

## **Speak to us of clothes**

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/78202351) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/78202351>.

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| Rating:          | <a href="#">Teen And Up Audiences</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Archive Warning: | <a href="#">No Archive Warnings Apply</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Categories:      | <a href="#">Gen</a> , <a href="#">M/M</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Fandom:          | <a href="#">Heated Rivalry (TV)</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Relationship:    | <a href="#">Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Characters:      | <a href="#">Original Female Character(s)</a> , <a href="#">Shane Hollander</a> , <a href="#">Ilya Rozanov</a> , <a href="#">Rose is there in spirit</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Additional Tags: | <a href="#">POV Outsider</a> , <a href="#">Canon Compliant</a> , <a href="#">OFC is the stylist</a> , <a href="#">Shane Hollander is sartorially challenged</a> , <a href="#">Relationship Reveal</a> , <a href="#">Coming Out</a> , <a href="#">Sort Of</a> , <a href="#">Fashion Industry references</a> , <a href="#">Domestic Boyfriends</a> , <a href="#">we are literally and figuratively in Shane's closet</a> , <a href="#">possibly the fluffiest thing I have ever written</a> |
| Language:        | English                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Stats:           | Published: 2026-01-24 Words: 5,003 Chapters: 1/1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

# Speak to us of clothes

by [whimsicule](#)

## Summary

Shane Hollander, hockey player extraordinaire, hovers in the doorway to his impressively designed but sparsely filled walk-in closet, looking at her with wide eyes like she might shoot him if he's got the wrong things in there. If she finds any cargo shorts, she might shoot *herself*.

*or: shane hires a stylist.*

## Notes

outsider pov is my kryptonite. also, i am not a stylist, but i have worked in fashion all my life and about half my friends are stylists, so i felt compelled. massive thanks to whatisdrifting, who's been in the heated rivalry trenches with me this past month and a half, for egging me on and beta'ing this thing (aka ridding it of my britishisms).

title is from khalil gibran's poem *on clothes*.

enjoy this silly little thing.

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

Shane Hollander is not what she expected.

Well – that’s not quite right, she guesses. Up until a few days ago, Shane Hollander was a name she was aware of in the same way that she’s always known the name Roger Federer, without having ever watched a single game of tennis. Ana hasn’t lived in Montréal in about ten years, so she should be forgiven for not being able to put anything to his name, not even a face, until the perfunctory Google search a couple days ago.

It is a bit strange to be sitting opposite him, at his kitchen island, in his home, and watch him fidget with the tab of his ginger ale like he’s nervous meeting her, rather than the other way around. Generally, she always finds it a bit nerve-wracking to meet a new client, but this morning, she feels pretty calm. Probably because she isn’t really looking for work at the moment. Or rather, hadn’t planned on taking on any clients while in Montréal.

But Rose had called her a couple of days ago, asking if she was still in town, and if she’d be willing to talk to a friend of hers who was looking to hire a personal stylist. That friend being hockey player Shane Hollander had come as a bit of a surprise – she’s been off Instagram and Twitter for weeks – but she figures it will be an easy gig.

He pronounced her name correctly – *Ah*-na, instead of the Anglicised An-na – so he already has a head start on most of her clients.

“So, uh –” she starts, after clearing her throat, “Rose didn’t say much when I spoke to her. And I’m not sure what she told you about me?”

“Just that you’re the best,” he replies, sincerely.

Ana wants to roll her eyes. Rose has a tendency to hype up her friends, and while she’s grateful, she’s not exactly at her best at the moment, and Rose knows that. “Well, probably,” she says, anyway. “So why do you want to hire a stylist? Something tells me you’re not looking for the full Hollywood A-List experience.”

Not the best choice of words, she realises when his eyebrows shoot up. “I’m guessing you don’t have fifty award shows on your calendar,” she adds, to clarify.

“Ah, uh – no. There’s only the MLH Awards at the end of the season. Maybe the All-Star Game that’s a bit more...public.”

She opens up her Notes app and types *mlh awards* and *all star game*? So that she can look both up later, to figure out what the deal is, even if award shows tend to be pretty straightforward for most guys. But a good tux takes time. There aren’t many things she hates as much as ill-fitting suits.

“So we’re mostly talking personal wardrobe?” Ana concludes. “Couple of public appearances?”

“Yeah, mostly. I just –” Shane shrugs. “I don’t know. I’ve never really thought much about clothes before. I’m always going to the rink or the gym. And I look like that, too.

He’s really soft-spoken, Ana notes. Practiced, like he’s tried to outline their conversation in his head. She imagines this is what he sounds like talking to the press, as well. “Athleisure can be a thing if you’re doing it right.”

He huffs once, a smile tugging at his lips. It looks a bit self-deprecating. “Yeah I don’t think I am. Doing it right.”

“That’s okay,” she tells him, puts her phone face down, and allows herself to just look at him for a moment. He has a great face. The haircut’s a bit tweeby, but that’s not her area of expertise. It’s easy to see why Rose likes him. *He’s a friend*, she’d insisted, and Ana hadn’t bought that line, initially. But watching him now, she thinks she might have an inkling as to why that relationship is what it is. Not that it’s any of her business.

It won’t be hard to make him look good, regardless. Making him feel comfortable, on the other hand – that might be a challenge.

“Have you given any thought to what direction you might want to go in?” Ana nudges them along. She doesn’t have any plans other than watering her mother’s plants, but she doubts Shane wants her in his space longer than absolutely necessary.

“What do you mean?”

“Any designers you like?” Given the puzzled expression on his face, probably not, so she offers, “Perhaps some celebrity you think looks good?”

He looks apologetic when he says, “I don’t really pay attention to any of that.”

*No shit*, Ana thinks, but she wouldn’t be able to name a single hockey team besides the Metros, so it’s fine, and not that surprising. She’s not worked with a lot of athletes the past couple of years, but she figures it requires a lot of focus and commitment, leaving little to no spare time to do much but work out and like...be intense.

“Any colours that are a no-go? Textures that put you off?” she tries, but he pulls a bit of a face, looking pretty out of his depth. Seems like he really wasn’t exaggerating when he said he never thought about clothes.

“Okay, so we’ll start with the basics,” she tells him, which seems to be a bit of a relief to him, but he tenses right back up when she requests a tour of his closet. Ana needs at least somewhat of an idea of where the baseline is.

So Shane Hollander, hockey player extraordinaire, hovers in the doorway to his impressively designed but sparsely filled walk-in closet, looking at her with wide eyes like she might shoot

him if he's got the wrong things in there. If she finds any cargo shorts, she might shoot *herself*.

It's not as bad as she thought it might be. Bland, but tidy. Most of the drawers are filled with tees, shorts, hoodies, and joggers. He's got a couple of chinos and linen and cotton shirts that belong in the closet of a forty-year-old accountant, not a twenty-something sports star.

"Does your mom do your shopping?" she has to ask and isn't the slightest bit surprised when he nods. She has a suspicion that she buys it exactly where she buys clothes for his dad. "Right. I can work with that. We'll keep the shirts, they're good quality," she mutters after a quick inspection. "Wear them when you see her, that'll keep her happy."

The pants have to go for sure, and so do most of the jackets. They're fine, but they definitely do not fit. No athlete has an off-the-rack, sample-size body, so the first order of business will probably be taking most of the decent quality stuff in here to her favourite men's tailor. Ana hopes he's had at least his suits custom made.

"So, uh – Rose mentioned you're from Montréal?"

Bless him for trying to engage in small talk. It is a bit awkward, Ana guesses, to go through someone else's clothing in complete silence.

"I was raised here, yeah," she replies distractedly, grabbing a hanger with a thankfully real leather jacket. It's a nice colour for him, but the cut isn't ideal. "My parents emigrated from Croatia when I was three." It probably makes him look stockier than he is. A diagonal zip would be better. "Well, back then it was still Yugoslavia."

She turns towards him, jacket in hand. "Put this on."

He acquiesces easily. "When Rose shared your contact, I thought you might be, uh – Russian, or something."

The jacket looks better on him than on the hanger, but it sits too tight around the shoulders, and he'd definitely look better in a longer silhouette. "Well, it's all Slavic. My grandparents and parents had to learn Russian in school." She hums. "Rule of thumb, always buy your outerwear one size bigger."

Ana steps up to him, taps his shoulder on one side, an inch from where the seam of the jacket sits. "That's where the shoulder seam should be. Slightly off the curve."

She can see him file away that piece of information. Not that he's going to be buying his own jackets and coats in the near future. Hopefully she can set him up with a handful of great pieces, the right colours and silhouettes already forming in her head. There isn't really anything else for her to do here at this moment, so she takes the jacket from him and puts it back on the hanger.

"I charge per hour," Ana begins to wrap this up, putting the jacket back where it was before. She'll reorganise everything once she's done with the first haul, to make it easier for Shane to put outfits together. "I'll do a reduced rate, because I won't be available twenty-four seven."

He fishmouths at her. “People do that?”

“You’d be surprised,” she drawls, heading back to the living area with him on her heels. “I’ll email you the terms and conditions. Feel free to have your lawyer go through everything, but it’s pretty standard.”

Shane rocks back onto his heels, then his toes, hands in the pockets of his jeans. “Not scared off by that, then?” he asks with a nod back towards his bedroom.

Ana waves him off. “No skinny jeans or cargo shorts, so we’re good.” She puts her phone back in her bag, grabs her hat and scarf. “Once the contract’s signed, I’ll go shopping for you. We can reconvene here in a week or two, whatever works for you. My schedule is pretty flexible at the moment, so...”

Her schedule is non-existent, she doesn’t tell him, since breaking up with her girlfriend and hightailing it out of LAX with a single suitcase and so much exhaustion in her bones she’d spent the first two hours of her flight bawling her eyes out.

“Great, I appreciate it,” he says, and holds out a hand for her to shake.

*So formal*, Ana thinks, but reaches for it anyway. His palms are rough, probably from all the stick-handling, and then she has to bite the inside of her cheek to stop herself from laughing. “No worries. You got my number, in case there are any questions.”

And then she’s out the door, back towards her dad’s old Toyota.

Working with Shane is good. He’s sweet, and the job is comparatively easy, even if she does have to needle him a bit before he tells her whether he likes something or not. He seems a bit surprised that practically all clothes except tees should be fitted and tailored, and mildly horrified when she makes him try on every single piece she wheels in on the garment rail she had to borrow from a neighbour.

“You’re like a Ken doll to me, honey,” Ana tells him when he hesitates before stripping down to his underwear. “This isn’t doing anything for me.”

So he holds still when she hems Jil Sander pants, and doesn’t fidget when she takes in the Zegna shirts. She should have worked with athletes earlier. They’re a lot more obedient than actors and musicians. Also far less opinionated when it comes to fashion.

She gets him a nice linen suit for his charity match thing in Tampa, which she only hands over once he’s sworn to get it steamed before putting it on – “modern Miami Vice, because I don’t think you can sell Magnum P.I.” – and a few nice silk shirts, then focuses on transitional pieces while he’s on his trip.

From her childhood bedroom, she has some more of her things shipped from the now sublet apartment in La Brea, talks her friend through selling her car, and looks up online classes for

everything from Business Management to Architecture. Her parents call from Zadar to check in, and she lets them know she's taken on one client without telling them who it is. Her dad isn't a hockey fan, but he's enough into sports that he's probably aware of Shane Hollander, and Ana doesn't want to make it weird. Thankfully, the fact that she's working, at least a bit, puts her mother's mind at ease, always more concerned about her savings than she is. She isn't paying rent at the moment, housesitting for her parents, and she has no real expenses besides food and gas for the car, so it's fine while she tries to figure out what the hell she wants to do with her life.

She sees Shane twice before summer; once to fit him for a new suit and then to try on a few items before he's off to Ottawa. But then he breaks his collarbone, and doesn't go to that awards show, which is a shame, because Ana had really knocked it out of the park with that outfit. It's Rose who texts her about the injury, because Ana still hasn't watched a single hockey match.

She doesn't need to be watching any hockey to learn about Scott Hunter.

It's interesting what you learn about a person just by observing what they wear, and how they wear it; by how they curate their own body, and their own private spaces. She's discreet, has to be, in her profession – or rather, former profession, in a way. But that doesn't mean she can't observe, and draw conclusions.

Shane changes in increments over the course of the next couple of months. He dresses better, for sure, but that's her job, and she's good at it, and that's not really what catches her attention. It's that he seems a bit more – settled. Which is nice to see. They're not friends, but they're friendly, and on occasion, he'll send her pictures of some of the downright absurd outfits some of his teammates show up in. And she keeps it to herself; doesn't even talk to Rose about it, who's been filming in Prague for over a month.

She isn't conceited enough to believe the clothes have something to do with it, but she really hopes that they've at least helped to make him feel more comfortable in his body, in his own skin, and more confident in himself. It's the one thing Ana's always loved about fashion, and about getting to play a part in helping people look their best, and feel their best by extension. Maybe that's why she left LA, ultimately. Because it had stopped feeling like that.

Now that she's built a solid wardrobe for Shane, there isn't too much to do besides style him for the occasional sponsor event, which, for an athlete of his calibre, are surprisingly few. So she does a few online classes on interior design, and flies to New York for a few weeks to meet with her friend Pierre. They get drunk at The Bowery, and make plans to go to Milan and Paris for Fashion Week. He asks her to go watch the New York Admirals play the visiting team from Boston, because apparently, watching hockey is now a thing queer people do in New York, but Ana begs off with a headache.

Once she's back in Montréal, she picks up a few items from the tailor and heads to Shane's to drop it all off. He's busy with some video analysis thing on his iPad, so she heads to his

closet by herself. He still keeps it just as tidy, though it's less rigidly structured, because while he certainly does not possess an innate sense of style like some people, Shane is a fast learner, and Ana trusts him to put an outfit together without prearranging its parts for him .

But she has organized this closet, which is why she immediately clocks a few items she absolutely did not put there. They're slightly separated from the rest of the clothes, but neatly hung up. Nothing special, at first glance. Two tees, one pair of pants and two sweatshirts. Three white stripes down the legs and sleeves. Huh.

"Hey!" she calls out. "Do you have a new brand deal with Adidas you haven't told me about?"

"What?" he calls back from the living room, and a moment later she hears footsteps coming down the hallway.

Ana reaches for one of the sweatshirts. It's got a retro look, but it's brand-spanking new. One of the pieces reissued last year in a small range of colours. This one is a nice slate grey. She turns left, and sees Shane in the doorway, looking a bit pale.

"I thought you were with Reebok?" It's a pain, really. She'd prefer to set him up with a different brand, but that's Mama Hollander's domain.

"I am," Shane says. "I just – this is some old stuff I had at my parents' house."

He stares at her, wide-eyed. Now, he doesn't know how truly obsessive she is; that she could probably take one look at almost any item of clothing and determine exactly which collection and which season it belongs to. These Adidas tops can't be old stuff, because they are embroidered with a version of the retro logo that wasn't reissued until recently. She can recall the ad campaign.

But he looks at her, and she looks at him, and they both know he's lying.

"Right," Ana says. "Because I was gonna say, I can't recall you ever dressing like literally all of my cousins."

He blinks. "Your cousins?"

Ana takes a breath, leaves the Adidas things where they are, and resumes her original mission. "Yeah, I mean, some clichés are true. This is like...the Slavic fuckboy uniform."

She wasn't expecting him to laugh at that, but it bursts out of him, seemingly involuntarily. A surprisingly loud guffaw that she didn't believe him capable of, before he slaps a hand over his mouth.

"I'll keep that in mind."

Ana can see him take a deep breath, and then another, before enough air seems to settle in his body. She should remind him of her confidentiality clause.

Over the next couple of months, the corner of Shane's closet that Ana has started referring to as "boyfriend corner" in her head expands. Not by much, and only incrementally, but it does. There is no permanent cohabitation happening, as far as she can tell, and while she doesn't follow hockey, she doesn't live on the moon, so she gets that it's still hard, even in a post-Scott Hunter world. But she supposes it's as solid as any relationship can be given Shane's profession.

She certainly wouldn't be leaving an eight-thousand dollar Tom Ford coat at someone's place if she was just seeing them casually.

At least with that one, Shane doesn't try to come up with an excuse. There was a half-arsed attempt, when she almost fell over a pair of Burberry boots, to convince her that these had been left by a teammate, but he seems to have relaxed around her, thankfully. Maybe because Ana has made an effort to stress how much she is not interested in hockey, and how little time she spends online these days. She's still not back on Twitter, and she only uses Instagram to post about the styling work she's still somewhat getting roped into doing here and there.

She wonders if Rose knows the boyfriend, but they don't talk about Shane much, not even when she joins Rose on the press tour for the newest X-Squad movie for a couple of weeks. He's got decent taste, from what she can tell, as the boots and the coat are joined by Rick Owens sweatpants, Acne Studios jeans, and a leather jacket from Enfants Riches Déprimés she really, *really* wants to steal.

All always neatly hung up, never draped over the arm of the sofa or left by the door. Not obvious when you walk through the door, Ana supposes, in case Shane has people over. And while she notices a second pair of headphones on the kitchen table, a new brand of coffee beans on the counter, she really doesn't snoop, and she doesn't want to. The bunched-up shirt dangling from the edge of the hamper only catches her eye – armed with a stack of Alex Mill henleys – because it is *so* out of place, there might as well have been a spotlight on it.

Against her better judgement, curiosity piqued, she sets down the henleys on top of the dresser and fishes the sliver of silk out of the hamper, unfolding and holding up in front of her. When Ana sees what it is, she – and she's not proud of it – lets out an honest-to-God squeal.

"Oh my God." She feels giddy.

Shane comes skidding around the corner, probably alarmed, but Ana doesn't pay attention to him. "Are you –"

*Okay*, he surely wants to ask, but doesn't, stopping and staring at her and the shirt she's absolutely losing her fucking marbles over.

"This," she says, reverently, "is vintage Jean Paul Gaultier." Briefly, she glances at him, then back at the shirt. There is no way Shane knows who Jean Paul Gaultier is. Not that it matters to her in this very moment. "Specifically, nineteen-ninety-eight Jean Paul Gaultier."

This shirt is off-white, leopard skin print on its front and its sleeves. She'd found the black version of it a couple of years ago at Tokio7 in Manhattan, hadn't bought it, and spent the subsequent years in a pit of regret. It'd been the Balenciaga patent leather houndstooth coat from Ghesquière's twenty-eleven collection all over again.

"This is a piece of fashion history. Gaultier in the nineties was..." Ana trails off. She genuinely lacks words. There are probably other things to say, or ask, but her eyes flicker between the shirt and the hamper as understanding dawns on her. "Were you about to machine wash this?"

There is apparently so much vitriol in her voice that it makes Shane take a step back. "Uh, yes?"

"Jesus fucking Christ," Ana breathes. "This is silk. You'd ruin it."

She needs to know how Shane pulled someone who owns vintage Jean Paul Gaultier. And then, because this isn't weird enough, her eyes fall onto a small smatter of lightly colored stains near the hem, barely visible against the creamy fabric.

Oh, Ana thinks. And then, *oh*.

Scratch that, she needs to know how Shane pulled someone who not only owns vintage Jean Paul Gaultier, but lets him cum on it.

She looks at Shane, and clocks the exact moment he realizes what she's just realized. He subsequently goes so red she's momentarily worried he's about to have an aneurysm.

Thankfully, Ana has experienced far worse. This is tame in comparison to the absolute carnage she's had to clean up post Vanity Fair Oscars party. She pointedly clears her throat, then delicately folds the shirt at its sleeves, and then once across the middle, keeping a layer between her and the stains. "I'll take this to the dry cleaner for you."

"You really don't –"

"Oh, I absolutely do," she assures him, and walks up to him. Flicks his chest once. "This isn't a chore. It's basically public service."

Henleys forgotten, she goes to find a hanger and bag for the shirt. "Vintage Gaultier in the washing machine. Absolute fucking lunatic."

She keeps returning to Montréal in between the odd freelance gig – a couple editorials, some lookbooks and runway shows – torn between returning to her old life in LA, and giving it all up to move to Croatia to herd goats and make cheese. Her ex slides into her DMs, she smokes too much and sleeps too little, and hooks up with a cookbook author slash culinary influencer who makes her sourdough pancakes the morning after on another trip to New York.

It's nice, to not be too busy, but then her friend Cat trips over a Yorkie outside the Equinox on Santa Monica Boulevard, breaks her shoulder, and all her plans for the upcoming weeks are shattered. Cat has three clients doing the awards circuit, and Ana needs to take over two of them. So she has to book a far-too-expensive ticket for a flight to LA that very day, pick up one of Shane's suits two days early, and break a few speed limits on the way to his building.

She tries calling him, because she doesn't want to show up unannounced, but it rings out. He'd mentioned having a few days off, after sending her a picture of Boiziau's acid wash jeans, so maybe he's got his phone on silent. Maybe he'll see the text that she sends him anyway, or if he's out, send her the code to the front door. She tries to come up with a contingency plan as she parks her car. Bless buildings with doormen, but she can probably drop her home key into his mailbox and he can pick up the suit at her house while she's away.

He could, of course, just wear a different suit, but she's already matched all the accessories down to his fucking socks, so that's not an option.

Maybe he's just taking a nap, she hopes, grabbing the garment bag from her passenger seat and heading to the front door. She rings the doorbell, thinking ahead to what she still has in storage in LA, and what she needs to pack, and how much time she has to pack everything before she needs to head to the airport.

When the door buzzes and the lock clicks, she breathes a sigh of relief and thanks her lucky stars as she jogs to the elevator. She presses the button for the top floor, opens the Uber app, and books a cab for five. That should give her enough time.

Ana adjusts her bag on her shoulder, almost drops her phone in the process, so she is a bit distracted when she gets to Shane's door. When the door opens, she's still fumbling with her phone, and when she finally looks up, and comes face to face with one of the hottest men she has ever seen, Ana does drop it.

"Oh, shit." She bends down to pick it up, basically slaps herself in the face with the garment bag. "Fuck."

*Jesus fucking Christ*, she thinks when she looks up again. It's a good thing that she's gay, or her knees would probably buckle. Nobody should be allowed to look this good in a wife beater.

Shane's boyfriend, partner – presumably – opens his mouth, then closes it again. Then says, "I thought you were Shane."

She can detect an accent. Ana snorts. "That makes two of us." She lifts her brows, and Shane's packaged suit. "I really need to drop this off. I tried calling him."

"Meeting," he says, monosyllabic.

That explains it, and she pushes past him without waiting for an invite. If he didn't want her inside, she's pretty sure he could stop her. His arms are very – there.

"I'm Ana," she introduces herself, even though she has no empty hand for him to shake.

He looks at her for a moment, says, “Hi,” and nothing else.

But the accent, paired with his entire look, makes her take a punt. “Hrvatski?”

His eyes go wide. Then he shakes his head, still hovering by the front door. “Русский.”

“Ah, shame,” she drawls. “That would’ve been a bonus point.”

Ana guesses the Adidas stuff is still pretty on brand. She turns on her heel, because she is kind of in a hurry, calls out, “I’ll be out of your hair in a minute,” and makes her way towards the bedroom. The bed is unmade, which is a first, sheets rumpled and pillows strewn around.

Good for Shane.

Speaking, or rather, thinking of the devil, her phone starts chiming just as she’s unzipping the garment bag. She answers, puts it on speaker, and puts it on the floor.

“Hey,” Shane’s voice comes from the other end of the line, *“sorry, I just got out of a meeting, but I –”*

“Oh, no worries,” she cuts him off, and swaps the wire hangers for the fancy oak ones in Shane’s closet. “Your boyfriend buzzed me in.”

A sharp intake of air. “My –”

“Congrats, by the way,” Ana steamrolls on. She can feel her anxiety starting to simmer just thinking about the stress coming her way. It makes her chatty. Fucking insufferable.

“What?”

“Great bone structure. Those cheekbones could cut glass.” She folds up the garment bag and stuffs it in one of the drawers, then crosses the small space to pick out the right pair of shoes. She’ll send him a text later, regardless, but she wants to make sure he doesn’t end up wearing fucking wingtips. Then comes the shirt, the tie, the socks, the cufflinks.

“Uh –”

Ana takes a deep breath once it’s all in place, and counts to three. “Really sorry to have barged in like this, but I gotta be at the airport in like, two hours.”

“That’s fine, I just – uh,” he clears his throat. “I just –”

She heads back out. Shane’s carved-out-of-goddamn-marble boyfriend is leaning against the kitchen island, arms crossed in front of his chest, looking a bit tense. His biceps are insane.

“Let me know if you are ever in the market for some matching suits. You know I have a contact at Tom Ford, right?”

Shane splutters, and the boyfriend’s eyes go wide. God, he’s pretty. She really wants to dress him up, too.

“Enjoy your day off, honey. Text me if you need me. I’ll be back in Montréal in like, two weeks.”

Ana hangs up, pockets her phone, and readjusts the strap of her bag, *again*. If Cat’s gig pays well, she definitely needs to invest in a new tote bag.

“It was nice meeting you,” she tells the boyfriend, then does good on her promise and shows herself out.

Later, as she sits at her gate, waiting to board, sipping on acidic airport coffee, she pulls up her text chain with Obadiah, and inquires about the average turnover of a custom tux.

It never hurts to be prepared.

## End Notes

when i tell you that i screamed when i saw ilya in that shirt in episode four...

in case anyone is interested, here are all referenced items.

- [Jil Sander straight cotton trousers](#)
- [Zegna shirt](#)
- [new suit from Ralph Lauren](#)
- [Tom Ford coat](#)
- [Burberry boots](#)
- [Rick Owens sweatpants](#)
- [Acne jeans](#)
- [Enfants Riches Deprimés jacket](#)
- [Alex Mill Henley](#)
- [Tom Ford tux](#)

also my only wish for season two is for the show's stylist to NOT have shane and ilya wear grey and burgundy suits for their wedding. they are millionaires, please let them wear tom ford.

p.s.: i am also on [tumblr](#) where i mainly scream about heated rivalry these days, but always happy to talk fashion.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!