

pour mercy, mercy on me (set fire to history)

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pour mercy, mercy on me (set fire to history)

by Anonymous

Summary

"I was thinking summer," Shane said.

"Summer for what?"

Shane lifted his head and met Ilya's gaze. "For everything. Coming out. Going public. Getting married."

Ilya's heart flipped. "Yes?"

"Yeah. I know it's going to be a shitshow, but I'm tired of being scared of being found out. I want to tell people, on our own terms. I think I can handle anything that happens, as long as going public is a choice we made ourselves. Together."

"That is what I want," Ilya agreed. "We tell people ourselves. Together."

~ The Long Game, Chapter 25

What if Shane and Ilya were never outed in Hayden's FanMail, and got to come out on their own terms?

Notes

hello!! this is my first official fic for the heated rivalry universe, though i must confess, it certainly doesn't feel that way - i've had SO many plot bunnies (and read so many incredible fics!) for this fandom that it feels like i've been here forever.

this fic is very much a labour of love, and one which i've been working on since i finished reading The Long Game in November 2025. i started writing with stars in my eyes, and the momentum of watching the show carried me through the first half... but then unfortunately, real life returned, i had to go back to work, and this fic fell to the backburner. which is where the hollanov summer exchange came in! writing for an exchange is a uniquely satisfying feeling, and it ALWAYS gives me the motivation i need to finish fics. a special thank-you to my lovely giftee, **sparkysparky/queenofshenanigans**, for letting me gift you something that was already an idea well before the exchange. this fic idea of mine just felt like it fit perfectly with so many of your likes and requests, so i really hope it makes you smile!!

► **a little bit about the inspiration behind this fic:**

- ▶ **a note on show versus book canon in this fic:**
- ▶ **trigger warnings for this fic:**

the title is from *Only the Brave* by Louis Tomlinson.

haha, i just realised that "happy reading" has the same first letters as Heated Rivalry (and Hollander & Rozanov!) so... HR ❤️

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

Chapter 1: January

Chapter Notes

this chapter ties in directly with TLG at the start, as well as for a few sentences towards the middle of the chapter. now, i am a lifelong academic who believes that plagiarism is pretty much the worst thing you can do, so i've put exact details of quotes i've used from TLG underneath the dropdown.

► quotes from TLG

thanks so much for reading, and hope you enjoy this fic!!

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

“I was thinking summer,” Shane said.

“Summer for what?”

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“Yeah. I know it’s going to be a shitshow, but I’m tired of being scared of being found out. I want to tell people, on our own terms. I think I can handle anything that happens, as long as going public is a choice we made ourselves. Together.”

“That is what I want,” Ilya agreed. “We tell people ourselves. Together.”

Shane smiled. “I might have already told my parents that I was going to propose to you.”

“Did they approve?”

“Of course. I think we already are married, as far as they’re concerned. But they’re also a little unclear about our plan. So am I, but we’ll figure it out.”

“We will,” Ilya agreed. “And until summer?”

“I guess more of the same? Except maybe we could... be less careful?”

Ilya’s eyebrows went sky high. “Shane *Hollander*,” he said slowly, incredulously. “Did you just suggest being *less* careful?”

Shane swatted his shoulder. “Fuck off,” he grumbled, but there was no heat in it. “I just meant, maybe we could spend more time together, publicly? Not confirming anything yet, but

making it even clearer that we like each other off the ice. It's going to be a huge shock for everyone when we *do* come out, so maybe we can drop some hints beforehand.”

“So you're saying that you want to spend time with me in public?” Ilya checked, not quite sure if he can believe this yet. It just – it felt far too good to be true.

“Would you be okay with that?” Shane asked, his brow furrowing as he tried to read Ilya's expression.

“Shane. This is all I've ever wanted,” Ilya replied, and even to his own ears, his voice sounded thick with emotion.

Shane's eyes softened, his expression melting into something heartbreakingly tender. “Then that's what we'll do.”

He leaned in and sealed it with a kiss, soft and slow and tender. It felt like a promise.

Ilya kissed him back, just as tender and warm. His heart felt fuller than it had been for a long, long time.

He was getting married. This summer, he was getting married to the love of his life – and he would finally get to tell the world all about it.

Hot Off The Ice: NHL Gossip Updates

@hot_off_the_ice

Long-time rivals and charity co-founders Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov spotted hanging out together in Ottawa 🙄☕

[A series of grainy iPhone images of Shane and Ilya sitting across from each other in a small café, talking and laughing.]

@justagayhockeygirlie omfg I didn't know they actually hung out like that??!

@numberoneshanefan HELLO WHAT THE FUCK. SHANE AND ROZANOV??

@censfanmaria you do know they're friends, right?

@numberoneshanefan i mean, yeah, they've said they're friends when they announced the charity, but there's never been any actual evidence of it, you know?

@rozrozroz ngl i always thought they just kinda tolerated each other off-ice to run the charity. happy to be wrong tho!! seems like they're genuinely enjoying each other's company

@hereforhollanov RIGHT?! they're both smiling so much

@left_boston_for_ilya why is this low key the most we've seen ilya smiling in like... a while

@bostonbearz4life because his new team is SHIT lol

@left_boston_for_ilya “his new team” this is his third season for the Cens, you clown. #staymad (unlike ilya who looks like he's having the time of his life getting coffee with shane hollander 😊)

All About Shane Hollander

@shanehollandersource

Shane spotted getting coffee and greeting fans in Ottawa with Ilya Rozanov.

[a zoomed-in image of Shane and Ilya mid-conversation; a couple of selfies of Shane and Ilya with fans]

@centaur_ilya_forever HOLY SHIT GUYS I'M ONE OF THOSE FANS IN THE SELFIES 😭 it's me and my girlfriend in the second to last pic (yeah i know i look like i was about to start crying. full disclosure, I WAS.) i've been the biggest ilya rozanov fan ever since he moved to ottawa, but i've never gotten to meet him. so today was a dream come true! also i'm canadian so of COURSE i love shane too. that's our boy 🤖 (1/3)

@centaur_ilya_forever omg and they were both SO nice too 🤖 for all that he's a menace (affectionate) on the ice, ilya was so so kind to us both. he even asked where my gf got her bi flag pin (!!!) and said he thinks it's very cool. like, yeah, we know they're both allies because of their camps and all, but it was still so surreal and wonderful to hear (2/3)

@centaur_ilya_forever shane was a little quieter, but very polite (of course xD). he also spent quite a lot of time staring at ilya and smiling this very small, half-hidden little smile - deadass one of the cutest things i've ever seen 🤖 anyways in conclusion: hollander and rozanov are literally the best, and this has been a fever dream of a day that i'm going to be crying over for a long time (3/3)

@marrymeshane girl i hope you know that you just lived everyone's dream

@hollanovtruther i know you guys are going to call me crazy, but hear me out... HEAR ME OUT... the way they both look so relaxed and happy in each other's company? not to mention **@centaur_ilya_forever**'s description of shane smiling at ilya? hollanov is real, i'm TELLING you

@voyageurs_are_king god, shut up. they're definitely not gay. they're probably just talking about their plans for the next hockey camps.

@rozanovdefender hate to agree with a Voyageurs fan, but this is probably the most likely explanation. still, always happy to see my king ilya happy <3

Ottawa Centaurs ✓

@ottawacentaursnhl

That's a 5-3 win for the Cens against Montreal! Let's go, boys! #winningstreak

Here are some of our favourite moments from the game:

#1) That amazing hat trick by our one and only captain!

[A GIF of Ilya Rozanov scoring the first goal of the match, with quick cuts to the two more goals he scored in the third period. A little hat emoji floats onto the screen at the end, surrounded by confetti.]

#2) This crazy save by Hazy!

[A GIF of Wyatt Hayes sliding across the ice on his stomach, deflecting the puck with his shoulder pad.]

#3) A beautiful goal by Troy, assisted by Roz and Bood. Teamwork makes the dream work!

[A GIF of Zane Boodram passing to Ilya Rozanov, who rapidly skates around the Montreal defence and passes to Troy, who shoots cleanly into the top right of the net.]

#4) Haasy scores! This is his fifteenth NHL goal. Congratulations @luca_haas_nhl!

[A GIF of Luca Haas scoring in the second period of the game.]

#5) A very happy locker room post-game! This is our ninth win in a row, and boy, does it feel good!

[A short video of the Centaurs' locker room. Loud hip-hop music is playing, and Ilya Rozanov is dancing along, randomly stopping to tell his teammates "Well done!" and "I love you." Everyone is smiling.]

@hannahthecensfan LET'S FUCKING GOOOOOO! THIS IS WHAT IM TALKING ABOUT!

@longsufferingcentaursfan I USED TO PRAY FOR TIMES LIKE THESE

@hazyisourhero what a save from Hazy! 🙌

@ottawatheart highlight reel worthy fr

@centaur_ilya_forever ilya dancing and smiling and telling all his teammates that he loves them 🥹 he is SUCH a sweetheart actually. i love him so dearly

@rozanovdefender GOD RIGHT!! everyone calls him an asshole, but that's SO clearly just a persona. i bet he's actually the sweetest person ever off the ice

@barrettbarrettbaby hell yeah Troy 🏒

@dallaskentisthebest But he couldn't do it on his own. He never does. Barrett always needs better players to set up his shots. Doesn't deserve to be called an All-Star.

@hannahthecensfan dude. do you even know how hockey works?

@ottawatheart nobody wants a dallas kent apologist anywhere near our team. get lost.

[@dallaskentisthebest has been blocked]

@hereforhollanov adding my personal favourite moment from the game below: when Shane slammed Ilya into the boards, and neither of them could stop smiling about it even when they were *supposed* to be fighting (1/2)

@hereforhollanov *[a GIF of Shane Hollander shoving Ilya Rozanov into the glass. Ilya Rozanov is very clearly grinning widely.]*

i mean. just. wow, guys. WOW. (2/2)

@24x81 oh i am SICK. that is not the way you smile when your rival slams you into the glass. that's the way you smile when it's your HUSBAND and this is secretly foreplay for you –

@horny4hockeyboys GIRL. you are so right.

@thehollanovarchives consider also: this truly insane conversation (thank you to @rozanovchirps for the lip reading):

[a zoomed-in video of Shane, Ilya and Hayden Pike on the ice. Yellow captions float across the screen when the players speak to each other. First, Ilya chirps Hayden about the All-Star game. Hayden turns to Shane and asks “Can I please stab him?” The referee says “Nobody is stabbing anyone.” Ilya looks at Shane and says “Not yet” and winks. Although the video is grainy, it is clear that Shane blushes.]

@rozrozroz what the fuck lmao 😂😂👁👁

@shilyaaaa they are INSANE. that wink?? THE BLUSH?? somebody sedate me

@shanezone um. i don't know how the fuck i ended up in a rpf thread, but what's even worse is that they seem to HAVE A POINT?? wtf was that about, guys 😭

@hollanovtruther OMG BESTIE WELCOME. i hope you're ready for the most insane time of your life, because these two... they're something else, fr

“Next year we will be the first married NHL All-Stars.”

Shane’s whole body tensed. “Oh my god.”

“What?”

“I hadn’t even thought of that.”

Ilya kissed him again, but it didn’t stop Shane’s brain from spinning out of control.

“Oh my god,” Shane said again when Ilya finished kissing him. “I’m so focused on marrying you and being a couple and stuff and dealing with the blowback from the hockey world that I never even thought about, like, being married and playing hockey.”

“Scary?”

It was fucking terrifying, but Shane didn’t want to say that. “We’ll deal with it,” he said with not nearly enough confidence.

“Mm. I’ve been thinking about that,” Ilya said, surprising Shane.

He blinked. “You have?”

Ilya met his gaze directly and spoke with painful sincerity. “I am always thinking about you, and about our future.”

The words hit Shane like a punch straight to the heart. He had to close his eyes for a moment, because the look on Ilya’s face right then was just too much.

Shane wasn’t sure if he felt more touched or... or *guilty*, because he had just admitted that this was something he hadn’t thought about.

It wasn’t that Shane didn’t care about his future with Ilya. He *did*, with all his heart, and he wanted it so badly that he could almost taste the longing sometimes.

But during the season, hockey consumed the majority of his thinking capacity – he was always strategizing and analysing and preparing for the next game. He had his routine, and his things that he thought about every day, and unless there was an urgent reason to deviate from his settled patterns, then he wouldn’t.

That was why he was so lucky to have Ilya, who approached life completely differently. He helped Shane relax and re-think things when he got too settled into a rut, and he encouraged him to be spontaneous and take risks that he never would have otherwise. As much as it sometimes stressed him out, he also loved Ilya so much for it.

Like now. Shane took a deep breath, and opened his eyes again, propping himself up on one elbow so that he could meet Ilya’s gaze squarely. “What have you been thinking?” he asked.

“It’s not going to be easy,” Ilya said softly, but with heartbreaking honesty. “People are going to have a lot of opinions.”

Shane swallowed hard. He’d known this, of course, but to hear Ilya say it out loud like this...

“Some people might even say that we should not be allowed to play against each other,” Ilya continued. “Which is bullshit. Obviously. But it is still something that people might say.”

“I know,” Shane whispered, because he *did* know. It made sense, as much as he hated it. There had never been a married couple playing in the NHL before, and certainly not a married couple who were also archrivals on the ice. Of course people would have strong opinions.

“But,” Ilya said, and visibly took a deep breath. Shane knew him well enough that he could practically *see* him preparing himself to say something he thought would be difficult.

“But it might be easier if we were on the same team.”

For a moment, it felt like the world tilted completely off its axis. The idea was so completely new, so *foreign* to Shane's mind that it almost didn't compute.

Then –

“You'd move to Montreal?” Shane blurted out.

Ilya shook his head. “No,” he said, gently but firmly. His expression turned wry. “Even if I wanted to, I do not think the Voyageurs would ever take me on. But I don't want to.”

But I don't want to. The words sank into Shane like a stone slowly falling to the bottom of a lake.

“I love my team,” Ilya said simply, but sincerely. “We are maybe not quite as good as Montreal, but we have been getting so much better lately. And the *people*, Shane – they are the best people I have ever been teammates with. The vibes are so good.”

“Right,” Shane said, feeling suddenly very far away. Which didn't even make sense, because Ilya had told him all of this before, in almost the exact same words even.

But this time, Shane couldn't help but think of his own team. *Good vibes* weren't exactly the first words he would use to describe them. Good at hockey, yes. Great, even. But good vibes?

Shane closed his eyes and remembered the way some of his teammates would never quite meet his eyes again after he told them he was gay. It wasn't all of them, of course (Hayden and J.J. had his back, and so did a good few of the younger players who he had personally spent time mentoring). But some of the veteran players... Well. Nobody had said anything to his face, of course – he was their captain, and he was Shane Hollander, so none of them would dare – but he knew what some of them thought of him now.

But they were still his *team*. He had given everything to them for almost eleven years, and even if they weren't perfect... who was?

“I love my team, too,” Shane said, a little helplessly, because he did, with all his heart.

“I know it's a lot to give up,” Ilya said gently.

A lot to give up.

Those words sent Shane reeling. Completely unbidden, his mind played him a memory of Ilya's face twisted with anger, Ilya snapping at him *what have you given up, Shane?*

Leaving his team *would* be a lot to give up. But it would be exactly what Ilya had done for Shane when he moved to Ottawa.

Maybe it was Shane's turn.

Shane licked his lips, although his mouth suddenly felt very dry. “It's not a lot to give up,” he whispered. “Well, it is. But it's what you gave up for me.”

Ilya was shaking his head almost immediately. “No, no. That was different. Look at me – Shane, that was *different*. I wanted to leave Boston anyway. And I would give up anything for you.”

“But that's not fair,” Shane said, his voice suddenly dangerously wobbly. “You shouldn't have to give things up for me all the time.”

“I am happy to do it,” Ilya said gently.

Shane shook his head sharply, fighting the lump he could feel forming in his throat. Here was Ilya, so willing to give up everything for Shane in the name of love – *happy to do it*, he said – and Shane couldn't do the same in return. Struggled to even think about it.

It was official: he was a terrible boyfriend. The *worst*.

“Shane,” Ilya interrupted his thoughts before they could spiral any further. “*Shane*. Sweetheart. Look at me.”

Shane looked at him, responding almost instinctively to that tone in Ilya's voice, gentle but commanding.

When he met Ilya's eyes, he found only love in them. No resentment, no anger – just Ilya looking at Shane like he meant the world to him.

“This was just an idea,” Ilya said, cupping Shane's face in one hand. “Do not panic about this. We will find a way.”

“We'll find a way,” he echoed, and it was honestly a little crazy how much just saying that reassured him.

Ilya leaned in and kissed him softly, like a confirmation.

Shane sighed into his mouth and kissed him back, reaching up to run his hands through Ilya's hair. The kiss stayed gentle and slow, with no intentions of taking things any further – just a soft, tender affirmation of love and trust and intimacy. On any other day, it would be more than enough to make Shane's brain go hazy with bliss.

But not today.

“Do you really think it would be easier if we were teammates?” Shane asked once their kiss broke.

“I am obviously not kissing you well enough if you are still thinking about that,” Ilya said wryly.

Shane rolled his eyes, shoving his shoulder gently. “Shut up. You know you always kiss me *very* well.”

“Oh?” Ilya asked, wagging his eyebrows. “Tell me more?”

“*Later*,” Shane huffed. “This is on my mind now, and you know I won’t be able to sleep until I figure it out. So. Don’t you think people would always be asking questions about whether it’s appropriate for us to be on the same team?”

“Maybe,” Ilya replied, honestly. “But I think it would be worse if we played for opposing teams. If we play for the same team, then at least nobody would be able to say that we were being unfair or cheating in games against each other.”

“People would say that, wouldn’t they?” Shane asked, because now that Ilya had said it, he could picture it all too clearly. Headlines like *Married Captains Face Off: Will They Let Each Other Win?* would be all over hockey media.

Shane and Ilya would never *let* each other win, of course, but that wouldn’t stop the speculation. Hell, Shane’s own *mother* had asked if he’d ever let Ilya win after she had found out about them.

And it would only be worse if they were married and the whole world knew.

“You’re right,” Shane said at length, dropping his head onto the pillow with a sigh. “It probably would be easier – still not easy, but *easier* – if we both played for the same team. But I don’t...”

He swallowed. He couldn’t quite say it, but the words hung in the air between them anyway: *I don’t know if I can leave the Voyageurs.*

“Don’t worry too much about this now,” Ilya said, plastering on a reassuring smile that didn’t quite feel real to Shane. “There is still a lot of time until July.”

There was something almost *too* careful about the way he said the words; about the way he didn’t quite meet Shane’s eyes, staring at his freckles instead.

Ilya loved Shane’s freckles, but this wasn’t about that. This was something else, and Shane knew it.

“You know I’m not changing my mind, right?” Shane asked, reaching out to lace his fingers with Ilya’s. “Whether we’re on different teams or on the same team next season, we’re still getting married. And we’re still coming out.”

Every part of Ilya’s body relaxed, like he was letting go of some tension Shane hadn’t even realised he was carrying. For the first time in a long time, it felt like Shane had said exactly the right thing.

“I’m not changing my mind about you,” Shane promised, squeezing Ilya’s hand tightly. “I want to be with you. Forever. And I’m still not quite sure how that’s going to look, but we *will* figure it out.”

“I love you so, so much,” Ilya said, his accent thickening a little in the way it always did when he was feeling particularly emotional.

Shane squeezed his hand again. “I love you, too. And I can't wait for July.”

“Me, too,” Ilya agreed fervently.

“Until then, I guess we'll just keep being less and less careful,” Shane said, and although the idea still fucking terrified him, it was almost starting to feel a little exciting, too.

Ilya gave him the kind of wicked, playful smirk that still made Shane's heart flip, even after all these years. “Oh, we can *definitely* do that.”

Yup. Shane was absolutely terrified, but he was most certainly excited, too.

Shane Hollander ✓

@shanehollanderhockeyplayer

[A photo of Shane at the All-Stars game, posing under a scoreboard that shows his time at the top of the Fastest Skater list.]

Delighted to share that I'm officially this year's fastest All-Star. It's always a pleasure to take part in this weekend.

@ilyarozanov81 ✓ It was basically a tie.

@shanehollanderhockeyplayer ✓ That's not what the scoreboard says! 😏

@24x81 ILYA ROZANOV IN SHANE'S COMMENTS THIS IS NOT A DRILL I REPEAT THIS IS NOT A DRILL

@hannahthecensfan OMFGGGG

@rozanderstan FR! girl WHAT is in the water at the all-star game

@numberoneshanefan this is crazy because Shane almost never comments on anything. and if he does, it's the most polite, boring thing imaginable. (this is not criticism, just fact. i love my polite canadian king.) he also never uses emojis. like never. and now he's chirping rozanov in the replies, WITH A WINKING FACE NO LESS?!!

@hollanovtruther i'm telling you guys... i'm telling you!

@rozrozroz not to be all rpf on main, but uh... has this ever happened before?!

@thehollanovarchives no!! no it has not. ilya has liked shane's posts a couple of times, and they've co-posted for the irina foundation, but they've never left comments on each other's posts before

@rozrozroz 🙄

@justagayhockeygirlie i mean, this probably means nothing, right? we know they're friends, and friends can comment on each other's posts. but god... first the coffee date in ottawa, and now teasing each other in the comments? GIRL.

Ilya Rozanov

@ilyarozanov81 

[A selfie of Ilya with Shane at a hotel bar. Shane is holding an empty shot glass and grimacing, while Ilya is grinning like a maniac.]

He might be faster (this once) but I definitely hold my vodka better.

@hereforhollanov HOLY FUCKING SHIT?!!!

@left_boston_for_ilya um. HI SHANE?!!

@rozanovdefender he's such a menace, lmfao. i love him your honour

@thehollanovarchives NEW 24x81 MILESTONE UNLOCKED: first selfie together

@rozanderstan wait, wouldn't that be the selfies they took at that one gala where they had to present an award together?

@thehollanovarchives tbh i don't think they actually took any photos then. or if they did, they're long deleted. we'll never see them, so i'm counting this as a milestone

@rozanderstan fair enough. HOLY HOLLANOV MILESTONE

@24x81 🙏🙏

@marrymeshane i came here because someone said there was shane content to be found on ilya's acc. i thought HA, there's no way. but uh. i stand corrected. here he is

@shanes-canada-dry HERE HE IS! and looking fucking adorable lmao. i bet he wishes that vodka was anything else 😂😂

@marrymeshane oh for SURE lmao

@hockeybutt well. i had a lot of things on my bingo card for this year, but shane hollander and ilya rozanov hanging out TWICE IN ONE MONTH was not on it

@hollanovtruth may it happen MANY MANY MORE TIMES

Your No.1 Source for All Things Ilya Rozanov

@ilyarozanovupdater

[A shaky, zoomed-in video taken from someone's phone. Ilya and Shane, both wearing hoodies and sweatpants, are walking briskly through an airport, rolling suitcases behind them. Shane points at something ahead of them, and Ilya makes a dramatic gesture with his

hands. Shane shakes his head, although he also appears to be smiling. Hayden is trailing a little behind them, talking on the phone.]

Ilya travelled back from the All-Star Game in a private plane chartered by Shane Hollander. Hayden Pike was also there.

@ilyasrozanova even in peanut quality my boy looks so GOOD

@smileyilya he really does 😭😭

@left_boston_for_ilya “hayden pike was also there” PLEASE – at times like these i’m half convinced that ilya himself runs this account just to drop in random little lines of hayden pike slander like this

@hannahthecensfan LMFAO 💀💀

@hereforhockeychaos why does that unironically sound like something he’d do 💀🤔

@hollanovtruther so they’re taking private planes together now? i’m taking notes... i am SEEING...

@shilyaaaa GAY!!

@shanehollywood Or, you know, it could just be one friend doing another friend a favour.

@rozanovchirps okay!! here’s my best attempt at a lip-reading of Ilya’s conversation with Hollander here (not super confident in this one because the video quality is shit, but i did my best:)

HOLLANDER (pointing): Just up ahead, there.

ILYA (making mocking hand gestures): Mr. Private Plane.

HOLLANDER (shaking his head, but still smiling): Shut up.

PIKE (behind them): I am so sick of this, I can’t even tell you, Jackie –

(Video ends).

@rozanovstyle making fun of your rival while also hitching a ride on his private plane?
peak ilya rozanov

@rozanovlover13 LOL IT REALLY IS

@thehollanovarchives can we pause for a moment on Hayden Pike telling his wife “I am so sick of this” WHILE WATCHING SHANE AND ILYA BICKERING AND TEASING EACH OTHER??!!

@24x81 oh my god. so like... it's basically confirmed that Rozanov and Hollander are the most annoying couple ever and Pike is sick of their shit?

@thehollanovarchives i MEAN...!

@rozanderstan 100% that's canon to me now

@hockeyalphas you're all insane

@hollanovtruthr OR ARE WE???

Chapter End Notes

and there we go - some slight butterfly-wing changes to canon taking place already. bigger things are coming, but all in good time! please do let me know what you thought of the fic so far 

Chapter 2: February

Chapter Notes

a quick little TLG tie-in note: in February in The Long Game, two main plot points take place: Troy Barrett comes out, and Ilya tells Svetlana about his relationship with Shane.

for purposes of the first fic, the first point (Troy's coming out) very much still takes place, but the second does not, because i'm using show-Ilya and Svetlana's relationship, where it's heavily implied that Svetlana knows who "Jane" is in the Heated Rivalry era already. so, Svetlana is not in this chapter... but if you're like me and you love her, fear not, because this is not the last time you'll hear her name ;)

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

Ilya knocked on the door of the social media team's office, smiling to himself as he did.

The door swung open immediately, and Ilya found himself faced with Harris' bright smile. "Troy! You're early today, how can I –"

He trailed off mid-sentence, his eyes widening comically when he realised that it was not, in fact, Troy who had come knocking.

Ilya winked at him, unable to hold back his smile. "Sorry to disappoint."

"No, no!" Harris said, almost tripping over the words in his haste to get them out. "You could never be a disappointment, Ilya. It's great to see you!"

Ilya's grin widened even more. Harris was just impossible to dislike.

"Come in, please!" Harris urged, seeming to realise that he was blocking the door and offering Ilya a wry smile of his own. "What can I do for you?"

Ilya stepped inside, looking around curiously as he did. He had never been into the social media team's office before.

It was fairly small, with two desks on opposite ends of the room, facing each other. One was currently empty except for a coffee mug with a little cartoon camera on it, so that probably belonged to Gen, their team's professional photographer. The other desk was clearly Harris', because it had a large pride flag hanging behind it, several framed family photos and a small bowl of apples in the right corner.

"Um, I'd offer you somewhere to sit, but –" Harris gestured around the room with a rather endearingly helpless shrug.

“It's no problem,” Ilya said reassuringly. “I just have a quick favour to ask you.”

“Me?” Harris asked, looking so completely shocked by this that Ilya had to smile again.

“Yeah, you. If you don't mind?”

“Oh my god, not at all!” Harris said enthusiastically. “C'mon, lay it on me.”

“It's about social media,” Ilya began, and then hesitated for a second, wondering how to phrase this.

Harris nodded encouragingly. “Social media is kinda my specialty, yeah.”

Ilya nodded back, feeling somewhat steadied by Harris' warm enthusiasm and clear willingness to help. “Troy was telling me that you said you would help him make a video. To come out.”

Harris' eyes widened a little, but he nodded.

Ilya took a deep breath, clenching his hands into fists and then actively forcing himself to relax them. As much as he had always longed to tell the world about him and Shane, he also completely understood why Shane was so scared about it. After spending so long hiding, it was fucking *terrifying* to say the words out loud.

But he had said it to a few people already, and that had all gone well. Besides, Harris was gay, and also the nicest person ever, so this should be even easier.

“I was wondering... would you be willing to do the same for me?” Ilya asked. *There.*

Harris' eyes went comically wide, and his jaw actually *dropped*. “For... for you?” he stuttered. “Y-you want a... a coming out video?”

Ilya couldn't help but smile at that. Harris, bless him, had clearly never had to hide a single emotion in his life, and his shocked surprise was written all over his face. He might as well have been holding a sign that said *WAIT WHAT?* over his head.

“Mm, well, not quite the same kind of video as Troy's, I think,” Ilya said. “You see, I am... I am dating someone.”

Harris' eyes went huge all over again. “You *are*? But —”

“But you have always heard that I am a — what is that word for someone who sleeps with many, many women and moves on fast?”

“A playboy?” Harris provided, and then immediately went bright red. “That is, I mean, I don't actually think you are one, it's just, you know, the media about you is always —”

“Mm, I do like women,” Ilya said with a casual shrug, because it was true. “But I have never said that I am straight. This is something that the world assumed. But that does not make it true.”

Harris nodded so fast that Ilya half-worried his head would come off. “Of course! Of course, and I'm so sorry that I assumed too. I should have known better, and I –”

“No, no, you do not need to apologise,” Ilya assured him. “I have been hiding this for a long time.”

Harris tipped his head to the side, studying Ilya with surprisingly perceptive eyes. “Is it because of Russia? I'm guessing your partner is a man, then?”

“Yes. That. But we have also been hiding because... the man I am dating will be quite a shock to the world.”

Harris leaned forward over his desk, his eyes bright with curiosity. “Is he someone famous?” he asked eagerly.

Suddenly enjoying himself immensely, Ilya pretended to think about it. “Mm, you could say so. *He* definitely thinks so.”

“Do I know him?”

“Well, you haven't *met* him,” Ilya hedged. Then he stopped to think about it. “Well, actually, maybe you have. From a distance, anyway.”

Harris' jaw dropped. “Ilya!”

“Harris,” Ilya replied teasingly.

“Who's your mystery man?” Harris asked, practically vibrating with excitement. “Please, you can tell me. Actually, no, you *have* to tell me, if I'm going to be making your coming out video.”

“Maybe you should ask your boyfriend,” Ilya said innocently.

“*Troy knows?!*”

“He guessed,” Ilya said, which was true. Ilya hadn't confirmed it yet, because at that point, he and Shane hadn't yet made the decision to come out this summer. He was pretty sure that Troy knew anyway.

“But he hasn't said a word!” Harris gasped. Then sighed almost immediately after. “Well, yeah, of course he wouldn't. I guess he would know what it's like to date someone famous, and all the secrecy surrounding that.”

Now *that* was interesting. Ilya filed that little tidbit away to think about later.

“*Anyway,*” Harris said, giving himself a little shake. “Okay, so you're dating someone famous. Someone who will shock the world, too. God, I am *so* curious, but okay. I can be a professional about this. Since everyone thinks you're straight – sorry again about that, by the way, you're right that I never should have assumed – and since the man you're dating is

famous too, maybe it'd be a good idea to get in touch with his social media team and do some soft launching before you post your coming-out-slash-relationship-reveal video.”

“Soft launching?” Ilya echoed. “What is this?”

“Oh!” Harris exclaimed, looking genuinely excited to be explaining this. “It's a social media thing. It's when you, like, drop little hints that you're in a relationship. You post small things like... maybe a photo of a table with two plates and candles, very romantic, but you don't include any faces or anything. You don't confirm anything yet. That way, you get to tell your followers that you're in a relationship and let them get used to the idea before you reveal who it is.”

“That is perfect,” Ilya said immediately, with an approving nod. “We have started doing this already, I think, but if you could help us do it even better, that would be great.”

“You've started doing it already?!” Harris gasped, once again looking like he might explode with excitement. “Ilya!”

He pulled out his phone immediately, swiping over to Instagram and opening Ilya's profile in a series of quick, practiced taps. Ilya didn't have to look over his shoulder to know what he would see – the seemingly random collection of photos: the foosball table, the exercise ball, the puzzle, and the plastic rings. And, of course, the most recent one, which was a selfie of him and Shane.

It was, Ilya had to admit, not very clear that he was doing any soft-launching. But, to be fair, they had only just decided to start being less careful, so there hadn't been much time to make the romantic hint posts that Harris had mentioned.

Not yet, anyway. Ilya was planning to change that, now that Harris had given him the idea.

Harris was far too perceptive and far too good at social media, because after frowning for a moment, he immediately zoomed in on the photo of the two plastic rings. “Ilya!!” he whisper-yelled. “Are you *engaged?!?*”

Ilya couldn't stop the smile that spread across his face, or the way he instinctively reached up to touch Shane's ring, nestled comfortably next to his mother's cross on his necklace.

Harris covered his mouth with both hands, practically vibrating with excitement. “Oh my god, you *are*. You're engaged. Oh my god! Congratulations!”

He was so genuinely delighted for Ilya – such simple, uncomplicated joy for him, for *them* – that it hurt Ilya's heart a little.

Nobody had ever been this genuinely happy, with no conditions, for Ilya and Shane before. And, sure, that was probably because Harris didn't know who exactly Ilya was marrying, because God knew that that made things complicated, but still.

Still. Harris was so *happy* for Ilya, and it made Ilya want to hug him and cry at the same time.

He didn't do either, instead opting just to smile at Harris and reach over to nudge his shoulder gently. "Thank you."

"Of course!" Harris said, still beaming. "This is fantastic news. *Wow*. Ilya Rozanov, engaged! That's going to shock hockey fans even before they find out that it's to a man. And a *famous* man at that. God, Roz, you don't do anything halfway, do you?"

"Of course not," Ilya said with a cheeky wink, happy to return to playful territory. "I always want to win."

"Well, then you came to the right team," Harris said dryly.

Ilya wagged a finger at him. "Hey, we're on a winning streak at the moment! And I plan to keep it going all the way to the playoffs."

"That's the spirit!" Harris agreed enthusiastically. Then he seemed to realise something, and his eyes widened once again. "Wait... Troy told me that last month, you came to practice one day and gave a *hell* of a speech. Got everyone fired up, and started the winning streak. Was that after you got engaged?!"

"Maybe," Ilya said coyly, though he was sure his unstoppable smile said it all.

"Oh my God," Harris said, shaking his head with a small smile. "I really *never* would have guessed."

"Mm, speaking of that... are you any closer to figuring out who I'm engaged to yet?" Ilya asked innocently.

Harris squinted at him. "You're enjoying this, aren't you?"

"Maybe," Ilya said with a coy smile that Harris most definitely saw through. But it was true – Ilya really was enjoying this. Despite his initial nervousness, it felt really good to tell someone from his team, someone who he liked, about the man he loved.

Also, Harris' comically shocked expressions were *very* funny, and Ilya would never pass up the opportunity to tease someone.

That was why he shook his head mock-sadly, sighing dramatically. "Ah, Harris. But the answer is right in front of you!"

"What do you mean the answer is right in front of me? There are just a bunch of random pictures, and then a selfie of you and—" Harris began, and then suddenly cut himself off mid-sentence and practically launched himself across the table to grab Ilya's arm. "Wait. *Wait*."

"I am waiting," Ilya said with another too-innocent smile.

"Is it... are you engaged to..." Harris paused to glance quickly around the office, before finishing his sentence in a frantic whisper. "*Shane Hollander?*"

Ilya opened his arms and inclined his head in a theatric little bow. "You got me."

“Holy shit, ” Harris whisper-yelled. “Oh my God. Wait, so *that's* why you were always so mysterious about your private life. You know, I don't think *any* of the guys would've guessed this. I mean, *Roz has a secret girlfriend* was a popular theory for why you always disappeared on days off, but nobody ever thought it could be Shane Hollander.”

One detail in particular from that little speech had caught Ilya's attention. “The guys made theories about why I am always busy on off days?”

“I mean, yeah,” Harris said with a wry grin. “Have you *met* this team?”

Ilya had to smile at that. “Fair enough.”

Harris smiled back, though there was still a large amount of shock behind it. “This is insane,” he said, shaking his head slowly. “But at the same time, it actually makes so much sense? What the heck. Shane *Hollander*.”

“Shane Hollander,” Ilya agreed, but where Harris had said the name like it was the shock of the century, Ilya said it like the syllables of Shane's name were made to fit perfectly in his mouth. Like Shane was *his*, and always had been.

And Harris heard it, he must have, because his expression suddenly went very soft. “You really love him, huh?” he asked.

“I do,” Ilya replied simply. Honestly.

Harris nodded once, his expression somehow both soft and determined. “Then I'm going to help you two make the *best* coming out video. Well, the best after Troy's, of course.”

“Of course,” Ilya agreed with a smirk. “There have to be *some* perks for dating the social media guy, yes?”

Just in time to hear that sentence, Troy poked his head in through the door. He raised his eyebrows at Ilya. “Whoa. Are you here to steal my boyfriend?”

He was smiling as he said it, obviously joking and not concerned in the slightest, but still.

“No,” Ilya said decisively. “I've got my own.”

The look Troy shot him contained equal parts surprise and warmth. “Oh?” he asked, beginning to smile, just slightly. Troy smiling was a rare thing, and it almost always looked painfully fake – but *this* smile was wholly real.

“Yes,” Ilya said, and smiled back at him. And then, because he just *had* to stir things up a little, he added, “By the way, good guesswork, Barrett. Harris could not *believe* when I told him that you knew about me and Shane and didn't tell him.”

“Oh my god,” Troy said, halfway between a groan and a laugh.

Ilya winked at him, grinning even wider. “Have fun sleeping on the couch tonight. *I* will be going to text Shane about this soft launching thing Harris has told me about. It is Valentine's

Day soon, yes?"

Troy turned to his boyfriend, arching his eyebrows. "Soft launching? Oh, man. What have you started?"

Harris just beamed at him. "Something great, I hope."

hockey boys and flower girls 🌸🏒
@florenceeee_81

guys. GUYS. you are not going to BELIEVE who just visited my gf's store??!! (for context, my gf is a florist in downtown ottawa. she's not a sports fan at ALL, but obvs she knows i'm insane about hockey, so she's like, peripherally aware of the main names & faces.) anyway. so she texts me this morning being like "haha so one of your hockey guys was just in my store buying a massive bouquet of flowers" (1/2)

AND GUYS. it was ILYA ROZANOV. ilya fucking rozanov was in my girlfriend's store, buying flowers. the day before valentine's day. and get this. apparently he SPECIFICALLY ASKED about flower meanings, and he wanted the bouquet to say "i love you." oh my GOD?!!! (2/2)

@rozanovlover13 some girl is about to have the best valentine's day of her LIFE 😭

@florenceeee_81 RIGHTTTT

@hollanovtruther it's not necessarily a girl, though... hear me out...

@left_boston_for_ilya babe, i love you, but there is simply no way that ilya rozanov was buying those flowers for shane hollander

@ilya_rozanov_i_would_have_your_babies so what i'm hearing is that ilya rozanov is now officially off the market? 💔

@81forever i mean, a bouquet that specifically says "i love you?" it definitely sounds that way... 🙄 and ngl i'm really happy for him. he's seemed very down lately. hopefully he has a great vday <3

@wyatthayesgoalie ✅ oh i KNEW he had a secret girlfriend hidden away somewhere! i knew it. pay up **@zane_bood**

@centaur_ilya_forever WYATT?? HELLO?? ariana what are you doing here 😭

@zane_bood ✅ THIS PROVES NOTHING

@censfanmaria god i love this team 😭

@ottawatheart hey op! as someone who's lowkey obsessed with flower language, would you mind asking your gf what exactly the bouquet contained? i would LOVE to

know

@mapleblossoms hey friend! this is florence's gf 🌸👉. the bouquet i made for mr rozanov had the following flowers (and i've added their meanings for everyone who may want to know:)

- red freesia (passion, deep love)
- baby's breath (everlasting love)
- white trillium flowers (he requested these specifically. he did not say why. it is worth noting that this is the official flower of ontario.)
- maidenhair fern (luck & secret love)

(for some reason, he did not want to include any roses.)

@ottawatheart omg you are the BEST, thank you so much!! and what a bouquet, wow

@smileyilya oh i am SOBBING. deep love?? everlasting love?? SECRET LOVE?? oh, ilya...

@hollanovtruther flowers symbolising secret love... THE OFFICIAL FLOWER OF ONTARIO AKA SHANE'S HOME STATE... do you see what i'm saying??

@justagayhockeygirlie i mean, realistically, there is no WAY, lol. but also... 🙄🙄🙄

@rozanderstan okay but hear me out... no roses in the bouquet... who is shane hollander's most famous ex? that's right. ROSE landry.

@roselandryrules DONT BRING MY GIRL INTO THIS!

@24x81 i mean... they're kinda onto something here... no roses is a VERY specific (and unusual!) request

@rozrozroz not gonna lie... i'm like 🙄🙄

Ilya Rozanov ✓

@ilyarozanov81

[A photo of Ilya and another person, whose face and upper body is completely hidden behind a huge bouquet of flowers – a tasteful assortment of red freesias, white baby's breath, white trillium, and green maidenhair fern. Ilya is kissing the other person on the cheek.]

@rozanovstyle what in the soft launch is this 🙄🙄

@wyatthayesgoalie ✓ is THIS enough proof for you **@zane_bood**?

@zane_bood ✓ ... fuck.

@wyatthayesgoalie ✓✓ PAY UP!!!

@therealevandykstra ✓ next bet: Roz's girl is someone insanely famous and that's why he's never introduced her to anyone

@troybarrett17 ✓ Yeah, OK, I'll take that bet. 😊

@hannahthecensfan i am obsessed with whatever is wrong with this team 😭😭😭🔪

@inlovewithrozanov can we talk about the SIZE of that bouquet though? and the fact that it was clearly custom? i always knew that he'd be the best boyfriend 😭😭

@rozanovdefender omg RIGHT!! i always told everyone that i bet once roz falls in love, he'll be in Love love, no expense spared

@81forever 10000%!

@shilyaaaa am i the only one who thinks that the person holding a bouquet kinda... looks like a man? and i don't even think i'm being delusional here! like, YEAH, we can't see the face or upper body at all, but the hands on the bouquet? they *really* look like a man's hands

@hollanovtruthr oh bestie you are SO not the only one who sees this!! i am low-key losing my mind

@hockeyalphas That is the single dumbest thing I have ever heard. There's no way you can tell if it's a man or a woman just from zooming in on their hands holding a bouquet. Flowers are a girl thing anyway. And Rozanov is definitely not gay.

@captainamericascott People like you are why hockey social media sucks ASS. Why exactly can't Ilya Rozanov be gay, huh? Or maybe bi? It wouldn't stop him from being a damn good hockey player

@rozanovdefender PREACH

@ilya_rozanov_i_would_have_your_babies whoever she (or he? 🤔😊) is, i just hope she knows how DAMN LUCKY she is

Shane Hollander ✓

@shanehollanderhockeyplayer

[A photo of a dinner table covered in small electric candles. There are two places set, one with a can of ginger ale beside it and one with a shot glass of clear, chilled liquid, a small piece of dark, dense bread next to it. On a bookshelf behind the table, a bouquet of red and white flowers in a vase is just visible in the corner of the shot.]

Feeling very lucky this Valentine's Day ❤️

@whorefortwentyfour SHANE?? IS THIS A SOFT LAUNCH??

@numberoneshanefan OMFG?!!!

@roselandryofficial ✅ So romantic!! I love you both so much ❤️

@roselandryrules OMG QUEEN!!

@hollanderose I don't know if I'm more heartbroken that #hollandry are definitely not back together, or if I find it really cute that Rose apparently knows and loves Shane's new partner...

@shanezone the second one!! they are SUCH cute besties <3

@shanehollandersource Milestone alert! This is the first time in his professional career that Shane has posted a non-sponsored, personal picture that doesn't include either his family or teammates.

@24forlife WAIT WHAT... are you for real??

@hollandrybaby i went "no fucking way, he HAD to have posted Rose at some point" and to prove it, i scrolled through his page up till fucking 2016. and guys.... it's true 🧠 the ONLY personal photos on this man's entire page are of him spending holidays with his parents and/or him babysitting hayden pike's children. i don't know why i'm this shocked 😊 i mean, #hollandry lasted like 2 months total. but still!

@mtlhockeybabe imagine getting something even Rose Landry couldn't get from this man 😭 whoever his new girl is, she's Special special

@gayshanehollander oh my god... are we finally going to get Confirmation ™?

@princeofhockeyhollander wait, sorry, i'm a bit lost... confirmation of what now?

@justagayhockeygirlie bestie look at op's username. you've heard the rumours, right? he means confirmation that shane is team 🏳️‍🌈

@princeofhockeyhollander oh. OHHHH! oh 🧐 good for him!

@thehollanovarchives guys. GUYS. I JUST NOTICED SOMETHING AND HOLY FUCK IT IS *LIFE CHANGING.* 🧠🌸 Look on Shane's bookshelf... That bouquet. Does it seem familiar to you?

@24x81 wait... WAIT 🧠

@rozrozroz holy shit, I kinda... see it? i can't even believe it, but that bouquet low-key looks REALLY similar to Roz's custom one 🧐🧐🧐

@florenceeee_81 um. holy shit. so i went and asked my gf (florist who made ilya's bouquet) if it could be the same one, and she said that the photo is too blurry to be sure, but it's possible. and i'm like. OH MY FUCKING GOD????

@hollanovtruther it's happening, omg, it's actually happening??

@voyageurs_are_king god you are all so unbearably delusional

@justagayhockeygirlie I mean, yeah, but at the same time, the coincidences are PILING UP. what is going on 🙄🙄🙄

NHL WAG Watch

@wagsofthenhl

Long-time rivals Ilya Rozanov and Shane Hollander both seem to be soft-launching WAGs this Valentine's day! 💕💕

Ilya Rozanov posted a photo of himself kissing a mysterious woman's cheek as she holds a huge bouquet – which he apparently custom-ordered in Ottawa yesterday! Swoon! 🌸

Meanwhile, Shane Hollander was a little more cryptic, but no less romantic: he posted a candid shot of a candlelit dinner for two, with the caption “feeling very lucky this Valentine's Day.” ❤️

@goalsandgirlfriends lol somehow i doubt that Shane Hollander has a WAG...

@gayshanehollander a HAB though? 🙄 **@the_nhl_has_habs_now**

@the_nhl_has_habs_now god this would be the best thing to happen this year. the only official NHL HAB is still Kip Grady, and iconic as he is, i would fucking LOVE to be able to post someone else too!!

@hockeyplayboyz Rozanov AND Hollander off the market... puck bunnies everywhere just fell to their knees

@inlovewithrozanov the sexist undertones are strong with this one, huh

@marrymeshane RIGHT?! these hockey bros are always so shady about women when we all know they're even more insane about their favourite players. just because we sometimes daydream about having sex with them *as well as* admire their playing doesn't make us lesser fans or anything

@justagayhockeygirlie i mean, the hockey bros could totally daydream about having sex with their favourite players too... maybe it would fix them

@rozanovlover13 lol SO TRUE

@shaydenisreal 🙄🙄🙄

@goalsandgirlfriends NOPE. GO HOME. hayden pike already posted his own valentine's day photos – WITH HIS WIFE. shane might be gay but he's NOT gay for hayden pike

@sarcasticshanestan help lmao people ship shane with HAYDEN?? never have i ever seen a straighter man than hayden “each time i look at my wife we have another kid” pike 🤪🙄 i love the guy but WOW. there is simply no way

@rozanovdefender BOYFRIEND ERA INCOMING! god i can't wait to see this side of ilya 😊

@centaur_ilya_forever RIGHT?!! i'm sure he's going to be such a good boyfriend 😊

@censfanmaria 1000000%. loverboy CONFIRMED

@numberoneshanefan i for one can't wait to see shane in a happy relationship again... our boy works too hard!

@shanezone couldn't agree more!! whoever his partner is, i hope they make him really happy <3

izzy | this year is our year FOR REAL GUYS 🏆
@longsufferingcentaursfan

so uh. i was on my morning run and i just saw SHANE FUCKING HOLLANDER?? in a random suburb in ottawa??? what the heck????

@hannahthecensfan NO WAY LMFAO

@hereforhockeychaos “what da hell is a polar bear doing in arlington texas” except the polar bear is the captain of the Montreal Voyageurs

@left_boston_for_ilya no but seriously... WHAT is shane hollander doing here?

@longsufferingcentaursfan idk he seemed to be doing a morning run too 😭

@justagayhockeygirlie Shane Hollander doing a morning run = perhaps the least surprising information ever. Shane Hollander doing a morning run IN OTTAWA, THE DAY AFTER VALENTINE'S DAY... 🙄🙄🙄

@censfanmaria HOLY SHIT YOURE RIGHT, I DIDN'T EVEN THINK OF THAT

@longsufferingcentaursfan NEITHER DID I OMG! so uh... is this official confirmation that Shane spent Valentine's Day in Ottawa? Shane fans?? 🙄

@numberoneshanefan i mean... that does seem to be the only logical conclusion? Ottawa & Montreal are 2 hours apart. why the heck would he wake up super early in Montreal and drive to Ottawa of all places just to do a morning run? nah, he had to have stayed in Ottawa last night. and since we know he was having a Valentine's Day dinner with someone last night... 🙄

@shane_wrist_shot oh my god, do NOT let the RPFers see this

@hollanovtruther TOO LATE *rubs hands together gleefully* HOLLANOV SPENT VALENTINE'S DAY TOGETHER, I AM TELLING YOU ALL

@24x81 oh my god oh my god oh my god!! this CANNOT be a coincidence. first the bouquet and now this... guys i am actually starting to believe™

@rozrozroz why is it that each time i open this app, i find another increasingly suspicious circumstance that COULD prove that hollanov is somehow a thing, but could also be a complete coincidence? am i going crazy or are the RPFers lowkey onto something? what is going ONNNN

@gayshanehollander i have no idea but i am kinda obsessed with it

@rozrozroz SAMEEE

“One more question, Shane,” a reporter called just as Shane had thought the post-game interviews were over. “Troy Barrett just came out a few days ago. What are your thoughts about that?”

His heart suddenly hammering, Shane arched his eyebrows. To buy himself some time, he said, “That’s a strange question.”

The reporter started stuttering awkwardly. “I mean, I – that is, we – just wondering if –”

Shane fixed his eyes on the wall just above the reporter’s shoulder and let him dig his own hole.

Unfortunately, another reporter chipped in. “We noticed that you haven’t said anything on social media yet. We just wanted to know if you have any thoughts to share? Sympathies, maybe?”

And suddenly, Shane understood exactly what was happening here. This reporter was fishing for confirmation of the *Shane Hollander is gay* rumour that everyone in the NHL had heard by now, and which was making the rounds once again because of his most recent post on his social media.

Shane would be disgusted if he wasn’t already uncomfortably used to the media’s pointed questions, digging into any and every part of his personal life to try and find a scandal to tarnish his image. It felt like they always demanded that he be the picture-perfect role model, but at the same time, they were constantly salivating for a chance to tear him down and prove he *wasn’t* perfect.

It was shitty, but it had always been a part of Shane’s reality. And he knew it would keep being a part of his reality no matter how much the NHL proclaimed *hockey is for everyone* – there would always be people who thought they had the right to treat Shane differently simply because he looked different than the majority of the league.

Well. Shane couldn’t change that, but he wasn’t going to give them what they wanted, either. He’d gotten good at that, over the years.

“I haven't said anything on social media because I've been very busy with my own season, and because I have never been the most active on social media,” Shane said calmly. A much calmer answer than the question merited, honestly.

“I have nothing but good wishes for Troy,” he continued. “As you know, I have always been a strong supporter of inclusivity in hockey. The charity camps that Ilya – Rozanov – and I run have always prioritised equality and access to hockey for everyone. If you're interested in finding out more, we have plenty of details about our inclusivity initiatives on the Irina Foundation's website.”

Shane swore he could see a vein popping in the reporter's forehead at having his search for a headline so neatly deflected.

“Very admirable,” the reporter gritted out.

“Thank you,” Shane said with a bland smile that he knew would irritate the man even more. “Remember, the Irina Foundation's website is www.irinafoundation.com. We are always grateful for any and all donations you feel you can make. Please include that in your article.”

Shane offered them all a final superficial smile, before turning around and leaving the room.

His parents were waiting for him just outside the locker room, both of them wearing *Hollander 24* jerseys and bright smiles.

“Shane, honey! Well done on the game – that goal in the third period was an absolute beauty,” his mom gushed, going straight to hockey as per usual. “Although you really should reconsider your power play lines. That Latimer kid cost you a goal when he – wait, sweetheart, are you alright? You look tired.”

“I'm fine,” Shane said, although he couldn't quite keep back a small sigh. “The reporters were just being... exhausting.” *Unfair*, he didn't say, because his mother already knew.

His dad put his hand on Shane's shoulder, quietly comforting. Shane hated how the silent show of support suddenly made his eyes prickle.

“Sometimes when they're like this, it makes me wonder if we're doing the right thing,” he blurted out. “Me and Ilya, I mean. Planning to come out.”

His mom inhaled sharply, preparing to say something, but Shane barrelled on before she could. “It's not that I don't want this. It's *not*. I do want it, and I can't wait to finally tell everyone how much I love him. But it's just...”

He trailed off, shaking his head as he struggled to find the right words. “It's going to be yet *another* thing that makes me different from everyone else,” Shane said at last, and the bitterness in his own voice took him by surprise. “Something else about me that they can pick apart and use as proof that I'm not perfect after all. Which is so fucking unfair, by the way, because I never *asked* to be anyone's perfect role model. But the second I'm not, I'm criticised so much more harshly than pretty much anyone else in the league.”

“Shane...” his mom began.

“I know, Mom. I *know*, okay?” he said, cutting her off before she could say anything more. “I just... need to let it out for a second.”

His dad’s hand was still on Shane’s shoulder, and he squeezed gently. “Go on,” he said softly.

Shane knew, on a practical level, that he didn’t need permission for any of this, but having it nonetheless took a weight off his shoulders and somehow helped the words come a little easier.

“It’s different for Ilya,” he said, hating himself a little even as the words left his mouth. “I’m not saying that it’s easy for him – I know how many sacrifices he’s made for me. Believe me, I’ve felt like a terrible boyfriend for *weeks* because I took for granted just how much he gave up for me.”

Shane shook his head sharply. “But this is different. It’s different for him. He’s still... well, he’s *white*. And he can get away with pretty much anything, right? Everyone loves him, even when they think he’s an asshole. No-one will think *he’s* any less of a man or whatever the fuck they’ll say to me. And they *will* say it, because God knows they’ve never been scared to say whatever the fuck they want to about me. And this – coming out – it’s going to make everything so much worse. It’s going to give them so much more shit to throw at me.”

Shane’s voice was shockingly bitter again, even to his own ears, and so he hastened to add, “None of that is Ilya’s fault, of course. And I *do* still want to come out. But I wish...”

He shook his head again. “It doesn’t matter. I know I can’t change it. But I’ve been thinking about this a lot, you know? Ilya and I talked a bit about what it’ll be like when we come out, and he said it might be easier if we played for the same team.”

His mom, who had been surprisingly quiet up until that point, drew in a sharp breath.

“I know. I don’t want to leave the Voyageurs. I *don’t*,” Shane said, suddenly aware that he had clenched his hands into fists and his nails were biting into his palms. “But I’m wondering if I might have to anyway.”

“*What?!*” his mom gasped, loud enough that several people on the other side of the parking lot sent them curious looks.

Shane waved them away with a tight smile, and made a beeline for his car, his parents trailing behind him. “I don’t want to leave,” he repeated. “But Mom... the most popular insult in this team is *cocksucker*. Most of the guys are completely comfortable throwing the word *faggot* around. And if that’s not enough, some of the guys still won’t look me in the eye just because I told them I’m gay. Now *imagine* what’ll happen when I tell them I’m not only gay, but married to Ilya Rozanov?”

Even in the semi-darkness of the parking lot, Shane could read the conflict on his mom’s face. This was her favourite team in her favourite sport, and Shane knew how much it meant to her that he played for them, but...

“Do you think it'll be easier in Ottawa?” she asked at last, her voice so soft that Shane could barely hear her.

Shane bit his lip. “I'm... I don't know. Maybe?” He hated how unsure he sounded, so he added, “Ilya is always talking about how it's a much better organisation. Much more accepting. And Troy is living proof of that, I guess. The whole team has had his back, so...”

“So,” his mom repeated, sounding more than a little dazed.

“It's a lot to think about,” his dad put in, his voice gentle.

Shane nodded, then shook his head firmly. “I mean, yeah, it *is* a lot to think about. But I'm not changing my mind. I'm still going to do this. It's not going to be easy, though, and it scares the *hell* out of me.”

His dad nods slowly, and then to Shane's surprise, he puts a hand on his shoulder again and gives Shane a very serious look. “You're right about that. But, Shane, you need to *talk* to Ilya about this.”

Shane opened his mouth to say that they *had* been talking, but his dad held up a hand.

“It sounds to me like the two of you have both been avoiding difficult topics,” he said. “You didn't realise at first how much Ilya sacrificed for you. And speaking as a white man myself, I can tell you that *he* probably doesn't realise all the ways that this is different for you, and uniquely difficult for you. That's why you need to *tell* each other these things.”

His dad's voice turned very gentle as he concluded, “That's what marriage *is*. Talking about the hard stuff even when you'd rather avoid it. Being there for each other through everything.”

There was a lump in Shane's throat all of a sudden, and his eyes stung with the beginning of tears. Shane thinks he might even hear his mom sniffle once, too.

“I'll try,” Shane whispered.

His dad pulled him into a tight hug. “That's all you can do.”

Ilya Rozanov 
@ilyarozanov81

[A photo of Ilya from the chest down, sitting on a couch in a cozy-looking black hoodie and sweatpants. Someone has their legs in his lap. Ilya's hand is resting on the person's knee.]

Couch talks 

@inlovewithrozanov oh the soft launch is LAUNCHING!

@goalsandgirlfriends !!!! can't wait for the reveal

@hardforhockey god i just KNOW that the chick who finally locked down *ilya fucking rozanov* has to be SUCH a babe

@goalsandgirlfriends hockey bros try to be normal about women challenge: failed yet again

@left_boston_for_ilya i mean, yikes, but also, why does he kind of have a point... i would also bet anything that roz's gf is absolutely STUNNING. my bisexual ass will *not* survive seeing how hot they are together!!

@rozanderstan can we just take a moment to appreciate that nowhere in this entire soft launch process has Ilya Rozanov actually confirmed the gender of his partner...

@rozrozroz 🙄 you know, you have a point...

@hockeyalphas No, they don't. What the fuck? It's Ilya Rozanov. Obviously it's a woman, he doesn't need to say it because it's so obvious.

@24x81 It's not obvious though? Ilya Rozanov has actually never publicly talked about his sexuality. Yeah, he's been seen with women, but that doesn't mean he can't be bi or pan...

@rozanovlover13 that caption though?? OH MY GOD?? i bet he's so SOFT with her 🙄🙄

@centaur_ilya_forever omg you're going to make me cry. i bet he IS 😭😭

@ilya_rozanov_i_would_have_your_babies i'm just saying, if it doesn't work out with this person, i'll still be available

@81forever bestie i love the enthusiasm, but i won't lie... this relationship looks serious serious

@rozanovdefender it really does... and you know what, good for him!

Shane Hollander ✓

@shanehollanderhockeyplayer

[A selfie of Shane in checkered pajamas, his head on another person's shoulder. The person's face is carefully cropped out, and most of their body is out of frame, but they are clearly wearing a black hoodie.]

@shanezone oh my god 😭😭 Shane looks so COZY, i can't!!

@whorefortwentyfour RIGHT I'M ON MY KNEES

@marrymeshane this is the most boyfriend he's EVER looked and i'm in shambles

@gayshanehollander okay. OKAY. call me crazy if you must, but i have to say it: shane's partner here truly does NOT look like a woman

@sarcasticshane i would love to agree, but come on... we can barely even see the other person. just a bit of an oversized black hoodie. i'm afraid to say it could be literally anyone

@hollanovtruther 🚨🚨 BLACK HOODIE 🚨🚨 BLACK HOODIE 🚨🚨 everyone, Shane's partner is wearing a BLACK HOODIE

@voyageurs_are_king right... and what's so special about a black hoodie?

@hollanovtruther who ELSE was wearing a black hoodie recently? in a very similar soft launch post, no less? ILYA ROZANOV, THAT'S WHO!! hollanov is real and this is PROOF

@voyageurs_are_king come on, hundreds of people around the world own black hoodies 😭

@shanezone yeah, it is literally like one of THE most generic pieces of clothing. this proves absolutely nothing, sorry babe

@shaydenisreal You know who else owns a black hoodie? Hayden Pike.

@princeofhockeyhollander Hayden Pike is also married?? To a WOMAN??

@justagayhockeygirlie oh babe, don't even TRY... if you think the hollanov crowd is intense, you do *not* want to meet the shayden stans. they're convinced that jackie is a beard and the kids are all dolls... yeah. DOLLS.

@princeofhockeyhollander QUEEN JACKIE?!! *DOLLS?!* what even 😭😭 tbh hollanov is much more believable...

@justagayhockeygirlie i mean... you're not wrong 🙄

@kirstenloveshockeyandjames my heart 😭 the vibes of this are so TENDER. not to be too parasocial, but it kinda feels exactly like the way i always lie on my husband's shoulder to recentre after a difficult conversation. *i know* realistically, that's probably not what happened here, but it's true in my heart, okay?

@24x81 okay but THIS?? this comment RIGHT AFTER ilya posted a picture of himself wearing a black hoodie (!) WITH THE CAPTION "COUCH TALKS" oh my god?!!!!

@justagayhockeygirlie ... oh my god. I hate to say it, but, oh my god. What if you're onto something here?! I swear the couch looks VERY similar too

@voyageurs_are_king FOR FUCKS SAKE, COUCHES DONT PROVE ANYTHING EITHER

@24x81 but what if they do, Steven? what if they do?

Zoé Marie Lévesque 🍒

@merci_zoe

HELLO #MTL HOCKEY FANS (who am i kidding that's everyone in this damn city) i HAVE A *HUGE* UPDATE FOR YOU (1/6)

so. i work at this restaurant called Venice MTL, and guess who walked in for dinner tonight? you'll never guess, so i'll go ahead and tell you. Shane Hollander and his parents... WITH ILYA FUCKING ROZANOV (2/6)

no i'm not kidding. the Hollanders and *Rozanov.* (i wish i could have taken a photo, but i wasn't going to be That Person. especially not as their waitress. and yes, before you ask, they're not at the restaurant anymore. i'm posting this from HOME, after my shift.) anyways. (3/6)

THE HOLLANDERS AND ROZANOV. they came in together, sat together for the whole meal, and left together. they were also chatting and laughing nonstop, and they all - yeah, *all* - seem to get along really well. like really well. (4/6)

Rozanov was full of jokes, and from the few snippets i overheard, he seemed to be chirping and teasing Shane a lot. but get this. neither Shane nor his parents seemed to mind - they were all laughing, actually, and i swear Shane straight up BLUSHED one time. this is going to sound crazy, but i kinda got a bit of a vibe from them?? as in, they seemed really close... (5/6)

ANYWAYS. craziest slash best evening of my life, and i'm going to end it off by saying that Shane and Rozanov are both somehow even better looking in person. they're so damn fine. and somehow even hotter when they're next to each other?! yeah. i'm never getting over this night. (6/6)

@shanes-canada-dry OH MY GOD?!!!

@shanezone i've just started to wrap my mind around the idea that shane genuinely gets along with and likes spending time with rozanov... and now THIS?? not only are they friends, but they're good enough friends that shane invites him along to DINNER WITH HIS PARENTS, and more than that, SHANE'S PARENTS SEEM TO LOVE HIM??? guys what universe are we in?!!!

@rozrozroz girl... two months ago, i would NEVER have believed you if you told me this exact same story. but now i'm nodding along and adding another note to my "maybe the RPFers have a point" list 🤔

@shanezone ... i hate to say it, but i might need to start doing the same

@hollanovtruthther YOU SEE! YOU SEE!

@ilya_rozanog_i_would_have_your_babies Ilya being even hotter in person... i know that's RIGHT

@gayshanehollander Shane too!! 😊

@horny4hockeyboyz it doesn't have to be a competition... they can both be hot AF 😊

@hannahthecensfan SO TRUE

@rozanderstan CAN WE TALK ABOUT THE WAY ILYA WAS APPARENTLY MAKING SHANE LAUGH AND BLUSH?!! holy shit guys!!!!!!

@hollanovtruthr RIGHT?!! also the fact that the waitress said she “got a bit of a vibe from them...” Ms Zoe Lévesque i am in your WALLS. tell us more!!!! tell us EVERYTHING!!!

@thehollanovarchives also very significant to me that Ilya must have driven two hours *after* playing an afternoon game just to meet Shane Hollander and his parents for dinner?

@hollanovtruthr i didn't realise that before but HOLY SHIT, YOU ARE SO RIGHT. The Cens played Detroit at home today, AND it went to OT. My man must have showered and SPRINTED to the car to make it here in time for dinner with the Hollanders. oh i am SICK

@shilyaaaa LITERALLY INSANE BEHAVIOUR!! I am screaming omg

@justagayhockeygirlie listen. LISTEN. i don't normally go here. i don't rpf!!! but i can't even lie... each time i see a post about them, i become more and more convinced that Something Is Going On

@centaur_ilya_forever real

@24forlife hey **@merci_zoe**, if you wouldn't mind, I'm really curious about what they all ordered? 🙄🙄🙄

@rozanovstyle can't believe I'm agreeing with a Hollander fan, but actually I'd love to know too **@merci_zoe**

@hereforhockeychaos ME TOO! I bet the contrast between Roz and Hollzy's dinners will be HILARIOUS lol

@rozanovstyle LMAO YOU ARE SO RIGHT. who wants to bet that it'll be 3 leaves of salad for Hollander vs a massive cheeseburger for Roz? 🤔🤔

@24forlife lmao I love my man, but I am so not taking that bet 🤔

@merci_zoe okay you freaks, here's what they ordered:

- Ilya Rozanov: a cheeseburger with sweet potato fries (he wanted regular fries but Shane made him get the sweet potato ones LOL) and a double chocolate brownie for dessert.
- Shane Hollander: a salmon poke bowl, but he substituted the rice for kale, and added

extra raw salmon. He didn't have dessert. (So I guess I can confirm that the rumours about Hollzy being a health freak are absolutely true).

- Yuna Hollander: a shrimp poke bowl, and for dessert, a cheesecake, which she shared with David.

- David Hollander: a chicken burger, and the cheesecake shared with Yuna.

@rozanovstyle LMFAOOOO I FUCKING KNEW IT. Hollander try not to be boring challenge: failed yet again 🤦🏻

@marrymeshane you call that poke bowl boring, I call it boyfriend material! I'm sorry but a man who cares about his health & looking after himself is HOT

@hockeybuttz listen, if boring-ass poke bowls are the secret to looking like *that,* then maybe we should all try them

@whorefortwentyfour amen to that

Chapter End Notes

one thing i wanted to speak to a little bit in this chapter is the fact that, in my opinion, TLG tends to show us more detail about how Ilya is struggling. especially in the pre-plane crash half of TLG, we get a lot of Ilya's POV of their relationship, and how it's so hard for him to stay closeted. which is really well done, don't get me wrong, but i sometimes feel like the book just *slightly* ignores Shane's perspective, and the very real reasons why coming out is an extra difficult decision for him. i am very much a Shane defender, but come on, i just think it needs to be more widely acknowledged that Shane was not having an easy time of it either.

anyways, i hope you all are enjoying the read so far!! please do let me know what you think ❤️

Chapter 3: March

Chapter Notes

buckle up, baby, because this chapter is where we REALLY start to diverge from canon.

► direct quotes from TLG in this chapter:

the reason i quoted this exact part of the book is because it is THE scene: that is, the one where Shane and Ilya kiss in Hayden's driveway, then end up in the back of his FanMail. i *want* readers to recognise it, because directly afterwards, i want to flip the scene on its head and rewrite what happens next. in THIS universe, nobody gets outed 🙏

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

As much as Ilya loudly claimed that he did not like Hayden, he also freely admitted that he *loved* Hayden's kids. And Hayden's wife. It was remarkable that someone as annoying as Hayden had managed to surround himself with people this great.

(If he was *really* being honest, Ilya might admit that Hayden wasn't that bad – as a person. Terrible hockey player, though. Nowhere near his and Shane's level.)

Fortunately, Hayden had just run off to record one of his FanMails – which Ilya still found hilarious, because really, who wanted to see *Hayden's* face that badly? – and so it was just him, Shane, Jackie and the kids, who were playing with Anya.

Ilya's new dog, his *darling*, was absolutely perfect with the kids, and they completely adored her already.

That was only right, Ilya thought. *Everyone* should completely adore Anya. She was the best dog in the world.

There was very little that could make this moment better, except maybe if he was also kissing Shane.

Ilya was pulled from his thoughts by a sudden silence as the Pike children stopped running and playing for a moment.

“Mom?” asked Arthur in a quiet, trembling voice. “Where’s Chompy?”

Jackie’s brow furrowed. “Oh no...wait! He’s in the car, I’ll bet. Let me go—”

“No,” Ilya said. “I will get him. Where are the keys?”

Jackie gave him a grateful smile. “Hanging by the door in the mudroom, that way. Chompy’s in the Mercedes, I think. Back seat.”

“Will you come with me?” Ilya asked Shane. “I do not want to hunt an alligator alone.”

Shane rolled his eyes. “Sure.”

Of course, Ilya was only trying to steal a moment alone with Shane. They stepped outside, through a secluded side door that led to a concrete path that wrapped around to the front of the house. A row of thick trees ran along the edge of the yard, blocking the view from any neighboring houses.

Perfect.

Ilya turned to stand in front of Shane and placed a hand on his waist.

“I assume you have an ulterior motive for inviting me on this adventure,” Shane said. He gazed up at Ilya flirtatiously through his lashes, and Ilya made a silent promise to figure out a way to have sex with his boyfriend tonight. Anya was just going to have to deal.

“Maybe,” Ilya said.

Shane smiled, then leaned in and kissed him. It was so soft and sweet and warm despite the air around them being so cold. Ilya sighed happily and deepened the kiss, sinking his fingers into Shane’s hair, dipping him back slightly.

“Wow,” Shane said breathlessly when they broke apart. “That was a good one.”

His cheeks were pink and his eyes were as bright as his smile. Ilya helplessly kissed him again.

Shane laughed against his mouth, then stepped back. “Later, okay? Any more of that and I won’t be able to go back inside.”

“Yes, okay.” Ilya’s voice was shaky. He took a steadying breath and said, “We have a job to do now.”

“Mm. Operation: Chompy.”

Ilya gave him a lazy salute and turned toward the driveway.

They found Arthur's toy crocodile – the one and only Chompy – exactly where Jackie had said it would be, in the backseat of Hayden's Mercedes. (Ilya even managed to bite back a comment about how even Hayden's *car* was only the fifteenth best Mercedes SUV available.)

All in all, a very successful little adventure – and one that was made even better when Arthur Pike's little face lit up with a radiant smile when Ilya handed Chompy over to him.

Ilya was feeling particularly pleased with himself and with his day when suddenly Hayden half-fell down the stairs, his face as white as a ghost.

“Shane, Ilya,” he said, and the fact that he actually used Ilya's name instead of his surname was an immediate clue that something was wrong (if the ashen colour of his face hadn't given it away already.)

Ilya shot to his feet immediately, reaching out to steady Hayden in case he was about to pass out or something.

Hayden swatted his hand away. Okay. It couldn't be *that* serious then.

Hayden still looked like he had just seen the scariest horror movie of his life come true, though.

“Deep breath. Then talk,” Ilya instructed him, brusque but kinder than he usually was to Hayden.

Hayden scowled at him, but did as Ilya said.

“Hayden?” Shane asked gently. “What's up?”

“*Fuck*. Guys. I nearly fucked up. Like, *really* badly.”

Ilya saw panic flare briefly in Shane's eyes, but it didn't show up at all in his voice when he asked, “Tell us what happened?”

Hayden swallowed hard. “So, um, you know how I went up to record that FanMail video, right?”

“Yes,” Shane replied, sounding more than a little impatient.

Hayden swallowed again, then shook his head. “*Fuck*. Maybe it's better if I just show you.”

“What, now we have to listen to you on video as well? Don't I already put up with enough of you?” Ilya quipped.

Hayden rolled his eyes. “Shut it, Rozanov.”

Back to Rozanov, Ilya noted. That meant Hayden was calming down again, which *probably* meant that this crisis, whatever it was, wasn't quite that bad after all.

On Hayden's phone screen, Hayden began rattling off a birthday message to someone named *Brad*, stopping halfway through one sentence to thank Brad for the request before remembering to complete his birthday wish.

Ilya couldn't help letting out a small scoff. “Really, Hayden? You should write down what you want to say before you begin talking. You are all over the place.”

“Shut up, for fuck's sake,” Hayden groaned. “And look in the mirror.”

Ilya looked, for a moment not sure what he was supposed to be seeing, and then –

“Jesus, Hayd,” Shane said faintly.

“Wow,” Ilya said, slowly. “*Wow*, okay.”

Because there in the mirror, *all* too clearly visible, were Shane and Ilya. Kissing. Not a quick, gentle kiss either – Ilya's fingers were tangled in Shane's hair, and he was *dipping him backwards*, Jesus Christ. Shane's arms were running up and down Ilya's back and arms as he kissed him back with just as much passion.

It was, as Shane himself had said, a good one.

“You didn't... post this, right?” Shane asked now, his voice trembling just slightly in the way it did when he was fiercely holding back his panic.

Hayden shook his head so fast that Ilya half-worried it would fall off. “No, no. God, no.” He scrubbed a hand over his face, and Ilya noticed that his fingers shook a little. Adrenaline, probably.

“Thank God for Jackie,” Hayden said fervently. “She always makes me watch the videos back before I send them, just in case there's something in them we don't want the whole world to see. I mean, we're usually worried about the kids, but...”

“But she saved our asses today,” Ilya supplied.

Hayden just nodded, his face still a strange, shocked colour.

Ilya would never say this out loud, but it was kind of... sweet, how hard this had hit Hayden. It showed that he cared about them, Ilya included, far more than he pretended he did.

That was probably why Ilya clapped Hayden's shoulder and said, “It was close, but nothing happened, yes? You're a good friend, Hayden.”

Shane, who had been standing semi-frozen by Ilya's side for the last while, finally unfroze at that. “Yeah,” he agreed. “I mean, I won't lie, you scared the *shit* out of me just then. But Ilya's right – you've been a really good friend, to both of us, and you've kept our secret for years. We appreciate you, Hayd.”

“Thanks,” Hayden mumbled, not meeting either of their gazes directly. “That's very kind of you to say, but I'm still a bit fucked up about this, man. I mean... I almost *outed* you. That would've made me the opposite of a good friend.”

“No,” Ilya said, surprising himself with how firm he sounded. “No, it wouldn't. It would have been an accident. Accidents happen. That doesn't make you a bad friend. We wouldn't have held it against you.”

Out of the corner of his eye, Ilya saw Shane nodding, too – and he was also trying (and failing) to hide a delighted little smile. Probably because Ilya was being nice to Hayden.

Well. Ilya could only do that for so long. It was very out of character for him, after all.

“If you *really* feel bad about this, though, I can think of something you could do to make it up to us,” Ilya said to Hayden, smirking a little when Hayden immediately shot him a suspicious glare.

“If you're going to say I should let you score in the next game or something –”

“Please, I do not need you to *let* me score, I will do it anyway,” Ilya scoffed. “No, no. Since you like your videos so much, you could make one for us and post it on your official account. We are soft launching, you see, and this will help.”

Hayden's expression morphed into a mixture of exasperation, wariness and what looked like reluctant curiosity. “Wait, did you say *soft launching*?”

Ilya just grinned at him. “It will be brilliant, Pike. You will see.”

Hayden Pike ✓

@hayden_pike

[A video of Jade, Ruby and Arthur Pike running around on the lawn, shrieking with laughter as they toss various toys for a very cute, floppy-eared dog.

“Here! She likes this one a lot,” a Russian-accented voice says, and a banana-shaped squeaky toy is tossed onto the lawn.

“Thank you, Uncle Ilya!” Jade cheers.

“You’re welcome,” Ilya Rozanov’s voice replies, off-camera. “Here, Hollander, baby duty. I want to play, too.”

The camera pans left in time to see Amber Pike, who had been perched on Ilya’s hip, being gently handed over to Shane Hollander.

“Of course you do,” Shane says, although his voice sounds fond, and he settles Amber in his arms without complaint.

Ilya runs onto the lawn with the kids and immediately bends to pat the dog, who runs straight over to him, wagging her tail. “Hello again, my sweet girl. Are the little Pikes treating you well?”

Anya barks, and the Pike children chorus “Yes! Yes! Yes!”

Ilya laughs and says, “Then we will have to come visit again, yes?”

The chorus of yeses from the Pike children gets even louder, Anya barking along. The camera shakes as Hayden, filming, presumably shakes his head in despair.

“Fucking wonderful,” he mutters.

The video ends.]

They're never going to stop asking me for a dog now. Thanks for nothing, @ilyarozanov81.

@ilyarozanov81 ✓ You are very welcome, Pike. 😊

@hayden_pike ✓ 😐

@himbohayden Hayden?! ROZANOV?! what universe is this omg

@ilyasrozanova rozapike was SO not on my bingo card for this year

@shanehollanderhockeyplayer ✓ Thanks for a lovely afternoon, Hayd!

@hayden_pike ✓ See, Rozanov, THIS is how friends treat each other

@ilyarozanov81 ✓ Boring. My way is better.

@hereforhockeychaos I'M SCREAMING OMG??!!

@gayforthevoyageursfirstline HOLY SHIT ME TOO

@jackiepike35 Our favourite babysitters! 🥰 Thanks for the spa day, boys 💕

@goalsandgirlfriends queen jackie making 3 of the top players babysit for her... i know that's right 😊

@ilyarozanov81 ✓ 3 of the top players? Me and Shane, yes. Who else was there?

@hayden_pike ✓ Shane I really am going to kill him one of these days

@shanehollanderhockeyplayer ✓ Stop it. Both of you.

@shaydenisreal Shane making his authority known 🤡 oh I just KNOW he's dominant as fuck in the bedroom

@hereforhollanov 🤡

@rozanderstan yeah, okay... the same Shane who IMMEDIATELY did what Rozanov said when he threw out a casual "baby duty?"

@shaydenisreal You're misinterpreting that completely! He was just being a good godfather to his niece. He probably didn't want Rozanov to drop her or something.

@rozanovdefender EXCUSE ME? 🤡 i know you did not just insinuate that ilya rozanov is bad with children, because you could NOT be more wrong. that man LOVES kids and they love him too, thank you very much!!

@mtlhockeybabe okay so WHAT did i just watch? WHAT IS HAPPENING OMG
OMG

@left_boston_for_ilya can't believe i'm agreeing with a m*treal fan but OMG WHAT THE FUCKKKK IS HAPPENING! SINCE WHEN WAS *ANY* OF THIS A THING?!!!

@rozrozroz RIGHT? since when is Ilya Rozanov good enough friends with Hayden Pike that his kids call him “Uncle Ilya”??????? i feel like i missed like twenty steps somewhere!!

@inlovewithrozanov “uncle ilya” honestly melted my entire heart 😭 maybe the cutest thing i've ever heard. AND ILYA IS SO SO SWEET WITH THE KIDS TOO 😭😭😭

@ilya_rozanov_i_would_have_your_babies THIS IS IT. THIS IS THE VIDEO THAT CAUSED MY DEATH. YOU ARE NOW TALKING TO MY GHOST

@inlovewithrozanov real

@marrymeshane i don't think we took enough of a moment for how unbelievably freaking adorable shane looks holding a baby. i think my ovaries just exploded

@whorefortwentyfour GIRL SAME

@24x81 BOTH OF THEM THOUGH?!! Ilya holding the baby on his hip while smirking made me drool, and then the confident way he handed her over to Shane? and Shane just smiling and adjusting the baby to hold her more comfortably? YOUR HONOUR... give these men all the babies NOW

@marrymeshane honestly you're so right

@centaur_ilya_forever biggest revelation of the year: Hayden Pike and Ilya Rozanov hating each other is FAKE NEWS, because Hayden apparently trusts Ilya enough to let him spend time with his kids. and not just once, oh no – enough times that they literally know him as Uncle Ilya. LIKE. I CANNOT EMPHASISE ENOUGH. THAT IS THE SORT OF THING THAT YOUR KIDS CALL YOUR *FRIENDS*, most certainly not your enemies!

@justagayhockeygirlie that is SUCH a good point omg. i have NEVER heard of anyone's kids calling their “enemy” Uncle. the only logical conclusion atp is that they're friends. good friends!

@hollanovtruther and the best possible explanation for why they're friends is... 😏

@rozanovstan13 i am almost afraid to ask, but uh, why are you smirking?

@hollanovtruther because who's the only friend these two have in common? oh that's right. SHANE HOLLANDER.

@rozrozroz i mean 🙄 she's not WRONG

@hereforhollanov Ilya took “if you wanna be my lover, you gotta get with my friends” very seriously 🙄

NHL WAG Watch

@wagsofthenhl

Ilya Rozanov is serious about this soft launch – he just posted his new girlfriend again! 📸

A few hours ago, he posted an Instagram story of his girlfriend cooking for him, wearing a *Rozanov 81* hoodie. He added a red heart as the only caption of the story. Swoon! ❤️

Although Ilya is still very shy about showing his girlfriend's face – in his latest update, she had her back to the camera and her hoodie up – we are sure that the reveal will come soon! We can't wait to meet her! 🌸

@rozanovdefender he really is in his boyfriend era 😭😭 my heart is MELTING

@smileyilya RIGHT? Like, he's so clearly so proud to show off his new girlfriend. I am so freaking happy for him 😭😭

@goalsandgirlfriends Counting down the days until the reveal!! 🥰

@left_boston_for_ilya You and me both, omg

@jjboiziau ✅ wait is that Shane's fucking kitchen?
[This comment has been deleted.]

@centaur_ilya_forever UM?? WHAT???

@rozrozroz i'm sorry WHAT

@left_boston_for_ilya omg what? what? the og comment was deleted by the time i got here 😭😭

@rozrozroz oh girl @left_boston_for_ilya you are not going to BELIEVE this. so basically, J.J. Boiziau from the Voyageurs commented “wait is that Shane's fucking kitchen...” and then deleted it like 2 minutes later. i wasn't quite fast enough to get a screenshot, but he DEFINITELY said it

@thehollanovarchives I managed to get a screenshot! Here it is.

[Photo attached. It is a screenshot of J.J. Boiziau's comment, now deleted.]

All I can say is this is going in the archives IMMEDIATELY.

@left_boston_for_ilya HOLY SHIT???

@24x81 OH MY GOD OH MY GOD OH MY GOD. Ilya Rozanov in Shane's kitchen - this is not a drill. I repeat, this is not a drill!

@hereforhollanov Ilya Rozanov in Shane's kitchen, taking a photo of someone in a Rozanov hoodie, WHOSE BACK IS CONVENIENTLY TURNED TO THE CAMERA AND WHOSE HOODIE IS UP SO IT COULD BE ANYONE. and he posted it with a RED HEART

@hollanovtruthr it's happening, it's actually happening, holy SHIT guys

@shaydenisreal You guys call ME delusional, but you're actually over here believing that Shane Hollander would be caught dead in a Rozanov hoodie? Please!

@shanehollywood Also, there is NO proof that this is actually Shane's kitchen! This is all just speculation based on a deleted comment.

@ilyasrozanova i mean... Boiziau is one of Hollander's best friends on the team. He has for sure been in Hollander's house before, and would definitely be able to recognise his kitchen. I'd say it's a pretty good source 🙄 As for Hollander in a Rozanov hoodie... I mean realistically, that could be anyone. But like. Why would Ilya's girlfriend be making dinner in Hollander's kitchen of all places?

@24forlife I hate to say it, but she's completely right. Boiziau would for sure recognise Shane's kitchen. and why the hell would Rozanov's mysterious girlfriend be there? unless Shane's girlfriend is friends with Rozanov's girlfriend or something?

@gayshanehollander That's assuming Shane actually has a girlfriend...

@shanehollywood What are you talking about? Of course he does. He's soft launching her, just like Rozanov is doing.

@the_nhl_has_habs_now He is for sure soft launching SOMEONE, but who says it has to be a girlfriend? For that matter, why are we assuming that Rozanov's partner is a woman, too? NOTHING HAS BEEN CONFIRMED.

@justagayhockeygirlie Oh my god... Imagine if both Rozanov and Hollander have boyfriends – but not each other. Imagine they're just, like, two random dudes. Just Some Guys. Objectively the funniest outcome imaginable 😭

@gayshanehollander PLEASE, IT WOULD BE SO FUCKING FUNNY

@24x81 I live for Hollanov and I can't even lie, that would be hilarious 😭 But only one way to find out, right? We'll just have to wait and see 🙄

@justagayhockeygirlie Oh hell yeah. I am SO invested!

Each time Ilya had to leave and go back to Ottawa, Shane felt like the biggest part of his heart was going with him. The feeling hadn't faded at all since they got engaged – if anything, it had only gotten *worse*, because being engaged was a promise of being together forever, so it hurt that they still had to part ways so often.

But we have a plan now, Shane reminded himself, as he had taken to doing whenever the ache of missing Ilya got too strong. *We have a definite timeline for coming out, and then we're going to get married.*

It didn't make the ache go away, of course, but it did help. Shane had always found a lot of reassurance in having a clear plan, a clear structure for how things are going to go.

Just a few more months now, he thought, and although the idea still partially terrified him, he was also starting a mental countdown of the days.

He was distracted from his thoughts when his phone vibrated. To his surprise, it was J.J. – which was strange, because J.J. almost never texted. He preferred calling, and had no compunctions about phoning Shane up whenever he felt like it.

Shane felt a strong sense of foreboding before he even opened the text, and it only got worse once he read what it said. *Hey man can we talk*, J.J. had sent.

Well. Fuck.

Yes, of course. My place? Shane texted back, forcing himself to stay calm. This was J.J. His friend. Whatever he wanted to talk about, it couldn't be that bad.

He forced himself to keep repeating that, over and over, until the doorbell rang.

He rushed downstairs and opened the door, and was immediately confronted by an unusually silent, scowling J.J. His sense of foreboding immediately worsened, because J.J. was normally one of the most animated people Shane knew – vibrant and full of energy and almost always smiling, at least off the ice.

Shane swallowed hard, but made himself smile anyway. “Hey, man! Do you want to come in?”

J.J. nodded, still without saying anything. Shane let him in without another word.

When they got to the living room, J.J. turned to face him, his expression unreadable. “I need you to answer a question for me, and I need you to not lie to me,” he said – in French, which immediately told Shane that this, whatever it was, was serious.

“Why would I lie?” Shane answered, also in French.

“Because I think you've been lying to me for a long fucking time,” J.J. snapped. He sounded genuinely *angry*, which was... Well, Shane had heard him angry before, of course, but usually directed at other teams' players, or the press asking stupid questions. Never directed at *him*.

“What are you talking about?” Shane asked, although he had a sinking feeling that he knew exactly what J.J. meant.

“You and *Rozanov*,” J.J. said, spitting Ilya's name out like it was poison. “You're fucking, aren't you?”

“No,” Shane denied automatically, and when J.J.’s eyebrows raised, disbelieving, he repeated it more emphatically. “*No*. We’re not just fucking. I love him, J.J. And he loves me.”

For a long moment, J.J. just stared at him. Then he said loudly, “What the fuck, Shane?”

Shane crossed his arms defensively. “What’s wrong with it? You’ve known I’m gay for years, and you’ve never had a problem with that.”

“*No*, I don’t care that you’re gay. I care that you’re apparently with Ilya Rozanov behind everyone’s backs,” J.J. said darkly. “Including *mine*. I felt sorry for you, Shane, what the fuck. I thought, *poor Shane, it must be so hard having a crush on a straight guy*. And you just let me think that. What, were you and Rozanov laughing at me the whole time?”

“Of course not!” Shane said hotly, even though he and Ilya *had* actually laughed at J.J.’s assumption that Shane was pining for Ilya. But it had only happened once!

“Yeah, right,” J.J. scoffed. “I planned to come here to comfort you, did you know that? Noémie was telling me about the latest post by that NHL WAGs blog, and how it was all about Rozanov’s new girlfriend. And I thought, *oh man, poor Shane, that’s going to hit him hard, I’ve got to go be there for him*. But then I went and looked up the post, and I couldn’t believe my eyes. That’s *your* fucking kitchen in *his* post, Shane.”

He shook his head once, a sharp jerk of motion. “I tried to rationalise it at first. I thought, *now what would Rozanov’s girlfriend be doing in Shane’s kitchen?* I mean, I know you guys are friends, but I didn’t think you were that close. Then I saw social media speculating that *your* girlfriend was friends with Rozanov’s girlfriend, which is impossible, of course. And then it hit me. There are *no* girlfriends, are there? Not for you, and not for him, either.”

Shane could only shake his head slowly. “No,” he said, very softly.

J.J. exhaled loudly. “Jesus, Shane. I don’t... I don’t even know what to say.”

Shane shrugged his shoulders, hating how awkward he felt. “I mean, it’s not that different to when you were trying to set me up with random guys, right?”

J.J. narrowed his eyes. “That’s where you’re wrong. *It is* different. Don’t you see it?”

“What are you talking about?”

J.J. sighed. “Look, buddy, I don’t care that Ilya’s a man. I might not like the guy, but I can admit that he’s not *completely* terrible. I can even see why you might be attracted to him. But, Shane... you know this can’t ever work out, right?”

For a moment, Shane thought he’d heard wrong. “What?”

“He’s the captain of a different team,” J.J. said, like it was obvious. “A team we might be facing in the playoffs, no less, if they keep up their current streak. Don’t you think that’s fucked up?”

“No!” Shane snapped, far louder than he had been intending. “What the hell do you think is going to happen, anyway? Do you think I'd throw a game for him just because we happen to be together?”

J.J. was silent for longer than Shane would have liked – long enough for a slow, creeping anger to begin building in Shane's chest.

“What the fuck?” Shane said, loud and incredulous. “I would never throw a game for *anyone*. Jesus Christ himself could descend from heaven, and I'd play him just as hard as anyone else. You have to know that. You know *me*, dammit.”

For a long moment, J.J. just stared at him. At last, a scant few seconds before Shane was about to snap and kick him out, J.J. blew out a huge sigh and shook his head. “You're right. You're right. I *do* know you better than that. You're the most hockey-obsessed person I know. Of course you wouldn't throw a game.”

“*Right*,” Shane agreed, still a little sharply, but feeling vindicated now, at least.

J.J. sighed again. “I guess what I really want to know is just... Why didn't you *tell* me?”

“Maybe because I knew you'd react like this,” Shane said archly. “And maybe because I'm tired of everyone having some kind of fucked up opinion about me and Ilya. We're *friends*, aren't we? Can't you just be happy for me that I finally get to be with the love of my life?”

“Not when the love of your life is apparently Ilya fucking Rozanov,” J.J. said, in such a tone of long-suffering despair that Shane had to snort.

“Oh my God,” he half-sighed, half-groaned. “It's not enough that Hayden is like this about Ilya, but you have to be too?”

He only realised that he had said the exact wrong thing when J.J. went very, very still.

“Hayden?” he echoed, his voice suddenly ice-cold. “Hayden knows about this?”

“Yes?” Shane replied, hating the way his voice pitched up at the end, like it was a question.

“For how long?” J.J. asked, still in that oddly calm, frozen voice.

“Um. Since Ilya moved to Ottawa,” Shane said honestly, even though he knew with an instinctive kind of dread that this answer would make things even worse. “So since 2018.”

“Three fucking *years*?!” J.J. burst out. “Hayden has known for three whole years and neither of you ever thought to say a word to me?”

“To be fair,” Shane said tightly, “it was a secret.”

“But you told Hayden!”

“Hayden figured it out,” Shane corrected sharply. “Well, to be honest, Ilya thinks that *Jackie* figured it out and told Hayden. I think he's probably right. But the point is, I didn't tell him on purpose.”

“He still knew,” J.J. said, and he didn’t sound angry anymore. Shane couldn’t place the emotion that was in his voice, though, but it was enough that J.J. turned away from him, like he couldn’t stand to look at Shane any longer.

For a long, long moment, he said nothing. Finally, he spoke, and his voice was uncharacteristically quiet. “Again, Shane. Why didn’t you *tell* me?”

Shane opened his mouth, but J.J. held up a hand before he could get anything out. “I thought we were friends. I thought you trusted me!”

Finally, Shane realised what the unnameable emotion in J.J.’s voice was. It was *hurt*.

It hit Shane, then. At the end of the day, that was what all this was about, wasn’t it? J.J. wasn’t angry, not really – he was reacting like this because he was *hurt*. Because he thought Shane didn’t trust him and didn’t value their friendship.

That couldn’t be further from the truth. Shane *did* value J.J.’s friendship, more than he could properly put into words. Yes, Hayden was his best friend on the team, but J.J. was a close second. He was also the only person who came close to understanding the way Shane felt when the media treated him differently, because, at the end of the day, he was the only other non-white person on the team. That meant something.

Also, J.J. was just a great guy. A little loud and brazen, yes, but Shane needed that sometimes. He needed the way that J.J. made him come out of his shell, and made him and the whole locker room laugh, and was fiercely supportive of Shane being gay even when he was a little confused about the whole thing.

He was a good friend, and Shane didn’t want to lose him. Not now, not ever.

Shane took a deep breath, and deliberately softened his tone. “J.J., no. We are friends. Of *course* we are. And I never... I didn’t hide this from you because I don’t trust you. I did it because we’ve been hiding it for eleven years, and I don’t... I’m so used to hiding it that I don’t really know how to stop.”

Something that he’d said must have worked, because J.J. turned around to face him again, looking like Shane had slapped him clean across the face. “Did you just say you’ve been hiding this for *eleven years*?”

Shane nodded, then shook his head. “We weren’t... it’s not like we were *together* for eleven years. But.”

“But,” J.J. echoed, sounding dazed. “Eleven years. Jesus Christ. Who *are* you, Hollander?”

“The same person I’ve always been,” Shane said softly. “That person is just someone who’s in love with Ilya Rozanov, and who probably has been for half his life.”

J.J. shook his head again, but it was almost awed, this time. “Half of your life, and the entire time I’ve known you,” he said, like he still couldn’t quite believe it.

“Yeah,” Shane said simply. “We were inevitable, I think.”

“Well, fuck,” J.J. said, and then he sighed, loud and dramatic. “I guess I'm going to have to seriously try to get along with Rozanov now, huh?”

Shane couldn't help it. He laughed. “You and Hayden should form a club. He'll be very happy to have someone else to complain to.”

“Oh, I think I need to complain about *him* lying to me first,” J.J. said, a little bit of residual hurt still clear in his tone. “For three fucking years. Man, you both owe me *so* many drinks.”

“You'll have them,” Shane was quick to assure them. “As many as you want.”

“Fucking right,” J.J. said, but he was smiling, and Shane let himself relax for the first time since J.J. walked into his house.

They were going to be okay. This had been a rough conversation, but they were going to be *okay*.

Now all that remained was for the rest of the world to be okay with it, too.

All About Shane Hollander

@shanehollandersource

[A screenshot of @shanehollanderhockeyplayer's Instagram story. Shane posted a photo of two people's shadows holding hands. One shadow is clearly Shane's, while the other is wearing a long coat and has short curly hair.]

Shane just posted another soft launch: an Instagram story of his and his partner's shadows holding hands.

This is also the first time ever that Shane has posted a non-hockey-related Instagram Story.

@shanezone this is so cute i can't 😭

@marrymeshane RIGHT?! shane genuinely seems like THE sweetest boyfriend 🥺

@hollanderose not sure if Rose Landry would agree 🤡

@roselandryofficial ✅ Actually, no. I do agree. Shane was an incredibly sweet boyfriend! We might not have worked out, but it didn't have anything to do with him being a bad partner. He is amazing ❤️

@shanes_canada_dry oh WOW. Rose really said “you're not talking shit about him, not on MY watch”

@gayshanehollander and good for her!! she is an ally, i know it

@numberoneshanefan the first time Shane has EVER posted a non-hockey Insta story, and it's this adorable? 😭 what an absolute icon

@gayforthevoyageursfirstline no but for real... shadows holding hands is SUCH a cute aesthetic. Shane is a loverboy, CONFIRMED

@24forlife when he knows, He Knows 😭❤️

@shilyaaaa SO. who's gonna say it 🙄

@sarcasticshanestan I'm scared to ask, but... say what?

@shilyaaaa OH GIRL. the shadow. THE SHADOW

@mtlhockeybabe What about the shadow? 🙄

@hollanovtruthr WELL. the curly hair... the person being just slightly taller than Shane... their whole build, as a matter of fact... it all looks *very much* like a certain Russian hockey captain, don't you think?

@rozrozroz i mean, i can *kinda* see it, but it could also be anyone's shadow, you know? shadows are not exactly great for identification

@24x81 true... but in light of all the other times they've been spotted together recently/all the other times their soft launch posts have “coincidentally” been really really similar...

@rozrozroz i see your point

@shaydenisreal Oh please. That shadow is much more likely to be Hayden's. Everyone knows they *actually* spend time together

@princeofhockeyhollander not this again 😭 for the last time, Hayden Pike is married. To a WOMAN. And if that's not enough, I believe Hayden Pike posted his own Insta story just a few minutes ago showing him making breakfast for his wife and kids

@shaydenisreal That doesn't prove anything! This could be an old photo.

@princeofhockeyhollander i mean, yeah, it could be an old photo, but that doesn't change the fact that HAYDEN PIKE IS STILL MARRIED

@justagayhockeygirlie i'm telling you, just give up with the shayden stans 😭 it's like arguing with a brick wall

@princeofhockeyhollander i see what you mean 😭 i might need to start following Hollanov tags soon just so i don't have to see that shayden bullshit anymore

@shaydenisreal Literally how is *Hollanov* more believable than Shayden????

@justagayhockeygirlie where to even start...

@shanezone all *i'm* saying is that the whole Hollanov thing has got me, someone who doesn't even really believe in RPF, going like “DAMN what if the RPFers have a

point” every second day. (i have never thought that way about shayden, ever).

@hollanovtruth EXACTLY!!!! exactly.

Ilya Rozanov 

@ilyarozanov81

[A shirtless mirror selfie of Ilya, taken at a home gym. His cross necklace is nestled between his pecs, and if one looks carefully, a simple black-and-gold ring is also visible on the same chain, resting against Ilya's heart.]

@ilya_rozanov_i_would_have_your_babies holy thirst trap 

@rozanovstyle hot damn!!

@centaur_ilya_forever um. UM. SO WE'RE ALL SEEING THIS RIGHT?

@81forever YES OH MY GOD YES

@smileyilya wait what? what are we seeing?? 

@81forever omg, okay, SO. look carefully at Ilya's necklace. we all know his infamous cross pendant, right? now look right next to it

@smileyilya HOLY FUCKING SHIT IS THAT A *WEDDING RING???

@inlovewithrozanov it really does look like a wedding ring, holy shit HOLY SHIT

@ilyasrozanova IS ILYA MARRIED????

@florenceeee_81 i mean, he could be engaged!! the ring is on his necklace, not his wedding finger. but still. THIS IS INSANEEEE

@rozrozroz oh my god!!!!!!!!

@ilyarozanovupdater This is HUGE. Ilya has mentioned before that the cross necklace was his mother's, and that it is one of his most prized possessions. Him wearing a ring right next to the cross is a sign of a MASSIVE commitment right there! 

@rozanovdefender i have actual tears in my eyes oh my god  whoever ilya's partner is, they are SO lucky

@rozanovlover13 okay, so, i know everyone is freaking out about #ring-gate (and deservedly so!) but uh. am i... the only one who thinks that this is *not* ilya rozanov's home gym?

@snarkyrozy lmao what are you talking about?

@rozanovlover13 look, i know i may be a little too obsessed with that one video of ilya working out, but that means I Know What His Home Gym Looks Like. i know it, uh, very well. and this is *not it*

@rozanovchirps HOLY SHIT I THINK YOU'RE RIGHT

@rozanovlover13 i'm going to sound crazy for saying this, and i feel crazy for even thinking it, but... it lowkey looks like Shane Hollander's home gym

@hollanovtruther THE GASP I JUST GASPED... bestie i think you might actually be right

@rozrozroz i mean, surely there's no way it's actually Hollander's home gym. right? right?

@numberoneshanefan well... Shane's home gym does have a very particular kind of wood panelling, and these specific adjustable light strips. it's fairly unique if you know it. and uh. the background of this photo... looks VERY similar to that. it could just be a coincidence of course!! but um. WOW.

@24x81 OH MY GOD OH MY GOD OH MY GOD. Ilya posting a photo of himself with a ring, IN SHANE HOLLANDER'S HOME GYM? hollanov has never been more real

@hereforhollanov ALL WE DO IS WIN WIN WIN FR

Chapter End Notes

dedicated readers of TLG may know that another significant plot point that happens in the book-verse in March is Shane & Ilya's confrontation with Commissioner Crowell. of course, in this AU, it doesn't really make sense to have that happen right now. with that said though... Crowell is an asshole, and unfortunately i do think it's rather inevitable that he'll try to prevent Hollanov from coming out in pretty much every universe. so, it might not be right now, but Crowell will still feature in this fic at some point.

with that said - please let me know what you thought of this chapter! ❤️

Chapter 4: April

Chapter Notes

major events that happen in TLG in April are the build-up to the playoffs & the playoffs themselves, particularly The Incident where Shane trips. for purposes of this fic, that still happens... but the fallout is a little different, because Shane and Ilya haven't been outed. there are only rumours, but who listens to *those,* right? (lol)

a quick shoutout/note about one of the social media sections in this chapter: i have included a very short segment of the Centaurs doing a Question Of The Day video. this is intended as a mini-homage to [wilmonstan12345](#)'s incredible fic [Question Of The Day](#), because that's one of the first fics that i read in this fandom and i freaking LOVED it, so when i saw the opportunity to include a little tribute to it in my own fic, i couldn't not! it's one of the fics that made me REALLY start loving social media-style fics for Heated Rivalry, which is now probably my favourite fic style of all for this fandom. so YEAH!

now with no further ado, here is April in the *pour mercy on me*-verse.

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

“I think you should come out to your team,” Shane said out of the blue early one morning, thirty seconds after he woke Ilya up with his restless tossing and turning.

Ilya blinked up at the ceiling, which was only *just* starting to be lit by the first slivers of predawn light, and said slowly, “What?”

“I think you should come out to your team,” Shane repeated, rolling onto his side to face Ilya.

Ilya was still half-convinced he was sleeping, and this was some strange dream. “Why? I thought we agreed it was too risky, no?”

“Well, when we said that, it was before we decided we wanted to come out this summer,” Shane said, like it was obvious. “One of our biggest advantages when we were hiding was that people think you're straight. If people know you're bisexual, then they can put two and two together really easily and realise that we're together. We used to want to avoid that, but now that's exactly what we want, you know?”

“Slow down, please,” Ilya said, pushing himself into a sitting position and fighting back a yawn. “Why do you always come up with these plans of yours so early in the morning, Hollander?”

“Sorry,” Shane said, not looking sorry at all.

Ilya yawned again. “It is fine. I know you and this brain of yours.” He leaned forward and flicked Shane's forehead, then ran his fingers much lovingly over the line of his brow.

Shane leaned into his touch a little, and Ilya smiled, letting his fingers trail down until he was cupping Shane's jaw. “I know when your mind is busy, you won't rest until you solve the problem, or until I fuck it out of you,” he said, pressing down just hard enough that Shane's lips parted.

Ilya leaned forward and kissed him, quick and sweet, then dropped back onto his pillow with a dramatic sigh. “If you are waking me up, then you have solved some problem, yes? Tell me about it quickly, and maybe —” he glanced quickly at the alarm clock on Shane's bedside table “— we will still have some time for the fucking, too.”

Even in the grey, hazy predawn light, Ilya could see Shane's pupils dilate at that. Then he cleared his throat and shook his head a little. “I think you should come out to your team,” he said clearly. “Because you deserve to have their support, and because it's not fair that I got to come out to my team years ago, and you never did.”

He shook his head again, just once, sharp and decisive. “And if the Centaurs figure out we're together after you come out, well...” He swallowed hard. “That's what we want, right? We're soft launching for a reason. They're going to find out in a few months anyway.”

“Shane,” Ilya said softly, reaching out for him. He curled his fingers gently around Shane's wrist and tugged, pulling Shane forward to lie against his chest.

Shane came easily, melting into Ilya's touch like there was nowhere he'd rather be than in Ilya's arms. Which was good, because there was nowhere Ilya would rather have him be, either.

“Sweetheart,” he began, enjoying the way Shane melted further into him at the sound of the pet name. “Maybe it's because we spent seven years *not* talking about our feelings, but we still need a lot of practice to communicate properly, like your parents said. So. I need to know: are you saying this because you feel guilty about something?”

“No,” Shane said, with surprising certainty. “We *do* need to get better at communication, especially about our feelings —” he gave a wry snort, which Ilya echoed “— but that's not what this is. I want you to have people who are in your corner, like I have Hayden and Rose and my parents, and even J.J.”

“I have your parents, too,” Ilya pointed out, running his fingers through Shane's hair. “Sometimes I think they like me more than you.”

“Ha, *ha*,” Shane said, and even though Ilya couldn't see his face, he could tell just from the sound of his voice that Shane was rolling his eyes. “No, but seriously. It's great that you get along with my parents, but you should have something that's *yours*, too. I know you felt like you didn't have anyone here in Ottawa.”

Ilya hummed, then shook his head slowly. “I felt like that, yes, but... I think that was my brain lying to me,” he said slowly. “That is one of the worst things that depression does,

Galina told me. It can make me feel like I am all alone, and stop me from seeing all the people who want to be there for me.”

“Ilya,” Shane said softly, pushing himself up on his elbows so that Ilya could see his face. His brow was furrowed with concern, and Ilya reached up and ran his thumb over the little worried lines, trying to smooth them out.

“It's okay,” Ilya said, even though it wasn't, not really. Things had been *really* bad, for longer than he probably wanted to admit.

But no more. “I am learning to get better. I *am*, ” he said firmly. “There will always be bad days, I think, but there will be good days too. And on a good day, I can *see* that I am not alone. Not at all. Even if you are not here, and David and Yuna are busy, I have my team. They love me, and they will have my back through anything.”

“Yeah,” Shane said softly, something pained in his voice. He looked away for a moment, staring out of the window into the slowly-lightening world, then brought his gaze back to Ilya.

When he spoke again, he sounded resolute. “That's exactly why you should come out to them. *Let* them have your back for this too. I know you want to, and you should get to have that.”

Ilya tightened his arms around Shane, because if he was honest: yes, he did want that. Especially after seeing the way the team embraced Troy, and how much happier and *freer* Troy looked these days.

Well, that might have something to do with his amazing boyfriend. And with getting that asshole Dallas Kent out of his life. But still.

“I think I would like that very much,” Ilya said, the unsteadiness in his own voice surprising him a little. “I'll tell them today.”

Shane smiled down at him, his eyes crinkling with affection, and Ilya felt his breath catch. At this angle, the soft morning light, which was just starting to turn gold, lit up every dip and curve of Shane's face so that he was almost glowing.

“So pretty,” Ilya said softly, which had the wonderful effect of making Shane flush pink.

“Shut up,” Shane muttered, but he looked pleased.

“Mm, no, I don't think so,” Ilya teased, propping himself up so that he was nose-to-nose with Shane. “You know, there is still a lot of time before I can go to the rink. I can think of lots of things we can do until then.”

Shane's eyes darkened. “Oh? Like what?” he asked, deliberately playing coy despite the clear want in his eyes.

“Talking is good, but I can use my mouth for even better things,” Ilya replied, letting said mouth curve up into a smirk.

Shane's eyes dropped to his lips immediately. "Promises, promises," he said, but he sounded breathless already.

In one smooth movement, Ilya grabbed Shane's waist and flipped them over, catching himself with his elbows on either side of Shane's head. He leaned down so that their lips were mere millimetres apart.

"I always keep my promises to you," he said, and then he kissed him, slow and deep and thorough, exactly the way that Shane liked best.

Needless to say, he kept his promise. Thoroughly. And more than once.

All in all, Ilya was in an excellent mood when he arrived at the rink – and it only got better, because the practice went extremely well. The team had been on fire lately, working together seamlessly and just *clicking* in a way that they hadn't managed before.

It showed in their stats, too, because they were currently on a winning streak that was approaching a franchise record. If they won their next two games, then that was a playoff spot clinched.

A playoff spot. For Ottawa.

True, it was a wildcard spot, but Ilya would fucking take it.

"Two to go, eh?" Bood said, coming up behind Ilya and clapping him on the shoulder. He'd clearly had the exact same thought process.

"We'll get them," Ilya said, because for the first time in a long time, he had absolute confidence in his team.

"With this team? Hell yeah, brother," Bood agreed with a grin.

"And when we do, you're going to come and celebrate with us," Wyatt said, popping up in front of them and giving Ilya a mock-stern look. "None of your mysteriously-disappearing-on-days-off shenanigans."

"Too right!" Bood agreed, jumping on that idea immediately. "I'll be having a barbecue for sure, and you're expected. The guest of honour, in fact."

Ilya raised both hands, laughing. "I'll be there, I promise."

Before the conversation could take another turn, Ilya took the opening that Wyatt had inadvertently provided him. "Hey, Hazy, would you like to know where I actually disappear to on my off days?"

Wyatt's eyes widened comically. "Wait, for real?"

"Yep," Ilya confirmed, popping the *p*.

"Of course, man! What the heck – everyone has been *dying* with curiosity for years."

“Well, listen up,” Ilya said, raising his voice so that the whole locker room could hear him. “I’ve got an announcement.”

He waited until the room had quieted sufficiently. It wasn’t long, because these guys loved him (and also because they were a very nosy bunch).

“First things first,” he said when he was sure he had the room’s attention. “We are *going* to get our playoff spot. We are going to fucking destroy Buffalo, and then we are going to eat Toronto for breakfast.”

There was a chorus of whoops, cheers and *hell yeahs* at that. Ilya let it wash over him, grinning.

“This team has never looked better,” he said, and meant it. “You’re my fucking *guys*.”

“You’re our guy too, Cap!” someone yelled from the back.

“I love you!” Ilya yelled back at whoever it was. “So. That’s why I’ve got to tell you all something. Don’t worry, I’m not dying.”

That got him a round of chuckles, at least.

Here we go, he thought, and even though he knew this would go well – had all the evidence that it would, thanks to Troy – he still felt nervous for the few split-seconds before he said the words.

They were big words, after all. Important words.

“I’m in a relationship,” Ilya told his team. “Okay, you probably knew that already. But what you didn’t know is that I’m in a relationship with...” He paused for a moment, for effect. “With a man.”

There was a moment of surprised silence, and then Wyatt burst out, “I *knew* it!”

“No, you fucking did not,” Bood refuted immediately. “You thought Cap had a secret *girlfriend*.”

“Ignore them,” Dykstra said, raising his voice so that he could be heard over Wyatt’s attempted retort. “That’s great, dude! Thanks for telling us.”

“Yeah, Cap! Good for you,” Bood added quickly, and the rest of the locker room quickly chimed in with an overlapping chorus of congratulations.

“Any questions?” Ilya asked when it had died down a bit.

“So are you, like, gay too? Were you just pretending with all those women?” Holmberg blurted out, then looked immediately ashamed of himself.

Ilya snorted. “No, no. I am not that good of a liar. No. I am bisexual.”

“Right, that makes much more sense,” Holmberg said, smiling a little sheepishly. “I probably should've thought of that.”

“Maybe,” Ilya acknowledged, smiling back to let him know that there were no hard feelings. Ilya *did* have a certain reputation, after all.

“Wait, so. Bisexuality... is that actually, like, a thing?” Boyle asked, his hand raised like he was in a classroom and he wanted to ask the teacher a question.

Ilya turned to him, his smile fading slowly. He found that he was not entirely sure what to say.

“Yes?” he said at length, hating that it sounded like a question. It was just that... he had been so sure that his team wouldn't have any problems with his sexuality.

Boyle shook his head slowly. “I thought it was just something people said when they didn't want to admit they were gay.”

Ilya honestly had no idea what to say. He'd imagined a lot of reactions to him coming out, but never this. It wasn't something he'd ever even considered, though he was realising belatedly that maybe he should have – he did remember the words “bisexuality erasure” being said in one of the Irina Foundation's campaigns about issues faced by LGBTQIA+ people.

Still. It was shocking enough that for a long moment, Ilya just stayed silent.

Fortunately, the rest of his team did not.

“Jesus,” Dykstra said loudly, smacking his palm against his forehead. “Boyle. No. Bisexuality is a real thing.”

“Oh,” Boyle said, looking honestly confused. “I just... I always heard that bisexuality didn't exist, only confused people and cowards using it as an excuse.”

“That is biphobia,” Wyatt said sharply from beside Ilya. “A lot of people might think that bisexuality is just a phase, or something people say to hide the truth, but it's not. It's a valid sexuality all on its own, just like being gay or being straight.”

“And we will not tolerate biphobia or anything like that in this locker room,” Bood added before Ilya could say another word.

Touched, Ilya could only smile at the two of them. It turned out he *hadn't* even needed to say anything. They had his back.

“Sorry,” Boyle whispered, drawing Ilya's attention back to him. He suddenly looked very young, like the teenager he only *barely* wasn't anymore. “I didn't mean to be homophobic, or... or biphobic. I just really didn't know it was a thing.”

“It's okay,” Ilya replied, even though it probably wasn't. “You know now. Don't ever say things like that again, yes?”

“Yes, no, I mean, of course not. I won't, never again,” Boyle agreed, nodding so fast that Ilya was a little worried about his neck. He looked so thoroughly chastened that Ilya actually felt sorry for him.

He was a rookie, and rookies said stupid things sometimes. He hadn't meant it badly, Ilya was sure of that. He just hadn't known better.

Deciding that moving on quickly would be best for everyone involved, Ilya cleared his throat and raised his voice again. “Any *other* questions for me, boys? Don't you want to know about the guy who got Ilya Rozanov to move to Ottawa?”

“You moved to Ottawa for *him*?!” Wyatt whisper-yelled.

Ilya gave him a three-fingered salute. “So worth it.”

“Damn, I always wondered why the *hell* you would come to Ottawa, of all places,” Dykstra said with a slow shake of his head. “I guess this makes sense.”

“Is he hot?” Luca asked, then covered his mouth with a horrified look when he realised he'd said that out loud.

Ilya snorted a laugh. “Very,” he said with a smirk.

That got him a proper round of cheers, and some wolf-whistles too.

“When do we get to meet him?” Bood wanted to know.

Ilya had known this question would be inevitable, and even though he'd already mentally prepared the answer, he still felt a small thrill of nervousness when he said it. “Technically, you already have.”

The noise level in the locker room rose to a fever pitch, with half the team shouting “*what?!*” and “*dude!*” and “*wait, but who the fuck...*”

“He's famous!” Ilya said above the rising hubbub. “That's all I'm going to say for now. But you'll find out eventually. You're welcome to guess –” he gave them all a little smirk “– but I won't confirm anything.”

“Oh my god, are you dating *Justin fucking Trudeau*?!” Chouinard burst out. When half the room, Ilya included, swiveled to gape at him, he defended, “What? He's famous, and he's in Ottawa because, you know, politics.”

“No *way* Roz could pull the PM,” LaPointe said immediately, and then, apparently pausing to think about it, “Could he?”

“No, because Trudeau's *married*, you idiots,” Bood said roundly.

“Right,” LaPointe said, a little shamefacedly. But in true rookie style, he perked up quickly and countered with “But it could be another politician, though!”

“I mean, it'd make sense,” Chouinard said thoughtfully. “What the hell else is in Ottawa?”

Ilya just smirked, thoroughly enjoying the chaos. “I told you, I'm not confirming or denying anything.”

He caught Wyatt's gaze from across the room, which was a mistake, because Wyatt was shooting him a *very* suspicious look.

Wyatt, with his goalie perceptiveness *and* his propensity for social media doomscrolling, as he called it – yeah, there was a very good chance that he'd figured out the right answer.

Ilya decided that that was his cue to get out of there, because as much as he'd said he wouldn't confirm anything, he also knew that the look on his face would give him away *immediately* if anyone brought up Shane.

And that would probably be okay: he trusted his team, and like Shane had said, they were planning to come out soon anyway.

But he wanted to try and keep this secret a little longer, for Shane's sake. He *knew* that Shane would prefer to stick to their planned timeline as much as possible.

If people guessed sooner, fine – but they wouldn't confirm anything until summer.

(Also, if he was being completely honest, Ilya enjoyed his team's slightly crazy guesses about his partner. He kind of wanted to see what they would come up with next.)

Troy, who had kept mostly quiet throughout Ilya's whole reveal, slipped out of the locker room behind him and fell into step with him as he walked to the parking lot.

“Proud of you,” Troy said, bumping his shoulder into Ilya's.

“Thank you,” Ilya said genuinely. “You know, I probably wouldn't have done this without you. I mean, I knew the team would probably be fine with it, but...”

“But it was good to see it first-hand?” Troy guessed with a wry half-smile. “Yeah, well, I never would have told them if it wasn't for *you*, so I guess we both have a lot to be grateful for.”

“We really do,” Ilya agreed, unable to stop the smile from spreading across his face.

Maybe today hadn't gone entirely perfectly, but then, nobody and no team was truly perfect.

Still, this day had meant the world to Ilya.

GUYS GUYS GUYS GUYS GUYS OMG (1/4)

I'm tweeting from the stands where I'm watching a Cens open practice and oh my god. OH MY GOD. You are not going to believe this (2/4)

ALL THE CENS PLAYERS – yeah, all of them – are wearing BI PRIDE TAPE on their sticks for practice

[A series of photos taken from the Ottawa Centaurs' practice rink. The first is a wide-angled shot of the whole Centaurs team, all of whom have bi pride tape on their sticks. The next few shots are close-ups of individual players, including Wyatt Hayes, Zane Boodram, Troy Barrett and Luca Haas all skating and doing drills with the bi pride tape on their sticks.]

LIKE. OH MY FUCKING GOD?!!!! (3/4)

wait wait wait wait, UPDATE: the only player not wearing the bi pride tape is Ilya Rozanov (?) BUT he keeps smiling and hugging his teammates, and he's getting lots of back pats from everyone. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN??? HOLY SHIT??? (4/4)

@hannahthecensfan my favourite team all wearing bi pride tape... is this heaven? 🥹
💙💜💖

@centaur_ilya_forever MY HEART IS SO FULL, OMG

@goalsandgirlfriends Wait, why on earth would Roz not wear the bi tape? Is he homophobic or something?

@rozanovdefender Definitely not. He's worn the regular pride tape before, and he always donates his Pride jerseys. He's also one of the few players who actually defended Scott Hunter publicly after he came out. *And* the Irina Foundation has a large LGBTQIA+ inclusion drive well

@goalsandgirlfriends HUH. Well, is he specifically biphobic then? 🧠

@rozanovlover13 more likely that HE'S bisexual honestly 🥹🥹

@hereforhockeychaos wait... WAIT

@rozanovlover13 listen, i was joking when i first said it, but HEAR ME OUT. *Ilya* is bisexual and told the team, and they surprised him with bi pride tape in their next practice

@inlovewithrozanov OH. MY. GOD???

@rozanovstyle NO BUT WHY WOULD THAT BE THE MOST ILYA ROZANOV THING EVER

@rozanovchirps you're so right omg! he would totally be that bisexual who's like “hole is hole 🤪”

@81forever not “hole is hole” 🤡🤡🤡🤡

@rozanovchirps i know, but walk with me for a sec... 2013 fuckboy rozy smirking and telling the camera “hole is hole.” you just know he WOULD

@81forever ... i fear you have never been more right

@longsufferingcentaursfan how does it feel to be a fan of the gayest team in the NHL, they ask? FUCKING AWESOME, i answer

@censfanmaria LITERALLY SO TRUE. do we have a Cup? well... no... not *yet*... but do we have immaculate vibes and unmatched whimsy? FUCK YES

@ottawatheart FOR REAL. i'll never stop loving this team, because what do you MEAN they all* came to practice wearing bi tape, and NOBODY THINKS IT'S WEIRD because that's the kind of guys they are!!

@ottawatheart *all except Rozanov... who everyone seems to think is possibly bi himself? 🙄

@ottawatheart but anyways my point stands. Ottawa Centaurs = team of all time 🥇

Your No. 1 Source For All Things Ilya Rozanov

@ilyarozanovupdater

[A screenshot from @ilyarozanov81's Instagram story. It shows Ilya posing in a club with his eyes closed and his arms spread wide. He's bathed in pink, purple and blue sparks of light from the club's disco lighting. He is grinning.]

The caption reads “lots to celebrate” with a peace sign emoji.]

Ilya's most recent Instagram Story featured him grinning in a club, standing in distinctly bisexual-coloured lighting. Which could mean nothing.

@snarkyrozy this is my favourite account on this app, istg 🤡 the sass is always UNMATCHED

@81forever LMFAO YES! admin whoever you are, please know that you are so loved

@snarkyrozy this account's admin is genuinely THE ONLY person who could run it correctly & in exactly the way Ilya Rozanov himself would probably want it run 🙌

@rozrozroz lots to celebrate, huh... 🙄

@left_boston_for_ilya he's probably talking about the Cens clinching their playoff spot. but also... THAT LIGHTING??

@justagayhockeygirlie the lighting, THE SMIRK... and the fact that this came RIGHT after that practice where all the Cens were wearing bi tape...

@gayshanehollander holy shit. did Roz just lowkey confirm that he's bisexual?

@ilyasrozanova ARIANA (user gay shane hollander) WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? but also... yes. yes, he kinda did 🙄🙄🙄

@gayshanehollander ABSOLUTELY HUGE IF TRUE. i know someone who needs to see this immediately. @the_nhl_has_habs_now

@the_nhl_has_habs_now SCREAMING CRYING THROWING UP OMG. Ilya Rozanov bisexual?? dare I even hope for it?? if this actually turns out to be true, it will be one of THE best days in queer NHL history

@hollanovtruthr OH MY GOD WE ARE FINALLY FREE FROM THE PRISON OF STRAIGHT!ILYA... i thought this day would never come!! for years, everyone would tell me “no, hollanov isn't possible because Ilya is straight...” NO MORE!!

@24x81 BEST DAY EVER 🥳

@ilya_rozanov_i_would_have_your_babies I mean, technically he could still be straight?

@hereforhollanov technically, if your grandma had wheels, she would be a bike. #bisexualilya for the win!!

@rozanderstan LFGGGG #bisexualilya

Ottawa Centaurs ✓

@ottawacentaursnhl

QOTD with the Centaurs: Special Playoffs Edition! 🎯

Cens fans, we heard you – you love our pre-game QOTD sessions. So, to celebrate the team officially clinching our spot in the playoffs, we've shot a special extra edition of QOTD for you! 🎤

[A short promotional video, part of the Ottawa Centaurs' Question Of The Day series, shot at the Centaurs' practice rink. Harris Drover directs the day's question at each player as they walk in.]

HARRIS DROVER (voiceover): Question of the day! Who is the most famous person in your contacts?

PIERRE LAPOINTE: Oh, man. Honestly, it's probably Cap. Ilya Rozanov. He's pretty famous!

ERIK HOLMBERG: Oh, same. Cap, definitely.

(Cut).

ZANE BOODRAM: I have a good one. My wife is friends with Winnie Harlow. I've met her a few times too, and she's awesome. I don't think I've ever actually texted her, but I do have her number! Shoutout to Cassie for her cool connections.

(Cut).

WYATT HAYES: Oh, great question. Mine's probably Shane Hollander. Is he more famous than Ilya? I think he might be. Will Ilya kill me for saying that? Sorry, Ilya! But I did get Shane's number at All Stars. Great guy.

(Cut).

LUCA HAAS: Well, uh, this is a bit embarrassing, but mine is probably Ilya.

HARRIS (kindly): That's not embarrassing. Half the team had that exact same answer.

(Cut).

EVAN DYKSTRA: Huh. I don't really have any famous people's numbers. Unless Roz counts. Does Roz count? I guess he's pretty famous. More famous than me, for sure! Yeah, I'll go with Roz.

(Cut).

ILYA ROZANOV: My answer is... Rose Landry.

(Some scuffling can be heard in the background at this point.)

ONE OF THE CENTAURS PLAYERS (shouting, half-muffled): You do NOT have Rose Landry's number! There is no fucking way you have Rose Landry's number.

ILYA ROZANOV: I do! It's true. She is friends with my fiancé.

ANOTHER CENTAUR PLAYER: Fiancé? What the hell, Cap, when are we finally meeting your mysterious –

(Cut).

The title card drops, along with the text "Hopefully some of these famous friends will send some good-luck wishes our boys' way! Best of luck in the playoffs, team. #GoCens."]

@roselandryofficial  Good luck in the playoffs! And for all the doubters, I can exclusively confirm that Ilya Rozanov does in fact have my number 

@ottawatheart ROSE FREAKING LANDRY??? AM I DREAMING???

@longsufferingcentaursfan bestie if you are then i am having the exact same dream

@censfanmaria my jaw is on the FLOOR omg. Rose Landry in the Cens comment section???? what alternate universe is this?????

@smileyilya I MEAN... apparently Rose is friends with Ilya's fiancée

@florenceeee_81 CAN WE FREAK OUT ABOUT THAT BY THE WAY? ILYA JUST OFFICIALLY CONFIRMED THAT HE HAS A *FIANCÉE*

@inlovewithrozanov i mean... we kinda knew that already because of that one selfie he posted with the ring on his chain? the REAL thing we should be freaking out about is the fact that his fiancée is friends with THEEEEE Rose Landry

@rozanovstyle RIGHT OH MY GOD. like, we already knew Ilya's fiancée would be an absolute babe, but now she's friends with Rose Landry too? you realise this means she's most likely another actress or model 🙄

@inlovewithrozanov HOLY SHIT YOU ARE SO RIGHT. She *has* to be famous

@rozanovdefender that explains why he's taking so long to soft launch her too!!

@hollanovtruthr you're all going to call me crazy for this, but... who do we *know* is good friends with Rose Landry? and who is ALSO currently doing a long-ass soft launch on social media?

@justagayhockeygirlie ... holy shit

@hollanovtruthr YOU SEE IT RIGHT?!?! YOU SEE IT!!!!

@rozrozroz i mean. i can't NOT see it

@24x81 VINDICATIONNNNN

@hereforhollanov every day feels like another tiny step closer to Hollanov canon and i fucking LOVE it

@barrettbarrettbaby everyone freaking out about Ilya and Rose Landry (validly so tbh) but i am here wondering what the HECK Troy was talking about

@hannahthecensfan OMG i'm so glad i'm not the only one who noticed!! Troy, babe, WHOSE number did you have and then delete 🙄🙄🙄

@barrettbarrettbaby i'm sensing TEA and i know we'll probably never find out, but i for one am SO curious

@hazyismyhero lowkey same 🙄🙄🙄 it's even more intriguing because we know Troy was closeted for a long time (in his own words!) what big-time Hollywood closeted actor did he know, i wonder 🙄

@barrettbarrettbaby OOOOHHHH MY GOD I THINK YOU'VE HIT THE NAIL ON THE HEAD. oh, Troy, the things you could tell us if only you didn't hate social media 😭

@hazyismyhero LMFAO 🤡

@left_boston_for_ilya this video gave us so much to talk about, but the one thing i haven't seen anyone mention yet is how much all the Cens clearly LOVE Ilya. that is their Captain and they adore him, your honour ❤️

@rozanovdefender awww YES! he is so loved in this team. (and he is also the most famous person that most of them know, LOL 🤔)

@centaur_ilya_forever i fucking love this entire team. here's hoping they go all the way in the playoffs!

@longsufferingcensfan I BELIEVE IN MY TEAM!! the power of love and friendship will get us there 🙏

@ottawatheart amen, sister!

Getting eliminated in the playoffs always sucked, but it was even worse when it happened in a Game 7. It was the worst of *all* when it happened because of a mistake Shane made.

Well. Okay. No. Shane could acknowledge that the loss was *not* truly his fault – he did trip, yes, but Drapeau still let in the goal, and their defence was nowhere. Had *been* nowhere all game.

Still. Shane couldn't help but replay the moment he'd been chasing Ilya down, all set to catch him and poke the puck away from him, when he'd caught that *fucking* edge and gone down hard.

If he hadn't tripped, would Ilya still have scored?

Probably not, his mind told him. *But it's not impossible. He's very good.*

Even frustrated and furious as he was, the thought made Shane smile. Yes, that was his fiancé – damn good at hockey.

He was still smiling faintly when he stepped into the locker room, which was his first mistake.

The atmosphere in the locker room was sullen and frustrated, which was to be expected. But when Shane stepped inside, it shifted.

Comeau took one look at him, scoffed, and turned away.

Shane stopped short in the middle of the locker room, suddenly aware that the whole room was looking at him.

In and of itself, that wasn't too strange – he was the Captain, and they had just lost. He should probably make a bracing speech, or start making the rounds individually, or something.

But. There was something about the *weight* of the stares today. The way his teammates looked at him... It was like they were *angry*. With him.

Surely not? He had to be reading this wrong.

Shane cleared his throat and decided to try talking to them, like he would after any other loss. “Tough one, guys,” he began. “You all fought hard for it. But this wasn't your fault.”

“Yeah,” came a voice from the back of the room, sharp and cold – Drapeau. “We know.”

Shane stiffened. “What's that supposed to mean?”

“Oh, nothing much.” It was Comeau now, and his voice was snide. “Just that everyone saw how *conveniently* you tripped instead of getting the puck away from Rozanov.”

“*Excuse me?*” Shane snapped, not quite sure that he was hearing correctly. “I caught a fucking edge.”

Comeau met his eyes dead-on, and Shane was shocked at the genuine hatred in his gaze. “Sure you did,” he said contemptuously.

“Hey, what the fuck?” That was Hayden, flying upright with one skate still half-unlaced to come to Shane's defence. “What the hell are you saying, man?”

“Oh, you really don't know?” Comeau laughed, and it was an ugly sound. “Come on. Even *you're* not that stupid. You have social media, don't you?”

“What's that got to do with anything?” Hayden snapped. “This is about hockey, not Facebook.”

“Is it?” Drapeau asked coldly, and the room's attention snapped to him, like spectators in the worst kind of tennis match. Drapeau seemed to welcome it, spreading his arms mockingly. “Everyone on social media is *really* interested in how much time Shane is suddenly spending with his dear friend Rozanov.”

“I also spend time with Rozanov,” Hayden said tightly. “So I don't know what *that's* meant to imply.”

Drapeau waved a hand dismissively. “And you're stupid as hell for that, but whatever. At least *you're* not gay.” He spat out the word *gay* like it was poison.

Shane felt like he'd been backhanded through the face. “*What?*”

“Yeah, you wanna say that again?” J.J. asked, raising his voice enough that the underlying warning was loud and clear.

“Yes, I'll say it again,” Drapeau said, not giving an inch. “Hollander here is gay, and he's gay for *Rozanov*.”

J.J. looked uncomfortable for a short moment, then he squared his shoulders. “Even if that's true, so what?” he asked.

Drapeau, and half of the locker room, stared incredulously at him. “What, that doesn't bother you?”

J.J. squirmed a little, but then he shook his head decisively. “Shane can be gay for whoever the hell he wants,” he said firmly. “It doesn't change the fact that he's still *Shane*.”

Despite everything, Shane had to smile at that. He knew this couldn't be easy for J.J., who was definitely still getting used to the idea of Shane and Ilya, but it meant a *lot* that J.J. had his back now.

Comeau scoffed loudly, drawing the room's attention back to him. “It might not bother you, but it sure as fuck bothers *me*,” he said, and the venom in his voice stung almost more than the words themselves.

How long had his *teammate* been feeling this way about Shane? It had to have been for a long time, because hatred like that didn't just appear randomly one day.

“Rozanov likes women, everyone knows that,” Comeau said, speaking directly to Shane now. “But maybe you thought that if you let him win, he'd let you have what you're obviously gagging for.”

Shane could hardly breathe. “What.”

“Please. Did you honestly think no-one would notice the way you stare at him like you're two seconds away from dropping to your knees?” Comeau's voice was so scornful, so *disgusted* that it was almost physical in the air.

“I –” Shane started, but couldn't finish.

“Bad news, mate,” Comeau cut him off, sneering. “Rozanov's got a girl. So you cheated for *nothing*.”

For a moment, Shane was so blindingly angry that the room swam in front of him. Then, he had to fight back an incredulous laugh. Oh, if only Comeau knew who Ilya was actually dating.

When everything steadied, he was left with a strange hollowness in his chest. “You can't seriously think that,” he said, very quietly.

“Of course we don't!” Hayden said immediately, glaring around the room like he was daring his teammates to disagree.

“Yeah, man, this is *Shane*,” J.J. agreed, like it was obvious. “He's all about hockey. He'd never throw a game, not for anyone.”

There was a mutter in the room at that, but Shane couldn't tell if it was agreement or dissent.

He also couldn't help but notice that out of the whole locker room, only Hayden and J.J. seemed to believe that he hadn't tripped on purpose.

They were also the only ones who knew that Shane actually *was* dating Rozanov. The rest of the locker room only had rumours and homophobia to go off, but it still seemed to be enough.

At least, until one of their rookies, Taylor, spoke up. “I don't believe that Cap would throw a game, either,” he said, then winced when the weight of the whole team's gazes fell on him.

He squared his shoulders and spoke up again. “Cap's not like that. He's the best player in the league, and probably the fairest, too. He wouldn't throw a game.”

Shane gave him a little nod, which Taylor returned. It was something, at least.

“Believe what you want to believe,” Comeau said, staring Taylor down coldly. “I know what *I* saw. And I know what I won't tolerate.”

Me being gay? Shane wanted to snarl at him. *Is that what you won't tolerate?*

But he didn't have to ask, because he already had his answer.

It wasn't really about the fact that he'd tripped today. That was just an excuse. No, this was always going to happen, because people like Comeau and Drapeau simply couldn't handle that their Captain was gay, and that he was still better than them all.

A bitter part of Shane wondered if it also had something to do with the colour of his skin. Maybe it would've been fine if he was Asian *or* gay, but both at once? Too much for people like Comeau to *tolerate*, apparently.

And yes, maybe it wasn't the *whole* team who felt that way, but it was enough of them.

“Fine,” Shane said, and his voice sounded different, even to his own ears. “You won't have to tolerate it anymore.”

The pressure in the locker room seemed to shoot up as everyone collectively inhaled sharply. Even Comeau and Drapeau looked taken aback.

“Shane?” Hayden asked tentatively, when the silence had stretched uncomfortably long.

But Shane didn't say anything more. He just went to his stall and started removing his gear, slowly and methodically. When he was done, he left everything in his stall for what he now knew would be the last time.

He gathered up his things without bothering to shower. He could do that at home, where he was loved and trusted.

The locker room was deadly quiet, and everyone seemed to have frozen in place, like Shane had hit some kind of room-wide pause button.

Everyone was waiting, even if they weren't quite sure what they were waiting for.

Shane took a deep breath and looked around the locker room, at the men he'd raised the Stanley Cup with, whose backs he'd slapped after crushing losses, and who he'd considered

his brothers in that particular way you could only develop through the gruelling grind of many seasons on the same team.

“It's been an honour being your Captain,” he said at last, because he thought that it needed to be said, for his own sake as well as for theirs. “Even if you all don't feel the same, I have truly enjoyed my years in Montreal. I wish you all the best for next season.”

The silence that followed his words was somehow deeper, like the shocked stillness after a bomb was dropped.

It was Comeau who finally broke it. “Good riddance,” he said, which got him a scoff of agreement from Drapeau and one or two others.

“No, ” someone else said urgently – Shane recognised Miitka’s slightly accented English. “Hollander, wait. We don't want you to go.”

Well, *that* was the definition of too little, too late. Shane did not bother to reply.

He met Hayden’s eyes, and then J.J.’s – both his alternates, and his two best friends on the team. Both of them looked pained, but also resigned.

They knew his decision was made, and after today, he doubted either of them would even try to change his mind.

“I'll see you guys around,” he said to them, and to them only.

Then he turned towards the door.

He made a point of stopping at Taylor's stall on his way out. “You're a good kid,” Shane told him, and meant it.

Taylor tried to smile, although his expression was too anxious to really pull it off. “Thank you, Cap. I... I know I can't apologise for them, but I hope you know that *not* everyone on the team agrees with those guys.”

“I appreciate that,” Shane said, and in a way, it was true. It just didn't matter anymore. If there truly were more people who disagreed with Comeau and Drapeau’s blatant bigotry, then they'd kept quiet about it. That was just as bad as agreeing, in Shane's view.

Taylor nodded, looking more than a little helpless. “I, um... Thank you for everything you taught me,” he said in a rush. “I won't forget it.”

“Good,” Shane said, thinking of all the evenings he'd stayed late at the rink, helping Taylor practice passes and giving him tips to improve his puck control. It would be a real shame to see all that potential go to waste. “It would be nice to see you at the All-Stars in a few years. Maybe we can even be on the same team again.”

“It'd be an honour,” Taylor replied immediately. “I won't stop working hard for it.”

He was clearly determined, and Shane hoped it would work out for him. *Montreal will certainly need a star if I'm leaving*, he reflected dryly.

But that wasn't his problem anymore. No. Shane's decision was made, and it was final.

His future was going to be red and black, and *married*.

Daniel Tremblay | Voyageurs Beat Reporter ✓

@dantremblaymtl

For the first time since becoming Captain, Shane Hollander has not appeared for post-game media availability after a playoff Game 7. I'm told that Hollander has already left the Bell Centre.

Pour la première fois depuis qu'il a été nommé capitaine, Shane Hollander ne s'est pas présenté devant les médias après un septième match de séries éliminatoires. On m'indique que Hollander a déjà quitté le Centre Bell.

@voyageurs_are_king he's probably feeling guilty. as he should!! he cost us that game

@shanehollywood Right? I hate to say it, but I'm so disappointed in him. That trip came at the worst time and made us lose

@24forlife fun fact for you: a team is actually made up of more than one player. it's not ONLY shane's job to make sure we win.

@voyageurs_are_king sure, but he had the perfect opportunity to stop Rozanov from scoring, and he didn't. he fucked up, it's as simple as that

@numberoneshanefan it's not, though?? shane is a forward, not a defenceman and NOT A GOALIE. it isn't his JOB to stop the other team from scoring

@gilcomeauocks just say you know nothing about hockey 😏 Hollander is supposed to be a two-way forward. That means he's supposed to be responsible defensively too

@numberoneshanefan fuck off with your patronising tone, i know what a two-way forward is. but even the best two-way forwards can't do it all alone. where was everyone else on the ice? why did it fall to hollander alone to chase down and stop rozanov?

@24forlife what's even worse is that he probably WOULD have been able to stop rozanov if he hadn't caught an edge. it's just really bad luck. and yeah, it SUCKS, but this kind of thing happens, especially in playoff hockey

@gilcomeauocks Bad luck or just bad playing? Hollander is overrated, i've been saying this for years

@mtlhockeybabe oh you did NOT just say that three-time Stanley Cup winner, two-time Hart winner, four-time Art Ross winner and two-time Rocket Richard winner Shane Hollander is overrated. like. are you actually INSANE? sure, he made a mistake

today, and sure, you can be disappointed about it, but do NOT start making up bullshit about him suddenly being a bad player now

@numberoneshanefan THANK YOU **@mtlhockeybabe**!! finally someone is putting some respect on his name. just to be technical tho: shane will be a 5-time Art Ross winner this year, since he finished a few points above rozanov in the regular season. ALSO you forgot his 3 Ted Lindsay Awards and 2 Conn Smythe Trophies as well 😊

@mtlhockeybabe **@numberoneshanefan** omg you're RIGHT, i can't believe i left those out! and of course he'll be winning the Art Ross again this year 😊 one mistake is nothing – he is still *the* Shane Hollander

Daniel Tremblay | Voyageurs Beat Reporter ✓

@dantremblaymtl

Thierault on Hollander tripping: “It's unfortunate. It's really unfortunate. Might have cost us the game.”

Thierault, à propos de la chute de Hollander: «C'est regrettable. C'est vraiment regrettable. Cela a peut-être coûté le match.»

@princeofhockeyhollander HEY COACH THIERAULT, FUCK YOU

@allezlesvoyageurs Why “fuck you?” He's right lol. Hollander cost us that one

@princeofhockeyhollander 3 things:

#1) It's easy to point fingers and lay the blame, but in reality, there's almost never just *one* moment that loses you a game. Yeah, it's easy to say that it's the moment where the game-winning goal was conceded. But what about all the goals before that? And what about all the missed scoring chances that could have ended things sooner? It's a game of what-ifs that never ends well.

#2) Shane Hollander scored TWO OUT OF OUR THREE GOALS THIS GAME and assisted on the third. You cannot seriously be blaming the loss on him. Ask yourself this: how much faster would we have lost without him?!

#3) Why aren't you blaming Drapeau for not blocking the shot, or our defence for being fucking non-existent when they should've been there, or LITERALLY THE ENTIRE TEAM FOR LETTING FUCKING *OTTAWA* TAKE US TO OT IN GAME 7? Do you people realise how insane that is? Ottawa was the second WORST team last year. We were the defending champions. We should have swept them! It should NEVER have gone to Game 7! And that is a MUCH bigger issue than just one player

@hereforhockeychaos perfectly said **@princeofhockeyhollander** 🙌 especially the Ottawa part, because seriously, people need to realise how fucking CRAZY that is

@censfanmaria diehard Ottawa fan here, and I could not agree more

@shanezone honestly, it's fucking embarrassing for the whole organisation that ILYA ROZANOV defended Shane more than his own coach did

@marrymeshane wait, he did????

@shanezone yeah, 2secs, let me get you the clip!!

@shanezone here it is, courtesy of [@ilyarozanovupdater](#)

[A transcript of Ilya Rozanov's post-game media availability.

REPORTER: Tell us about that last goal, with Hollander chasing you down. It looked close for a moment there.

ROZANOV: Yeah, I thought he had me. He must have caught an edge, went down hard. It happens. It's playoffs – everyone is pushing so hard all the time that these little mistakes are inevitable, even for players like me and Hollander.

REPORTER: Unlucky for him, lucky for you!

ROZANOV: Not lucky. I would have beaten him anyway. (Smirks). But it would have been more difficult, for sure.

REPORTER (laughs): I'm sure the fans would have liked to see that.

ROZANOV: Me too. I love battling with Hollander. He is the best. After me, of course.]

@rozanderstan YESSS ILYA, DEFEND YOUR MANS!!

@hollanovtruther ilya rozanov smugly implying that he and shane hollander are in a league of their own, and immediately after that, telling the world that he *loves* battling with him on the ice... i fear i don't even need to say anything else. the narrative is writing itself at this point!

@sarcasticshane ...okay, so, i might need to reluctantly start becoming a rozanov fan, because what do you MEAN ilya rozanov said more to defend shane hollander than anyone from the v*yageurs bothered to do. AND he did it while smirking and chirping too

@rozrozroz one simply HAS to stan 😊😊

The Montréal Hockey Report ✓
@mtlhockeynow

Montréal's Shocking Game Seven Loss To Ottawa, And What Led To It

When the playoff brackets were finalised and it was confirmed that the Montreal Voyageurs would be facing the Ottawa Centaurs in the first round, hockey fans nationwide thought the outcome was predetermined. The defending champions versus last year's second-worst team – it was a no-brainer. Or so we all thought.

Now, after a seven-game series, it's the Centaurs who are advancing to the second round, while the defending champions have been eliminated. But how did this end up happening? Several experts weigh in below.

Click on the link to read the full article: <https://hockeynewsmtl.com/montreal-game-seven-loss-to-ottawa-20219373859>

@sarcasticshaneistan One of the most bullshit takes I've read in a long time. Why the hell are three out of four so-called experts blaming HOLLANDER for the loss?!

@allezlesvoyageurs Because he's the Captain, and he fucked up big time.

@shanezone FOR THE LAST FUCKING TIME, THIS LOSS IS *NOT* ON SHANE HOLLANDER! he played excellent hockey for that entire fucking game, but somehow the only thing anyone focuses on is the one mistake he made right at the end. the rest of the team hung him out to dry ALL GAME LONG, but no, no, the loss is all shane's fault

@gayforthevoyageursfirstline Yeah what the hell? How is it that only ONE of these "experts" said anything about our shoddy defence? Not to mention the fact that Hollander CARRIED us offensively this entire series. Without him we might actually have been swept. By fucking OTTAWA. Let that sink in.

@shanezone RIGHT, AND PEOPLE ARE STILL SOMEHOW SAYING THIS LOSS IS *HIS FAULT?* brother without shane hollander we wouldn't even BE HERE

@ottawatheheart so uh... why is this entire article focused on how hollander somehow let down the voyageurs (???) and only one throwaway paragraph at the end talking about how the centaurs played unbelievably well all series? 🤔

@centaur_ilya_forever OMG I'M SO GLAD I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE WHO NOTICED! like, where's the praise for the cens? and for ILYA?

@barrettbarrettbaby no literally! the whole team has been on fucking FIRE and deserves all the praise

@longsufferingcentaursfan LISTEN I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE WE MADE IT TO THE FREAKING PLAYOFFS 😭😭 let alone that we BEAT MONTREAL! the media might be focused on other things but WE will remember this forever

@hazyisourhero DAMN RIGHT!!

The Hockey Analyst ✅

@thehockeyanalyst

Did The Pressure Finally Get To Shane Hollander?

Montreal Voyageurs captain and star forward Shane Hollander is known for being ice-cold under pressure. However, in the shocking conclusion to the Montreal-Ottawa playoff series,

Hollander tripped on the ice at a critical moment and allowed Ottawa's Ilya Rozanov to score the game-winning goal.

It's no secret that Montreal is one of the most legendary franchises in hockey, and being its captain is a uniquely difficult challenge. Did Hollander finally snap under all that pressure? Is this something that was inevitable from the day he was first given the C?

Watch the new Hockey Analyst video below for an in-depth discussion.

@numberoneshanefan what the fuck. i don't even have the words

@24forlife my jaw is on the FLOOR. there are no words for how unbelievably retarded this take is

@shanes_canada_dry “did the pressure get to Shane Hollander” NO. what “got” to Shane Hollander was the fact that his team was NOWHERE to help him

@numberoneshanefan also, can we just note that Hollander's TOI was an exhausting 29:23. yeah. Shane Hollander played TWENTY-NINE MINUTES of hockey at the end of a brutal playoff series. and yes! he tripped at the end! but is that “the pressure getting to him,” or is it just the kind of mistake that can be reasonably expected after playing that hard for that long? he must have been dead on his feet and again, WHERE 🙌 WAS 🙌 THE 🙌 REST 🙌 OF 🙌 HIS 🙌 TEAM 🙌

@gayforthevoyageursfirstline maybe it's time to start asking ourselves why Shane Hollander is held to such a different standard than everyone else

@shanezone it's honestly getting embarrassing at this point... like, NOBODY else is getting blamed and cursed as hard as shane is, and other players arguably made even dumber mistakes than shane tripping throughout this series

@shaydenisreal But all those other players are white. Let's just call this what it is: racism. People can't handle the fact that an Asian man is the best player in the league, so the second he makes any mistake, they're all over him.

@shanezone i REALLY hate to agree with a shayden fan, but in this case... you are completely right, and you should say it.

@gilcomeaurocks Oh my god, of course the woke squad is trying to blame this on racism. It's literally not. People are just rightfully calling out Hollander for costing us another Cup. Shut up and let the men who know talk about hockey.

@marrymeshane excuse me, “the men who know?” and who might they be? all i see here are racist clowns who would rather blame the one asian player on the team than admit that their precious white faves *might* have made a mistake

@mtlhockeybabe I hate to say this, but if this carries on next season... I'm genuinely not sure we'll be able to bring back another Cup.

@snarkyrozy and honestly, good riddance

Meegan | Missing Ilya Rozanov Hours

@boston.misses.u.ilya

Guys. GUYS. I know that all us hockey fans are currently losing our minds over the playoffs, but I've just figured out THE HOTTEST bit of NHL gossip to distract us. That's right: I know who Ilya Rozanov's girlfriend/fiancée is! (1/10)

Here's my first piece of evidence:

[A screenshot of Ilya Rozanov's Instagram story, made using Create Mode. The pink, purple and blue background has been used, with bold white text.]

The text reads: "Can't wait for this next series. I've never had a fiancé there to cheer me on before, but now I do!" and a red heart.]

This tells us that Ilya's fiancée **didn't** attend the Montreal-Ottawa playoff series, but **will** be attending the Ottawa-New York series (2/10)

Now, you may be wondering why the heck Ilya's fiancée WOULDN'T attend. Well, 2 reasons. 1) is that he hasn't finished soft launching her yet, so she can't really sit with the other Ottawa WAGs unless he's ready for a hard launch. And 2) if she is who I think she is, she had a completely legitimate business reason not to be there. (3/10)

Which brings me to my next piece of evidence:

[A screenshot of Svetlana Vetrova's Instagram story. It shows a screenshot of the Ottawa-New York playoff bracket, with a caption in Russian, which, translated, reads "Did not see this one coming, but I am so proud. Congratulations @ilyarozanov81 for leading your team all the way here!"]

Another screenshot shows that Ilya Rozanov reposted her story, adding a red heart.]

Do you see what I'm getting at? (4/10)

You may be thinking "but Meegan, who is this Svetlana Vetrova person? How do we know she's not just some random Ilya Rozanov supporter? Also, Ilya has been reposting many fans' Stories congratulating him. This doesn't mean anything." Well, I answer, Svetlana Vetrova is the daughter of Sergei Vetrov, a legendary Bears goalie... and also Ilya Rozanov's childhood sweetheart. (5/10)

Yup. That's right. Svetlana is Ilya's childhood sweetheart. We know this because, before he joined the NHL, Ilya had a profile on an older Russian social media site called VK. On his profile there, he had a photo of himself kissing Svetlana's cheek.

[A screenshot of Ilya Rozanov's VK profile in 2006, showing a fifteen-year-old Ilya kissing Svetlana's cheek. Svetlana is giggling, her hand cupping Ilya's cheek.]

Cutest thing you've ever seen, right? (6/10)

We also have proof that Ilya and Svetlana dated on-and-off once he joined the NHL as well.

[A short clip of Ilya and Svetlana dancing and kissing in a Boston club.]

It doesn't seem like they were exclusive or even serious back then, but that's not the case anymore! (7/10)

My theory is that everything changed after Ilya's father died. This was in 2017, and Ilya missed some games to fly to Moscow for the funeral. Nobody was there to comfort him... except his childhood sweetheart Svetlana! We have proof that she was at Grigory Rozanov's funeral.

[A rather solemn picture of a large group of people attending a funeral. Svetlana, dressed in black, is by Ilya's side. The angle of the photo does not make it quite clear, but she seems to be holding his hand.]

I think that Ilya realised at this moment, or soon after, that Svetlana was it for him, and they made things official. (8/10)

This also explains why Ilya hasn't really been seen with any women since 2017. If you think about it, it even explains why he left Boston: because Svetlana started working for the Bears organisation soon after. I'm guessing she didn't want to be seen as someone who slept with the star to get a job, so that's why they kept things quiet and, eventually, why he moved teams. Putting his girl first – I know that's right! (9/10)

What's more, this even explains why she couldn't be there for him in the first round of the playoffs: the Bears were playing their own series against Tampa, and since she works for the team, she had to be there for that. But as we know, the Bears are eliminated now (😞) so that leaves Svetlana free to support her boyfriend in the second round. Which Ilya is clearly looking forward to, because he posted his own story *and* reposted hers. Conclusion: they're together, and it's only a matter of time until they tell us officially. I rest my case. (10/10)

@rozanovlover13 oh my god... if this is true, it's the most romantic thing I've ever read.

@hereforhockeychaos personally i can't decide if this is romantic or creepy as fuck. i mean, who cares THIS much about who their idol is dating?

@goalsandgirlfriends not to mention that, if it IS true, they spent years keeping this very private... and now this person has shamelessly upended that privacy

@rozanovstyle i mean, to be fair, they are clearly not hiding it anymore, but i hear you... it's still a bit weird lol. just let the man tell us in his own time!

@left_boston_for_ilya so uh... am i the only one who feels like there are a lot of things that don't quite add up here? 🤔

@boston.misses.u.ilya What do you mean?

@left_boston_for_ilya okay. SO. we have very limited actual information about Ilya Rozanov's partner (yes, PARTNER - we don't know that it's a woman!!) but what we do know is this:

#1: Ilya's partner is friends with Rose Landry. (He confirmed this in a QOTD video with the Cens. Rose herself also confirmed - !!!)

#2: Ilya's partner was **definitely** in Ottawa for Valentine's Day. Svetlana Vetrova was not (the Bears had a game on the 14th of Feb, and she was seen in attendance. I checked).

also... all your "evidence" really shows is that Ilya has known Svetlana for a long time, MAYBE dated her at one point when they were younger, and that they still have a good relationship today. that... is not at all the same as irrefutable proof that they're engaged right now. your story about them falling for each other after his dad's funeral is very moving, but based on **literally nothing concrete** i fear

OH AND ONE MORE THING! if Ilya really is dating Svetlana, why on earth would he move to OTTAWA of all places? I can maybe understand why he left Boston, but to Ottawa? What? Literally why? It makes zero sense.

Conclusion: his fiancé is NOT Svetlana Vetrova. Sorry.

@rozanovchirps damn @boston.misses.u.ilya she ate your ass with that 🤪

@boston.misses.u.ilya Whatever, I still think it's possible! Besides, it's not like you have any BETTER theories for who his mysterious fiancée could be.

@hollanovtruther well, actually 🤪👍 do you know who **is** friends with Rose Landry and was **confirmed** to be in Ottawa for Valentine's Day? and is also a person for whom it would make ACTUAL SENSE for Ilya to move to Ottawa? that's right everybody: it's Shane Hollander

@rozrozroz i can't even lie, that argument was twice as convincing as the Svetlana Vetrova one, and she only needed like 2 sentences to make it 🤪🤪 (this is not intended as slander to Svetlana Vetrova btw. i looked her up and holy fuck she is an actual GODDESS)

@rozanovstyle she really is STUNNING! i kinda want to believe this rumour just because they would make such a fucking gorgeous couple

@hereforhollanov i mean... Shane Hollander is pretty damn gorgeous too. he and Ilya would ALSO make an incredibly hot couple

@rozanovstyle That... is actually such a good point. Holy fucking shit. But do we actually think Roz has enough game to bag Shane Hollander? Yeah, he's Ilya Rozanov, but that's SHANE HOLLANDER, you know

@inlovewithrozanov i believe in my captain!! if anyone has that much game, it's him 🙏 (also lowkey can't believe those words just left my mouth, but FUCK IT WE BALL)

@24x81 HELL YEAH, COME JOIN US ON THE HOLLANOV SHIP. we have cookies (and a seriously hot pair of guys to drool over)

@rozrozroz ...sold

Chapter End Notes

i felt like i couldn't leave off this chapter on the sour note that is the montreal media, and so i added in a completely different bit of social media just as a small hint of what's (or who) is coming next chapter 🤔

thank you so much for sticking with me so far! please do let me know what you've thought ❤️

Chapter 5: May

Chapter Notes

not a lot happens in the book TLG in the month of May, which meant that i could go WILD and make up scenes that i would have loved to see in the book (or in season 2!) hope these make you all smile too :)

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

It had been years, Ilya thought, since hockey had made him feel *this* happy. They had just gotten a spectacular win over New York at home, and even better, Shane had been in the stands to watch him do it. And it all felt somehow even *better* than he'd imagined.

When his phone starts buzzing in his stall, Ilya picks it up without checking who it is, already smiling. "Hello, my love. Did you miss me already?"

"Hello, Ilya," replied a voice that was decidedly *not* Shane's, in Russian. "I did miss you, actually."

"Sveta?" Ilya asked, surprised but no less pleased. "It's so good to hear from you!"

"I can't say the same, because I haven't heard from you in *forever*," Svetlana replied archly. "What, do cellphones stop working in Ottawa? Or is there something in the air there that makes people forget about their best friends?"

Ilya winced, his good mood dimming just a little. He probably deserved that.

When he had first told Sveta that he was planning to move to Ottawa, she had told him he was crazy. Then she had tried to convince him to get *Jane* to come to Boston instead, cap space be damned, he could take a team friendly deal. *Then*, when he wouldn't budge, she had told him that he'd better make Ottawa's rebuild truly worthwhile, and that she expected weekly phone calls at least.

He'd tried to keep to the weekly phone calls at first, but he was just so *busy* with the new team, and the new city, and his new relationship too. Soon, weekly became more like monthly.

But he did still call her. Or, well. He used to.

He'd let it trail off about a year ago, he thought – when the depression really started to get worse.

It hadn't been an intentional choice, not at the time. But he realised now that a part of him had known all along that if Svetlana, his oldest friend, talked to him, she would *know* that

something was seriously wrong. And he hadn't been ready to face that.

So he'd stopped returning her calls. He'd still texted, just enough that she wouldn't fly up to physically check on him, but it wasn't the same and he knew it.

"I'm sorry," Ilya said, meaning it. "I was... I had a rough patch. But things are much better now."

"Hmph," Svetlana huffed, but he could tell that she was softening a little already. "You will tell me all about it when you buy me a *very* expensive dinner. You have a lot of making up to do."

"Of course," Ilya agreed quickly. "It will be nice to catch up again. Of course, it will have to wait until June."

"June?" Svetlana echoed, her tone incredulous. "Ilyusha, you cannot think that your team is going to win the Cup?"

"What, you're not cheering for the Centaurs?" Ilya asked, mock-offended.

Svetlana's disbelieving scoff was so wonderfully familiar that Ilya found himself smiling like an idiot. "I am very proud of you for getting this team so far, but, please. You are not winning the Cup this year," she said, like there wasn't any room for doubt. "Tampa will."

"*Tampa?*" Ilya repeated. "No."

"Yes!" Svetlana countered firmly. "*You* might have won one against New York, but that's all you'll get. New York will beat you 4-1, and then Tampa will take the conference finals. They have been the best team in the postseason by far."

"I can't believe you're not cheering for me," Ilya said, still pretending to be offended, even though Svetlana was most likely right. She usually was, when it came to hockey.

"Yes, you can," Svetlana said dryly, not letting him get away with any bullshit. She never did. "But enough. This is not why I called."

"Why did you call, then?"

"Well, I got tired of waiting for you to call me and tell me what I already know," she said, in exactly the kind of tone she always used to use when she asked Ilya about *Jane*.

"Ah," Ilya said, and winced again.

Svetlana made a little huffing noise, which came through as a crackle of static over the line. "The last thing you told me about *Jane* was that the two of you made things official at his cottage, but that you would wait until you both retired to come out. I assume this plan has changed now?"

"Yes," Ilya agreed, unable to keep the joy from seeping into his voice. "Yes, we're getting married this summer."

“Congratulations, Ilyusha,” Svetlana said softly, and he could hear the wistful smile in her voice. “I’m so happy for you.”

“Thank you,” he said, leaning against the side of the stall and letting himself picture it. “You’ll be invited, by the way.”

“Well, I would hope so!” she snapped, but he knew her well enough, even after all these years, that he could hear the smile in her voice.

“You know, I’ve been thinking of flying to Ottawa when you’re done with this playoff series,” Svetlana said, like it was just something minor and not one of the most shocking things she’d ever said to Ilya.

“Sveta, what? You once told me *Ottawa is the most boring city in the world. I don’t care how handsome and talented your Jane is, but I am not going there unless it is an emergency. You can bring him to Boston to meet me.*”

Svetlana snickered. “And I still think that. But *clearly*, leaving it in your hands to plan our meeting was the wrong decision.” She clicked her tongue. “*Men.*”

“You want to meet Sh– *Jane*?” Ilya asked, not quite sure why the idea made his heart twist with longing.

“Of course I want to meet him! He’s the man who’s going to be your husband,” Svetlana replied, like it was obvious. “Also, it’s *Shane Hollander.*”

Even though Ilya had *known* that Svetlana knew exactly who Jane was, it was still a shock to hear her say the words out loud.

Unbothered, Svetlana continued, “I’ve wanted to meet him for years. You have been hiding him away from me for far too long.”

“It wasn’t on purpose,” Ilya said, biting his lip as he thought back over the years where he *could* have tried to make that meeting happen. “It was... Sveta, you have to understand. Even after I came to Ottawa, we still got *so* little real time together. Every free second we had, we tried to spend with each other, and it still wasn’t enough. We had to be so careful, leaving early in the morning and hiding so well, and it was just... It was so hard.”

“I’m sorry,” Svetlana said softly.

“It’s okay now,” Ilya assured her. “It’s so much better now. We’re not hiding anymore, and we’re getting ready to tell the whole world in the summer. And then next year...”

“Next year?” Svetlana echoed, her voice suddenly very sharp and intent. Oh, yes, Ilya had *known* she was much too smart to miss that hint. “Is Hollander planning to...”

“Yes. Yes, he wants to come here, too. It’s not confirmed yet, of course, but...”

“But Ottawa might actually win the Cup next season,” Svetlana said, like she couldn’t believe the words even as they left her mouth.

Ilya couldn't have stopped his grin even if he tried. "Yes. We will. Together."

"My God, Ilya," Svetlana said after a long silence.

"I know," Ilya agreed, more than a little smugly.

"I know you are smirking right now," Svetlana said dryly. "You are *so* pleased with yourself, aren't you?"

"Yep," Ilya agreed, popping the *p*.

Svetlana rolled her eyes. Ilya couldn't see her, of course, but he knew she did. "Well, then, I've kept you long enough. Go say hi to that fiancé of yours."

"I will," Ilya agreed, and he could *feel* the way his own smug smirk softened into something hopelessly fond.

"I'll see you after you have finished losing to New York," Svetlana told him, barrelling on before he could even make an offended noise. "Please make reservations at the best restaurant in Ottawa."

"Nothing less for you," Ilya agreed, half-solemnly and half-playfully.

"Good," Svetlana said, and Ilya could hear the smile in her voice. "I will need *something* interesting to keep me from dying of boredom in Ottawa."

"Yeah, yeah," Ilya said, and he could hear the fondness in his own voice, which was a bit embarrassing. "It grows on you. It may seem boring at first, but soon it becomes... everything you have ever wished for. Home."

"We're not talking about Ottawa anymore, are we?" Svetlana asked in the tone of voice that said she already knew the answer.

"No," Ilya confirmed, picturing Shane's smile and the way they fell into each other's arms after a long day. "No, we're not."

"Go home, then," Svetlana told him, and he knew that she meant *go to Shane*. "I'll see you soon."

"Bye, Sveta," Ilya said, smiling at the side of his stall. "Thank you for calling. I can't wait to catch up properly."

"I'll hold you to that," Svetlana said, and although her voice was sharp, he could tell that she was smiling, too. "Bye, Ilyusha."

Then, since Svetlana was almost always right, Ilya decided to follow her instructions and go to his home. To Shane.

Hot Off The Ice: NHL Gossip Updates

@hot_off_the_ice

Shane Hollander has been spotted attending Game 3 of the New York-Ottawa playoff series! Hollander was accompanied by his parents, David and Yuna. 🏒

Sources also say that Hollander visited Ottawa's locker room after the game. 🦶

[A photo of Shane, Yuna and David Hollander on the Jumbotron at the New York-Ottawa game. Shane is wearing a nondescript black hoodie and jeans. His parents are both wearing Centaurs merch: a scarf for Yuna and a cap for David. All are smiling.]

@centaur_ilya_forever yessss I was at this game!! they all waved very awkwardly (but cutely) when they popped up on the jumbotron. it was great to see them!

@snarkyrozy cute, but what the fuck are Hollander and his parents doing here?

@ottawatheart David and Yuna Hollander sometimes attend Cens games – it's their hometown team! Maybe they decided to bring Shane along this time

@snarkyrozy sure, OK... but why would Hollander *want* to go? the Cens just kicked his ass in the last round 🧠

@princeofhollanderhockey maybe he wants to see the Cens get THEIR asses kicked by New York 🤔

@longsufferingcentaursfan HEY! we actually won this game!

@captainamericascott yeah, because my team is aiming for a gentleman's sweep. we're nice like that 😊

@gilcomeauocks Hollander, what a fucking traitor. Don't know why we're even surprised anymore though.

@gayshanehollander oh get OVER yourself. it's a free country! he's allowed to attend other teams' games if he really wants to

@numberoneshanefan yeah, seriously, this is NOT a crime. maybe he's there to support a friend!

@hollanovtruther a friend or a Friend... 😊

@hereforhollanov YUPPP. my headcanon is that they're all there to support Ilya ☺

@shanezone I MEAN... even if you take RPF out of the equation, that's the most likely explanation! Shane and Ilya are definitely good friends, and we know that Ilya gets along with the Hollander parents too. it kinda makes sense – and it's really sweet

@24x81 okay. OKAY. SO. EVERYBODY STAY CALM. Shane Hollander came to Ottawa to watch Ilya play (!) AND then went to visit him in the locker room afterwards

(!!) *AND* this all happened right after Ilya posted that story saying that his fiancé will be cheering him on this series (!!!)

@rozrozroz hello 🐼

@hollanovtruther i'm just going to say it, guys: ALL the signs are there if you look for them. literally ALL of them, and they add up so perfectly

@boston.misses.u.ilya No they don't! You're just using a few coincidences to “prove” your desired outcome. But that doesn't make it true!

@rozanderstan hey, aren't you that girl who thought that Ilya was dating Svetlana Vetrova?

@boston.misses.u.ilya Yeah, that's me. Why?

@rozanderstan just saying... you're a fine one to talk about using a series of coincidences as “proof” 😭💀

@shilyaaaa also... how many “coincidences” can you HAVE until it starts to become something more?

@the_nhl_has_habs_now all i know is that whatever is going on with Hollander and Rozanov, coincidence or not... it's giving me more hope for a gay NHL than literally ever before. i hope they never stop 🙏

@justagayhockeygirlie i feel like we need to take a second to appreciate how insane it is that “Shane Hollander Attended A Playoff Game To Support Ilya Rozanov” is just kinda... normal now? Well, okay, no, it's still insane, but like. It's only the fifth most insane thing they've done this month, so it's *almost* unsurprising at this point

@hereforhockeychaos literally so true oh my god. if you told ANY of that to me last year, i would've laughed at you. but now i'm just nodding like “oh yeah, seems legit”

@goalsandgirlfriends YUPPP. one of these days i'll unironically be starting a “goals and boyfriends” page just for them

@hollanovtruther OMG DO IT

@goalsandgirlfriends really? 🤔🤔 i was mostly joking, but like, would you guys actually be interested in that?

@shilyaaaa FUCK YES!!!

@hollanovtruther YES!

@rozanderstan yessss

@rozrozroz yes!!

@shanezone yes.

@justagayhockeygirlie yes ❤️🧡💛💚💙💜

Ilya Rozanov ✓

@ilyarozanov81

[A brief video of Ilya walking up to a person in a long winter coat and falling into their arms. They hug for a long minute, swaying slightly, before the video cuts to black.]

Can't wait to come home to you every day.

@inlovewithrozanov oh 🙄🙄

@rozanovdefender this is so tender, oh my god... tell me why there are actual tears in my eyes. Ilya, you deserve to come home to this person EVERY DAY!! 😭😭

@smileyilya to everyone who called him a fuckboy who'd never settle down... i hope you watch this video and eat your words

@left_boston_for_ilya no, truly... this right here is a man who is deeply in love and just wants to spend the rest of his life with his person

@inlovewithrozanov and i, for one, thing it's the loveliest thing ever 😭❤️

@rozrozroz i can't believe *i'm* going to be the one who says this, but, um. guys. GUYS. ARE WE GOING TO TALK ABOUT THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM?

@hereforhollanov do you mean the fact that the person in the video is a) very clearly a man and b) a man who looks A WHOLE LOT like Shane Hollander??

@rozrozroz yes. yes, that is in fact *exactly* what i mean

@hockeyalphas What? No. It's clearly a woman. Women can have short hair too, you know. Lots of hot chicks do.

@justagayhockeygirlie i mean, yeah, but come on... it is uncanny how much the person in this video looks like Shane Hollander

@hockeyalphas Nah, how can you POSSIBLY know that? His back is to the camera the entire time!

@whorefortwentyfour well, uh, you see, some of us are very dedicated Shane fans and we happen to know *exactly* how he looks from behind

@rozanderstan also, the fact that Ilya's partner has short black hair & a hockey player's build is just one more in a series of WILD coincidences

@24x81 YEAH. they're not even *trying* to be subtle anymore

@shanezone FURTHER proof (as if we need it at this point) – Shane Hollander definitely owns a coat that that looks **exactly** like that one. I believe it was a gift from Rose Landry

@hollanovtruther you see? YOU SEE!! it's them, your honour. it's THEM.

Rose Landry, Shane reflected, was the best friend he could ever ask for.

All it had taken was one text – *SOS, Ilya's extremely beautiful ex-girlfriend slash best friend who he once said he might MARRY wants to have dinner with us* – and Rose had rearranged her entire schedule for him.

Well if that's the case, you should have YOUR extremely beautiful ex-girlfriend slash best friend there too!! Rose had texted back, along with a confirmation of her flight to Ottawa.

Shane had checked and double-checked if she was *sure* that it was okay for her to rearrange her commitments like that, but Rose had waved him off. “I had a break anyway, I just shifted around some of my holiday plans. I wouldn't do it if I wasn't sure,” she'd said firmly, and that had been that.

Ilya hadn't been quite as pleased with the whole idea, but he'd caved when Svetlana had said in no uncertain terms that she would *love* to meet Rose Landry.

So now he was leaning on the side of his car, which was parked in a narrow little side street next to Rose's ridiculously fancy hotel. The hotel was letting her use one of its side entrances for discretion.

Shane's phone buzzed with two texts in rapid succession. The first was from Rose: *I minute away*, it said, with a little smiley face emoji.

The second was from Ilya. *I've just picked up Sveta. Let me know when you and Rose leave? I love you.*

Shane sent a thumbs-up to Rose, and a heart to Ilya. *I love you too. Leaving in 2 minutes*, he added.

Sure enough, Rose ducked out of the side door a moment later, waving at him. She was wrapped in a stylish cream-coloured coat with dark brown boots that came up to her knees. She looked, as always, very well-dressed and very pretty.

“Hey, stranger!” Rose greeted him, beaming as she opened her arms for a hug.

Shane couldn't help smiling back at her. “Hey, Rose.”

She held out her arms and pulled him in for a tight hug. “Oh, my God, it has been *too long*.”

“I know, I know,” Shane said wryly. “You know how it is. But I missed you, too.”

“Good!” Rose declared, bouncing back on her heels and pointing one finger at him. “Well, come on then, catch me up on *everything*.”

“Everything?” Shane echoed, amused. “There's been a lot going on!”

“The important details, *obviously*,” Rose said with a playful roll of her eyes. “Come on, Mr Hockey IQ, I need to know the play. How should I be acting when we get to this dinner? Should I be the bitch ex-girlfriend, or are we trying to kill her with kindness?”

Shane had to laugh. “None of that, oh my God, you're impossible.”

“But you love me,” she countered, not seeming fazed at all. “And you texted me a *SOS*. That means you need me here for something! So, tell me what it is.”

“Let's get going first,” Shane suggested dryly, gesturing towards his car.

Rose waved a hand like she was saying, “*details*,” but she stepped into the car when Shane opened the door for her. By the time he'd rounded the car and gotten in himself, she was already staring him down expectantly.

“Ugh. Okay,” Shane began, starting the car and pulling away. “So, Svetlana is one of Ilya's oldest friends. I think I've told you about her before? They grew up together, and they used to hook up – before Ilya and I made it official, of course.”

He sighed, tapping his fingers on the steering wheel. “It's *not* that I think Ilya's going to cheat on me or anything. He would never. It's just... That first summer when he came to my cottage, when we were still figuring things out, he said that he could *marry* her. It would just have been as a way to get American citizenship, but I also knew that he could be *happy* married to her. He really could.”

Shane shook his head sharply. Even now, almost four years later, the memory was still one that stung. “Obviously, he's marrying me now, and I *know* he's happy with me, so there's no reason for me to feel... I don't know, insecure, or anything like that. But.”

“But Svetlana is still a sore spot for you?” Rose guessed accurately.

Shane sighed. “Yeah. Does that make me a terrible person?”

“Of course not,” Rose said kindly. “It just makes you human.”

Shane released another heavy whoosh of breath, feeling his shoulders loosen just slightly as he did. “I guess you're right.”

“Oh, I am always right, and you know it,” Rose said playfully. “But especially this time. It's completely normal to have complicated feelings about your partner's exes. Especially if that ex is still in their life. I mean, Ilya took *years* to start actually liking me, and you're literally gay.”

Shane snorted a laugh. “True.”

“It'll probably be a little awkward at first,” Rose said frankly. “But you've got nothing to worry about, because I'll have your back the entire time. I mean, if I can pretend that I'm interested in eighty-year-old producers' stories about their glory days and how things were *so* much better way back when, then I can *definitely* smooth over one awkward dinner.”

She smiled encouragingly at him. “I'll be your lifeline. If I notice you starting to look stressed, I'll just start talking to her about her brand of lipstick, or where she got the dress she's wearing.”

“And that'll work?” Shane asked dubiously.

“Oh, Shane,” Rose said, half-pitying and half-fond. “It'll definitely work. Maybe even for long enough that you can sneak off to the bathrooms and fit in a makeout with your sexy, sexy fiancé.”

That, Shane knew, would settle him more than anything else ever could.

“You really are the best,” Shane told her, meaning it with his whole heart.

Rose flipped her hair and gave him a playful smile. “Don't I know it.”

“I really mean it, though,” Shane said, holding her gaze for as long as he could before he had to focus on the road again. “I don't know what I would've done without you tonight. I would've had to pull over on the way here because I was freaking out, probably.”

“Well, you're very welcome,” Rose said, her voice warm. “Oh, hang on, are we there already? That was quick.”

Shane nodded, feeling his nervousness rising as he found a parking spot and pulled in smoothly.

Rose noticed, of course, patting his shoulder reassuringly. “You've got this,” she said bracingly. “Come on, you've done *way* harder things than this.”

“Have I?” Shane wondered, only half-rhetorically.

Rose snorted and opened her door. “Pretending to be straight, for one,” she said cheekily.

“Ouch,” Shane said, laughing as he followed her out of the car and into the restaurant.

They were waved through to a private room, one of those that was completely walled off from the rest of the restaurant. Which was good, because tonight wasn't for social media or anyone else – it was just for them.

“Oh my God, you weren't kidding, she is *gorgeous*,” Rose whispered as they approached the table.

“Yeah,” Shane agreed, a little glumly.

Rose elbowed him gently. “Don't be like that. You're gorgeous too. And so am I! Wow, we're probably going to be the most attractive table in the whole restaurant.”

“I agree, Rose Landry,” Svetlana said, rising from the table and offering her hand to Rose to shake. “It is lovely to meet you.”

“And *you*, Shane Hollander,” she said, turning to him with a smile that Shane found mildly terrifying. “I have been an admirer of your wrist shot for a long time. I cannot believe Ilya has kept you hidden from me for so long.”

“Sveta, I told you it was not on purpose,” grumbled Ilya, who had also stood up to greet Rose with a quick kiss on the cheek.

“I think you were just afraid I was going to steal him away from you,” Svetlana teased him.

Shane couldn't help himself. He snorted. “Yeah, uh, that wouldn't have gone too well for you.”

“Yes, you would have failed completely. It would have been very funny for me to watch. I never get to see you fail to pick someone up,” Ilya said with a smirk.

“I can imagine,” Rose said from to Shane's left, giving Svetlana a distinctly admiring look. “By the way, where *did* you get that dress? It looks so good on you.”

As Svetlana answered, Ilya ducked around her to finally hug Shane hello, holding onto him for just a few moments than what was probably platonic.

“Hi,” he said, blue eyes flickering all over Shane's face. “Everything OK on the drive here?”

“All good,” Shane said softly, brushing his hand over Ilya's, which was resting tenderly on Shane's hip.

“Good,” Ilya replied, equally softly.

“Cute,” Svetlana said dryly from behind them.

Shane glanced over and was surprised to see that she and Rose had already taken their seats. Svetlana had one eyebrow slightly raised, while Rose just looked fond.

“You two can get lost in each other's eyes another time,” Rose said mock-sternly. “Now, let's chat.”

And they did. Shane was shocked by how easily the conversation flowed – which, if he was honest, was probably because Svetlana mostly wanted to talk about hockey.

That was one of the few topics Shane was completely comfortable with, so of course he answered eagerly. And Svetlana knew *so much* – she might honestly be the first person Shane had met who could rival his own almost encyclopaedic knowledge of hockey stats and facts.

The wine was flowing too, courtesy of Rose's good taste in wine pairings, and by the end of the evening, Shane was convinced he was half in love with Svetlana.

"In a platonic way, of course," he told a very tipsy Rose, who giggled along. "Though, I mean, if I'd never met Ilya, and if she was a man..."

"Yeah," Rose sighed, looking wistful. "Same."

Shane gave her a sideways look.

Rose flushed a little. "What? I'm just *saying*. She's like... perfect."

"I mean..." Shane began carefully. "Are you a *hundred* percent sure that you're straight?"

"Yes," Rose said mournfully. Then she sighed. "No? Well, maybe. I don't *know*."

"Well, if you ever want to find out..." Shane began, and let the sentence trail off meaningfully.

Rose shook her head immediately, hunching her shoulders a little. "Oh, I couldn't."

"Why not?" Shane asked. "I mean, if she's anything like Ilya – and he hinted that she *is* – then she's bisexual. And, you know." He could feel himself starting to blush fiery red. "Very good in bed."

"Don't be terrible!" Rose gasp-laughed, but it didn't sound like she really meant it. If anything, she almost sounded... intrigued.

"I'm not!" Shane protested. "I mean, it's like you told me." He paused for breath, then said solemnly, "It's okay to be gay."

Rose hiccuped a laugh, swatting his arm. "Wow."

"I'm right, though," Shane pointed out.

Rose's laugh settled into a contemplative smile. "I guess you are."

Shane smiled back at her, trying to tell her without words to go for it, if she wanted to. He wasn't sure he was doing quite as good a job of coaxing someone through a potential gay awakening as Rose herself had, but hopefully his words meant something, at least.

It had taken Shane a while to get there, but now, he would happily acknowledge that being gay was probably the best thing that had ever happened to him, because without that, he probably never would have had Ilya in his life the way he did now.

It was about time that Rose found some of that same happiness, he thought. He hoped for her sake that it would come sooner rather than later, because being happy and in love was, honestly, the best feeling in the entire fucking world.

Shane Hollander

@shanehollanderhockeyplayer ✓

[A photo taken at Shane's cottage. A group of people is gathered in front of a low wooden table which holds a large chocolate cake. The cake has several candles as well as a large amount of Snickers bars randomly scattered across its surface.

Shane is sitting front and centre, wearing a soft white henley that is slightly big on him. Clearly visible against the white fabric is the golden chain Shane is wearing, with a black-and-gold ring resting at the centre of his chest.

To Shane's right, with an arm thrown over his shoulders, is Ilya Rozanov. Next to Ilya is a smiling Jackie Pike, with Hayden seated beside her, an arm around her waist.

To Shane's left is Rose Landry, who is beaming at the camera. Beside her is J.J. Boiziau.

Behind Shane are his parents, both of whom are smiling proudly. Yuna has one hand resting on Shane's shoulder, and the other hand on Ilya's shoulder right beside him.]

My favourite place, with all my favourite people. ❤️

@sarcasticshanestan Oh man, this is so sweet 😊 Even my sarcastic heart is melting!

@numberoneshanefan SAME 😭 it's just so special to me that Shane is finally in a place where he feels like he can post these things, you know? maybe it's a little parasocial of me, but i am just SO glad to see him being happy <3

@24forlife YESSSS! honestly, we used to be so starved for *any* glimpses into Shane's private life, so the bits he shares now feels like a blessing every time

@shanes_canada_dry i am SUCH a terrible gossip, but i have to say that i find the group of people Shane describes as “my favourite people” SO interesting. his parents, cute. his long-time hockey besties, check. his ex-girlfriend who he's still good friends with – interesting, but sure. and then lastly: HIS NHL RIVAL???

@princeofhockeyhollander to be completely fair, Shane & Ilya haven't been “rivals” for a long time now. on the ice, sure, but off the ice... please, lmao. those two LOOOOVE each other's company

@mtlhockeybabe they really do seem to enjoy each other's company! it's weirdly sweet

@hereforhollanov is it sweet, or is it romantic... 🧐 don't people say that your lover should be your best friend, too?

@mtlhockeybabe that is honestly so sweet that i can't even be mad at the RPF 😊

@rozanderstan that's #myhollanov: rivals on the ice, who can't get enough of each other's company off it ❤️

@shanezone OH MY GOD. oh god. okay. so. i just saw something UNBELIEVABLY huge. and i do mean unbelievable. like, i even took a screenshot and zoomed in like ten times in a row, and i am **still** not quite believing what i'm seeing

@shanezone *[a zoomed-in screenshot of Shane's post, focusing on Shane's chest and specifically the necklace he is wearing. The ring resting in the centre of Shane's chest has been circled in red]*

@marrymeshane SHANE??? IS THAT AN HONEST TO GOD WEDDING RING???

@gayshanehollander it is. it really is. Shane Hollander has a wedding ring.
EVERYBODY STAY CALM

@hollanovtruther HOLY. FUCKING. SHIT.

@24x81 the way my jaw just DROPPED... tell me that ring is not the **exact** match of Ilya's ring in #ring-gate a while back

@hereforhollanov NO BUT IT IS LITERALLY IDENTICAL

@justagayhockeygirlie RING GATE 2: ELECTRIC BOOGALOO

@rozrozroz 🤪🤪🤪

@thehollanovarchives Analysis time: I've taken and enhanced screenshots of both rings, and oh my god. Guys. GUYS.

@thehollanovarchives *[a photo showing Ilya and Shane's rings side by side]*

Both rings are black on the outside with gold on the inside. Both rings are exactly the same thickness and style. Both rings have subtle engraving on the inside that we can't quite make out in the photos, but which **seems** like it might match. And finally, both of them wear the rings on matching gold chains.

I don't even have the words. This is... this is beyond huge. This is **the** closest to a confirmation that I think we have EVER come

@hollanovtruther AJDJDHFJFBDNHSSHDHJD i am literally hyperventilating.
MATCHING RINGS??? WHAT DO YOU **MEAN** MATCHING RINGS????!!!!

@hereforhollanov if this isn't proof, then idk what is

TMZ 

@tmz

Could The NHL's Ilya Rozanov and Shane Hollander Be Soft Launching... Each Other?

Over the past few weeks, NHL stars and famous rivals-turned-friends Ilya Rozanov and Shane Hollander have both embarked on social media soft-launching campaigns for their respective partners. Nothing unusual there – lots of celebrities decide to soft-launch their new beaus before making it fully Instagram official.

But some hockey fans have another theory: there are no “respective partners” at all. Instead, the two hockey stars are – wait for it – soft launching *each other*.

Could there be any truth in this ribald speculation? Click on the link below to find out more.

@hereforhollanov TMZ WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN FAMILY BUSINESS

@justagayhockeygirlie *laughing nervously* what the fuck?

@thehollanovarchives Here's the thing. RPF is all good and well when it's confined to fandom spaces, but when it starts getting reported in the actual media, that's when you've got a problem on your hands.

@rozanovstyle TMZ is hardly “actual media,” though, surely? 🧠

@thehollanovarchives It's a trashy outlet, but still a news outlet, which is never a good thing when it comes to RPF. In my opinion, RPF should **always** be kept strictly separate from anything official that involves the real people in question, otherwise you start getting into really dangerous territory.

@shilyaaaa wait... you don't think this will cause actual issues for Shane and Ilya, do you?

@thehollanovarchives That really depends on what exactly the article says.

@hereforhollanov okay, so. i read the article, and guys... it's not good. they literally list **all** the Hollanov soft launch posts and all the ways they could possibly be linked to each other, as well as all the times Hollanov have interacted publicly in the last few months. they also make a BIG, BIG deal about both #ring-gates. actually, the reporter who wrote this used ring-gate 2 as the sorta crowning jewel/final piece of proof to tie the article together & imply that there might be some truth behind all the speculation, crazy as it sounds

@shilyaaaa FUCK. okay. so. what does this mean for them?

@hockeyinsider Best case scenario, nothing at all happens. Worst case scenario... well, let's just say I have it on good authority that Commissioner Crowell will do anything in his power to prevent any more players from coming out.

@rozrozroz WHOA, what the fuck??? he can't do that... can he?

@hockeyinsider Legally, no... but he has a lot of sway inside the NHL. He can put a hell of a lot of pressure on teams, and coaches, and players themselves.

@centaur_ilya_forever SHIT SHIT SHIT SHIT SHIT. why am i legitimately terrified for them now?

@hollanovtruther TMZ, WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

Chapter End Notes

sorry not sorry, but i couldn't RESIST adding in just a hint of roselana. i love my girls!

please do let me know what you thought of this chapter 

Chapter 6: June

Chapter Notes

the book TLG skips over June and goes straight to July, but i couldn't bring myself to do that because a) i wrote large parts of this fic IN june and b) it's pride month!!!! so here's a full chapter for June.

► quotes from TLG in this chapter

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

From the moment he'd seen Roger Crowell's email, Ilya had known that this day was *not* going to go well.

The email itself had been polite enough, to be fair – requesting that both Shane and Ilya meet him in the Montreal branch of the NHL's offices. No reason for the meeting had been specified.

Still, Ilya had instantly felt uneasy about it, because while they had both only had very brief meetings with the commissioner before, none of those meetings had gone well, and they had all involved some form of veiled threats.

But here they were now. It wasn't like they could refuse.

Just before the elevator got to Crowell's floor, Ilya reached for Shane's hand and laced their fingers together tightly. He didn't say anything, but he didn't have to – Shane squeezed his hand, and Ilya knew he understood.

They let go as soon as the elevator doors opened, but the small moment of reassurance had meant a lot to Ilya.

Whatever the commissioner had to say, they would face it together.

Crowell's office was sleek and surprisingly modern, all glass panelling and clean lines. The NHL logo was emblazoned on everything, large and unmistakable.

The whole thing felt a bit like a hospital ward to Ilya: sterile and emotionless, despite pretending to be the opposite.

Crowell himself was seated at his desk, and he rose when Shane and Ilya walked in. "Morning, morning! It's great to see you both. Thank you for agreeing to meet me on such short notice."

"It's no problem," Shane replied, polite as ever.

Ilya said nothing, but he made himself smile blandly at the commissioner.

Crowell gestured at the stylised black leather chairs in front of his desk. "Please, take a seat."

They did, and Ilya was unsurprised to find that the chairs were extremely uncomfortable.

Crowell took his own seat and steepled his fingers on the table. "I assume that you're both spending some time relaxing now that you're out of the postseason?" he asked. It felt like he was trying to make small talk, but the words were far too pointed. "Spending some time with your respective partners?"

"Yes," Shane agreed, his voice guarded.

"Good, good," Crowell said. "It's important to spend time with loved ones. Yes. Now, I'm sure you're both wondering why I called you here."

They both nodded.

Crowell gave a rather dramatic sigh. "Well, I'm sorry to even bring this up to you boys – I know social media rumours are probably not of any interest to you, especially when they're so obviously false, but –"

"What social media rumours?" Ilya interrupted. He would prefer to get this conversation over with as fast as possible, especially if it was going to go in the direction he was starting to think it might.

The commissioner gave him a cold look before deliberately forcing a smile over it. "Inconsequential nonsense, of course, but it has become rather... pervasive, as of late."

There were a lot of very long English words in that sentence, and Ilya wondered if Crowell was doing that on purpose to make him feel stupid. It wouldn't work, though – Ilya had understood him just fine. His English was excellent after eleven years in America and Canada.

Shane was speaking before Ilya could, which was probably a good thing, because what *he'd* have said would definitely have gotten them in trouble. "We're not aware of any social media rumours painting either of us or the league in a bad light," Shane said calmly.

"Like I said, the rumours are unsubstantiated nonsense. But you see, they pose the potential for... distraction."

"Distraction?" Shane echoed. "From what?"

"From hockey," the commissioner replied coldly. "While we support players' right to do what they want in their private lives, this league will always prefer that the focus remains on hockey. Currently, there is an increasingly large subset of fans who appear to have convinced themselves that the two of *you* are somehow... involved."

He said the word *involved* like it was simultaneously a curse word, and the most ridiculous thing he had ever heard.

“I’m sure you both can understand that it’s of the utmost importance to stop this ridiculous rumour before it can gain any more traction,” Crowell said, in the kind of tone that made it clear no disagreement would be tolerated. “My team tells me that the both of you are currently in the process of *soft launching*, I believe it’s called, your respective partners. *Obviously*, this couldn’t have been your intention, but that soft launching process may be contributing to the widespread public confusion.”

Ilya did not miss the subtle threat behind that “*obviously*.” From the way Shane inhaled sharply beside him, neither did he.

“Fortunately, there is an easy solution. Both of you should simply introduce your *separate* and *different* partners to the public, and sooner rather than later,” Crowell said with a genial smile that rang completely false.

Ilya stole a quick glance at Shane, who was sitting up very straight in his chair, his whole body tense.

He wasn’t saying anything, so Ilya bit his tongue, too.

That became increasingly difficult when the commissioner turned and addressed Ilya directly.

“Mr Rozanov, I’m sure your partner is a lovely young woman,” Crowell said. “I understand wanting to take your time with introducing her to the public, especially given your... lengthy history of romantic exploits.”

Ilya blinked. Had the commissioner of the NHL just called him a slut?

“But perhaps it would be prudent to cut the process short and tell everyone her name now, just to firmly quell these rumours,” Crowell said, in a tone that sounded like a suggestion but was really a command. “Besides, it’s best not to make her wait too long. Women can get impatient about these things, you know, and I’m sure you wouldn’t like the consequences of *that*, eh?”

Of course the commissioner of the NHL would be a sexist, too. *Does a bear shit in the woods?*

Before Ilya could say anything, the commissioner turned to Shane. “Mr Hollander. If you insist on introducing your no doubt *male* partner to the public, the NHL will help you to do so tactfully. We do not need another... *show*... like the one provided by Mr Hunter.”

Ilya decided that enough was enough. “Actually, I thought that Hunter’s *show* was quite impressive. I didn’t know he knew how to kiss like that. Sadly, my own boyfriend refuses to put on a similar show, even though I am obviously a *much* better kisser, and much better looking.”

“*Ilya*,” Shane said, the word halfway caught between a laugh and a scolding.

Crowell did not find his words anywhere near as amusing. “Your *what?*” he snapped.

“My boyfriend,” Ilya replied with a pleasant smile. “You see, I never said I had a girlfriend. You assumed.”

Crowell’s face twisted, incredulous. “You don't mean to tell me that you're *gay*, do you, Rozanov?”

“No, no. I'm bisexual,” Ilya said, fully aware that the distinction wouldn't matter at all to the commissioner. To Crowell, the mere fact that he liked men was enough.

“Well, if *that's* the case,” Crowell said, staring Ilya down in a way that made him feel like one of those bugs pinned on display. “Should I go ahead and assume that those *rumours* about the two of you are not rumours at all?”

His tone made it very clear that there was a right answer to this question, and it would be something like “no, Commissioner, those are just rumours, of course we're not together.”

Ilya took a deep breath, steeling himself, but Shane beat him to it.

“That's correct,” he said crisply. “The rumours are true.”

The statement hung in the air for a tense, frozen moment.

Then the commissioner smiled. It wasn't a nice smile. “As long as the rumours remain rumours, we can still make them go away,” he said.

“No,” Shane said loudly, giving voice to Ilya’s exact feelings on the matter. “No, we don't want anything to go away. These rumours are part of our plan.”

“*Plan?*” Crowell repeated in a voice that sounded like the ice cracking ominously beneath your skates on a frozen lake.

“Yes,” Shane said, lifting his chin. Ilya was so, so proud of him. “We plan to come out this summer.”

“Out of the question,” Crowell said immediately, and with devastating finality. “The league as a whole would be disgraced. Countless games would be called into question. No, I'm afraid that you'll have to change this *plan* of yours, and fast. Perhaps you could both publicly reveal partners who are completely unrelated to hockey, and to each other.”

“No fucking *way*,” Ilya said immediately.

Next to him, Shane shook his head vehemently. “We would *never* do that. And you can't ask us to. It's beyond unfair. We're – we're getting married this summer.”

Crowell’s eyebrows shot up in obvious surprise, but he quickly composed himself. “That,” he said coldly, “is not happening. Not if you want to remain in this league.”

“Really?” Ilya asked. He wanted to flip the fucking table. “You are going to kick us out?”

“We’ll sue the shit out of the league,” Shane said, which honestly shocked Ilya.

For a long moment, Crowell said nothing. Then he said, “You’re right. You could sue. But do you think any team would sign you after that? Either way, you’d be done.”

Shane sucked in a breath. Ilya trembled with rage. They’d both given this league – this game – so much.

The thought that it could all be taken away from them just like that was... it was infuriating, and unbearable, and so unfair that Ilya wanted to scream.

Instead, he made himself take several deep breaths and thought about what the hell to say next.

Shane beat him to it. “You’re wrong, Crowell.”

“What did you just say to me?” Crowell asked, his voice dangerously soft.

Ilya could see the tension written into every line of Shane’s body, but he did not flinch or back down. “You’re wrong. There *will* be teams who will sign us, because we’re the best fucking players in the league,” he said, and Ilya felt a powerful jolt of pride (and lust, if he was honest) course through him. Shane being all angry and confident was *hot*.

“You can try to force us out of the league, but you won’t succeed. Or, if you do, the NHL would never recover from the backlash. It would be more than just a small scandal. Have you *seen* how popular we are on social media? If you kick us out, you’d be facing not only a lawsuit that will cost you millions, but also public shaming from thousands of fans. People would boycott the league over something like that. Do you realise that? The world is changing, whether you like it or not, *Commissioner*.”

“Are you threatening me?” Crowell asked, his voice soft and deadly.

“No. You are the one threatening us. I am just refusing to be intimidated,” Shane said. “I know what we’re worth. And I know that, at the end of the day, this league cares more about money than about any-fucking-thing else.”

That was probably the truest thing that had been said all day so far.

“You’re playing a dangerous game,” Crowell warned, his blue eyes flinty. “You think you can win, and maybe you can, but at what cost? Think of your careers. Your legacies. If you do this, it will overshadow everything else you have ever achieved.”

“I don’t care,” Shane said, lifting his chin. “I choose Ilya. I’ll choose him over everything else.”

Then he held out his hand for Ilya to take, which Ilya did without question. Despite the unbelievable tension of the moment, Ilya honestly thought that he had never been happier.

Shane had just chosen him over the commissioner of the entire NHL – chosen him over hockey, over *everything* else in the world. If he had still needed any assurance that Shane loved him just as desperately and completely as Ilya loved him... well, he had it now.

Ilya had just one thing left to say, and it was something that he (and many other hockey fans too, if he had to guess) had been longing to say for *years*. “Fuck you, Commissioner.”

They turned and left the office together, completely ignoring whatever Crowell shouted at their retreating backs.

It didn't matter anymore. They had made their point.

The moment they were safely ensconced inside the elevator, Shane slumped back against the wall like his strings had been cut, running an anxious hand through his hair. “Oh my god. Oh my god. Did we really just –”

“Tell the commissioner of the entire NHL to go fuck himself, we're coming out anyway?” Ilya asked. “Yes. Yes, we did.”

Shane covered his face with his hands. “Fuck. Our careers are *so* over.”

Ilya shook his head, still buzzing with adrenaline, and grinned half-manically, half-devotedly. “No, sweetheart. The best part of both our careers is just beginning.”

The Irina Foundation

@theirinafoundation 

[A series of photos of Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov in matching rainbow Pride jerseys. Instead of a team logo, the jerseys are emblazoned with the Irina Foundation's logo.]

The first photo is of Shane and Ilya bending to take a faceoff against each other. Both look serious and focused, staring into each other's eyes. It is a direct callback to their first-ever joint CCM ad, though in this photo, both are also wearing Pride tape on their sticks.

The next photo is a zoomed in shot of Shane and Ilya's sticks. This reveals that while Shane is using the standard rainbow Pride tape, Ilya is using a special edition tape in the colours of the bisexual flag.

The next photo is of Shane in the middle of a breakaway. The puck is on his stick, which is still wrapped in rainbow tape. It is an epic motion shot.

The next photo is of Ilya stopping in a dramatic spray of snow. He is grinning, and still wearing the Pride jersey. It is an equally epic motion shot.

The next photo is of Ilya leaning against the boards while Shane re-tapes his stick with the Pride tape. Shane's expression is serious, focused on his task. Ilya is watching him with a small smile, undeniable fondness written all over his face.

The next photo is of Shane and Ilya at center ice, both standing up straight. Shane has his arm wrapped around Ilya's shoulders. Ilya's arm is around Shane's waist, his fingers splayed possessively over Shane's hip.

The final photo is very similar to the first one, with Shane and Ilya bending to take a faceoff. However, in this one, both are laughing hysterically. Both look extremely happy.]

Happy Pride from the Irina Foundation Family! We firmly believe that hockey is for everyone, and wherever you may fall on the spectrum of gender and sexuality, you will always be welcome at our summer camps.

P.S. – These limited-edition Hollander and Rozanov Pride jerseys will be available for purchase on our website from 5 June. All proceeds will go towards the Foundation's summer hockey camps and the operation of the charity.

@justagayhockeygirlie happy pride month from Hollander and Rozanov... oh i am so sure

@rozrozroz I KNOW WHAT YOU ARE DOT MEME

@gayshanehollander Shane in full pride gear, looking hot and competent as fuck on the ice... i think i just passed away

@numberoneshanefan could not agree more, holy fuck. whoever took these photos – ESPECIALLY that sick motion shot of Shane – deserves a hell of a raise

@whorefortwentyfour shane hollander, i hope you know that am on my KNEES

@81forever SAME except it's that shot of Ilya stopping in a spray of snow... good GOD. this photographer truly is an artist

@ilyasrozanova praise be!!

@hereforhollanov that shot of Shane all focused on taping his stick while Ilya is just giving him the biggest heart eyes ever – i can't with them! this is literally STRAIGHT from AO3

@24x81 NO LITERALLY! i have read that exact fic like 20 times

@hollanovtruthr what i'm seeing is that loverboy Ilya and focused!bf Shane is OFFICIALLY CANON. and everybody cheered!

@thehollanovarchives I also can't help but appreciate the callback to their first-ever joint ad 🙄 I went and looked it up again, just for nostalgia's sake, and my word, they were such babies. They really have come SO far ❤️

@shilyaaaa and what an epic journey it's been!

@left_boston_for_ilya for real.

@rozanderstan i also cannot get over that last shot of them giggling... like honestly, have we EVER seen either of them look that happy before?

@shanehollandersource I can truthfully say that that's one of the very few photos where Shane is truly laughing with not even a hint of a PR smile. Honestly warms my heart to see him that carefree and lighthearted!

@hollanovtruther and of course he's only that carefree and lighthearted *with Ilya*... they are each other's happy places, i swear

@shanezone STOP that is the cutest thing i've ever read 😭😭

@hockeyinsider I heard a rumour that Hollander and Rozanov were called in for a joint meeting with Crowell just a few days ago. Thought it might be about the social media rumours and him telling them to put a stop to it. If that's actually what happened, then these two just sent a GENERATIONAL fuck-you to Crowell 🤡👁️

@ilyarozanovupdater Holy shit 👁️

@snarkyrozy honestly, i TOTALLY believe that's something Ilya would do

@rozanovdefender oh he TOTALLY would. and he'd probably smirk while hitting post, too

@ilya_rozanov_i_would_have_your_babies an absolute legend, for real

@24x81 *[a zoomed-in screenshot of Ilya gripping Shane's waist]*

relax bro, ain't nobody taking him from you

@hereforhollanov NAHHHH, THEY'RE ACTUALLY TOO MUCH

@rozanderstan that grip... HELLO. Ilya wants the entire world to know that man is HIS

@marrymeshane we get it Ilya Rozanov, you're the luckiest fucker on this planet 🙄

@gayforthevoyageursfirstline guys... is it time to change my username from "gay for the voyageurs first line" to "gay for whatever Hollander and Rozanov have got going on?" 👁️

@24x81 i think now is the PERFECT time for that, honestly

Ilya Rozanov ✓

@ilyarozanov81

[A group photo taken on the porch of Ilya Rozanov's Ottawa mansion. A large group of smiling people is gathered around a table laden with various types of grilled food and spectacular-looking sides.

Ilya is standing in the center, Shane by his side. Ilya has his arm casually around Shane's waist.

Wyatt Hayes, Troy Barrett, Evan Dykstra, Nick Chouinard, and various other Centaurs players and their partners are gathered around Shane and Ilya. Zane Boodram is on the far side, standing next to the grill, pointing at it as though to emphasise that he is the one who has been doing all the grilling for everyone.

On Ilya's other side is Svetlana Vetrova. She is wearing a stylish winter coat, and half the Ottawa rookies are staring at her with hearts in their eyes.

David and Yuna Hollander complete the group. David is holding a bottle of vodka, and Yuna has an old-fashioned Polaroid camera in one hand. Both of them are smiling. They look like proud parents.]

Birthday with the best. ❤️

@centaur_ilya_forever Ilya surrounded by his entire team and looking like he's never been happier... my heart 🥹🥹 he really loves them so MUCH

@rozanovlover13 he really DOES and it's making me emotional

@hannahthecensfan and they clearly all love him so much too!! just love all around 🥹❤️

@rozanovdefender he deserves EVERY BIT of this love

@thehollanovarchives Just taking a moment to appreciate how Ilya's birthday post is very, VERY similar to Shane's in almost every way. Composition, caption... and of course the fact that they're RIGHT next to each other in both posts

@shilyaaaa of course they are! these men are obsessed with each other, your honour

@24x81 i also find it SO sweet how Ilya also clearly took pains to include the Hollander parents. like. no awful in-law stories here – our man is LOVED by his in-laws

@rozrozroz i am honestly a full-on RPFer now, because what do you MEAN neither of these guys has ever really posted for their birthdays before, but NOW they both have, and the posts are near-identical. not to MENTION the fact that they both made a point of saying “YOU 💛 are included in the group of my favourite people ever and i want the whole world to know that”

@shanezone i am right there with you, tbh... especially because, OH GUESS WHAT, you can see their *matching rings* in this photo if you zoom in

@justagayhockeygirlie WAIT you actually can!! and the similarity is more obvious than ever before, too... my god. they truly are insane for this

@goalsandgirlfriends i saw a gorgeous woman next to Ilya and went 🙄, only to immediately also notice the way he is gripping the FUCK out of Shane Hollander's waist. he really said “i've already got my bae right here”

@hereforhollanov PLEASE that's exactly what's happening here!

@rozanderstan these two, especially Ilya apparently, want the whole world to know that they belong to each other, and that's final

@the_nhl_has_habs_now if there is an award for “most possessive of each other without officially being together” then they have won by a LANDSLIDE

Shane had never really been a fan of the NHL Awards.

Sure, it felt good to be recognised for his efforts, particularly when he got to lift a big trophy at the end of the evening. But that was always accompanied by a speech of some kind, and maybe another speech if he had to present something as well, *and* hours of socialising with increasingly drunk colleagues and hockey higher-ups.

So. Not Shane's favourite way to spend an evening, all in all.

The only part of the NHL Awards that he *did* enjoy was that Ilya was almost always right there beside him.

It didn't take him long to find Ilya in the crowd. Even off the ice, he always had this sense of where Ilya was, a low-grade awareness he couldn't shake off even if he tried.

It was, Shane reflected, probably because his first instinct when he walked into a room was to check if Ilya was there, and where he was.

“Rozanov,” Shane greeted him, like they hadn't just been getting ready together in the same hotel room, after a round of extremely satisfying shower sex.

He saw a smile flicker across Ilya's face before he schooled his expression. “Hollander.”

It took a lot of effort not to smile back immediately. God, it had been so *long* since they'd spoken to each other like this. But just for tonight, they had decided that they would be playing up their rivalry, since this was the last time they would be attending the NHL Awards as rivals on opposite teams.

“Congratulations on the Art Ross,” Ilya told him, his face almost entirely blank, before a cocky smirk spread all over it not even a second later. “Of course, this will be the last time that you win it, so enjoy it while you can.”

“Didn't you say the same thing last season?” Shane asked, pretending to scratch his head in thought. “But who just won it again?”

“Ah, Hollander, but this time I am making it a promise,” Ilya purred, his voice equal parts seductive and shit-stirring. “And you should know I always keep my promises. Next year, the Art Ross *and* the Rocket Richard are mine.”

“Big talk, Rozanov,” Shane said, crossing his arms. “We'll have to see if you can back it up.”

Ilya glanced quickly around the room, then stepped in close enough that his lips were brushing the shell of Shane's ear. “My talk is not the only thing about me that is big.”

Shane choked on air, and Ilya stepped back, smirking.

Shane scowled at him, wondering if Ilya would have dared say something like that to him while they were still just hooking up.

... Probably. And as much as Shane would have tried to pretend he hated it, he had always loved when Ilya got cocky like this.

It was hot as fuck, especially because Ilya really *could* back it up.

He was working on a stinging retort when someone threw an arm around his shoulders, shaking him playfully. "Rivalry still going strong, eh?" Carter Vaughn asked, grinning at them both.

"Always," Ilya replied without missing a beat. "Someone has to keep Hollander on his toes."

"Someone has to keep Rozanov's head from getting too big," Shane retorted.

Ilya's smirk grew. "I didn't know you cared about my head, Hollander. But since you're so interested, I should tell you that I've never had any complaints."

Shane choked on air again, feeling himself starting to go scarlet.

Vaughn, meanwhile, threw his head back and laughed like Ilya had just said the funniest thing in the world. "Attaboy, Rozy!"

"I'm in Room 2112, if you'd like to find out for yourself," Ilya said, just playfully enough that Vaughn would probably think it was a chirp.

Surprisingly, Vaughn's laughter stopped, and his face turned serious. "Hey, man, not cool," he said, folding his arms disapprovingly. "Cut it with the gay jokes." He gave Shane what he probably thought was a quick, supportive sideways glance.

Now it was *Shane* who was fighting back a laugh. "It's fine, Vaughny, it doesn't bother me. I know better than to let Rozanov rile me up," he said solemnly.

Vaughn nodded once, though he still looked unusually stern. "Okay, well, if he ever gives you shit about, uh, anything like that, you know where to find me."

That was actually surprisingly sweet. "Thanks, man. But we're all good, I promise."

"If you're sure," Vaughn said. "Well, I'll be joining Scott soon, then. You're always welcome to hang with us, too."

It was the opposite of subtle, but Shane was still touched.

"Nah, I'm good. He's an asshole, but I know how to handle him," Shane assured him. "We're friends, man. For real."

Ilya waited until Vaughn was just out of earshot before he asked, “Oh, you know how to *handle* me?”

“Mm. I think I'm the only one who can,” Shane said, in a tone that dared Ilya to argue.

Ilya leaned in a little, his eyes glinting. “So full of yourself, Hollander.”

“I'd rather be full of you,” Shane replied, and had the rare pleasure of seeing Ilya look genuinely shocked, then delighted.

“Hollander, Hollander, *Hollander*. Did you have too much champagne? You're getting very bold.”

That was probably true. Shane would never have said something like that to Ilya before, and *certainly* not in public.

But tonight... *well*. The illicit little thrill of it was making Shane hot all over.

“Maybe I am,” he said coyly. “What are you going to do about it?”

Ilya's eyes went dark, his pupils dilating to twice their normal size. “I'll tell you what I'm going to do,” he said, his voice dangerously soft, enough that Shane had to strain to hear him. “You're going to come to my hotel room, and I'm going to do the same thing I did in 2014 and put a chair in front of the bed. Do you remember?”

Shane's throat clicked as he swallowed. “Of course.”

“Good,” Ilya purred. “But it's going to be a little different this time. It's going to be *you* on the chair, and *me* on the bed, and you're going to watch as I get myself hard. And you won't be allowed to touch. Not yourself, and not me.”

Ilya licked his lips. “Not until you're *begging* me to touch you. And then I'll fuck you so hard that you forget your own name, and all you can say is *more* and *Rozanov* and *please*.”

“Fuck, *Ilya*,” Shane groaned, breaking character and dropping his head onto Ilya's shoulder just for a moment. “Now I'm going to be hard for the rest of this stupid event.”

Ilya dragged his gaze slowly down Shane's body, and then back up. His eyes were still so, so dark. “You'll have to wait like that until I decide it's time to go up to our room,” he said, his voice rough.

“I hate you,” Shane said, squeezing his eyes tightly shut.

“No,” Ilya said, gripping Shane's chin and squeezing hard. He let go not even a second later, but Shane's eyes still flew open, shocked. “No, you don't.”

Shane glanced frantically around the room, but fortunately, nobody seemed to be paying them much attention. Except for Crowell, who was scowling furiously at them from a distant corner.

Well, fuck *him*. Just for that, Shane took a deliberate step closer to Ilya and kissed him on the cheek.

“You're right,” he said, lips still hovering just above Ilya’s skin. “I don't hate you at all. And I'll prove that tonight.”

“Now who's the one making promises?” Ilya asked, his voice dropping a little lower than usual.

Shane patted Ilya’s chest, just once, then stepped back. “I only make promises that I can keep,” he said. “But first, let's enjoy the rest of this party. Then, when we're good and ready, we can go fuck in the fancy hotel room that the commissioner is so kindly paying for.”

“Sounds perfect to me,” Ilya replied.

It really, really did.

Shane Hollander ✓

@shanehollanderhockeyplayer

[A photo of Shane and Ilya standing side by side at the top of a staircase. Both of them are wearing formal suits, and Shane is holding the Art Ross trophy for the most goals scored in the regular season, while Ilya is holding the Hart Memorial trophy for regular-season MVP. Ilya is smirking down at the camera, while Shane looks solemn and focused.]

From the first day I played against Ilya Rozanov, I knew that my life would be different forever. All my dreams of being the one and only best player evaporated, because I knew instantly that I would never be alone at the top again. It's not an easy thing for a hockey player to acknowledge, but I would like to say it publicly for the first time: if my career has to be forever intertwined with someone's, I am so proud and honoured that it can be Ilya’s.

@ilyarozanov81 ✓ I wouldn't want anyone else by my side.

@rozrozroz EXCUSE ME MR ROZANOV, MR HOLLANDER... what the fuck.

@shanezone RIGHT?? RIGHT?? I AM LITERALLY HYPERVENTILATING

@hereforhollanov HOLY SHIT HOLY SHIT THIS IS THE MOST INSANE THING THEY'VE DONE YET

@shilyaaaa no but literally... Shane just wrote an entire tribute post to their rivalry. and then said he's HONOURED that it's Ilya beside him. just when i thought they couldn't POSSIBLY do anything more insane...

@justagayhockeygirlie seriously, do not test these guys, because just when you think “oh, we've reached the peak, they cannot POSSIBLY get gayer than this” THEY WILL TAKE IT AS A CHALLENGE AND PROVE YOU WRONG

@24forlife okay WHICH one of you AO3 authors took over Shane's socials, because *damn*

@shanehollandersource Honestly though! This man went from barely posting, ever (and when he did it would be the most bland, PR-drafted posts ever) to writing romance novel paragraphs to his career-long rival. What gives?

@hollanovtruther love. love is what gives

@numberoneshanefan i mean, at this point... if they're NOT in love, it would be almost more insane

@hockeybutt Then again... hockey is one of *the* gayest homophobic sports ever to exist. The things these straight hockey men will say and do to each other will make your jaw drop – but no, no, they're straight

@the_nhl_has_habs_now well... not all of them 😏

@gayshanehollander life is beautiful 🌈

@ottawatheart SO. this is going to sound crazy, but bear with me for a sec. Ilya saying he's honoured to have Shane by his side... 🙄 could that mean Shane is considering moving to Ottawa?

@shanehollywood WHAT?? there is literally no way

@numberoneshanefan well, technically... Shane's contract is up, and he has *not* re-signed with the Voyageurs yet. so he could go anywhere he wants, if he wants to move

@hollanderose but surely Shane Hollander would never leave the Voyageurs? that is HIS franchise. he's literally said that he wants to retire there

@hockeyinsider Maybe... but things change. If he wanted to stay with them till retirement, why hasn't he signed another 8-year deal with them yet?

@shanehollywood i mean, negotiations are complex... and he still has time!

@hockeyinsider True. But if he doesn't re-sign soon, his next contract is going to be THE hot topic of the off-season

@hereforhockeychaos 🙄

Man In The Crease

@maninthecreasepod

With free agent season rapidly approaching, the biggest news so far is that Shane Hollander has not yet re-signed with the Montreal Voyageurs. Could we actually see him on the market as a UFA? If so, where would he possibly go? Join us for our latest episode as we unpack the possibilities in full!

@montrealhockeyforever you guys can't seriously believe Hollander would leave, right? that man bleeds red and blue

@allezlesvoyageurs Right?! Like, sure, he might have made a mistake in the playoffs, but that doesn't mean he's leaving. What player DOESN'T make mistakes? Besides, it's Hollander. He's literally the face of Montréal. There's no way he's leaving!

@justagayhockeygirlie i gotta say, it's... interesting... how fast you Montreal fans are changing your tune

@montrealhockeyforever what are you talking about? NONE of us want him to leave?!

@snarkyrozy ...oh so THAT'S why you all tarred and feathered him all over social media after the playoffs?

@allezlesvoyageurs Listen, if Hollander got any flack online, it was because it was deserved. Montreal expects the best from our players, and we hold them accountable when they fuck up. But that doesn't mean we want them off the team!! Hollander is literally our captain and star center.

@24forlife I just think it's funny how all these Voyageurs chuds, who were happily ripping into Shane 2 months ago, are now suddenly waking up and realising how valuable he actually is to the team. like. you realise this is probably way too late, right?

@shanehollywood Oh please... Hollander is never bothered by social media. He wouldn't let the noise get to him. I'm sure he's just waiting for a good time to sign.

@justagayhockeygirlie whatever you need to tell yourself, buddy

@mtlhockeybabe The idea of Shane leaving Montreal is breaking my heart, but after the way the press and fans treated him... I hate to say it, but I wouldn't even be surprised.

@justagayhockeygirlie what she said!!

@hereforhockeychaos personally, i'm hoping Hollander *does* become a UFA. just IMAGINE the absolute scenes

@hockeyinsider GMs all over the NHL will be salivating, that's for sure. I'm certain Hollander will get offers from pretty much every team in the league

@hereforhockeychaos oh for SURE. btw, have you heard any rumours about where he might be looking into moving to, if he does go?

@hockeyinsider I mean, I've heard some rumours. There's one that's louder than the rest, but I kind of struggle to believe it. Then again...

@censfanmaria GIRL YOU CAN'T JUST SAY THAT?? you have to tell us now!!!

@hockeyinsider All I'll say is that it'd be an absolutely crazy move if it does happen. Absolutely insane.

@24x81 !!!!!

@hollanovtruth so we all agree, right... Hollander is leaving Montreal and coming to Ottawa

@montrealhockeyforever what the fuck? no, we certainly are NOT all agreed

@hereforhollanov Get out of here, hater. HELL YEAH THAT'S WHAT'S HAPPENING! he's coming to Ottawa to join his HUSBAND

@shilyaaaa omg i'm hyperventilating just imagining it. imagine the two of them on the same team!!

@hereforhollanov imagine them MARRIED and on the same team!!!!

@shilyaaaa screaming crying throwing up omg

@ottawatheart SHANE HOLLANDER IS COMING HOOOOOME

@hannahthecensfan i am trying SO hard to stay calm and rational about this and not get my hopes up too high. because like, he really could go anywhere he wanted, right? but oh my actual fucking GOD. just IMAGINE if he actually comes to Ottawa!!

@censforever same, but also... oh my god. Ottawa Boy Shane Hollander could FINALLY be coming home. we've only been hoping and praying for this for, oh, FOREVER 😭

@ottawatheart i can't fucking WAIT for July!!!!

Chapter End Notes

happy (belated) pride from me! it's june in the universe of this fic, at least, so sending some extra love to all my fellow queer folks, wherever you are, as you read this chapter



if you're enjoying this, please do drop me a comment and let me know what you thought <3

Chapter 7: July

Chapter Notes

FINAL CHAPTER! this chapter is my personal favourite, my baby, and the one i spent the entire fic working towards. i hope you love it just as much as i loved writing it ❤️

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

Ilya was no stranger to press conferences. He wasn't even a stranger to press conferences *with Shane*.

But this particular press conference was unlike any they'd had before. Because this time, it was about Shane signing with the Ottawa Centaurs.

“Are you ready for this?” Ilya asked, turning to Shane, who was pulling a red-and-black Ottawa jersey over his suit.

Shane smiled at him, reaching over and straightening Ilya's collar. “Fuck yes,” he said, looking effortlessly comfortable and attractive in his new team colours. In *their* team colours. Fuck. Ilya wanted to *bite* him.

Shane seemed to be on the same wavelength, because he stepped a little closer to Ilya, close enough that their chests brushed, and looked up at Ilya through his eyelashes. “A kiss for good luck couldn't hurt, though,” he said coyly, and that was all Ilya needed to hear.

Ilya kissed him, looping his arms around Shane's waist and tugging at his brand-new jersey so that they were pressed tightly together. Shane made a satisfied humming sound against his lips, getting a hand on Ilya's own chest and pulling at his own Centaurs jersey.

“Fuck,” Ilya muttered against Shane's mouth. He felt Shane's lips twitch up in a smile, and he couldn't help but kiss him again. He missed slightly, getting the corner of Shane's mouth instead, but didn't let that faze him, trailing a line of kisses down Shane's jaw and under the soft hollow of his throat.

Shane tipped his head to the side to give him better access, letting out that little sigh that meant he was really enjoying what Ilya was doing. Ilya could feel himself starting to smile, too, but didn't let that distract him too much, pressing an open-mouthed kiss over the spot where Shane's pulse thrummed and –

“Oh my God!” a startled voice yelped, followed by a slapping noise, like someone had hastily thrown a hand over their eyes. “Why is it that I *always* find the two of you like this before press conferences?”

It was Hayden, because of course it was.

“Fuck. Sorry, Hayd,” Shane said, looking a little sheepish as he disentangled himself from Ilya.

Ilya reluctantly let him go, although he kept one hand twisted in the bottom of Shane's jersey. Hayden rolled his eyes at the sight.

“No, we're not sorry,” Ilya said, because it was Hayden, and because he had appearances to keep up.

“Of course you aren't,” Hayden muttered. “*Anyways*. You've got two minutes until you need to go on.”

“Thanks. We're ready, pretty much,” Shane said, smiling at his friend.

“Mmm,” Ilya grumbled. He still wasn't quite sure why Hayden was even *here*. It wasn't like he was going to be joining the Centaurs.

Although... Hayden did say that he wasn't planning to renew his contract with the Voyageurs when it expired next year. So maybe he *would* be joining them. He would be hopelessly lost on the ice without Shane, after all.

Without even looking at him, Shane elbowed Ilya.

“*Ow!*” he muttered, and then, grudgingly, “Thanks, Hayden.”

He supposed he *did* know why Hayden was here, if he was being honest. It was to support Shane. And to support Ilya too, though neither of them would ever admit *that* out loud.

“Yeah, well,” Hayden said in a long-suffering voice, “*someone* has to make sure you guys get where you're supposed to be on time.”

“We have assistants and PR people for that,” Ilya couldn't resist pointing out.

“Right, but I didn't want some random person walking in on this and splashing the photos all over the internet before you guys are ready,” Hayden said, crossing his arms pointedly.

Ilya softened a little, though he made a point of not showing it outwardly. Yeah, okay... Hayden was a really good friend.

Maybe it *wouldn't* be all that bad to have him on the team.

But they could think about that later. For now, they had an entire room full of reporters to deal with.

“Let's get on with it, then,” Ilya said briskly, dusting himself off. He finally let go of Shane's jersey, straightening it out with a few unnecessarily long strokes over his chest before turning back to Hayden. “Do we look okay?”

Hayden scowled at him, but to his credit, he did check them both over. “Black and red still looks all wrong on Shane. But... you guys look really good together,” he said grudgingly.

Ilya had to agree. Being on the same team looked fucking *amazing* on them, and it felt even better.

They made their way to the press room, which was already *packed* with reporters, unsurprisingly.

The first shouts of “Shane! Over here!” and “Ilya! I have a question!” and “Hey, guys, could you tell us –” started before they had even taken their seats on the stage.

Jenna, one of the Centaurs’ media people, stepped forward and tapped her mic sharply. It made a loud screeching feedback noise, which finally quieted the room.

While Jenna addressed the crowd of reporters, one of the other media people, Heather, walked over to adjust Shane and Ilya’s microphones. “You ready for this, boys?” she asked with a kind smile as she adjusted something on the mic.

“Definitely,” Shane replied before Ilya could.

Under the table, Ilya nudged his shoe against Shane's. He watched out of the corner of his eye as Shane smiled, his whole face turning tender for a moment as he nudged Ilya's shoe back.

“We’re ready,” Ilya agreed, unable to stop himself from smiling, too.

The first question was, predictably, aimed at Shane.

“Shane! You got the whole hockey world reeling with your move to Ottawa. Can I ask why you didn't re-sign with Montreal?”

“I felt that it was time for a new challenge,” Shane replied smoothly. This had been one of the first questions that Yuna had told them both to expect, so naturally, they had planned exactly how to answer it. “I am very honoured to have spent eleven years of my hockey career in Montreal, and I will never forget all the memories I made there. But ultimately, I felt like the team and I were heading in different directions.”

“Follow-up question,” another reporter called. “You faced quite a lot of criticism from both fans and the media after your early exit from the playoffs. Did that factor into your decision to leave?”

“Well, look, hockey media is particularly intense in Montreal, and the fans there have high expectations,” Shane answered far more calmly than Ilya would have. “And in a sport like ours – in any sport, really – it's inevitable that every player will face criticism at some point. It's not something that's new to me, and I've learned how to keep my head down and focus on my own game. So, no, the criticism did not play a major role in my decision.”

“Next question, also for Shane,” the next reporter said. “Once you'd decided to go to Montreal, you could have gone pretty much anywhere. Why Ottawa?”

“That's an easy one,” Shane said with a smile. “Ottawa is my hometown, and the team I grew up cheering for. At the end of the day, I wanted to come home.”

That got him a few restrained cheers from the hometown journalists.

“Also,” Shane continued with a glance at Ilya, “I was excited about getting to play with Ilya again. We’ve only shared a team once or twice at the All-Star game, but it’s always been an experience that I thoroughly enjoy. We may be rivals, but I really respect him as a player, and I look forward to sharing the ice with him.”

“You don’t think you’ll have any problems transitioning from rivals to teammates?” shouted a particularly cheeky reporter from the back.

Ilya snorted. “No. We are professionals.”

“What he said,” Shane agreed with an amused sideways glance at him. “I don’t foresee there being any problems with that. We’re both competitive, but we’re also team players.”

“What about the captaincy?” another reporter asked. “How will it feel to lose your Captain title and be captained by Rozanov instead?”

“We’ll have to see how long he keeps that C once I’m around,” Shane joked, which got him another round of chuckles. “No, but in all seriousness, I don’t foresee that being a problem either. Ilya is a great captain, by all accounts, and I look forward to seeing how he runs his room. I’ve only heard good things.”

“You’re being so nice to me, Hollander,” Ilya said teasingly, playing it up for the cameras. “We should do this more often!”

“Question for Ilya!” a reporter called out when the ensuing chuckles had died down. “How do you feel about Hollander joining your team? Did you have any reservations when the team told you they’d acquired him?”

“Nope,” Ilya said, popping the *p*. “Shane is a brilliant player, and we need depth at center if we want a cup. I don’t think it gets much deeper than having Ilya Rozanov *and* Shane Hollander.”

“Are you saying that Hollander will be on the second line?” another reporter asked.

“No, I can’t tell you that,” Ilya replied, rolling his eyes a little. “I am not the coach, and we have not even had one practice together yet.”

“Right, but surely he can’t take your starting center spot? That only leaves the second line. Isn’t that a massive downgrade for you, Shane?”

“Well, as Ilya said, nothing is confirmed. Besides, I wouldn’t see it as a downgrade. It would be the most practical choice considering the team’s roster,” Shane said matter-of-factly. “At the end of the day, the goal is to bring the cup to Ottawa. I’ll play wherever I’m needed to make that a reality.”

“Do you think the two of you will ever share the same line? Maybe on the power play?” another reporter wanted to know, leaning forward with an expression so eager that they practically had hearts in their eyes.

Ilya shrugged, deliberately keeping it coy. “Maybe. Like Shane said, we will both play wherever we are needed to bring home the cup,” he replied. “But... I would very much enjoy sharing a line with Shane. We have done it a few times before, and it was always...” He paused for a moment, searching for the right word. “Special.”

“I agree,” Shane said before any reporter could ask him the same thing. “Every time we've gotten to share a line, we've had exceptional chemistry. I can't wait to develop that even further.”

“Scariest fucking power play in the league,” someone near the front muttered.

Ilya snorted and tipped his hat at the man, because, well, he was right.

“Another question for Ilya,” came the next reporter’s voice. “How did the Centaurs manage to make space for Shane given that you already have three All-Stars to cater for on your team?”

Ilya gave him a slow, bored blink. “That is a question for our finance team, not me.”

“Right,” the reporter said, obviously dissatisfied. “Well, then, question for Shane: there are speculations that you agreed on a contract with a much lower amount than you might have gotten from another team. Is this true?”

“Well, of course, I'm not at liberty to discuss offers that I may or may not have received from other teams, let alone their compensation structure,” Shane said dryly. “But I will say that money is not the only thing I looked for when I decided to move teams. Previous experience has shown me that the atmosphere of a team – knowing you can trust everyone in it to have your back – is more important than anything else. I believe I will find that with the Centaurs.”

“He is saying that money is less important than happiness,” Ilya explained helpfully.

Shane rolled his eyes, but Ilya could see that he was smiling, too. “I guess I am saying that, yes. Exactly.”

“Also, he has many, many sponsorships. Yuna is a very good manager; he will have more than enough money for the rest of his life,” Ilya continued, because if the reporters really wanted to make this about *money*, then he would talk about money. “Oh, and there's the other thing.”

Shane frowned. “What are you...?”

Ilya covered his mic with his hand, then leaned over to whisper in Shane's ear. “Remember that you have a very wealthy fiancé.”

Shane snorted a laugh, his shoulders relaxing visibly. “Right, right. Yeah, *that* other thing.”

He waited politely for one of the reporters to take the bait and ask “What other thing?” until he replied.

“Well, as Ilya helpfully reminded me, I do have a fiancé who does very well financially, so...”

Shane and Ilya both smirked as there was an immediate burst of chatter in response to this.

“Shane!” a brave reporter yelled out above the noise. “Wait, Shane, are you confirming that you're engaged?”

Shane just smiled. “That's correct. I am engaged.”

“Wow, congratulations!” the reporter said enthusiastically. “May I ask who the lucky, uh, lady is?”

Shane raised one eyebrow, but his smile didn't falter. “No comment.”

Ilya shook his head dramatically, leaning in over his microphone again. “He is always very secretive about his love life, this one.”

“Not secretive!” Shane protested. “Not anymore, anyway. It's just private.”

“Of course,” the reporter said hastily. “Well, if there's anything you do feel like you can share, I'm sure the public would love to know!”

Ilya was sure that *that* was true, but they'd have to wait just a little longer.

Not *much* longer, though. Not much longer at all.

“I'd just keep an eye on social media if I were you,” Shane replied blandly, but Ilya could see him fighting back a smile. “That's all. Thank you.”

None of the reporters were *quite* bold enough to ask them about the social media rumours about the two of them, though Ilya would bet there were several who wished they could.

Well, they'd just have to wait, along with everyone else.

Ilya caught Jenna's eye and signalled to her that they had taken enough questions. Jenna nodded briskly, then stepped forward and began thanking the assembled reporters.

Ilya stood up, offering his hand to Shane to pull him up. He saw the way Shane glanced at the room full of reporters and cameras, hesitated for a second, and then placed his hand in Ilya's anyway.

It took everything in Ilya not to kiss him right there, he was so happy and proud.

Instead, he contended himself with holding onto Shane's hand for just a little longer than what was probably needed. As soon as they reached the side of the stage, he put his hand on the small of Shane's back and guided him off.

“That went well, I think,” Shane said when they were safely backstage, turning to smile at Ilya.

“Mmm,” Ilya agreed, giving into his impulse from earlier and pulling Shane in for a kiss.

Not even ten seconds later, a loud, distressed sound interrupted them. “Not *again*,” Hayden groaned.

“Sorry, Hayd,” Shane said, not sounding particularly sorry. “I think this is just what it's going to be like from now on.”

Ilya grinned at him, his heart soaring. If this was what the future looked like, then he couldn't wait for it to start.

Shane Hollander ✓

@shanehollanderhockeyplayer

[A photo of Shane in a Centaurs jersey on the ice in the Canadian Tire Centre. He is pointing at the Centaurs logo on his chest. Ilya Rozanov is just visible in the left corner of the photo, leaning on the boards and smiling as he watches Shane.]

Happy to be home.

@ilyarozanov81 ✓ Welcome home. ❤️

@centaur_ilya_forever ILYA!!!!

@hereforhollanov OH MY GOD???

@24x81 THE HEART... oh i am SICK

@troybarrett17 ✓ Welcome to the team, man!

@zane_bood ✓ So stoked to have you on board!

@wyatthayesgoalie ✓ Hell yeah Hollzy! Let's go!

@_lucahaas02 ✓ It's an honour, Mr Hollander. I can't wait to play with you and learn from you!

@therealevandykstra ✓ FUCK YEAH, we never have to try and defend against Hollander again! Best news ever, man

@censfanmaria all the welcome messages for Shane... god i love this team so much

@hannahthecensfan truly, our vibes are UNMATCHED. i hope Shane is going to be so, so happy here. (and so, SO deadly on our power play. ho-ly fuck, i am swooning just thinking about next season!)

@left_boston_for_ilya fucking HELL... the entire league is going to be scared SHITLESS of our power play. imagine having to face Rozanov and Hollander AND BARRETT all at once? jesus H christ. we are going to be fucking terrifying

@hannahthecensfan not words i'd ever thought anyone would say about this team, but now... HOT DAMN. that is all

@longsufferingcentaursfan somebody PLEASE PLEASE pinch me... i still can't believe this is real. and yes i KNOW we've had the official announcements from the team & from Shane's camp, and the contract signing photos, AND the press conference, but still... a part of me still believes i'm going to wake up and this was all a fever dream

@ottawatheart well, here's hoping we never wake up if it is a dream, because BOY OH BOY, THE CUP IS COMING HOOOOOME NEXT YEAR

@longsufferingcentaursfan we really can do it now, can't we? like, we really, genuinely can. please excuse me while i go cry tears of joy

@mtlhockeybabe as a lifelong Montreal fan, my heart is broken... but as a Shane fan, i am cheering. i hope that the Centaurs treat you SO right, Mr Hollander. better than we did 😞

@24forlife THIS. i am still coming to grips with all of this, but especially after that presscon & Shane talking about wanting a team that he can trust to have his back... OUGH, that hit hard

@mtlhockeybabe I HOPE YOU'RE SO HAPPY AND SUCCESSFUL IN OTTAWA, SHANE (i say through floods of tears)

@censfanmaria you are always welcome to join us as Ottawa fans. we are very accepting 😊 and... VERY good Cup contenders all of a sudden

@24forlife oh, i am SO on board. the future is red & black, baby

All About Shane Hollander

@shanehollandersource

[A screenshot of @shanehollanderhockeyplayer's Instagram story. On a plain black background, in bold white text, Shane has written "Major Announcement Coming Tomorrow. Stay Tuned."]

Shane's most recent Instagram Story. Shane fans all over the globe: whatever you do, make sure you take a second to check his socials tomorrow 🙄🙄🙄

MAJOR UPDATE: We have just been informed that an identical message was posted to Ilya Rozanov's socials as well. It seems that whatever this major announcement is, it likely involves both of them. Intriguing!

@numberoneshanefan WHAT THE HECK WHAT THE HECK WHAT THE HECK

@24forlife the gasp i just gasped...

@shanes_canada_dry Mr Hollander, please... we are still processing the fact that we've all got to convert to Centaurs fans now. what MORE do you want to announce?

@princeofhockeyhollander RIGHT? my heart can't take this!!!!

@mtlhockeybabe i am literally pacing in little circles around my bedroom 😭

@shanezone THE HOLD THIS MAN HAS ON ME, I SWEAR!!

@marrymeshane i'm going to be refreshing my phone every ten seconds until they post this damn announcement, i swear

@the_nhl_has_habs_now You and me both!

Your No.1 Source for All Things Ilya Rozanov

@ilyarozanovupdater

[A screenshot of @ilyarozanov81's Instagram story. On a plain black background, in bold white text, Ilya has written "Major Announcement Coming Tomorrow. Stay Tuned."]

Ilya's Instagram Story today. It's identical to an Instagram Story posted by Shane Hollander mere seconds earlier. (He is still not faster than Ilya Rozanov, though).

The last time these two made a major announcement together was when they co-founded the Irina Foundation. What could it be this time? I, for one, cannot wait to find out.

@rozanovlover13 OHHHHHH MY GOD

@ilyasrozanova IT'S HAPPENING, GUYS, IT'S HAPPENING!! EVERYBODY STAY CALM!!

@81forever girl, calm is SO far out of the window. i am literally vibrating. i am gnawing on the bars of my enclosure. i am screaming crying throwing up

@rozrozroz same, a thousand times same

@centaur_ilya_forever tomorrow cannot come fast enough!!!!

@hollanovtruther do i even need to say it...

@24x81 no, but you should anyway. just for the sheer joy of it

@hollanovtruther SO REAL. okay, i'm saying it. guys: it's the announcement that they're together

@hockeyplayboyz You guys are going to look soooo stupid when it's literally just an announcement that they're doing a new sponsorship together or some shit.

@shilyaaaa fuck, i didn't even consider that possibility, and now i'm like 🤔

@rozanderstan i mean, even if it is that, i for one would be like “hell yeah boys, get that bag 😊”

@thehollanovarchives I wouldn't worry too much. I have a good feeling about this.

@justagayhockeygirlie same. it feels like everything over the past six months has been building up to this moment

@thehollanovarchives YES. And i think it's going to be so, so worth it ❤️

“Hey, Ilya?” Shane called, his fingers hovering over the attachment Harris had just emailed over.

Ilya, who was sprawled out on a towel on the deck with one of Shane's dad's old sunhats over his face, lifted up one hand in acknowledgement.

Shane found himself smiling before he could even think of stopping it. God, he loved this man.

Crossing over to Ilya's side, he dropped down onto the deck beside him, nudging him with a knee to get him to make space for Shane on the towel. “Come on,” he prompted. “I've got something to show you.”

Ilya lifted the sunhat off his face just enough that Shane could see him smirking suggestively. “Is it something new you want us to try out?” he asked in a low, sultry voice. “Because, my love, you know I am always game for anything.”

“No!” Shane hissed, feeling himself starting to blush already. “No, God. Is your mind always in the gutter?”

Ilya leered at him. “Like you are any better.”

Shane couldn't exactly refute that, because, well, it was true. *Especially* here at the cottage, where it always felt like this was *their* place to relax, and unwind, and properly take each other apart.

“It's not that,” he said, tapping his phone screen to stop it from going dark.

Ilya actually looked disappointed. “Are you sure?”

“Yes! Well... okay, fuck, maybe later. But first, you need to see this,” Shane said, tipping the screen towards Ilya.

Ilya pushed himself up on his elbows and squinted at the screen. “What is this? Who is emailing you videos when we're supposed to be... *oh*. Harris finished editing it?”

“Harris finished editing it,” Shane confirmed, proud of the way his voice only shook a little. “And he said he's really proud of it.”

“*Oh*, ” Ilya said again, and then he was sitting up in a rush and pulling Shane into a tight hug.

“Fuck, Shane,” he whispered, muffled into Shane's neck. “It's *ready*. ”

“It's ready,” Shane repeated, his voice just as unsteady as Ilya's. He clung onto him tighter, for just a moment, breathing him in.

Ilya let him stay like that for a long moment, before gently disentangling himself and standing up, offering Shane a hand. “Well, come on then!”

“Where to?” Shane asked, although he took Ilya's hand without any hesitation.

“Inside!” Ilya replied like it was obvious. “We are not watching our specially made coming out video for the first time ever in the bright sunlight, squinting to see on your tiny phone screen. No, no. This deserves a proper big screen. And maybe some of the good vodka.”

“You and that vodka!” Shane said, deliberately holding on to Ilya's hand even after he had stood up.

“It's good for all occasions,” Ilya defended, swinging their joined hands between them as he led Shane up toward the cottage.

“Hmm,” Shane huffed, but he didn't bother arguing. He let Ilya lead him inside and to the couch, although he protested when Ilya tried to take his phone and start connecting it to the Smart TV himself.

Definitely *not*. Ilya would definitely mess up Shane's settings, and he was very precise about those.

When he had connected his phone and pulled up the video on the TV – all settings correct, all that was left to do was press play – he found himself hesitating for some reason.

Ilya noticed, of course. “Shane,” he said softly, putting his big hand very gently on Shane's cheek and cradling his jaw. “We do not have to do this now, you know.”

“No, I know,” Shane said. “It's not that. It's just... this feels huge, right?”

“Yes,” Ilya agreed immediately. “Massive. And it's... it's terrifying, no?”

“It's *so* terrifying!” Shane agreed, grateful all over again for how easily and how well Ilya understood him. “I'm excited, of course, but... fuck.”

In a way, he felt just like he had that very first time he'd invited Ilya to the cottage – terrified and excited and so hopeful it scared him almost more.

It was the newness of it all, the knowledge that neither of them knew exactly where this was going to go. It was equal parts thrilling and, well, *terrifying*.

“I feel like I'm back at the cottage for the very first time,” Ilya confessed, and Shane had to smile at that.

“I was just thinking exactly the same thing,” he said softly.

Ilya beamed at him, his eyes crinkling with those smile lines Shane loved so much, and leaned forward to press his forehead against Shane's. “And look how that turned out.”

“Yeah,” Shane agreed, feeling the full force of his love for Ilya flood over him. God, he really loved this man so, *so* much.

Ilya took Shane's hand and lifted it to his lips, kissing his knuckles gently before lacing their fingers tightly together. “We have to trust that this will be the same,” he said. “Terrifying, but so worth it.”

“So worth it,” Shane agreed.

He took a deep breath, then made himself turn back to the TV, squaring his shoulders.

“Ready?” he asked, reaching for the remote.

Ilya pulled him closer, so that Shane was tucked comfortably against his side, and only then did he nod. “Ready.”

Shane squeezed Ilya's hand, and pressed play.

The video begins with a wide-angled shot of a lake. Soft piano music plays as the camera zooms in on waves lapping gently against a pebbled shore.

VOICEOVER (SHANE):

Everyone in life has secrets. It's inevitable. But for every secret, there comes a moment where you have to choose to be brave and reveal the truth.

The camera slowly pans up along the shore, revealing a lone figure in the distance. It's a man, standing with his back to the camera, staring out over the lake.

VOICEOVER (SHANE):

I have a secret. I've been keeping it for years and years. But now, it's finally time to reveal the truth.

Another man appears on the screen, also with his back to the camera, and walks slowly over to the first man. He wraps an arm around his shoulders and pulls him close.

CUT TO BLACK.

In the next frame, SHANE and ILYA are sitting next to each other on a couch in a tasteful wood-panelled living room, with a wall of windows behind them. There is a garden with lots of trees, and in the distance, a lake just visible through the windows. Viewers may recognise SHANE's cottage in Ontario.

SHANE has his hands twisted together in his lap. ILYA has one hand draped along the back of the couch, his fingers just barely brushing SHANE's shoulder.

SHANE:

Hello.

ILYA:

Hi, hockey fans.

ILYA lifts the hand behind SHANE's shoulder in a quick wave.

SHANE:

Like I said, I've been keeping a secret for many years.

ILYA:

We both have.

SHANE:

But I realised recently that life is too short and too unpredictable not to spend it with the people you love. The *person* you love.

ILYA:

Yes. When someone is the love of your life, every moment with them is precious. But love is not meant to be a secret thing. When you love someone and you can't show it, that breaks your heart.

SHANE:

It's not right that some people feel like they have to live like that – hiding their love away, pretending it doesn't break their hearts. It's not right that the world gets to have such strong opinions about something that isn't their business.

SHANE shakes his head sharply, his fingers clenching in the fabric of his shorts. ILYA lowers his arm from around the couch and drapes it around SHANE's shoulders, his fingers gently brushing the side of SHANE's neck. SHANE tips his head sideways and smiles at him before continuing.

SHANE:

But as a good friend once told me, in the end, no-one matters except the people you care about. And, hockey fans, here is the truth for you: there is nothing in my life that I care about more than Ilya.

ILYA:

Shane is everything to me. *Everything*. And it has been the hardest thing I have ever done in my life to hide that, when all I have wanted for years is just to be with him.

SHANE lifts his arm and reaches for ILYA's hand on his shoulder. He takes it gently. ILYA laces their fingers tightly together.

SHANE:

We love each other. We know this will come as a surprise to many of you, but it's the truth. It's our truth. We love each other, and we don't want to hide it any longer.

ILYA:

I want to be able to kiss the man I love in front of everyone. Like Scott Hunter, but better.

SHANE:

Oh my God.

ILYA:

What? We are both much hotter and *much* better at –

A long beep cuts off his next words.

The scene resets. SHANE and ILYA are still on the same couch, but have now shifted positions slightly. They are sitting noticeably closer together, and ILYA's arm is curved around SHANE's waist, his fingertips just visible on SHANE's hipbone. SHANE's hand is on ILYA's knee.

SHANE:

[visibly a little tense]

We know a lot of people will probably have a lot of questions about us. About our relationship.

SHANE begins tapping his fingers nervously on ILYA's knee. ILYA immediately takes his hand and squeezes it reassuringly.

ILYA:

So we will be answering some of those questions for you today. My good friend Harris has compiled some of what he thinks will be the most common things people want to ask us. We will answer those, and then we will not be taking any more questions.

ILYA glares at the camera, his expression fiercely protective. SHANE visibly relaxes, his frown smoothing out as he melts against ILYA.

HARRIS, OFF-CAMERA:

Hi everyone! Hi, Ilya and Shane. Thanks for letting me do this.

SHANE:

Hi. No problem.

ILYA:

We are the ones thankful to you. You are very good at your job.

HARRIS:

Aw, thank you.

Right, okay, so moving on to the questions! I think the first thing that people will probably want to know is this: what about your rivalry? If you guys are together, was your rivalry ever real?

ILYA:

Ha! Very real.

SHANE:

Yeah, definitely real. But I think a lot of people forget that most athletes, us included, keep the professional and the personal separate. It's possible to be rivals on the ice and not hate each other off it. Although... I won't lie, we weren't each other's biggest fans at first.

ILYA:

[grinning]

Yes. I thought Shane was very boring. And much too perfect.

SHANE:

I thought you were an asshole.

ILYA:

[grin turning into a smirk]

And you thought I was hot.

SHANE:

[spluttering]

You thought I was hot too!

ILYA:

Obviously.

SHANE:

Anyway. I will say, the media probably made a much bigger deal about the rivalry than it actually justified. Like, yeah, obviously we're very competitive, and yeah, we're very different people. But we also have a lot in common, and I don't think we ever actually hated each other.

ILYA:

This is probably true. But we were both stupid about our feelings for a long time.

HARRIS:

You say "a long time," and I'm sure people will be curious: how long exactly have you two been together?

SHANE:

Several years.

HARRIS:

Can you give us any more detail than that?

ILYA and SHANE exchange a glance. ILYA raises his eyebrows, and SHANE smiles like he can't help it, blushing a little.

SHANE:

[clearing his throat]

Well. That depends on how you define "together." But we've been hiding this for... eleven years, give or take a few months.

HARRIS:

[spluttering a little, clearly not having expected this answer]
Eleven years?!

SHANE:

Well, we weren't officially a couple for all eleven years. Um. That is, for a while, we were...

ILYA:

[smirking]
Lovers.

SHANE rolls his eyes and swats ILYA's shoulder without even looking. It is clear that this is some kind of inside joke between them.

SHANE:

You and that word. God. I hate you.

ILYA:

[sing-song]
No, you don't.

SHANE:

[softer]
No, I don't.

There is a brief pause, in which ILYA watches affectionately while SHANE stares into the distance, a small smile on his lips. He seems to be remembering something.

SHANE:

[refocusing his attention on the camera]

Anyway. To answer your question, we've been an official, exclusive couple for just about four years now.

HARRIS:

So your relationship is serious, then?

ILYA:

Very. We are getting married this summer.

SHANE:

Soon, now.

ILYA:

[smiling]
Soon.

ILYA and SHANE turn to look at each other, both of them smiling like they simply can't hold it back. Both of their faces are glowing with love, so clear that any viewer would wonder how

they didn't see it before. ILYA kisses SHANE on the cheek, lingering, and SHANE closes his eyes, his smile almost painfully soft and tender.

HARRIS:

Congratulations. I'm so happy for you both.

SHANE:

Thank you.

HARRIS:

Of course.

So, with this announcement, you're not just telling people that you're together. You're also both coming out. How does that feel?

ILYA:

Good. It is a relief to not have to hide anymore.

SHANE:

I mean, I agree, but it's... it's complicated, right? I hate that we have to come out at all. What we have is not different to what straight people have. We're in love, and we're getting married. It shouldn't be anything more than that.

SHANE shakes his head slowly, a pensive look on his face. If one looks in the right-hand corner of the frame, you can just about make out ILYA rubbing soothing circles on SHANE's hipbone with his thumb.

SHANE:

But I guess that's the world we live in.

To tell you the truth, I struggled a lot with my sexuality. Accepting it, and accepting what it meant for me. It doesn't quite feel real yet that the whole world is going to know soon. But I think... I do think Ilya is right. It will feel really good not to hide anymore.

HARRIS:

Was it hard, hiding your sexuality and your relationship for years?

ILYA:

For me, hiding my sexuality was not so bad. I grew up in Russia, so hiding it there was second nature. But once I met Shane and we became serious, then... then it changed. I met the love of my life, but I couldn't tell anyone about it, and it broke my heart.

SHANE seems to flinch at that, his body tensing up a little again. ILYA shifts almost imperceptibly, pressing his shoulder harder against SHANE's, comforting.

SHANE:

Yeah. I spent a lot of time wishing that there was some way for the world to see Ilya the way I do. Especially when everyone thought we hated each other, or that we were *barely* friends who tolerated each other for PR. I wanted everyone to know that I love Ilya, I *really* love him, and it's not for show. It's the real thing. He's it for me.

ILYA whispers something in Russian which the camera does not quite catch. SHANE blushes, then murmurs something back. Both smile softly at each other before looking back at the camera.

HARRIS:

Because of the world we live in, your coming out will mean a lot to a lot of people. How do you feel about that?

ILYA:

Proud. Happy. Hopeful. If we can make some young people out there realise that they are not so alone, then I am happy.

SHANE:

I mean... I don't really want to be a gay icon. I just want to be with Ilya.

ILYA:

[gently]
Sweetheart.

SHANE:

[muffled, clearly only meant for ILYA]
I love you.

SHANE:

[more clearly, speaking to the camera again]
But if this can help someone out there, then I'm happy too.

HARRIS:

Thank you, guys. Not to get too personal, but something like this would have meant a *lot* to me when I was a kid. Just saying.

ILYA:

[softly]
Me too. I will say this once only, but for me, it felt like Scott Hunter changed the whole world. I will be so proud if we can give that to someone, too.

SHANE doesn't say anything, but he nods along, his eyes shining a little with emotion.

HARRIS:

I'm sure you will.
Okay, next question – and I know we discussed this beforehand, but I'm still sorry to ask this.

SHANE:

[tensing a little, but maintaining direct eye contact with the camera]
Better to answer it here and now. Otherwise there will be way too much speculation.

HARRIS:

Probably, yeah. Okay, so. You guys have both had fairly high-profile relationships with

women in the past. Shane, of course, you dated Rose Landry for a little while, and Ilya, you've been seen with, uh...

ILYA:
[smirking a little]
Many, many women.

HARRIS:
Well. Yeah. Um, what can you tell us about that?

SHANE:
I'll start, shall I?
Rose and I tried dating for a little while at the end of 2016, which was before Ilya and I were official. Actually, I, um, I was still very much in denial about my sexuality at the time. I was convinced that I still liked women. I kept thinking that I just had to find the perfect woman to settle down with and eventually marry. Well, Rose was the perfect woman.

ILYA mutters something under his breath. SHANE snorts and elbows him gently.

SHANE:
[with affectionate exasperation]
Still so jealous! It was years ago, and you *like* Rose now.
Anyway. Like I said, Rose was perfect: beautiful, sweet, funny, smart, kind. We hit it off from the moment we met, and that had never happened to me before. I really thought she was the one. I wanted more than anything to make it work with her, but we just...

ILYA:
[emphasising every word]
You were not compatible.

SHANE:
[wryly]
Well, yeah.
In hindsight, I realise that what I felt for Rose was just instant, easy friendship. I've always found it a bit difficult to really get comfortable with people, but with Rose, it was effortless. So I mistook our connection for romantic love. Which, uh, it really wasn't.

SHANE winces a little, shaking his head.

SHANE:
Rose was the person who helped me fully realise that I was gay. She was also the first person who told me that that was okay. So. Thank you again, Rose.

ILYA:
Alright, we can move on from Rose Landry now, yes?

SHANE:
Fine. Do you really want to talk about all your relationships with women instead?

ILYA:

[shamelessly]

Yes. Unlike Shane, I *do* like women – you have all probably heard the stories.

ILYA winks, throwing the camera a cocky smirk. SHANE pinches the bridge of his nose, looking exasperated, although he also seems to be fighting back a fond smile.

ILYA:

[his smirk softening into a tender smile]

The stories were true once, but not anymore. It has only been Shane for a long time now.

SHANE smiles fully at that, looking both fond and deeply self-satisfied.

ILYA:

So, there is your answer. I am bisexual, and Shane is super gay.

SHANE:

[makes a protesting sound, then glares at Ilya, half-exasperated and half fond]

For the last time, I'm not super gay, I'm just regular –

ILYA:

Super gay.

HARRIS:

[with an audible smile in his voice]

Don't stress it, buddy. I'm super gay, too.

ILYA:

Thank you, Harris!

HARRIS:

You're welcome!

Now, Ilya, the next question is for you specifically, because I'm sure people will want to know. Is Shane the reason you moved to Ottawa?

ILYA:

Yes, he is the main reason. But not the only one. I knew I wanted to leave Boston when I became a free agent. Not because of the team itself, but because America, at the time, was not the best place for Russians anymore. It made sense to come to Canada. I chose Ottawa because it is Shane's hometown. Also because it is close to Montreal. It made it easier for us to see each other.

HARRIS:

I see. And are you happy with your decision?

ILYA:

Every day. It let me be closer to Shane, and I would do anything for Shane. But also, I love the Centaurs. We have the best group of people here. Like a little family. Very supportive. That is not something you find in every hockey team.

SHANE:

I agree. I mean, I haven't interacted that much with them yet, but from what I've seen, it's a great organisation. I'm very excited to play for them next season.

ILYA can't hide his smile at that. SHANE notices and smiles back, quick but fond.

HARRIS:

Thank you; that leads me very neatly into my question. How do you think it will be next season, playing on the same team, as husbands?

ILYA:

Oh, easy question. I think it will be the best hockey we have ever played.

SHANE:

I completely agree. We've always pushed each other to be better and better, and we've always been very competitive. Wedding rings and being on the same team won't change that. We'll be making each other even better players – and we'll probably have a fierce scoring race throughout the season.

ILYA:

Oh, *definitely*. And I am going to win.

SHANE:

In your dreams.

ILYA:

[smirking]

No, no. In my dreams, you –

HARRIS:

[hastily]

Next question! Time for the next question. It's the last one for today, so I chose a more fun one.

SHANE and ILYA abandon their bickering, though both look rather reluctant about it.

ILYA:

Go on.

HARRIS:

The final question for you two is this: who proposed?

ILYA smiles immediately, letting go of SHANE's hand to reach into his shirt and pull out a simple black ring on a gold necklace.

ILYA:

Shane.

It was very romantic. He filled my living room with candles, and then he made a joke that only the two of us would understand – how do you say this again?

SHANE:

Inside joke.

ILYA:

Yes, inside joke. He made an inside joke, and then he told me I matter more to him than anything else. I will remember this forever. It was the best moment of my life.

SHANE:

Better than winning the Cup?

ILYA:

Of course. I will win the Cup many more times. But you asking me to marry you happened once only.

SHANE ducks his head, looking a little flustered.

ILYA:

My only problem is that you didn't even buy yourself the matching ring.

SHANE:

I wasn't sure if you'd say yes! I didn't want to assume.

ILYA:

I was always going to say yes. Always. I will choose you, every time.

SHANE:

I'll choose you too. Forever.

SHANE leans in and kisses ILYA on the forehead, having to stretch upwards a little to do so. ILYA looks briefly surprised, then absolutely thrilled. He cradles SHANE's face in his hands, brushing his thumb gently over the curve of SHANE's cheekbone.

HARRIS:

[clearing his throat]

Um. Anything else you'd like to say to your fans before we end the video?

SHANE moves away from ILYA, looking a little guilty, like he had forgotten they were still on camera. ILYA pouts, but quickly smiles again when SHANE takes his hand and laces their fingers together, resting their joined hands on the couch between them.

SHANE:

Just one thing. We're together, and we have been for years – and it has never affected our playing. I think our career stats are enough proof of that. So I just want to ask that, no matter what you think of our relationship, please don't let that affect your opinion of us as hockey players. We have always kept our personal and professional lives separate. We hope that you all will be able to do the same.

ILYA:

[staring directly into the camera]

We're in love, and fuck you.

HARRIS:

Well, there you have it. Ilya Rozanov and Shane Hollander, everybody.

CUT TO BLACK.

A montage of photos floats onto the screen next.

First is a photo from the NHL draft, clearly not one of the professional shots, but one taken on a phone camera. The quality is a little grainy, but the image is still clear: an eighteen-year-old Shane and Ilya shaking hands in their brand-new Boston and Montreal jerseys. Ilya is smirking a little, clearly smug at being first overall, while Shane's expression is forcedly polite. Still, both of them are looking intently at the other, like no-one else exists in that moment.

Next is one of the behind-the-scenes photos from Shane and Ilya's first-ever joint CCM shoot. Both are caught mid-laugh, Shane's eyes crinkled and wearing a rare, genuine smile as he looks directly at Ilya. Ilya, too, is beaming while he holds Shane's gaze, dimples just barely visible in his cheeks. Both look painfully young and painfully happy.

Next is one of the selfies taken by Ilya when they presented together at the 2014 NHL Awards. Ilya is grinning, bright and wide and clearly enjoying himself. Shane's expression is far more deadpan, and he is barely smiling. Still, there is a notable intimacy in the way he's leaning subtly towards Ilya, and in the way Ilya's fingers are digging tightly into the fabric covering Shane's shoulder, like he doesn't want to let go.

Next is a photo of Shane and Ilya at a bar in Florida, at the 2017 All-Stars weekend. The photo was taken from behind by Carter Vaughn, and neither Shane nor Ilya was aware of it in the moment. They are facing each other, their side profiles visible to the camera. Ilya is caught in a moment of surprised, completely genuine laughter. Shane looks a little flustered, although he is clearly smiling too, gesturing with the hand not holding a Corona. Again, both are focused so intensely on each other that they barely seem aware that anything else exists.

Next is a photo of Shane and Ilya from the first-ever Game Changer hockey camp. They are wearing matching Irina Foundation jackets and sweatpants. Ilya's arm is draped around Shane's waist, and Shane is leaning into him. Both are grinning at the camera. Ilya is throwing a peace sign with his free hand.

Next is a selfie of Shane, Ilya, Yuna and David having dinner together at Shane's cottage. Shane and Ilya are sitting next to each other, across from Yuna and David. All are smiling, although Shane is not really smiling at the camera, but rather at Ilya. It is an almost unbearably fond look. Ilya looks comfortable and happy, like he knows he belongs here. There are some papers stacked on the far side of the table, the Irina Foundation logo visible if you zoom in, likely to give them plausible deniability if the photo ever leaked.

Next is a rather different style of photo. It is very similar to one posted by Ilya during their social media soft-launching campaign: Shane, on Valentine's Day, holding a large custom bouquet of flowers. In this photo, though, Shane's face is clearly visible. He is rolling his eyes a little like he might be exasperated by something Ilya just said, but his smile is full of fondness.

Next is a photo of Shane and Ilya cuddling on Ilya's couch. Ilya is lying back against a huge pile of pillows, with Shane lying between his legs, his back to Ilya's chest. Their hands are laced together, resting on Shane's stomach. Both of them look deeply content and comfortable. Ilya is wearing a black hoodie, and Shane, checkered pajamas.

Next is a photo of Shane holding Amber Pike on his hip while Ilya kisses his cheek. Shane is caught mid-laugh, his eyes half-squinted and one hand half-covering his mouth as though to hide just how hard he's laughing. Ilya's eyes are closed, and Amber is reaching up to pat his cheek with one tiny hand. Even Hayden Pike acknowledged that it is a "stupidly cute" shot.

Next is a behind-the-scenes shot from Shane and Ilya's Pride-themed CCM shoot. Shane is busy taping his stick with the pride tape while Ilya leans on his own stick, watching on. The look on Ilya's face as he gazes at Shane can only be described as one of absolute adoration. Shane is completely focused, but he's also wearing a small, private smile. His silver chain is loose, the engagement ring hanging from it clearly visible.

Next is a photo of Shane and Ilya taken from behind as they walk out of the Centaurs' practice rink. They are both in black-and-red Centaurs jerseys: Shane's reading ROZANOV and Ilya's reading HOLLANDER. They are holding hands.

*The last photo is of Shane and Ilya sitting on the dock, watching the sunset over the lake. The photo is taken from behind, so they are in silhouette. Shane's head is resting on Ilya's shoulder, and Ilya is pressing a kiss into his hair.
It is a beautiful shot.*

END.

Shane Hollander ✓ and **Ilya Rozanov** ✓
@shanehollanderhockeyplayer, @ilyarozanov81

[Video.]

Us. ❤️

@yunahollanderhockey My boys. So proud of you both ❤️

@roselandryofficial ✓ Congratulations ❤️❤️ You have my support always!

@svetlanavetrova горжусь тобой ❤️

@hayden_pike ✓ So happy for you, Shane (and you too, I guess, Rozanov.) And so relieved the secret is out. I can't tell you guys how scared I was that I'd accidentally let

something slip 😭

@jackiepike35 Love you both so much!

@troybarrett17 ✅ I've said it in person too, but once again, I'm so, so happy for you guys. You're perfect for each other, and I'm so glad everyone can see it too now! Shoutout to my boyfriend for the amazing video. He always gets it so right ❤️

@harrisdroversocials ✅ I love you!

@harrisdroversocials ✅ That applies to you, Troy, but also to Shane & Ilya. I'm so proud and honoured that you guys chose me to be part of your coming-out journey. And, of course, I'm beyond thrilled for you that the secret is finally out! Wishing you both many, many years of happiness.

@wyatthayesgoalie ✅ Hell yeah! So freaking proud & happy for you both!

@drlisahayes I think this occasion warrants an "I'm so FUCKING proud and happy for you both!"

@wyatthayesgoalie ✅ As always, my love, you are so right. Roz, Hollzy, we are so fucking proud and happy for you guys!

@hayeskristy Sorry, Wy, but this is hands-down the happiest I've ever been about any piece of hockey news ❤️🧡💛💚💙💜

@wyatthayesgoalie ✅ You know what? I'll let it slide, because I kind of agree.

@zane_bood ✅ Let's go, Cap!

@cassieboodram97 Ahhhh just thrilled for you guys!! Can't wait to officially welcome you both to the team partners gang 😊💕

@therealevandykstra ✅ I still think I should've won my last bet - Cap's partner IS someone insanely famous! Some of you guys are just SORE LOSERS (**@troybarrett17**). Anyways, super pumped for you Cap & Hollzy!

@troybarrett17 ✅ Oh my god. For the last time, you bet that Cap's GIRLFRIEND was someone insanely famous. It doesn't count!! I'm not giving you any money!!!

@therealevandykstra ✅ Cheapskate.

@caitlin_kelly_dykstra Please ignore them. It's what I do. More importantly: we are so happy for you guys!!

@_lucahaas02 ✅ Congratulations Cap!! Can't wait to have you both on the team 🥳

@nick.chouinard ✅ Let's fucking go!! So proud of you guys!

@selenachou ❤️🧡💛💚💙💜🤗🤗

@leahcampbell ✅ Boys! You almost made me tear up! I can't believe how beautiful this was. So happy for you both!

@max_riley ✅ You know, I've always thought you two would be adorable together. I am so fucking pleased to be right. Massive congrats to you both!!

@scotthunter ✅ Congrats, guys! Welcome to the out & proud NHL players club 💪

@vaughny19 ✅ Well damn, I can safely say I never saw this one coming... way to go boys!! 🏳️🌈😭

@cliffmakesthediff ✅ Yoooo Roz, what the fuck! I always knew you had game, but I never thought you had THIS much game. Guess this explains why you came to Ottawa. Happy for you brother!!

@ottawacentaursnhl ✅ We couldn't be prouder to have the first husbands of hockey on our team!

@rozrozroz THE GAYEST TEAM IN THE NHL FR 😭😭

@hannahthecensfan god i love this team SO MUCH

@lewishamilton ✅ Big congrats guys!! #blessed

@justagayhockeygirlie SIR LEWIS?!?! HELLO?! unexpected but epic crossover, omg

@katemiller89 Congratulations and best wishes to you both! @ilyarozanov81 Willa and Andrew send their love 🍷

@ilyarozanov81 ✅ Thank you!

@justagayhockeygirlie HO-LY SHIT. I AM OFFICIALLY FLABBERGASTED. LIKE. WHAT THE FUCK!! as much as i wanted to believe they were together, i also *couldn't* believe it, you know? but HERE WE ARE oh my god. oh my GOD

@shanezone RIGHT?! i am half convinced i'm going to wake up and this was all a crazy dream 😭

@rozrozroz you and me both... but here's hoping we NEVER wake up if it is a dream. they are so fucking cute together i can't even 😭😭

@inlovewithrozanov COUDLNT AGREE MORE

@justagayhockeygirlie also, am i right that the piano music in the beginning is the intro of Secret Love Song by Little Mix?!!!

@marrymeshane OH MY GOD I THINK YOU MIGHT BE!! i used to be obsessed with LM and it *really* does sound like the Secret Love Song intro

@rozanderstan oh i am SICK... that might be the most romantic thing i've ever heard 😭

@the_nhl_has_habs_now LET'S FUCKING GOOOOOO!! 🎉🎉🎉🎉 welcome to the NHL HABs Club, Shane Hollander & Ilya Rozanov! 🍷

@thehollanovarchives this day will go down in history 🙏🙏 this is it. this is THE moment. it is never getting better than this.

@24x81 there are actual tears streaming down my face... we have won so fucking hard on my god 😭

@hereforhollanov THIS IS EVERYTHING I HAVE EVER HOPED AND DREAMED FOR OMG 😭 I CAN DIE HAPPY NOW

@shilyaaaa watching this video on repeat for the foreseeable future... everyone is going to be so fucking sick of me

@thehollanovarchives OH ME TOO. and there is SO much to dissect in the video!! best believe i will be on it as soon as i can stop crying tears of joy

@rozanderstan they asked what would do if we didn't win? I GUESS WE'LL NEVER KNOW

@hollanovtruthr holy shit. HOLY SHIT. I actually don't even know what to say 😭
😭 like YEAH, i've always believed in hollanov. but i never, not even in my wildest dreams, imagined THIS. guys 😭 they're actually together, and they told the whole WORLD! AND THEY'RE GETTING MARRIED! i'm so fucking happy i can't even 😭
😭 this is hands-down the best day of my life

@ilyarozanov81 ✅ It is probably the best day of my life, too.

@shanehollanderhockeyplayer ✅ The best day of your life so far, you mean.

@ilyarozanov81 ✅ Yes. Yes, I do.

THE END.

Chapter End Notes

thank you so much for reading this labour of love! i hope you enjoyed reading it as much as i enjoyed writing it ❤️ please let me know what you thought - comments make my entire day brighter! ✨

End Notes



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