Five Times Shane's Oral Fixation Got Him in Trouble (And One Time It Didn't)

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Five Times Shane's Oral Fixation Got Him in Trouble (And One Time It Didn't)

by mikkijam

Summary

Shane Hollander has a problem. He can't keep his mouth off Ilya Rozanov, and it's going to get them both in trouble. Five times Shane's oral fixation nearly exposed their secret, and one time it was exactly what he needed.

Notes

Happy birthday girl! You're one year closer to the big 4-0 and becoming a fandom grandma. This fic was born from a simple premise: what if Shane's oral fixation wasn't just a quirk, but a genuine coping mechanism? Something he does without thinking, something that grounds him when his brain won't shut up?

I tried to include the things I know you love and hopefully I hit all your kinks. I only know enough from the tv show so if I get something wrong about canon I am so sorry.

See the end of the work for more notes

1. The First Time Ilya Noticed

All-Star Game Weekend - January 2011

The problem starts at the press conference.

Ilya is only half-listening to the moderator drone on about league initiatives and charitable partnerships and whatever else they say every year at these things. It's his first All-Star weekend, and already the speeches are blurring together.

But then Shane Hollander walks in.

Not unusual. They're both here, both rookies making their first All-Star appearance. The kid's been tearing up the league, so of course they're parading him around like a show pony. *Look at our perfect Canadian golden boy. Polite, media-trained, and boring as hell.*

Hollander sits two seats down from Ilya at the long table. Close enough that Ilya can see him in his peripheral vision. Close enough to be annoying.

The moderator asks Hollander a question, something about what it means to be here, about representing Montreal, the usual softball garbage. Hollander answers with the same rehearsed humility he always uses. Talks about being honored. About his teammates. About the fans.

Ilya rolls his eyes and looks down at his phone.

And then he hears it.

A soft *click*.

He glances up. Hollander has finished answering, but he's still holding the microphone. His other hand is at his mouth, pen cap between his lips. He's not chewing on it, exactly. More like holding it there. The tip of his tongue flicks against the plastic.

Ilya stares.

Hollander pulls the cap away to write something on the notepad in front of him. His lips are wet. Pink. He bites the bottom one, just for a second, then puts the cap back in his mouth.

Chyort.

Ilya looks away. Tries to focus on the next question. Something about the skills competition. He gives an answer, doesn't even remember what he says, and the moderator moves on.

But his eyes keep drifting back to Hollander.

The kid is doing it again. Pen cap in his mouth, rolling it between his lips. Not nervous, exactly. More like absent. Like he doesn't even realize he's doing it.

Ilya shifts in his seat. Adjusts his tie. Heat prickles at the back of his neck.

Someone asks Hollander another question. He pulls the cap out to answer, and Ilya watches his mouth shape the words. Watches his tongue touch his teeth when he says "team." Watches him bite his lip again when he pauses to think.

Stop looking, Ilya tells himself. *Stop.*

He doesn't stop.

The press conference ends. Ilya escapes to the hallway, loosening his tie and trying to think about literally anything else.

It doesn't work.

Because Shane Hollander is apparently a menace even when he's not on the ice.

Ilya sees him later that day at the player meet-and-greet. Hollander is talking to some kid in a Montreal jersey, smiling that perfect media smile, and he's doing it *again*. Chewing on the inside of his cheek. Biting his thumbnail while the kid's parent takes a photo.

And at dinner, the formal league dinner with all the All-Stars and their families and the corporate sponsors, Hollander is at a table across the room. Ilya watches him suck on a cocktail stirrer while some guy in a suit talks at him.

This is problem, Ilya thinks. *You have problem.*

He's not sure if he means Hollander or himself.

Ilya finds Hollander outside the ballroom after dinner. The kid is leaning against the wall, tie loosened, looking at his phone. His bottom lip is red from biting.

"You are going to bleed," Ilya says.

Hollander looks up, blinks. "What?"

"Your lip." Ilya gestures. "You keep biting."

Hollander touches his mouth self-consciously. "Oh. Yeah. I do that when I'm..." He stops. "Why do you care?"

"I do not," Ilya lies. "Just noticing."

"Well, stop noticing."

"Cannot help it. You do it constantly."

Hollander's eyes narrow. "Are you seriously criticizing the way I exist? At a press conference?"

"Am not criticizing. Am *observing.*" Ilya steps closer. Close enough to smell Hollander's cologne, cedar and something citrus. "You have thing about your mouth. Yes?"

"I don't have a *thing*..."

"You do." Ilya's gaze drops to Hollander's lips. They're parted slightly. Pink and wet and distracting. "Do you even notice when you do it?"

"Do what?"

Ilya reaches out slowly, giving Hollander time to pull away, and touches his bottom lip with his thumb. Barely a brush, but enough to feel how soft it is.

Hollander goes very still.

"This," Ilya says quietly. "Cannot stop putting things in your mouth. Pen caps. Cocktail stirrers. Your own fingers." He drags his thumb across Hollander's lip. "Do you know what it looks like?"

Hollander gasps, a sharp, needy sound. "What does it look like?"

"Like you need something."

The air between them crackles. Dangerous. They're in a hallway where anyone could walk by. Hollander is Montreal. Ilya is Boston. They're supposed to hate each other.

Hollander licks his lips. Ilya's thumb is still there, and Hollander's tongue touches it.

"Your room or mine?" Hollander says, voice rough.

Ilya's room is closer.

The hallway is silent, the carpet muffling their footsteps, and Ilya's hands shake slightly as he swipes the keycard. The door beeps, clicks open. The room beyond is dim, just the glow of the Nashville skyline through floor-to-ceiling windows, the air conditioner humming softly, the bed a dark shape in the corner.

They barely make it through the door before Hollander is on him, kissing him hard, shoving him against the wall, grabbing at Ilya's tie like he's trying to strangle him with it.

"Thought you were staying away from me this weekend," Ilya gasps between kisses.

"Changed my mind." Hollander bites Ilya's bottom lip, pulls, lets go. "You started it. With the mouth thing."

"You started it. Cannot help yourself."

Hollander pulls back just enough to glare at him. "I don't have a..."

Ilya shoves two fingers into Hollander's mouth.

Hollander makes a surprised sound, a choked-off moan, and then his lips close around Ilya's fingers and he *sucks*. He smells like Ilya now. Birch and black tea, that scent Ilya can't escape, and it makes his head spin.

"*Bozhe.*" Ilya's slacks go tight, his whole body flushing hot. "See? This is what I mean."

Hollander doesn't answer. Just keeps sucking, tongue working against Ilya's fingers, eyes half-closed like he's savoring it.

Ilya pulls his fingers out. Hollander chases them with his mouth.

"You really do have problem," Ilya says.

"Shut up." Hollander drops to his knees.

Ilya stops thinking.

He's had Hollander once before, that CCM shoot in Toronto, six months ago, when they'd both pretended it was just curiosity. But this is different. More desperate. Hollander's fingers are already working at Ilya's belt, and the look on his face is hungry. That's the word.

"You do not have to," Ilya starts.

"I want to."

"Hollander," Ilya says.

"I want to." Hollander gets the belt open, the zipper down. "Just let me."

And then Hollander's mouth is on him, hot and wet and eager, and Ilya forgets how to speak Russian or English or any language except the broken sounds coming out of his throat.

Hollander makes a sound low in his throat, hungry and greedy. His tongue swirls like he's chasing a taste he can't get enough of. The wet sounds of his lips and tongue fill the quiet room, slick and obscene.

Hollander is eager, *so* eager, but he's not clumsy. That first time in Toronto, he'd been nervous, hesitant. Now? He knows exactly what he is doing. He takes Ilya deep, swirling his tongue with a confidence that makes Ilya's knees weak. He must be mimicking what he's had done to him, translating the sensation, because the technique is shockingly good.

Because Shane Hollander has to be excellent at everything. Even this.

He's still messy, saliva slicking his chin, breath coming in sharp huffs through his nose, but the movements are calculated. Precise. He is studying Ilya's reactions, filing away what makes him gasp, and then doing it again. Harder.

Ilya's head hits the wall. His palms find Hollander's hair, dark and soft and perfect for pulling.

"You love this. Yes?" Ilya gasps, voice breaking.

Hollander makes an affirmative sound, the vibration traveling through Ilya's length, wet and filthy.

"Love having your mouth full," Ilya gasps. "Cannot help yourself. Need something to taste."

Another sound. Hollander takes him deeper, until Ilya hits the back of his throat.

"*Khorosho*." Ilya tightens his grip on Hollander's hair. "So good. Perfect like this."

Hollander's eyes open at that, looking up at Ilya. They're dark and blown and hungry, and the way he looks up, on his knees, mouth swollen, wanting Ilya to *watch* him. Ilya can see him shifting, hips rolling forward against nothing, hard in his jeans just from this.

Ilya almost loses it right then, has to bite his lip to keep control.

He pulls Hollander off. Has to, or this will be over in thirty seconds. Hollander makes a protesting sound.

"You are not done already," Ilya says, trying to catch his breath.

"I could be." Hollander's voice is wrecked. His lips are red and swollen. "I want..."

"What do you want?"

Hollander doesn't answer. Just opens his mouth.

Oh.

"You want me to..." Ilya can't finish the sentence.

Hollander nods.

Ilya's breath punches out of him, ragged and harsh in the quiet room. His hands shake.

He cups Hollander's face with one hand, thumb pressing against his bottom lip again. Hollander's tongue flicks out to taste it.

"You tell me if is too much," Ilya says. "Yes?"

"Yes."

"Good." Ilya slides back into Hollander's mouth, slow at first, then deeper. "Relax your throat."

Hollander does. Takes him all the way down, nose pressed to Ilya's stomach.

"*Vot tak*." Ilya's accent is thick now, control slipping. "Just like that. Stay."

Hollander stays. Breathing through his nose, throat working around Ilya's length. His palms are on Ilya's thighs, not pushing away. Just holding.

Ilya pulls back, lets Hollander breathe, then pushes in again.

They find a rhythm. Ilya's grip in Hollander's hair, guiding the pace. Hollander letting him, taking it, wanting it.

"So good for me," Ilya gasps. "*Posmotri na sebya*. Look at you. Made for my cock."

Hollander moans around him.

"You are perfect."

That's what does it. Hollander's hips stutter forward against nothing, his thighs trembling. The sounds he's making around Ilya turn frantic, high-pitched and needy, muffled whimpers that Shane can't control. His whole body shudders, and he comes untouched, spilling in his jeans from nothing but having Ilya in his mouth and being called *mine*.

The realization pushes Ilya over the edge. He tries to pull out, give Shane warning, but Shane grabs his hips and holds him *in*, swallowing everything Ilya gives him.

"*Yeshchyo*," Ilya gasps as he finishes, the word torn from him. "*Yeshchyo*." More. Again.

They stay like that for a long moment. Ilya catching his breath. Hollander with his forehead pressed to Ilya's stomach, still mouthing at softening flesh.

"You really do have thing," Ilya says finally.

Hollander pulls back, wipes his mouth with the back of his hand. "Shut up."

But he's smiling.

Later, after they've cleaned up and Shane has stolen one of Ilya's t-shirts and they're lying in bed pretending they're going to sleep instead of doing this again, Ilya asks: "Do you always need this?"

"Need what?"

"Something in your mouth."

Hollander is quiet for a moment. "I don't... it's not a need."

"No?"

"It's just..." Hollander stops, starts again. "I don't know. I do it when I'm nervous. Or thinking. Or..." He stops again.

Ilya rolls onto his side, looks at him. "Or?"

"Or when I want something I'm not supposed to have."

The words hang in the air between them.

Ilya reaches out, traces Hollander's bottom lip with his thumb. Hollander's mouth opens automatically, and Ilya slides two fingers inside.

Hollander's eyes slide shut. He sucks gently, tongue working against Ilya's skin.

"Is okay," Ilya says quietly. "Can have this. Can have me. Whenever you want."

Hollander makes a sound, a quiet, wounded thing, and Ilya's chest aches.

He pulls his fingers out, leans in, kisses Hollander soft and careful.

"We should sleep," Hollander says against Ilya's mouth.

"*Da*. Should."

They don't.

The next morning, Shane's barely made it to the hotel breakfast before Liam Casey from Pittsburgh corners him.

"Hey, Hollander." Liam's grinning in that way that means he's about to be annoying. "Saw you talking to Rozanov last night. After the dinner."

Hollander freezes. "What?"

"By the ballroom. You guys looked pretty intense." Liam waggles his eyebrows. "What was that about? He chirping you already?"

Hollander forces a shrug. "You know Rozanov. He's always got something to say."

"Yeah, but you looked..." Liam trails off, still grinning. "Anyway. Whatever. Just thought it was funny. You two really hate each other, huh?"

"Something like that," Hollander says, and escapes to the coffee station before Liam can ask any more questions.

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2. The Post-Game Interview

Montreal vs Boston - February 2013

Shane hates losing to Boston.

Hates it more than losing to anyone else, which is saying something because Shane hates losing, period. But losing to the Bears, losing to Rozanov, burns hotter than it should, makes his jaw ache from clenching.

Final score: 4-3. Boston wins in overtime on some bullshit deflection that Shane is pretty sure touched a high stick, but the refs didn't call it and now he has to stand here in front of cameras and pretend he's fine with it.

He's not fine with it.

"Shane, tough loss tonight. Can you walk us through what happened in overtime?"

Shane reaches for the water bottle on the table. Unscrews the cap. "Yeah, uh, they capitalized on a lucky bounce. That's hockey sometimes."

His throat is dry. He takes a sip, then puts the bottle down but keeps the cap in his grip. It's blue plastic, Voyageurs logo embossed on top. He rolls it between his fingers while the reporter asks another question about defensive breakdowns.

"We had some miscommunication," Shane says. He's not really paying attention to his own words. The cap finds its way to his mouth, just resting against his bottom lip while he thinks. "But we'll watch the tape and make adjustments."

Another question. Something about Rozanov's game-winner. Shane's jaw tightens at the name.

"He's a talented player," Shane says, because he has to. Because that's what you say. He bites down on the cap unconsciously. "We know what he's capable of, and we should have covered him better."

The interview drags on. Shane answers on autopilot, giving the same diplomatic non-answers he always gives, and somewhere in the middle of it he realizes he's been sucking on the water bottle cap for the last thirty seconds.

He pulls it away from his mouth. His lips feel wet. Cold from the plastic.

"Thanks, Shane," the reporter says finally, and Shane escapes.

In the locker room, the air is thick with sweat and defeat. Rubber mats under Shane's bare feet, the clatter of guys stripping off equipment, someone's music playing tinny through a

phone speaker. The lights are harsh after the dimmed arena, stripping away every shadow. Nowhere to hide.

He checks his phone.

Three texts from Ilya.

Good game

Almost had us

You coming to my hotel or am I coming to yours?

Shane stares at the messages. His thumb hovers over the keyboard.

Across the room, Hayden Pike, Shane's line mate and his best friend on the team, is watching him.

"You good?" Hayden asks. He's half-dressed, still in his base layer, ice pack on his shoulder. "You look weird."

"I'm fine, man." Shane shoves his phone in his pocket. "Just tired."

"Uh huh." Hayden doesn't look convinced. "You sure? Because you've been chewing on that water bottle cap for like ten minutes."

Shane looks down. The blue cap is still in his hand, teeth marks visible in the plastic.

"Nervous habit," he mutters.

"Sure." Hayden's voice is careful. "Look, I know losing to those guys sucks. But you can talk to me, you know? If something's going on."

Something is definitely going on, Shane thinks. *Something I can never tell you about.*

"I'm fine," he says again. "Just need some sleep."

Hayden nods, but his eyes linger a second too long. Shane waits until he's turned away before pulling out his phone again.

He should say no. Should go back to his own hotel, get some sleep, stop doing this thing where he hooks up with the guy who just beat him.

Yours. Give me an hour.

He hits send before he can change his mind.

In the Bears locker room, Ilya watched the entire post-game interview on the TV mounted in the corner.

His teammates noticed.

"Dude, why're you watching Hollander?" one of them asks. Ilya tells Shane about it later, face flushed with embarrassment.

"Am not," Ilya apparently said. "Is on. Am just looking."

"You've been staring at the screen for five minutes. The interview's almost over."

"Is good to see what other team is thinking. Strategy."

"Uh huh. That why you keep rewinding the part where he bites the bottle cap?"

Ilya didn't have an answer for that.

Hollander shows up at Ilya's hotel room exactly one hour later. He's showered and changed into street clothes, jeans and a Henley, Voyageurs cap pulled low. No one looks twice at him in the lobby.

Ilya opens the door on the first knock.

"Hi," Hollander says. His jaw is tight. His eyes are hard.

"Hi." Ilya is barefoot, wearing sweats and a t-shirt that's tight enough to show every line of muscle underneath. His hair is damp. He smells like soap and underneath it, birch and black tea, that scent Shane has never been able to get out of his head.

They stare at each other for a moment.

"You going to gloat or..."

Shane doesn't wait for an answer. He shoves Ilya back into the room, the door slamming behind him, and kisses him hard enough to bruise. Two years of practice have taught him exactly where to bite, where to push, how to make Ilya lose his smug composure.

"You're in a mood," Ilya manages between kisses, already breathless.

"You scored on me." Shane's hands are rough, yanking Ilya's t-shirt up. "In overtime. On a bullshit deflection."

"Was good goal..."

"Shut up." Shane bites Ilya's bottom lip, pulls. "I didn't come here to hear you gloat."

"Then why did you come?"

Shane shoves him toward the bed. "Figure it out."

Ilya lands on his back, and Shane is on top of him before he can recover, straddling his hips, pinning his wrists above his head.

"This is not how it usually goes," Ilya says, but he's not fighting it. His eyes are dark, curious.

"Yeah, well." Shane rolls his hips down, feels Ilya hard beneath him. "You took something from me tonight. I'm taking it back."

"Took what? The game?"

"Don't play dumb." Shane leans down, bites Ilya's jaw. "You *knew* what you were doing. That celly right in front of our bench."

Ilya grins up at him, unrepentant. "Needed to remind you who is better."

"Fuck you."

"Is that what you want?" Ilya's voice drops, teasing. "To fuck me?"

Shane's mind blanks. That's not... he's never...

Ilya laughs, the bastard. "Your face. Priceless."

"I hate you."

"No you don't." Ilya's still grinning, and Shane wants to wipe that smug expression off his face. He releases Ilya's wrists and slides down his body before Ilya can say anything else.

"The bottle cap," Ilya says, breathing harder now as Shane yanks his sweats down. "During interview. I watched you."

"I know." Shane doesn't look up. "Your teammates saw."

"*Da.* Very embarrassing." But he doesn't sound embarrassed. "You do it to drive me crazy."

"Maybe." Shane finally looks up, holds Ilya's gaze. "Or maybe I just needed something to bite because I was imagining doing *this*."

And then Shane's mouth is on him, and there's nothing gentle about it.

This isn't like the first time. No hesitation, no testing. Shane takes him deep immediately, aggressive, *punishing*, like he's trying to prove something. Like losing the game is unacceptable and this is how he wins it back.

The first taste hits him. Clean skin, salt-musk, *Ilya*. Shane groans around him, the sound more growl than moan. The wet sounds fill the room, obscene and rhythmic.

"*Chyort*..." Ilya's hips jerk up. "Shane, you..."

Shane's mouth leaves him only for the growled "Don't talk" before he's back, taking Ilya deeper, faster, the wet sounds filling the room obscene and rhythmic. No teasing. No buildup.

Just raw, competitive determination.

Two years of practice have made him *good* at this. He knows exactly what makes Ilya lose control: the swirl of tongue here, the pressure there, the way he can hollow his cheeks and *suck* until Ilya forgets how to speak English or Russian.

"You are..." Ilya gasps, fingers scrambling for purchase in Shane's hair. "This is... *fuck*..."

Shane hums smugly around him. *Who's better now?*

He's hard and aching in his jeans, but he doesn't touch himself. This isn't about him getting off. This is about taking back control. About reminding Ilya, and himself, that losing one game doesn't mean losing *everything*.

"Shane..." Ilya's voice cracks. "I'm..."

Shane doesn't let up. Doesn't slow down. If anything, he goes harder, takes Ilya deeper, works his tongue along the underside until Ilya is cursing in broken Russian, hips bucking up off the bed.

"I cannot... you are..."

Ilya comes with a shout that's probably too loud for a hotel room, and Shane swallows all of it, greedy and triumphant. He keeps his mouth on Ilya through the aftershocks, only pulling off when Ilya's hand goes weak in his hair.

Shane sits up, drags his thumb across his bottom lip. He's still hard, aching, but the fury that's been simmering in his chest since the final buzzer has finally cooled.

"Feel better now?" Ilya asks, still breathless, sprawled across the bed like Shane undid him.

Shane considers. "Little bit."

Ilya laughs, surprised and genuine. "You are something else, Hollander."

"Yeah, well." Shane crawls back up the bed, lies down next to him. "You're welcome."

"I am..." Ilya rolls onto his side, eyes dropping to where Shane's still hard in his jeans. "Oh no. This will not do."

"It's fine. I didn't come here to..."

"You came here to win." Ilya's hand is already on Shane's belt, undoing it with practiced ease. "And you did. But now I return the favor."

"You don't have to..."

"I know." Ilya's hand wraps around him, hot and perfect, and Shane's protest dies in his throat. "But I am competitive too. You think you are only one who wants to be best?"

Shane chokes out a laugh that turns into a moan as Ilya's grip tightens. "This isn't... *fuck*... this isn't a competition."

"Everything is competition." Ilya's thumb swipes over the head, and Shane's hips jerk. "And I am going to win."

Shane's mouth falls open on a gasp, and something must show on his face—something needy and wanting—because Ilya's free hand comes up, two fingers pressing against Shane's lower lip without a word.

Shane doesn't hesitate. He sucks them in and groans around them as Ilya's other hand keeps working his cock, the dual sensation making his brain finally, *finally* go quiet. Salt skin and the familiar taste of Ilya on his tongue, the slick slide of Ilya's palm, the heat building low and tight in his belly—it's too much and exactly enough, and Shane's hips fuck up into Ilya's grip without any input from his brain.

"There," Ilya murmurs, watching Shane's mouth work around his fingers with dark, fascinated eyes. "This is what you need, yes? Something to focus on."

Shane moans in answer, sucking harder, and the wet sounds of both—his mouth on Ilya's fingers, Ilya's hand on his cock—fill the room until Shane can't think about anything except the taste and the pressure and the way Ilya is looking at him like he's something worth figuring out.

He comes embarrassingly fast, gasping around Ilya's fingers, whole body shaking with it, and Ilya doesn't pull them away until Shane's stopped trembling—just lets him suck through the aftershocks like it's the most natural thing in the world.

They lie there for a moment, catching their breath, the competitive energy finally bleeding out of both of them.

"You should stay," Ilya says quietly. "Sleep here."

"I can't. Someone might see."

"I know." Ilya sounds sad about it. "But you should."

Shane pulls back, looks at him. Ilya's eyes are soft. Fond.

"Next time," Shane says. "When we're in a different city. I'll stay."

"Promise?"

"Yeah. Promise."

Shane's back at his hotel by midnight. He showers again, crawls into bed, checks his phone.

One text from Ilya.

Was good game tonight. Next time I let you win.

Shane snorts. Types back:

Fuck off. Next time I'm scoring on you.

In more ways than one.

The reply comes thirty seconds later.

Looking forward to it.

Shane falls asleep smiling.

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3. The Playoff Series

Montreal vs Boston, Eastern Conference Finals - May 2014, Game 3

They're not supposed to see each other during playoffs.

That's the rule. The unspoken agreement they made after the last time Montreal and Boston met in the postseason. Too risky. Too dangerous. Someone might notice Shane slipping into Ilya's hotel at 2 AM, or Ilya showing up at Shane's door still smelling like the ice.

So they don't. During playoffs, they're just rivals. Nothing more.

Except Shane is standing outside Ilya's apartment door at 11:47 PM, and he can't remember why he thought this rule was a good idea.

The series is tied 1-1. Game 3 is tomorrow night in Montreal. Shane should be at his own place, sleeping in his own bed, preparing for the most important game of the season so far.

Instead he's here, in the hallway of a luxury building in the Seaport. His flight doesn't leave until morning. His hoodie is pulled up, cap pulled low, and he's praying the doorman didn't recognize him.

He knocks.

It takes thirty seconds, long enough that Shane's hand hovers over the door, ready to bolt, convinced Ilya is asleep, convinced this was a mistake.

The door opens.

Ilya is in sweats and nothing else. His hair is a mess. His eyes widen when he sees Shane, and that scent hits Shane like a wave. Birch and black tea and sleep-warm skin, something that's become as familiar to Shane as his own heartbeat.

"What are you..."

"Can I come in?"

Ilya glances down the hallway. It's empty. He pulls Shane inside and shuts the door.

The room is dark except for the blue glow of the TV on mute, some late-night sports recap, the score from tonight's game still scrolling across the bottom. The sheets are rumpled, the pillow dented where Ilya had been lying. He wasn't asleep; he was waiting.

"Hollander. What are you doing here?"

"I don't know." Shane pulls off his cap, shoves a hand through his hair. "I just... I couldn't stop thinking about..."

"About?"

Shane's mouth is dry. He licks his lips. "You."

Ilya goes very still. "We said no. During playoffs. Is too dangerous."

"I know."

"If someone sees..."

"I know." Shane takes a step closer. "I was careful. No one saw me."

"You do not know that."

"Rozanov." Shane's voice comes out rough. Desperate. "Please. I just... I need..."

He can't finish the sentence. Doesn't know how to put into words what he needs. Just knows he's been wound tight since the series started, since they shook hands at center ice and Ilya looked at him like Shane was something he wanted to devour.

Ilya's jaw tightens. His eyes drop to Shane's mouth. "What do you need?"

"You know what I need."

"Say it."

Shane's face heats. "I need..." He stops. Tries again. "I need your cock in my mouth. Happy now? Or do you want me to beg in French too?"

Ilya groans, low and raw, and curses in Russian. His palm comes up to cup Shane's face, thumb pressing against his bottom lip. The corner of his mouth quirks up.

"You are going to get us both in trouble," Ilya says, but there's a smile in his voice. "Again."

"I know."

"This is not smart."

"I know."

Ilya stares at him. His jaw works, hands flexing at his sides. Then his nostrils flare, his pupils blow dark, and Shane knows, before Ilya moves, before he even speaks, that caution has lost.

Ilya's grip shifts to Shane's hair, pulling him into a kiss that's more teeth than lips. Shane gasps into it, hands grabbing at Ilya's bare shoulders, and when Ilya pulls back they're both breathing hard.

"Bed," Ilya says. "Now. And you are quiet. Yes? No noise."

"Yes."

"Good." Ilya's eyes are dark. Hungry. "Because I am not going to be gentle."

Shane ends up on his knees beside the bed, Ilya standing in front of him. They don't bother with the usual routine. No teasing, no slow build. Shane's mouth is on Ilya before his own jeans are even off, urgent and needy and too fucking grateful for this. The slick sounds start immediately, wet and filthy in the quiet apartment.

"*Chyort*," Ilya gasps above him, breathing ragged. His fingers tighten in Shane's hair. "You really could not wait. Could not stay away."

"Shut up," Shane breathes against the head of Ilya's cock, and then his mouth is full again, tongue working deliberately, the obscene rhythm resuming like he never stopped.

"Brat." But Ilya's voice is fond. "Missing this so much you risk everything? Take cab across city in middle of night?"

Shane hums in agreement, the vibration making Ilya's hips jerk. Takes Ilya deeper.

"What if someone from your team sees you leave? What if someone recognizes you in lobby?"

Shane doesn't answer. Can't answer. Just focuses on this, on the weight and heat on his tongue, the way it makes everything else go quiet.

Ilya's grip tightens. "You are not even worried. Are you?"

Shane looks up at him. Shakes his head slightly.

"You really do need this," Ilya says, accent thick now. "Need it so bad you forget how to think."

That's exactly it. Shane can't think straight. Hasn't been able to since Game 2 ended and he watched Ilya skate off the ice and wanted nothing more than to follow him into the tunnel, pin him against a wall, get on his knees right there.

A knock on the door.

Shane freezes. His heart slams against his ribs, adrenaline spiking so hard his vision narrows.

But Ilya doesn't let him pull off.

Ilya's grip in Shane's hair tightens, holding him *exactly* where he is. Shane's eyes go wide, looking up, and Ilya's expression is... not panicked. Hungry. Thrilled. His pupils blown, jaw tight, a muscle jumping in his cheek.

Another knock. "Rozanov? You awake?"

Ryan Price. The Bears' enforcer. Shane recognizes the voice from interviews, and his stomach drops.

"*Da*," Ilya calls out, voice steady, too steady for a man with his cock in someone's mouth. His thumb strokes Shane's cheek, almost soothing. "What do you need?"

Shane should pull off. Should hide. Should do literally anything except what he does next.

He swallows around Ilya and keeps going.

Ilya's whole body jerks. His grip in Shane's hair turns bruising, but he doesn't push Shane away. His eyes go dark and wild, and Shane realizes with a thrill that shoots straight to his own cock: *Ilya's into this.*

"Just checking if you want to grab breakfast tomorrow before practice," Price says through the door. "Few of us are going to that place on Boylston."

Shane hollows his cheeks. Takes Ilya deeper. The wet sound is obscene in the quiet room, and Shane's heart hammers with the certainty that Price can hear it, that this is insane, that they're going to get caught.

And he's never been harder in his life.

Ilya's hand clamps over his own mouth for a second, stifling a groan. When he speaks, his voice is shot. "Cannot. Have... appointment with trainer." A pause while Shane swirls his tongue. "But thank you."

"You okay? You sound weird."

"Is fine. Just tired." Ilya's hips twitch forward, involuntary, and Shane gags slightly before adjusting. "Long day."

"Yeah, I hear you. See you at the rink."

Footsteps retreat down the hall.

Neither of them moves until the sound fades completely. Ten seconds. Twenty.

Then Ilya looks down at Shane, and his expression is *feral*.

"You are insane," Ilya breathes. "You know this? *Completely* insane."

Shane pulls off, lips swollen and wet, and the look he gives Ilya is pure defiance. "You didn't stop me."

"No." Ilya's voice drops to a growl. "I did not."

He shoves Shane's head back down, and Shane takes him with a moan that's way too loud for how thin these walls are. He doesn't care. Can't care. The adrenaline is still screaming through his veins, mixing with arousal until he can't tell the difference.

Ilya fucks into his mouth, grip brutal, pace punishing. "You like this," he gasps. "Almost getting caught. You *want* someone to hear."

Shane moans in answer. His own cock is aching, untouched, leaking in his jeans.

"Should have let Price come in." Ilya's accent is thick now, control slipping. "Let him see you like this. On your knees. Mouth full. Would you like that?"

Shane whimpers, takes him deeper. The idea is horrifying and impossibly hot, and Ilya knows it, the bastard.

"My little exhibitionist." Ilya laughs, breathless. "We are both fucked up. Yes?"

Shane can't answer. Can only take what Ilya gives him, throat working, jaw aching, whole body vibrating with the knowledge that anyone could have walked in, anyone could have *heard*, and instead of running he'd...

Ilya comes with a strangled sound, fingers tight enough in Shane's hair to hurt. Shane swallows, greedy for it, and the taste pushes him over too. He comes in his jeans like a teenager, untouched, shaking through it with Ilya still in his mouth.

Neither of them moves. Ilya's hand gentles in Shane's hair, and Shane's forehead drops to Ilya's thigh.

"That was..." Shane's voice is shot. "Fuck."

"*Da.*" Ilya sounds just as shattered. "Fuck."

Shane sits back on his heels, looks up at Ilya. They stare at each other.

And then Ilya starts laughing.

It's not the reaction Shane expected. But the laugh is real, surprised, delighted, a little unhinged. Ilya pulls Shane up and kisses him, still laughing against his mouth.

"We are terrible people," Ilya says. "Terrible. Reckless. Stupid."

"Yeah." Shane's grinning now too, the adrenaline crash hitting him like a wave. "We really are."

"Price is going to tell everyone I sounded 'weird.'" Ilya's eyes are bright with mischief. "They will think I am sick. Will probably send trainer to check on me."

"Oh god." Shane buries his face in Ilya's shoulder. "We're so fucked."

"Probably." Ilya's arms wrap around him. "But worth it. Yes?"

Shane thinks about the knock on the door. The terror. The way he'd *kept going* instead of stopping, and the way Ilya had let him, and the way they'd both...

"Yeah," he says. "Worth it."

Shane leaves an hour later, after they've cleaned up and Ilya's made him drink a glass of water and they've had actual sex in an actual bed like normal people who aren't insane.

The elevator ride down feels different this time. Shane's still shaky, still wired, but the shame isn't there. Just the buzz of getting away with something. Of sharing a secret that belongs only to them.

His phone buzzes.

One text from Ilya.

> Next time, lock door first.

Shane laughs out loud in the empty elevator.

> Next time, warn me before you decide to keep going while your teammate is RIGHT THERE
>
> You did not complain.
>
> I was busy.
>
> Yes. Very busy. 😏

Shane shakes his head, still grinning like an idiot.

> See you on the ice tomorrow.
>
> Cannot wait to beat you.
>
> In your dreams, Rozanov.

He falls asleep still smiling, replaying the moment over and over: the knock, the terror, the choice to keep going anyway.

They're both fucked up. But at least they're fucked up together.

Montreal wins Game 3. Shane gets two assists. Ilya gets a goal.

They don't see each other again until the series is over.

(Montreal wins in six. When they shake hands at center ice, Ilya's grip on Shane's palm lingers just a second too long.)

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4. The Rose Landry Era

NHL Foundation Gala - New York - January 2017

Shane hates these things.

The fancy suits, the small talk, the photographers who want him to smile and pose and pretend he gives a shit about anything other than getting back on the ice. But it's part of the job. Part of being the face of the Voyageurs. So he shows up, shakes hands, makes donations, and counts down the minutes until he can leave.

Tonight is worse because Rose is on his arm.

The ballroom is oppressive. Crystal chandeliers cast everything in warm gold, the clink of champagne glasses, the drone of a hundred conversations layered over soft jazz from a quartet in the corner. The air smells like expensive perfume and canapés. Shane's collar feels too tight.

Rose Landry. Actress. Model. His "girlfriend" according to every gossip magazine and sports blog that's been tracking them since J.J. introduced them at his party back in November. She's beautiful and smart and nice, and every time he has to kiss her for the cameras, his stomach twists with something sour and shameful. Because all he can think about is...

He stops that thought before it can finish.

"You okay?" Rose asks quietly. She's holding a champagne flute, smiling at someone across the room. Her voice is low enough that only Shane can hear.

"Yeah. Fine."

"You look miserable."

"I always look miserable at these things."

She laughs. It sounds genuine. That's the thing about Rose. She's actually trying to make this arrangement work. Trying to be his friend, even if they both know what this really is. She'd figured out the truth about him within weeks of their first date, had asked, point blank, "So who's the guy?" over dinner, but Shane had shut that down fast. She knows he's gay. She doesn't know who.

A waiter passes by with a tray of drinks. Shane grabs a vodka tonic, takes a sip. The glass comes with one of those thin plastic stirrers, red to match the charity's branding.

He pulls it out to take another drink, then absently brings it to his mouth while Rose talks to someone about her latest film.

The stirrer tastes like plastic and vodka. Shane rolls it between his lips without thinking, tuning out the conversation, wishing he was literally anywhere else.

Someone takes a photo. Flash going off somewhere to his left.

Shane barely notices.

What Shane doesn't know, what he won't find out until much later, is that the photo goes viral within an hour. The way Shane is looking at the camera with that stirrer between his lips, head tilted just slightly, expression unreadable, it's exactly the kind of image that breaks the internet.

The caption on Instagram reads: *Shane Hollander and Rose Landry at tonight's gala. Goals.*

The photo gets 50,000 likes in two hours.

Ilya Rozanov sees it approximately five minutes after it's posted.

And he loses his fucking mind.

Shane's phone vibrates in his pocket halfway through dinner.

One text from Ilya.

> Nice photo.

Shane frowns. Pulls up Instagram with his free hand while Rose chats with the person next to her.

Oh.

The photo is... not great. Shane looks tired. The stirrer in his mouth makes it worse, makes him look like he's doing something he definitely wasn't trying to do.

He types back quickly:

> It's not what it looks like.

The reply comes fast.

> What does it look like?

Shane stares at his phone. Tries to figure out how to answer that.

> PR. You know that.

> Do I?

Shane's jaw tightens. This is not the time or place for this conversation.

> Can we talk about this later?

Come to my hotel when you are done. We will talk then.

It's not a request. It's a command.

Shane's throat goes dry.

Which hotel?

Ilya sends the address. Shane knows it, an upscale place in Manhattan, the kind where NHL players stay when they're in town for games.

I'll be there around 11.

No response.

Rose corners him by the dessert table an hour later.

"So," she says, selecting a miniature éclair with surgical precision, "you've been staring at your phone like it personally offended you. Want to talk about it?"

"It's nothing, just..." He trails off, and Rose raises an eyebrow.

"Mm-hmm." She bites into the éclair, unbothered. "Is it the guy?"

Shane's head whips around. "Rose..."

"Relax, no one's listening." She gestures at the room with her champagne flute. "Everyone here is too busy talking about themselves to notice anything. Occupational hazard of galas."

Shane exhales. Looks around. She's right. They're in a little pocket of quiet near the window, and the nearest guests are three conversations deep in their own dramas.

"It's complicated," he says finally.

"It always is." Rose studies him with those sharp actress eyes. "He saw the photo, didn't he? The one with the stirrer."

"How did you..."

"You went from 'bored' to 'existential crisis' about thirty seconds after you checked your phone." She shrugs. "I'm observant. It's literally my job."

Shane doesn't know what to say to that.

"Look," Rose says, her voice gentler now, "I don't know who he is, and I'm not asking. But I know what it looks like when someone's tied themselves in knots over another person." She finishes her éclair, dabs at her lips with a napkin. "And I know what it's like to pretend in public while something real is happening in private."

"Rose..."

"I'm just saying." She meets his eyes, and there's no judgment there. Just understanding. "If he's worth it, go. I'll cover for you. Tell everyone you had an early flight."

"I can't just..."

"You can." She straightens his tie, smooths his lapel. "That's literally what I'm here for. Arm candy and alibis." Her smile turns wry. "Besides, whoever he is, he's clearly more interesting than this party."

Shane huffs a surprised laugh. "You're kind of amazing, you know that?"

"I do know that, actually." She pats his chest. "Now go. Text me when you get there so I know you're safe."

"Rose..."

"Go." She gives him a gentle shove toward the exit. "And Shane? Don't let fear make your choices for you. Life's too short."

Shane goes.

Shane makes it to Ilya's hotel at 11:17. He's still in his suit, tie loosened, jacket slung over his arm. He left Rose at the gala with an excuse about an early practice tomorrow. She'd given him a knowing look but didn't call him on it.

He knocks on Ilya's door. It opens immediately.

Ilya is in jeans and a henley, barefoot, hair still damp like he just showered. He looks Shane up and down, expression unreadable.

"Hi," Shane says.

Ilya doesn't answer. Just pulls Shane inside and slams the door.

"Ilya..."

"Do not." Ilya's voice is low. Dangerous. "Do not talk yet."

Shane's heart kicks against his ribs. "Are you seriously mad about a photo?"

"Am not mad about photo." Ilya steps closer. "Am mad about you. With her. Looking like..." He stops. His jaw is tight. "Looking like you want something."

"I was bored. I wasn't..."

"You had cocktail stirrer in your mouth. On camera. In front of entire league."

"So?"

"So?" Ilya laughs, but there's no humor in it. "So everyone saw that photo, Shane. Everyone saw you doing *that* while she is on your arm."

"It's not like I was..." Shane stops. Realizes what Ilya is really saying. "Wait. Are you *jealous*?"

Ilya's eyes flash. "Should I not be? My..." He cuts himself off. Switches to Russian, something sharp and frustrated that Shane doesn't understand.

"She's PR," Shane says. "You know that. It's not real."

"Looks real." Ilya pulls out his phone, shows Shane the photo again. "Looks very real. You and beautiful actress. Perfect couple."

"We're not..."

"Does she know?" Ilya asks quietly. "Does she know what you really want? What you really need?"

Shane's face heats. "That's not..."

"Does she know you cannot help yourself? That you crave something on your tongue? That you think about my cock when you are bored at fancy parties?"

"Ilya..."

"Answer me."

"No." Shane's voice comes out rough. "She doesn't know. No one knows. Just you."

Ilya's expression shifts. The anger doesn't fade, but it sharpens, his jaw tightening, his gaze dropping to Shane's mouth. Possessive. Hungry.

"Just me," Ilya repeats. He steps closer, backing Shane against the wall. "She gets the photos. I get this." He gestures at Shane, possessive. "Fair trade, yes?"

"Yes." Shane barely recognizes his own voice.

"Say it properly."

"I'm yours. Only yours."

Ilya growls against Shane's mouth and kisses him hard enough to bruise. Shane inhales sharply through his nose and gets a lungful of Ilya, sweat and expensive cologne and musk underneath, possessive and male and *his*. Shane gasps into it, hands scrambling for purchase on Ilya's shoulders, and when Ilya pulls back they're both breathing hard.

"You drive me fucking crazy," Ilya says against Shane's mouth. "Seeing you with her. That fucking photo. Wanted to..." He stops. Breathes. "Wanted to fly to New York and take you right there. In front of everyone. Show them who you really belong to."

Shane's knees go weak. "Ilya..."

"But cannot. Because you are mine in secret. Mine where no one can see." Ilya's hand moves to Shane's throat, not squeezing, just holding. Claiming. "So I will make sure you remember. Yes? Make sure you know exactly who you belong to."

"I know..."

"Do you?" Ilya's thumb presses against Shane's pulse. His voice drops, teasing edge returning. "You say you are mine but you let her put hands on you for cameras. Maybe you need reminder."

"I didn't forget." Shane's voice is barely a whisper. "I could never forget."

"Then prove it." Ilya releases Shane's throat. "Get on your knees."

Shane drops so fast he almost loses his balance.

There's nothing gentle about this.

Seven years they've been doing this. Seven years of hotel rooms and stolen nights and learning exactly what the other needs. Shane doesn't fumble anymore, doesn't hesitate. He knows Ilya's body like he knows his own stick, every angle, every pressure point, every trick to make him fall apart.

Ilya's grip in Shane's hair is brutal, his pace unforgiving, and Shane takes it all. Takes everything Ilya gives him and asks for more with broken sounds that aren't quite words. No gag reflex anymore. No tears. Just easy, practiced submission that makes Ilya curse in Russian. The wet sounds are obscene, filling the room with slick rhythm.

The taste is familiar now, salt and musk and *Ilya*, that specific flavor Shane has mapped like a road he could drive blindfolded. Seven years, and he still craves it like the first time.

"She can have the red carpet," Ilya gasps, punctuating with a thrust. "This," another thrust, deeper, "this is mine."

Shane moans in agreement, taking him deeper. But then he pulls off, looks up with wet eyes and swollen lips.

"Hers for the cameras," Shane says, voice rough. "Yours everywhere else. Always have been."

Ilya's expression shifts. The jealous edge softens into tenderness. He cups Shane's face with both hands.

"Always?"

"Since Nashville." Shane's voice cracks. "Since you noticed me biting that stupid pen cap and looked at me like..."

"Like you were everything I wanted." Ilya's thumb traces Shane's cheekbone. "Still are."

Shane's chest aches. "Then stop being jealous of a PR stunt and *take* me already."

Ilya laughs, actually laughs, surprised and genuine. "Bossy."

"You love it."

"I do." He pulls Shane up, kisses him soft this time. "I really do."

Shane's hands find Ilya's belt. "Bed. Now."

"Who is giving orders now?" But Ilya's smiling as he walks Shane backward toward the mattress.

"Someone has to. You were too busy being dramatic about a photo."

Ilya laughs again, and Shane realizes he could get addicted to that sound. "You are impossible."

"And yet here you are."

"Here I am." Ilya pushes Shane down onto the bed, follows him down. "Where I want to be."

Ilya takes his time with prep. Slow, deliberate, one slick finger and then two, working Shane open while Shane buries his face in Ilya's neck and makes sounds he's not proud of. The lube is cold at first, then warm from friction, and Ilya's fingers find that spot inside him that makes his whole body jolt.

"Ready?" Ilya asks, his voice rough.

"*Yes*. God, yes. Please..."

Ilya reaches for Shane's hip to turn him over, but Shane pushes back against his chest instead, shoving him flat against the mattress and straddling his hips in one fluid motion.

"What are you—"

"Shut up." Shane reaches back, finds Ilya's cock slick and hard and perfect, and sinks down onto it in one long, burning slide that punches a groan out of both of them. The stretch makes his thighs tremble, his breath catch, but he doesn't stop until Ilya's fully inside him and Shane's hands are braced on his chest.

"*Chyort*..." Ilya's hands fly to Shane's hips, grip bruising. "You are... this is..."

Shane rolls his hips, experimental, and the angle is *different* like this—deeper, sharper, lighting up every nerve ending until he has to bite his lip to keep from crying out. He plants his hands on Ilya's chest and starts to move, setting a pace that's slow and deliberate and entirely under his control for once.

"Look at you," Ilya breathes, eyes dark and reverent as he watches Shane ride him. "Taking what you want. So beautiful."

Shane's rhythm stutters. He needs—he doesn't know what he needs, except his brain won't shut up, too much sensation and not enough grounding, and his mouth feels empty in a way that makes him ache.

Ilya notices. Of course he does.

His thumb presses against Shane's bottom lip without a word, and Shane opens for it like breathing, sucking it into his mouth and groaning around it as the familiar weight settles on his tongue. The taste of Ilya's skin grounds him immediately—salt and warmth and *safe*—and his hips find their rhythm again, rolling and grinding with renewed focus.

"*Da*, that's it," Ilya murmurs, pushing a second finger past Shane's lips. "Take what you need."

Shane moans around Ilya's fingers and fucks himself down harder, the wet sounds filling the room—the slick slide of their bodies, the obscene rhythm of Shane taking what he wants, his own muffled whimpers caught on Ilya's fingers. It's filthy and raw and exactly what he needed.

"Seven years," Ilya gasps, hips bucking up to meet Shane's rhythm. "Seven years, and you still surprise me. Still make me crazy."

Shane can't answer, not with his mouth full, but he lets his body speak instead—the clench of his thighs, the roll of his hips, the way he sucks harder on Ilya's fingers as the pressure builds low in his belly.

Ilya's free hand wraps around Shane's cock, stroking in time with their rhythm, and Shane's whole body tightens. He's close, so close, the dual sensation of Ilya inside him and Ilya's hand on him and Ilya's fingers on his tongue overwhelming every other thought.

"*Davay*," Ilya growls. "Come for me."

Shane shatters with a broken cry muffled around Ilya's fingers, spilling over Ilya's hand as he clenches down hard enough to drag Ilya over with him. Ilya comes with a guttural groan, hands tightening—one on Shane's hip, one in his mouth—as Russian words Shane doesn't understand fall from his lips like prayers.

Shane collapses forward onto Ilya's chest, still trembling, and Ilya's fingers slip from his mouth to card through his sweat-damp hair. They lie there gasping, heartbeats wild against each other, both of them breathing like they just finished overtime.

"That was..." Ilya says finally, voice shaky.

"Yeah." Shane can't move, doesn't want to. "Yeah."

Ilya carefully pulls out, rolls off to the side. He pulls Shane with him, tucking Shane against his chest, fingers carding through his sweat-damp hair.

Silence settles between them, warm and heavy.

"Am sorry," Ilya says quietly. "For being jealous. Possessive. Is not fair to you."

"It's okay." Shane's voice is rough. "I get it. Fuck, I'd be jealous too if you..."

He stops. Doesn't want to finish that sentence.

Ilya tilts Shane's face up. "If I what?"

"If you were with someone else. Even for PR." Shane's throat is tight. "It would kill me."

Ilya's grip on Shane's jaw loosens, his thumb tracing Shane's cheekbone. The hard edge in his eyes melts away. "I would never. You know this, yes?"

"I know."

"But you... you have to. For your career. For your image." Ilya's voice is quiet, resigned. "I understand why. But does not mean I have to like it."

"I don't like it either." Shane closes his eyes. "I hate it. Hate pretending. Hate that I can't... that we can't..."

"I know." Ilya kisses his forehead. "But someday. Yes? Someday we will not have to hide."

Shane wants to believe that. Wants it so badly it aches.

"Yeah," he says. "Someday."

Shane leaves at 2 AM. Ilya doesn't want him to go, but they both know he can't stay.

In the elevator down, Shane checks his phone. Three texts from Rose.

> So? Did you let fear make your choices, or did you go get your man?
>
> (I'm assuming you went. You had that look.)
>
> Text me when you're home safe. And you owe me brunch.

Shane laughs despite himself. Types back:

> I went. You were right. And brunch is on me.

Her response comes immediately.

I'm ALWAYS right. That's why you keep me around.

Then, a second later:

Seriously though. I'm glad. You deserve someone who makes you look like that.

Like what?

Like you actually want to be somewhere for once.

Shane stares at the message. Something in his chest cracks open.

Thanks, Rose.

💕 Now go to sleep. I want eggs benedict and a full debrief tomorrow.

Shane shoves his phone in his pocket and thinks maybe he doesn't have to keep doing this alone.

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5. The All-Star Game

Tampa Bay - January 2017

Shane hates All-Star weekend.

Not the game itself. That's fine. Easy hockey, no pressure, a chance to hang out with guys from other teams. But everything *around* the game is exhausting. The media obligations. The sponsor events. The constant performance of being Shane Hollander, Captain of the Montreal Voyageurs, Perfect Canadian Hockey Star.

And this year, there's the added complication of Ilya.

They've managed to avoid each other so far. Different hotels, different practice times, different media slots. It's probably for the best. One look at Ilya and Shane's face does things he can't control, and the last thing he needs is some reporter noticing that the captains of two rival teams can't stop staring at each other.

The Sunday brunch is mandatory.

It's one of those league-sponsored things, all the All-Stars gathered in some hotel ballroom, schmoozing with donors and VIPs. The room smells like coffee and expensive cologne, the clink of silverware mixing with the low hum of conversation. Sunlight streams through floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the Tampa Bay waterfront. There's a buffet that probably cost more than Shane's first car, and everyone's dressed in their team polos, smiling for the cameras.

Shane fills his plate with fruit because it's safe. Strawberries, melon, pineapple chunks. He's not actually hungry. He's never hungry at these things, too keyed up. But standing around with an empty plate looks weird.

He finds a spot near the windows, away from the main clusters of conversation. A few guys nod at him as they pass. Shane nods back, takes a bite of pineapple.

Across the room, he can feel eyes on him.

He doesn't look. Doesn't need to. He knows exactly who it is.

Ilya's been watching him all weekend. Shane's caught him three times now: once at the Skills Competition, once in the hotel lobby, once during warm-ups yesterday. Every time, Ilya's gaze is dark and focused, like Shane's the only person in the room.

It makes Shane's skin feel too tight.

He spears another piece of pineapple with his fork, brings it to his lips. It's sweet, cold. He lets it sit on his tongue for a second before chewing, savoring the burst of juice.

When he glances up, Ilya's still staring.

Shane looks away quickly, heat crawling up his neck. He reaches for a strawberry instead. Something to do with his hands, something to focus on that isn't the way Ilya's standing there with his arms crossed, jaw tight, like he's two seconds from crossing the room and doing something stupid.

The strawberry is big, ripe. Shane bites into it, and juice runs down his chin.

"Fuck," he mutters, reaching for a napkin. But the napkin dispenser is empty, and he's standing here like an idiot with strawberry juice on his face. So he does what he always does when he's flustered: licks his lips, wipes his mouth with the back of his hand, sucks the juice off his thumb.

Somewhere behind him, he hears someone laugh.

Shane turns. It's Scott Hunter and a couple of the Admirals guys, but they're not looking at him. They're looking at...

Oh.

Ilya's standing fifteen feet away, and he looks like he's about to commit murder.

His face is flushed, his jaw clenched so hard Shane can see the muscle jumping. His hands are shoved in his pockets, and he's staring at Shane like Shane just committed a crime.

"Uh," Shane says.

Ilya turns on his heel and walks away.

Shane stares after him, confused. What the hell was that about?

Scott catches his eye and grins. "Think Rozanov's having a rough morning."

"Yeah," one of the other Admirals says, smirking. "Real rough."

They're all laughing now, and Shane doesn't get the joke, but his face is burning anyway. He sets his plate down on the nearest table and follows Ilya out of the ballroom.

He finds him in the hallway, pacing like a caged animal.

"Ilya..."

Ilya whirls around. "You do this on purpose."

Shane blinks. "Do what?"

"This." Ilya gestures vaguely at Shane's face, his mouth. "You, with the fruit. You *know* what you are doing."

"I was just eating..."

"In front of everyone." Ilya steps closer, voice dropping to a growl. "You put strawberry on your tongue, and you..." He makes a gesture that Shane doesn't understand. "Like you are... *thinking* about it. In front of entire All-Star team."

Shane's thoughts scatter. "I wasn't..."

"You were." Ilya's eyes are wild, pupils blown. "And everyone sees me watching. Hunter sees. His teammates see. They *laugh* at me because I cannot look away."

"I didn't mean..."

"You never mean." Ilya's right in front of him now, close enough that Shane can feel the heat coming off him. "But you do it anyway. You put things in your mouth and you do not think about what it looks like. What it does to me."

Shane's heart is pounding. They're in a public hallway. Anyone could walk by. But Ilya's looking at him like he's starving, and Shane can't think past the rush of want flooding his veins.

"I'm sorry," Shane says, and he means it. He genuinely didn't realize...

"No you are not." Ilya grabs his wrist, pulls him down the hallway. "Come."

"Ilya, we can't..."

"We can."

They end up in a single-stall bathroom, the kind with a lock on the door. Ilya flips it closed and shoves Shane against the wall in one smooth motion. The small space fills instantly with Ilya's scent, that familiar birch and black tea, sharper now with adrenaline and want.

"This is fucking insane," Shane gasps.

"Yes." Ilya's hands are already at Shane's belt. "Is your fault."

"I was just eating fruit..."

"You were sucking on strawberry like is cock. In front of everyone." Ilya gets his zipper down, shoves his hand inside Shane's briefs. Shane makes a choked sound. "You have problem. Cannot help yourself."

"It's not..." Shane can't finish the thought. Ilya's hand is hot and rough and perfect, and they're in a *public bathroom* at an All-Star brunch, and this is the worst idea they've ever had. "Someone's gonna notice..."

"Let them." Ilya shoves Shane back against the wall and kisses him, hard and urgent.

Shane gasps into it, hands grabbing at Ilya's shoulders. They're in a public bathroom at an All-Star brunch, and this is insane, this is so stupid, but Ilya's mouth is hot and demanding and Shane can't think past the want flooding his veins.

"You drive me crazy," Ilya growls against his lips. "Cannot even eat fruit without making me..."

"Shut up." Shane drops to his knees.

Ilya makes a choked sound. "*Shane*..."

"You want to punish me for the strawberry thing?" Shane's already working at Ilya's belt, fingers quick and sure. "Fine. But I'm the one who decides how."

"We cannot. Someone will..."

"Then you better be quiet." Shane gets Ilya's zipper down, pulls him free. Looks up with a smirk. "Unless you want everyone to hear."

Ilya's head falls back against the door. "*Blyad'*."

Shane takes him in without preamble. No teasing, no buildup, just taking Ilya deep and fast because they don't have time for anything else. The small bathroom fills with wet sounds, obscene and rhythmic. Shane's knees ache against the tile floor, but he doesn't care. This is what he needs. This is what shuts his brain up.

"Shane..." Ilya's voice is broken already. His hands find Shane's hair, not guiding, just holding on. "You are... this is..."

Shane hums around him, smug. *Who's in control now?*

Six years of practice have made him devastating at this. He knows exactly how to angle his jaw, when to swallow, how to use his tongue to make Ilya lose every language he speaks. The constant terror that someone's going to knock on the door only makes it better, sharper, more urgent.

"Cannot believe..." Ilya gasps, hips twitching. "In bathroom, at league event, you are *insane*..."

Shane hums smugly around him, pulls back just far enough to breathe "You love it" against the head, and swallows him down again before Ilya can respond.

Ilya comes with a strangled sound, both hands clamped over his own mouth to muffle it. Shane swallows everything, greedy and triumphant, and doesn't pull off until Ilya's shaking.

He sits back on his heels, wipes his mouth. Grins up at Ilya. "Feel better?"

Ilya stares down at him, still breathing hard. "You... you did not..."

"I'm fine."

"Is not fine." Ilya hauls Shane to his feet, hand already reaching for Shane's belt. "You think I let you leave like this?"

"We don't have time..."

"Then I am fast." Ilya's hand wraps around him, hot and perfect, and Shane's protest dies. "You give me this, I give you something back. Is fair."

It doesn't take long. Shane's been wound tight since the strawberry, since Ilya dragged him out of that ballroom, and Ilya's hand is relentless. Shane comes with his face buried in Ilya's shoulder, biting down on fabric to muffle the sound.

They stand there for a moment, catching their breath.

"We're fucking insane," Shane says.

"Yes." Ilya tucks them both away, straightens their clothes. His eyes are soft now, the frustration gone. "But you start it."

"I was eating *fruit*..."

"You were sucking on strawberry like porn star." Ilya cups Shane's jaw, thumb pressing against his bottom lip. Shane's mouth opens automatically. Ilya makes a rough sound. "See? You cannot help it."

Shane should argue. But Ilya's thumb is in his mouth now, pressing down on his tongue, and words are suddenly impossible.

"Someday," Ilya says quietly, "I will fuck your mouth in bed. Will take my time. Will not have to worry about who sees." His thumb slides deeper, and Shane's eyes fall closed. "But for now, we are careful. Yes?"

Shane nods. Ilya's thumb is still in his mouth, and he can't help it. He sucks, just a little.

Ilya groans. "You are going to kill me."

"Sorry," Shane mumbles around Ilya's thumb.

"No you are not." But Ilya's smiling now, that crooked grin that makes Shane's chest ache. He pulls his thumb free, traces Shane's lips one more time. "Go back to brunch. I wait five minutes, then follow."

"Okay."

"And Shane?"

"Yeah?"

"No more strawberries. Not in public." Ilya's eyes are serious now, burning. "Not unless you want me to bend you over table in front of everyone."

Shane's face goes hot. "That's... you wouldn't..."

"No." Ilya kisses him, quick and hard. "But I want to. So no more strawberries."

Shane slips out of the bathroom first, his heart still racing.

When he gets back to the ballroom, a couple of the guys from the Western Conference team give him odd looks. Shane ignores them, grabs a glass of water, tries to look normal.

It doesn't work.

Scott Hunter catches his eye from across the room. The Admirals captain doesn't say anything, just holds Shane's gaze, slow and considering, then glances at the hallway Shane just came from, then back at Shane. Scott's expression shifts into something like recognition.

Shane's stomach drops.

Does he know?

Scott gives him a small nod, barely perceptible, and turns back to his conversation. Like nothing happened. Like he didn't just clock Shane coming back from a suspiciously long bathroom break with his tie crooked and his face flushed.

Shane forces himself to take a sip of water. Act casual. Nothing happened. He just needed air. That's all.

When Ilya comes back five minutes later, his hair's messed up and his face is flushed, and Shane catches Scott's gaze flicking between them. Brief, but unmistakable.

Then Scott looks away, and Shane is left with the uncomfortable feeling that the Admirals captain sees a lot more than he lets on.

Shane decides he's never eating fruit in public again.

That night, after Shane's back in Montreal, his phone buzzes with a text from Ilya.

> You are trouble.

Shane stares at it for a moment, then types back:

> You love it.

The response comes immediately.

> Too much. Miss you already.

Shane's chest aches. He types: *Miss you too*, then deletes it. Types: *See you soon*, deletes that too.

Finally settles on:

Next month. Your place.

Promise?

Promise.

Shane falls asleep with his phone on his chest, Ilya's last message still on the screen: *Cannot wait.*

+1. The Cottage

Ontario, July 2017

It had taken months to unclench after Tampa. Months of avoiding each other's eyes in interviews, of texting only in the middle of the night, of Shane dreaming about Scott Hunter's knowing gaze and waking up in a cold sweat. After six years of stolen nights and careful planning, they'd made it here. To Ilya's cottage on a lake in Ontario, hidden from the world, finally able to breathe.

Ilya wakes up to the feeling of Shane's mouth on his cock.

It takes him a second to orient himself. The bedroom is dim, early morning light filtering through the gauze curtains, casting everything in soft gold. The window is cracked open, and he can hear the loons calling on the lake, smell the pine and clean water that defines this place. Shane's already halfway down his length, humming softly like this is the best way to start the day.

Shane hums around him, eyes closed, expression blissful. Like this is exactly where he wants to be. The wet sounds are soft, intimate in the quiet morning.

"*Solnyshko*," Ilya groans, his hand automatically going to Shane's hair. "Again?"

Shane lifts his head just enough for a lazy "Morning," his smile soft and unhurried, before his mouth finds Ilya again, tongue swirling deliberately, the quiet rhythm punctuated by his own soft breathing.

It's the fifth time this week.

Not that Ilya's complaining. He'd be insane to complain. But the way Shane does it makes Ilya wonder. It's not frantic, not desperate. It's meditative, ritualistic even, like Shane's doing it because he *needs* to, not because he's trying to get Ilya off.

Ilya's noticed other things too.

The way Shane will wake up in the middle of the night and press his face against Ilya's chest, mouth open, breathing him in. That familiar scent of birch and black tea and clean sweat. The way he'll sit on the dock with Ilya's fingers in his mouth, sucking absently while he watches the sunset. The way he'll ask Ilya to hold him after sex, not for comfort exactly, but so he can have Ilya's thumb against his tongue while he comes down.

It's not just about sex.

Comfort and grounding wrapped into one quiet *need*.

But right now, Shane's mouth is hot and perfect, and Ilya can't think past the slow, deliberate way Shane's taking him apart. No urgency, no performance, just Shane on his knees in the pale morning light, like this is exactly where he wants to be.

Ilya gasps, his hips twitching up, but Shane's hands are firm on his thighs, holding him still. "Shane..."

Shane hums again, and the vibration goes straight through Ilya's spine. His eyes are closed, lashes dark against his cheeks, the furrow between his brows gone smooth for once. His shoulders are loose, breathing even through his nose, like the tight-wound thing inside him has finally unwound.

Ilya comes with a broken sound, gasping "*Yeshchyo, yeshchyo*", the same word he always says, the one Shane has learned by now, and Shane swallows it down like it's easy. Like he's been doing this his whole life.

When he finally pulls off, he's smiling. Lazy and soft and completely unselfconscious.

"Good morning," he says again.

Ilya stares at him. "You are ridiculous."

"Yeah?" Shane crawls up the bed, slots himself against Ilya's side. He's still half-hard, but he doesn't seem to care. "You complaining?"

"No." Ilya wraps an arm around him, pulls him close. "But is five times this week. You are not..." He pauses, trying to find the right words. "You do not need to..."

"I wanted to," Shane says simply.

And that's the thing, isn't it? Shane *wants* to. Not because Ilya asked, not because they're in the middle of something. Just because.

Ilya presses a kiss to the top of Shane's head. "Why?"

Shane goes still. "What do you mean?"

"This." Ilya gestures vaguely. "You wake me up like this five times in one week. You..." He hesitates. They don't usually talk about this. The oral fixation thing. It's just something Shane does, something Ilya accommodates without question. But maybe they should talk about it. "You always need something to taste," Ilya says quietly. "Something between your lips. Yes?"

Shane's face goes red. "I don't..."

"You do." Ilya keeps his voice gentle. "Is not bad thing. I am not complaining. I just..." He cups Shane's jaw, tilts his face up. "I want to understand."

Shane doesn't answer right away. When he finally speaks, his voice is small. "It helps."

"Helps with what?"

"I don't know." Shane's eyes slide away. "Everything. When I'm anxious, or stressed, or..." He makes a frustrated sound. "It's stupid."

"Is not stupid."

"It is." Shane pulls away, sits up. "It's like... I can't just sit still. I have to be *doing* something. And if I'm not, I start thinking too much, and then I spiral, and..." He runs a hand through his hair. "Having something in my mouth... it grounds me. Makes my brain shut up."

Ilya sits up too, realization dawning. "Like anchor."

"Yeah." Shane laughs, bitter. "Fucked up, right? I give you a blowjob because I'm anxious."

"No." Ilya reaches for him. "Not fucked up. Makes sense."

"It doesn't..."

"It does." Ilya pulls Shane back against him. "You have brain that never stops. Always thinking, always worrying. And when you put something in your mouth..." He presses his thumb against Shane's bottom lip, and Shane's mouth opens automatically. "...you stop thinking. Yes?"

Shane nods, eyes fixed on Ilya's face.

"Is same for me with hockey." Ilya slides his thumb inside, and Shane's eyes close. "When I skate, my brain shuts off. Everything is quiet. Everything is..." He searches for the word. "Simple."

Shane sucks on Ilya's thumb, and Ilya stops breathing.

"You are not broken," Ilya says quietly. "You just need different things. And I..." He swallows. "I want to give you what you need."

Shane's eyes open. He pulls back, Ilya's thumb slipping free. "You already do."

"Not always." Ilya traces Shane's lips, thinking. "Sometimes you ask for my fingers after sex. Sometimes you wake me up like this morning. But sometimes..." He frowns. "Sometimes I see you biting pen cap at grocery store, or chewing on stirrer when we watch movie. And I think, you do not want to bother me. Yes?"

Shane's face goes red again. "You're not... it's not your job to..."

"Is not job." Ilya leans in, kisses him soft and slow. "Is *want*. I want to take care of you. Want to give you what you need." He pulls back, looks Shane in the eye. "So from now on, you do not hide. You do not chew on stirrer when I am right here. Yes?"

"Ilya..."

"Yes?" Ilya presses.

Shane's throat works. "Okay."

"Good." Ilya kisses him again. "Now. Is still early. You want to go back to sleep?"

Shane hesitates. "Can I..." He stops, bites his lip.

"Can you what?"

"Can I just..." Shane's voice drops. "Can you hold me? And..." His face is burning now. "Can I just... have your fingers? For a while?"

Ilya's throat closes. He has to swallow twice before he can speak. "Of course."

They settle back into bed, Shane's head on Ilya's chest. Ilya brings his hand up to Shane's mouth, and Shane takes two fingers inside without hesitation. Not sucking, exactly. Just holding them there. Breathing around them.

His whole body relaxes.

Ilya holds him, feeling the tension drain out of Shane's shoulders, the way his breathing evens out. It's not sexual. It's deeper than that, trust distilled down to its most basic form.

"This is what you need?" Ilya asks softly. "Just this?"

Shane nods against his chest.

"Then you have it." Ilya presses a kiss to Shane's hair. "Anytime you need. You just ask. Or you do not ask, you just take. Is okay."

Shane makes a muffled sound around Ilya's fingers that might be "thank you."

They lie there for a long time. The sun climbs higher outside, light spilling across the floor. The lake laps gently at the dock. Somewhere in the trees, a bird calls.

Shane's breathing deepens, his body going heavy and pliant against Ilya's side. Ilya thinks he's fallen asleep, but then Shane shifts, presses closer, and Ilya realizes he's not sleeping. He's just... here. Present. Calm.

"I love you," Shane mumbles around Ilya's fingers.

Ilya's throat tightens. "I love you too."

"Thanks for not..." Shane pauses. "Thanks for not making me feel weird about this."

"Is not weird." Ilya shifts his fingers slightly, and Shane hums. "Is just you. And I love all of you. Even weird parts."

Shane huffs a laugh. "Especially the weird parts?"

"*Especially* the weird parts," Ilya agrees. He runs his other hand through Shane's hair, gentle and soothing. "This is good, yes? Here. Just us. No hiding."

"Yeah." Shane's voice is soft, full of quiet wonder. "This is really good." He presses a kiss to Ilya's chest, then murmurs against his skin: "*Yeshchyo.*"

Ilya goes still. "You... you know that word?"

"You say it every time." Shane looks up at him, smiling. "I figured it out."

More. Again. Ilya's chest aches with how much he loves this man.

Ilya thinks about all the times they've done this before. The hotel rooms, the bathrooms, the stolen moments in between games and obligations. Always frantic, always risky. Always with the fear of getting caught hanging over them.

But here, at the cottage, there's none of that. Just the two of them, and the quiet, and the understanding that they don't have to hide anymore. From each other. From the world. Scott Hunter came out last month, and the league actually started enforcing their anti-discrimination policies.

It's still not perfect. There are still assholes, still risks. But it's *better*. Good enough that they can have this, a whole week at the cottage, no one else around, just them and the lake and the slow, steady rhythm of days with nothing to prove.

"Hey," Shane says after a while.

"Mm?"

"Can we..." He pulls back just enough to look at Ilya. "Can we make breakfast? I'm starving."

Ilya laughs. "You just..."

"I know." Shane grins, shameless. "But that was appetizer. Now I want pancakes."

"You are terrible." But Ilya's already moving, already sliding out of bed. "Come. I make you pancakes."

Shane follows him into the kitchen, and Ilya starts pulling out ingredients. Shane hovers nearby, watching, and after a moment he picks up a wooden spoon from the counter and puts the handle in his mouth.

Ilya glances over, and something in his expression shifts. It becomes thoughtful, like he's cataloging data.

"This is different," he says.

Shane raises an eyebrow, spoon handle still in his mouth.

"The pen caps." Ilya cracks eggs into a bowl. "Those you chew when stressed. I see your jaw go tight, you reach for something to bite." He whisks the eggs with practiced efficiency. "The stirrers at parties, those are when you are bored. Annoyed. Wanting to be somewhere else."

Shane pulls the spoon out slowly. "You noticed that?"

"I notice everything about you." Ilya shrugs like it's obvious. "The strawberry in Tampa, that was something else. You were not stressed or bored. You were..." He pauses, searching for the word. "Relaxed. Sensual. You did not know what you looked like."

"Which is why you dragged me into a bathroom," Shane says dryly.

"*Da.*" Ilya grins, unrepentant. "But this," he nods at the wooden spoon, "this is new. You are not stressed. Not bored. You are..."

"Happy," Shane finishes quietly. "I'm just... happy."

Ilya stops whisking. Looks at him.

"The spoon is for happy," Ilya says, and his voice is rough around the edges. "Good to know."

Shane puts the handle back in his mouth, smiling around it.

"Okay." Ilya turns back to the stove. "But when I am done with pancakes, you put down spoon and use my fingers instead. Yes?"

Shane's face goes red. "You don't have to..."

"I know." Ilya looks at him, serious. "I want to. I like..." He struggles for the words. "I like that you need me. I like that I can give you this."

Shane's eyes are bright. "You really don't think it's weird?"

"I think is you." Ilya reaches out, cups Shane's jaw. Shane's mouth is still wrapped around the spoon handle, and he looks ridiculous and beautiful and entirely himself. "And I love you. So no. Not weird."

Shane drops the spoon on the counter and kisses him, hard and grateful.

They break apart when the pancake batter starts to bubble.

"Shit," Ilya mutters, turning back to the stove. "You distract me."

"Sorry." Shane doesn't sound sorry at all.

They eat breakfast on the porch, bare feet propped up on the railing, watching the lake shimmer in the morning sun. Shane demolishes three pancakes and then leans back in his chair with a satisfied groan.

"This is perfect," he says.

Ilya looks at him, at the freckles scattered across his nose, the way his hair sticks up in the back, the soft curve of his smile, and thinks, *yes*.

This is perfect.

Later, they'll swim in the lake. They'll canoe out to the middle and float there, Shane's head pillowed on Ilya's thigh. They'll make dinner together, something simple and good, and they'll eat it on the porch again while the sun sets in shades of pink and gold.

And later still, when they're back in bed, Shane will curl up against Ilya's chest and take Ilya's fingers in his mouth again. Not because he's anxious, not because he needs to come down from something. Just because he can.

Just because Ilya's here, and he loves Shane, and he'll give him whatever he needs.

"Hey," Shane says, pulling Ilya back to the present.

"Mm?"

"I'm really glad we have this." Shane gestures at the cottage, the lake, the quiet. "Just... us. No bullshit."

"Me too." Ilya reaches across the table, tangles their fingers together. "Is good to not hide."

"Yeah." Shane's smile is soft, genuine. "It's really good."

They sit there for a while longer, hands linked, the morning stretching out lazy and unhurried around them.

And for the first time in five years, Shane doesn't feel like he needs to put something in his mouth to calm the noise in his head.

Because Ilya's here. And that's enough.

End Notes

I hope this motivates you to please finish your WIPs. I am dying for more sammick!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!