

adrenergic

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/86391436) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/86391436>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Heated Rivalry (TV)
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov
Additional Tags:	Allergies , Shane Hollander Has Food Allergies , Anaphylaxis , Ilya Rozanov Loves Shane Hollander , Shane Hollander Loves Ilya Rozanov , Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov in Love , Good Significant Other Ilya Rozanov , Sweet Ilya Rozanov , Husbands , Fluff , Fluff and Humor , Fluff and Mush , Shallergies , Feels , Ilya Rozanov Takes Care of Shane Hollander , Soft Ilya Rozanov , Soft Shane Hollander , Soft Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2026-06-09 Words: 14,957 Chapters: 1/1

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by [PenAndInkPrincess](#)

Summary

It does mean missing out on things like barbeques and team dinners sometimes, but it's not as if he would have been able to participate anyway. At this point in his life, risking someone not taking his allergies seriously would mean potentially missing games, which makes it unacceptable. Jackie always makes sure he has a dish or two that's safe when he's over at their house, but if he was going to be the one guy sitting and drinking ginger ale instead of taking part in sharing nachos or Korean barbeque or burgers or any other delicious thing he goes in knowing he can't have anyway, there's no point in making a fuss about it. He eats at home, has a drink with everyone else, and he calls it a day. Easy. Safe. Foolproof.

But also the reason it doesn't occur to him that he hasn't actually told Ilya about any of his allergies until it becomes immediately relevant five days into being at his cottage together.

(how Ilya learns about Shane's food allergies) (and how Shane learns what it's like to have someone who always saves him a seat at the table) (and who also makes sure there's food he can eat on the table to start with)

Notes

friends, too many people have played idea ping pong with me about this to call them all out by name, but thank you to everyone who launched on this voyage of shallergies with me based on the initial post I made:

<https://www.tumblr.com/penandinkprincess/818583603012354048/oh-my-god-though-shane-who-is-so-used-to-safe>

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

It's not that Shane *means* to keep his allergies a secret, really. If anyone asked, he would tell them, and he's always diligent in showing medical staff the list he has saved on his phone, a tidy little grid of what he's allergic to and what reactions he has, the latter ranging from "itchy for a couple of days" to "hey, so, jab me with my epipen *now* and then tell an ambulance to go Mach Jesus, thanks." He stopped wearing a medical bracelet as a pre-teen, embarrassed about the teasing he got when the other boys just thought it was an accessory and the questions he got if he tried to explain that it wasn't.

At this point in his life, he honestly doesn't think about it that often. Enough years of doing it have demonstrated that chalking up his odd habits to a performance diet gets him out of both "Oh, you poor thing" and "Damn, I could *never* live that like, dude" comments—both equally annoying and the latter always tempting him to get snarky about not really having a *choice*—and he'd be lying if he didn't say he likes the reaction he gets when people think it's just all down to discipline. "No, I can't have that, sorry. I'm allergic." Follow-up questions, pity, and/or unwanted advice. "No, I can't have that, sorry. I'm on a performance diet." Kudos, applause, minor teasing but with an air of respect, and people not pushing further because it gets chalked up to being an athlete thing. Ideal.

It does mean missing out on things like barbeques and team dinners sometimes, but it's not as if he would have been able to participate anyway. At this point in his life, risking someone not taking his allergies seriously would mean potentially missing games, which makes it unacceptable. Jackie always makes sure he has a dish or two that's safe when he's over at their house, but if he was going to be the one guy sitting and drinking ginger ale instead of taking part in sharing nachos or Korean barbeque or burgers or any other delicious thing he goes in knowing he can't have anyway, there's no point in making a fuss about it. He eats at home, has a drink with everyone else, and he calls it a day. Easy. Safe. Foolproof.

But also the reason it doesn't occur to him that he hasn't actually told Ilya about any of his allergies until it becomes immediately relevant five days into being at his cottage together.

"Do you mind rinsing that juice off the deck?" He asks now, when the number of bees investigating the spilled watermelon juice at the edge of the patio has gone from "I should keep an eye on that" to "Oh, that's anaphylaxis waiting to happen."

"But they are having fun," Ilya says with a lazy kind of smile, resting his head back and looking at Shane from over his sunglasses. Shane smiles back reflexively, enjoying getting to see Ilya like this, relaxed and at ease and comfortable.

Which Shane could also be participating in if not for the stupid bees.

"You do not want to share with them?" Ilya tsks playfully. "Selfish."

"I mean," Shane hesitates, pulled between impulses. If his parents were here, he would have already been sent inside until the juice was rinsed away, and if he were on his own, he probably would have just retreated to a distance and blasted the hose on jet until juice *and* bees had been dispersed. He could do that now, but it would involve Ilya getting up anyway to avoid getting sprayed, too.

“You are scared of them?” Ilya asks, lifting his eyebrows slightly. It’s not a taunt, Shane can tell. He’s waiting to tease until he’s established if it’s something *to* tease about or not, and the consideration makes him fall just a little bit more in love with him.

A bee getting just a *little* too close to his face on its way to join the others at the Juice-chella festival happening on his deck refocuses him pretty quickly, though. He’s not 100% on *all* of the rules for being a good boyfriend yet, but he’s *fairly* certain not going, “Surprise, you get to watch me stab myself in the thigh with epinephrine and then call an ambulance for me” is probably one of them. That seems like it’s a bummer, probably.

It certainly is on the other side of the equation, after all.

“I’m not scared,” he answers honestly, and he’s not. At this point in his life, he thinks he might have just exhausted his nervous system into keeping his allergies on a backburner for his own self-preservation, always *there* but not his main focus. “I am pretty allergic, though, and you don’t know where my epipen is.”

Ilya blinks.

“What.”

*

Shane is a *little* annoyed at being chased inside the way he would be with his parents, but he retreats only to the sliding door and watches while Ilya gets up to find the hose, clearly muttering to himself in a way that seems annoyed as Shane watches from behind the glass, stomach going a little tight.

It’s one of the reasons he doesn’t really bring up his allergies unless it’s relevant, after all. Asking people to accommodate them doesn’t always go over well, and even when someone *does* make an effort, he can’t always be confident that they’ve been as rigorous as they should be. He’d ended up getting cold shouldered for *weeks* at school when he was nine after someone’s mom swore up, down, and sideways that she’d made the cake safe specifically to let him have some at the birthday party he’d been invited to.

Not safe enough, though, to not send him to the hospital after because she apparently hadn’t thought almond extract had “enough almond to be a problem,” a statement that Shane even through the anaphylaxis-haze of the memory thinks almost made his mom catch a murder charge.

That mom had told her son to stay away from him after that, like it was *his* fault he had allergies, like it wasn’t already humiliating enough when someone bringing a peanut butter sandwich to school meant he had to go eat lunch in classroom exile for his own protection.

Watching Ilya start coiling the hose up after making sure all winged and stinged insects have been banished from the area, Shane feels a little wriggle of anxiety in his stomach remembering how it felt to get sent away from everyone else because he was too much of a problem to be allowed to stay.

*

Shane's half-afraid it's not going to be something they talk about, that it'll linger between them like something slowly rotting. One of the main things he wanted in this vacation was for them to be honest with each other, but he's not totally sure how he's supposed to bring this up. It's not actually something that he's had to do before, honestly. When he was a kid, his parents were always diligent about bringing it up, and left to his own devices, he avoids it unless it's immediately relevant, like Jackie reaching out to ask if he had any allergies before he went over for dinner at her and Hayden's house for the first time. He's not exactly sure how he's supposed to bring it up, especially not when he gathers from Ilya's response that he's already managed to do it badly.

Either thankfully or unfortunately, Ilya does it for him, glancing around when he comes back inside and joining Shane on the couch after he sees him.

"So," Ilya says shortly, dropping onto the sofa, "bees will kill you."

Shane considers clarifying that technically, no, they won't kill him so long as he has access to an epipen and an ambulance soon after, but it doesn't really seem like Ilya is in a place to hear those details right now. He decides to go the short and sweet route.

"Yeah."

"And epipen is...medicine?" Ilya says on a guess. "The stick thing, like in movies?"

"Yeah, it's-I can just show you." Shane gets up and can feel Ilya's eyes on him all the way to the drawer in the kitchen where he keeps the one that lives in his cottage full-time. It feels like overkill to him sometimes, frankly, having an epipen in his house and cottage, his parents' house and cottage, one to throw in his daily gym bag, and one that lives in his travel bag so it won't be forgotten. He hasn't needed to use one for a couple of years, thankfully, but the habit is too deeply ingrained to stop now, all of them logged in the calendar on his phone after he gets them to make sure he remembers to replace them on time.

That seems like a little much to explain to Ilya right now, though.

"Here," he says, handing it over as he passes by and feeling at least a little reassured by the way Ilya's fingers stroke over his on the hand-off instead of avoiding touching him.

"How does it work?" Ilya asks, turning it over carefully. "It...stabs you? Or something?"

"Kind of," Shane says with a shrug.

"And you need it for bees?" Ilya asks, turning the tube to look at the label printed on the side.

"Among other things."

Ilya glances up at him sharply.

““Other things’?” He repeats, calmly enough that Shane knows he’s made a mistake somewhere.

“Yeah,” Shane says, feeling a little self-conscious now and wondering if Ilya wants him to say the full list or if he’d rather just get shown the list on his phone. “Coconuts, almonds, peanuts-

“You are allergic to peanuts?” Ilya demands, and Shane frowns, thrown.

“Yeah?”

“I tried to give you Reese’s before!” Ilya says, like Shane’s insulted his mother or something. “You didn’t stop me!”

“I mean,” Shane says, shifting slightly and feeling absurdly like he’s been sent to the principal’s office, something that actually never happened to him. He can’t say it’s a good kind of novel to experience it now. “I said no.”

“You didn’t say *why!*” Ilya insists, tossing one hand in the air with apparent frustration.

“I said I don’t eat peanuts,” Shane points out. “And I asked you not to eat it then.”

“*You did not tell me why!*” Ilya says. “I thought it was just-” A flick of his hand in Shane’s general direction. “Hollander thing. Like how-” He stops short, eyes narrowing. “The condoms.”

“Yes?” Shane prompts, a little thrown.

“You always bring yours and refuse to use other ones. Is allergy thing?”

“Yeah,” Shane says with a shrug. “I’m allergic to latex.”

Ilya closes his eyes like he’s praying and folds forward, pressing his hands to his face for a moment. When he speaks, he looks up at Shane from over his fingers.

“And you did not think to mention this? At any point? In literally fucking *years* of knowing each other? ‘Hey, Rozanov, by the way, there are many things that can kill me. You should know about them, maybe.’”

Well...when he says it like that.

Shane feels his face heat.

“You didn’t eat peanuts around me again, and you started buying the same condoms as me,” Shane says, feeling a little defensive. It all made sense when he was doing it. He had half-thought to bring it up now and then, after the first couple of years when it was clear it was going to be a semi-regular arrangement between them. Each time, though, he’d gotten distracted by Rozanov in front of him, kissing and touching and fucking him, and afterwards, he’d told himself firmly that he didn’t need to say anything because that was for *sure* the last time. Definitely. Absolutely the last time.

...until the next time came around and started the whole cycle over again.

“This is not-you let me feed you!” Ilya says, eyes going a little wide as he sits up straight again. “Hollander, you came to my house and let me feed you food. You didn’t even ask!”

“I watched you make it,” Shane says, a little annoyed now. “I’d eaten that chip brand before, and it’s not like anyone puts peanuts or anything in their tuna salad.”

“Maybe I usually keep peanuts in all of my containers!” Ilya insists. “Maybe I have fucking-secret peanut butter company! You do not know! You did not ask me!”

Shane crosses his arms over his chest and looks to the floor in front of him, digging his socked toes into the grain of the wood, feeling stupid in a way he doesn’t care for. It’s increasingly dawning on him that this is *exactly* the fucking reason he doesn’t usually even fucking bother having this conversation. It can never be anything normal. It always has to be A Thing, something for people to judge or question or wonder about i-

“I am sorry,” Ilya says, a little calmer. Shane glances up at him. “I should not yell. It-I do not like knowing I could have hurt you very badly and not known what was happening.”

The apology makes Shane’s shoulders lose some of their tension.

“I’m not-I don’t usually tell people.”

“Is a secret?” Ilya asks, tilting his head slightly like he’s trying to work it out.

“I mean, not really,” Shane says, shrugging. “I just tell people I follow a special diet, and they usually don’t ask me a ton of questions after that. They just think it’s a hockey thing. It’s-” He lets out an annoyed breath and drops his head back as he slumps against the sofa, trying to find words to something he doesn’t usually even really think about. “It’s kind of a pain, you know?” He tells the ceiling rhetorically. “Hey, I’m Shane, by the way, here’s a list of things I can’t eat, yes I’m serious, yes I mean at all, yes I’m sure, yes even that, no not even a little bit is okay...” He trails off and tilts his head enough to look at Ilya again. “People can never be, like, *normal* about it. It’s just easier to not bring it up, you know?”

“Hm,” Ilya hums thoughtfully. After a moment, he stands and moves to sit next to Shane. Shane lets himself tilt to the side to lean against him, Ilya’s chin coming to rest lightly on his head. “I want to know, okay? I promise I will not argue about them. I just want to know.”

Shane tucks his cheek against him a little tighter, smiling slightly.

“If I say I’m allergic to cigarettes, will that make you stop smoking?”

He laughs when he gets a throw pillow to the face.

*

Shane takes Ilya on a rundown through the major allergies he has and walks him through using an epipen—Ilya blanching slightly at the idea of driving a spring-loaded needle into his thigh but not commenting—and lets him know to call an ambulance if he does have to use it

on Shane's behalf, and he calls it good enough. There's more to cover, obviously, and he'll probably have to get to the ones that aren't deadly but are still annoying eventually, but his cottage is allergen-free, and he'd rather not spend their two weeks on having a medical brief about his weird ass allergies.

Which is why he's surprised when he pauses at the doorway to the kitchen on a night his parents came over for dinner to hear Ilya slowly saying the words "anaphylactic shock" with a care that says he's committed it to memory but not yet practiced it enough for it to come out of his mouth smoothly. He's even more surprised when his dad responds, and he peeks around the doorjamb to find him and Ilya cutting up vegetables for the salad together, Ilya paying more attention to Shane's dad than the cucumber he's slicing than Shane would prefer when there's a big ass knife in his hands.

"Mostly if he eats them," Shane's dad says, sliding his half of a bell pepper into the salad bowl and picking up the other half to start dicing it up as well. "Peanuts and some of the tree nuts, he can also have a reaction on contact to, but that's not usually as bad."

"He is allergic to *all* nuts?" Ilya asks, and Shane can't help the way his mouth twitches when a reflexive joke about nuts pops in his mind, but this is neither the time nor the audience to say it out loud, so he refrains.

(He does file it away for later, though.)

"Funny enough, no," Shane's dad says, sounding genuinely amused. "We did desensitization when he was a kid and most of it didn't take, but pecans ended up being okay, at least last time they checked, I think. Still smarter not to take the risk most of the time, but it's something, at least. Hazelnuts are still iffy, I think, but you'd have to ask him about that. Me and Yuna just avoid tree nuts completely just to be safe."

A glance at Ilya's face to read how he's taking all of this reveals an expression of total focus, like he's filing this information away like it's something important to him, that makes Shane's stomach feel warm and flippy in a good way.

"The reaction to contact, this is-what is the word? Hides?"

"Hives?"

"Yes, hives. They are the red bumps, yes?"

"Done your research, huh?" Shane's dad asks, and Ilya shrugs, looking a little shy in a way that's both out of character and wildly endearing. The downside to eavesdropping, as it turns out: not being able to kiss his boyfriend when he's looking *incredibly* kiss-able.

"Is important to know, yes? Things that are safe for him or not?"

"You really don't have to worry about it too much, Ilya," Shane's dad says, though he looks more than a little pleased at Ilya's worrying in a way that makes Shane want to roll his eyes. He's a grown man. He can handle his own allergy restrictions. "Shane's grown up knowing what's safe or not."

“Yes,” Ilya agrees, moving behind Shane’s dad to dump his cucumber slices into the bowl before returning to his place. “But he is important to me, so these things are important to me, too.”

Shane’s dad opens his mouth to say something before he pauses, instead resting a hand on Ilya’s shoulder and squeezing gently. Ilya looks surprised for a moment, twitching slightly at the contact before he relaxes under it, looking almost regretful when Shane’s dad lets go.

“His list is pretty comprehensive, and you have mine and Yuna’s numbers now. If there’s anything on there that isn’t clear and he isn’t giving you a straight answer on, feel free to text one of us.”

“List?” Ilya repeats. “There is list?”

Shane’s dad snorts.

“He didn’t show it to you when he told you?”

“No,” Ilya says dryly, in a way that makes Shane wince, knowing from his boyfriend’s face that he’s going to pay for that decision later. “He did not.”

“Classic Shane,” his dad says fondly. “I’ll send you a copy, alright? I think Shane has a printer here, too, if you want to print it out.”

“I would appreciate it,” Ilya says. “If he dies from almonds because he didn’t tell me about them, I think I will be very upset with him.”

Shane winces and chooses that moment to retreat and relieve his mom of watching the grill for him, forgoing the tongs he meant to retrieve and deciding to make do with the spatula he already had.

This doesn’t seem like the best time to be right in front of Ilya, after all.

*

“-and bananas, they are-”

“Is there a way,” Shane wonders out loud, not bothering to open his eyes or move from his comfortable place of sprawled over Ilya’s chest, “to say, ‘I love you, but please stop making this a whole thing’ without sounding like a dick about it?”

Ilya snorts, and Shane feels a kiss pressed to his head.

“I am just making sure you are not forgetting anything,” Ilya says, but his voice is fond, and the fingers that stroke lightly over his spine are gentle.

“You have the list now,” Shane says around a yawn. “No more secrets.”

He feels the shape of a smile pressed to his temple, followed by another kiss.

“No more secrets.”

Shane smiles and leans into another kiss pressed to his head before he relaxes once again, snuggling down a bit more comfortably and playing with the idea of falling asleep right-

“And kiwis are okay, just not the skins-”

Shane groans and flops to the side.

“Why is this such a big deal to you, dude? Everything in the cottage is safe. We’re good here.” He imitates Ilya’s accent on the last three words specifically to make Ilya’s lips quirk in a smile, and he grins when it gets the response he wanted, turning onto his side, Ilya moving to mirror him.

“What about after the cottage?” Ilya asks, closing his eyes and leaning into it when Shane traces gentle fingers over his face.

“What *about* after the cottage?” Shane repeats, resting a palm over the curve of Ilya’s cheek. “You planning to take me out with peanuts?”

“Would make winning easier,” Ilya says, faux-thoughtful, grinning when Shane lifts his palm from his cheek just to bring it back down in a measured slap, more noise than force. “*Mean to me,*” Ilya complains, ruining his own accusation when he turns his head to kiss Shane’s palm before settling under the weight of it again. He opens his eyes, and the love there is so clear, so warm, that Shane feels a kneejerk urge to look away, overwhelmed.

Instead, he just keeps looking.

“This is part of building a life together, yes?” Ilya asks softly, and Shane’s breath catches. Ilya reaches out and strokes the back of his fingers over Shane’s cheek, down his jaw. “Is important to know these things. Because you and I are together now. Your things are my things.”

“Your things are my things, too,” Shane says, and he hopes Ilya can hear the three words living beneath the statement.

The way Ilya kisses him says he does.

*

“Even fucking *condoms*, Hollander,” Ilya says into the darkness of the bedroom a couple of nights later, sounding amused. “Bad luck.”

“Tell me about it,” Shane says with a roll of his eyes even if Ilya can’t see the motion. “Didn’t even think about latex in condoms until sex ed when we were supposed to roll one down over a banana, which—double fuck me in particular, apparently. Did it right and then had a rash all over my hands and had to go home and tell my mom what-stop laughing!” He demands, even though the noise is making him smile. “It’s not fucking funny, asshole.”

“Is pretty funny,” Ilya says, and Shane punches him lightly on the side, grumbling wordlessly when Ilya moves to get on top of him, pressing him down into the mattress. “Poor baby,” he coos obnoxiously, kissing Shane’s face despite the way Shane gets a hand in his hair with a tug of threat against the curls. “With your poor dick, too delicate for-”

Ilya makes a surprised noise when Shane flips them in one sudden move-

-and another kind of noise altogether when Shane gets hands around Ilya’s wrists and presses down.

“You have a problem with my dick?” He challenges.

“No,” Ilya says, sounding flatteringly a little breathless as he rocks his hips up, chasing friction. “Am a big fan. I will get a t-shirt if you want, wear it-”

“You’re so fucking stupid,” Shane says, but it comes out affectionate, and he leans down to kiss Ilya, slow and lazy, releasing his hold on his arms and feeling Ilya’s hands immediately move to his body, one pressing between his shoulder blades and the other going to his hip, guiding him in a slow, delicious rocking movement.

“Get-get one of your special condoms,” Ilya breathes against his mouth. “Shane, get-”

“I don’t know,” Shane says, moving to press his lips to Ilya’s cheek, his jaw, his ear. “They’re kind of hard to find, and neither of us has fucked anyone else recently. Should probably save them when we can.”

“What-” Ilya starts, clearly confused until Shane’s suggestion actually registers.

And then it’s Shane who finds himself on his back, pinned to the mattress.

“Good idea,” Ilya says, voice nearly a growl, and Shane smiles in return to the one he hears in Ilya’s voice without even needing to open his eyes to see it.

*

His first time staying over at Ilya’s house after the season starts, he’s too excited to see his boyfriend again to think about anything beyond how many more minutes it’ll be before he has Ilya in front of him again. He brings his epipen—and was already planning to, which means he rolls his eyes when Ilya sends him a text reminding him to—just in case, but his allergies have never been further from his mind than they are the second the door opens and he and Ilya are reaching for each other at the same time.

They certainly don’t become more important to him when his boyfriend has him pinned against the wall.

*

They share a long stretch of kissing, though not *nearly* long enough, which he indicates by whining through his nose when Ilya pulls away, earning himself a huff of a laugh against his

mouth and an affectionate tap to his chin but not his boyfriend squishing him against the wall again.

“C’mon,” Ilya says, taking him by the hand and tugging him into motion. “Dinner. You will need your energy for later.” The comment comes with a grin that Shane returns, grabbing a quick slap to Ilya’s ass as a personal appetizer and then moving out of range of retribution when they make it to the kitchen, where dinner preparations were clearly in full swing before he arrived.

“Damn, it smells good,” Shane says. Too used to caution, he doesn’t inhale *too* deeply, but the house does smell amazing. He lets his bag slide from his shoulder and drop to the floor before he hops up onto a barstool as Ilya returns to the stove, feeling oddly thrilled by the domesticity of the moment even if this isn’t the first time he’s seen Ilya cook, both of them enjoying doing it together at the cottage. At a quick glance, he can see that the salad looks safe, and he can probably ask Ilya to just set aside some of the protein pasta he pours into a pot of boiling water. He doesn’t know if Ilya already planned to or not, but with a game tomorrow, he’d rather not try to survive off of leaves if he doesn’t have to.

“Almost ready,” Ilya responds, not looking back, and Shane smiles slightly at the pride he can hear in Ilya’s voice, enjoying not being the only one enjoying this.

“Salad’s good for me?” He asks, just to get it out of the way. He’s too used to it to mourn that everything else looks good, so he doesn’t bother looking too closely at anything else on the counter. There’s no point in appreciating what he can’t have, after all.

“What?” Ilya asks absently, glancing over his shoulder only briefly before stirring a pot of what looks like sauce.

“Salad’s safe for me?” He clarifies. He shifts a little, slightly uncomfortable at sounding so dramatic, but it’s not like it wouldn’t be *more* embarrassing if he didn’t ask ahead of time and then had to see if Ilya can indeed use an epipen after watching the videos Shane’s dad sent him after Ilya asked when they were over one night.

“Is all safe for you,” Ilya says, pulling the pot of sauce off of the burner and setting it to the side on a pot holder.

Shane blinks.

“Labels are over there,” Ilya says, tipping his chin to indicate the tidy little stack of packages on the counter in the corner, “if you want to check, but I used list.”

“I can eat all of this?” Shane asks, a little embarrassed by the way his throat feels slightly tight in a way that for once isn’t a bad thing when it comes to food.

“Yes?” Ilya asks, sounding amused. He glances at Shane, smiling faintly. “You think I would make food you-” He cuts himself off when Shane all but leaps off of his stool, backing him into the fridge and pulling him into a deep, *filthy* kiss. Ilya makes a noise of surprise but responds with equal passion, slipping a hand down down down until he has a palmful of Shane’s ass, squeezing appreciatively.

“You made me food?” Shane asks, pulling back enough just to press his lips to Ilya’s jaw, his throat. He feels Ilya shiver faintly at the heat of his tongue against sensitive skin, but the hand he brings up to thread fingers through Shane’s hair is gentle.

“Yes,” Ilya says, sounding flatteringly breathless. “Is okay?”

Shane could almost laugh at the question. Is it okay?

He hopes the way he drops to his knees and reaches for Ilya’s belt buckle is enough of a yes.

He knows from years of making it that the pasta takes 11 minutes to be done.

He’ll make it be enough time.

*

“Oh *fuck*,” Shane says with feeling when he takes his first bite. He’s used to thinking of food as fuel at this point—it’s just the most efficient way of going about it—and outside of the cottage, it’s not really worth spending the energy on trying to get fancy, not with how busy he usually is and how much thought and planning cooking takes working around his allergies. He knows the foods he can have, and he has an efficient, reliable list of ways to make those foods. Anything else is just more to think about.

“What?” Ilya asks.

“Jesus *Christ*, Ilya,” Shane emphasizes. “You’re sure this is safe for me?” It’s mostly meant to be a joke, honestly. There *is* a little part of him that’s certain Ilya must have fucked up somewhere and put something delicious and forbidden in, but he doesn’t feel himself reacting yet, so he’ll enjoy it while he can.

“Yes?”

The strain in Ilya’s voice finally catches his attention away from his pasta, and he finds his boyfriend looking at him with concern, one hand extended as if he’s about to yank his plate away from him.

“You are reacting to something?” Ilya asks, half-rising. “Something is wrong? What is-”

“Oh!” Shane says, catching on and shaking his head quickly. “No, sorry! I’m good!”

Ilya pauses for a moment, like he’s making sure Shane isn’t lying, and then he drops back into his seat, exhaling heavily and then scrubbing a hand over his face before he drops it to the counter.

“Don’t fucking do that,” he complains. “Jesus, Hollander. I thought you were about to fucking-die or something. That-don’t smile about it!”

Shane tries and fails to stop, unsuccessfully trying to hide it behind his hand.

“What?” Ilya demands, and Shane can see the way he’s trying to remain stern instead of smiling back. “You think it is funny scaring me like this? I think I am going to have to answer to the police about killing Shane Hollander, and you are laughing at me?”

The question just makes him laugh, and Ilya’s annoyance breaks under the force of amusement. He kicks Shane’s ankle and mutters something in Russian that Shane doesn’t need to know the language to understand is an insult.

He takes a massive bite of his pasta, unapologetic.

“Is good?” Ilya asks, starting to eat his own food now that he’s been reassured Shane isn’t about to keel over on him.

“*Really* fucking good,” Shane says honestly. “Did my dad give you the recipe?” It’s his best guess. After a lifetime of having to accommodate his needs, a moving-out present from his dad had been a binder of Shane Food Recipes, a title that had made Shane roll his eyes when he read it; he still uses it most weeks, picking out the two he wants to eat for lunch and dinner and following them exactly. This pasta, though, tastes new, and he wonders if his dad has been holding out on him.

“No,” Ilya says, reaching for more parmesan because Shane knows by now that he’s a cheese fiend. “Was on recipe blog.”

“Didn’t you have to make a lot of substitutions, though?” Shane asks, frowning, feeling a little bad about the idea of Ilya having to go through the effort on his behalf when *he* doesn’t even bother. If a recipe isn’t meant for him, it’s more trouble than it’s worth to try and fix it, especially when the results will probably turn out shitty anyway.

“No,” Ilya says, sounding unconcerned. “Is blog for allergies. All safe for Hollander recipes.” He turns to give him a playful wink, but Shane’s feeling a little too stunned to respond to the playfulness.

“You looked up recipes for me?” He asks.

Ilya gives him a look like he’s wondering if the question was a trick.

“Yes?”

“Why?” Shane asks, genuinely thrown.

Ilya looks equally thrown by the question.

“What do you mean why?”

“I could have just, like, brought something,” Shane says. “It’s seriously fine. I used to do that if I stayed over at someone’s house when I was a kid.”

(It’s also a contributing reason to why he *stopped* staying over at people’s houses when he was a kid, embarrassed by the way it *always* got questions and comments, even when they were meant kindly, but that doesn’t seem like a detail he should add.)

“You think I am just going to eat in front of you when you can’t have something?” Ilya asks, sounding almost insulted by the idea.

Well...yeah, Shane thinks but doesn’t say.

“I seriously don’t mind,” Shane insists. “You don’t have to-”

“I know,” Ilya says. “I can make you eat lukewarm water and plain toast like sad old person. You will probably like this, actually. Maybe you do that next time.”

“Asshole,” Shane says, shoving his shoulder.

And then returning to his dinner, because confusing or not, it *is* fucking delicious.

“You’re not a kid, and I am not just someone,” Ilya says. “I’m your boyfriend. Is different, yes? I want you to be comfortable here when you stay with me.”

Shane shifts slightly, not even remotely prepared to process something like that.

“Also this means I can show you I am a better cook than you, which we knew already because I beat you at everything anyw-”

For the crime of being an asshole, Shane confiscates the parmesan and shoves it far out of Ilya’s reach.

The justice makes the food taste even better.

*

“Can I ask you something?” Ilya asks that night, after dinner and making out in the kitchen and grinding against each other on the couch and a shower and fucking in the shower and fucking in bed and then brushing teeth and then blowjobs and then needing to brush their teeth again *because* of said blowjobs.

(It’s possible being long distance has made them more than a little nympho when reunited.)

“You just did,” Shane says, full and satisfied and sleepy.

“Asshole,” Ilya says, ruining the insult when it’s paired with a kiss to the top of his head before he settles back. Shane tilts his head up to look at him from his place on Ilya’s shoulder, but Ilya remains looking up, one hand moving to card through his hair slowly. “Why didn’t you tell me before? About your allergies?”

Shane frowns, thrown.

“What?”

“You never told me,” Ilya says. “Why?”

“It-” Shane shifts back, resting against a pillow instead of Ilya but draping an arm over his side when Ilya turns to face him. “It didn’t come up.”

Even in the dim light of the room, he can see that Ilya looks unimpressed by the answer. He tries again.

“I don’t talk about it a lot,” he says, trying to even think of an answer to give when he deliberately thinks about his allergies as little as possible, unwilling to give them more of his life than they already take. “It doesn’t come up.”

“Many things can *kill you* and this just doesn’t come up?” Ilya asks, clearly doubtful. “What about team dinners? Or going to bars? Even terrible team like Montreal does things like this, yes?”

“You’re such a dick,” Shane says fondly, before he goes a little more serious. It’s not something he’s given much thought, honestly. He gets out of as many team food-based events as he can without seeming rude, and when he does go to one, unless it’s Hayden and Jackie’s place where he can be certain of safe food being set aside for him, he eats at home and then nurses a ginger ale. It’s not that he thinks the team would take it badly, necessarily, but he knows by now that he can’t just say it and not expect follow-up questions.

Not expect it to be one more way he doesn’t fit in with everyone else.

“I don’t usually eat with everyone else,” he answers honestly.

“Not even bringing your own food?” Ilya asks, sounding surprised, and Shane shrugs.

“Hey guys, don’t mind me just bringing tupperware in my bag,” Shane says dryly. “Can you imagine the chirping I’d get?”

“You thought I would chirp you about this?” Ilya asks, and his tone is neutral in a way that Shane knows means he’s hurt his feelings. He leans forward, kissing him slow, sweet. When they part, he brushes his hair back gently. “I wouldn’t-”

“I know,” Shane says, and it’s true. They both step on each other’s toes now and then, get a little too rough both physically and emotionally without meaning to, but there’s an understanding between them, too, a little bubble of the two of them, where they can be comfortable with each other. Even before the cottage, before them actually talking, before pasta and panic attacks and confirmation of being boyfriends, there was trust there, *here*, in the space between them when they’re together. It’s something he’s never actually experienced with anyone else before, the open invitation to drop the performance of Shane Hollander, NHL Star, and just be Shane, normal guy.

(Well, normal with some caveats.)

“It wasn’t you,” Shane says, because it’s the most important thing, even if it’s *maybe* a little bit a lie. It’s not Ilya because it wasn’t *just* Ilya, but he doesn’t know how to verbalize that distinction in a way that makes sense or won’t mean accidentally hurting Ilya’s feelings. “I didn’t think it would matter.”

“You didn’t think, ‘Hey Rozanov, if you use the wrong condoms, I might die’ would matter?” Ilya asks dryly.

“Okay, the latex isn’t deadly, it’s-” The look Ilya gives him says to refocus. He inhales and then lets the breath out, shifting forward until they’re pressed together, foreheads touching. He closes his eyes. “I don’t tell people because it doesn’t usually matter. I can eat by myself at home. I can bring my own condoms to a hookup. I can just leave the table if people start eating peanuts. It’s not-a lot of people aren’t big enough parts of my life to matter, if that makes sense.” It’s a mean thing to say, maybe, but it’s true. He’s learned how to work around his limitations the same way he’s learned how to work around strengths and weaknesses on his team in a game. If he doesn’t get to sit with everyone else at a lunch table no matter what they’re eating, if he doesn’t get to just grab something off of a shared plate of appetizers, if he doesn’t get to just order whatever sounds good off of a menu at a restaurant, if he doesn’t get to fit in with everyone else without thinking about it, then it might as well be his choice.

(Or at least...it might as well feel like it’s his choice.)

“We’ve known each other many years,” Ilya says softly, and Shane nods, not bothering to pull back when he does. “That is not a big part of your life?”

“You-” He hesitates, just for a moment, long practice making him want to stay quiet.

But determination making him keep talking anyway.

“I think you’re the biggest part of my life,” he says softly. “I think you have been for a long time.” He opens his eyes and pulls back just enough to look at Ilya. He’s so beautiful in the dim light of the bedroom that it almost hurts to look at him, but he also can’t look away. It blows his mind sometimes, that he has a claim to this man, that he’s Ilya’s and Ilya is his, that there are thousands of people who would kill to be dating Ilya Rozanov.

And yet Shane is the one here beside him.

“If I told you about my allergies, I think it would have been like admitting you would be around long enough to need to know about them,” he confesses. “A casual fuckbuddy doesn’t need to know that kind of stuff.”

“And now I get special boyfriend knowledge?” Ilya teases, kissing him once, quick and playful.

“Yeah,” Shane agrees, smiling slightly. “In exchange for making me really awesome food that doesn’t kill me.”

Ilya snorts.

“What?” He teases. “Those are the rules.”

“You do love rules,” Ilya says affectionately, squeezing his hip and tugging him in a little bit closer. “Such a good boy,” he says on a purr, thumb pressing down in a way Shane would like to pursue further except for the fact that they *really* need to go to bed soon.

“Don’t,” Shane says, kicking his shin lightly. “We have a game tomorrow.”

“So boring,” Ilya complains, but he doesn’t push, just slides his hand back to slip under Shane’s shirt and press his palm against his back. Shane feels the last little bit of tension he didn’t know was in his shoulders unwinding under the touch.

“I wasn’t ready to think about how much of my life you were then,” Shane says, and the honesty is more than a little uncomfortable.

Still, if there’s one person he trusts enough to be uncomfortable around, it’s Ilya Rozanov.

“You weren’t supposed to be so much of my life that it would matter.”

“And now?” Ilya says, and Shane smiles, just faintly, at the careful neutrality of his tone.

“Now I’m tired of pretending you aren’t the person I want to spend my whole life with,” he says.

Ilya takes a deep breath that shudders slightly, and then he tugs Shane into a kiss that sends electricity in him all the way down to his toes.

“*Fuck*, Hollander,” he says against his mouth when they draw apart just long enough to catch their breath. “Ty vsya moya zhizn. Moye serdtse. Vso.”

Shane doesn’t know what the words mean, not yet, even after his first few lessons on Rosetta Stone that he’s been keeping secret to make a surprise out of it for Ilya. Still, he thinks he knows the right words for this situation.

“Ya tebya lyublyu,” he says, sounding the words out carefully, wanting to get them right.

He feels Ilya’s smile against his mouth, confirmation that he succeeded.

“I love you, too.”

*

It doesn’t stop being a novelty no matter how many times it happens, being able to go over to someone else’s house and just *know* there will be food for him. He’s used to his parents having things for him, of course, but he’s been in the habit since he was a kid of not having any expectations at someone else’s house. It doesn’t even make sense, really, not with how infrequently he and Ilya see each other, but Ilya seems strangely insistent about it, and it’s not as if Shane doesn’t enjoy getting to go to someone else’s house and look at a tidy little cabinet of food that’s just for him, picked out with him in mind, already cleared by someone else to be safe for him.

Primarily because Ilya abuses the *fuck* out of the Hollander family group chat while grocery shopping now.

He sends less “will this kill shane? y/n” messages with time, and Shane is even reluctantly amused at watching him learn the annoyances of brands changing their formulas with no

warning, usually announced with things like, “Mary has decided to be a traitor. She has put nuts in her crackers now. 🙄” along with a picture of an ingredient list.

Less endearing is the bit Ilya started and refuses to let die: clarifying foods based on a shorthand that is *immensely* annoying.

sunflower seeds love you, yes?

Please just ask me normal questions.

they love you: yes or no?

They’re not sentient, Ilya. They don’t love anyone.

hollander, you are being very difficult

I’M being difficult? Just ask me if I’m allergic or not like a normal person.



i am waiting, hollander. you are the one who is not going to get to eat super special sunflower seed butter cups after the other ones cheated on you with coconut oil if you keep not answering a very simple question.

The message makes him smile despite his best efforts to resist. He’s used to being strict in his diet out of both necessity and practice. Trying to deviate from a standard formula is just asking for more trouble than it’s worth, and it’s not as if he *needs* things like sunflower seed butter cups to survive. They’re an indulgence, and he’s gone his entire career resisting indulgences.

...well, with the exception of the indulgence currently texting him.

Are you sure they’re even safe for me?



you think i would ask if i wasn’t sure?

A picture of an ingredient list and a screenshot of their entry on the food allergy app Ilya downloaded per Shane’s mom’s recommendation because he’s an overachiever.

now answer, hollander: they are not on your list.

do sunflower seeds love you?

Shane rolls his eyes but exhales, knowing the easiest path forward here.

Yes, sunflower seeds love me.

good.

I love you also ❤️

Shane smiles, pressing his cheek into his pillow a little harder, lying to himself that he can still pick up a faint trace of Ilya in the material even though it's been weeks since he was last here.

Gross.

I love you, too.

*

The day Shane sits down to lunch with his parents and hears his mother say the words, "The salmon sandwich loves you now, by the way. I asked the waitress, and she said they stopped using peanut oil in their mayonnaise," he almost gets back up and leaves, betrayed beyond belief by this bit following him into the real world.

When his dad contributes, "The croutons are cheating on you, though. It looks like they have a tree nut label now," he wonders if his late twenties are still in the right timeframe to file for emancipation.

*

It's been enough years of going over to eat at his and Jackie's house that Shane hasn't actually thought about the fact that he doesn't remember if he's ever told Hayden about his allergies or not.

Not until it becomes a new thing for him and Ilya to fight about during what was meant to be a nice dinner to let two of his most important people get to know each other.

At the moment, all the dinner is accomplishing is him and Jackie exchanging "Can you believe these two?" looks across the table. He'd thought hosting it at Jackie and Hayden's house might make Hayden feel a little better at having the home field advantage, but that doesn't currently appear to be the case.

"-tell him what he can eat or not, Rozanov," Hayden continues.

"What?" Ilya taunts, because he loves getting under other people's skin more than almost anything in the world. "Is *your* job?"

Shane accepts another helping of green beans when Jackie holds up the platter in offer. He'd also like another helping of the potatoes, but they're currently in Hayden's custody, and he's a little too busy arguing to catch Shane's gesture of request.

"No! It's not anyone's job. If he wants to have some fucking cake, he can have some fucking ca-"

"No, he can't," Ilya says pointedly. "It has walnuts, yes? You are wanting to kill him? The only person on your team who actually knows what he's doing?"

Shane takes a bite of his green beans, trying to decide if he should intervene or just let this play out. He thinks he heard someone once mention something about how dogs have a pecking order and it's best just to let them fight it out among themselves to decide where everyone stands. Obnoxious as it is to listen to them squabble, he's not sure if trying to jump in would make things better or worse ultimately.

For the moment, he'll stick to his beans.

"A piece of cake isn't going to fucking kill him, you fucking drama queen," Hayden scoffs.

"It does have walnuts in it, honey," Jackie interjects, and Hayden turns to her, looking mildly betrayed before her words register.

"So?" Hayden asks, clearly thrown. He looks to Shane. "I know you're always strict with your diet, buddy, but—"

"No cake," Ilya says, and his tone is a deliberate taunt that Hayden rises to immediately, opening his mouth to keep this fight going before Shane interjects.

"I'm sure," he says. He turns to Ilya. "And stop being a dick."

"I am being the dick?" Ilya repeats, incredulous. "He," he gestures with his fork towards Hayden, "is the one trying to kill you."

"It's one fucking piece of cake," Hayden says, looking like he's contemplating using his own fork as a weapon.

"He's allergic, babe," Jackie says. She turns to Shane, giving him a smile. "We still have some of the strawberry sorbet in the freezer you can have, though."

"Thanks," Shane says, returning the smile, "but I—"

"No," Hayden says, putting his fork down and resting both hands on the table, "what do you mean you're allergic?" He demands. "Since when?"

"Maybe the news is right about prevalence of traumatic brain injuries in the NHL," Ilya says thoughtfully. "Very sad to watch in person."

"Shut the *fuck* up!" Hayden snaps, glaring briefly before looking back to Shane. "What do you mean you're allergic to—wait," something seems to dawn on him, and he turns to Jackie, "why do *you* know that and *I* don't know that?"

Jackie shrugs, reaching to pick up her glass and take a sip of her wine.

"That's why he always has his own things when he's over here, honey," she says. "You didn't notice?" She sounds almost amused.

"Well, yeah," Hayden says, "but that's because he's on his special diet."

"His special *allergen-free* diet," Jackie says.

“What are you allergic to?” Hayden asks, turning to him now and seeming genuinely bothered.

“Luckily not stupid people with how much time he spends with you,” Ilya observes, swirling his wine in his glass contemplatively.

“Would you just-” Hayden starts.

Shane sighs and takes another bite of his green beans.

*

For the sake of everyone’s sanity, Shane doesn’t resist Jackie’s efforts at giving them a break by splitting Ilya and Hayden up by offering to take Ilya out to the back patio while sending Hayden to do the dishes, Hayden snagging him to come help in what’s a blatant plan to get him alone.

Shane doesn’t bother resisting.

“Since when do you have allergies?” Hayden asks the moment they’re in the kitchen.

“Since always?” Shane says rhetorically, pulling on the pair of dishgloves laying over the edge of the sink and starting to rinse things off to stack in the dishwasher.

“No, but-” Hayden grabs his shoulder to get his attention. “You’re like *allergic* allergic?”

Shane huffs a laugh, amused by the question.

“As opposed to what, Hayd?”

“I mean are you ‘yeah pollen makes me sneeze’ or are you ‘don’t feed me a peanut or I’m *dead*’ allergic to stuff?”

“I mean I have an epipen, so I-”

“You have an epipen?” Hayden demands. “Dude, you didn’t think to ever give me a heads up about that? What if I needed to use it on you?”

“I mean there’s instructions on it,” Shane says with a shrug, reaching for a dish sponge to scrape a bit of roasted vegetable off of a pan before putting it in the dishwasher. “It’s pretty clear, I think.”

“I’m serious,” Hayden says. “That’s fucking dangerous, man. Do you know how many times guys on the team have tried to fuck with your food at parties to mess with you?”

“Uh, no?” Shane says, turning to look at him now. “People fuck with my food?” The idea makes his stomach clench slightly, wondering what’s been slipped in without him noticing, what might have-

“I mean not when I’m around,” Hayden says. “I wouldn’t let them do that to you, but I thought it was just me stopping people from fucking with you just to be assholes. I didn’t know it was life or death, Shane. That’s pretty fucking important to know.” He shifts his weight slightly. “Rozanov knows.”

“I mean, yeah,” he says. “We end up eating together pretty often, and I stay over at his house sometimes. He kind of needs to know I can’t eat peanuts and stuff.”

He also needs to know *he* can’t eat peanuts and stuff and then make out with Shane without waiting a few hours and also brushing his teeth, but he thinks he might actually die of embarrassment if he has to say that part.

“And he’s good about it?” Hayden asks. “He’s not a dick to you about it?”

Shane can’t help the way the question makes him snort.

“No, he’s not,” he says, and he can hear that his tone sounds affectionate. He doesn’t bother to try and hide it. “He’s really good about it, actually. He even keeps his house safe when I’m not there.” It’s something they’ve disagreed about, actually, Shane feeling flustered and unsure how to proceed when it comes to Ilya orienting himself around Shane’s needs like that and Ilya insisting that he’d rather be sure his house remains safe so Shane can come over whenever he wants instead of needing to give him a heads up.

It still makes him feel a little disbelieving, sometimes, Ilya loving him like that.

“What do you mean, ‘safe’?” Hayden asks, handing over a platter and then reaching over him to wet a dishcloth to start wiping down the stove.

“Like, doesn’t have peanut butter or anything in the house and reads labels for stuff like body wash to make sure there’s nothing in it I’m allergic to even when I’m not there. Stuff like that. He, uh, he cooks for me, too. Recipes I can eat and stuff.” For some reason, that makes him feel a little bit bashful, like Ilya perusing allergy recipe blogs when they’re relaxing on the couch together in the evening is some lurid, filthy thing instead of something very sweet.

(Upon reflection, the fact that it makes Shane want to jump his bones every single time he sees him doing it probably has more than a little to do with it.)

(He decides very quickly that Hayden doesn’t need to be in on that realization.)

He glances over when he realizes the silence has stretched a little too long, finding Hayden studying him intently. He fidgets a little, uncomfortable under the scrutiny. Finally, Hayden lets out a sigh that turns into a groan, tossing his head back for a moment before he rolls it back up, leaning back against the counter and resting his hands on the edge of it.

“Goddamnit,” he says. “I’m going to have to think Ilya Rozanov is a good boyfriend, aren’t I?”

Shane laughs, picking up the sprayer to start corralling food scraps towards the garbage disposal.

“I mean, *I* think he is.”

Hayden makes a noise of disgust.

*

“Happy?” Ilya asks, crowding him against the door of his apartment the moment it’s closed and sliding a leg between his, taking hold of his hips to encourage him to rock against the firm muscle of his thigh.

“About?” Shane asks, trying and failing not to be immediately distracted from the question by the joys of grinding on his boyfriend’s leg.

He thinks winning the Stanley Cup might be an easier accomplishment, honestly.

“Now I have met Pike as Ilya and not Rozanov and now we can be best friends and hold hands and go on vacation to Cabo like boring old people couples. This is what you wanted, yes?”

Annoyance allows him to gather himself together enough to give Ilya a look.

“I wouldn’t say-hmm,” he interrupts himself for a moment when Ilya pressing his thigh up a little higher requires his full attention for a second. “I wouldn’t say that was ‘let’s be best friends’ behavior, Rozanov.”

“What?” Ilya asks with faux innocence, nosing Shane’s head to the side to get at his neck. Shane closes his eyes when a playful little threat of a bite is followed by a warm tongue dragging over his skin. “I was *very* good. I played nice.”

“You—yeah, there—you were *not* playing nice, Ilya.”

“Neither was Pike,” Ilya complains, a hint of a whine in his voice.

“Well you didn’t make it better,” Shane points out. “You offered to let Jackie become our third if she wants to.”

“What?” Ilya asks. “You are not a feminist? Women should have choices, Hollander. I am telling Twitter on you.”

“Asshole,” Shane huffs. With pure force of will, he manages to get a hand into Ilya’s hair to tug his head back so he can look at him. “I want you and Hayden to get along. You’re both important to me. I don’t want to have to constantly ref you guys when we’re all hanging out.”

“Hm,” Ilya says, pulling against the restraint of his head until Shane releases him, letting himself be drawn into a kiss that stretches for a few long seconds before Ilya pulls back. “He tried to kill you with walnuts,” he says in the scant moment he takes to take a breath. “This is not very nice of him.”

“He didn’t know,” Shane says, flinching when Ilya nips at him. “What was—”

“He should know,” Ilya says. “You tell him where you’re going and when like he is your mother, but you do not tell him something important like this?” He tsks in a way that makes Shane smile faintly, taking a guess about where this scolding is about to go. “Naughty, Hollander. Very bad behavior.”

“Oh?” Shane asks, pressing a hand to Ilya’s stomach and then gliding down. “I’m bad?”

“Yes,” Ilya says, abs twitching under Shane’s touch. “Very-very bad.”

“Hm,” Shane hums thoughtfully, moving his head enough to get his teeth on Ilya’s earlobe, tugging gently. “Maybe you should punish me, then. So I learn my lesso-” He laughs when he’s suddenly jerked into motion, Ilya herding him rapidly towards the stairs.

He submits to his punishment without argument.

He had it coming, after all.

*

The first time Shane ever has an allergic reaction around Ilya is almost comically random, their luck after years and years running out on an evening with no particular significance at all.

Montreal is set to play Ottawa the next day, and even if it got him some side eyes, Shane had needed to see Ilya badly enough that he’d decided to get permission to just drive up the night before instead of taking the bus with the team the next day under the excuse of wanting to see a fictional relative who was coming to town to see his parents, allowing himself the luxury of a whole night spent with his boyfriend. It had gotten a few snide comments in the locker room, but at this point, it would be noteworthy if he went a day *without* hearing snide comments in the locker room.

Maybe it makes him a stupid, short-sighted person, but for the sake of a few stolen hours with Ilya, he’ll take the hit to his already-damaged reputation with his team.

Because it was so last-minute, Ilya had already agreed to going out to a bar the Centaurs frequent fairly often for the sake of celebrating someone’s birthday, but Shane hadn’t minded, content to let himself into Ilya’s house, take a shower, and then rummage through the snack cabinet primarily just to once again enjoy the novelty of an entire selection of things at someone else’s house that are safe for him. By the time he hears Ilya’s key in the door, he’s grazed his way through some nori sheets, a granola bar, and some popcorn, waiting to eat actual dinner until he can eat it with Ilya.

Well, he amends when he rushes Ilya and ends up accidentally slamming the door shut by pressing him against it with more force than he meant, *maybe after another little appetizer first*.

“You taste like beer,” he complains, not bothering to fully pull away from Ilya’s mouth when he says it despite the words. He makes a content little noise when Ilya cups the back of his head and tilts it to the side to get to his neck, and he sinks into the sensation without a fight,

letting himself be backed into the wall, closing his eyes and smiling at the delicious heat of Ilya's mouth against sensitive skin.

"You taste like seaweed," Ilya says back between kisses, sounding amused. "You do not hear me complain."

"Mmm," Shane hums, willing to let the argument drop.

Especially when one of Ilya's hands traces a firm path down his stomach and under the fly of his jeans.

"Oh, fuck," he gasps out, canting his hips into the sensation. He feels the rumble as much as he hears the sound when Ilya lets out a low, quiet kind of laugh.

"You missed me?" He asks, clearly teasing.

"Yes," Shane still replies, turned on into honesty. "I always miss you."

For a second he thinks he's going to have to get violent about being teased when Ilya stops cold, but then his mouth and hand are both back, more intent than before.

"*Fuck, Shane.*"

"Yes," he agrees, smiling, eyes still closed. "Good plan. Fuck Shane."

Ilya laughs again, and Shane laughs back when he finds himself suddenly lifted, wrapping his legs around Ilya's hips automatically. They trade kisses all the way over to the couch, and Shane is so breathless with pleasure and the relief of being with his person again that he doesn't notice his throat feeling incrementally tighter.

Not until he starts feeling a kind of breathless that's much, *much* less pleasant.

He freezes immediately, panic like ice flooding through him. *No*, he tells himself firmly. *No, no. Please no. I didn't do anything. No. Please no.*

"Shane?" Ilya says, an edge of concern to his voice. It's only when he speaks that he realizes that Ilya froze in response to him, pulling back at once. "What's wrong? You are okay?"

"I—" He takes a breath, or he *tries to*, and the telltale wheeze of it is the last nail in the coffin. He sits up so fast he almost knocks his head against Ilya's, and he doesn't even have time to apologize as he tries to focus on breathing at the same time he tries to focus on remembering where the *fuck* his epipen is—

"Shane?" Ilya asks, cupping his face now, tone urgent, eyes searching. "Talk to me. What is happening?"

His panic, though, has cost him the time in which he had enough air to fully speak in complete sentences, and he grabs his throat both as a natural response and in what he hopes is a hint. He sees the second it registers for Ilya, what's happening, and he wishes he had a little

less panic swirling inside of him right now so he could do something about the instant panic he sees in Ilya's eyes.

As it is, all he can do is try and force air past the way it feels like there's a vice around his throat, a hand squeezing squeezing squeezing. He swallows, *hard*, trying to force down the itchiness in his mouth and throat, and he can feel how shaky he is, going cold and clammy. He can feel his mouth watering, the way it does before he pukes, but it does nothing for the itchy sensation, and each swallow is painful, forced down against the constriction in his throat. He's going to die, he thinks in a moment of absolute certainty. He's going to die. He's dying. He's dying right now and it's over for him. He's going to die right here, right now. He's going to die in front of his boyfriend, going to asphyxiate to death right in front of him, and there's nothing he can do to- He makes a small, startled noise when Ilya suddenly launches himself away, terrified in an instant, reaching without any thought behind it. *Don't leave*, he thinks, sudden, desperate. *Please don't leave me. Please. Please don't-*

"Okay, okay, okay," Ilya says, returning in a rush of words. Torn between a gut-deep conviction that he's dying, the pain in his throat, and the relief of Ilya back beside him, he doesn't even notice what he's holding until Ilya is pulling his leg straight and flicking away a piece of plastic, hesitating only a second before he drives his hand down against Shane's thigh. Shane twitches, reflexively, at the little sting of pain, negligible as it is compared to the pain in his throat and chest, but Ilya doesn't pull away, shifting the hand holding what Shane has managed to process is an epipen so he can gather him close with the other, gently guiding his head to his shoulder, fingers sinking through his hair. "I know, sorry, sorry. I know. I'm sorry. Just breathe, sweetheart. Is okay. Just breathe, yes?" Shane tries to reassure him, tries to let him know it's okay even if he isn't sure that's actually the case, but Ilya just shushes him.

He can feel the tremble of his hand where it's resting on the back of his neck.

"Is okay," Ilya says, pulling back just enough to kiss his head twice before resting his cheek over the spot. "Ya s tobey, dorogoy. Vso khorosho. Vso budet khorosho."

If he wasn't actively in anaphylaxis, Shane thinks he might actually be able to understand what he's being told thanks to the Russian he's been learning, but for the moment, he just lets the cadence wash over him, the love behind the words clear even if the meaning isn't.

He doesn't react when Ilya pulls the epipen away, but he apologizes anyway, a quiet "sorry, sorry" as he replaces the cap and reaches enough to set it on the coffee table. He doesn't let go of Shane as he moves, and Shane doesn't complain about the jostling, feeling shaky now from relief as he feels the tightness and itchiness and "oh fuck I'm fucking dying right now"ness start to fade, leaving him feeling cold and shaky but increasingly capable of breathing now even if he can feel the adrenaline zipping through him like sparks through his bloodstream, leaving him jittery.

He'll still take it.

"Yes, hello," Shane frowns and glances up at Ilya saying something so wildly left field right now, and it's only looking up that lets him realize that Ilya's on the phone. "-drow Way. Yes,

my boyfriend has allergies, and he had reaction.” A pause. “No, I do not know what. Yes, I have already done epipen injection for-”

Shane closes his eyes and leans against Ilya, letting the words fade out until they’re nothing but the familiar, comforting sound of Ilya’s voice. There’s a part of him that protests reflexively at Ilya using the “b” word about them to a stranger, of the way that could *so* easily blow up in their faces if this call ever gets out later, of the way-

The rest of him, though, is too fucking drained to do anything but sit in the safety of Ilya’s embrace and let him take care of things for now, even managing to smile faintly, eyes still closed, when he feels Ilya tug the throw blanket down one-handed to wrap around his shoulders, hand moving in firm, decisive strokes across his back in what must be a response to him still shaking, a misread of why but sweet nonetheless, even as he cycles rapidly between too hot and too cold.

Shane keeps his eyes shut, focusing only on the soothing sound of Ilya’s voice.

*

Shane does his time in the hospital under medical supervision and even grants himself the luxury of ignoring all of the texts but the ones from management and Hayden and JJ, the latter stopping by briefly to see him before the game the next day to ask if he needs anything. He smiles and thanks them and tells them he’s all good and that he’s sorry he’ll have to miss the game. After getting the details of why he’s in the hospital in the first place, JJ berates him good-naturedly about keeping important secrets—the scolding cosigned by Hayden with an enthusiasm that makes Shane roll his eyes even as he smiles slightly—and offers to stop by again after the game if he wants. He thanks them but declines.

After all, the person he wants to see the *most* has already texted to let him know he’ll be stopping by then.

Have fun losing, he texts Ilya, following it with a smile emoji.

Less lying to yourself, more resting, is the response he gets near-immediately.

Texting me in your locker room? Wow, it’s like you miss me or something.

I do.

I missed you in my bed last night.

Before Shane can come up with a flirty response—difficult when he still feels so tired, but irresistible with such a good set-up—another text comes through.

I always sleep better with you.

Shane smiles, curling up on his side around the glowing screen of his phone.

*

He's officially on med hold for 72 hours before he can be evaluated and cleared to return to play. It doesn't require even a *moment* of thought to know exactly where he wants to spend them.

If he's off anyway, he might as well stay where he's wanted.

Ilya's been painfully guilty ever since he got here, dropped off by his dad right out of the hospital. Apparently the culprit of the reaction was a plate of shared appetizers at the bar, Ilya unthinkingly grazing when they passed by him and only later finding out—apparently after he *called* to find out, which is sweet in a way Shane doesn't really know what to do with—that apparently the bar's secret ingredient for their egg rolls is peanut butter in the filling, a wildly unfortunate thing to not know before he went home to kiss his very allergic boyfriend.

And something he is exceedingly determined to needlessly make up for based on the sweet, lingering kisses he's apparently decided to press along every inch of his skin after Shane refused to hear apology number four within a one hour span and told him he could do better things with his mouth if he was *that* eager to use it. It's not that Shane isn't enjoying it, really, but he'd prefer it if they could move along with tonight's programming already, especially when Ilya hasn't even *touched* his cock yet, too busy paying attention to other parts of him.

He doesn't know why Ilya is especially paying attention to a random part of his thigh until he looks down, ready to be annoyed, only to find Ilya once again pressing his lips gently to the side of a small bruise.

The place where the epipen needle went in.

"Hey," he says, reaching down to nudge at Ilya's chin, applying increasing force to the effort until his boyfriend gives in and looks up, looking miserable and guilty and scared, still, like he can't believe things are okay right now.

When Shane pulls him up, he goes easily, settling over him like a blanket, head tucked to his throat.

"I'm okay," Shane soothes, rubbing a hand over the warm skin of his back. "I promise."

"I was too hard, I think," Ilya says, voice muffled. "I hurt you. I'm sorry."

Shane can't help the way it makes him snort, and he makes a half-grimace of apology when Ilya's head pops up to glare at him. He pulls him into a kiss, soft and gentle and slow, stroking gentle fingers over his cheek, down his jaw, until they curl around the soft skin of his neck, pressing gently.

"It was literally life or death," Shane says against his mouth. "I think you get a pass."

"Not funny," Ilya complains, but he still settles down after pulling away, tucking his face against Shane's throat once again.

Shane just holds him quietly for a while, stroking his fingers idly across his shoulders, his back, gliding up occasionally to wind curls into tight coils before letting go, getting the hint

that Ilya isn't really in the mood, not yet, not when everything is still so fresh. This is a part of life he's never had to think about before, not really, the shared risk of someone being part of his life the way a boyfriend is. He knows his parents worry about him and have spent more than their fair share of time with him in ERs before, but it feels different with someone who doesn't *have* to put up with him and his weird ass quirks. It seems unfair, somehow, that Ilya has to get dragged into things like this, has to sign on for putting up with things like this just to be with him. No matter how careful he is, after all, he can't control everything. He shifts slightly, resting his lips lightly against Ilya's soft hair, smelling conditioner picked specifically because they'd learned the hard way that the one he'd used before started giving Shane hives after they changed their formula. It's a little thing that feels like a pretty massive thing, Ilya changing his conditioner for him, because Shane needed it of him. In the grand scheme of things, it's not the biggest deal in the world, but he knows that little things build up over time until they're very, very big things.

Shane wonders, not for the first time, how long it'll be until *he's* a very, very big thing.

"It's probably going to happen again," Shane says, when the thought is too loud in his head to remain unspoken.

He realizes his error at once when Ilya's head comes up so sharply he almost clips him on the chin in the process. He blinks, startled by Ilya's suddenly terrified expression, and it isn't until Ilya presses a hand against his chest that he realizes what he accidentally implied.

"What is wrong? You need your ep-"

"Not right now!" Shane rushes to say. "I'm good right now, I promise! I just meant, like, in general."

Ilya stares at him for a second before exhaling in a way that deflates him.

"Jesus Christ, Hollander," he says, pressing a hand over his heart. "Do not fucking do that to me."

"Sorry," he says, tucking a stray curl back and then tugging Ilya to lay down next to him, curling up and resting his head on his shoulder. "But it..." He hesitates, not wanting to actually say it, not wanting to actually admit to what he knows he should.

Not wanting to risk letting Ilya know exactly what he'll be taking on if they stay together.

"It happens, sometimes," he says, stroking the backs of his fingers idly over Ilya's warm skin. "It's going to happen again, eventually. It's just a matter of time." A fact he tries not to think about as much as possible, honestly, but one he feels he should point out. "It-I-" He hesitates. There's words he should say, and he knows it. They're probably words he should have said a long time ago. It's not fair, asking Ilya to do this, to have to live with the fear of when—not if, *when*—Shane has another reaction. He scared him, and he can't promise he's not going to scare him again. He can be careful, he can check labels, he can be hyper-aware of everything that even goes near his mouth, but he knows it's just a numbers game for how long he's got until something slips through again. "It's part of being with me. It's always *going* to be part of being with me. Even if it's not eggrolls, it'll be surprise almonds or coconut oil or-or

something, and I'm going to have to use my epipen again, and I'm going to have to go to a hospital again, and if you can-if you can't do that-do *this*, with me, I would understand."

He's cut off by a mouth against his, Ilya not even moving his lips, a sure sign that it was more about getting him to stop talking than it was about kissing him.

"It was scary," Ilya says softly, lips brushing against his with how close they are, "but I do not scare easy, Hollander. You will have to do better than that if you are trying to get rid of me."

Shane traces gentle fingertips over his cheek, Ilya closing his eyes and leaning into the touch.

"But still," he says quietly. "It's not something that's ever going to go away. It'll always be something I have to think about, and if you're with me, it's going to be something you have to think about, too."

"Hm," Ilya says, and there's quiet between them for a moment before Ilya opens his eyes, reaching out to touch Shane's face in return. "I am like my mother, sometimes," Ilya says. "Maybe."

"Like your mother?" Shane repeats, confused by the apparent sudden turn in conversation.

"Her...depression," Ilya clarifies, and the second word comes out stilted, like he doesn't want to actually say it. "Is also something that is not going to go away, probably. It will always be a thing, too."

"Your things are my things," Shane says softly, and he can tell from the faint smile it gains him that Ilya remembers what he's repeating.

"Then we will be sad sometimes and allergic *all* the time together, yes?" Ilya asks.

Shane blinks against the way his eyes feel a little wet.

"Sounds like a plan," he says, voice sounding a little rough.

"Yes," Ilya says, tracing his fingers down and resting his thumb against Shane's chin gently. "I am very good at plans." A slight twitch of his lips, informing Shane that whatever comes out of his mouth next is probably going to piss him off. "Is why I am a better captain than you are."

"Mother! Fucker!" Shane says, shoving himself upright and emphasizing each word with a thwack of his pillow to Ilya's head, Ilya bringing his arms up in an attempt at defending himself, laughing unapologetically.

Their resulting wrestling match is gentler than it usually is, which Shane knows is due to Ilya's lingering worry, but it doesn't feel like pity, the consideration that he's not yet back at full health, Ilya holding back to let the playfight stretch despite his temporary handicap.

It just feels like love.

*

Shane meets the Centaurs piecemeal in the course of signing paperwork and completing physicals and getting fitted for new gear, but he's still feeling more than a little stupidly nervous the day he arrives to a pre-season team barbeque hosted by Boodram, even with Ilya at his side until he peels off at Shane's insistence, determined to stand on his own two feet here and make a good impression at this first real moment of getting to know his new team. He wants it to go better this time around, wants to *actually* fit the way he *thought* he fit in Montreal.

He *needs* to actually fit the way he thought he fit in Montreal.

He mingles and talks, laughs at jokes and shakes hands and doesn't twitch under shoulder shakes and claps on the back. He sips at the ginger ale Ilya pressed into his hand when he passed by, paired with an affectionate squeeze to his elbow that was more calming than he would like to admit to. He's worked his way around the party in sections, finally managing to end up next to Zane Boodram, who has maintained a cheerful post at the grill since Shane got here. He's playing a wildly mean game with himself by getting so close to food that smells good but absolutely *can't* be safe when it's accommodating so many people, but Boodram is the last person he needs to check off his mental tally before he'll allow himself to drift back towards Ilya, and he knows from bringing it in the car that at least there'll be potato salad and a cake he can have, though he's going to have to ask Ilya where he put them, his husband taking ownership of them at the door and telling Shane, "Now go make friends so they can appreciate how sexy my husband is and respect my game."

Shane had rolled his eyes but complied.

"Hey, rookie," Boodram says with an easy smile when he notices Shane hovering.

Shane makes a face that Boodram laughs at.

"Sorry, couldn't resist," he says, not sounding very sorry at all. "Having a good time?"

"Yeah, totally," Shane says, and it's not even a lie, really. The team wasn't totally strangers to him when he got here, and he's been welcome in every circle he's joined with an easiness that had made him suspicious at first, honestly.

He's certainly been to worse parties.

"Oh, did cap give you the run down of food jail?"

It takes Shane a full couple of seconds to even process that the words have been said to him and a further second to confirm that no, yeah, those words make no fucking sense in that order.

"What?"

"Cap has a whole thing about food allergies," Boodram says with a fond roll of his eyes.

"Safe stuff—no peanuts, no coconut, stuff like that—is on the table over there," he indicates

said table with a tilt of his chin, “and anything that isn’t safe gets banished to a different table. We call it food jail. Hang on, I’ll send you the list.”

Shane blinks as Boodram pulls his phone out of his pocket, struggling to comprehend, and he glances down when his own phone vibrates in his hand, lighting up. He opens the link he was sent and finds a list.

His list.

He stares at the word “almonds” like a focal point he can try to orient understanding around.

“I know it looks intense,” Bood continues, and Shane glances up at him, “and he is kind of intense *about* it.” There’s no heat in the words, no judgement, just fondness for what has apparently been chalked up to being a quirk of a beloved captain with a weird strictness about food allergies. “But it gets normal the more you do it, promise.”

“I-yeah,” Shane agrees. “I’m sure.”

“Makes it easier, you know?” Bood continues, already turning to flip burgers, like he’s just given Shane a casual team heads up about something and not told him his husband has apparently taken on the role of Food Police on this team.

Apparently well before Shane was even a possibility in this context.

“Apparently Carson has a peanut allergy, so it’s definitely nice for him.”

“Yeah,” Shane agrees, already detaching from this conversation to look for Ilya. “For sure.”

“Think he has something with pineapple, too, but his dumb ass-”

“Excuse me,” Shane says absently, spotting Ilya and making his way to him. Like a sixth sense, Ilya apparently feels him coming, glancing to the side to exactly where Shane is and smiling immediately, holding out a hand and flexing his fingers in teasing welcome.

He blinks, clearly surprised, when Shane takes it, linking their fingers together. He can’t help the way he glances over at the people near them, observing responses, calculating judgment, wondering what’s going to be said and what’s going to be thought and what’s going to come back to bite him in the-

No one’s looking at them.

He feels his shoulders go a little looser, not aware that he’d been holding tension in them to start with until it was released. Feeling a little giddy with daring at the lack of response—like this is normal, like this is nothing special, like this isn’t something Shane of even three years ago never even imagined as a possibility—he leans against Ilya slightly, trusting him with some of his weight. Ilya takes it easily.

“Okay?” Ilya asks, turning his head to speak close to his ear so no one else will hear.

Shane smiles, shifting enough to press his cheek to his husband's briefly, a chaste gesture but one meant affectionately.

"I'm great," he says.

And for the first time in a long time, he really means it.

*

Boodram announces "soup's up!" enthusiastically, and everyone begins milling towards the grill and the burger and hot dog stations that have been set up. Shane smiles, unable to help it, when he hears "-nothing in jail, but the shifty mustard got banished, so it's over there if you need it" to an apparent question about the food.

"Shifty mustard?" He asks, glancing at Ilya, who handed him a paper plate from a stack before they joined the line.

"Mm," Ilya says absently, looking for a fork and then stretching around the person in front of them to grab two and pass one to Shane. "Fucking 'seasonings,'" he says, with the venom of someone who's been reading food labels long enough to hold opinions about them. "Oh," he says, apparently remembering something, "the food is safe for you. All of the stuff here by the grill and the table over there." He glances at the table Boodram pointed out earlier. "Unsafe things are over on the other side of the yard. There's a sign, you can rea-what?" He cuts himself off, looking thrown but amused by whatever he sees on Shane's face.

"Apparently you're a food allergy compliance dictator," Shane says fondly, and Ilya smiles. After only a moment of hesitation, he reaches out, brushing a hand over Shane's hair and then resting it, very briefly, against his cheek, a quick, chaste caress, before he drops his arm back to his side.

"I wanted-" Ilya pauses, just briefly, and Shane is endeared to see he looks almost shy. "I wanted it to be safe. For you. If you got to come with me one day."

Shane's throat feels tight in a way that has nothing to do with allergies.

"I really fucking love you," he says, voice sounding a little rough in a way Ilya thankfully doesn't comment on.

"I love you, too," Ilya says, and he knows he resisted the urge to kiss him by the fleeting little glance he directs at his mouth. It's by Shane's request, this no-PDA rule. Even with Ilya assuring him it's better here, *safer* here, he hadn't wanted to risk it, hadn't wanted to fuck around and find out the hard way that it wasn't true, but he's standing in front of his husband, the love of his life, who has apparently drilled food allergy awareness into his team just so Shane could theoretically join him here one day and join in, eat with everyone else, get to have a whole range of things to choose from.

So Shane could have a place to *fit*.

“Fuck it,” he says, and Ilya doesn’t get a chance to ask what he’s talking about before there’s a hand at the nape of his neck, pulling him in for a brief, sweet kiss. It’s not long, not heated, and Shane still feels a kneejerk little flicker of discomfort at doing it around other people, but he’s not sorry about it. This is his husband, the other half of him, the person who understands him in a way that still blows his mind in bed *and* outside of it.

Why the fuck *shouldn’t* he get to kiss him if he wants to?

“Scandalous,” Ilya teases, stealing one more little kiss because he’s a hedonist before he’s anything else. “There are children here, Hollander.”

“Yeah, I’m standing next to one,” Shane says dryly.

Ilya laughs, moving forward with the line but then nudging Shane ahead of him to let him grab what he wants first. Shane does, picking out a cheeseburger patty and a hotdog and putting them on his plate before shuffling down the serving table.

Right along with everyone else.

End Notes

hi hello i hope you enjoyed!!

if you want more shallergies madness, please feel free to mosey on over to my tumblr because boy oh BOY has it gotten wild over there.

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