

Burn me it's kinder

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Additional Tags:	hey you know that scene in ep 6 where shane looks like hes gonna kill people? , yeah this is my idea of what was going on in his head , it's prob covered in the books but i haven't read those , and im obsessed with hudsons performance , Episode 6 , Episode: s01e06 The Cottage (Heated Rivalry) , also bringing up the fight that shan had with scott , in like ep 3 or whatever , Angst , but very lighthearted cause we all know how this ends , Shane is not a violent man but boy can he be tempted , Mentioned Svetlana Vetrova
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Burn me it's kinder

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Summary

Shane Hollander was no violent man. He didn't fight on the ice, which he could. Really even he should. It'd certainly be a good excuse for Shane to touch Ilya more. Their collective rivalry branding surely would do well with them fighting from time to time. When Ilya slammed him into the rink wall last January or so (during his period with Rose) the commentators went wild. There were gifs of it all over Twitter. But if anything Shane Hollander was notable expressly because he didn't fight on the ice, nor off. Even when provoked.

Notes

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

Shane Hollander was no violent man. He didn't fight on the ice, which he could. Really even he should. It'd certainly be a good excuse for Shane to touch Ilya more. Their collective rivalry branding surely would do well with them fighting from time to time. When Ilya slammed him into the rink wall last January or so (during his period with Rose) the commentators went wild. There were gifs of it all over Twitter. But if anything Shane Hollander was notable expressly because he didn't fight on the ice, nor off. Even when provoked.

Hockey could get brutal. In certain leagues it was half the point. Especially for Americans. He wasn't sure if it was a side effect of their Football culture but the guys in the MLH were a lot more prone to brawling on the ice than anyone from the teams under the CHL. Shane didn't even play against the CHL he'd just watched enough games to know they knocked skulls less.

The only time Shane Hollander ever fought anyone was Scott Hunter (ironically American). The presenters had made a really big fuss about it too. There was a lot to be said about good boy Shane Hollander with his perfect PR managed image taking a swing (two really) at a Hockey veteran. One he'd played on the ice with during his first ever All Stars game.

Some fan on Twitter even read his lips in the clips and found out he called Scott a pussy. There were niche Hockey Podcasts that Shane would never tell a soul he listened too, saying they liked him better now that he proved himself. Their approval was sickening.

"Shane Hollander's act is so grating. Does anyone really believe he's that squeaky clean? He goes around and gets sponsorships from Rolex and reebok and all these fucking company's just cause he looks like a nice guy. But I'm sure he has as many skeletons as the next player. No one is that nice or that clean. And I for one am glad he finally took a swing and tried to take down Scott Hunter."

Shane wasn't even sure why he listened to those niche Hockey Podcasts. Some form of masochism? Those guys threw around the same degrading jargon that Shane was constantly deflecting. He'd heard the words they called him because they were confident he'd never find them. Yet there he was calling Scott Hunter a pussy. Knowing those assholes would pick it apart.

Embarrassing.

When he finally stepped back from the whole mess it was just so mortifying. He never called people that. It was just so crude.

His Mom was so disappointed. Called him after everything just to hear what the hell he was thinking. Demanded answers.

"What were you thinking Shane?" She sounded so frazzled, worried. "What if the brands drop you. A lot of kids look up to you sweetie, you can't get away with what the other guys do."

She probably was on the phone with him for half an hour trying to get answers.

Not like he could give any. His response to her was no better than the one to reporters before it.

After the game, once the winner was shaken loose from the play by plays, but before his mom tore him a new one, there were cameras shoved in his face about it. Questions about how, why, what was said to him. What made *the* Shane Hollander act out like that? What made Shane Hollander call Scott Fucking Hunter a pussy in front of everyone.

He didn't have an answer for them. Not as Shane Hollander at least.

'You're starting to sound like him.'

Scott knew what he was doing when he said that. In that moment he wasn't talking to Shane Hollander the Hockey player, he was taunting Shane. He had goaded that fight intentionally.

Especially after his stunt with his boyfriend Shane knew Scott knew he was picking at a scab. That man was asking to be fought with. Scott wasn't even really on the ice. Not mentally.

He could hazard a guess why, especially after that public of a come out; but Shane wasn't really much in the mood to give grace for it after that disaster of a game. Hell he didn't even have context then. Shane's actions just got him penalized, as captain, after the final whistle and everything. And Everyone had wanted to know why.

'You're starting to sound like him.'

Still do.

'You're starting to sound like him.'

There were dozens of reporters looking at him threads of a story woven before their eyes as they all asked.

"What was it that made you fight Scott Hunter like that?"

If Shane had half the persona that Ilya did then he'd grin brazenly at the camera, wink at the woman asking him what was said and say *'A gentleman never kiss and tells'*. And he'd get away with it because he was charming and suave and could pretend he was worse at English than he was. But Shane Hollander was not a daring Russian with glittering puddle eyes and a persona built on playing with people expecting him to be an asshole who cared only for the win. He could not lean on the idea that English was his second language because it wasn't, and He was not Ilya Rozanov

Instead Shane Hollander just ducked his head and bashfully apologized for his behaviour. Said he got too caught up in the moment. Never giving an answer but never deflecting from the fact that he was ashamed of his actions.

"I shouldn't have acted out like that. I let my emotions get the better of me."

And he was. Ashamed that was. Attacking people was his least favourite aspect of the sport.

Against all odds it satiated them. Made them all titter about what a class act he was. As if he hadn't just slugged a man across the jaw. Twice. They were all so impressed by Shane Hollander managing to still keep brand integrity in the midst of attacking another Player. None of them commented how lucky it was that Scott's jaw wasn't tissue paper and cardboard. Shane wasn't sure what he'd do if he actually maimed the man

Truthfully he didn't care much for getting violent. Not just as Shane Hollander the hockey player, or Shane Hollander the brand; but as himself, Shane. He found it set him on edge.

He understood it rationally, violence, knew it was part of the game. It was an underbelly he'd grown up expecting for Hockey. From a young age Shane had watched every single game that aired. Many live, most taped on VHS after school or practice. Violence on the ice, even blood on it was extremely commonplace.

Junior leagues really tried to prevent it but everyone knew it couldn't be avoided in a professional league.

A few years before his rookie season, during the 2004-2005, there was a lockout at the MLH. Huge deal even up in Canada. Hell some of the Hockey Forums Shane used to frequent said it was big even across Europe. Everyone was turned to watch. The few teams that the MLH had snapped up in Canada were also on a labour strike. Anyone in the hockey world, even just prospective players were keeping up. So of course he had to stay aware. His mom had been doing that religiously. Her keen Hockey knowledge and knowhow was kicked into overdrive. When there wasn't a CHL game running it was news about the negotiations with MLH.

MLH was all but bleeding money daily. Mom Was able to predict the negotiated terms within 5 percent. She was so on the pulse about it Shane almost considered entering the junior betting pool about the turn out.

It took the Players and MLH forever to get everything sorted, the Stanley cup wasn't even issued that year, it was that much of a mess. There were a lot of side effects to it. The biggest one was the rule changes.

When the negotiations on Pay structure, and treatment from MLH faded away there was one huge shift that was seismic in the hockey world. Fighting on ice has never technically been legal. But to that point it'd been mostly ignored. Why wouldn't it be? Hockey was a high grossing sport. There were insane levels of money to be found in the industry. And in the American market, which always had to be catered to, Violence sold. Their blood, sweat, and sometimes teeth, were worthwhile sacrifices to the masses in the eyes of the MLH.

But after the strike it was different. They put more rules on the books disincentivizing not just the players but the coaches and management from pushing physical brawls. There was a bigger focus on finesse and skill after that. The enforcer role was now less of a starring player. Half the reason Ilya and all the other European players like him flocked to North American Leagues and teams was that shift in focus.

Europe had long encouraged skill over blood and it showed.

At the time a good chunk of Shane's highschool buddies were bummed out by the rule change. A lot of them were good. Shane could tell, however, from some of their forms that they were really depending on the ability to punch someone's clock. They were fun to watch but not mesmerizing. Not like Players like Ilya were.

At the time Shane wasn't sure that the league would pick him. He had his hopes of course, but he was mainly glad for the focus being shifted to skill.

Then he got in and was grateful for the policy change. Especially after Cliff Marleau sent him flying to the stratosphere. If an accidental collision was that bad, he loathed to think what intentional prolonged blows would do to him.

Unlike many of his peers Shane Hollander was not driven by Violence. He could school himself and pick apart the impulses that led him there long before a punch was thrown, a swing was swung.

Shane Hollander was not even one prone to fits of destruction.

But hearing those words. Those curdled casual words. Something in him burned at them. Shane wanted to cry. He wanted to break something.

"I could marry Svetlana."

Ilya said it so simply. Like an afterthought.

Shane knew him long enough know; Could glean his ability to fit a foot in his mouth well enough to know the intent wasn't malicious. But it was not stopping a hither to unawakened jealous beast from rising its head.

The previous day, looking back on their conversation with a sort of foggy reflection, Ilya had started this conversation

"I'm free agent next season"

He'd teased the idea of playing for Canada, they'd been messing around just kicking a soccer ball hardly competing about it. Just having fun. Shane thought that maybe he was looking into immigration to Canada. The conversation was certainly steering that direction.

Right?

"I would love to not have Russian passport"

Maybe he read it all wrong, maybe Ilya was trying to Brace Shane for the real option.

"I could marry Svetlana"

The words seemed to echo again though Shane knew he only said it once. Shane wasn't sure if he even responded. Maybe he did, maybe he didn't. All he knew was he could not stop

staring at this man trying to place, no, to understand his words. He'd heard him clear and he could not stop hearing him.

Ilya remained casual in tone, no rush or worry, he didn't see the fire burning a hole through Shane.

"She's American. Would be easy citizenship." He wasn't even looking at Shane, he could not see the set of uncontrolled fire in his brow. He was busy typing something on his phone. Probably googling.

"She would do it. Her father is goalie, Sergei Vitrov." Casual little fun fact tidbits like it was trivia night. As if Shane hadn't obsessively googled Svetlana Vetrova while he was still seeing Rose.

Ilya was a silly man. He was very funny, often on purpose. Often by accident. He had a sort of silent underlying comedic timing no one would believe Shane for saying existed. No one could make him Laugh like Ilya could. This was not such a moment. Nor was it even a moment where his being trapped in a secondary tongue made him flounder to find words. Ilya was, despite it, very clear and very concise. Communicating things was something he was very talented at. He was surgical the way he went for Shane's heart on the operating floor of the living room.

"Yeah, you've told me." Against best judgement the words came out harsh. Cutting even. He never wanted people to hurt, especially not Ilya but some dark part of him wanted that pain in his chest to be felt by something or someone else in the world.

"I could Marry Svetlana." And where would that leave Shane?

Svetlana... Shane had never met her. She's been Ilya's friend for a long time. Longer than they even had known each other.

She had dual citizenship in America and Russia. She sold fancy luxury cars, the kind he knew Ilya enjoyed. And she understood Hockey, able to go on conversations with Ilya about the sport in his first language. Svetlana was also very pretty. The kind of pretty that made Shane more than jealous. She had alluring eyes and a set of gorgeous curls she manipulated into elaborate hairstyles on her social media photos. She wore nice slinky dresses that made other men faint and most importantly she wasn't a danger to Ilya's stability like Shane was.

Ilya had mentioned her once or twice.

One of them during their call after Ilya's Father's funeral. Shane didn't understand the words but he could hear the warmth in his tone that'd been vacant until she was mentioned. Fondness transcended language and for a moment in that pained vent, it'd dissolved to something softer. Svetlana and Ilya had a history together. A less tangled simpler history than Ilya and Shane had. One that wouldn't take a press team and a PR manager from god to detangle. Ilya was proposing he marry her just for an American Passport.

Shane thought that Ilya was going to play for a Canadian team. He thought they were on the same page.

“She would help me.”

He said it with no love. Not of her but of the plan. No sense of immediacy. Not even pleasure at the idea. Just a straightforward plainness that this was the most sensible option. It was almost teasing. Ilya could not read Shane’s mind, could not hear the screaming threatening to burst from his throat. He'd rather Ilya had set him on fire. Fire's had plans. A way you stop the pain.

Mouth driest it'd ever been in his entire life Shane swallowed the pained whimper he wanted to make and tried to speak. “But...” His eyes were burning,” is she, I-I don't know, someone you'd *want* to marry?”

He tried to put that emphasis on want. If it was something he wanted maybe but...

Shane had never felt robbed so thoroughly before. Like something he never knew he needed was stolen out from under him.

Ilya didn't seem to understand. “We are friends. We would be fine. And it would be for the passport.”

To him the issue was simply one of logistics. At this time Ilya could not become an American citizen. Well he could but the implication was laid bare between them. The process they had there in the states was messy and difficult. Really the only good easy route was marriage. Hell, Americans had a whole show about it. The only way to become a citizen even after living and providing revenue for seven years was to marry a woman he didn't love. At least he hoped not like that.

Ilya was not like him. He could be happy with Svetlana, in a way Shane couldn't with Rose.

“OK, but...”

“But what?” Ilya asked

Must he say it?

Why make him admit he was jealous of Svetlana? That seemed to cruel for Ilya.

Shane was going to burn the cabin down.

The feeling startled and upset him almost as much as Ilya's proposition. He'd never do it. Shane was not a violent man. But the world was burning around him. He could feel it in his chest rising in the back of his throat. Releasing steam through his nostrils and making his eyes squeak.

He was not crying, not really Shane could handle himself, he was good at schooling his emotions. Hiding how he felt from people. Partitioning away the ugly bits.

But he was close. So close.

Ilya was *Shane's*. And Shane *Ilya's*.

The world was burning, the smoke was rising, why not light a match. Shane had this place built he could have it destroyed too. It didn't matter. It was just a place. Just a stupid cabin in the woods. Their sanctuary was nothing without Ilya.

“But you like women, right?”

Shane had only felt so utterly awful like this because of Ilya's words once.

Back at Ilya's, Before Cliff Marleau t-boned him, before the All Stars match, before Rose. God it was what made him go on the path with her in the first place.

Ilya told him he never saw Shane with a woman. And then, as if to make him jealous, about all the pretty girls, all the beautiful women that threw themselves at him that he liked. That they were not difficult to find. Ilya had options. He could always find love. Find a person who wouldn't ruin his career and chances of going home to Russia.

He would not like it but Shane could maybe force himself to tolerate it so long as Ilya was happy. If he actually went for love. He'd burn himself in the process but it'd be worth it for him right?

“You could find someone you'd want to marry for real and still get the passport.”

Shane did not remember the feeling being so terrible then. The implication of what Ilya's ability to find a safer route to happiness meant. What it could mean for them. It must not have been so encompassing. Muffled maybe was the wordage. The feeling was muffled and he could go on existing in a lie a little longer.

Ilya let out a long suffering sigh and finally put his phone down. Whatever he had googled no longer entranced him.

“Maybe, but...” He sighed again like it explained it all. Like Shane could understand the implication of those breaths and how they sandwiched two simple words.

“But what?”

Ilya shook his head ever so slightly the motion buffeted by the couch and his eyes were far away.

“I have this problem.”

What?

“What's the problem?” He tried so hard to keep his tone flat, his voice from breaking, his face neutral. And he was doing well, only a lifetime of schooling his face like a business man kept him from breaking. But he *wanted* to break. He'd never wanted to break so badly in his entire life. Spilling himself in front of Ilya however was terrifying. They were important to each other, he could feel the shape of that eventuality. But they were still hovering at the precipice. He hoped maybe he read this all right, that Ilya would not mind being in his splash zone of emotion.

But Shane was very bad at reading people

Ilya sat up and leaned on his arm finally looking Shane more squarely in the face. Maybe the proximity would tell Shane more clearly what was going on in his head.

“I like women, yes?”

“Yeah, I know.” Shane wasn’t sure how he was keeping it together, his vision was blurring terribly.

“And everywhere I go, I’m surrounded by beautiful women. And they love me.”

“Sounds rough.” He looked away because if he didn’t then the impulse to scream, or burn himself alive would become unbearable.

Even now at his couch, toe to toe heel to heel Ilya was telling him again about all the pretty girls and beautiful women that threw themselves at him. He envied them. They could brazenly without fear of] their careers tell the world exactly how Ilya Rozanov made them feel.

He might not marry Svetlana, still it was only a matter of time before a lovely woman could swoop in and give Ilya the life Shane couldn’t. The reminder had him feeling like a caged pathetic coyote. The kind that should be set free or put out of its misery. The kind that whimpered at a gentle hand. The kind that bit with no teeth.

“Yes, it is.” Ilya sounded annoyed but Shane couldn’t dare look to verify. “Listen.” Ilya implored as if Shane wasn’t hanging onto every word like a pathetic creature.

“And these women, they’re so sexy and fun.” He said it like it was a true burden. So Shane looked again. Awful terrible intrusive thoughts about Ilya at a wedding with a blank faced woman flashing before his eyes. But he looked. And Ilya was staring at him tenderly. Like he was choosing his words with delicacy.

“But I am always thinking about this slow fucking hockey player with beautiful freckles.”

Salve to his burning ego. Shane’s lips twitched up to a smile. Ilya always had to hedge his sincerity with some stupid halfhearted dig.

“And a weak backhand.” There it was the sentiment sandwiched.

“A weak backhand?” Shane only felt half indignant, so he let that half show. It was easier to laugh at that as he shuddered out a breath that could sound like a sob than to show Ilya just how fragile this made him.

“Yes, very weak.” Ilya insisted. “And he’s so boring, and he drives this terrible car.”

Now he was trying to get a rise out of him. Shane knew it from the way he melodramatically slumped back into the couch like Shane’s stupid car was the end of the world.

“It’s a normal car!” Shane insisted, for prosperity mainly.

“I am always wishing that these women were him. It's a terrible problem, huh?”

He was thinking of him. When those women threw themselves at his feet. Ilya had double the options. Life was a buffet of gorgeous people all vying for Ilya Rozanov, a piece of him and his charm. But none of the world had his thoughts.

Shane was maybe slightly more balanced as he asked after a hefty pause, just to be sure,” Do you want that problem to go away?”

Ilya shook his head into the cushion again making a small little noise in the back of his throat. “I don't ever want that problem to ever go away.” Ilya all but whispered it. Shane had to catch it and hold it like a fragile thing.

So many emotions slammed into Shane at the fragile thing in his hands. What Ilya had just admitted fluttered between them.

Shane had not misread. Ilya was his, he was Ilya's. Shane was wanted, and he was never going to let go.

“Don't marry Svetlana.” he choked out around the lump in his throat. He could see it now. What the proposition was. Ilya was searching for a route and this was all he could find. A sham marriage with Shane and him hiding still. “Just don't.” He couldn't justify it, objectively it was their only option. But it'd kill him. Being secret was bad enough but to be a torrid affair might kill him.

“I know it wouldn't be for love or whatever. Just don't. We can figure something else out, okay?” his voice nearly gave out and he was really going to cry if they didn't stop soon but he needed Ilya to understand. Needed him to see that it would kill him.

“Okay.” Softly, gentle as a feather fell from Ilya's lips. And if he were not so wrung out Shane might throw himself at Ilya into a clumsy embrace.

Ilya was a foolish man. Not intentionally. Not even usually. He just became that way sometimes by happenstance. When he said something stupid. This entire conversation was that. Ilya going and saying something foolish just to make it better in the end.

The insects sang louder and with them Shane's thoughts. Against reason, against logic Ilya's half-assed plan echoed to him across their winding night.

“I could marry Svetlana.”

Those words. God those terrible words they lingered. He had genuinely felt like the world was collapsing at them.

He'd look handsome in a suit, Ilya. Amazing with his curls styled for the occasion, those pale cunning eyes glimmering with tears. But Shane even in a reality where the world wasn't obsessed with their ‘rivalry’ wouldn't be able to stand as best man. The only way a wedding

like that between Ilya and Svetlana, any woman really, would come to pass would be if he was comatose dead or even in jail. None of them were realistic or actionable.

There wasn't even gasoline or matches nearby. He'd probably have to find and dig out Ilya's shoddy little gas station lighter that only worked half the time.

"I could marry Svetlana."

But Ilya said it for a reason. He did not just throw out words to say them. This was like that day at Ilya's apartment. There was a deeper meaning. Ilya wanted out of Russia. Wanted another country's passport. Ilya wanted something else.

If his plan with the sham Svetlana marriage wasn't a go then it was Shane's job to find an alternative.

He was the one who shot it down in the first place.

Later as they brushed their teeth he thought of it.

"I could marry Svetlana."

As they fooled around kissing with minty breath and clumsy fingers he thought of it.

"I could marry Svetlana."

On the come down when Ilya found a moist washcloth and cleaned Shane off, the thoughts eventually wandered back.

"I could marry Svetlana."

As they turned the lamps off and kissed for the final time that night blankets around them in a cocoon it stuck.

"I could marry Svetlana."

It would not leave him, all night.

Svetlana Svetlana Svetlana. This wasn't healthy. She was just Ilya's friend. If anything between He and Ilya were to work he should probably like Svetlana. He shouldn't be so hurt. They weren't even dating. Ilya hadn't asked, neither had he. They hadn't even said they-

It was embarrassing to be so jealous of a woman he'd never met.

At some point when Ilya's breaths fell soft and the night insects surrounded them deeper all he could think about was that terrible option.

These gorgeous, probably perfectly nice women used to never bug him. Because Ilya was never his before. So Shane had no right to be bothered. So he wasn't, he chose not to be about the whole situation.

But if Shane didn't find another plan, then all they'd be stuck with was that wedding plan. A plan he couldn't choose to be alright with.

A wedding Shane would only get to see on YouTube. A wedding whose pictures would haunt him like a ghost because surely Ilya would have to put the pictures up in his home so Shane would never be able to be with him in his place without the grinning visage of a fake marriage smiling at them at all times. Watching them desecrate vows and beds that weren't theirs. A plan that was growing worse by the moment because surely to keep up the ruse Ilya might decide to have kids or something and then Shan would be a homewrecker.

Ilya snorted, rolling slightly in his sleep. Shane was learning so much about him during this trip. When Ilya slept, truly slept, he was just as he was awake. An asshole with a mouth mumbling what were probably insults or sweet nothings in his mother tongue as he sought out warmth and embrace.

Okay so maybe Ilya would not go that far. He wouldn't father kids he didn't want. From the tender way he remembered his mother and the jagged way he still loved his terrible father Shane could tell Ilya would never take the idea of family and children so flippantly.

Life was so much simpler the other day. When it was just them outside eating too many burgers because Shane didn't think to cut the recipe. When they were kicking around a ball. Just goofing off.

"So I was thinking I'm a free agent next season."

It wasn't a lot but they could start there, a relocation. Preferably to Canada because Ilya wasn't really interested in signing with Boston again.

Their laughter and heavy breathing as they played echoed in his ears. Shane had to get this right. This summer, these two weeks of their free time, it could not be it, this could not be the only time they ever got. It would kill him.

"Then where?" He'd asked then and it was the question now. Somewhere nearby. And still in the league. Preferably somewhere with a different culture against Montreal but still played against them a lot. Because Boston was red hot and would burn them if they weren't careful.

Effigies of Shane Hollander were burned in Boston. Montreal did the same for Ilya Rozanov but maybe they could be nudged from that over time. Boston might also stop their Effigies of Shane Hollander if he moved cities too but Ilya had offered. And both of them changing teams might look... odd.

Somewhere else, somewhere else could be less tense and maybe they could even change the way people saw them. Selfishly he thought of home.

Ottawa.

He wanted to show off the place to Ilya, show him all the corners he knew like the back of his hand. The team there wasn't... great at the moment, but they were down a man. Star Center if

Shane was remembering right. Perfect for Ilya. And Ottawa was only like two hours from Montreal. Super reasonable all things considered.

And sure they were still in the same division as Boston, but they'd pay for a player like Ilya through the teeth. They'd be stupid not to.

He just needed to change the Narrative.

Maybe parts of it already were, he didn't know. But it wasn't fast enough.

He's seen the commentary for the game he got concussed. The announcers were remarking on their 'comradery'. Chatting about how they 'respected each other as players and men' remarking that *Rozanov* and *Hollander* had known each other since rookie season.

If only they knew.

A wry chuckle always came from Shane at the comments. Comradery indeed. But he could do something with that they both could. They could play it like the rivalry was nothing. Play the idea that the rivalry was mostly on the MLH's end than theirs. His mom was even warming up to Ilya. After Ilya came to the hospital to check on Shane.

People in their lives might be harder to convince that there was something other than hate there but if they balanced it right, slowly revealed things. Shane would have to tell his parents he was gay soon, probably. It was hard enough holding so many secrets from them. They knew he was off. So telling them he was gay might... help? He wasn't sure.

Ilya and his part in that could wait. That part he was sure off. Ilya was right he didn't need to give his parents a blow by blow of all the men he'd slept with. Especially not this one.

At least until they found a way to reveal their 'friendship' to the world. He needed his parents to like Ilya. More importantly they needed to slowly take the heat off this stupid rivalry.

There was already some boredom in the MLH coverage at their back and forth. There'd always be interest in the storyline but he could tell it was repetitive. Eight years of the same Hollander vs Rozanov tit for tat was getting stale. These days they were split focused onto a new rookie duo. Shane didn't know their names and didn't care about them, but they were new entertainment. It was proof that they could bow from that specific burning starlight.

These rookies meant as Hollander and Rozanov became normal established players they could now have a different story. One less intense. The move was a good start but even somewhere like Ottawa, that was only two hours away did not give them excuses to hang out. He'd like to go to places and sometimes be there with Ilya and it would not be a big deal. What a life he was living where getting a bite to eat with someone was a radical action.

They needed an excuse. Shane needed to find ways for the public to see them acting all buddy buddy.

And a good one.

Something they could have maybe talked about during the All Star game. The way those crowds reacted during that game, some people wanted them to have a more interesting dynamic. When Ilya had smacked a big goofy kiss on his cheek, the crowd ate it up. They loved a narrative, especially one where players with a rivalry became respected colleagues or friends. Everyone lapped up their chemistry. Now there was further speculation about them being friends after Cliff bodied him to the next century.

It could start half as a lie and half as truth.

What would make two rivals temper their hate?

Slowly it came to him. If it wasn't late it'd have clicked sooner.

Charity.

Lots of the guys were involved in Charities. Scott Hunter was a big one. The St. whatever. Name actually wasn't super important at the moment. Scott didn't own his charity but he was the face. There'd been some speculation they might drop him after he kissed his boyfriend but he was that Charity. Losing Scott was losing the money.

Even when articles debated if he should have done that they couldn't shit talk his charitable efforts. Getting Scholarships for kids was kind of hard to spin negatively.

Okay a charity. He and Ilya could pretend they connected over... well he wasn't sure what yet just that it needed to be real, but they could pretend. Pretend that he went up to Ilya after learning about their mutual interest in... something, and started the charity. They could even play up the rivalry being broken for a good cause.

It wasn't strictly true. The rivalry was broken by foolhardy lust and haphazard feelings if it ever truly existed. Press however would love the idea of the Hollander Rozanov feud being put to bed for charity.

And eventually one day.

He clicked on his bedside lamp.

One day after the mess after the fame. They'd retire.

He looked over to Ilya, his hard brow softened in sleep. His scattered moles looked perfectly kissable.

And when they retired... They could be together.

For real.

"I have another idea."

End Notes

Really captivated by the way that Shane fully believes till their love confession, that there is a slim chance Ilya could be just as or even happier with someone else. Shane's got such a fascinating complex about him tbh. His internalized Homophobia keeps kicking him in the ass bc instead of realizing that Ilya wants HIM he's focused on the fact that Ilya's life could be hypothetically easier if he chose Svetlana over him. also really tapped into that concept that Hudson talked about where Shane is like a pathetic cayote bc he's so right. there is a pathetic little whimpering beast in that performance and its stunning

thematically Shane's fight with Scott Hunter and the way he glares down Ilya about his marriage to Svetlana for a passport plan are intertwined to me. bc its like the two only times we see him tempted to actual violence and both are because the stability of what he has with Ilya is being threatened

Random pointless fanfic funfact of the day cause its my duty as a fic author: there was a real labour strike in the NHL over workers rights and stuff. and for 80% of writing this i forgot that there was an in universe league that the guys were in instead of the irl NHL. like i just genuinly forgot that they were in the MLH until most of this was written so like Yay random trivia insert about hockey labour rights and rule changes.

Including the bit where after the league established rule changes on the types of play, there was an increased push to sign European players to NHL teams. And bc there are a fair few mentioned and shown players from Europe across the MLH in HR i feel like a similar sort of situation could have happened.

They also could also hypothetically both be in the NHL despite Shane living in canada bc the NHL is not just american teams it's just primarily usa teams. that's also why i ended up mentioning a different league (CHL) Hockey leagues confuse me i understand why the books have their own parallel but different league so if anything is inaccurate you can just go 'yeah well its an au :)'

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