly closer. “I should kill Wyatt for noticing before *I* did.”

A short, surprised laugh slipped out of Shane, warm and completely unguarded. “You’re ridiculous.”

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