The First of His Kind

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The First of His Kind

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Summary

Shane was the first omega ever drafted into the NHL. His designation usually considered only good for two things: breeding and mating — and most people didn't even think male omegas were worthy of the latter.

He had a lot to prove.

And he really couldn't afford distractions.

Especially when those distractions came in the form of a cocky Russian alpha.

Chapter 1

Shane was the first omega to ever play hockey at a professional level.

He heard the rumours—playing with a team that was made up of 50% alphas. Who's he fucking? All of them, probably. And all the alphas that made up the majority of the other teams too.

So unfair. He'd only had sex with a handful of female betas—safe, unsatisfying sex.

He'd never even let himself get near a male alpha. Too risky. His career would be in tatters if the rumours were ever substantiated with actual evidence.

And why would he want to, anyway? He didn't like alphas. Not male ones. Full of themselves, possessive, rough, and domineering. Shane might have been an omega, but primary gender preference was very much a thing. And he liked women.

He just hadn't found the right one yet.

And if he did occasionally crave a male alpha, that.... could be worked around. There were plenty of male alphas who weren't hockey players.

Who weren't brash, bold, rude Russian hockey players.

"Ilya Rozanov. I'm Shane Hollander." Shane stuck out his hand stiffly. Sure, an unmated omega approaching an unfamiliar alpha was a little unexpected. But so was an omega playing in major league hockey. Shane was done with stereotypes.

Rozanov shook his hand gruffly, not seeming bothered by the breach of social etiquette, even though Shane knew it was an even bigger deal in Russia than in North America.

"You're an awesome player to watch," Shane persevered, attempting to make conversation when Rozanov clearly didn't feel inclined to speak.

"Yes." Rozanov's voice was deep, rumbling—confident, even in that single word.

Shane felt a traitorous shiver ripple through his omega. He reached for Rozanov's hand again, even though he knew, deep down, it was just for the thrill of feeling that large, warm, rough palm against his own smaller, softer one.

Sometimes Shane hated his omega.

"Well, good luck in there."

Shane made himself walk away, forced himself away from the heady scent of the Russian alpha.

"Do you always come near unknown alphas?"

“Yeah. Why shouldn’t I? I’m not afraid,” Shane shot back.

“Not saying you should be,” Rozanov replied with a smirk.

Shane was brought up short, though he shouldn’t have been. He already knew Rozanov was a cocky asshole. What he hadn’t known until now was that his omega would find that quite so appealing.

They lost the prospect cup. Shane tried very hard not to blame himself—or how distracted he’d been by the Russian captain. Rozanov just had a way of getting under your skin.

Something about the way the rest of the Russian team avoided him—didn’t check him, barely connected with him—incensed Shane. Like they thought the omega wasn’t worth challenging. Like he was less than the other players.

But not Rozanov. Rozanov had come for him again and again, never letting up on the ice.

Shane hated to admit it, but he loved it. Loved the challenge. Loved the rivalry. Loved that someone saw his hockey ability, not his designation. Shane felt like it made him a better player.

Just not good enough to win, apparently.

Or good enough to be drafted first.

Second—after that infuriating alpha.

All anyone could tell Shane was that he was still making history. Still the first omega ever drafted into the NHL. Even if it was second overall, he was still a trailblazer.

But it still stung.

He wanted to be the best. He’d always been told he was. And now there was undeniable proof that he wasn’t.

And it just had to be Rozanov who beat him.

“Let’s see those numbers!”

Shane reluctantly raised two fingers, forcing a smile as he caught a smirk out of the corner of his eye.

Fucking smarmy alpha.

But at least that smarmy alpha wasn’t trying to commiserate with him about how well he’d done “for an omega.”

No. Shane had not done well, even for an omega. And he certainly hadn’t done well for himself.

With those thoughts plaguing his sleep, Shane threw off his blankets and changed for the gym. Exercise might calm his racing mind—and, hopefully, chase away the image of the posturing alpha he hadn't been able to shake since their eyes had met in the hotel lobby.

Shane pounded his feet on the treadmill, pushing himself longer and harder than he normally would. He cursed how much harder it was to get his omega body into the shape it needed to be in to compete at an elite level. All the effort he put into his diet and training regimen, and it still wasn't enough.

Not enough to beat the Russian who smoked and whom Shane had caught eating McDonald's on more than one occasion.

The alpha who was somehow now on the treadmill beside him.

Fuck.

Ilya cranked the setting way up, the pace bordering on a sprint.

Shane's hand twitched toward his own dial.

Was this a bad idea?

Rozanov ran hard, feet smacking against the belt, the sound echoing through the room.

Shane turned his own dial up, a notch higher than Ilya's.

Ilya didn't skip a beat, twisting his to the next setting above Shane's.

Shane's heart was already hammering, his legs burning. He'd been running for a while, and Rozanov had obviously just started—but fuck that.

Shane hit the highest setting, probably faster than he would ever normally run. He did cardio to build stamina, after all, not to sprint like he was fleeing a rabid animal.

Shane's eyes drifted to Ilya.

He was also charging along at the highest setting.

Their eyes met—both red-faced and drenched in sweat, arms and legs pumping as fast as they could manage.

Shane took a huge breath, his lungs tight and struggling—and that was when it hit him.

Rozanov's scent.

Heady. Rich. Musky alpha.

Sure, Shane had smelled him before, but not like this. Not undiluted by others. Not in such close quarters. Not while Rozanov was drenched in sweat.

Delicious alpha sweat.

Shane slapped the stop button, his feet stumbling to a halt so abruptly he had to grab the rail to keep from falling.

Rozanov threw his head back and laughed before hitting his own stop button.

Shane had already slumped against the wall, chest heaving, his whole body slick with sweat. He knew he must smell—cloying and ripe—but nothing cut through the alpha's scent. The air felt thick with it.

Rozanov dropped down opposite him, chest heaving too—though Shane hated to admit it, maybe not as much as his own was.

They sat in silence, taking deep breaths. Shane hoped his breathing looked like simple exertion—like Rozanov's—and not like he couldn't get enough of the other man's scent into his lungs.

"My team are stupid," Ilya said eventually.

Shane frowned. "Boston?"

"No. Russia. They refuse to play you properly. They stay away. But they don't know what they miss."

"They don't?"

"Yes, Hollander. Playing you on the ice. Getting you hot. Angry."

Ilya ran a hand down his neck, trailing it over the broad expanse of his chest before letting it rest at the very top of his thigh.

Shane's eyes followed the movement against his will, lingering too long where Ilya's hand stopped—between his spread legs—caught by the very noticeable bulge in his shorts. Shane didn't even think he was hard. Just… impressively equipped.

Shane licked his lips without thinking.

"Very stupid," Rozanov repeated.

Shane's head snapped up guiltily, hoping Ilya hadn't noticed.

His smirk said he had.

"I'm glad you don't hold back like them," Shane admitted. "You don't give me any special treatment for being… what I am."

"In the game, no," Ilya said seriously. "Off the ice… maybe a little."

He winked.

Shane's breath stuttered.

Was Rozanov coming on to him?

Did Shane want him to?

It didn't matter. He couldn't go there. He would ruin his reputation before he'd even played a single game with his new team. No. He had to be the best he could be—he couldn't let some inexplicable pull toward a rival alpha get in the way of that.

Shane shook his head and jumped to his feet.

"I should go… shower. See you at the prospect cup."

He stuck out his hand—professional, polite.

Ilya didn't take it.

Instead, his gaze dropped to Shane's waist, now level with his eyes. With dawning dread, Shane followed his line of sight.

His shorts were tented.

His traitorous cock was hard inside them. Shane pulled his hand back and bolted.

He had never been so humiliated in his life.

"See you at the cup," Ilya called after him.

And Shane did see him at the cup.

And Shane beat him at the cup.

And not once did Shane allow himself to think about that awful night in the hotel gym.

"See you in October." The words slipped out before Shane could stop himself.

Ilya's eyebrows rose, looking pleased.

Damn it.

Shane had practically admitted that he knew exactly when their schedules would align again.

Too late now.

He had until October to live that down.

And yet, it was much sooner that Shane found himself face to face with the alpha again—over and over—as was the nature of the photoshoot.

"Pretty omega," Rozanov purred. "Lucky me."

Shane rolled his eyes, forcing himself not to read into it. Rozanov was only trying to get under his skin, using Shane's uncomfortable suspicion that he might be—just ever so slightly—attracted to the alpha.

Shane refused to give him the satisfaction of a reaction, remaining calm and professional as he skated back and forth in a mock faceoff.

And it worked.

Rozanov cracked first, his serious expression breaking into helpless laughter.

Shane couldn't help joining in—but by then it was too late. The alpha had already lost it.

"When did they tell you that you would be doing the shoot with me?" Rozanov asked afterward.

"Like two days ago," Shane replied with a casual shrug, ignoring the fact that he'd been spiralling about it ever since. "Why? When did they tell you?"

"They told me nothing. It was my idea."

Shane's mouth gaped open. Why on earth would Rozanov do that?

"Better be careful," Shane warned, mostly for his own sake. "If you get too close to me, you know there'll be rumours. There always are."

He tried to make it sound like a joke. It definitely fell flat.

"No point being careful," Rozanov said with a shrug, utterly blasé. "If there are rumours, whatever you do. Then we might as well do as we like."

Shane frowned. He'd never thought of it that way—then quickly corrected himself.

It was easy for Rozanov. He could take risks, the fallout wouldn't ruin his career.

They did their individual skating shots next, Shane valiantly trying—and failing—not to stare at Ilya on the ice.

Afterward, he went to shower before his planned dinner with his mom.

He had just finished rinsing his hair when he heard the door open, he didn't need to look up to know who it was. He would recognize that scent anywhere.

Shane resolutely ignored him, rinsing off the rest of his body as the alpha boldly took the next shower down from his own.

Of course he did.

Personal space was clearly not a concept Rozanov understood.

Shane couldn't help himself.

The vast expanse of slick, taut alpha muscle on display was too much to resist. He stole a glance—and somehow forgot how to look away.

Ilya Rozanov was mesmerizing at the best of times. Like this—naked and wet—he was glorious.

Shane's mouth went dry, his omega rattling around inside him, urging him to do something. Shane didn't know what—but he strongly suspected it would be something mortifying, like baring his neck or turning around to present his ass.

Instead, he forced himself to look away, ducking his head under the spray to rinse the last of the suds from his hair.

He was just about to shut off the water when he caught the sight of Rozanov turning to face him out the corner of his eye.

Not sneaking glances, just openly, unashamedly looking him up and down.

When the alpha noticed that Shane was aware of it, he jerked his chin toward Shane's midsection.

With horror, Shane looked down.

He was hard.

Again.

In the alpha's presence.

"Fuck off," Shane stammered, frozen in place—too nervous to leave, too nervous to do anything at all.

With a mix of horror and anticipation thrumming in Shane's veins , Ilya turned fully toward him.

Shane's traitorous eyes dropped lower—past rippling muscle, past the teasing line of water darkened hair, to Rozanov's cock.

To Rozanov's huge, rock-hard alpha cock.

Shane's knees went weak—especially when Ilya dragged a hand down his own body and wrapped his fist around it, giving it a slow, deliberate squeeze, then stroking himself in a lazy, confident motion.

Like this, Ilya's scent—usually potent—was overwhelming, flaring with arousal that made Shane's mouth water with the urge to taste it at the source.

Rozanov jerked his head toward Shane, silently urging him to touch himself too.

And maybe Shane would have, maybe he would have given in.

But in that moment, cutting through the alpha's scent of arousal, Shane caught something sweeter.

His own.

With dawning dread, Shane realized he was wet. Not shower-wet but wet between his cheeks.

Slick.

He never produced slick, never let himself get that aroused.

Shit.

Being hard was one thing. That could be blamed on hot water, his age, adrenaline.

But this?

Omegas didn't leak slick for no reason.

Only when they wanted to fuck.

"Fuck, Hollander," Ilya groaned. "That for me?"

"No. Fuck off," Shane snapped, wanting to melt into the tiled wall.

This was humiliating—and dangerous, he realized suddenly. If anyone walked in right now, there would be no explaining this away.

"You're getting so wet. I can smell it."

Shane's mind reeled, what could he possibly say? There was no denying what was happening.

"It's not for you," he stammered, his pulse pounding in his ears louder than the spray of the shower. "It's not."

"You want this?" Rozanov asked, squeezing his cock again to make his meaning painfully clear. "Yes?"

Shane swallowed, his eyes darting around the room. "Not here."

That was all he managed.

And what even was that?

No was what he should have said. The only acceptable thing he could have said.

Like the scared little omega he suddenly felt like, Shane ran again, grabbing a towel and drying himself in a rush.

He wasn't fast enough though, still struggling into his shoes when the alpha emerged from the showers.

"Can we just pretend that didn't happen?" he hedged, ducking his head, trying to hide how hot his face felt.

"Is that what you want?" Ilya asked quietly—like he already knew the answer.

Which was quite obviously, *No*.

But thankfully, Shane couldn't get the word past the thick saliva suddenly flooding his mouth.

"I didn't think so." Ilya stepped closer, bending down until they were eye to eye.

Shane tried not to stare at his bare torso up close.

He really did.

"Don't do this to yourself," Ilya said softly. "You want me… need me. So have me. What's your room number?"

"1410."

Shane winced.

Why was it now that he could speak?

"Good," Ilya purred approvingly, straightening and heading for his locker. "I'll see you there."

Shane left—because what else was he supposed to do?

And then he spent the entire evening freaking out. What now?

Rozanov was coming to his room.

Shane could turn him away, could say no, could deny it and pretend none of it ever happened.

But what was the point?

Rozanov had seen it all clearly. Smelled it in the steamy showers.

He knew what Shane wanted and Shane now knew he was completely fucked.

If anyone found out—if anyone found out that Shane wasn't just weak for a male alpha, but for a fellow hockey player, his rival—his career would be over.

Every bad game, every missed goal, every lost faceoff. That would be it. *The omega can't cope with the other alphas. Send him to the minor league. The experiment failed.*

His mind in chaos, Shane heard the promised knock at his door and, still undecided, he opened it.

Chapter 2

Rozanov stood still by the now-closed door, waiting him out like the omega was cornered prey that might bolt. At least, that's how Shane felt.

He shouldn't be doing this. He needed to tell the alpha to leave. It was too risky, just not worth it.

Ilya took a step forward, and then another, Shane left penned in at the opposite wall.

Now was the time to say it. *We need to stop. You need to leave.*

Rozanov leaned in close. "Yes?"

"Yes," Shane gasped as their lips met.

The heady taste of the alpha exploded across his tongue and Shane kissed back, any notion of fighting this pull, went up in smoke almost immediately.

Rozanov began licking into his mouth, claiming and overpowering. Nothing like the tentative kisses he'd shared with his handful of girlfriends.

Shane whimpered, already feeling the urge to submit, to drop to his knees or turn and bend over.

He managed to fight it, for now. Instead, Shane let his hands roam, exploring the alpha's torso, finally getting to feel what those muscles he'd been staring at earlier felt like under his palms. Ilya's body was just so hard, everything about him solid and strong. Shane couldn't get enough, his hand boldly going to the alpha's crotch. He couldn't help himself — he wanted to feel so badly.

Rozanov broke away and Shane swayed forward, chasing.

Rozanov chuckled lowly, pressing Shane back against the wall with one hand, holding him there with ease as he pulled off his vest.

Shane's body thrummed like a live wire as Rozanov resumed kissing, his scent even stronger now than it had been in the showers. Shane began mouthing across Rozanov's cheek, his jaw, desperate for anything, needing something to fill the gnawing emptiness inside.

Rozanov cottoned on immediately, obviously familiar with omega ways. Of course he was. Shane tried not to feel bitterness at that as Rozanov caught Shane's jaw in one hand, hooking his thumb into Shane's greedy mouth.

Shane sagged, sucking strongly, letting the taste of the alpha's skin soothe the craving, but pretty quickly realising it was not enough. Not even close. He needed more.

Shane barely caught the pleased groan from the alpha as he fell to his knees, too busy fumbling Rozanov's zipper down and drawing out the truly impressive length contained within.

Rozanov growled as Shane's eager mouth connected with his solid flesh, caressing the hair at Shane's nape as the omega worked his lips and tongue along it. Shane should have felt daunted. He'd never done this before, and for his first time giving head to be on such a huge cock, he should have been nervous — but for some reason he wasn't.

He just felt hungry, achingly hungry for it. So he let himself have this, following his instincts like he never normally allowed himself to, exploring the feast before his eyes. Using his hand to fondle and jerk Ilya before taking more into his mouth, savouring how spongy the head was compared to the rock-solid weight of the shaft.

Before taking a deep breath, Shane opened his mouth wide, flattened his tongue and dove down. Further and further, until his eyes watered and his throat burned. And still he was only halfway. He tried pushing further, but it was no good. He coughed and spluttered, fighting off a gag as Rozanov pulled his head off.

"Careful, omega. You will not get it all. Is not possible."

Shane frowned, feeling belligerent. Surely, if he were given long enough to practise, he could eventually manage it all.

"Come here," Rozanov said, hauling Shane up, and Shane could barely resist as Rozanov pressed him back against the wall to claim his mouth.

"Was your first time?" Rozanov asked after a while.

"Sucking cock? Yeah. Was it bad?"

Rozanov shook his head. "You are natural. Little omega made for it."

Shane shook his head, both preening at the praise and bristling at being tarred with the slutty omega stereotype brush.

"How about we get on the bed and we do some more?"

Shane grabbed the alpha's hand, not sure what *more* meant but knowing he wanted it, as he led them to the bed.

Ilya stripped before he sat at the edge, and Shane followed suit, his clothes suddenly feeling too coarse against his sensitive, overheated skin.

Once Shane was bare and his clothes folded into an acceptably neat pile, he looked up to see Rozanov watching him, eyes glinting and predatory.

"My turn."

That was the only warning Shane got before Rozanov grabbed him and flipped him onto the bed, hips bouncing as Shane's head hit the pillows.

Rozanov crawled over him and Shane's legs fell apart to allow the alpha in.

"So sweet," Rozanov groaned into his neck. Shane fought the urge to tilt his head, bare his scent gland. Smelling like a ripe, desperate omega was one thing — he couldn't help that. Presenting his neck to an alpha he barely knew? Shane could at least spare himself that much dignity.

Rozanov didn't seem to notice Shane's internal battle, kissing down his neck to his collarbones, tracing them before ducking down to Shane's pebbled nipple.

Rozanov mouthed at it before clamping the bud between his teeth. Shane lost it, thrashing beneath the alpha, spine arching, hips bucking — and as Shane dropped back to the mattress, he felt it.

He was wet again.

He'd managed to have full-on sex with his two past girlfriends and not produce a drop of slick. But one second of Rozanov on his chest and he was dripping.

Shane wanted to die from humiliation, but was finding that quite hard to accomplish as Rozanov growled, obviously smelling it.

Rozanov picked up the pace then, his grip on Shane's hips turning feral as he dragged himself past Shane's navel to take the head of Shane's cock into his mouth.

And Shane was thrashing again. Sure, he'd been blown before — but not in this possessive, rough, all-consuming way.

Rozanov looked up to meet his eyes as he sank down on Shane, taking him all into his mouth in one easy swallow.

Shane tried not to be jealous of the ease with which Rozanov accomplished that. It wasn't a fair comparison, really, and any envy was quickly replaced with heat as Rozanov bobbed his head. Such delicious, tight, wet heat surrounding him — Shane wanted to come on the spot.

It was just something about the rich, heady scent of the alpha surrounding him that had Shane's body aching for more… something else.

Shane writhed, pinned to the spot by Rozanov's hands on his waist. Shane turned desperate, fidgety, until he felt those hands moving — down Shane's hips, around Shane's thighs and behind him, cupping his ass.

Shane froze.

Caught between burning desire and fear.

A blow job was a blow job between two men. Any male designation could do that. But this — where the alpha was heading — that made it alpha and omega. That made it everything the media said it was. Said Shane was.

“You don’t want?” Rozanov broke off to ask.

Shane looked down at the truly gorgeous man between his thighs. A sheen of sweat across the alpha’s brow, eyes dark with lust.

Shane knew, in comparison, he was dripping sweat, cheeks flaming red. Probably a fucked-out, needy mess already.

Shane shifted uncomfortably. Slick was dripping out of him now, forming a puddle on the bed beneath him. But that wasn’t who he was allowed to be.

“You’re so wet,” Rozanov groaned, a finger trailing through the mess on Shane’s thigh. “You want to fuck?”

“I don’t do that,” Shane replied immediately. He just couldn’t.

“Never?” Rozanov asked, clearly shocked.

“No.”

“You are omega, yes?”

“Duh,” Shane squirmed under the alpha’s intense gaze.

“Then why not? Is what your body wants, is made for. Are you never satisfied… what about your heat?”

Shane blushed to his hairline, an alpha he barely knew asking something so personal. It was just so socially… rude.

Rozanov didn’t seem to realise how forward he was being, though, waiting for Shane to answer.

“I’m sedated for mine. I don’t like them. I don’t like losing control like that,” Shane admitted quietly.

“You’ve never had a heat?” Rozanov asked, clearly in disbelief.

Shane shook his head.

“I don’t think is healthy.”

“Oh, fuck off,” Shane scoffed. That was all right for an alpha to say — ruts were not the same as heats. “Mr Smokes and Drinks and Eats Processed Crap.”

“Yes, but at least I take care of myself in rut.”

“I bet,” Shane rolled his eyes. “Different omega hanging off your knot every time.”

“Yes, is good… natural,” Rozanov said seriously. “But no, no knot. I am too young to be papa.”

Shane felt something clench deep inside himself at the words. Something he’d never felt before — or even knew was there. Shane clasped his thighs together tightly, aching, but he didn’t know what for.

Ilya certainly seemed to notice, giving him a speculative look. “…So no fuck. What do you want to do?”

“What we were doing was nice,” Shane hedged, a little shy at so explicitly asking for a blow job.

Ilya dropped back down, kissing around Shane’s abdomen, his hand lazily stroking Shane’s cock.

“Why do you deny yourself this?” Ilya sighed. It was obvious what he meant.

“I don’t want to prove them right,” Shane mumbled, kind of shocked at how easily he’d given up that admission — and the insinuation that it was something he would actually want. He really should have just claimed he wasn’t into it. But they’d have both known it was a lie.

“About what? That you are omega?” Rozanov rumbled. “I think they know,” he said in an exaggerated whisper.

And Shane had to chuckle at that. “No, asshole,” Shane shoved at his shoulder with no real strength. “The rumours that I’m fucking every alpha in the NHL.”

“Are you?” Rozanov raised his head, pretending to peer around the room curiously. “I don’t see any here… no, just me.”

“You’re an alpha in the NHL, dickhead,” Shane laughed.

“But only one.”

“Doesn’t matter,” Shane sighed wearily.

“Okay,” Rozanov agreed easily. “No fuck.”

Ilya dipped his head back down, back to the task at hand, sucking Shane’s cock deep into his throat.

Shane cradled his head, holding tight. Pressure built and built behind his navel. Ilya was so good. Shane felt like stretched elastic, pulled so taut, ready to snap. Or maybe break in two.

He whimpered, the urge to come turning painful. His stomach hurt — or not his stomach, something else in that vicinity — aching and pulsing.

“Hollander,” Rozanov pulled off once again, replacing his mouth with a loose fist. “You are dripping. You must feel empty. You don’t have toy, or…?”

“I have a dildo,” Shane choked out.

“Ah, so you do like it,” Ilya smirked, looking almost triumphant. “I knew there must be something… my fingers, you want?”

Shane nodded quickly.

“Yes?”

“Yes… please.”

And then Shane was truly lost.

Rozanov’s mouth worked his cock in short, sharp sucks, his fingers — god knew how many — buried deep in his ass.

It was too much. His baser instincts, his omega, took control of his body as Shane flipped, presenting himself ass up, face down on the bed. He hadn’t even remembered moving.

“And you don’t want to fuck?” Rozanov checked once again, the fingers that had been wrenched free by Shane’s sudden movement coming back to play with Shane’s loose opening.

“No, just more, please,” Shane panted into the sheets, his body thrumming and alive.

It didn’t take much more than Rozanov pressing his fingers back in — deep and stretching — for Shane to tense, his heavy cock twitching and jerking as he spilled beneath himself.

Shane shook, arms and legs trembling as he came down from the giddy high of coming with his ass full — something he barely ever allowed himself the satisfaction of.

In danger of falling into his own mess, Shane flopped to the side, landing on his back to the most arousing sight he had ever seen.

Rozanov was jerking himself off, his hand flying fast and rough, his other hand — the hand that had been in Shane — stuffed in his mouth as he licked every last drop of slick from his fingers. His eyes were screwed shut, head thrown back as he suddenly growled, every muscle in his body standing out in stark relief as torrents of cum shot from between his fist.

Shane gawped. Rozanov’s cock looked huge and swollen, and the head looked kind of like—

“Did you just knot your hand?” Shane asked, incredulous. Was that even possible?

“Sorry,” Rozanov said in a way that meant he definitely wasn’t. “Your slick… too much. Too good.”

Shane melted against the mattress, covering his face with his hands This whole night was just too hot for him to take any more. He never thought his heart rate would drop to a normal rhythm after this.

“I think you needed that,” Rozanov said smugly as he flopped down next to Shane. And Shane could hardly disagree.

They both lay in silence, breaths slowly growing less ragged, their minds slowly catching up to what they’d just done.

“You won’t tell anyone, will you?” Shane eventually asked, realising how stupid he’d been — giving his rival ammunition to ruin him and barely affect his own career.

“Of course not. We have same secret. No worry. I will tell no one.”

Shane frowned. It wasn’t the same secret, though. Sure, people would probably find it titillating that the alpha had fucked his omega rival — but alphas fucked omegas all the time. No big deal.

The first male omega in the NHL getting fucked by another alpha in the NHL? He’d be kicked off the team. Everyone would be proven right. He didn’t belong here.

Shane felt sick.

“Look, Hollander,” Rozanov sighed after too long a silence. “I am from Russia. I don’t know if you know, but Russia is not like here. They frown upon male and male, even if alpha and omega. It would cause me problems at home. So calm down.”

Shane frowned. Sure, it would cause Rozanov problems at home. It would cause Shane problems everywhere.

“You won’t tell?” Shane asked with a resigned sigh.

“Even if it didn’t mean I would be shunned at home, I would not do that to you. Okay?”

Shane nodded slowly. He had no choice but to trust him.

“We do not have to, Hollander,” Rozanov began, sounding uncharacteristically nervous. “But maybe we can do this again. Denying yourself so much is bad for you.”

Shane chewed his lip. His mind was too much of a mess to make that kind of decision right now, even if his omega wanted to crawl into Ilya’s lap and demand that it happen again right there and then.

“Just think about it,” Rozanov said before standing. “I should go.”

Shane nodded robotically, barely managing to call goodbye when the alpha left.

Should he do it? See Rozanov again?

He had to admit he felt wonderful right now. His body was more lax and sated than he'd ever felt. But the risk of discovery felt too great, and as he washed and tucked himself into bed, Shane felt just as confused about the whole thing as he had been before he'd even opened his hotel door that evening.

It didn't really matter that Shane still hadn't made up his mind. He wasn't going to see the Russian until the next season. And even then, they both remained professional, concentrating on their game whenever they were together, and Shane began to think Rozanov had moved on from the idea — was busying himself with omegas who did let him fuck them.

Shane tried to tell himself he wasn't disappointed by that.

It wasn't until the All-Star Game in Nashville that Shane was in direct contact with him again — at a joint press conference, of all things. Because, of course, them being pitted against each other again was the top news story of the event.

Shane sat awkwardly at his side, feeling so exposed with the mass of cameras and microphones pointed their way.

Shane felt as if he were holding a giant placard proclaiming, *We sucked each other off* in bold lettering.

Thankfully, none of the reporters seemed aware of that, asking mundane questions about the upcoming competition and their rivalry in general.

"Question for Shane — how does it feel going up against not just an alpha, but one as formidable as Rozanov?"

Shane leaned towards the mic obediently, hurt stinging that this was what it boiled down to. Poor little omega up against a greater rival. *How does it feel to face true greatness, Shane?* That's what they were really asking.

Before Shane could open his mouth and give the expected answer — I'm nervous, but honoured—

Rozanov was speaking.

"I would like to say how great it is for me to be challenged by such a worthy competitor. Never before have I come up against such a, formidable—" he adorably stumbled over the word.

Shane knocked his foot against Rozanov's in silent gratitude before he continued.

"—opponent as Hollander."

Shane felt breathless once Rozanov was done talking.

Why had Rozanov done that for him?

He'd stood up for him. Shut down the degrading, demoralising question that put Shane in lesser standing than him. Made them sound like equals.

Rozanov bumped his foot back and Shane gave a tentative smile.

Other than his mother, no one had ever spoken up for him before. And he couldn't deny that it felt good. Maybe too good — because he really didn't need another reason to need this alpha.

"Shane?" the same reporter pressed.

"Oh — yeah, sure," Shane stammered, his voice not as practised or even as steady as normal. "I look forward to the challenge of facing Rozanov on the ice again. I always do."

Chapter 3

"Room 1221."

Shane blinked. Had he heard that right? Rozanov had just given him his room number.

He shouldn't do this. Shane had resigned himself to not meeting up with the alpha again. Despite the fact that his dildo had been getting a lot more use ever since their night together, stuffing himself full while thinking about Rozanov.

He had settled on it remaining a fantasy, seeing as Rozanov hadn't approached him since. Shane hadn't exactly approached him either, but that just wasn't Shane's way, and Rozanov would know that.

Which was why he'd just given him his room number, Shane's mind helpfully supplied.

The ball was fully in Shane's court. He could choose to go to 1221 or not. And maybe, if it hadn't been for Rozanov sticking up for him in front of the press, Shane could have resisted.

Or that's what he told himself as he took the lift down to the first floor of the hotel that evening, eyes scanning the rows of doors until they settled on Room 221.

Shane tried to resist. Tried to do something—anything— before immediately diving into the alpha's arms. To not give away just how much he'd been wanting this, longing to do this again.

But it was futile.

The second the door clicked shut, Shane was slamming Rozanov into the wall. A surprised *oof* came from the alpha as they crashed together, before Rozanov gripped him back.

Slowing Shane's frantic kisses into something hotter and deeper, like he was trying to savour the taste rather than devour him all at once.

It was sweet and almost caring, and Shane's omega preened at it, praising this alpha as if he were his. As if the simple act of these tender kisses and near-reverent touches meant anything more than Rozanov not being a complete douche.

Shane couldn't have that. He was barely allowed sex with this man— feelings were completely forbidden.

Shane dropped to his knees, desperate to bring this back to what it was.

Meaningless sex.

The alpha groaned deep in his chest, the sound rumbling through Shane's core as he tore open Rozanov's jeans and dragged his dick free, ramming the heavy head down his throat as if oxygen were a mere nicety.

The hands grasping Shane's hair were no longer gentle, hauling and tugging him back and forth, and Shane whimpered. He loved this—loved letting Rozanov use him, take his pleasure from him.

Shane forced his throat to relax, opened his mouth obscenely wide, and bobbed down further than ever. So far there wasn't even room for his fist to handle the base of Rozanov's cock—barely an inch left that wasn't swallowed by the hot, slick heat of his mouth.

Rozanov's thighs quivered, and Shane could have combusted with pride and arousal.

Shane swallowed around the girth as Rozanov's hands moved from his scalp to cup his jaw, fingers pressing on the bulge Shane now realised was visible in his throat.

Shit.

Rozanov was inside his body. Deep inside.

Not where, if Shane were truly honest, he wanted him most—but it was still something. He'd taken an alpha into himself. Was making an alpha come apart with his body.

Shane pulled off slightly to suck in a desperate breath through his nose before diving down again. Not wanting to pull away too far. Not willing to give up the musk of the alpha's scent down here, the feel of coarse hair against his face, the rumbling almost-growls the alpha was failing to hold back.

Shane repeated the movement, his mind swimming in a beautiful fug of pheromones and omega contentment before it was rudely ripped away.

Shane fell back, body too lax to hold himself upright on his knees as he watched Ilya's cock explode, the head swelling rapidly.

Shit.

The alpha had knotted into thin air.

His knot was huge. Shane wanted—

But then a sliver of coherent thought returned. Rozanov probably would have suffocated him if he'd done that in his mouth.

"Shit… sorry," Rozanov panted, cum still pouring from his twitching cock.

Shane shuffled forward again, pulled by a subconscious need as he began lapping it up, licking and sucking every last drop Rozanov had to give until the stream finally dried up.

Shane blinked up through bleary eyes to find the alpha looking just as dazed as he felt.

"Fuck," Rozanov sighed breathlessly.

“You knot very easily,” Shane commented, still squeezing the swollen head of Rozanov’s cock to catch every drop, marvelling at the weight and size.

“Only with you,” Rozanov rasped. “I can normally control myself better.”

Rozanov hauled Shane to his feet, and Shane reluctantly let go of the appendage that had fascinated him. Shane might have had a cock himself, being male, but his certainly didn’t do anything as interesting as the alpha’s did.

“What shall we do with you then?” Rozanov asked with a smirk, already crowding Shane toward the bed.

“You want my mouth on your cock and my fingers inside again?”

Shane helplessly fell back onto the bed, too stunned to answer. When Rozanov whipped off Shane’s pants and boxers in one smooth motion, he wasn’t even surprised to find them drenched in slick anymore.

“Or maybe you want my mouth somewhere else?”

Liquid fire shot down Shane’s spine. His hole throbbed, desperate for attention.

“That was yes,” Ilya decided for him as he climbed onto the bed, pressing Shane down into the mattress beneath him.

Shane felt Rozanov’s erection already hard against his hip and glanced at it guiltily. Ilya had been knotting thin air he’d been so desperate to be inside him. How could he possibly find this satisfying?

“What do you get from this?” Shane mumbled into Rozanov’s curls.

The alpha immediately pulled back, frowning down at him.

“You think I get nothing?”

“Kind of.” Shane shrugged.

“Getting to be with pretty omega,” Rozanov murmured, his accent thick as he ducked down to nip Shane’s neck, dangerously close to his scent gland. “Who smells so sweet and gets so wet for me?”

Shane blushed, the praise doing strange things to his omega.

“Trust me,” Rozanov said between kisses down Shane’s torso, “I get plenty from this, okay?”

Shane couldn’t argue much after that as Rozanov spread his legs apart, pushing them up and outward before diving down and burying his face between Shane’s ass cheeks.

Shane’s startled yelp dissolved into a lewd moan as Ilya speared him open with his tongue, working in maddening circles to push deeper and deeper inside.

Shane's thighs shook as he tried to hold himself in the position the alpha had bent him into, but it was a losing battle. He trembled helplessly, jolts of pleasure wracking through him too strongly to stay still.

Without removing his mouth at all, Rozanov reached for Shane's knees, lifting them carefully and placing them over his shoulders, his head bracketed completely by Shane's thighs.

Shane couldn't get over how obscene they must look.

Shane's cock twitched and he came, a small spurt of cum that Rozanov either didn't notice or didn't care about, continuing to lick and suck at Shane's rim, slurping down wave after wave of slick.

Shane didn't care either. One orgasm clearly wasn't enough. His cock stayed hard, twitching in time with the movement of the alpha's tongue inside him.

Shane had never really understood the term *being eaten out* before. Nothing technically got consumed.

But the way Rozanov worked his mouth against him—jaw literally moving up and down—Shane began to get it.

Rozanov was trying to consume him. Taking as much inside as he could, like he'd been starving for it.

Shane groaned, hands tearing at the alpha's hair as another spurt of cum dribbled from his cock. And it still wasn't going soft. If anything, he felt more desperate.

That ache from last time returned, deep in his abdomen, clenching and throbbing.

Shane couldn't deny it anymore.

He knew what he wanted.

He twisted his head to look down his body, past Ilya's head buried between his legs, down the long line of the alpha's muscled back to his hips pressed into the mattress, subtly rutting against it.

Shane ached for it.

Even though he knew he couldn't have it.

It was suddenly all he could think about. His hole fluttered, desperate to be stretched more—opened on something bigger than a tongue.

Much bigger.

Rozanov obviously noticed, sitting back on his knees so Shane's legs fell to either side of his hips.

He replaced his tongue with his fingers, starting with three immediately.

“You open like flower for me.”

Rozanov pressed and twisted just right, and Shane couldn’t even look anymore, throwing his head back with a helpless moan.

“Maybe if you bring your toy. Or I could get you one, if you tell me what you like. Maybe you would let me use that on you?”

Shane groaned at the thought. It was so hot… but also—

“You’d be happy with that?”

“Of course.”

Ilya slowed the movement of his hand to give Shane time to answer.

Shane peeked through his lashes down at the alpha, calmly pumping his fingers in and out of him, eyes locked on where they disappeared inside Shane’s body.

As if he didn’t have a straining, almost purple looking erection jutting between his thick thighs.

Shane couldn’t stop staring.

How huge it had swollen when Rozanov had knotted. What that would feel like pressed inside him. Reaching deeper than anything ever had.

Finally filling him with that deep, all consuming pressure he secretly longed for.

“Wouldn’t you rather fuck me?” Shane asked breathlessly.

Shit.

He was not supposed to ask that.

“Of course,” Rozanov answered offhandedly. “But you said no.”

He tucked another finger inside Shane and pressed even deeper.

Shane felt it building—a real orgasm, one that might finally sate him, dragged from that deep place inside his body.

“Rozanov, I—” he gasped. “Okay… I do want it…”

Ilya surged forward, knuckles burying deep inside Shane as he kissed him—wet, desperate, tongue sliding against his— as Shane finally shattered beneath him.

His whole body seized as his cock shot cum everywhere, covering his heaving belly.

Shane came back to himself to find Rozanov stroking his own swollen dick, a question in his gaze.

“Not here though,” Shane clarified reluctantly, suddenly aware of his teammates just down the hall. “Maybe next time?”

“Yeah?” Rozanov panted, hand flying over his cock. “You want it?”

Shane nodded frantically.

Apparently that was all it took.

Rozanov came all over him.

Shane was both horrified at the mess and desperately turned on by the way the alpha had marked him.

“Can’t really blame you,” Rozanov chuckled as he climbed off the bed. “Is nice dick.”

Shane’s gut clenched, and a fresh wave of slick poured out of him, ruining the hotel sheets even further.

“Ah. I see you agree,” Rozanov smirked.

Shane threw a pillow at his head to hide just how much he did.

They showered, exchanged numbers under ridiculous aliases, and made a plan to fuck at Shane’s place the next game.

Simple.

Even though Shane knew it was anything but.

Chapter 4

A snowstorm. A fucking snowstorm. Shane wanted to scream… or throw something. He'd worked himself up into a state —a horny, delirious state— about finally getting fucked by Rozanov, and now they'd have to take a rain check. Or… seen as Rozanov had totally ignored Shane's text of *maybe next time?* Maybe that was it. The alpha had lost interest, and Shane's chance at feeling what he had finally admitted he wanted was over.

Actually, maybe he was relieved. He shouldn't be doing this anyway. Risky, indulgent… downright stupid.

Rozanov must have seen the light too.

They didn't text anymore. In the last few games of the season, they barely acknowledged each other.

Shane told himself he'd moved on. *Stick to the plan, Hollander.*

The plan where he excelled at hockey, settled down with a female beta, started a family, and paved the way for omegas in top-tier sport.

Not get knotted by an alpha and be outed as a weak, needy omega who couldn't cut it.

He blamed the shots he'd been forced to imbibe at the afterparty for why he approached the alpha on the rooftop that award's night in Vegas. For why he couldn't stay away like he knew he should.

He made a stupid quip, Rozanov snapped at him, and Shane wanted to disappear on the spot.

So confused by the hot and cold. Had he done something wrong? Probably. But he didn't know what. And instead of relief that it was obviously over, he just felt hurt. Hurt and crippling disappointment.

He turned away—and then suddenly the alpha was there.

His scent hit Shane first, strong and demanding, tinged with some unfamiliar bitterness. Rozanov crowded his space, kissing him hot and desperate, and Shane's omega soared, begging him to do whatever the alpha wanted.

That was when the alarm bells rang. He could not listen to his omega—ever—but especially where this alpha was concerned.

He pushed Rozanov away and got out of there.

He should have congratulated himself on being strong. On not crumbling to whatever stupid, reckless ideas Rozanov had about making out on the very public roof of a Vegas hotel. But he

couldn't be proud. Not when he knew how close he'd come to giving in. To dropping to his knees and submitting right there and then.

Shane stayed strong and resolute in his plan to stay away from the alpha. Which wasn't exactly hard, seeing as it was the summer break and Rozanov was on a different continent.

That was until the texting began.

Shane should ignore him. Maybe even block him. Instead, he texted back... flirted back.

The entire summer. Training camp. Game after game.

Back and forth. Push and pull.

Relentless.

And Shane had never felt more alive.

He didn't give in completely, though. That was the only way Shane could still look at himself in the mirror, go to practice and face his teammates with his head held high.

Whenever Rozanov tried to meet up, Shane held him at bay.

No, we have a game.

No, your teammates will hear.

No, it's close to my heat.

That last one seemed to draw Rozanov's attention.

Maybe you should not knock yourself out for this one.

Is not natural, Hollander.

Doesn't it hurt to be so empty?

Shane gritted his teeth and told him no. He headed to the heat clinic alone, passing it in blissful oblivion—except for the fact that, for the first time, the sedative washing over his heat-hazy mind didn't bring bliss.

It brought a deep, aching regret.

A whole year passed. And Shane's want for the alpha, instead of diminishing with distance, only seemed to increase.

It wasn't just messages now. Pictures came too.

Ilya shirtless.

Ilya at the gym.

Ilya holding his hot, throbbing cock.

Shane had to run and lock himself in the hotel bathroom after that one, just in case Hayden smelled the slick pouring out of him.

Shane wanted—but he couldn't.

He was captain now.

The weight on his shoulders only increased.

His team seemed cool about having the first and only omega captain, but Shane knew it was only because he didn't "seem like an omega," as they liked to tell him.

He wasn't emotional or weak or sensitive. He could take a joke, talk about girls, and play hockey like a champion.

So sure—they were fine with him, as long as he didn't act like what he was.

Which meant Rozanov was a no-go.

But the texts kept coming. The alpha kept chasing, and Shane kept wanting.

Months passed like that, and before he knew it, another year had gone by.

He wanted so badly he thought he was losing his mind. He sobbed as he went under for his next heat, knowing he didn't have it in him to do another like this.

Next year he knew he needed something else.

They were playing Boston in Montreal the next week.

Shane hadn't seen Rozanov since before the summer break, and Shane just knew this time, something was different. This time he simply could not say no again.

Not that he didn't try. But it was futile. He'd fought it long enough.

Shane texted "Lily" his address and felt the world shift beneath his feet, hands trembling as he held his phone, almost in disbelief that he'd actually hit send.

He was doing this… finally.

He should have been nervous, but all he felt was relief.

Ilya teased him about his apartment. Teased him about his interior designer. Teased him for waiting two years to finally invite him over.

Instead of irritation, all Shane felt was fondness. He'd missed this stupidly huge alpha, with his arrogant smile, messy curls, and tobacco-laced musky scent.

And when they finally kissed, Shane poured all of that into it—kissing him over and over as they shed their clothes and made it to the bed.

“You still want?” Rozanov asked.

Shane tried his best not to whine as he answered.

Rozanov rolled a condom on, and Shane gulped as he took in the true size of the alpha once again. Sure, he knew Rozanov was big—in an objective *that’s a lot of inches* way—but imagining it fitting inside Shane’s body, what organs would have to be displaced to accommodate it, was something he hadn’t really considered before.

“Don’t worry. It will fit,” Rozanov reassured him with a chuckle.

And Shane guessed Rozanov would know. He was probably well experienced at fitting himself into various omegas. Hell maybe betas... maybe *even* alphas.

Shane pushed the stupid thought away. He had no business caring who else, Rozanov did this with.

Rozanov snaked a hand between their bodies, giving Shane’s cock a few gentle tugs before going lower, teasing at Shane’s rim to test the stretch.

Of course Shane was already open and leaking. He had been since Rozanov said he was on his way.

“You feel ready for me?”

Shane nodded. His body had been ready for months… years. His mind was as ready as it would ever be to accept the fact that he was letting a male alpha inside him.

A forbidden rival alpha.

It was like nothing else when Rozanov sank his cock inside, inch by inch, Shane’s body splitting open for him. Forced wider than it ever had to stretch, pressed deeper than anything had ever reached.

Rozanov paused once he was fully inside, letting Shane feel the weight of him. Letting him adjust to the insane stretch and fullness.

Shane suspected he would never feel quite the same again—not now he knew what it felt like to be held open on an alpha’s huge cock.

Rendered totally immobile as he spread his legs wide, tilted his ass up, and let the alpha above him take whatever he wanted.

And Rozanov seemed to want a lot. His hands gripped Shane’s knees as he pounded inside, hips bouncing Shane back against the bed in a relentless rhythm that had Shane tossing his head back to moan while his cock dribbled a constant stream onto his stomach.

“Is okay?” Ilya checked frequently, though Shane could barely manage more than breathy sighs and punched-out gasps.

Just as Shane felt like he might seriously lose his mind if the pressure inside him didn’t ease up soon, Rozanov pulled out and turned him over.

It didn’t take much encouragement for Shane to flip onto his stomach.

Face down, ass up.

Presenting like any good omega should.

And Shane hated how good it felt to do this for the alpha. How natural it felt.

Ilya pressed back inside and Shane groaned into his forearm.

He was going to come any second—not just the pathetic twitching his cock was attempting, but the deep-seated ache inside him finally giving way.

He just needed Rozanov to—

“Fuck!” Shane cried as Rozanov hit the angle just right.

Shane came with a helpless mewl, barely registering Rozanov’s cock swelling, growing harder and thicker— then gone.

Shane collapsed forward into his own mess as he heard Ilya roar behind him.

Twisting to the side, Shane saw Rozanov cumming in his hand, cock swollen and sore-looking, the condom ripped open, no match for an alpha’s knot.

Shane felt saliva flood his mouth.

That had nearly been inside him.

His hips shifted restlessly, like they were still hoping for it. Tearing him open. Pumping him full of cum. Staining and bloating his belly with it.

Shane caught Rozanov’s gaze and saw the same hunger reflected back.

The drive for something more.

To be entwined, locked together while Rozanov emptied himself entirely into him.

To fill him properly.

Shane forced his eyes away. Thoughts like that were not allowed. Stupid hormonal fantasies were dangerous.

This was sex. Pleasure.

Not fucking mating and breeding.

Rozanov seemed to snap out of it too. He jumped up to shower, and by the time he returned, Shane was already replacing the soiled bedding with a fresh set.

“Was worth the wait?” Rozanov purred against his ear as Shane bent over the bed.

“It was so fucking hot,” Shane replied in an equally low voice, straightening so he could lean back against him.

Rozanov kissed the back of his neck, easy and gentle.

“I should go.”

And Shane knew he should—but that didn’t stop him wishing Rozanov would stay.

Shane asked about the upcoming Olympics on their way out, but Rozanov was as vague and dismissive as ever about anything personal.

Shane shrugged it off. Rozanov still left him with a sweet, lingering kiss before he left.

Shane headed back up to his bedroom, thoroughly fucked out and exhausted.

He’d stupidly been hoping that once he’d had a taste of the forbidden fruit that was fucking an alpha, he’d be satisfied and able to move on.

But now that he’d tried it, all he knew was that he wanted more.

And he was scared he always would.

Chapter 5

Ilya was back to ignoring him. Shane pretended that didn't hurt.

Back to how they were the first time their plan to fuck had been cancelled.

And that really should have told Shane everything he needed to know. Rozanov would only give him the time of day when Shane was an available, willing hole to fill.

Charming.

Shane wasn’t blind. He’d seen the frequent tabloid shots of Rozanov out partying, a different omega on his arm every week.

Shane just hadn’t realised he was among their number—but why wouldn’t he be? Nothing made him special. If anything, he was less special because of how much trouble Rozanov had to go to just to fuck him. Shane wasn’t one of those easy omega girls from a club.

Rozanov had to be careful not to be seen with Shane. Had to wait for their schedules to align. And he’d evidently decided Shane was no longer worth that effort.

Shane gave up texting.

That was until Sochi—and Russia’s spectacular defeat.

Shane had refused to message at first, out of stubborn pride at being ignored, but that pride soon withered into concern.

Rozanov must feel dreadful, and Shane couldn’t deny the pull to check up on him. Make sure he was okay.

He still got no response, and the worry wouldn’t let up its churning in Shane’s gut.

As soon as Shane spied the alpha skulking high up in the stands, he was off.

“Go away, Hollander. Back to your little alpha protectors.”

Shane had been prepared for his anger, even his rejection, but the strange way Rozanov snarled as he looked down into the stands—where Shane had been sitting with Hunter and Vaughn—was unexpected.

“Excuse me?” Shane stammered.

“I said go away. You cannot be here.”

“I just wanted to see if you were okay?”

“Yes, as you see, I am fine, so now you go. Bye-bye.”

Shane hesitated. Rozanov was obviously not okay. Shane had no idea what he could do about that, but leaving felt like a bad idea too.

“Hollander,” Rozanov snapped, exasperation plain—but Shane was very much used to people finding him exasperating. “Do you not see I am humiliated here? I have pride... alpha pride, national pride. I have to focus on this right now.” Rozanov gesticulated wildly, his voice a harsh hiss through gritted teeth. “I cannot have distractions. Do you get it?”

Shane nodded slowly, blinking rapidly to clear the moisture in his eyes.

He did get it—and it hurt all the more because he understood completely what it was like to have everyone’s hopes rest on you, only to let them down so abysmally. The weight would have crushed him, as he was sure it was crushing Rozanov. But Rozanov didn’t want Shane’s understanding. Or his sympathy.

That much was clear.

So, of course, he would back away. Do as he was told, despite it feeling like it might kill him.

Shane began to turn to leave. “I just wanted to make sure you were okay,” he mumbled, stupidly trying to draw it out longer. Not wanting it to be over just yet.

“You don’t need to do that.”

It’s not your place went unsaid—but it didn’t need to be. Shane wasn’t his omega. He wasn’t his anything. He had no place worrying about Rozanov, checking up on him. He never had.

Shane left. Left before the alpha could catch the embarrassing scent of omega turmoil.

Shane would do better. Forget this alpha and stick to the plan. He couldn’t have an alpha and a career in hockey—and he wasn’t willing to give up hockey—so he let it go. Vowed to get back on track. No more distractions for him either.

And whether it worked for Shane over the following weeks, he was unwilling to examine. It definitely worked for Rozanov, though, Shane thought, bitter tears gathering, as he watched the alpha wave the Stanley Cup high. Ditching Shane had more than worked for him.

Shane balled his hands into fists, eyes darting nervously between the dingy lighting backstage and the awaiting glare of the stage.

If it wasn’t bad enough he was being forced to present an award with the alpha he was so desperately avoiding, said alpha was now missing. And late. Very late. Shane—as well as the stage manager—had written off his appearance about two minutes ago, and Shane steeled himself to go out there alone.

That was until footsteps approached.

The manager and a different alpha in tow.

Scott Hunter.

“How about this, then?” Scott smiled easily, amusement clear on his face.

Shane visibly sagged with relief. Of course a veteran presenter and overall publicity-savvy Hunter could be called upon to step in at the last minute.

Hunter’s scent was so soothing right then, balming his frayed nerves—from worrying about being near Rozanov again, to worrying about being stood up. Shane didn’t feel any attraction to this alpha, and that just made it all the more comforting. Without thinking, Shane found himself leaning into his space.

His breathing evened out.

There was no pull, no drive to bare himself and submit, just lovely soothing calm.

If only he could like nice alphas like this. Not Scott Hunter, obviously—but any nice guy who didn’t use him and then discard him. Didn’t make him feel worthless. Why did he only want the asshole?

And just then, said asshole appeared.

Shane tensed immediately, leaning away from Scott—as if he had any reason to feel guilty about it.

But the dark, rolling waves of anger coming off the other alpha said otherwise.

Rozanov moved like a storm cloud.

“Where were you?” Shane hissed.

“Doesn’t matter. Seems I am already replaced,” he growled in Hunter’s direction, and Scott turned to him. Two alphas facing off.

Shane backed away, instincts blaring that this was dangerous.

But Scott wasn’t like that, and Shane breathed a ragged sigh as Scott patted his arm in farewell and left.

Rozanov turned to Shane instead, and he found himself recoiling at the intensity of his expression.

Shane wanted to drop to his knees, beg forgiveness for whatever perceived slight he had caused. Instead, he clenched his fists harder. Shane was stronger than that. At least that's what he told himself.

“Time,” a runner called, and Shane squared his shoulders as they walked onstage.

And Shane hated himself as he followed the alpha's lead, read his lines next to him, melted into his touch as Rozanov recklessly ran a hand down Shane's back in front of the entire audience.

Shane tried to pull away from the touch. To not allow it.

But his body didn't listen.

Despite telling himself he was mad at this alpha, that he was over him and back in control of his life, all it had taken was a whiff of Rozanov's scent, a ghost of his touch and Shane was helplessly enthralled once more.

Shane charged to the nearest restroom afterwards, desperate for space to think—some way to claw back control and clarity.

But no sooner had he splashed water on his face than Rozanov was there, his presence filling the entire room just by leaning against the dryers.

"Knew you still wanted me," Ilya said with a smirk.

And despite that being very much true, Shane seethed.

"Fuck you... I don't."

"Na-ah," Rozanov said, shaking his head slowly, eye contact steady and unyielding. "You cannot hide it from me. As soon as I am near, as soon as I touch—you tremble. Tell yourself you do not need an alpha, but it is a lie."

Shane was trembling then—but definitely not from the desire Rozanov seemed so sure of. He hadn't been this angry in forever.

"You cocky shit," Shane ground out, hands bunched into fists. "You think just because I'm omega and you're alpha, I automatically want you? Well, I don't."

Shane took a shuddering breath. For the first time, proud of himself. He was holding his ground. Finally turning down this infuriating alpha who was far too sure of himself.

Ilya just smirked—and suddenly Shane felt more uncertain. Maybe he hadn't done such a good job shutting this down as he thought.

"You don't want me because I'm alpha. You want me because I'm me."

And damn it, those words undid Shane on the spot. Because maybe he wasn't a weak omega, gagging for a knot like he'd tortured himself into believing—but he was weak for one thing.

Rozanov.

And he would be stupid to pretend otherwise.

Shane sagged towards him.

Hating that the way Rozanov's smirk grew only entranced him further.

Ilya kissed him like Shane was barely capable of movement—lips and tongue moulding his mouth like wet clay.

Shane went pliant immediately.

Months of uncertainty and separation rendered him a wanton mess already.

"Please," he sighed, not even sure what he was begging for. All he knew was that he ached and Rozanov could make it better.

Rozanov gripped his jaw, tilting Shane's face up to meet the lust-darkened depths of his eyes.

"If I hadn't shown up, would you be in here begging Hunter the same?"

Shane shook his head in a silent no.

"Good." Rozanov used his grip to tug him closer, burying his nose against Shane's neck. "This is just for me, yes?"

Shane gasped, incapable of answering with Ilya's nose brushing his scent gland like that.

His knees felt weak already, the pull of gravity seeming to increase tenfold as Shane longed to drop for him. Sit pretty at his feet and take whatever he could get.

"What do you want from me?" Shane asked airily.

Rozanov skimmed the collar of his shirt, nosing greedily along his neck.

"The same as always… suck my dick."

Before Shane's knees could hit the floor—

Rozanov stopped him, strong arms holding him up.

"Not here. I have award to win and party to attend. But later…" Rozanov hauled him closer, mouth a breath from Shane's ear. "Later, come to my room and you can suck it all night long."

Rozanov let go and stepped away, and Shane already felt bereft—cast adrift by the alpha's rapid shift.

"You pretend I don't exist for six months and then invite me to your hotel room?"

"You do not want?"

"I…"

Shane did want it, because he was pathetic, and would apparently take whatever scraps Ilya was willing to throw his way.

Shane gulped remaining silent.

“You won’t congratulate me on my win?”

“You’ve not won it yet,” Shane huffed.

“I will text you room number.”

Rozanov didn’t wait for a response. He didn’t need to.

Shane would be there.

Obviously.

Lily: *penthouse*

Shane took the elevator. Excitement and trepidation quickening his heart rate.

Which Rozanov would he get tonight. Passionate and greedy? Caring and tender? Aloof and detached?

Shane didn’t even know which one he wanted. He just knew he wanted.

“Strip.”

Shane obliged immediately, just taking a little bit longer to carefully fold his tuxedo. It was a nice suit—he didn’t want it to wrinkle...

“Get on the bed.”

Shane complied again.

Resigning himself to cold and distant Ilya. Maybe it was for the best. Always good to have a reminder this was purely about sex.

“I have present for you.”

Shane felt a flicker of curiosity despite himself. He took the brown paper bag Rozanov offered, reaching inside and pulling out something he was unfortunately quite familiar with.

A dildo.

Although on closer inspection this made Shane’s look like a small lump of plastic in comparison.

This one had detail—a defined head, veins, ridges. Where Shane’s was a bland, unanatomical purple, this was flesh-coloured, mimicking the real thing almost too convincingly.

Shane ran his hands over it, unconsciously licking his lips as he imagined the girth stretching him out, the tip reaching only as deep as Rozanov himself had managed

And damn it, if Shane hadn't been hard and leaking before, he was now.

"You got me a dildo?" Shane asked, frowning up at the alpha. It wasn't like Shane didn't appreciate it, but why would Rozanov do that, when they were both very much aware he had his own fully functioning cock?

"Not just," Rozanov corrected, reaching out to place his hand over Shane's, guiding his fingers lower along the base. "Here."

Shane brushed over a small button.

"What—?" he started.

"Is knotting toy."

Shane's insides instantly turned to jelly.

Wow.

Knotting.

He would never normally get to experience a knot. He couldn't risk pregnancy.

As Shane experimented with the toy, pressing the button and watching the head expand in a slow, tantalising swell, he didn't notice Rozanov drag a chair over and sit across from him.

"What are you—"

"I want to watch."

Shane gulped. Taking in Ilya, fully dressed, save for his shirt being unbuttoned, reclined casually in his chair as he sipped a glass of what Shane assumed was vodka.

While Shane was naked, on a king-size bed, holding a large knotting toy.

"Watch what?"

He knew he sounded naive. He could already guess—but he needed to hear it. Needed that steady, commanding voice to guide him, to give him the confidence he so often lacked where sex was concerned .

"You," Ilya said smugly, taking a slow sip—then, perhaps taking pity. "Open your hole for me and knot yourself. I want to see the first time you take a knot. Okay?"

Shane nodded, legs already falling apart. Somehow having Ilya's clear instructions made it so much easier. Almost like he had permission.

And it wasn't like Shane didn't want it. He craved it. Craved the feeling of the knot punching a hole up through his abdomen. Longed to finally feel what it was like to be hollowed out,

have his insides cleaved down the middle like they were designed to.

And with thoughts like that, Shane felt himself begin to leak slick, hole pulsing in time to his heart beat as he dragged a hand up his thigh, leaving goosebumps in its wake as he made the slow ascent between his legs. Scooping up the slick there to push back inside himself.

He could already go in with two fingers easily—he was that aroused.

His scent turning sweet and syrupy.

“Oh fuuuuck,” floated towards Shane’s consciousness. He’d nearly forgotten the alpha was there.

Shane glanced up, hips stuttering deeper onto his fingers as he caught the heady sight of utterly aroused alpha staring intently between Shane’s legs.

Shane smirked. For once he had Ilya at his mercy. Completely entranced by what Shane was doing.

He pressed his fingers together and sank back down on them, riding his own hand.

After that, he lost awareness of everything else, head tipping back as he chased the sensation —something, anything inside him after so long without. It had been too long.

Shane’s cock was leaking, spurting pitifully against his stomach and Shane knew he needed more now.

But something stopped him from reaching for the toy just yet. Made himself wait to see if the alpha would snap first. Because even though Shane felt desperate, his body begging for more with an urgency that bordered on feral.

Something told Shane, the alpha had it worse.

He could smell it—the sharp tang of alpha need. Hear it in the ragged breaths. See it in the way Rozanov’s had his palm pressed hard against his crotch his face tight, expression almost pained.

Rozanov wanted to see him knot himself even more than Shane wanted to do it.

“Gonna come,” Shane moaned. And it wasn’t a lie. Roaznov didn’t need to know that it wasn’t the kind of deep, internal orgasm that left him happy and sated, just a twitch and unsatisfying jerk of his cock.

Because Shane knew just how to get Rozanov to crack.

“No no,” he protested quickly. “Your toy, you come on that.”

Shane hid his victorious smirk as he reached for it, sinking the tip inside. His body opened easily, accommodating it without resistance.

It wasn't until Shane was half impaled on it, that Shane's wrist started to cramp from the awkward angle, that came from sitting up with his legs spread.

Too far gone to even contemplate the depravity of the act, Shane rose onto his knees, turned around, so his back was to Rozanov and braced the half impaled toy between his toes, holding it steady so he could use his weight to sink down on it. Inch by inch until Shane finally felt full. Beautifully, impossibly full.

His body sang with it. Beyond caring about whatever the alpha was seeing or doing, Shane began shifting his hips, experimenting with angle and depth, chasing whatever felt good. Everything felt good.

"So full," Shane sighed, blissed out, words slurring as his mouth went slack with pleasure.

"You can take more," Rozanov murmured behind him. "Take it all."

Shane reached behind himself, fumbling the slick drenched toy to try and push the last inch inside.

There were footsteps approaching and then the bed dipped behind Shane, before Shane could react, he felt pressure at his hole. Rozanov had pushed the last inch inside before activating the knot.

The swell began immediately.

Shane's body clamped down hard on it, locking it even further inside his body as his cock exploded cum beneath him, in spurt after helpless spurt.

He shook from head to toe, every muscle spasming as the sensation overwhelmed him.

He'd taken his first knot.

The only thing that cut through the overwhelming feeling was movement— hot fingers grasping at his chin, urging his mouth hurriedly open. Shane obeyed without thought.

And then his mouth was flooded with cum. Rope after rope of thick alpha cum, pooling on his tongue, dribbling past his lips and trickling down his gullet, Shane opened wider for more, chasing the torrent as his own cock twitched dry in sympathy.

A hand tangled in Shane's hair dragging his head back, exposing his throat, his gland and Shane's knees felt weak as more cum landed there. Rozanov marking his mating gland. Almost scenting him. So close to a claim.

When it eventually stopped Shane collapsed to the side, utterly wrecked.

Rozanov, next to him, didn't look much better. "Shit," he muttered, reaching out his hand, not entirely steadily.

He pressed high on Shane's abdomen, and Shane realised with a jolt he could see the outline of the toy beneath his skin, pressing up against his abs.

Rozanov pressed harder, dragging a deep, helpless sound from him.

“Imagine it was me,” Ilya said voice rough and gravelly. “But would be even bigger, even fuller with my cum inside too.”

Shane clenched instinctively on the toy, as if trying to milk the real thing, chasing that image. Shane couldn’t even Imagine how this would feel if it were real flesh inside him, hot and pulsing. Yet he wanted to find out. Desperately.

The thought surfaced again—asking Ilya to spend his heat with him this year.

Last year had been agony, suppressing it alone. Shane knew what he wanted. Wanted the alpha to help him through it. Take care of him. And Rozanov had hinted a few times he would be willing.

But that was before Sochi. Before he’d acted like Shane was nothing to him. Something stopped Shane asking just yet. There would still be time to arrange it later anyway.

They lay in silence, both watching the rise of his stomach, hands tracing the shape of the bulge beneath.

It was probably the hottest thing Shane had ever experienced.

That was until Shane noticed, Ilya was no longer looking relaxed and sated.

His cock rose and lengthened against his abs.

Expression hungry once more.

“Why don’t you take this out of me and replace it with something else?” Shane asked, trying to sound sultry but not sure he managed it.

Rozanov’s expression shuttered instantly and he was abruptly rising from the bed.

“I should shower, I have early flight.”

“You want me to leave?” Shane asked, not quite believing it.

“We are done so probably you should.”

Done.

Shane was still fully impaled on the sex toy Rozanov had bought him. Both of them were still hard and ready to go and instead of fucking him, Rozanov was kicking him out.

Shane didn’t know what to say.

Thankfully, Rozanov had already left for the shower, so Shane could pull the toy out of himself without Rozanov watching him wince at the sudden emptiness.

Shane cringed as he tentatively pulled his suit back on, slick clinging to his thighs, between his cheeks. He knew better than to ask to use the shower here though. Shane had one in his own room anyway.

His sterile, empty hotel room.

The sound of the bathroom door closing had Shane flinching but he fought the urge to scarper. Fuck it, what was the worst that could happen? Rozanov would ignore him again?

“What did I do wrong?” he asked.

“Nothing,” Rozanov answered dismissively, pulling out a cigarette and lighting it right there in the room.

Shane knew it was to piss him off, force a distance between them and he hated that it worked. Shane couldn’t stand the smell enough to get any closer.

“Then why won’t you touch me? Did you not like fucking me?”

Ilya exhaled a slow plume of smoke , irritation clear and Shane second guessed his decision not to just leave.

“No I did... too much.” Ilya took a deep drag.

“Too much?”

“My fangs, Hollander. Came out, last time, when I fucked you.”

The breath left Shane’s body in one long gust. He had not expected that.

An alpha’s fangs only extended when they wanted to mate.

Rozanov had nearly done that? Had wanted to do that?

Shane ran his tongue along his upper gums, a phantom itch beginning to prickle.

Rozanov had gone very still after his admission and Shane knew he was feeling the weight if it. So was Shane but it hadn’t happened and it wasn’t going to. Shane took a shaky breath.

“Wow,” he tried lightly. “You liked fucking me that much?”

Ilya didn’t respond to his pitfiful attempt at levity.

“I was not in control,” he said flatly. “And we cannot let that happen.”

Shane swallowed hard, tears prickling. He didn’t know why. He agreed. Of course they couldn’t afford for that to happen. A mating bond could not be hidden. The world would know and Shane would be ruined.

“You’re right,” Shane said quietly.

He grabbed his jacket, pausing only to glance at the toy on the bed.

Earlier, it had felt thrilling but now it just left him feeling cold and empty and pathetically, a little used.

“Goodnight, Rozanov.”

Ilya turned away, grunting an acknowledgement before stuffing the cigarette back in his mouth.

So this was all Shane got.

What they’d had before felt like a fever dream now. All the gentle touches, the hot soft kisses, the way Ilya had felt pressing inside his body.

Reduced to this.

Cool, calculated instructions and the hard silicone of a toy.

Shane yanked out his phone, checking himself into the heat clinic.

He would take this one alone.

Again.

Chapter 6

Shane thought that was it over. He told himself he didn't care. That if anything, it was a relief. He wouldn't admit that when Rozanov started up his usual stream of flirty texts that *that's*, what relief truly felt like.

Shane didn't question it. Didn't let himself slip into his usual overthinking spiral when Rozanov began instigating regular hook-ups as soon as the next season started.

They did kiss, they did fuck. But it was always rushed and frantic. No time to talk things through and definitely no time to linger.

Shane worried about the risk to his career. He worried about Rozanov going cold on him again, and he worried about that alarming admission—that somewhere deep inside the alpha, there was a compulsion to bite him. But it was never enough to stop meeting up.

Over time it got easier not to think about what they were doing. Which should have worried him more than it did. It was just, somehow, seeing the alpha became routine. It was just something they did.

A year passed. Shane chickened out of asking about his heat—too worried about upsetting the fragile balance they'd found.

And before he knew it, another year of being plowed into hotel room beds, his showroom sofa and more than a few secluded shower room walls had passed.

Summer 2016. Shane's heat was fast approaching and he was still undecided. Rozanov showed no signs of wanting to end what they had. But he also never brought up things like heat and rut again either.

Their communication remained light and teasing. The walls Shane had erected to protect himself, seemed to be reciprocal.

Even though, despite Shane's best efforts not to, whenever anything happened, whenever he felt anyway about anything, his phone was the first place he wanted to go to.

Lily, the person he really wanted to share it with.

But even while regretting it immensely, Shane spent his heat alone.

He'd drafted and redrafted the message. Asking if Rozanov was free. Asking if he'd to come and share it with him but in the end he'd deleted it.

Rozanov was still obviously spending his ruts with another omega, so why should Shane offer his heat? He knew that was petty, especially when the new season started and Shane received some very cryptic messages.

Lily: *your heat in the summer? You never need to schedule time off with league?*

Jane: *yes*

Jane: *why?*

Lily: *tell them yours is October*

Jane: *why?*

Lily: *cos when my rut is*

Jane: *good for you...*

Lily: *Hollander spend my rut with me*

Jane: *can't get the time off without telling them what for*

Lily: 🙄

Jane: *oh you want me to lie and say my heat is when your rut is???*

Lily: *yes.... bravo*

Lily:*????*

Shane was going to respond. Just as soon as he pulled himself up off the floor from the melted puddle of goo he'd become.

Rozanov wanted to spend his rut with him. Shane knew he should say no.

Shane knew with how much he checked his phone with baited breath for any contact from the alpha. With how, even though the off season should be an exciting time of year for him, the only break he got. The summer dragged. Spent in longing for the return of this alpha.

He felt like they were on a collision course for disaster. He just didn't know how to stop, or if he even wanted to.

Because every time he even considered doing the responsible thing —ending it— his omega whined pitifully, tearing down every plan, until Shane gave in and accepted that he was going to keep doing whatever this was for as long as he could get away with it.

Jane: *sure. Where would we...do it?*

Lily: *my place. Hotel no good. I get a little... territorial*

Shane shivered at that. Rozanov could be possessive at the best of times. The thought of rut crazed, grabby alpha was almost too much to contemplate.

"Good luck with the game Hayd's. I'm off to the heat clinic." Shane called, grabbing his things from their hotel room.

"Eurgh the clinic, buddy. Jackie says those places are grim. Just get yourself a nice girl to spend it with."

Shane tried not to roll his eyes. Hayden met his high school girlfriend once and it was enough to convince his best friend he was only into beta females. Then again, he should be grateful for the flagrant heteronormativity. And for the fact that Hayden was a beta and probably wouldn't be able to smell the serious lack of heat on him.

"Nah, I'm good."

"What about Lily? She not up to sharing it with you?"

"I've told you, she's just a friend."

"Heat friend?"

"Bye Hayden."

Shane could hear the beta chuckling softly to himself as he shut the door.

Apparently the lies just kept racking up. Not only to his best friend, but to his coach and the team as well. As he'd now officially been signed off for a week of "heat" leave.

And very much free to head to Rozanov's. The address of which had been texted to him that morning.

Shane didn't know what to expect from a Rozanov in rut. Hot, frantic sex maybe. Then again, that's what he always got. But from the moment Shane lifted a hand to ring the buzzer and was immediately snatched inside the building, as if Rozanov had already been waiting there for him, he knew this wasn't going to be like it usually was.

Ilya crowded him back into the kitchen straight away. No time to look around, no time to calibrate to the fact that this was Rozanov's house— his actual space, where he lived his actual life that Shane so rarely got a glimpse of.

Ilya was already pawing at his clothes, nosing at his neck, rutting his alarmingly hard cock against him. But instead of immediately bending Shane over the first available surface, Rozanov seemed content with that.

Slowly revealing inch by inch of Shane's skin so he could run his nose against it, breath Shane in, mapping him out with his mouth as if he needed to taste every single divot, every

single nook of Shane's body— and he meant every nook. Nobody had ever nuzzled Shane's armpit before, and Shane probably spent too long trying to come to terms with that fact.

Once the alpha seemed satisfied that no inch of Shane's skin remained unexplored, Rozanov tossed Shane over his shoulder and hurried with him upstairs, laying him out in the middle of the bed with more care than Shane could quite comprehend.

Shane blinked up at him, reclined against the pillows. Rozanov didn't join him at first, just stood there, track pants still on, tenting the front of them like they had been from the start, with a strange look on his face.

Contemplative, Shane thought it could have been and definitely approving. And something else. The tilt of the alpha's smile —usually playful, on the edge of smug— was now just… content. Shane couldn't find another word for it.

"Omega where he belongs."

Shane knew it was the rut talking. Knew it was the colossal flood of hormones that had Rozanov sounding like an alpha speaking to his omega—to a mated partner.

That didn't stop Shane from going weak for it. Weak for the fantasy of a world where he could be just that, his omega.

"Please, alpha."

And shit, Shane's voice didn't even sound like his own when he said that. Thankfully, Rozanov seemed too far gone to clock it.

He finally yanked off his own pants and crawled along the bed towards Shane, eyes near black and predatory.

With more care than Shane thought Rozanov was even capable of, he opened him up with his mouth, tongue diving deep as if he wanted to stay there, never come back out, carve out a home for himself inside.

As Rozanov drove his cock into him, he blanketed Shane with his body, and Shane had the errant thought that if someone walked in right then, they probably wouldn't even be able to see him beneath the rutting alpha. It was a safe feeling. Grounding.

So unlike the time-pressed fucking of the past two years.

Rozanov's nose spent more time buried against Shane's scent gland than not, and Shane had to suppress the urge to press his own against the alpha's in return. To truly scent each other. But he managed it. Just. Rozanov had the excuse of a rut. Shane had no such cover.

Every touch, every movement felt deliberate, Rozanov's sole focus on bringing Shane pleasure, on keeping him as close as physically possible.

Of owning him.

Shane lost track of time, but it certainly felt like it went on for hours, Rozanov keeping him suspended, barely letting him move as he wrung orgasm after orgasm from his already overwrought body.

Shane wasn't sure the alpha would ever come, still rutting away, hips relentless, until finally, finally, Shane felt it. The telltale swelling. The addictive stretch, pushing him right to his limits. So close. Shane felt the knot moving inside him, in and out and in and... gone.

With a groan that sounded close to agony, Rozanov pulled away, coming in a spill through the destroyed condom, all over himself, the bed, Shane— anything within reach.

Shane pressed his thighs together, despite all the stimulation, despite the multiple orgasms, he wished that had been inside him. Filling him.

He reached out, almost without thinking, hands stroking up and down Rozanov's swollen shaft, squeezing, massaging.

"That's it da, play with my knot," Rozanov rumbled, voice thick with approval.

Shane leant forward, mouth stretching wide to take him in, letting the pulsing stream spill onto his tongue.

Rozanov's hips still twitched helplessly in short, aborted thrusts that Shane knew would have been to drive that knot deep inside him.

Shane whimpered, licking desperately, trying not to miss a drop.

"Get it inside yourself, all for you," Rozanov purred, and if Shane could have stopped to think about it, he would have been fairly certain that he was somehow the one acting more pheromone-drunk than the alpha was.

Shane felt sticky and disgusting afterwards, cum drying on his skin, slick cooling on his thighs. But before Shane could even think about heading to the bathroom, Rozanov growled and tackled him back into the mess.

"Stay."

Shane wriggled, trying to break free, but it was useless. Rozanov had him pinned.

"Rozanov," Shane tried, forcing his voice into something sounding reasonable, "I need a shower."

The alpha did not look happy about it, but his grip loosened just enough for Shane to slip away. Shane couldn't help catching the flicker of something like dejection on his face as he left the bed.

Thinking about it, Shane was probably supposed to be immobilised beneath him right now, held in place on a knot that never happened. Leaving must break that illusion even further for the alpha.

Rozanov trailed after him to the bathroom and Shane swore to god, pouted when Shane shut the door in his face.

The moment Shane was done, the door barely open, Rozanov was already there, dragging him back to bed, locking his arms tight around him and burrowing into the back of his neck.

Shane tried not to melt into it. Tried not to let that foolish omega voice crow about how natural this felt, how this alpha could be his.

He knew it was just hormones.

That did not stop him from curling tighter against Rozanov and slipping into one of the most satisfying naps he could remember having.

“I bring food. Stay.”

Shane was still clearing his bleary eyes as he felt the Russian pull away. He tracked the alpha across the room, noting dimly that he wasn’t moving like someone who had just woken from a nap. But Shane was still too sleep-addled to dwell on it.

In next to no time, Ilya brought back a tray of sandwiches, pickles and potato chips.

“You like? Or I make something else?”

Shane had borne the brunt of enough stern looks from his mother to know it would be rude to complain about his usual dietary requirements here, so he just nodded and reached for a chip.

“Thanks, you didn’t have to.”

“Need to keep you strong.”

Shane stuffed another chip into his mouth to stop himself quibbling that it didn’t take much energy just to lie there and take it while Rozanov did all the work.

They ate in silence, a hockey game murmuring away to itself in the background. Any time Shane slowed, Rozanov nudged more food his way, giving him an encouraging nod. Shane got the faintly alarming impression that Rozanov was paying more attention to him eating than to his own meal.

Shane was getting full now, and just as he was trying to find a polite way to refuse more, the alpha abruptly stood, as if remembering something.

“Here I got you these.”

Shane accepted the cool can of ginger ale— the proper Canadian kind, in disbelief.

“Wow…” Shane couldn’t keep the surprise out of his voice.

“Is what you like?”

Shane nodded, a little dumbfounded, not sure how Rozanov even knew that.

Ilya's mouth slanted up into a self-satisfied smile as Shane cracked it open and took a long drink. He hadn't realised how thirsty he was, but it did make sense, seen as how, with all the alpha pheromones in the air, he'd been leaking slick since his arrival.

"Thank you," Shane began, but Rozanov waved him off and before anything further could be said, Rozanov's phone started ringing.

Rozanov looked conflicted. Eyes flitting between the screen and Shane.

"Maybe you shouldn't, while you're... you know," Shane offered weakly.

Rozanov rolled his eyes. "I am not animal. I can still speak." He smiled, though it didn't quite reach his eyes, and answered the call, stepping out of the room.

"Stay," he mouthed on the way out.

Shane waited. Without the presence of the alpha, suddenly feeling lost and out of place. What was he doing here?

Playing house with his rival. Acting like this was something more than what it was. Shane had tried to add a layer of warmth to their dynamic before and been firmly shut down. So why was Rozanov doing it now?

Was it purely rut behaviour or...

Shane's heart kicked hard in his chest.

Was Rozanov looking for something else now? Something more than sex?

The thought was terrifying. And, if he was honest, a little thrilling too.

The phone call didn't last long, but apparently it hadn't needed to— the alpha who came back to Shane was not the one who had left.

This one was on edge, cagey, and quite obviously barely holding it together.

The remnants of their meal were shoved aside, and then Rozanov was on him, pressing Shane's legs apart, licking at his neck, rutting against his thigh.

"I have you?" Rozanov asked, voice uneven.

Shane couldn't imagine saying no, not when the need rolling off him was so obvious. He knew Rozanov would stop if he did ask him to. He also knew it would hurt Rozanov to do so.

Thankfully, Shane had no intention of stopping. He spread his legs wider, mouthing at the alpha's neck in return. "Take me."

There was no way Rozanov was drawing this round out for hours— not with the way his cock was already twitching inside Shane, shoving in and barely pulling out before snapping his hips deep again.

"Omega, mine, mine, moya omega," Rozanov chanted.

Shane tried to block it out, told himself it was nonsensical alpha rambling. But when he clamped down hard and came between them in record time, he knew it wasn't just because of the hot, hard length moving inside him.

Shane felt it then. Rozanov got harder still, the pressure only increasing. Any minute now he would tear himself away, spill into his own fist.

But Rozanov pressed in instead, not pulling away, only forcing himself deeper. His eyes went feral as he suddenly raised his arm and bit down hard on the flesh of his forearm.

Shane watched the alpha's jaw clench as the knot engaged and that was it. Shane was locked tight on the end of it. His insides split open, doused in wave after wave of cum, swelling and bursting inside his abdomen.

Rozanov unclenched his teeth, and there on his arm were two perfect indents, blood slowly pooling to the surface.

Rozanov's fangs were out.

Rozanov could nearly have mated him.

And just for a moment, Shane allowed himself to feel what it would be like to be joined to this alpha— body and soul. To become two parts of the same whole. A true bond. Alpha and omega together.

Shane gazed up at him in wonder. This alpha wanted him. Forever. That's what a bond meant.

And although Shane *should* have been terrified, should have wanted to run, he couldn't escape how right it all felt.

"Oh fuck—" Shane's body trembled as another shot of cum was pumped inside him, his body seizing as he came again, unable to resist the overwhelming sensation.

"Omega," Rozanov sighed, lowering himself carefully over Shane. He pillowed his head against Shane's chest, one hand splayed over the pronounced bulge in Shane's stomach, stroking it slowly. Rozanov had been right before— it was bigger than with the toy.

They lay there in silence, the afterglow heavy and charged, neither of them quite willing to acknowledge what it mean, what they'd done.

Shane knew he should be worried about pregnancy, with the way Rozanov was pawing at his swollen belly. But as he ran through the probabilities, he knew it was unlikely. It had been a long time since his heat, and, if he was being honest, his body fat was far too low for a healthy omega, as any number of doctors scolded him for.

Whether through logic or from deep denial, Shane found he wasn't worried.

If anything, he was far too content being held there, still joined to Rozanov like that.

Eventually, with one last shudder, Rozanov slipped free. A rush of cum followed, enough to make Shane sit up and stare in disbelief at how that had all fit inside him.

"Shit... is that normal?" Shane asked incredulously, gingerly climbing off the bed to avoid the mess.

"I… I don't know… I've never—" Rozanov stammered, cut off as Shane hurried to the bathroom to clean up.

It only registered that he had not been followed this time, once Shane was already cleaned up and back in the bedroom, where Rozanov was busying himself with the clean up.

"Let me get that," Shane offered, reaching to take the tray from their lunch.

"No no. Is okay you go wait, ah maybe... downstairs while I do this."

Shane tried not to feel dismissed as he perched on the couch. Rozanov's rut had obviously eased up enough to allow some distance and Shane, who normally truly appreciated his personal space, should not have been feeling put out about it.

"I should have said... er."

Shane looked up when Rozanov finally joined him, sitting a noticeable distance away.

"Thanks for being here, when Svetlana said she would be away for my rut I was worried I would be alone."

Shane blinked. "Svetlana?"

"Ah— friend. Alpha. We help each other, usually. Is good to have girl like that, yes?"

"Right," Shane said, forcing his voice steady.

Of course.

Rozanov hadn't invited him cos he actually wanted to share his rut with him specifically. He'd just not wanted to be alone.

"Let me know if, at your heat, you want to… return the favour?"

Shane nodded automatically. What else was he supposed to do?

'Return the favour.'

Like he'd helped move lawn furniture.

Shane took a deep breath. He only had himself to blame. Reading into Rozanov's rut behaviour like it was a marriage proposal. He'd never felt more pathetic. And it wasn't in anyway the alpha's fault. No. Shane had to take this one on the chin.

The rest of the evening passed in a blur. Suffering through some playful ribbing about hockey and clubbing from Rozanov. Shane could have believed it was a deliberate attempt to return to something lighter, more casual.

They fucked a few more times into the evening. Each time Shane taking it from behind. Each time Rozanov stayed almost purposefully away from his neck.

They collapsed in bed eventually and by the next morning Shane could hardly smell the rut on him. The intensity from the previous day burned out completely.

"You normally done so quickly?" Shane asked, watching Rozanov cook them some eggs.

"Ah no," he didn't seem to want to meet his eyes. "I think the," he waved his hands as if unwilling to say the word. "Knotting," he grit out eventually. "Sped it up."

"Right."

"I am sorry. We should have spoken about that before."

Shane nodded. They should have.

But he couldn't bring himself to regret it.

Not when, for those few moments, everything had felt so… right.

"No it's risky, but it's fine," Shane conceded.

"I guessed as much, that you would be on something."

"On something?"

"The pill, you are not freaking out so you are on it?"

Shane didn't lie exactly... he just didn't answer. He had thought about taking the contraceptive pill, of course. But he was too scared to go to a doctor and admit what he was doing. And anyway, he never should have been doing this in the first place so there should have been no need for the pill. Taking it would have been too much like acceptance.

"Anyway," Rozanov shrugged, "stick around or not. My rut is finished, so… up to you."

Shane forced himself to keep eating, even as disappointment settled heavily in his chest.

Of course.

The rut was over.

There was no reason for him to be here anymore.

If Shane hadn't felt like dying from the embarrassment of assigning meaning to something that obviously was meaningless, he might have stayed longer. Hung out, fucked again, who knows.

But Shane couldn't shake the gut wrenching shame that he had taken a rut drunk alpha's knot and called it love.

So he made himself leave. Because even if Shane hadn't spent his last three heats with Rozanov, he had spent them dreaming of him. And Rozanov had most definitely not been doing the same.

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

> So I hadn't originally planned to swap POVs in this fic, but I think this will help explain Ilya's actions a bit. Not to absolve his behaviour... he's still up for asshole of the year award.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Ilya was not a good alpha. In fact he wasn't even convinced he was a good person.

His problem was always wanting too much, never being satisfied with what he got.

And what he wanted was never the easy thing. If he'd just have rolled over for his father, followed in his footsteps just like good old Alexei. His father might have loved him too.

But no, he wanted to play hockey. Not just as a hobby or on a low-level team in his spare time. He had latched onto the idea of being the best and despite seeing the loathing in his father's eyes every time he got back from the rink, he pursued it.

He was selfish, he knew that, maybe if he'd put someone else's needs before his own for a change, his mother, his sweet, funny, kind mother would have had someone who cared enough about her to save her. But Ilya had always been wrapped up in his own stuff, too busy pursuing his own dreams.

And he was lazy. It was probably why he'd been so desperate to make hockey his life. Not because he was passionate about the sport. But because he just so happened to be naturally good at it, he couldn't be bothered to find or even work to become good at anything else, so he'd just stuck with it.

Even the Soviet teams hadn't been good enough for him... they weren't the best. No, that was the NHL. They were the best. So that is the only place his mind would be satisfied with him being.

And then he'd met Shane. His omega. Who could never actually be *his* omega. Russia would shun him. And Shane, beautiful, determined, earnest and warm, would be ruined. The whole omega world had their eyes on Shane. Willing him to succeed, to prove to the world omegas were not weak, were not dependant on alphas and were good for more than just taking a knot.

And then there was the other half. The disgusting, degrading, bigoted alphas. Willing Shane to fail. Busy stirring up gossip left right and centre about the omega, seen with this alpha here, too close to that teammate there. Salivating for the day those rumours came true.

And Ilya could not be the one to do that to him.

Despite every instinct in his body telling him*, this omega is yours*. Basically from the first time they met.

Bite him and never let go.

Ilya kept Hollander carefully at bay.

He'd been terrified that first time they met up. His knot, that he'd kept under control even during his rut, suddenly had a mind of its own. By-passing any of his techniques to keep it down and practically expanding inside the omega on first touch.

Consent be damned. And Ilya took consent very seriously. He would not be *that* alpha. He despised those alphas, that took from omegas as if they were objects without a will of their own.

So he backed off. Not for good. His alpha wouldn't let him. Every other omega he touched didn't compare. Didn't even come close to what he'd found with Hollander.

But he had to stay at a distance. As Hollander had said, they could not mate, the world would know. This had to remain casual. Purely sex, nothing more.

And when they finally, finally got to fuck. Ilya had worked himself into so much of a state about it. Built the omega up into this vision of perfection, chasing him, never letting up. And when Ilya wanted something, he was not good at letting go. Even as selfish as it was to do so.

Making Hollander risk so much.

Ilya was sure those long two years had built his expectations up into something that must have been impossible, but no.

Somehow, actually getting to fuck Hollander. His scent, his body, the delicious noises that poured out of him when he was stuffed to the brim, impaled on his cock. If anything, his vivid imaginings had not done him justice.

He was even better.

And Ilya was once again not in control. As Shane came, as only an omega could, writhing and moaning wildly. The most exquisite feeling Ilya had ever felt. The mild itch he'd had in his gums from the start, suddenly became painful. He'd never felt it before, even in rut. But Ilya knew. His fangs were out. His alpha was preparing to mate.

He'd panicked, just about managing to get out of there, somehow without alerting Shane to the problem... he hoped.

But it was close. It had been too close. If Ilya had bitten him, Shane would never have forgiven him.

Ilya would never have forgiven himself.

He'd ruin Shane's life. Without any indication that Shane felt in anyway the same. Sure, Shane obviously loved the sex, he'd been denying his omega too long. But he left Ilya's scent gland well alone, he'd been all too happy to keep Ilya at arm's length for those two years until he got so horny and desperate, he'd snapped.

Ilya needed to get a grip... and some space. Space would definitely help clear his head.

And after Sochi he couldn't even face the omega anyway. He was such a failure. In everyone's eyes, his family, his country and his omega's.

The pity he saw from Shane that day. It turned his stomach. How had he messed up so badly that even the omega, who had the weight of the world, not just one country, on his shoulders felt sorry for him? Did he look that weak? The answer was all over Shane's face. He had to fix it. Had to win and prove them all wrong.

Show he was good enough for Shane. Shane, who was not just the best, despite being omega, he was the best player Ilya had ever seen, period. Even from the start.

Shane's hockey ability ran through every bone in his body, it was something innate for him. Some people overlooked it, were almost blind to his pure talent, only seeing his designation. But no. Shane was the best and if Ilya wanted anywhere near him again, he had some making up to do.

And he had. He'd won, through sheer grit and determination and the thought of Shane being proud of him once more. Ilya won.

But that still did not fix the problem of his alpha's possessiveness.

The way he'd been ready to tear into Hunter... he still didn't know why, it made no sense. Because the other alpha stood too close to Shane? Because the omega had looked comfortable with it? None of that explained his alpha's sudden urge for violence. Shane was not his, he had no claim over him and he never would.

He could not trust himself to fuck Shane again, what if he couldn't stop his fangs this time?

But he couldn't stay away anymore. The thought was intolerable. He ached to be near him, fill his lungs with his scent and see that glazed look in his eye when he was letting his omega have what it so obviously craved. To be fucked and filled up.

That's when his idea for the toy came. Someway to have Shane, to watch him be satisfied and breath in that sweet intoxicating scent that only got sweeter when he was aroused. But not risk knotting or biting.

He had really thought it was one of his better ideas.

That was until he realised. It wasn't enough. Of course it wasn't. When they were together, he should have known, nothing else would be. They needed to fuck. And he couldn't risk that, not with how much he'd been missing this omega, longing to hold him and touch him, he could not trust himself. Even he, wasn't selfish enough to risk putting Shane through that.

So Ilya had been a coward, callously pushed Shane away. But it was for the best. As soon as he admitted what had happened the last time with his fangs, he saw it on Shane's face. The fear. Shane got it. They had to keep this casual. Or stop it all together.

Ilya's alpha had practically attacked him at that suggestion. So casual it was. Painfully so.

Emotions, longing, anything that was remotely more than just fucking was strictly off the table. Or else he risked losing it all.

He managed it. Two years he held his alpha back, locked behind stubborn will and the fear that if he did what he longed to do— let the omega close, integrated him into his life. Allowed them more than a hurried fuck with barely a hello and goodbye. He'd lose control again, try and bite Shane and ruin everything.

Then his rut drew near. He'd managed his other ruts with Sveta, she was good at helping, she was an alpha too, she understood what he needed and there was definitely no worry of any irresponsible emotions coming into play.

But this year. Summer 2016. The thought of being with anyone but Shane was just repulsive. He couldn't stand it to be anybody else.

So he cracked and asked him. Even if Shane would rather knock himself out for his heats then be anywhere near the alpha. Ilya just couldn't help asking, pretty much sure he'd be turned down.

Why would he want to share a rut when he had no interest in sharing his heat?

But he had said yes, and Ilya hadn't been able to concentrate on anything else ever since.

He'd planned everything. What food to make, something quick that wouldn't take him away from Shane for too long. What to drink, Ilya had once spotted Shane asking for ginger ale at a bar—and found it the cutest thing ever— so he'd done some research into brands he might like, settling on Canada dry.

And then figuring out where to have his rut den. He'd gone back and forth over using his bedroom or the spare room. His room, his own personal space felt so intimate, so very exposing. But in the end, his alpha would have it no other way.

And it had gone so well. It felt like he'd gotten everything he'd wanted. His omega in his den, taking his cock for hours on end.

And Ilya had done it. Not bitten him, not knotted him. He slowly started to believe that maybe he could have this and not go too far. He was so happy watching his omega eat the food he had prepared. Having him safe in his den to protect and take care of.

And then... his father had phoned and it had all gone to shit. The stress and worry mixed with his rut hormones and his alpha took over.

And Shane, naive, lovely Shane had gone and said that— “take me.”

If only Shane knew what he sounded like. Like food offered to a starving man.

But he didn’t know what those words meant. He said them in the same way he’d say ‘fuck me’ breathy and desperate. But to Ilya’s greedy alpha, it meant everything, *take me, my body, my soul, mate me and make me yours.*

And his resolve was too worn down. He had wanted too much, again, and his alpha took.

Knotting his omega within minutes and so so so dangerously close to biting him. His fangs inches from changing their lives forever. From severing any trust in any relationship they could ever have.

But the Knotting was bad enough. You don’t knot someone without talking about it first, getting their consent.

Yet he had, he was just as bad as those other alphas he claimed to hate.

He prepared to have Shane shout at him in disgust and leave. Never want anything to do with him again.

But he didn’t, he just lay there looking blissed out and knot drunk.

Totally calm and casual about the whole thing.

As Ilya panicked, knowing what that knot meant to himself. *You’re mine, I want you, I love you.*

Shane didn’t seem to care. Without the crazed pheromones in his system that were driving Ilya loopy, Shane obviously saw it as a sex thing. Nothing more.

As Ilya stripped the bed afterwards, as if ridding any memory of his mistake. He forced himself to think like Shane was.

It was meaningless, just sex, rut drunk alpha behaviour. Casual, almost so casual it hurt.

So he blurted out the first thing he could think of to make it that way. To show Shane it was the same for him too.

“Svetlana couldn’t make it.”

Not, *I couldn’t think of spending my rut with anyone else.*

Not, *I thought about nothing else but this day for a month.*

Or even, *you’re all I ever think about.*

No. He gave him. *Thanks for saving me from a lonely rut.*

Because if he admitted anything else, Shane would run a mile. Shane proved as much when Ilya had asked him to stay at the end. Ilya had made it Shane's choice, he didn't want him to feel obligated. And Shane had promptly chosen to leave. Because, why wouldn't he? All they had was sex, there was nothing else to stay for.

And then Ilya's worst nightmare began to play out before his eyes. Shane avoided him, using any excuse not to see him again. Even when Ilya asked and asked, even when it just became pathetic after rejection after rejection.

He couldn't bring himself to just let his omega go, it hurt too much. Even when he knew, it really was exactly what he deserved.

Chapter End Notes

And there's a little spoiler into the next chapter at the end there

Chapter 8

Distance. Shane definitely needed distance. He was fully aware he'd been telling himself that for years and, so far, had never actually followed through— but this time was different.

This time, he *would* create some distance. If only for his own dignity. At least until his stupid omega got over the ridiculous notion that Rozanov was, in any way, their alpha.

So when Rozanov texted, casually asking if Shane wanted to meet up before the Thanksgiving break, Shane casually turned him down. He was busy… busy with a new book on the origins and evolution of ice hockey... but Rozanov didn't need to know that part.

Shane got no response.

And that was it. Distance created. Easier than Shane had ever thought it would be.

The next time Boston played Montreal, the text came through right before Shane's flight.

Lily: *My place. Before or after game?*

Shane had thought about seeing him this time. He did miss the alpha and he was, admittedly, very horny after skipping their last meet-up. It was just… something about what had gone down last time at Rozanov's place, made him shy away from going back there. The memory of it was just too fresh. A little too raw still.

Jane: *promised the team I'd go out with them after*

Lily: *so before??*

Jane: *don't think there's time*

He got thinking dots this time, but in the end, no response.

Shane shrugged it off. He'd meet up with Rozanov in Montreal at their next game. Or maybe over Christmas, if there was time. This break was for the best anyway— time to rid himself of any lingering, clingy omega thoughts.

He felt strong, for the first time in control. It was only very late at night, when his resolve was at its weakest, did he admit that, even though he was proud of his restraint, it had really only left him feeling hollow.

Rozanov's stare was colder than the ice they were playing on during the first faceoff of the match in Boston. Sharp and penetrating.

"Something wrong, Hollander?" he almost snarled as they faced off.

"No. Why would there be?"

"You tell me."

Rozanov snatched the puck and was gone. Shane cursed himself for falling for the stupid mind games.

For the rest of the faceoffs, Shane kept his eyes down and his ears off. No more distractions.

The Metros won, and, just as Shane predicted, the team badgered him incessantly to go out with them afterwards.

Shane had had to turn them down. He loathed clubbing, had an early flight, and was feeling pretty tired anyway.

He'd just tucked himself into bed at the perfectly acceptable time of 10:05 when his phone buzzed.

Lily: *so you are not out with your team?*

Shane stifled a yawn. Shit. He hadn't thought Rozanov would find out about his little lie.

Jane: *tired, turned in early*.

He supposed he could invite Rozanov over to his hotel. All his teammates were out, and he had his own room... but he was really very tired.

When Shane woke the next morning to find a text sent much later from Lily, he was even more glad he hadn't invited him over.

Lily: *your loss.*

What an asshole.

Shane really wanted to type something petty back —*Was Svetlana busy again?*— but stopped himself. That might make him sound jealous or something, and that was just a ludicrous suggestion.

So Shane, very casually, ignored him.

It might have been a good thing to put the brakes on his hookups with Rozanov anyway. Shane had been feeling a little under the weather. Just really tired, mostly, definitely struggling with his usual workout routine. He needed as much rest as he could get.

During a Montreal–Boston match in January, Shane waited for the text.

Even as he laced his skates right before puck drop. But nothing came.

“Want to come over later?” Shane resorted to mumbling at the alpha during warm-up.

Dignity and resolve, be damned. Something was gnawing at Shane to see him.

“I don’t know. Might have plans. Will let you know," Rozanov said coolly, barely even looking at him.

Shane rolled his eyes as he skated away. There went any chance of him coming away from this with any dignity intact. If they met up now, Shane would always know he was second choice.

Again.

He played terribly all night. Always a second too slow to reach the puck, always a step behind the play.

He assisted one measly goal.

That was it.

Raiders won, 3–1.

Shane blamed how distracted he’d been by Rozanov’s uncertain reply. He liked to know how his day was going to go ahead of time. But something unsettling in his chest told him it maybe wasn’t just that— that something else had his skates dragging.

Too mentally drained to decline, Shane let himself be dragged to a bar by his teammates to commiserate the loss. He tried, he really did, not to spend the entire evening staring at his phone.

Waiting for a text that never came.

After his third beer, Shane pocketed his phone and forced himself to join in the conversation around him.

“Oh, excellent—company!” JJ drawled.

Shane glanced up to see the Raiders filing into the same bar.

As he scanned the room, he told himself it was just out of curiosity.

But that didn’t explain why, the moment he spotted Rozanov among them, he lost any interest in looking around.

Damn it.

Shane turned back to his drink, focusing hard on his beer. Of all the bars. This was the 'plan' Rozanov might have had that he was busy with—going out drinking?

He’d rather sit in a sleazy, boring bar than meet up with Shane.

But of course if they were oh so very casual, why wouldn't he?

Shane downed his beer, and when someone called, “Shots!”, who was he to protest?

By the time Shane stumbled to the bathroom, he figured the Raiders had left. There was no sign of them anyway.

Who he did run into, however, was a lot more surprising.

Scott Hunter.

“What are you doing here?” Shane asked, smiling broadly.

Shane barely listened to the answer, brand deal meeting something or other, Hunter explained warmly.

Shane did really like this alpha— he smelled faintly of campfire tea, and woodsmoke in a kind of homely, nostalgic way. Shane briefly entertained the idea of toasting a marshmallow on him.

“Hey, Rook. You alright?” Hunter asked after Shane realised he'd forgotten to respond.

Shane giggled as Hunter steadied him with a hand on his shoulder. Such a gentle touch, there was no expectation or pressure from this alpha.

It did make a nice change.

“My highly irresponsible teammates made me take a shot… or seven, and now my tongue feels like jelly.”

“Right. You do know you’re their captain and can say no?”

“Where’s the fun in that?” Shane swayed again, and Hunter ended up steering him back to their table.

“Look who’s here!” Shane announced cheerfully.

He only had a few more drinks after that— and only a mildly, hysterical giggling fit when the team teased him and Hunter for being the biggest monks in the NHL.

Shane had no idea what Hunter was up to behind closed doors. Maybe he had a lovely little omega at home or maybe he really was as celibate as people claimed, who knew. But what Shane did know for sure was he was the furthest thing from a monk the NHL had to offer... and nobody could ever know it.

Thankfully, his inebriated mind had decided that was absolutely hilarious and not totally tragic. As his manic laughter was a whole lot easier to excuse than bursting into tears at the bar.

Eventually last orders were called, and Shane was staggering out the door.

“Easy there,” Scott said, catching him around the waist as he tripped on the step.

“Thanks, Mr Hu— Scott,” Shane corrected, turning back round, only to freeze as a flash went off.

He raised a hand to shield his eyes and caught sight of a man with a camera pointed straight at them.

Great.

Shane staggered away from Hunter as they hurried around the corner.

“What the hell?” Hunter muttered.

“Sorry,” Shane sighed. “Welcome to my world.”

“Must be rough.”

Shane shrugged. Being the only omega in the NHL, he was used to nosy press.

“You got far to go, or need to call a car?” Hunter asked.

“Just a few blocks.”

Shane started walking and Hunter fell into step beside him.

“You don’t have to—” Shane began, before somehow managing to step on his own foot and nearly faceplant the sidewalk.

“Lead the way,” Hunter said, amused as he guided him at a slower pace.

He walked Shane all the way to his door before ruffling his hair fondly.

“Bad enough I get lumbered with the rookies on my own team,” he teased with a kind smile.

“It's because you make such a good father figure,” Shane chirped, feeling very pleased with himself about it.

“Father?” Scott spluttered. “I’m only, like, eleven years older than most of them.”

Shane laughed as he shut the door on him.

“Sleep on your side!” Hunter called through it.

Shane made a vague mental note to text him thanks the next day before collapsing into bed.

When Shane woke the next morning— with a pounding headache and only very broken fragments of memory— any thoughts of texting the Admirals’ captain vanished the moment he checked his phone.

Fraternizing with the Enemy

The headline in bold accusing letters. Beneath it were photos of him and Hunter leaving the bar. Hunter’s arm around his waist. Shane leaning into him, looking up at his face.

Then another— Hunter grabbing his wrist, towing him around the corner.

Shane knew what they’d captured was nothing.

He’d been drunk, he'd staggered and Hunter had caught him. Then they’d run from a camera.

Literally nothing headline worthy.

But it didn’t *look* like nothing.

It looked bad.. so very bad.

Shane's hand shook as he called his mum to try and sort out some kind of damage control.

In the end the league released a statement, just fellow captains socialising, nothing to see here.

Hunter posted one too, along with a few photos from earlier in the night, of them with the rest of the Metros.

Just a friendly, chance meeting between fellow players.

Shane curled into himself on the couch, regret and shame burning through him.

This was his worst nightmare.

Being linked to an alpha in the league. Proving everyone right. Showing there was no place for a male omega among elite athletes— especially not one who apparently couldn't keep his hands off the other players.

And the worst part?

The headline did hold some truth. They just hadn't got the right alpha.

Shane barely made it to the sink before he threw up.

He wasn't sure if it was the residual alcohol in his stomach or the crushing weight of his mistake— but either way, he was never drinking again.

And he was definitely never going near ~~an alpha~~... Scott Hunter, ever again.

Chapter 9

Thankfully, by the time the All-Star game rolled around, the rumours had died down. Between his mom's relentless campaign to shut down any press and Hunter's agent being incredibly savvy at navigating social media for some reason, the story finally died the death it deserved.

Shane was almost excited for the All-Stars this year. He'd be on the same team as Ilya— maybe even the same line if one of them conceded centre.

Well… he felt excited. But with the way his stomach rolled each morning, leaving him gasping over the toilet, it could just as easily have been nerves.

"Hey, teammate," Shane greeted, sliding onto the barstool beside Rozanov.

"Captain," the alpha replied, with only light sarcasm.

"Nice change, to play on the same team."

"I thought that's what we had been doing," Rozanov said, wrapping his lips around the neck of his beer bottle suggestively.

Shane flushed immediately.

"You want a drink?" Rozanov asked.

Shane shook his head. The last thing his stomach needed was alcohol.

"You come here alone?"

Shane nodded. "My parents were busy and who else would I bring?"

"I don't know," Ilya said mildly. "Hunter?"

"Hunter!?" Shane spluttered. "Why would I bring Hunter? He's not been picked this year."

"Is he not your alpha now?"

Rozanov sounded unbothered— but Shane knew better. He knew what it looked like when Ilya was trying very hard not to let on he cared.

"No. Of course not," Shane said wearily, bristling with annoyance. "You don't actually believe those bullshit articles, do you?"

"He did not take you home that night?"

“Well…” Shane glanced around, suddenly aware of how public they were. “Okay, he did— but nothing happened.”

Ilya raised an eyebrow, clearly unconvinced.

“He didn’t even come inside,” Shane rushed to add.

Ilya covered his mouth, trying, and failing, to hide a snicker.

“I meant inside my house, Ilya. Jesus.”

The humour vanished from the Russian’s face almost instantly.

“So he is not the reason you have been avoiding me?”

“I’ve not been avoiding you,” Shane shot back automatically, then winced. “Okay, fine. The whole rut thing—” He broke off as bottles clattered nearby, suddenly aware of how exposed they were. “Let’s talk later, okay?”

“After the game?”

Shane nodded and slipped away, steeling himself for what was definitely going to be an awkward conversation.

Shane retreated to his room, the heat was not helping the sick feeling bubbling away at the bottom of his oesophagus.

From the shade of his balcony, Shane glanced down at the pool. The sound of laughter carried up to him, sounding so bright and carefree. Rozanov was in the middle of it, splashing around with a group of kids, their delighted shrieks echoing through the air.

An odd feeling settled in Shane’s chest, very different from the nausea. Something warm.

That warmth didn’t fade— not when they lined up at centre ice, not when they took off together like they’d been playing on the same team their entire lives.

They were unstoppable.

Their right wing barely touched the puck as Shane and Ilya carved through the defence, passing between them with an almost effortless precision. Goal after goal, like the opposing team had simply given up trying.

By the end, Ilya was all over him in celebration.

All over the whole team, technically— but not in the same way.

With Shane, his touches lingered and his gaze burned.

They didn’t even bother to pretend.

Barely out of the locker room, they ditched team drinks and made straight for Ilya's room. Normally, it would have felt risky, both of them being so noticeably absent. But Shane couldn't bring himself to care. Not with how Ilya was looking at him. Not after three months apart.

The door had barely clicked shut before Ilya had him pinned against it, nose digging beneath his collar, inhaling deeply.

"Fuck, you smell so sweet," Ilya rumbled.

Shane sagged into him with a soft, dizzy sound, already unsteady on his feet.

Ilya chuckled, hoisting him into his arms. "Better get you to bed it seems."

Shane wrapped himself around him without protest, letting himself be carried and dropped gently onto the mattress

Their eyes met, Shane lying beneath the alpha, heart racing. Where he belonged, his mind supplied and for once, Shane didn't push the thought away. Pinned by the alpha's stare, his deep scent filling his lungs. Shane hadn't felt this good in weeks.

Slowly, slower than he perhaps ever had before, Ilya began removing Shane's clothes, laying them with care on the dresser.

"Are you not—" Shane started, only to be shushed.

"Let me just look."

Shane huffed, but he couldn't deny the effect it had on him, being watched like that, like he was something to be studied or admired, maybe even wanted.

His cock began to swell and the space between his legs was already a little damp.

"Fuck… so sweet," Ilya murmured. "Perfect for me."

Shane rolled his eyes. "Perfect like all the other omegas?"

Ilya frowned. "What other omegas?"

"The ones you fuck?"

"No," Ilya said simply. "There are no other. Not for a while. Long time. No one smells… right. Only you."

Shane stilled. "You said there was a girl," he said carefully. "The one you wanted to spend your rut with."

"Ah. Svetlana," Ilya said. "An alpha. I told you. We help each other. Only when desperate."

"Oh."

They fell into silence, Shane content to wait him out.

“Is this why you get with Hunter?” Ilya asked finally.

Shane flushed, suddenly very aware he was the only one naked.

“I did not ‘get’ with Hunter.”

“No? But you wanted to?”

Shane surged upright despite the lightheadedness it brought on, grabbing Ilya by the collar.

“No,” he said fiercely. “I don’t want any other alpha. I want you.”

The growl that tore from Ilya was deep and satisfied, rendering Shane immobile as he clung to the alpha’s neck and then Shane was being scented— Ilya’s mouth, nose, teeth against his gland, drawing his scent out, just to inhale deeply and claim it.

And this time, Shane didn’t fight it. Couldn’t remember why he ever had before. He buried his face beneath Ilya’s ear and scented in return.

Their scents surged together, filling the room. Light and fresh, deep and woodsy, blending together into something unique, belonging just to them.

From there, every movement was on instinct.

Ilya got himself bare, spread Shane’s legs beneath him before gently, so so gently opening him up on his hand.

“Ilya I’m ready,” Shane panted not long after but he should have known better. Ilya didn’t sink his cock inside until he had Shane crying out his orgasm on his fingers first.

Ilya took him in long, slow strokes, arms wrapped around him, hands clasped behind Shane’s shoulder blades, holding Shane against every inch of his body.

Shane laid back and enjoyed the view. The contrast their bodies made.

The alpha’s hard and muscled, Shane’s still strong but rounder, softer despite his rigid work out routine.

Ilya’s skin so pale, dotted with moles and tantalising strips of hair. Save for Shane’s freckles, his skin was unblemished, just smooth and golden.

And their scents, Shane would never get over that. How on their own they were so very different. Shane’s crisp and fresh, Ilya’s deep and potent but together, Shane felt almost high from the aroma.

As Ilya dragged orgasm after orgasm from Shane, obviously fighting off his own release if the sheen of sweat and pulsing vein in the alpha’s forehead was anything to go by.

“I can cum inside?” Ilya rasped eventually, licking his lips and Shane, the reckless fool he was becoming for this alpha could only gasp back “please.”

Ilya grasped Shane’s waist to hold him steady as the knot engaged. Shane felt the air forced out his lungs, making way for the huge intrusion. This feeling would never get old, Shane was certain of that.

The closeness, the connection of being joined like this. Two bodies becoming one, if only for a moment.

Ilya was gazing, entranced at the swell, so it took Shane a moment to notice that his smile looked off. Too white and broad, lips stretched taut... because his fangs were extended, taking up too much room in his mouth.

Shane reached up to touch them, grazing a finger along the sharp edge.

“Careful,” Ilya warned.

“Do you need to bite?” Shane asked, wondering if it would be weird to offer up his own arm this time.

Ilya shrugged, “will go away with my knot I think.”

Shane settled back down, an occasional tremor wracking through him with the pulse of the knot.

Ilya lay on top of him, content to wait out his release in silence.

That was until Shane’s stomach rumbled. Shane felt his cheeks flame in embarrassment but Ilya only laughed.

“Omega not full enough already?”

Shane huffed, “skipped lunch.” He offered in explanation. He didn’t elaborate that it was because he’d felt sick... but now he thought about it, Shane realised something strange.

The nausea was gone. For the first time in weeks, he didn’t feel a minute away from vomiting.

Just warm and content... and suddenly starving.

Ilya knocked him gently on the shoulder, “before a game? Shane, why? That is stupid.”

Shane shrugged, not wanting to get into it, he already got enough shit for his diet.

“I see when I am done filling this hole, I will have to get you something to fill the other one.”

“You can get hard again that quickly?” Shane joked.

Ilya rolled his eyes, “pervert. I meant with food.”

They gasped in unison as something gave inside Shane and Ilya was suddenly able to pull loose.

“So what do you fancy, pizza? Burger?” Ilya asked, voice more clear now that his fangs had finally retracted.

Shane scrunched his face up, “do you think they room service salad?”

Ilya offered him a look of revulsion, “I think I hate you.”

“No you don’t,” Shane sniggered. “You like me.”

Ilya’s expression straightened, “yeah I do.”

Shane let the admission settle. They liked each other. They didn’t want anyone else. They were doing this. Whatever this was. As much as that scared him, the thought of losing whatever they were, scared him more.

They stayed close while they ate, Shane demolishing grilled chicken and vegetables like he hadn’t seen food in days, while Ilya was working through a steak.

“I have never seen you eat like this,” Ilya said, watching him. “Why are you skipping meals?”

Shane shrugged it off. “Just busy.”

Ilya didn’t look convinced, but, thankfully, let it go.

Not long after, Ilya’s phone buzzed but once he'd given it a quick glance, he declined the call and set it face down again.

Shane felt the shift in the alpha immediately. His mouth downturned, eyes distant, a line appearing between his furrowed brow.

“Everything okay?” Shane asked softly. “Your father?”

Ilya exhaled, pushing his plate away.

“He is ill. Getting worse.”

Shane’s chest tightened.

And then, slowly and a little reluctantly at first, Ilya started talking.

His father’s declining health, his family’s professions. His useless stepmother. What happened to his own mother.

Opening up more than he ever had to the omega before, by a long way. The rare honesty almost a shock to the system.

Shane listened, heart aching, understanding slotting into place piece by piece. Why Ilya was the way he was. Why he kept himself so distant.

And somehow, despite all of that, he was still capable of this.

Of being caring and gentle.

Shane knew that had to have been Ilya's mother's influence. He would not have got that from his dead beat Dad and his bully of a brother.

"And you still go back there?" Shane asked after a while.

Ilya sniffed, wiping quickly at his eyes.

"It is Russia. My home. But… without my mother… it feels less like one."

Shane didn't let himself hesitate. Climbing into his lap, wrapping his arms around him, and holding him close, rocking gently while stroking his curls.

"You can make a new home," Shane murmured soothingly. "Anywhere."

Ilya pulled back, eyes searching his face. "Yes," he said quietly. "I am seeing that now."

Shane stayed with him until his breathing began to steady, until the tension drained from his body.

And when Shane finally tried to slip away—

A hand caught his wrist.

"Stay… please."

Shane didn't even think about it, he just stayed.

Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

> Trigger warning for presumed miscarriage. If this is something that may upset you, I wouldn't read past Shane's injury.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Shane tried not to worry about the change he saw in the alpha over the following weeks.

The way Ilya seemed desperate for contact. The way his expression became tight, almost panicked, whenever Shane had to leave him.

Shane didn't know if it was because of their previous time spent apart or whatever was happening with Ilya's family, but something had definitely changed.

Whenever they were anywhere even remotely close, Shane's phone lit up.

Lily: *come see me*

Even if Ilya still rarely spoke about anything real. Instead, he would just scoop Shane up, tuck him away in bed, and keep him there as long as he could.

Distracting Shane from the unsettling suspicions of his own he'd been having recently. The creeping sense that there was something not quite right within his own body.

His sudden aversion to smells and food he'd never had a problem with before. How tired he was, no matter how much he slept. The constant nausea.

Shane knew there had to be something to it. But thinking about it too much terrified him. Scheduling a doctor's appointment? talking to his coach? Saying the words out loud to anyone?

It just seemed insurmountable, so he didn't. He kept going. Pretended nothing was wrong and buried himself so deeply in denial that some days Shane almost believed it himself, that it was nothing.

A few weeks after all-stars, the news came from JJ of all people. "Rozanov didn't fly with the other players."

Shane, who had been slumped against his cubby after a game that had left his legs trembling with exhaustion, jerked upright in an instant.

“Did he fly separately?”

JJ shook his head. “He didn’t fly at all.”

Shane blindly reached for his phone. Worry churning in his gut.

He got no response to his text asking if Ilya was okay, not until hours later, when his phone rang.

Shane knew in the event of his own father’s death, having phone sex would be very low on his list of things he’d find comforting.

But then, he and Ilya had always been very different people.

As Shane followed Ilya’s low, steady voice—curling his fingers just so inside himself, twisting and teasing his nipples until he was covering his stomach with his own release— he knew it had settled something in Ilya.

The hard, tense edge to his voice, smoothed out. The pinched corners of his eyes and the tense set of his lips given way somewhat.

And Shane felt a strange sense of pride, that he could do this for him. Help him, in the only way Ilya ever seemed to let him.

“Good night, Ilya,” Shane sighed, before hanging up.

“Good night, moya lyubov.”

The alpha was back sooner than Shane thought he should be. But he looked fine on the ice his first game back. More than fine. Shane caught himself watching him a little too closely, maybe a little hungrily, as they made plans to meet after the game.

Shane just hoped he’d have the energy for it. Even as he looped around his warmup laps, he already felt like he could curl up on the ice and let the exhaustion take him.

He took another sip of his Gatorade and immediately grimaced at the taste. There was definitely something off about the last batch of it he’d bought.

The match began and Shane tried to hone in, stay with it but he knew he was falling behind. Passing slow, skates feeling clunky and heavy on the ice.

When he saw Marlow coming for him, he should have had time to dodge, to pivot to the right and avoid the collision.

But it was like there was interference in the signal from his brain to his legs.

Making him just too slow.

The hit sent him crashing to the ice. His head ringing, as his arm lit up with pain. But worse than that, so much worse, was the sharp, stabbing agony that tore through his abdomen.

Shane curled to a ball on instinct, clutching his midsection, biting his lip hard to stop the scream that wanted to rip free from his chest.

“Hollander?”

Shane forced his eyes open, vision blurry as he strained to see the face he knew was attached to that accented voice.

“Christ what is wrong?”

Shane couldn’t answer. Could barely breathe let alone form words.

And then Ilya was being instructed away and the medics were crowding him on the ice.

“Stay still.”

They handled his head and shoulders carefully, stabilising him as they lifted him onto the stretcher.

But every movement sent a fresh wave of agony through his abdomen, pain radiating up his spine, stealing the air from his lungs.

“Is he okay? fucking tell me!”

Shane winced at the strain in Ilya’s voice, but he couldn’t respond. Couldn’t do anything but grit his teeth as they rushed him down the tunnel toward the waiting ambulance.

Fractured humerus. That one, Shane understood, he’d broken his arm.

Midterm miscarriage. That one… he didn’t, not in relation to himself.

“Moderate bleeding. We’ll schedule a scan to confirm, but I’m very sorry—it doesn’t look good.”

The doctor’s voice blurred in and out.

“Is there anyone else we should call? Your mom and dad are on their way. The other parent, perhaps?”

Other parent.

The words felt foreign to him, like they were spoken in the wrong language. One he didn't even recognise.

"No," Shane managed eventually, his voice slow and uncooperative. "Not yet. Don't tell anyone."

He stared up at the ceiling long after the doctor had gone. He was pregnant... *had* been pregnant.

Just like, if he was being honest, he'd kind of suspected.

And now…

Now he wasn't.

Problem solved. Except it didn't feel like that. Shane felt hollow and utterly devastated.

He hadn't even let himself acknowledge it, hadn't let himself think about what it meant, and now it was gone anyway.

Just like that, in a single instant... gone.

And he couldn't tell a soul.

His mom and dad arrived later that evening.

Shane held it together for them. Played it off as residual pain from the knock. Claimed he was tired so they wouldn't stay too long and ask too many questions.

His tears didn't come until the next morning.

The guilt, regret and loss finally making its appearance and near crippling him with it.

Every time a flicker of relief crept in— relief that no one would find out, that he could keep playing—he crushed it immediately.

Because he knew, deep down he'd have dealt with it. Would have faced everything... anything, if it meant keeping the pup.

And it was all his fault that now he couldn't.

There was a knock at the door and Shane uselessly scrubbed at his snotty, tear streaked face.

Ilya came in and immediately his brow furrowed at the sight.

"Shane, what is the matter?" he hurried to his bedside.

“I—” Shane croaked.

Before he could answer, a nurse stepped in.

“Sorry, Mr Hollander, just checking—will the other father be joining us for the scan?”

Shane’s stomach dropped.

His eyes went wide as he shook his head quickly, desperately willing her to leave.

Which she did but the damage was clearly done.

“Father? What other father... Hollander?” Ilya held his voice quietly careful. “Shane... are you pregnant?”

His tears finally did stop then, replaced by an eerie numbness.

“I was,” Shane answered, sounding robotic, eyes trained stubbornly on the bedsheets.

“Was?” Ilya echoed, aghast.

“The hit… I started bleeding and…” He swallowed hard. “I lost it. I’m sorry.” He couldn’t look at him.

“Did you know?”

Shane looked up then. He had to see if the coldness in Ilya’s voice matched his expression... and it did. More so.

“What?”

“Did you know?” Ilya repeated, each word enunciated precisely. “Did you know you were carrying my baby when you stepped out onto the ice?”

“I suspected,” Shane hedged, too rung out to lie.

“And you did it anyway?”

Shane felt a fresh wave of guilt and with it more tears.

“I was scared,” Shane whispered. “I didn’t know what to do—”

“Not play hockey, Shane!” Ilya snapped. “You don’t play hockey.”

“Please, Ilya,” Shane begged, voice breaking. “I'm sorry… I... I love you.”

The words spilled out before he could stop them.

Shane already knew it was too late to save this. But he was too desperate not to try. Not to say everything he’d meant to say, had been building towards last night when they'd meant to be together.

I feel like we could be something. Come to my cottage this summer, please... I love you.

But instead of the sweet, tender confession he'd planned for, it felt like he was just dragging everything out into the open at the worst possible moment.

And the hard look in Ilya's eyes didn't soften one bit. He didn't even hesitate as he stepped back towards the door.

"No you don't," he spat. "You don't love anything but hockey."

And then he was gone and Shane felt like the alpha had taken a piece of his heart with him.

Chapter End Notes

I feel so cruel leaving it like this, so I'm going to try and have the next chapter out by Friday

Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

Just bouncing quickly back to Ilya's POV before we return to Shane.

The crack when Shane's body had hit the ice had echoed around in Ilya's head long after the sound had died in the arena.

He'd begged and pleaded with the paramedics to tell him what was wrong.

Why Shane had looked like that, like he was in the worst possible agony.

Ilya had seen fractured skulls, open leg breaks, a player's arm slit open from shoulder to elbow.

And not one of those casualties had looked like Shane did, curled up on the ice. His face screwed up as if he couldn't bear what was happening to him.

But outwardly there had been no blood, no bones, no visible sign of injury.

Ilya was tormented by not knowing. Not being able to go with his omega and make sure he was okay, that he was safe.

Marlow had finally pulled him away from the team doctor... and that had been a bad thing.

Marlow had hit his omega. His omega was hurt because of the great bumbling baboon of an alpha, who couldn't tell his ass from his skates.

Ilya had swung at him, knocking him down and diving on top, gripping his shoulders tight as he beat Marlow's head against the ice.

His teammates had dived in to try and stop him. It barely registered with him that the harsh snarling noise was coming from himself.

"He's gone feral!" someone had called in a panicked screech, and then Connors and Carmichael were wrestling him off while the team doctor was on top of him, yanking down his shoulder pad.

Ilya twisted and writhed, trying to get free.

Shane. He needed to get to Shane. They were stopping him from getting to Shane.

Then something silver flashed above him. Ilya's eyes shot wildly around the concerned faces looming over him before the doctor managed to sink the syringe into his neck, and everything slowly faded to black.

The next thing Ilya knew, he was tucked into his hotel bed, a dim light illuminating half the room and two large figures hunched over the coffee table, chatting in low voices as they devoured a pizza.

"Not seen anything like it," a voice that Ilya recognised as Carmichael muttered.

"Just once before." Ilya thought that was Connors. "Some drunk dude stumbled into my alpha buddy's pregnant omega... he lost his shit. Growling, and eyes like mad black... just like Rozy's were."

Connors jerked his head in Ilya's direction, and he screwed his eyes back closed so they wouldn't see he was awake.

"You're not saying that Roz and Hollander..." Ryan said, dropping his voice so low Ilya had to strain to hear it. "Well, he sure as shit ain't preggers... Well, shit, I mean I guess he could be. But Cap would *not* be the father. Mother Russia hates that shit."

Ilya felt a cold trickle of dread slither down his spine. Him and Shane had not been being safe, not for a long time... what if?

No. Shane wouldn't do that. He was Mr Sensible and Cautious himself. No way would he still be playing if he was carrying Ilya's baby.

"Nah," Connors gave a stilted laugh. "Not saying that. Reckon Roz's alpha just didn't like seeing an omega get hurt... another good case for them not being on the ice with the rest of us. Holz looked baaad."

Ilya couldn't stay still anymore. His omega was hurt, and he needed to see him. Make sure that look of incapacitating pain on his omega's face was gone.

"Roz?" Carmichael stuttered as Ilya flung the blanket aside and sat up. "How are you, Cap?"

Ilya flung his eyes around the room until they settled on his phone, and he quickly checked the time.

Just past one in the morning. Shit. No way could he go to the hospital right now.

He thought about texting Shane but decided to leave it. He'd need his rest.

"Do we know what hospital?" he asked instead.

Two twin dumbfounded expressions stared back at him.

"Where they took Hollander?"

“Oh,” Connors said, still frustratingly nonplussed. “I guess Coach might know.”

Right. He would go and find LeClaire and get some answers.

“Erm,” Connors called as he made for the door. “He’s probably with Marlow... he was a bit shaken up.”

Ilya scrubbed a hand down his face. Great. He would definitely have to go apologise for trying to shove his alternate captain’s head through the ice.

Even if, right now, he couldn’t claim Marlow hadn’t deserved it.

He made it till nine in the morning. After barely three hours of sleep, all of which was technically sedation and not restful in the least, an entire pack of cigarettes, no breakfast, and a very much coerced shower.

Ilya got to the hospital, stalking down the corridors in a frantic daze. The residual adrenaline and stress hormones from his brief attack of alpha ferality left him tense and on edge.

All he needed was to see that his omega was alright, and maybe then his own heartbeat would finally return to a normal rhythm.

His hand shook as he reached for the hospital room door.

Shane went into the scan alone. Well, he thought he was alone, but when the sonographer gasped and adjusted some dials, the room was suddenly filled with a loud whooshing noise.

“Heartbeat... strong and steady. This is a viable pregnancy, you are not miscarrying.”

Shane gulped before he was sobbing. He hadn’t killed his pup.

“Would you like me to get somebody?”

The first ridiculous thought Shane had was to ask for Ilya, but he immediately shut that line of thinking down.

“My mom,” he hiccupped.

Yuna was there in a heartbeat.

“Oh my god Shane... what? How?”

Shane couldn’t give her any answers, not yet. Instead, he clung to her while the sonographer carried out the rest of the scan.

“I’d date the foetus at 23+5, tracking at the 45th percentile for growth and would you like to know the sex?”

Shane nodded, he'd never been a fan of surprises.

“Pretty sure we’ve got a girl.”

Shane sobbed harder, if it hadn't felt real before, it did now. He could almost picture her. Dark eyes, freckles and waves of curly light hair.

“Oh baby.” Yuna smiled at him tearily.

“Bet you didn’t expect to be a grandma so soon?” Shane asked, voice still choked up.

“Well no...” Yuna admitted softly. “But I’m still thrilled, Shane.”

“What about hockey?” Shane asked quietly.

“Of course you’ll have to take some time off, but you’re young. Hockey will still be there afterwards.” She squeezed his hand gently. “Right now, we have something... someone else to focus on.”

His mom was obviously avoiding the harder questions —who the other parent was, chief among them— and Shane was infinitely grateful.

Shane was discharged later that day and before he knew it, he was packing his bags in Montreal and sitting in the back of his parents’ car on the drive to Ottawa.

His dad had taken it upon himself to practice his best prospective-grandpop jokes as they drove, and Shane was even more grateful at the obvious attempt at distraction.

Because even though his heart was soaring with relief that he hadn’t hurt his pup... hurt her. He knew there was one other person who mattered to him who was still hurting.

Ilya.

And Shane didn’t know what he was going to do about that. Mostly because, maybe selfishly, Ilya had hurt him too. Deeply. And Shane wasn’t sure he could forgive him yet. Not when he hadn’t really forgiven himself for risking his pup like that.

Shane rested up at his parents’ while the rest of the play-offs played out. Montreal was out almost immediately, without Shane, they crumbled.

Then Boston didn’t hold out much longer. Shane found those games a hard watch. Ilya did not play well. Aggressive, unfocused, more time in the penalty box than on the ice some nights.

“His play’s gone to shit this year,” his mom commented while watching the Raiders lose in overtime. “Do you reckon it’s his father?”

Shane immediately pretended to be very interested by his can of ginger ale the second the alpha was brought up. Only then did he realise his parents had gone silent, looking expectantly at him.

“Yeah, sure,” Shane said with a shrug, maybe a little tersely. “What would I know?”

He was most definitely not prepared to be discussing Rozanov. Not then. Watching him metaphorically crash and burn on the ice was bad enough.

Guilt and regret and anger churned impotently in Shane’s chest.

He knew he had to reach out eventually. Tell him the truth, that he would be a father after all.

But also, he felt delicate. Vulnerable. A small but noticeable bump growing beneath his skin, some days even a tiny fluttering inside.

Shane knew he needed to put himself and the little one first and if the thought of contacting the alpha filled him with fear and dread, then maybe he needed to listen to that.

So he put it off.

His parents had, of course, eventually questioned him about the other parent. The only thing Shane conceded was that it was a male alpha. Not a female one.

It wasn’t the best admission. Not for his hockey career.

If it ever got out that Shane preferred male alphas, the rumours would multiply tenfold.

Who on the team was fucking the omega player?

The assumption that it had to be somebody would always hang over him. Slutty omega stereotypes were just too well ingrained.

But as Shane’s mom pointed out, nobody needed to know that detail, especially if the father wanted nothing to do with them, as Shane had implied.

The Admirals won the Cup that year, which in and of itself made exciting news. For years the team had seemed to hold all the elements for success, but for some reason never quite attained it.

But after what Scott Hunter did on the ice in the aftermath, the victory seemed less astounding.

Dragging a man down from the stands and kissing him for the whole world to see. Not a dainty little omega man. A bearded, muscular, rugged looking man. Shane had convinced himself, must be a beta.

But no, the headlines hit that very night. Scott Hunter was in love with another male alpha. Subverting all expectations, not just of the hockey world but of the world in general.

Male alpha/alpha pairings were the last taboo. The last to ever be recognised as a legalised mating in North America. The rarest bond of all.

And sure, Hunter was greeted by some outrage, some bigoted hate. *What about the poor other players in the Admiral locker room? Are they even safe? That cannot be comfortable for them.*

But above that, came support and outpourings of love. Hunter's team backing him and cheering him on.

Filling Shane with a dawning hope that maybe... just maybe, one day, he wouldn't have to hide either.

So after the excitement surrounding Hunter died down, the Metros released their statement.

Shane Hollander, omega captain of the Montreal Metros, taking extended medical leave.

After careful consideration and medical advice, the Metros are sad to announce Hollander will not be part of the line-up for next season.

Assistant captain Hayden Pike will be stepping into the role for the foreseeable future.

They would let people assume it was due to his run-in with Marlow.

Even though it was inevitable people would talk, speculate because of his designation. That was once Shane's worst nightmare, but somehow he was beginning to accept it.

He was omega, not omega but basically just acts like a beta, and if being what he naturally was, was not good enough for them. Maybe that was their problem.

Hayden hadn't taken the news well, of course concerned, but Shane also suspected the captaincy was not exactly his top priority right now with Jackie due to have their fourth kid any day.

Shane had promised he'd visit them soon but he knew that couldn't happen. He was showing now, no way to hide it and he just wasn't ready for anyone to see his pregnancy yet.

Maybe he never would be, he didn't plan on making a big announcement. He'd just slip away quietly into fatherhood and then come back, back into the Metros line up the 2018 season.

People could see him with a kid then and figure out whatever they wanted from it.

Of course, after the announcement, Shane's phone blew up.

Didn't think your injuries were that bad.

I'm so sorry man.

Hope you recover soon.

And several voicemails from a blocked number which Shane ignored.

He would listen to them eventually. He knew he had to. He just needed to work on himself first. Come to terms with fatherhood and pregnancy and with the risk to his career.

Then he could face whatever shit Ilya had to send his way. He couldn't imagine it would be anything good.

Once Shane's arm was out of the sling, he relocated to his cottage.

Ready to baby-proof and set up a nursery— which was going to take some creativity, seeing as he hadn't exactly had a pup in mind when he'd designed the place.

His days were quiet and peaceful. He meditated, listened to podcasts about parenthood, ordered and consumed as much literature on the subject as he could.

He loved to be prepared. The whole thing settled his nervous energy better than anything else, apart from maybe his knotting toy. Apparently being horny was a perfectly normal symptom of being six months pregnant.

Shane was just measuring for stair gates one morning when his phone lit up with a call from his mother.

"Honey… is there any reason Ilya Rozanov was just at the door?"

Shane almost dropped the phone. His parents' house was only 10 minutes away. Ilya was 10 minutes away.

"You didn't say where I was, right?"

"No... is there something you want to tell us?"

Shane gulped.

"What did you tell him?"

"That you're resting from your injury but that you're fine... he seemed very concerned about your medical leave."

"He came to see me in the hospital, I guess he didn't think my injuries were that bad."

"Shane…" Yuna hesitated. "I don't think… does he know about the pregnancy?"

"Yes… no…" Shane suddenly felt light-headed. He sat heavily right there on the floor, taking slow breaths.

"Honey…" His mother said, sounding sympathetic. "Is he the other father?"

"Mmhm," Shane mumbled.

“Oh shit, Shane... you need to tell him. He's so worried.”

“Tell me what?”

Shane froze.

That was Ilya’s voice. Ilya was on the other end of the line.

“Rozanov, I thought you left,” Yuna exclaimed.

“How could I when you wouldn’t tell me where he is?”

Shane did drop the phone that time, his hands shaking so much.

His breath came in sharp gasps. Ilya was there. Just down the road. So close. And Shane couldn’t get a read on his voice. Frantic? angry? Stressed?

Over the sound of his own ragged breathing, Shane distantly heard—

“Tell me where he is.”

And then the sound of keys jangling.

“Shane, honey,” Yuna said quickly. “We’re coming.”

Shane hung up the phone. He didn’t want the auditory countdown of their drive playing in his ear.

Shakily, he reached behind himself to haul himself back up onto the couch, and then he waited.

Sitting where he was, curled up with his knees tucked up in front of himself, Shane knew his bump was hidden. He should be able to do this on his own terms as long as he stayed sitting down.

Yuna let them in and then Shane was face to face with his alpha.

His wrecked, exhausted looking alpha.

The man who had heard Shane tell him *I love you* and thrown it back in his face.

“I’ll wait out here,” Yuna declared as she bustled passed the couch and out the side door, heading for the lake.

The hand she brushed gently over Shane’s shoulder on the way past, did very little to steady his nerves.

And then it was just him and Ilya... and their baby but she was being very still right now. Soothed by the frantic rhythm of his heart, Shane would guess.

“Fuck Shane,” Ilya rasped, seemingly frozen to the spot. “You do not look so well, are you okay? No of course you’re not... come here.”

Ilya stepped towards him, arms outstretched and Shane instinctively snatched a cushion from the couch and held it between them.

Ilya stopped dead.

“No.” He begged. “Please, Shane. Don’t do that. I know I was angry. I know. But don’t be scared of me.” His voice cracked. “Please, I was hurt. Sad about the baby. But I know you were hurting too and I was asshole and I’m sorry. I’m so sorry.”

Shane nodded, blinking his eyes dry. “Just sit down,” he managed, feeling too small with the alpha towering over him.

“Of course.” Ilya sat, a deliberate foot of space between them.

“I had no idea you were injured so badly,” he said quietly. “Was it your arm? Or losing the —”

Shane shook his head. “No, not my arm.” He held it up as proof.

As he moved the cushion shifted slightly and Ilya’s eyes immediately flitted downwards and Shane froze as the alpha’s eyes turned appraising.

“Shane…” Ilya frowned. “You smell sad but also…”

Shane slowly placed the cushion aside, revealing the swell of his stomach.

“You are still pregnant?”

His eyes flitted up and down Shane’s body, brow furrowing.

“No... Shane how?”

His face fell slack with disbelief, his hand hovering uselessly between them.

“Hospital made a mistake, I did bleed but I didn’t miscarry,” Shane said with a shrug.

“My baby?” Ilya whispered, a broad smile breaking through the shock.

“Yes Ilya.”

Ilya moved so quickly Shane barely had time to react, scooping Shane up against himself, lifted clean off his feet as he was spun around gently, held tight but so carefully.

“Shane,” he breathed as he set him back down, looking intently down at his face. “Shane, why didn’t you tell me?”

“I was going to when she was born,” Shane said, not able to help the defensive edge to his tone. “I thought you were in Russia anyway.”

“Russia?” he echoed, fiddling with his pendent. “Ah, no. Never. I don’t want to, there’s nothing left there for me. Nothing that is worth more than this —” He broke off with a sigh.

“You won’t go back?” Shane asked, dumbfounded. “Why?”

“My baby with male omega,” Ilya replied as if it were obvious. “I think that maybe they will not be so welcoming now.”

“Not if we don’t tell anyone it’s yours.” Shane tried to keep his voice neutral, not give away his total revulsion to that plan.

“You want that?” Ilya’s eyes flitted swiftly across Shane’s face.

“Do you?”

“No, no never,” Ilya answered immediately. Hand coming up to gently run his knuckles across Shane’s bump. “My baby. I want the world to know is mine, my omega, my baby... girl? You say girl?”

Shane nodded, heart swooping with joy.

“My princessa,” Ilya sighed, already sounding hopelessly in love.

“I might never play hockey again if we tell,” Shane said sadly. “They could kick me out the league.”

“Oh.” Ilya’s face crumpled, hand dropping from Shane’s bump to fall limp at his side. Looking distraught. “Right, maybe is best we keep it secret.”

As much as Shane was filled with dread at the thought of letting the world see. Letting them know that he’d done exactly what they’d said he would— end up in bed with an alpha player.

That his career could be over, kicked off his team and never re-signed.

The thought of denying Ilya this, to be a real father to the pup he so clearly wanted. As well as denying his pup, a life of more than broken, stolen moments behind closed doors with one of her parents.

Shane just could not do it. Not even for hockey.

He’d spent his entire career trying to prove he was worthy of the sport. Prove he deserved to be there.

And after captaining a team to two cup wins, if this was enough to chuck him out over — maybe it wasn’t a place worth fighting for anymore.

Shane shifted closer, wrapping an arm around the broad expanse of his alpha's back. "You'd be willing to do that for me? Give that up for me?"

"Anything," Ilya promised. "I love you."

He said it as if that made it so simple. And maybe it actually was.

"I love you too," Shane whispered. "But is that really what you want?"

"Will make me very sad," Ilya confessed quietly. "I cannot be proud papa, proud alpha."

Shane tilted Ilya's chin up to face him with a finger under his jaw. Ilya went easily, although was reluctant to meet his eyes.

"We're not hiding it Ilya," Shane decided. "I can't do that to you, or her."

"Really?"

The hope swimming behind Ilya's eyes was devastating.

"No," Shane said firmly.

Ilya's face broke into a wide grin, eyes crinkling in delight.

"We tell people?" Ilya checked.

"Yes."

"Do this properly?"

"What does that me—?" before Shane could finish, Ilya was suddenly taking Shane's hands in his and sinking to his knees, before him.

"Marry me? Mate with me?" Ilya asked, expression bordering on manic.

"You don't waste any time." Shane laughed before Ilya squeezed his wrists gently.

"Shane, I am serious."

It was crazy. Probably reckless, stupid, ill-thought-out and totally not something Shane Hollander would ever actually consider doing...

"Yes," he blurted because he honestly could not have answered any other way.

"Shane," Ilya choked and pulled him into a tight hug, swaying them from side to side. "My omega. Moya sem'ya."

Shane was shocked to hear tears in the other's voice.

"What was that?" he asked, blinking back tears of his own.

“My family,” Ilya sighed.

Shane reached up, cupping Ilya’s face and sharing a sweet kiss, their scents rising around them and blending together once more into that familiar, heady mix that was just them.

“Oh my,” a voice cut through the moment as the patio door scraped open. “I can see you two made up.” Yuna laughed.

“Oh, well... erm, Mom, there’s probably something—” Shane stammered, shuffling a little further away from the alpha into what he hoped looked like a respectable distance.

“Well?” Yuna pressed.

“Er...” Shane began.

“We are getting married!” Ilya burst out.

Yuna’s eyes widened in shock.

“Oh my god, Shane.” She covered her mouth with one hand. “I thought this was a one-night-stand gone-wrong type of situation. I didn’t realise it was serious.”

Shane just shrugged his shoulders at her helplessly.

“One night stand…” Ilya cocked his head to the side. “Many night stands. Since before Rookie season.”

Yuna gasped.

"Is not important,” Ilya continued firmly. “I love Shane and I want us to be together more than anything I ever have.”

“Me too,” Shane said thickly, tears immediately streaming down his face again.

Yuna sucked in a sharp breath through her nose before clapping her hands together. “Right. A wedding. Are we doing this before or after the birth? Ilya, I’m going to need names for your guest list and venue preferences. Shane, we need to contact Farah as soon as possible. Ilya, who are you represented by? We may have scheduling issues—”

“Mom,” Shane interrupted shakily.

“Sweetie?”

“I need a lie down.”

Ilya was immediately beside him, putting an arm around his back as Shane pointed him weakly towards his room.

“Oh, of course,” Yuna muttered distractedly. “You rest. Don’t worry. I’ll take care of everything.” Her thumbs were already flying across her phone as she made a determined beeline for Shane’s home office.

“Phew,” Shane sighed as Ilya helped him get comfortable on his bed, puffing up pillows behind his back and drawing the blinds.

“You still want to do this?” Ilya asked, there was something unexpectedly vulnerable in his expression.

Shane nodded with a tired smile. “Besides, it’s probably already too late, my mom must have set at least five wheels in motion by now. This is happening.”

Ilya lay down beside him, hands folded over his stomach as he gazed up at the ceiling fan, already looking at home in Shane’s space.

“So…” he said eventually. “Can I give you bite now?”

Shane stared at him, not entirely sure he was joking.

“Maybe wait until after I’ve had a nap?”

Ilya flashed him a wide, thankfully fang-free, grin. “Sure, malysh. I shall wait right here.”

And true to his word, he did.

When Shane slowly drifted back to consciousness, it was to the sound of quiet Russian being murmured softly nearby. Not directed at him though.

To his belly.

“She moved, Shane,” Ilya whispered in awe the second he realised Shane was awake.

“Yeah she does that,” Shane said, both exasperated and fond. “A lot.”

“Good.” Ilya rested his hand gently over the curve of Shane’s stomach. “She will be big, strong hockey star.”

Shane felt a heavy kick to his insides.

“See,” Ilya gasped triumphantly. “She agrees.”

Shane didn’t bother arguing with him. Too overcome by the simple fact that Ilya was here. That he wanted this, he wanted them.

Chapter 12

Now, Shane had never met anyone who enjoyed winning more than himself. Even his mated husband wasn't quite as competitive as he was.

However, on the day of the Stanley Cup Final, the Ottawa Centaurs versus Winnipeg on home ice, Shane got the impression Ilya wanted the win even more than he did.

Not particularly for the Cup, even though raising it between them, the first mated pair ever to do so, meant everything to them.

It was what Shane had promised afterwards that he knew Ilya couldn't wait for.

After a gruelling, painful birth two years ago, they'd welcomed Sophia into the world. A beautiful girl with curly black hair, hazel eyes, and an explosion of freckles across her cheeks. Shane had spent a year raising her. A year torn between his alpha, finishing off his contract in Boston and Ottawa where his support system was. A year where the two of them spent more time on planes and driving across the country than they ever had, just to eke out time together. Learning how to truly be a family.

Montreal had dropped him like a hot potato as soon as they learned the truth— he'd been mated and bred by a rival team's captain. Despite what Shane had brought to the team, they threw him away like trash.

That had once been what Shane had feared the most. Not just being discarded and pushed out of the hockey world, but for everyone to know what he'd done. To live up to everyone's preconceived notion of what he was, to prove them all gleefully right.

But as he was gladly welcomed into Ottawa's arms, along with his husband, fully allowed to be a family unit. Him, Ilya, and Sophia finally together, Shane realised it was only a good thing.

Maybe the best thing.

The hate he'd gotten from Montreal and a small faction of the league was nothing compared to the support the public poured out for them. The messages he'd gotten from other omegas, praising how much he'd changed things for them. What possibilities and doors he'd opened for people like him. Being a bonded omega with a pup, no longer meant a life locked away indoors, barred from the hockey world. Shane was showing it was possible to have both.

The Cup was theirs and the team was jubilant. The alpha captain and omega assistant raised it high between them, the matching rings they both wore, put on just for this moment, glinting under the lights. The arena erupted in a din like Shane had never heard before.

Once they'd celebrated with the team and gotten home to tuck Sophia into bed, the two year old going down a lot more easily than she used to, Ilya turned to look at Shane with a look that spelled danger.

This was why Ilya had wanted the win, maybe even more than Shane.

“Now,” Ilya began, stalking Shane down the hall towards their bedroom. “Do you remember what you said?”

Shane shook his head, even though he absolutely did.

Ilya cleared his throat grandly as he shut their bedroom door behind them.

“Win me that Cup, Rozanov, and we can have another child. Well, Shane...” Ilya shoved Shane gently so he fell back onto their bed, limbs sprawling. “You have your Cup...”

Ilya stood over him, chest rising and falling. Anticipation thrumming like a taut chord stretched between them.

Shane chewed his lip.

“Yeah, but I didn’t think we actually would. Not in my first year playing on the team...”

Ilya pouted. “So no sibling for Sophia?”

“Well, I didn’t say that...” Shane went on.

And Ilya pounced immediately.

“Come here, Hollander,” he growled, pinning him bodily to the bed. “Time to put another baby in you.”

Shane felt hot all over at the raw, possessive need of the alpha, at the gaping emptiness inside him longing for his mate to fill.

Ilya got him onto his side, a position left over from his pregnancy days. Ilya straddling the thigh Shane had resting on the mattress, lifting Shane’s other leg to wrap around him, slotting in between, Shane’s legs held apart like a pair of scissors so he could rut inside.

“Oh God,” Shane threw his head back with a groan, already clenching around Ilya’s expanding knot.

It had only been a few minutes, but Shane knew the knowledge they were doing this raw, with no contraception in his system, had Ilya’s urge to breed him taking over.

His husband’s fangs were fully extended as he thrust hard, pupils nearly entirely black.

Yep, Ilya was pure wolf right now, Shane realised, that thought compounded by his near-pained howl as his knot engaged, stuffing Shane to the brim.

“Fuck,” Shane came too at the feeling of his insides being so thoroughly displaced by the knot, pulsing rhythmically as he was bred on it.

“Mine,” Ilya growled roughly, bending in two to graze his teeth against Shane’s mark. “Omega.”

“Yes,” Shane agreed on a sob, coming again, nearly dry now.

Shane must have passed out before the knot deflated because the next thing he knew, the sun was peeking under the curtains and he was empty once more.

He was met by Ilya coming back in carrying two cups of coffee.

“You feel pregnant yet?”

Shane rolled his eyes. "It is waaaay too soon to tell.”

“No,” Ilya disagreed, passing Shane his cup. “It took. I know it.”

Shane took a slow sip.

“You can’t just know. My heat's not for a few weeks and your rut is far off. Our chances of conceiving are actually quite low right now.”

Ilya set his cup down heavily on the dresser.

“So what you are saying is, I should knot you again right now?”

“Hmm,” Shane considered. It was still quite early. “Well, it couldn’t hurt—”

“Dadda! Papa!” rang out from down the hallway.

“Maybe later,” Shane sighed as he grabbed a robe and hurried down towards his daughter’s room.

Ilya was only pouting a little when he joined them.

“You want pancakes, princessa?”

Of course she said yes, and so began their summer. The best time of the year, when there was nothing but the three of them and the occasional visit from a teammate or Shane’s parents.

Everything was going as Shane had planned. Every brand meeting attended, every photoshoot and hockey obligation on the carefully planned-out calendar met.

Shane had scheduled for his parents to have Sophia during his heat, and he and Ilya had a few weeks' worth of activities planned with her to get the most family time in before he found himself incapacitated for a week, lying around moaning for his mate's knot.

Despite the fact that, since the Cup win, Ilya had not left him more than a day without it... the alpha was much too eager to breed him again.

Ilya got back from his run in good spirits. They were going to take Sophia to the children's museum that day, and then they had a whole itinerary of Shane-orchestrated fun activities to look forward to before a week of a different kind of fun awaited him.

Shane's heat. Only the third they'd got to spend together, and Ilya could not wait, especially as this time there would be no holding back. No reason to be careful. He had Shane's full permission to knock him right up, and he was determined to deliver.

Ilya paused as he tiptoed upstairs. All was quiet from Sophia's room, as it should be, seeing as it was only 6:45. Their room, however, was not so silent.

Shane was supposed to be resting in readiness for his heat, but the noises Ilya caught were not very restful sounding. The closet door being opened and closed, clothes hangers creaking on the rail, furniture scraping against the floor.

"Shane, what are you—?" Ilya burst through the door to ask before being brought up short.

The air was dense and cloyingly sweet. Not reaching that intoxicating level yet, if anything, it was a little sickly...

"Ilya," Shane snapped from where he was piling throw pillows in a circle around the bed. "Shut that door, you're making the smell all wrong."

Ilya obeyed immediately, knowing better than to argue when Shane was like this, when he was... "Shane, you're in pre-heat."

Shane slow-clapped. "Congratulations, knot-head. Maybe you do have a brain cell in there somewhere. It must have hit early, what with your insistance on humping me all week."

Ilya covered his mouth to hide his amusement. The omega got so bitchy when he was going into heat.

"Did you go to the store while you were out?"

"You didn't ask me to, sweetheart," Ilya replied tentatively. "It is Sunday. Nowhere's open yet."

Shane huffed in exasperation. "Well, you should have known that and gone out later then."

"Right," Ilya nodded, pretending to consider that seriously. "Next time you don't tell me to go to the store, I will remember that."

"Good," Shane said dismissively, already back to folding the blankets just so. "You'll have to go back when they open. I'll write you a list."

Ilya rolled his eyes fondly. His mate, who usually apologised to someone when *they* walked into him, somehow managed to forget his manners when his hormones began to surge.

"Of course, lyubimyy," he assured him.

Already knowing precisely what would be on it.

-Sour watermelon candy -Excessively dark chocolate
-Ginger ale popsicles from the health food store.

"I think I better phone your parents and bring forward their week with Sophia, no?"

Shane dropped the blanket he was holding. "The children's museum... oh, we were supposed to take her for frozen yoghurt... she loves frozen yoghurt..." His breath hitched, and Ilya rushed forward.

"It's alright," he said, taking his irrational mate into his arms. "You'll only be out a week. Plenty of time for frozen yoghurt after."

Shane sniffed. "But she was so excited."

Ilya kissed the top of his head, ignoring his instinct to recoil from the sickly sweet pre-heat he could smell on him.

"She's excited for her week with Nana and Grandpop too," he said soothingly.

"Yeah?" Shane asked shakily.

"Yeah," Ilya said firmly.

"Okay..." Shane said, wiping his face, his emotions already moving on. "So, from the store I'm gonna need that choco—"

"I know, I know," Ilya cut him off, already headed out of the room. "Leave it all to me. You just get your cosy little nest all snug and ready, okay?"

Shane nodded before a contemplative look crossed his face, and he was across the room, tugging at Ilya's sweaty running vest before the alpha could quite comprehend what was happening.

Ilya surrendered the garment easily, ignoring the tightening in his groin as his mate inhaled the soiled fabric with a sinful moan.

Ilya got Sophia up and ready, finished packing her bag, and called David and Yuna to move their plans forward.

Despite Shane's apparent devastation at disappointing their two-year-old, she hadn't actually remembered what they'd had planned, and was more than happy to go on her little vacation to her grandparents.

She gave a happy goodbye cuddle to her dad, while Shane looked more tearful than his daughter, and then Ilya went to drop her off. He made a quick stop at the store and was back home.

Where Shane all but attacked him. Manhandling him out of his clothes and down into his nest.

Ilya chuckled softly as Shane's angry kitten face eased up slightly on seeing Ilya where he wanted him.

"Better," Shane sighed happily before pouncing on the grocery bags he'd not given Ilya a chance to put away.

Ilya lay back and leisurely took in his anxious mate. It was still pre-heat, he wasn't really needed for more than nest dressing at this point, to make Shane feel safe as he prepared for actual heat.

The day passed slowly and restfully, and it wasn't until it was dark and Ilya had already been asleep for what felt like a good few hours that he was woken.

The first thing he took notice of was the smell. Shane was no longer sugar-sweet and a little repulsive. Now his scent was mouth-watering, rich and warm, and very aroused.

And then Ilya felt him.

Shane was hunched over him, a hot, soft sensation running over his rapidly hardening cock as Shane mouthed at him.

"Oh fuck, Shane!" he exclaimed as his hands shot down to hold his head right there.

He wasn't going to direct or even encourage his movements. Shane would know exactly what he wanted and would take whatever he needed.

Shane played with his mate's cock like he was making a study of it he would be tested on later.

Squeezing and twisting at the forming knot, grazing both hands up the shaft to massage the head, his tongue darting out to slurp up any drop of precum he could ease out of it.

Ilya lay back and settled into the slow torture of it. He loved the exhausting challenge of his omega's heat. To stay hard for as long as was needed, to knot on cue as many times as Shane wanted to be speared through with it.

To eke every drop of pleasure he could out of Shane's body until his mate was finally sated.

And even then it would not be his time to rest, not yet. As his alpha, Ilya would then be responsible for cleaning them up, fetching water, and tempting Shane to eat what he could.

Before it would all start again. Shane would begin to writhe, his face getting all tight and scrunched up with pain as another wave of heat hit, and it would be time for the alpha to perform once more.

Days passed relentlessly, Ilya staring at his poor reddened cock as he finally withdrew probably his twentieth knot.

Shane was out of it, deliriously moaning as he stroked at his distended belly, either so full of cum he was rounded with it, or maybe his muscles were so stretched out from the constant knotting they hadn't managed to contract flat again... or maybe both, Ilya mused.

Shane gave a contented sigh as Ilya wiped him down with a washcloth, the cool water instantly evaporating on Shane's heat-fevered skin.

Ilya urged Shane to sleep afterwards and tried to get some himself. But it couldn't have been more than a few hours, until Ilya felt the bed shift and a weight drop into his lap.

"Wait, wait," Ilya soothed, fingers fumbling in the dark to help stretch Shane and prepare him. "Malysh, just hold on—"

It was too late. Shane had already slipped Ilya inside himself, throwing his head back to desperately groan as his hips began canting back and forth, leaving himself no time to adjust.

Ilya grasped Shane's hips, trying to set a more reasonable pace, but it was no good. Shane was determinedly riding him to within an inch of his life, and there was fuck all Ilya could do about it.

He clung on, his abused cock rubbed raw. With the pheromones the omega was pumping into the air, the thick slick leaking onto Ilya's thighs, and the exquisite feel of the omega's insides pulsating around him, his knot began to form in no time. Aching as it was forced to swell so soon after the last time.

With more pain than pleasure, Ilya came, splattering his load up inside the omega as Shane came dry over and over on it.

"Bite me, alpha. Bite me," Shane commanded, eyes dark and feral.

Ilya grasped Shane by the back of the neck and tugged him down, fangs already extended—they had been for most of the week. He lined up his teeth with the delicate scars on Shane's neck and sank them home.

Shane went limp immediately, collapsing against Ilya's chest as he somehow clamped down even harder on Ilya's cock, forcing a fresh wave of cum from his painfully empty balls.

Although Ilya would have found it a happy way to go —death by excessive orgasming— he was a little relieved when he awoke to a much more coherent Shane, who was looking around at the devastation of the room in horror.

"Oh my god, Ilya!" Shane exclaimed. "Is that a bite mark in the headboard?"

Ilya nodded.

"You or..."

"Yours," Ilya confirmed. Shane had gotten a little carried away when Ilya had taken him from behind.

"Oh shit," Shane went on, now staring upwards. "What's that mark on the ceiling... how?"

"You got distracted when we 69'd and my knot popped into thin air."

Ilya didn't feel the need to bring up the fact it had not really been a 69, since Shane had basically just ridden his face and totally neglected Ilya's cock the entire time— hence the stain.

Shane's eyes widened hugely, flitting between their bed and the ceiling.

"That's like two metres, Ilya."

Ilya smirked. He'd been quite impressed with that at the time too.

"Right," Shane said decisively, gingerly clambering off the bed as he tried to avoid the wet spots... unsuccessfully. It was all a wet spot.

"You're on laundry duty... I need a shower... a long one."

"Whatever you say," Ilya agreed easily.

And within hours of that, Shane was already pouring over his calander, reworking the plans, adjusting for the lost week and preparing for the gained one.

"After all this," Shane muttered to his husband, eyes not drifting from his colourfully decorated spreadsheet, "you better have knocked me up."

Ilya chuckled nervously. "I hope so too, if I have to knot you anymore, I think my cock might fall off."

It was much later in the summer, during a barbecue at Bood's, that all Ilya's wishes came true.

Shane had just got a plate of food for them and was cutting up a hot dog for Sophia when he suddenly paused to frown.

"What is it, lyubimyy?"

Shane speared a slice onto his fork and gave it a tentative sniff.

"Is this properly cooked?" He held it away in disgust. "It smells off."

Ilya took the offending item and declared it perfectly fine.

"Shane," he beamed. "We need to get you a test."

Shane let out a breath in disbelief.

"You do work fast," he said, puffing out his cheeks and gulping down the rising nausea.

“This I did tell you,” Ilya replied, somewhat smugly.

Sophia came bounding over, diving at Shane, but Ilya caught her before she could land on his lap.

“We have to be careful of Dadda now, okay, malysh?”

“Why?” she asked, crossing her arms and pouting.

“Do you want to be a big sister?”

She jumped up squealing, racing off around the garden with glee.

“Hmm,” Shane mused. “Think she might be even more excited than you are.”

“Impossible,” Ilya declared, dropping down beside Shane and wrapping an arm around his shoulders.

Shane patted a hand against his still-flat stomach. He didn’t want this to become a competition or anything, but deep down he knew he was the most excited of all of them.

Getting to do this again, without the fears and uncertainty that had plagued him last time. Knowing he was safe and secure, and so was his pup.

Shane could not wait.

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