

## you take me higher

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# you take me higher

by [vividblossom \(drtymdbld\)](#)

## Summary

Gorgeous. Absolutely gorgeous. Ilya is struck by how lucky he is to be the first to see Hollander this way.

Maybe he's not the stereotypical Sub, but any Dom would fall over themselves if they knew just how sweet and yielding this body is.

And; Shane learns how good Playing can be while Ilya learns how terrible of a thing jealousy is.

## Notes

dedicated to alex!!!! we will find each other in every fandom forever my girl <3

\*Please be mindful of kink tags as we go along! TAGS ARE VERY IMPORTANT And please skip parts of the series that contain your squicks\*

Sub- Submissive (desire to be dominated)

Dom- Dominate (desire to dominate)

Playing- A scene between a Dom and Sub

Aftercare- post-Playing emotional care that prevents sub/dom-drop

Command- Orders between the Dom and Sub that the Sub is inclined to fulfill

Domspace- Mental state where a Dom is in complete control

Subspace- Mental state where a Sub gives up complete control

Subdrop- Condition where a Sub experiences intense feelings of dread and anxiety

Domdrop- similar to Subspace but affects Doms

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

Ilya adjusts the straps holding Hollander's arms behind his back. He watches his partner's face for any signs of discomfort, but Hollander's pretty, almond shaped eyes are already heavy and glazed. It shocks Ilya every time; how easily Hollander goes Under.

In the last two months, they've Played at least once a week; mostly at Ilya's home, in his study, where Hollander seems most comfortable. But also at the Sub's apartment where Ilya can tuck him in afterward and Ilya leaves knowing Hollander is safe and comfortable in his own bed.

Ilya slides a finger between the material and Shane's wrist to test the tightness. "Color?"

Hollander sighs and the sound goes right to Ilya's chest. So dreamy and so soft, Ilya can't believe he gets to hear these sounds Hollander makes. "Green."

Unable to help himself, Ilya runs his fingers through Hollander's hair and scratches at his scalp lightly. Like a cat, Hollander leans in to touch and Ilya smiles.

"Good boy, *myshonok*. You are so excited already and I have done almost nothing."

To prove his point, Ilya nudges Hollander's cock with his foot. It's the cutest cock Ilya has ever seen; shorter than Ilya's own but chubby and leaks like a fountain when Hollander is excited. Even now, the head of Hollander's dick is shiny and wet and drooling onto the floor.

Hollander's dick bobs at the attention. "Do you like that, sweetheart?"

Hollander makes a garbled noise that has Ilya smiling softly and nudging his cock with his foot again. Hollander's hips buck as Ilya pulls away, chasing the friction. If he was a dog, Ilya thinks he'd be humping his leg.

**"Tell me."**

"Yes, Ilya," Hollander responds immediately, the words punching out of him. "I like it so much. I— please. I need more."

Ilya hums. Hollander is kneeling at his feet with the dim lights casting shadows across the constellation of freckles across his cheek. Ilya runs a thumb over them. He wishes he could count them like stars. He pulls away quickly.

Hollander is unlike any Sub Ilya has Played with before, which is many. Subs are softer, gentler. Women like Caitlin Dykstra or men like Fabian Salah; pretty and sweet smelling and soft.

Except Hollander is pretty. So damn pretty with his dark eyes and his freckles and his round cheeks. And how could Ilya not think he's soft when he goes so pliant and cute under his Command?

And then there's his scent. Ilya's heart nearly broke when Hollander tried to pull away from him their first time, claiming he knew Ilya didn't like the way he smelled.

Hollander was mistaken. Sorely.

Ilya isn't sure if it's a side effect of the suppressant use or if it's completely natural. Either way, Hollander's scent is so unique that Ilya had trouble pinpointing where he'd smelled it before at first and then, when he did, it was almost impossible to control himself.

It's smoky and deep, almost unheard of for a Sub's scent profile. It's like a fire that has been well loved and tended to, burning the wood down to ash.

There's a spiciness, too, but also a warmth. Ilya had a difficult time finding exactly what it was; so familiar that it scratched at something in his mind over and over again until a memory was forced upon him.

His mother is cooking dinner. Alexei and father are out on a hunting trip together. They don't invite Ilya, but that's okay because he likes having his mother all to himself. She's happier when it's just the two of them.

She simmers bay leaves and peppercorn and Ilya knows she's making his favorite dinner.

It's sharp, spicy, but a little sweet. It makes his mouth water. It makes his lungs hurt.

Another memory. They pick juniper berries from a neighbor's bush. Ilya's hands are small enough to reach through the fence and his mother shows him how to pick out the ripe, edible ones. They smell bitter, but only to hide a bright, citrus flavor.

Hollander smells like that. He smells like Russia, he smells like the best parts of Ilya's memories with his mother. It was jarring, but not bad. Not bad.

He swallows.

**“Come, myshonok.** Follow me now.”

With Ilya's help, Hollander scrambles upright and waits eagerly for directions. So trusting. So sweet. Ilya trails his gaze down his torso; the muscles of Hollander's shoulder are bunched and straining from his hands being tired behind his back.

It pushes his chest out. His pectorals are brawny and hairless and his dark nipples strain in the cool air of Ilya's study. Hollander's stomach is rising and falling rapidly with his panting breaths; his belly a little soft from relaxing, but Ilya can still see the lines of his abdominal muscles when he sucks in a sharp breath.

Gorgeous. Absolutely gorgeous. Ilya is struck by how lucky he is to be the first to see Hollander this way. Maybe he's not the stereotypical Sub, but any Dom would fall over themselves if they knew just how sweet and yielding this body is.

Hollander follows patiently to Ilya's bedroom. They've never Played here, but they'll need more room for what Ilya has planned and he'd rather Hollander in his bed than spread out on the floor, even if that does paint a nice image in his mind. Maybe some other time.

For now, he leads Hollander to the edge of his bed. He seems hesitant to get on and looks shyly at Ilya for directions. It makes his dick throb. Hollander is such a natural submissive, how had he never Played before?

“Go ahead, sweetheart.”

Hollander knee walks until he’s kneeling in the center of Ilya’s bed and Ilya spends a long moment just taking him in. He’s surrounded by Ilya’s things; his blankets, his pillows, his scent. It appeals to a deeper, possessive part of Ilya’s Dom instincts; this Sub is in *his* bed, so this Sub is *his*.

“Ilya?” Hollander asks cautiously and Ilya realizes he’s been staring for too long.

“Sorry, *myshonok*. You are just too pretty, I could not look away.”

He’s rewarded with a deep blush that flames across Hollander’s cheeks. His bedroom offers more natural lighting which highlights the smooth, pale skin of Hollander’s thighs and the soft pink color of his lips and he squirms and smiles happily.

“Thank you, Ilya.”

He’s so damn sweet it makes Ilya’s teeth hurt. He crawls across the bed to meet Hollander, pulling him into a filthy kiss. He keeps Hollander’s mouth open with a thumb pressed to his bottom teeth and licks into his mouth.

“You are ready?” Ilya asks and Hollander nods silently, the finger still keeping his jaw open.

“Close your mouth, sweetheart, and **suck.**”

Immediately Hollander’s pouty lips close around Ilya’s thumb and the hot, wet suction shoots right to Ilya’s cock. Hollander can barely keep his eyes open, he’s slipping further and further Under.

“You are such a good boy, do you know this?”

Hollander moans, the vibration shoots through Ilya’s hand and into his gut. Hollander isn’t alone in his desire, Ilya feels his own thoughts shifting.

He doesn’t know what it’s like to be in Subspace, of course, but he’s heard it’s like a softening of thoughts. Domspace is the opposite; sharp, demanding, powerful. He already feels his entire focus zeroing in on the Sub in front of him.

Nothing matters but to make Hollander feel good. To take him apart, then put him back together.

The problem with most Doms is that they don’t take the time to learn their Subs and their individual needs. On the most base level, Subs all have the same desires; to be dominated, to be punished, and to be praised. But they are also people with their own preferences for all three.

Ilya has known Subs who only find Subspace through intense, long sessions of pain control. He's Played with Subs who get the most excitement over refusing Commands and being brats.

Hollander blooms like a flower under praise.

Now that they have trust between them, Hollander allows himself to fall quickly and easily into Subspace. Sometimes he's already almost Under before they even start to Play. It's a heady feeling to be trusted so completely and Ilya promises himself that he'll never do anything to lose that confidence.

He does wonder, though, how Hollander might respond to pain. Ilya, for personal reasons, isn't a fan of pain or humiliation, but he'd do anything that would make Hollander blossom like this. And Hollander would look so pretty with a red ass and wet eyes.

"Lean back, come on," Ilya slides behind him and props them against the headboard so that Hollander's head is under his chin and their spread legs are pressed together.

Hollander makes a questioning noise which Ilya quiets with another kiss, tilting Hollander's head back to access his mouth.

"We will try something new today. What are your colors?"

"Red, yellow, green."

"And your color now?"

Hollander hesitates. "My shoulders..."

Ilya immediately leans him forward to loosen the bands holding his wrists together so that Hollander's shoulders relax into a more comfortable position. He kisses between his shoulder blades, nuzzling the back of his neck where Hollander's scent is the strongest.

"Good boy. Thank you for telling me. What is your color now?"

Hollander melts against his chest, his nose against Ilya's collar bone. "Green."

Ilya presses another kiss to his temple. He can't help it. He wants to shower Hollander in as many kisses and praises as possible.

"Do you know edging?"

"Edging?"

"Yes. Is a part of Play control. I will touch you and you will not come until I says so."

He hears Hollander's short little intake of breath and his hips squirm against Ilya's, pressing Ilya's already hardening cock against against his pants.

"I don't know," Hollander says timidly. "If I can."

“You can, sweetheart, because I tell you to and you are very good boy. Right?”

Hollander’s cock jerks, hitting his stomach. Yes, a very good boy indeed.

**“Say it.”**

“I-I won’t come,” Hollander stammers. “Because you told me not to.”

“And?”

“And— and I’m a good boy.”

Ilya shivers. “Yes, *myshonok*. My good boy.”

Hollander’s gasp is loud and echoes in Ilya’s ears. He wishes he had a mirror to see Hollander’s face right now. It’s probably flushed and he’s probably digging his teeth into his bottom lip now and there’s probably a little divot between his eyebrows from concentrating on being still.

Ilya rests his chin on Hollander’s shoulder and looks down at his neglected cock. There’s a steady stream of precum bubbling from the slit and Ilya reaches down to swipe it up. He presses the thin liquid between two fingers and shows Hollander the sticky trail.

**“Lick.”**

Obediently, Hollander takes Ilya’s fingers in his mouth and runs his tongue between the sensitive webbing. With his other hand, Ilya takes a firm grip of Hollander’s cock and gives it a quick, dry jerk.

Hollander gasps around his fingers, his hips nearly jumping off the bed. Ilya removes his now wet hand and replaces it on Hollander’s cock, using his spit and precum to lubricate his fist.

Hollander is making the sweetest little fucked out noises. Small *ah, ah, ah*’s while his hips twitch uncontrollably.

“Ilya,” Hollander whines. “Ilya, I’m gonna—“

**“Stop.”**

To punctuate his point, Ilya moves his grip to Hollander’s balls and *squeezes*. His thumb presses painfully against Hollander’s slit, denying him his impending orgasm. Hollander *howls*.

“Color?”

“Green,” he slurs. “Fucking green, fucking— *please*. ”

“Such a mouth on you, Hollander,” Ilya teases. “I should punish you for it. Would you like that? Would you like if I punish you for being bad?”

Hollander trembles and sniffles slightly.

“No,” he whines. “No, I’m *good*. I-I’ll be *good*.”

Ilya’s heart fucking *clenches*.

“Yes, sweetheart,” he presses his lips to Hollander’s cheek, his jaw, his shoulder. “You are good. So good for me.”

Hollander whimpers. Ilya begins stroking again, but stops each time he feels Hollander getting close to the edge.

“*Ngh—ah—*“

With his hands behind his back, Hollander is helpless but to take the pleasure Ilya forces on him. His cock is plump and straining and so dark with blood that Ilya almost feels bad for it.

But then Hollander attempts to close his legs and that just won’t do. Ilya takes his hand off Hollander’s cock to yank his thighs open.

“**Spread.** Don’t close your legs, sweetheart.”

“Sorry,” Hollander sobs, looking down at his pulsing dick. “M’sorry, Ilya.”

“Is okay, I know you can not help it.”

Hollander groans. “*Fuck.*”

His legs are shaking with the strain of keeping them open. Ilya finally feels himself ascending into that place that had been just out of reach. His heart rate slows, his senses heighten.

His own cock is an afterthought. Although it’s pressed against Hollander’s back and the Sub is writhing against it, Ilya doesn’t even care to touch it. Doesn’t even care if *he* comes tonight as long as he can get Hollander there over and over and over until he’s a fucking mess of *thank you Ilya, thank you Ilya*.

“*Mm— oh! Ah— please.*”

“What do you want, *myshonok*? Tell me and I will give it to you.”

He doesn’t say it as a Command. He wants this to come from Hollander with no other reason but his own desperation. It’s the ultimate dominance to transcend Commanding a Sub and instead have them willingly obey. And Hollander does it so readily, so sweetly.

“Want— I want—“ Hollander sobs. “I want to fucking *come*, asshole. *Please—mph—*“

Hollander’s begging is cut off by a grunt. Ilya works his wrist in twisting downward strokes and he chuckles.

“My poor boy. Am I being mean?”

“Yes!”

“Eh. That is too bad. Stop looking at your dick, is only making it harder. **Eyes on me.**”

Ilya almost, *almost*, regrets it. Because as soon as Hollander turns over his shoulder and Ilya sees his red cheeks and wet eyes and quivering bottom lip; he knows he’ll give Hollander whatever he wants.

“**Kiss me.**”

Maybe he doesn’t have to Command it, but it’s easier that way. It’s easier to pass off his need for intimacy in this moment as a Dom’s need to control. Hollander opens willingly, his mouth lax.

“Please,” he whispers against Ilya’s mouth, so quiet Ilya almost can’t hear him. “Please, I can’t—I’m really gonna—”

Ilya kisses his top lip, the corner of his mouth. His cheek. His heavy eyelids. A tear escapes Hollander’s eye. He presses his forehead to Hollander’s temple.

“Okay. Okay, sweetheart. I’m sorry, eh? You have been so good. You deserve reward.”

“Yes,” Hollander gasps, his hips moving eagerly at the promise of release. “Yes!”

“Go ahead, *moy lyubimyy*,” Ilya nearly freezes at the slip of endearment, Hollander would be too far gone to notice. “**Come for me.**”

Hollander’s entire body pitches forward before jerking back into Ilya’s arms. God, it almost looks *painful* how hard he comes. Streaks shoot up his chest and hit his chin while the rest dribbles down his cock and over Ilya’s fingers.

“Oh my *goodness*,” Ilya coos, holding a panting Hollander limp in his arms. “You have made such a mess.”

Hollander looks like he doesn’t even hear Ilya. His eyes are open, but just barely, and they look glazed and far away. But he has the sweetest flush to his skin and a small, sated smile on his lips.

Ilya could die happy here. He feels his chest puffing up proudly because *he* made Hollander feel this way. *He* put this look on Hollander’s face.

He gently rolls Hollander to his side and stands from the bed. He needs to get a washcloth, definitely some Gatorade, maybe some food? Is Hollander hungry?

A small noise brings him back. Hollander is rolled onto his side, making unhappy grunts. His hand is spread across the covers, reaching for Ilya.

God.

Ilya kneels to grab Hollander's palm and give it a kiss. "Am not going far, *myshka*. Let me take care of you, yes?"

Hollander's face is still pouty, but he allows Ilya to leave the room without further protest. Ilya grabs *everything*. A damp, warm towel. Water, electrolytes, a soft blanket off the back of his couch that he thinks Hollander will like against his skin.

Hollander is dozing peacefully and so Ilya gets to work gently wiping off the cum and tucking the blanket around his shoulders. He should get up, let Hollander rest, but Ilya isn't ready to let go yet.

Maybe it's Domspace. Maybe it's Shane Hollander. Either way, Ilya carefully pulls the blanket up to Hollander's chin and leaves it there.

And he leaves his arm there, too. Draped over Hollander's side. He spends the time before falling asleep next to the Sub wondering how he found something so precious.

And wondering if he deserves to keep it.

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Ilya wakes first, but Hollander isn't far behind. He's just able to slip his arm from Hollander's waist and give them a few inches of space before Hollander blinks awake with a jaw-cracking yawn.

He rubs at his eyes with his fist like a baby and Ilya finds it so damn cute that he grins.

"What?" Hollander asks. His voice is deep and rough from just waking up.

"Nothing."

Ilya wants to kiss him. He wants to kiss his sleep-warm skin and keep him in this bed forever; the outside world and hockey be damned. He could make Hollander happy here, he could keep him safe here.

Which is what Ilya had thought when he went to visit Harris in his office to ask about an antibiotic cream for his split lip and heard most of his and Hollander's conversation.

It made Ilya... it made Ilya a lot of things. Worried, mostly, but not for a teammate. Not as a captain. No, these are not feelings any captain would have— *should* have for their player.

He was worried for Shane Hollander, the person. The Sub. The rookie who had moved his whole life and faced criticism every day to play the game he loves. Ilya loves hockey, but not like Hollander does.

So the thought that it could be taken from him; so young, with so much *potential*, stopped Ilya from leaving before Hollander could catch him eavesdropping. He *wanted* Hollander to

see him, to know that Ilya knew, so that he couldn't hide behind the facade of *fine* that he would surely show the rest of the team.

It was Hollander's face as he exited Harris's examination that really began the first tendrils of consideration that Ilya would offer himself up as a Play partner. He looked young. Young and scared and inexperienced and Ilya knew the type of Doms that would exploit that.

His father was one of them.

"What time is it?"

"Late," Ilya says without needing to check the clock. The sky outside had shifted into dark hues of pinks and oranges in the time they'd been asleep.

Hollander groans, rolling to his back and stretching his arms up like a cat. He has tiny red marks from where they were bound behind his back. Marks that will be gone in the morning, but Ilya wish wouldn't be.

"I should go," Hollander sighs.

"You like tuna melts?"

Ilya freezes. Why the fuck would he ask that? They don't do *that*. It's just... they didn't have the chance for much Aftercare before Hollander fell asleep. They should spend more time together, okay, just to be sure that he's come down enough not to risk Dropping. Okay?

"You want to make me a tuna melt?"

Ilya shrugs as if it's a causal thing. As if his heart isn't beating erratically and preparing itself for Hollander's rejection.

"Is late, you need to eat. I already will be making one, why not I make two?"

Hollander blinks, maybe trying to decide if he's still asleep and this is a weird dream. Ilya carefully constructs an expression of *I don't care if you do stay but you're welcome to if you want but I'm definitely not telling you that you have to*.

"Yeah, okay. That would be nice."

"Okay," Ilya responds, face blank as if he's not stupidly giddy about Hollander agreeing to stay. "I will get you change of clothes."

Ilya is glad he hadn't suggested a more elaborate meal because half the time spent cooking has been staring at Hollander sitting at his kitchen island, wearing his clothes. It's not just that Hollander looks cute, which he *does*, but the way their scents combine drive Ilya wild.

Drive his *instincts* wild, he means.

"I like your house," Hollander says, watching Ilya prepare the sandwiches. "It's much nicer than my apartment, for sure."

“Usually rookies live with- uh,” Ilya looks for the word. “Players on team that have been for a very long time?”

“Veteran?”

Ilya bobs his head. “Yes. I lived with Boodram when I first came to Canada, did you know?”

Hollander grins. It makes his round cheeks even more pronounced. And he’s in Ilya’s clothes. And he *smells* like Ilya. And Ilya is the one who made him smile like that. He drops his gaze to the bowl of tuna.

“I had no idea. How was that?”

Ilya shrugs. “Was fine. He had not met Cassie yet and he is very messy, so I moved out. Did you not want to live with veteran player?”

Hollander fiddles with the label of the water bottle Ilya had set in front of him. He mindlessly picks at the glue and shreds the paper into little pieces on Ilya’s counter.

“I didn’t– It wouldn’t have looked good to live with a single Dom. And I didn’t want to overstep in another Sub’s home. So.”

“They would not have minded,” Ilya says confidently. “Not Cassie or Caitlin. Maybe Jackie, but only because they already have, like, million children in the house.”

Shane laughs, but sobers instantly. “Yeah. I guess that’s true, but I didn’t know them. I hadn’t expected... The team is very different than I thought it would be.”

“Good different?”

“Oh, definitely! *Great* different. I kinda expected a bunch of shitty Doms who wouldn’t want to share a locker room with me and then their Subs who would accuse me of trying to, like, seduce their men away.”

“You deal with this before?”

Hollander snorts. “Are you kidding? That was me being *hopeful*. Playing in the junior league while everyone was going through puberty...”

Ilya grimaces and feels his grip tightening on the fork in his hand. “Yes. I can not imagine.”

“Uh-huh. So I’m– honestly, I’m kinda still amazed by how accepting everyone has been. I got really lucky being drafted here.”

“We are lucky ones. You are great player.”

Hollander ducks his head and Ilya can see the tops of those cheeks, freckled and flushing a gorgeous pink color. “Thanks. Um, but yeah. This place is really nice. Did you have an interior decorator or something?”

“No, I decorate,” Ilya turns to slide the pan of sandwiches into the over and when he turns back, Hollander’s eyebrows are raised and his mouth is parted in surprise. “What?”

“You’re kidding!”

“Eh?” Ilya grins. “You think Doms can not be good at this?”

“No!” Hollander responds quickly, his eyes getting even wider. “No, I don’t think like that. Um, obviously, I’m a Sub and I’m not good at the stereotypical Sub things like cooking or homemaking or whatever. So it’s cool that you are.”

Ilya frowns. It’s not the first time Hollander has spoken about his differences from other Subs, but Ilya doesn’t like it that he speaks as if they’re failures.

“That is okay. Being Sub is what you are, not who you are.”

“That’s what my mom always says, too,” Hollander murmurs. “She’s always supported me in whatever I wanted to do and said it didn’t matter if I was a Sub.”

Ilya leans on the other side of the island, balancing on his elbows and dividing the scraps of Hollander’s torn label into little piles.

“Mothers are like that.”

Hollander hums. “Your mom... You don’t have to answer, obviously. I know it’s not really my place, but you said she, um—”

Ilya swallows and focuses on resorting the scraps of paper so he doesn’t have to look Hollander in the eye. He should have seen this coming with how damn nosey Hollander is and Ilya supposes that he owes it to him to be a little vulnerable; considering how much Ilya knows about Hollander and his past.

“Yes, she died. Was accident.”

“Oh.” Hollander’s voice is so small and sad. Ilya’s lips tighten.

“She accidentally swallowed a whole bottle of pills.”

“*Oh.*”

Ilya rolls the paper between his fingers. “I do not want you to— she was not weak.”

“I don’t think that, Rozanov,” Hollander says and Ilya believes him, but still...

“My father,” he explains. “He is— well, I told you. He is like Alan Wright. He sees Subs like less than him. My mother... he did not treat her well. He did not care for her the way a Dom should.”

“Was she... Did she Drop?”

“Yes,” Ilya nods. “I was the one who found her. I was twelve.”

“Rozanov.”

Suddenly, Hollander’s fingers are prying open Ilya’s clenched fist. Tatters of paper fall onto the counter and Hollander replaces them with his hand and squeezes.

“I’m so sorry. That’s so— I don’t even know what to say. Did anything ever happen to your father?”

“No. In Russia, Subs are property still,” Ilya says bitterly, but gently strokes his thumb across the knuckles of Hollander’s hand. “How can you be in trouble for damaging own property?”

Hollander swallows audibly. “Fuck. That’s...”

“That is why I come here and say; I will not play with Doms like that. Coach agrees. My guys, they are good guys. Treat their Subs good. Treat each other good. I did not want...”

Ilya trails off, hoping Hollander won’t understand the unspoken words. He does anyway.

“You’re nothing like that,” Hollander leans forward, his hand squeezing more insistently. “You’re- Well, you’re an asshole, but you’re a great Dom. You’ve been so, uh, great. Sorry, I can’t think of another word right now. Is that why you offered to help me? Because of your mom?”

“Yes,” Ilya answers honestly. There’s no reason not to. Right now, he doesn’t feel like he could hide anything from Hollander. He feels big and raw and exposed. “I did not want you to be hurt the way she was hurt.”

“You’re,” Hollander shakes his head and Ilya is shocked to see his eyes are very, very shiny. “You’re so unexpected, Rozanov. Your mom would be really proud of you.”

Ilya doesn’t ask what he means by that; *unexpected*. What *had* Hollander expected? What did Hollander expect now? How can Ilya meet those expectations? How can he exceed them?

The timer on the oven interrupts them, though, and Ilya begrudgingly slips his hand from Hollander’s to turn it off and take their food out.

“We can eat in the living room, there should be Ranger game on,” then he juts his chin towards the refrigerator. “And there are ginger ales in there for you.”

“You got me ginger ale?”

Ilya is still turned, so he can’t see Hollander’s face but his voice is an odd mix of surprise, delight, confusion, and fond. Ilya busies himself so he won’t have to turn and show Hollander his red face.

“If you do not want,” he shrugs casually. “I return them. Get my money back.”

“Fuck you, I want.” Hollander’s laughter fills the room and all the tension that Ilya had built over the last few minutes eases instantly.

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“Rules for tea party are very strict, Hollander, so listen closely.”

Ilya crosses his arms and levels Hollander with as serious of a look as he can manage with a plastic tiara balanced on his head.

Adorably, Hollander looks a little nervous to be surrounded by Jade, Ruby, and all their stuffed animal guests. The team had been invited over to celebrate another win that afternoon and, unsurprisingly, the twins cornered Ilya to strongarm him into joining.

Very surprising, though, was when Jade had turned to Hollander and offered her little hand to follow along. He had tried to refuse awkwardly, until he saw Ruby’s pouting bottom lip and, seriously, Hollander would have to be a monster to say no to *that*.

Ilya loves these girls. He’s going to teach them everything he knows to help them get whatever they want. It’s already started. In fact, the other day Hayden had come stomping into the locker room, fuming.

“Jackie is pissed at *me* because *you* told them to ask dad if mom said no. What the fuck, Rozanov?”

“I did not say this,” Ilya had told Hayden calmly while his teammate’s face got even redder.

“Really? Because they both said, literally *quote*; Uncle Lily told us to ask both mommy and daddy because one of them will say yes.”

“Wow,” Ilya put a hand over his heart. “Pike, you should be worried. Your daughters are becoming tattletales.”

“The first rule,” Ruby is saying now, her hands on her hips. “Is that everyone has a princess name. I’m princess Ruby, this is princess froggy,” she points to a stuffed animal in its own chair wearing a dress. “and then princess Jade, and princess Lily.”

“You can be princess Jane,” Jade tells Hollander, who looks very overwhelmed.

“Does it have to be a girl name?”

“Yes,” the other three party guests say in unison.

“Can’t I be a prince?”

Jade and Ruby have twin looks of disgust at the suggestion. “Princes aren’t invited to the tea party. Boys are gross.”

“But me and Rozanov—”

“That is right, girls,” Ilya interrupts. “Boys are *blech*. Cooties. You are both so smart.”

Hollander snorts, adjusting the paper hat on his head. There were only so many real tiaras, after all, and Ilya was already grandfathered in to receive one. Hollander would have to attend many more of these before he steals the crown from princess froggy.

The consequence is that Jade and Ruby had obviously created this “crown” with flimsy construction paper, markers, and way too much tape. Instead of a tiara, Hollander looks like he’s wearing a very colorful chef’s hat. Adorable.

“Okay,” Hollander settles into his seat. “So I’m princess Jane. What’s the next rule?”

“We have to talk in accents,” Ruby, in her best impression of what sounds like Peppa Pig, says.

In a similar voice Jade adds, “Because tea parties are very fancy.”

“Very fancy,” Hollander agrees and flashes a smug smile to Ilya. “Let me hear yours, princess Lily.”

“I already have accent.”

“What! That is *so*—”

“Accent,” the girls remind him.

After a moment of genuinely thoughtful silence Hollander, to Ilya’s delight, repeats in a terrible British voice, “That is *so* cheating, Rozanov.”

Then he must have noticed the way Ruby and Jade were trying to hide their laughter behind cupped hands and how Ilya wasn’t even trying to contain his own amusement.

“Is this really a rule?” He demands of Jade, still in his awful accent. So cute, Ilya thinks. So damn cute.

“No,” she giggles. “Uncle Lily told us to tell you that.”

Ilya gasps in mock shock. He knew, of course, that they would eventually give him away as they’d done before. He taught them well, after all.

“Girls! Where is your loyalty!”

Hollander’s cheeks are so red. Maybe it was mean of Ilya to include the girls in hazing him when Hollander had already been so obviously nervous. But Ilya loves the face he’s making right now; his scowl, how the freckles look against his blush, his narrowed eyes flashing.

He’s always liked that about Hollander. He was always so obvious in his emotions, there was never any hiding his heart on his sleeve. It was the same while they Played. Every

expression, every sound, was authentic and raw and real. Hollander was so damn earnest and Ilya loved to see all the reactions he could pull from him; both positive and negative.

Hollander surprises him, though. He stays for the tea party. He keeps the stupid hat on. He talks to the stuffed animals as if they're real guests. He's thoughtful and kind with the girls and reminds them about sharing and manners.

And when he offers to help them get the "tea", which was just tap water, Ilya is both disgusted and *thrilled* when he takes a small sip and finds an ungodly amount of salt in his cup. He immediately spits it onto princess froggy, much to the twin's dismay.

"Who did this?" Ilya asks as if he doesn't know. Hollander is damn near on the floor laughing. This might be Ilya's favorite of all his expressions.

Ilya stands and the twins abruptly scatter, knowing he can't catch both of them.

"It wasn't us," they screech. "Don't! Uncle Lily!"

Ilya stomps dramatically. "Is no Uncle Lily here! Is a very angry dragon!"

When Jackie finally comes around to make sure everyone is okay, it's because they'd been *screaming*; Ilya pretending to be an angry dragon and roaring, the girls dodging his attempts to grab them and squealing, and Hollander egging them on between fits of his own laughter.

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Ilya offers to drive Hollander home. They both have a fresh set of terribly applied nail polish and matching toes. Ilya knows that Hollander will remove it as soon as he gets home, but he'll keep his on for a few days.

He keeps the radio low. Low enough that he can hear Hollander's breathing slow and deepen in the passenger seat as he dozes comfortably. They're quiet, but that's alright with Ilya. He's used to wrangling the twins, but Hollander is an only child and obviously has very little experience with children and so Ilya could tell right away that he was exhausted.

Hayden had suggested calling an Uber, but Ilya insisted he'd drive Hollander home even if it was on the opposite side of Ottawa from his own home. He doesn't bother to care about the confused look Hayden shoots him or the eyebrow raise that he gets from Jackie.

It's absolutely self-serving, but the Dom part of him needed to be sure that Hollander was safe. At least that's the reason he tells himself. It's just his instincts recognizing his— *the* Sub he's been Playing with in a vulnerable state and needing to be cared for.

He pulls up to Hollander's apartment building and gently coaxes him awake by shaking his shoulder. Hollander sleepily tilts his head to rest his cheek against the back of Ilya's hand. Ilya doesn't move and long eyelashes flutter against his wrist.

“Hollander, we are here.”

“Okay.”

But Hollander doesn't move. He must be truly exhausted, Ilya realizes, and pulls his hand away to unbuckle his seatbelt.

“Come on, Hollander. I take you up.”

He grumbles but complies by getting out of the car. His eyes narrow and blink uncomfortably from the shock of stepping out of the warm car into the cold. Without thinking much about it, Ilya wraps his jacket around Hollander's shoulders and leads him inside.

Hollander is mostly completely awake by the time they make it up to his floor and are outside his apartment.

“Did you wanna come in?” He asks Ilya suddenly before Ilya could find his own excuse to stay.

“You sure? You are not too tired?”

He thinks Hollander blushes but it might just be from the cold and without saying anything, opens the door for them both.

Hollander's apartment is so... *not* Hollander. It's neat, excessively, which is what he'd expected. But it's full of harsh lighting and geometric paintings and grey walls, grey furniture. He likes Hollander in his home better, where he looks so pretty and soft in the yellow lights and against his plush, colorful blankets.

It doesn't help that Hollander's complex has regular maintenance crew and so his already weak smell is almost always smothered by the chemicals and sprays they use for cleaning.

Hollander's health has gotten exponentially better in the last few weeks, noticeably so, but Ilya can't help but to think he'd be even better if he was able to surround himself with comforting, safe things.

“Did you want a... beer or something?”

“No,” Ilya says simply and pulls Hollander into a kiss.

He's not naive as to why Hollander invited him inside. He knows where he stands with the Sub. They don't hang out; not casually, not platonically. Ilya is a means to an end, a very effective medicine for Hollander's problem.

“I didn't invite you in for that,” Hollander lies, which is obvious because he melts into Ilya's arms and tilts his head up for another kiss.

“Okay,” Ilya smirks. “So I should go, then.”

“Shut up, *Lily*.”

“Make me, *princesska*. ”

Ah, Hollander definitely likes that. He pastes on a sneer, but he can't hide the hard length that is pressing against Ilya's thigh. It's not that surprising, Ilya thinks, considering how Hollander responds to praise and endearments.

“You like this, *myshka*?” Ilya nuzzles his flushed cheek. “You want to be my princess?”

“Fuck you,” Hollander spats, but his hips press closer. “I'm not a princess, asshole.”

“No?” Ilya raises Hollander's hand to show him the pink, sparkly nail polish still painted haphazardly on his nails. “But you are so pretty, sweetheart. *Krasivaya princesska*. ”

If possible, Hollander's cheeks get even darker. It's easier to see in the blue lights of his apartment. Ilya grins and lowers his head to suck at the pulsepoint on his wrist which makes Hollander moan.

“See? You like this. You want to be my good girl, *princesska*?”

Hollander is panting, even though they've done nothing. His eyes are wide and glassy, a little nervous. A little scared of this new thing Ilya is showing him about himself.

“Shut up,” he whispers. “I don't. I'm— I'm a man.”

“Of course you are, *myshka*. And still you are so *wet* for me.”

To accentuate his point, Ilya presses his palm against Hollander's sweat where the tip of his cock is and watches a dark patch form on the fabric. Hollander whimpers, but doesn't protest.

“Color?” Ilya murmurs against his ear, just to be sure. He never takes his hand off Hollander's dick. Instead, he kneads it gently. Slowly. Lets Hollander chase the movement, but never gives him more.

Hollander doesn't hesitate, even though the tips of his ears flame in embarrassment. “Green, Ilya.”

“My good girl,” Ilya purrs. “**Turn.**”

Hollander steadies himself with his arms braced on the back of his couch. His body is shaking. Is it nerves? Excitement? Ilya hopes it's both. He presses himself against Hollander's back and rubs his own straining erection against the plush roundness of Hollander's ass.

“Feel this, Hollander? Why are you shy? Is not just you, I like it too.”

Hollander whimpers and presses his ass back. Ilya slides his hands up the warm, taunt skin of his stomach until he reaches his chest. His pecs are muscled and full and Ilya kneads them in his hand, swiping a thumb over Hollander's nipples.

“You like your tits played with, sweetheart?” He asks as Hollander mindlessly rubs himself against Ilya’s cock.

Ilya plucks one hard nipple until he’s panting and squirming away from the touch. “You are so sensitive here, *princesska*. Just like a girl.”

“Please,” Hollander whispers and his voice is laced with desperate need that has Ilya’s instincts going wild. “I just need— *please*, Ilya.”

Right, Hollander doesn’t know *what* he needs. Every experience is new to him. He doesn’t understand what the feeling in his gut means or what he needs to make the ache stop.

But Ilya does. And Hollander trusts Ilya to know, to tell him, to make the decision for him.

**“Strip.”**

With a relieved sigh, Hollander slowly tugs off his clothes. He exposes the soft, pale expanse of his back. The muscles move and flex with every moment as he leans down to shimmy out of his pants and underwear until he’s completely bare.

Ilya can’t help it. He leans in to kiss the space between Hollander’s shoulder blades. There are freckles here too, and without Hollander looking at him Ilya can kiss each one curving down the arch of his spine.

“Open your legs for me, *princesska*. Let me see you.”

Hollander’s knees are quivering. The only thing holding him upright is the death grip he has on the back of his couch, but he obeys Ilya’s request even if it’s not a Command.

Ilya rewards him with two kisses to the twin dimples on his lower back. Hollander is smooth and pale and practically hairless, except for the dark curls Ilya can see between his legs as he parts them.

**“Bend over, sweetheart.”**

Hollander freezes. He must understand what view he’ll give Ilya with his open legs if he folds himself over the cushion and Ilya is about to ask his color, offer something different, take him into his arms and tell him how good he is, when Hollander slowly turns his upper body down.

“Good, *myshonok*. Tell me your color.”

Hollander’s voice is muffled a little by his face pressed against a pillow, “Green.”

“You are so pretty here, *prinsesska*,” Ilya trails a finger along the seam of Hollander’s ass, stopping to press a dry finger against his hole. It contracts and spasms at the touch and Hollander makes an embarrassed grunt and attempts to shy away.

“You touch yourself here, sweetheart? **Tell me.**”

“Yes, Ilya, I—“ Hollander pauses to shudder when Ilya presses the tip of his finger to his puckered hole. “I have a— a *thing*. ”

Ilya pauses. “A thing?”

Hollander squirms and Ilya knows for certain if he looked now, his cheeks would be flaming red.

“Like an... like a dildo or whatever.”

Ilya’s eyebrows shoot up. Whatever he was expecting, it wasn’t that. He has to reach down to press a hand against his own pulsing cock at the thought of Hollander in his bed, his legs spread, opening himself up around a toy and wishing it was something hotter and thicker and *real*.

Hollander is shaking and maybe not in a good way. He is very, very brave to admit this and is obviously worried about Ilya’s reaction.

“What color is it?”

Just as he hoped, Hollander’s nerves break off into a laugh and he shakes his head against the pillow he’s buried his face in. “God. Shut *up*. ”

“Is it big?”

“Did you want me to go get it?” Hollander asks, annoyed, but an electric current races through Ilya at the suggestion.

“Why, *princesska*? You want this tight pussy stuffed full?”

Ilya waits. Maybe it’s too much. But then Hollander gasps and Ilya sees his ass tighten and... *oh*. He likes that. He likes that a *lot*.

“Color, sweetheart. ”

“Green,” Hollander whines. “Green, Ilya.”

Ilya sits back on his haunches and removes his hands, ignoring Hollander’s disappointed whine.

“Where is it?”

“Um— bathroom. I just... it’s clean.”

Ilya is going to fucking *die*.

“**Stay.**”

Hollander whimpers, but holds his position as Ilya scrambles up and rushes to the bathroom. His dick is painfully hard and his mind is already going higher and higher into Domspace

which is *ridiculous* because they've barely *started*.

But Hollander is just too good. Too sweet. Ilya heart does something terrible and funny in his chest when he sees the toy laid out on a towel next to a bottle of lube, meticulously cleaned and surrounded by Hollander's other perfectly organized skin care and toiletries.

He grabs them and heads back to the living room to find Hollander squirming and rubbing his cheek against the pillow. Ilya comes up from behind and soothes a hand down his side, letting him know gently that he's returned.

Hollander relaxes instantly. His sigh melts him into the couch and Ilya is thrown upward into Domspace so quickly it makes him dizzy.

He makes his Sub feel good. He makes his Sub feel *safe*. His Sub, under his hand where he belongs.

"You are such a good girl, *princesska*, staying where I told you to."

Ilya kneels back down and smooths both hands down the back of Hollander's thighs. He caresses the sensitive, thin skin and watches his muscular calves flex and tremble and then leans in to press a soft kiss to his backside.

"Give me your hand."

Hollander falls a little further forward as he reaches awkwardly behind his back to offer his hands, palm up, to Ilya. Ilya presses soft kisses to both before grabbing his wrist and placing them on each asscheek.

"**Spread** for me. Show me your cunt, *princesska*."

Hollander's intake of breath is shaky and he exhales on a whine. His fingers dig into the meat of his ass and pulls them apart, giving Ilya a perfect view of his hole.

"So tight," Ilya coos and leans forward to spit directly on Hollander's pink rim. It runs down his crack, his balls, and drips onto the floor between Ilya's legs. "And so messy. Look how wet you are, *princesska*. You are *dripping*."

And then Ilya is leaning forward to swipe his tongue up Hollander's sack, collecting his spit, and licking a long stripe across his hole.

"Oh god," Hollander groans. His hips push back then forward as if he's not sure if he wants to move away or closer to the feeling of Ilya's mouth. "Oh god, what are you *doing*?"

Ilya only pulls back a hairsbreadth to say, "Am eating your pussy, *princesska*. Getting you ready for this cock," before returning to his ministrations.

Hollander's hole gets soft and pliant from Ilya's tongue. The Sub is a mess of sobs muffled by the pillow, garbled begging, and gyrating hips. Ilya lets him fuck himself back against his tongue until he realizes Hollander is also purposely dragging his dick across the couch for friction.

He hadn't realized Hollander was so close, but the signs are there. He knows Hollander now, he knows how taut and jerky he gets in the moments before his release. He knows how his long moans turn into quick, desperate pants the closer he gets.

Ilya reaches between his legs to grab his balls in a tight squeeze. It's not enough to hurt, but it's enough to shock Hollander to come back from the edge.

**"Stop,"** Ilya Commands. "Did I tell you to do this?"

Hollander whines. "I wasn't— M'not— Ilya. Ilya, please, I need it. I need to."

So sweet. His voice is slurred and Under and Ilya is going to take such good care of him.

"My *princesska*. What is it you need? **Say it.**"

"I want to—I wanna— Ilya, I wanna *come*."

Ilya smiles.

"Okay. I give you option. One, you hump couch like dog and come without me touching you. Two," Ilya picks up the toy and smacks it teasingly against Hollander's wet, soft hole. "I fuck you with this and you come with your cunt nice and full. What do you think?"

The toy is thin and flexible and the tip curves perfectly upward to reach exactly what Ilya will be looking for inside of Hollander.

Honestly, he'd be okay with either option. The mental image of Hollander rutting himself against the furniture and chasing his release like an animal while Ilya watches has its own appeal, but he's desperate to keep his hands on the Sub and watch this toy split him open.

"Ilya."

His name sounds so good on Hollander's tongue, like a song. Like a sigh. Hollander would never call him that outside of *this*, but sometimes the way he says 'Rozanov' is like he's throwing stones and Ilya is a glass house. Ilya prefers being called for like this.

"Anything you want," Ilya reminds him gently. "I give to you. Whatever you need, *myshonok*."

Hollander rubs his cheek shyly against the back cushion before looking over his shoulder and down at Ilya. It strikes him that this is the first time he's on *his* knees for Hollander, a place that very few Doms would allow themselves.

Ilya can only feel bad for them. They have no idea the power they can hold down here. The way Hollander is looking at him with dazed, glassy eyes and needy, drawn eyebrows is proof of that.

He licks his swollen lips. Ilya wishes he could kiss them so, instead, he kisses Hollander's hip and follows the line of stretch marks there with his mouth.

“I want *that*,” Hollander whispers. “Inside. I want— don’t make me say it, Ilya. You know what I want.”

Ilya is *vibrating*. Yes, Hollander, I know what you want. I know what you *need*. I’m the only one who can give this to you. I’m the only one who knows you like this.

Ilya hopes his trembling isn’t obvious. He places a final kiss to Hollander’s hip before uncapping the bottle of lube and drizzling a good amount in his palm and Hollander’s crease.

“Yes,” he hears him whisper dreamily from far away as he slicks up the toy and notches it against his opening.

Ilya feels dizzy with lust. At this rate, he might come before Hollander does. It might as well be his own cock slowly sliding into Hollander’s wet heat because Ilya can *feel* it; how tight and hot and perfect Hollander is clenching around the toy. His own cock throbs in response.

“This pussy. So greedy, *princesska*. Is sucking in the toy.”

Hollander’s hands, still obediently parting his ass, begin to quiver. Ilya pulls out the toy with a wet sound, watching Hollander’s hole open and squeeze around nothing.

“*Ilya.*”

“See?” Ilya shoves the toy back in, angling it towards the front wall of Hollander’s hole and he *screams*, his dark hair thrown back in absolute ecstasy. Ilya grins. *Found it.*

Ilya presses against that spot mercilessly, until Hollander is sobbing and howling and moving his hips for more, faster, deeper. His balls are drawn up tight between his legs and Ilya reaches behind them to grab a hold of his cock and strokes in time with his thrust.

“Please,” Hollander whispers around a small sob. He’s looking at Ilya again with his eyes shining a small spot of drool on the corner of his mouth. His bottom lip trembles. “I need to come. I need to come, Ilya, *please*. Tell me I can.”

Ilya has never felt this way before. It’s a different level of Domspace entirely. He’s always told himself he’d never be like other Doms. Not like his father. He’d never treat a Sub how they do; like they’re objects to be taken and used.

He’s Played with other Subs before, but none of them had made him feel like *this*. Hollander hands over control completely. They weren’t edging, this wasn’t a part of their Play, and yet Hollander *needs* the permission. He needs the praise. He needs to be *good*.

Fuck, he’s so *good*.

It’s scary, the things Ilya is feeling. He wants to own Hollander entirely. He wants to consume him body and soul and he wants Hollander always open and ready for him like this.

He wants to come home from practice to Hollander kneeling at his bedside. He wants to keep Hollander in Subspace for hours, days; happy and dazed and pliant. It scares him. It scares him what Hollander has the power to make him into.

“Come,” he hisses. “Fucking **come**, Hollander.”

Hollander’s release is silent until it’s not. His body pitches forward on a loud exhale of breath and then shakes uncontrollably.

“*Oh*,” he’s gasping. “*Oh—*“

Ilya fucks him through it. Cum coats Ilya’s hand and Hollander’s inner thighs are a mess of cum and lube and Ilya’s spit. He looks messy and beautiful and *his*.

Ilya gently removes the toy and Hollander crumples to the floor, half on Ilya’s lap. God, he is *gone*. His eyes are barely open and his face is sweaty, red, and so damn gorgeous Ilya can’t help but to press a kiss to his temple.

In a moment he’ll get them both up. In a moment he’ll get Hollander into the shower and wash the stickiness from his body and wrap him in a towel and dry off his hair for him before getting him into bed. In a moment. For now, he enjoys the quiet intimacy.

His cock is so hard it hurts, but he ignores it. Hollander feels it, though, and shyly presses a palm over it.

“If you wanted to... you know,” he mumbles. “Instead of the toy. I’ll need a second, but...”

Ilya closes his eyes. He feels the threads of his sanity pulling tighter and tighter, ready to snap.

“You’ve never done this before.”

“Well, no,” Hollander frowns.

He’s insecure about his lack of experience. Ilya has known this since the beginning. It’s not like Ilya thinks much of the concept of virginity, especially at his age, but there’s a different intimacy in penetration. Of sharing your body with someone completely.

“That is something you should save. Not for Dom, but for boyfriend. Lover. Enjoy this, yes? All of this is still new, no need to feel you must rush.”

Hollander’s frown deepens, his eyebrows coming together. “I don’t.”

“First time should be... special.”

“Was your first time special?” Hollander shoots back.

“No. But I am not special. Not special like you.”

Hollander swallows and opens his mouth to say something, but Ilya can’t possibly bear to hear it. He hushes the Sub by kissing his open mouth and of course Hollander is helpless but to chase his lips for more, precious discussion forgotten. For now.

“You didn’t finish, though,” Hollander mumbles.

“Is not necessary. This is for you, yes?”

Hollander is quiet for a long, charged moment. Ilya gets the feeling he’s said something wrong, but isn’t sure what.

“Right,” Hollander finally says. “Thanks.”

Without knowing what to say, Ilya presses a final kiss to Hollander’s red, freckled cheek and stands, taking Hollander with him. The Sub wobbles on his feet and Ilya hooks an arm around his waist to steady him.

“Come. I take you to shower before I go.”

“Mm,” Hollander hums. As they walk, he looks over his shoulder at his couch where streaks of wetness have soiled the fabric.

He cringes and tips his head to rest on Ilya’s shoulder, his expression full of embarrassment.

“I’m gonna need a new couch.”

“Maybe for the best,” Ilya laughs. “Was *so* ugly.”

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This is not a familiar face Ilya was expecting, or is excited, to see.

Emmanuel Herrera is a different kind of Dom than Ilya is; he exudes calmness and responsibility. He probably likes his Subs well behaved and takes them over his knee to reinforce the rules, whereas Ilya enjoys a bratty mouth and coaxing a Sub into submission with positive reinforcement and praise.

He’s also handsome. Undeniably, with his long, thick curly hair and olive skin and green eyes. Ilya has Played around with other Doms before, both in a setting with a shared Sub and a few times without, and so he can recognise how attractive the other man is.

He’s also a pain in the ass on the ice which, to Ilya, makes him a great player. It’s no secret that Ottawa has needed a strong right wing. Haas is great, but he’s also young and impulsive and could benefit from some time as an alternate player learning from a veteran.

So when Ilya walks into the team gym and spots Herrera shaking hands and grinning with the other players, a lead weight of dread settles in his stomach. It’s only made worse by Hollander coming in behind him and watching the surprised, elated expression brighten his face.

“E-Man! What are you doing here?” Hollander passes Ilya and goes right up to Emmanuel, whose grin softens considerably seeing the Sub. Ilya wants to smack it off his handsome fucking face entirely.

“He and Dillon got traded,” Haas explains with a thin, falsely happy smile.

He’ll be okay, Ilya knows. It’s frustrating, of course a blow to a young athlete’s ego, to be replaced on the starting line; but Haas will grow from this. Emmanuel Herrera is experienced, but he’s old and only getting older.

The Gators must have understood this and wanted to quickly get another right wing in to start building them up and Ilya knows coach Wiebe wouldn’t have passed on the opportunity to get another strong player in this season.

So he’s not annoyed or angry about their coach’s decision. It’s a smart one. They will all benefit from this, especially Haas, which is what Ilya will tell him later when he pulls him aside as captain.

But, secretly, Ilya isn’t all that pleased either.

They already have a good thing going. They’ve been winning more games than they lose. Their chemistry is good on the ice, especially between him and Hollander. What if this affects that?

What if this affects *everything*?

Because Hollander is practically bouncing as he follows Herrera and the rest of the guys into the rink and Ilya does *not* feel good about where his thoughts go with every smile Hollander gives their new teammate.

Hollander smiles at him, but not like this. He makes Hollander laugh by being an idiot and he makes Hollander smile soft and gooey during Aftercare, but never like this. Never like he’s happy to see Ilya.

“You’re being obvious.”

Ilya, who had been watching Herrera help Hollander practice his slapshot from the sidelines, turns his gaze to Troy Barrett. He’s looking at Ilya with a pointed, unimpressed look.

“No idea what you mean by this.”

Troy snorts. “Come on. You know that I know.”

“What?” Ilya snaps and looks back at the ice with a sneer curling his upper lip. “Did Harris spill in the bedroom? Is your ass that good?”

“Fuck you, Rozanov. He didn’t have to. And, actually, yeah it *is*.”

Ilya likes Troy. Specifically for this reason; Troy doesn’t take things personally. It’s probably a consequence of his terrible upbringing, but it’s the same consequence as Ilya’s terrible upbringing and so they truly *get* each other in a way Ilya has never experienced before.

When he’d initially signed to the Centaurs, it was because of a promise coach Wiebe had made to him long before the draft; they wouldn’t just build a team, they’d build an empire.

They'd be a home for those who never fit in anywhere else and they'd win because they'd understand each other at a deeper level than other teams.

When Troy was initially traded, it was the first and only time Ilya questioned coach's judgement. Ilya is an asshole, yes, but playfully so. There is truth in all his words, but also good humor that softens the blow.

Troy is monotone and biting and honest to a fault. His honesty is what got him kicked out of Toronto when he publicly stood with the 'alleged' Sub victims of his teammate. Ilya respected that, but didn't necessarily understand his motivations.

Troy was also obvious in the fact that he didn't care what other people thought about him as long as he got to play hockey and Ilya has never trusted Doms like that.

Except, Troy isn't a Dom.

It wasn't a secret Ilya had stumbled upon like he did with Hollander. No, Troy had volunteered the information willingly. As willing as you can be when you're shit faced drunk in your old city and just had all your old fans boo you and then had to sit for a long dinner with your asshole father and the only thing that could get you through it was the open bar.

Ilya could relate to this.

He'd been the one to help Troy back to his room and that's when he'd just... told Ilya.

"Why are you telling this to me?" Ilya had demanded. He still hadn't trusted Troy fully and the confession seemed so out of nowhere. Troy had hiccuped and rolled over on the bed so he wasn't facing Ilya anymore.

"Don't know," he slurred. "I'm just so... fuckin' tired."

Yes. Ilya could relate to this, too. So he had tucked Troy under the covers and vowed to never bring it up again and save Troy the fear and embarrassment.

Except the next morning Troy cornered him at the breakfast buffet, looking so scared and tired and very green in the face, and brought it up again. Ilya remembers the conversation very well.

*"You won't tell anyone, right? Not coach or—"*

*"Of course I will not. Is not my business to tell. Does no one know? Even on old team?"*

*"Not them, no. But our team doctor..."*

*"Harris."*

*"Yes. Yeah, he knows. I had to tell him because I was having some issues, but I think he sorta already knew."*

*"And these issues... They are still?"*

Troy had told Ilya everything; how he had been born with a limbic dysfunction that had become obvious after emotional and behavioral changes as a teenager. His body was a Sub, but his mind wasn't, and the juxtaposition had caused him to be depressed and angry and alone.

"Look," he tells Ilya now. "If anyone knows what he's going through; I do. And I'm sure you have a valiant reason for doing whatever the fuck you're doing."

"So be quiet, then."

"No, because you have no one else to tell you this shit."

Ilya grunts. He knows Troy is right and he knows his friend is just looking out for him the same way Ilya had for Troy over the years, and maybe it was hypocritical but he didn't want to hear it.

Troy sighs and Ilya knows for certain he's rolling his eyes. "What Caitlin said the other day is true. You're a big fucking softie, even if you hide behind that asshole front all the time. I know that, the other guys know that, but I don't think *Hollander* does."

Ilya watches Hollander on the ice. They're running drills in different groups to gauge game compatibility and it just so happened that Hollander and Herrera get paired together and so Ilya is forced to watch them skate around each other and watch Hollander show off and watch Hollander's face every time their new teammate makes a good play.

Ilya swallows. "Get to your point, Barrett. Is almost time for us to get on."

"*Ilya*," Troy says desperately and leans in so Ilya has no choice but to look at him.

His friend's eyes are a blue like Ilya has never seen before and Ilya feels like they can see right into his soul, into the places where he keeps the fear and the hurt and the anxiety.

"You're my friend. Probably my best friend, besides Harris. And I'm *definitely* your best friend. So I just... don't want to see you hurt."

Ilya sucks his bottom lip into his mouth and looks away from his friend's penetrating gaze. Though it might be worse because, instead, he finds Hollander smiling so warmly at Herrera that Ilya thinks it might melt the ice under him.

There's something that twists inside him. Something dark and unfair and strange because he's never felt it before. It makes him want to go down there and do... *whatever* the fuck Herrera is doing to get Hollander to smile at him like that.

Maybe he would be a better Dom for Hollander than Ilya is. Maybe Hollander would appreciate strict rules and discipline, he certainly enjoys it outside of Playing.

Maybe we want someone more mature. Nothing like Ilya who plays tea party princesses and gets into fights on the ice. Herrera is kind and patient and so many things no one would ever say about Ilya.

It's a harsh reminder that Ilya is nothing. Not to Hollander, not outside of their bedrooms. One day the Sub will, inevitably, find a Dom that suits him more and Ilya will become a figment of the past.

Will Hollander think of him? When he's on his knees for someone else? When he uncurls like a flowerbud under someone else's praise? Will Hollander think of them, think of Ilya, fondly?

Stop. Stop it, Ilya.

"I know where I stand," he says finally and his voice doesn't tremble. "Hollander can not hurt me."

Troy looks where Ilya is looking. Herrera gets one final shot in and he and Hollander celebrate their victory. Hollander practically jumps on his shoulders excitedly and Herrera sweetly wraps an arm around him.

Even from here, Ilya can see how the Dom is looking at Hollander like he's found something precious and Ilya wants to *scream*. I saw him first, you can't have him, he's not yours, he's fucking *mine*.

Troy sighs and rests a hand on Ilya's tense shoulders. "I think he already is."

## End Notes

see ya in part 3 <3

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