**you were reckless, you were hungry, you were real**

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# you were reckless, you were hungry, you were real

by rosemontstreet

Summary

> “I am normal,” says Shane, rearranging his silverware on the table. “And I will pass Logic, ignore Ilya Rozanov, and continue to be normal forever until I die.” When he reaches for Rose’s fork to move it parallel to her plate, she grabs his wrist and gently sets it on the table.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Rules had always made sense to Shane. Even as a child, his parents would praise how good he was at sharing— how he had this innate sense for what was just and fair. When he started school, they were slightly concerned that his intensity might be off-putting to the other kids, but they were never worried that he'd cause trouble.

This continued over the years. Shane was always a pleasure to have in class. Followed project rubrics perfectly. He was good at school. He liked school. And at 18, when Shane was accepted into Winslow College, a small, elite liberal arts school in Maine, he saw his life stretch neatly before him. A proper university degree, a good job, and eventually, a house in Ottawa near his parents. Maybe a partner and kids, maybe not.

Rules had always made sense to Shane. He knew what steps to take, the order in which to take them.

And then he began taking Introduction to Logic and Argumentation with Professor Babik.

"I'm just confused, Professor," Shane tries again, his grip tightening on the test marked with a bright red D-. "What I wrote makes sense to me. It is logical to *me*."

"I understand that," says Professor Babik, seeing the tears gathering in Shane's eyes and recognizing that the conversation was striking at something soft and tender, even if he didn't quite know what that was. And still, "but your proof is not valid according to the principles of logical reasoning that we have been studying."

Rules had always made sense to Shane. He'd done everything expected of him, enough to land himself a spot at one of the best universities in the United States. And now some old Greeks were going to tell him he didn't *actually* understand logic, when it was his own logic that had gotten him here?

When he walks out of Professor Babik's office, the number for Babik's teaching assistant in his hand, he glares at the miniature bust of Aristotle that sat on the man's desk. Fuck the Greeks.

He looks down at the slip of paper in his hand. Professor Babik's handwriting is difficult to read, but he thinks the name before the phone number says "Lily." Babik had reassured Shane that after some tutoring, his grade would be fine. That many students struggled with the class, which was a graduation requirement. That in some ways, it was like learning a new language.

Shane types out a text to Lily, explaining the situation, asking for a time to meet. He feels demoralized, having to ask for help with school. Fuck the fucking Greeks.

———

Shane fidgets at the library table, waiting for Lily. He takes off his glasses and cleans them for the fourth time. He'd chosen a table in the back, by the university archives. It was his favorite spot. He'd brought his ex-boyfriend here on study-dates, before the guy had ended things by accusing Shane of being withholding. "I feel like you have something *dark* going on up there that you won't tell me about," the guy had said, tapping his forehead, and Shane had said, "what?" But also just accepted it, because he was used to being misunderstood. Sometimes he felt like that scene from *The Family Stone* where Sarah Jessica Parker screams, "I am not a totally ridiculous person!"

Shane looks up at the sound of the chair across from him being pulled out from the table. In front of him stands Ilya Rozanov, captain of the Winslow hockey team. Shane sucks in a quick breath. Winslow was a small college, only 3000 students. He and Ilya were the same year, although they hadn't crossed paths much aside from the times Hayden would bring Shane and Rose to hockey parties.

But Shane had noticed him, of course he had. Watched Ilya play beer pong and absolutely run the table. Watched him pick up girls and guys with ease. He was jealous, sometimes, of the way Ilya moved through the world. *Socially graceful swan*, he'd thought when he first saw Ilya work a room. It was something his mother used to say about people who were charming. She'd never said that about Shane, though.

People liked Shane, of course. He was pleasant, and polite, and always helped clean up after parties. And, as Rose would vouch, he could be funny. Not always intentionally, but that was fine. He got invited to enough to feel included, even if sometimes, when he was there, he felt

like he was outside the scene instead of in it, like he was peering into a perfect snow globe from the other side of the glass.

Right now, Ilya stares silently at Shane, waiting for some kind of acknowledgement. He's wearing a Winslow Hockey t-shirt that hangs loose around the neckline.

*Arms*, Shane thinks. Out loud he says, "Oh, sorry, I'm waiting for someone," trying to convey that the seat across from him is taken. Like he's a guy with plenty of friends other than Rose, who has been to the library with men other than his evil ex-boyfriend, like he isn't intently watching Ilya's cross necklace glint in the yellow library lighting.

Ilya raises an eyebrow. Shane suddenly feels small, microscopic— but also, like it's Ilya who put him under the microscope to be examined in the first place, and there's a certain flush of pride that comes with that. "Ah yes, Lily?" Shane nods. Ilya motions to himself, "here she is."

"What?" Shane didn't understand. He thinks back to that piece of paper, to Babik's scrawl, and his brain makes horrified noises at him.

He blurts, "you're a Philosophy major?"

Ilya's mouth quirks, "minor. What, you don't think hockey players are capable of deep thought? Too many concussions?"

"Of course not," Shane blushes, although, he had sort of been thinking it. Most hockey players at Winslow studied Economics, and Shane had heard rumors of an underground network of tests and homework assignments that were shared around to ensure everyone passed. Winslow was an elite school with high standards, yes, but it was still an Old Boys club.

"Good, you do not have the grade to be picky about your tutor." Ilya pulls out the problem set assigned by Babik this week, waiting for Shane to do the same. "So," he begins, "I hear you have problem with nature of truth, yes?"

Shane grits his teeth. “I just think that my way of getting to the truth is equally correct.”

Ilya smiles like Shane has said something very endearing, and Shane, to keep himself calm, thinks *I am not a totally ridiculous person* like a mantra even though he doesn’t believe it.

“Maybe we talk through it. We start with easy one,” Ilya says, his finger lingering over the first problem:

A strange island inhabited by two types of people: people who only tell the truth (knights) and people who only tell lies (knaves).

You come to a fork in a road and need to learn which path leads to your destination. Two individuals are standing there. You know that one is a knight and one is a knave, but you don’t know which is which. What single yes-or-no question could you ask of one of the islanders to learn the correct path?

Shane’s head hurts. “Have you ever been to the observatory?” He asks Ilya.

“*What?*”

“It’s just, all the official college signage directs you to go past the library, and then past the dining hall, and then to take a right at the freshman dorms. But that’s not the only way to get there. You can cut through the back of the women’s rugby field and it’s way faster.”

Ilya’s eyebrows scrunched together. “Hollander— I’m sorry, you are asking me… to go to observatory? With you?”

Shane flushed, impossibly, an even deeper red than he’d already been. Oh God, Ilya had thought Shane was asking him on some kind of… weird date. “No! No! I just— the question! About the destination! What if there are multiple ways to get there!”

Ilya now had that amused look back on his face. “Oh, Hollander,” and Shane once again got that microscope feeling, like Ilya had plucked him from a Petri dish. “We will start from beginning.”

———

“Ilya is your tutor?” Rose grinned. She’d known about Shane’s little crush since they’d all been in the same introductory writing class freshman year. Rose had caught Shane staring one day and leaned over to whisper conspiratorially, “you know, I think Ilya Rozanov’s kinda cute. *And* he’s bi.” Shane had just blushed and nodded at the time, but secretly thought Ilya was more than *kinda* cute.

Their final assignment had been to write a personal essay that incorporated a text they’d read that semester. Shane and Ilya were paired to critique each other’s essay drafts.

Ilya had written a piece about his relationship with his father, the amount of pressure he received growing up in Russia. He compared it to the play *Death of a Salesman*. Shane never told anyone this, but Ilya’s essay had made him cry when he read it. He had handed the essay back to Ilya completely devoid of commentary or edits. “No notes,” he’d said. And Ilya had just nodded, as if he didn’t care either way. But Shane thought of that essay all the time— the hurt in it, the hope that one day he might be “free and clear” of his family burden. Ilya had ended the piece by quoting the scene where the son is begging his dad, “Will you let me go, for Christ's sake? Will you take that phony dream and burn it before something happens?" He’d talked about leaving Russia, about looking in the mirror sometimes and still seeing echoes of his father’s creation.

Whenever Shane saw Ilya on campus, he’d think of the essay, would look at the bags under Ilya’s eyes, the way his shoulders would sometimes hang low after his practices. He wanted to reach out, to touch.

“When he told me he had to go to a team workout, I said that I think exercise is a private, punishing ritual that humans should only do as repentance.”

“Shane.” Her smile had quickly become a look of disappointment. Like the first time she brought Shane to a frat party and he’d asked where to put the block of Gouda cheese and artisanal cranberry crisps he’d brought. “Why would you say that to the captain of the hockey team? And also, you work out more than any non-athlete I know.”

“I panicked. His arms were so large, Rose. It was deeply upsetting. Even more upsetting than when he tried to explain Hypothetical Syllogism to me.” Shane takes a bite of his salad. “And you’re just proving my point, I only work out because I have an extensive list of things to repent for.”

“Either way,” Shane continues, setting his fork down, “it’s better that nothing will ever happen between us anyway.”

“Oh?” Rose questions, “and why, exactly, have you decided that?”

“Because. I would love him, immediately, at the first sign I might have a chance, and he would never love me back, and I’d be a mess about it. And I’m already a mess. If I get any worse I’ll have to drop out of Logic. And eventually the school will send me to one of those Winslow-sponsored mental health retreats in Thailand like they do to anyone who fails enough classes but is too rich to drop out—“

“You’re cute,” sniffs Rose, her pink-lined lips pulling into a fond smile.

“I am normal,” says Shane, rearranging his silverware on the table. “And I will pass Logic, ignore Ilya Rozanov, and continue to be normal forever until I die.” When he reaches for Rose’s fork to move it parallel to her plate, she grabs his wrist and gently sets it on the table.

“Let’s go out tonight. Hayden’s having a small thing.“

Shane smiles. Going out with Rose is always fun, and he likes when Hayden hosts because he and Jackie enforce the shoes-off rule. “Pinot Grigio? I have a bottle left over from the last time we watched *The Family Stone* and cried.”

“Duh.”

—

Crooked Cow is only a five minute walk from campus and serves breakfast 24/7, making it a popular late-night spot with Winslow students. After a night of drinking at Hayden’s, their group had donned their winter coats and set out for the diner.

“Snow!” Rose shouts excitedly, twirling on the sidewalk. It snowed at least weekly in this part of Maine in the winter, but Rose was a California girl, and even after two years the novelty had yet to wear off on her.

Shane studies her, her face turned up towards the sky, snowflakes catching on her false eyelashes. Just so *open* to the world. He thinks, not for the first time, how easy his life would be if he could fall in love with her. Shane had no misconceptions about his sexuality, had known he was gay since middle school and had been out to his parents since then. But. Sometimes he still wished.

Hayden slaps Shane lightly on the back. “Your job to make sure she doesn’t trip,” he nods towards Rose, still spinning under the street light. Shane jogs ahead, linking arms with Rose for the rest of the walk to Crooked Cow.

It’s busy at the diner. It always is, but especially tonight. When their group arrives, Rose still leaning on Shane’s arm, there’s only standing room at the bar.

Shane orders two Mules and an order of fries, then feels Rose squeezing his hand. “*Shane*,” she sings, “Ilya Rozanov is looking at you.”

Shane whips his head around to look, and Rose cackles, “okay, well you could have attempted to play that one cool,” but Shane doesn’t care, because Ilya is sitting at a corner table, alone, somehow, and he’s looking at Shane. And then, *my god*, he gives a little wave.

“Shane,” Rose has put on her instruction voice. All traces of Pinot-Grigio-girl are gone. Shane knows it’s serious because Rose hasn’t sounded like this since the time Shane was drunkenly throwing up in the communal bathroom and their RA was around the corner, and Rose was telling Shane that if he didn’t get it together they’d soon be taking a very expensive ambulance ride. “You are going to go say hi to Ilya. Okay?”

Shane thinks of his dining hall episode earlier in the day. That was absurd. He can do this. He can be friendly with Rosanov. He can say a quick hello, like all regular peers and classmates do when they see each other out at the bars. He does not have to ignore Ilya, that would be an extreme measure taken by an extreme person. Shane Hollander is normal.

“Okay.”

Outside, the snow falls, visible through the big windows at the front of the diner. Shane feels like maybe he’s actually inside the snow globe this time, and smiles a little to himself as he walks towards Ilya.

“Here alone?” Shane asks, and then immediately feels embarrassed. Ilya is a socially graceful swan. They travel in flocks. Or herds. Or whatever groups of swans are called. Of course he isn’t alone.

But instead of laughing at him, Ilya just smiles wryly, “friends just left. They are boring tonight. But I already ordered cheese pancake, so I have to wait.”

“Cheese pancake?” Shane assumes this is some kind of mistranslation, but Ilya nods, “It's good. Other pancakes here are too sweet— chocolate or banana. After night of drinking, you want cheese pancake with butter. Trust me. You will try,” Ilya pulls out the chair for Shane, who spares a glance back towards Rose, who, to his relief, is now talking animatedly with Jackie.

“Unless,” Ilya says, “you came here with your girlfriend. I didn’t realize.”

“No, no— Rose is— I’m gay.”

“Eat a cheese pancake with me, Hollander. No need for whole life story.”

Shane takes the empty seat. He doesn’t say that the cheese pancake sounds horrifying to him, actually.

“You’ve been working on your problem set?” Ilya asks.

Shane just stares. “You want to talk about homework.”

“It’s philosophy. I like talking about philosophy. Why else would I study it?”

Shane concedes. “If philosophy is your minor, what’s your major?” Shane asks, thinking back to the illicit Economics test-sharing ring.

“Literature,” Ilya says, surprising Shane yet again.

But at the same time, “that makes sense. Your essay in our writing class was really… really good.”

“You actually read that? Was completely blank when you handed it back, thought you just forgot.”

“No I— I actually didn’t have any notes.” It had felt wrong to critique what Ilya had written. Shane knew that went against the spirit of constructive criticism, but it had felt so deeply personal, almost surgical in quality. Like he was holding Ilya’s heart in his hands.

Ilya hummed, looking pleased. “Yours was okay.”

“Fuck off.”

But Shane knew his wasn’t a great personal essay. He had struggled with the *personal* part. He knew the best personal essays took one example and extrapolated on it to form a grand unified theory, but he couldn’t think of one. He’d always liked academics because they were *separate* from the personal. In the end he’d written about *Autobiography of Red*, the experimental epic poem about a little gay monster. It had seemed the most apt, even if he couldn’t really articulate what he related to. When he’d received his feedback from Ilya, the boy had written at the end, “why?”

“And you?” Ilya questions, “your major?”

“Geology.”

Ilya laughs.

“What? What’s funny about that?”

“Boring. All rocks are the same.”

Before Shane can respond to *that*, a waitress sets a large pancake, freckled with orange splotches, in front of Ilya. Ilya nods, flashes his charming smile at her, and Shane is endeared to notice that his bottom teeth are a bit crooked.

And then Ilya tears off a piece of the pancake with his hands. “You have a fork and knife right there!” Shane cries out before he can stop himself. He figures Ilya hasn’t even washed his hands since coming from whatever party he was at, since picking up pong balls from the floor of someone’s dingy dorm room. This is good, Shane thinks, if he can just focus on all the germs crawling on Ilya’s fingers, he won’t think about having them in his mouth.

“It is part of the experience. But, if you must,” he hands Shane the fork and knife. Shane stares dubiously at the aberration in front of him.

But then he glances up at Ilya, who is looking at him without judgment, just giving him the option, like this is an in-joke he wants to share with Shane rather than something he's doing to make fun of him. And so Shane cuts into the cheese pancake and shoves it in his mouth before he can overthink it any further.

He swallows. "It's not bad. Basically just tastes like a grilled cheese."

Ilya grins. "Good, Hollander," he's teasing, but Shane still flushes, thinking he'd do anything if it meant Ilya would praise him like that again.

They trade bites of the pancake until the plate is clean, and when Shane looks around it becomes clear that the night is winding down. He catches Rose's eye, does the unspoken *it's-time-to-leave* look. In return, she gives him the *are-you-sure* look reserved exclusively for when she thinks Shane is making the wrong choice. He glares at her.

Ilya interrupts their stalemate. "So, I know you only asked for one tutoring session. But I think your situation is like, severe. But don't worry. I am excellent teacher, preach the Bible like a preacher, and so on."

"You're an asshole, and that's Rasputin," Shane bristles, but he knows Ilya is right. "I'll text you on Monday."

—

"You should come to hockey game this week," Ilya says abruptly during their next study session.

Shane pauses, brain catching up. This has nothing to do with knights or knaves or Modus Tollens.

“Never see you there.” It’s true. Shane had gone to one hockey game freshman year with some guys in his dorm, before he’d met Rose. He remembers the other boys chanting “blood on ice” when the players fought, which Shane had found morbid.

“The games are fun. They chant *blood on ice*. And I am there, of course, best player.”

“Of course,” Shane rolled his eyes. Even though he knew it was probably true, he wouldn’t let Ilya get away with it. “Yeah, I’ll go. Hayden has been bugging me anyway.”

Ilya scoffed. “Hayden will not see the ice, so no need to worry about that.” This was also true, but Shane kicked Ilya under the table anyway.

“Now, let’s see what you have done to those poor proofs, yes? You are like logical terrorist.”

—

Shane and Rose pull into the Athletic Center parking lot in Rose’s white Jeep.

“I fucking hate Maine. All the snow makes these spots even smaller than they already are,” Rose complains as she attempts to maneuver the vehicle into place.

“You were writing odes to the snow last week when we walked to Crooked Cow,” Shane said. He was looking down at his phone, wondering if it would be weird to text Ilya good luck. They’d been continuing their study sessions and, somewhere between their weird banter Shane thought maybe they were becoming friends?

“No, I don’t recall. Must’ve been a doppelgänger.” Funnily enough, there were a couple girls that looked just like Rose on campus. Nobody relevant to their lives, although Hayden had briefly taken to calling them Rose 2.0 and Rose 3.0 and so on until Rose said that was offensive because it implied that she was the *worst* edition of Rose. So now they mostly ignored the other Roses.

Shane decides against the text, figuring he'll just tell Ilya *good game* next time he sees him in person. Yes, good, Shane. Normal.

Shane didn't often wear Winslow gear, but for the game he's brought out his navy blue turtleneck with *Winslow Wolves* in white lettering across the chest. It would be cold inside the rink, he knew, and so he'd also brought gloves and a hat. Scarves made his glasses fog up.

They take their seats on the metal bleachers in the student section. It's a daytime game, so it's not as packed, and Shane is able to stretch his feet out onto the row in front of him.

"It's nice Ilya asked you to come to his game," Rose brings it up casually, but Shane can tell she's thinking about The Dining Hall Freak Out and trying to gauge how close they are to a More Dire Situation.

"He didn't really ask me," Shane plays off, "just like, let me know about it. It's been good, though. My grade in Logic is improving. We're chill."

"*Chill*," Rose repeats, knowing Shane has never once been chill about anything in his life. But just because it hasn't happened before doesn't mean it isn't possible, Shane thinks. He keeps his eyes on the ice. The players' skates taunt him, catching the light like uneven silverware.

Hayden is on the bench and he smiles, gesturing wildly when he sees Shane and Rose. Ilya sits further up, about ready to take to the ice, but he whips his head around when he sees Hayden waving.

He looks at Shane and gives a small, closed-mouth smile, raising his stick in acknowledgment. Shane smiles back, or at least he thinks he does, but from the way Rose is looking at him he thinks it may have appeared more like a medical event.

"Jesus Christ," she murmurs. "*Chill*," says Shane. Ilya gets in position for the face off.

“He looks good on the ice, though.”

“He does.” Shane won’t deny that part of it.

——

On Wednesdays, Shane has his Geology Lab. He usually doesn’t finish his lab report until 8:00PM, and by that time he’s exhausted. But he has a Logic exam tomorrow, and he’s supposed to meet Ilya. But the library is busy and so far away from the science center and his dorm is *right there*.

Ilya can come to his room to help him study, he decides. It just makes sense. He has a single room. It’s quiet. He texts Ilya, apologizes for the change of plans, and gets a thumbs-up emoji in return.

Shane’s room is small, he’d sacrificed size in order to live alone, having learned quickly freshman year that he found roommate living very difficult.

He has a Katsushika Hokusai print above his bed. His mom had taken him to a Hokusai exhibition at the Embassy of Japan in Ottawa when he was a kid. He’d liked *The Falling Mist Waterfall at Mount Kurokami* best, it had reminded him of hiking near his parents’ cottage house. When he’d seen the print of *The Great Wave* at IKEA he’d thought it would be nice to hang up.

He’d taken a guy back for the first time, at the beginning of the semester. He’d hooked up with some guys before, just never in his *own* room. He’d also had his fair share of frat house bathroom hookups, if the guy was embarrassed to be seen leaving with another guy. Or maybe just with Shane. The guy he’d brought back was an Art History major, and he’d laughed when he saw the print. “What, did you just Google, “art,” and buy the first thing that came up?”

He hears a knock on his door. Fuck. Should he have changed? He has a deranged vision of himself greeting Ilya in a suit. “Yeah,” he calls out.

And then Ilya is walking through the doorway. He’s so broad it makes Shane’s room feel even smaller. “Thanks for coming, sorry, I just couldn’t make the trek to the library tonight.”

Ilya flops on Shane’s bed. Well. Okay. “Is no problem. Always wondered what the inside of your room looked like.” Shane immediately shoves that comment into a mental lockbox, vowing never to touch it. It dies screaming.

Ilya looks up towards the Hokusai print. “It's nice. Very you.”

Shane moves to his desk, pulling out the study guide Professor Babik had given him. “I’m mostly good at this point, but I’m still getting tripped up with some of the rules of replacement—“

“Hockey team is having formal party this Friday,” Ilya interrupts, casually. Shane notices that he looks nice today. He’s wearing a vintage Winslow College crewneck. Shane wonders distantly if Ilya owns any clothing that wasn’t given to him by the Winslow Athletic Department, but he looks so soft, huggable, especially with his head resting on Shane’s decorative pillows.

“Sounds fun?” Shane knows most of the sports teams have formal parties every semester, ranging in dress code and size. He’d been to a couple of the crew team semi-formals with Rose back when she’d been seeing someone on the team.

Ilya nods, eyes wandering around the room, not looking directly at Shane. “Yes, we will play shitty music and get drunk, like usual, but this time in nicer clothes. So you will come?”

Ah. So it must be an open invite. They’re trying to fill the space.

Shane takes a short breath in. “Sure,” he says. Thinks *you are not a totally ridiculous person*. He’s worried how he might act, if he sees Ilya hooking up with someone. Worried that, despite his best efforts, despite the fact that nothing has happened between them, absolutely and truly nothing at all, it has still meant everything to Shane.

Ilya is looking at him now, in the way that makes Shane squirm. “Good.” Shane likes when he says that, maybe a little too much.

Ilya throws his head back on Shane’s pillow again. How is he just so *comfortable* everywhere? “Now, tell me how everyone else in the history of philosophy is wrong and you are right. I know you want to. And then I will help with rules of replacement.”

—

When Friday evening comes around, Shane takes one hefty shot of Ketel One, chases it with Ginger Ale, and walks towards the Hockey House in his suit. It’s dark on campus, old snow coating the lawns. It really was pretty, here in Maine. That was one of the reasons Shane had decided to attend Winslow. His parents had been confused. He could’ve gone elsewhere, could’ve been in a city. They’d asked, “What about NYU? What about Columbia? Or somewhere closer, like McGill?” But when Shane had viewed Winslow on Google Maps he’d thought, that just looks like what a college is *supposed* to look like. Uniform, red brick buildings with white doming on top. He’d learned in his American religion class that Winslow College was built by Baptists (although the school had since denounced its religious connection), and so whenever he saw similar looking campuses he gave a mental nod to his good friends the Baptists, for having such nice taste in university design.

He passes the chapel now, glowing warmly in the cold Maine December. He feels a bit out of place amongst all the New England beauty, like a cartoon character on a hyperreal backdrop. He giggles a bit at this thought, the shot enough to have warmed his blood, softened his hand-drawn edges.

When he gets close enough to the row of sports team houses, when he starts to hear the hum of loud music, he sends a text off to “Lily,” the name he’d never bothered changing in his phone: “I’m here.”

Ilya exits the house quickly, faster than Shane expected, before he's even at the front door. He looks nice. Blonde curls slicked back a bit. He smiles when he sees Shane, doing an overly dramatic bow to motion Shane inside the door of the house. "How nice of you to finally make an appearance, Mr. Hollander." Shane kicks his foot on the way in, "dick."

The house may not be run by a fraternity, but for all intents and purposes, it operates as a frat house for the hockey team. Shane wonders about the last time anyone mopped and thinks he's happy to keep his shoes on in here, actually.

But when he looks around, he realizes that even though he waited about an hour before showing up, there aren't that many people here. He'd expected a packed house, but it's really just the hockey team and some girls. And the girls are—

"Rozanov! Your date's here! Was starting to think you'd been stood up," slurred Marleau, an upperclassman who had already taken off his tie and undone several buttons on his shirt. "Just because you're late doesn't mean you can get out of it. Come on, you know the rules."

"What—?" Shane could tell his face was completely red. Marleau passed Ilya a set of handcuffs and Shane saw that every other guy on the hockey team had one of his wrists handcuffed to a girl's. Some couples were just talking politely, others were fully making out in corners.

Ilya had brought Shane here— what, to embarrass him? In front of all the other guys? So they could watch Shane Hollander freak the fuck out and not be able to leave? Or so he could walk around the room with Shane and have everyone laugh at how absurd the idea might be that they were together? He'd known Ilya was an asshole but he didn't think he'd do *this*. His breath quickens, he needs another shot, he needs Rose, he needs to never have come here at all, to never have thought he could skirt around the edges of normal and gotten away with it —

"Hollander," Ilya's voice cuts through, "you are having panic attack." And to his relief, it's Ilya's hand circling around his wrist, and not the metal handcuff. And then Ilya tugs him away from the crowd and leads him to a hallway of bedrooms, pulling him into the first that he sees.

“Why—" Shane starts, he’s so embarrassed, feels so small, turning away from Ilya so he can’t see whatever look is on his face.

“I am so sorry, Hollander, was supposed to be fun, silly game for everyone to get to know their dates better. I am sorry. I should have told you, I didn’t know you didn’t like to be— restrained, or—"

“Dates? This is a date party?

“I— yes?”

“And you asked— me? To come? Why? For what?” Shane tries to be forceful with his words. Ilya could fuck with him forever and he’d probably still come back, but he had to at least look like he was putting up a fight.

“Hollander,” Ilya stills, “are you actually confused about why I asked you to a date party, as my date?” He’s still holding the handcuffs, and when he notices Shane looking at them anxiously he sets them on the bedside table of whoever’s room they’re in.

Ilya steps behind Shane, bringing his hands to his shoulders, a grounding motion. “Shall we use principles of logical reasoning to figure this out?” He strokes one big hand down Shane’s bicep, lingering there.

“Let’s see. I spend free time helping you with homework, even though you are hopeless, even when I could be doing many other not boring things.” His other hand comes around Shane’s shoulder, rubbing his chest. He’s closer now, his own chest pressed to Shane’s back. “I feed you cheese pancake and invite you to my game, because I want to impress you.” Ilya’s hands are so big. Shane wants to feel them everywhere. “And you read my essay and it did not scare you.” Shane feels Ilya’s breath against the back of his neck, the ghost of a light kiss, maybe. It’s tender, intimate. It’s certainly not something friends do. “I want you, Hollander.”

Shane spins around. He’s not done. “You’re— you’re not even nice to me!” He sputters.

Ilya steps closer, reaching up to cup Shane's chin. Slowly, his head tilts, considering. "That is what you want?" taunts Ilya, leaning in closer, "someone… nice?"

A pause. "No," Shane breathes, and Ilya closes the distance between them, kissing Shane roughly, hungrily. And it's nothing like what Shane is used to, nothing like his first kiss at summer camp or the rushed, beer-soaked bathroom hook ups in the fraternity houses.

Ilya pulls away, thumbs pressing into Shane's cheeks, "You look so fucking good. Dressed so nice for me." Shane throws his head back and groans at the praise.

"What can we do? What do you want to do?" Ilya asks, hands grazing over Shane's belt, looking like he's holding back, like if he does the wrong thing Shane might bolt, like he's borrowed time and it's about to run out, and Shane can't have that, can't have Ilya think he's not willing to do—

"*Anything*," Shane says, knowing it's a little desperate, slutty, even, but it's also the truth, thinking back to that conversation with Rose in the dining hall, when he'd said that it was good he'd never fuck Ilya Rozanov, that it was better this way. Because he knew right now he'd give it all up— the easy, simple life in Ottawa he could have been happy with. Now, for the rest of his life he'd measure everyone against Ilya and it would be worth it for just having had him for one moment. He would carry that flame alone forever if he had to, tend to it in the quiet, private recesses of his heart. Ilya could stand in front of him and say, "Will you let me go, for Christ's sake?" and Shane would have to say, "no."

Ilya smirks, cocky again, his eyes searching for something inside Shane's. "So it is like that, then?"

Shane cracks open. The flame is lit. It's too late now. Maybe it always was. From the moment Shane saw Ilya on the ice and thought *swan*. Ilya's hand moves from Shane's cheek to below his lip, his thumb pressing into his mouth. Shane answers by bobbing his head forward and sucking on his thumb, eyes looking up at Ilya. *Yes, it's like that*.

Ilya puts his other arm around Shane's waist, guiding him until his back is flush against the wall.

Shane can’t take it anymore. He feels crazy, feral with Ilya’s hands on him. “Please, please let me suck you.”

“Fuck, Shane. So sweet like this. You want me to fuck your mouth? Right here? Like this?” Ilya kisses him wetly, Shane doesn’t ever want him to stop. “You are sure? Shane, tell me—“

“God, yes, Rozanov, I want to suck your fucking dick in this stranger’s bedroom. If you ever let me get on with it.”

Ilya smacks his face lightly. “Brat. Show me, then.”

Shane sinks to his knees, fumbles desperately with the button of Ilya’s pants, whines until Ilya takes pity on him and just does it himself. “Shhh, honey. I’ll give you what you need, yes? Fuck, didn’t know you’d be like this—"

He’s big, probably the biggest Shane’s ever seen in real life, of course he is. Because if he’s going to ruin Shane it might as well be in every way. But Shane doesn’t even hesitate before taking Ilya in his mouth, bobbing his head on the length of him a few times before looking upwards.

Ilya sees Shane stroking himself through his pants. “Let me see you, too, Shane, show me.” Shane pauses to unbutton his pants, his head leaking, underwear drenched. “Shirt too,” Ilya instructs. Shane unbuttons his shirt to show his flushed chest.

“God,” Ilya says when Shane sinks back down, hands on the backs of Ilya’s thighs, urging him to thrust, “look at you,” he fucks shallowly into Shane’s mouth, “you needed this. Why did you never ask?” Shane just moans in response, swallowing around Ilya, spit dripping from his lips.

He’s so good, Ilya didn’t know he would be this good. “Shane, will come in your mouth if we don’t stop,” but Shane just pulls him in harder, throats him deeper. He can see tears leaking from the edges of Shane’s eyes and that’s all it takes.

After, Shane nuzzles his head in Ilya's groin, worshipful, inhaling deep. "Perfect, Shane. Want to keep you, I think." Ilya's voice is soft. At the confession, Shane finishes onto the floor.

Ilya sinks down so he's level with Shane, both of them on the ground now, collapsed into one another. Shane almost says something about how it's dirty, how they should clean up, but decides he doesn't care because Ilya is petting his hair.

Ilya moves to hover over Shane just so he can look at him straight on again, most of the edge and heat gone from his face, replaced by a small smile.

"Hi," Ilya says. "I like you," he swipes his thumb over Shane's freckles, below where his glasses sit, dipping down to kiss him again.

"I still don't really understand why," Shane breathes between kisses, "I'm kind of," he takes a breath, "a totally ridiculous person."

Ilya pauses from where he's sucking a bruise into Shane's neck. "Not true," Ilya whispers, "am knight, cannot lie."

"Sounds like something a knave would say."

"Shane," Ilya looks serious, now, and Shane worries he's broken the spell somehow, brain spinning to backtrack— "I like everything. The ridiculous parts and not ridiculous parts. Okay?"

And maybe that's it— the freedom to be both. And maybe, as beautiful as he is, Ilya looks a little ridiculous too, head hanging over Shane's, his blonde curls encircling his face like some sort of Jordanian mosaic angel. His cracked, crooked tooth smile. Maybe it's because [proof: if (Ilya says it), then (it must be true)]. Or maybe it's because Shane just knows, feels it inside, beating, glowing, burning, that this is right and good.

Fuck it. “Okay,” Shane says.

End Notes

it's MY shane hollander and I get to pick the neuroses...

this silly fic is my first, not only in this fandom, but in general and i hope you enjoyed pls be nice to me and follow me on twitter @mythicalmarxism to yap abt hollanov!

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