

Fortress on a Fault Line

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Fortress on a Fault Line

by [transhollander \(fujofrankenstein\)](#)

Summary

A loon calls from across the lake, a long, mournful, warbling sound, and Shane is consumed with laughter. “It sounds so... dramatic. Like it just read tragic Russian literature.”

Rozanov snorts, which only makes Shane laugh harder. “He is not dramatic. He is expressing the existential plight of the waterbird! It is deep!”

Shane wipes his eyes, gasping. “The plight... of the loon... oh my god.” He laughs until he’s breathless, sagging against Rozanov’s shoulder. Rozanov’s arm comes around him, warm and solid, his own chest shaking with silent laughter.

Notes

Here is my first, humble offering to the world of Hollanov fics. What was supposed to be silly turned into a heartfelt discussion.

This is set before The Cottage, but where exactly it’s set in the timeline is up to reader interpretation.

I hope you enjoy! Hollanov have infected my brain like a fucking fujo virus!

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

“This is such a bad idea,” Shane chuckles. It is a high, nervous sound.

Rozanov simply *looks* at him. “You are scared?”

Shane feels his cheeks heat. “Not scared. Just... healthily skeptical?”

“You are asking me or telling me?”

Shane rolls his eyes.

It’s a balmy, late summer evening on the deck of some ridiculous, gaudy lakehouse Rozanov had rented for the off-season. Lake Tahoe glitters before them as they sit in two Adirondack chairs, a meticulously rolled joint on the table between them, next to two cold beers.

Rozanov grins and leans back, all loose-limbed confidence. God, Shane loves to hate him. “You are looking at this little plant like it is timed bomb, Hollander. It is not game seven. It is Tuesday.”

Shane fidgets, grabbing his beer from the table to pick at the label. “It’s... not legal everywhere. And I have a training regimen. And—”

Rozanov waves a dismissive hand, his eyes gleaming. “It is legal here. Your regimen is for tomorrow. And your brain, it needs a holiday more than your body does. You are always here.” He taps his own temple. “I will be your... tour guide. To nowhere in particular.”

Shane can’t help but give him a soft, reluctant smile. “You’re such a cliché. Big Russian bear, offering the straight-laced Canadian a joint.”

In response, Rozanov grabs the joint from the table and places it between his lips, lighting it as casually as he does a cigarette. He takes a drag before speaking, smoke exhaling with his words. “I am not a ‘cliché.’ I am an *experience*. Now, are you watching, or are you participating?”

Shane takes a deep, centering breath. Then, he takes the joint from Rozanov and places it between his own lips.

“Start slow—” Rozanov tries to warn him, but he’s already sucking deeply, throat burning on the exhale as he coughs.

When his ears stop ringing, he realizes that Rozanov is laughing loudly at him and making grabby hands for the joint. He passes it back and then takes a sip of his beer, the cold liquid soothing his abused throat.

They pass the joint back and forth lazily, Shane getting the hang of it on his second try. The world begins to soften at the edges, the trees a detailed, shifting tapestry. The lake is a breathing, black mirror swallowing the last of the light. Shane scoots his chair closer to Rozanov’s, the plastic scraping against the deck with an ear-splitting screech.

A loon calls from across the lake, a long, mournful, warbling sound, and Shane is consumed with laughter. “It sounds so... *dramatic*. Like it just read tragic Russian literature.”

Rozanov snorts, which only makes Shane laugh harder. “He is not *dramatic*. He is expressing the existential plight of the waterbird! It is deep!”

Shane wipes his eyes, gasping. “The plight... of the loon... oh my god.” He laughs until he’s breathless, sagging against Rozanov’s shoulder. Rozanov’s arm comes around him, warm and solid, his own chest shaking with silent laughter.

The silence that follows is anything but awkward. It is thick and sweet as honey. Shane feels every point of contact with Rozanov humming with a soft, new significance.

“Come here,” Rozanov murmurs, and Shane giggles.

“I’m already here.”

Rozanov huffs. “No. Come *here*.” He pats his lap, and Shane, too high to feel embarrassed, awkwardly climbs from his own chair into Rozanov’s lap, settling his legs over the other man’s thighs and wrapping a lazy arm around his neck.

“There,” Rozanov hums, content. “That is better.” He presses a kiss to Shane’s hair, and Shane’s breath catches. That’s his Ilya—heartbreakingly tender when you least expect it.

His brain catches on the term of ownership, *his Ilya*, and he finds that he quite likes the sound of it. So much so that he says it aloud, over and over again. “My Ilya. My Ilya. My Ilya.”

Ilya chuckles. “Oh, you are, as the kids say, *fucking gone*.”

Shane turns his head to pout at Rozanov, pleasantly surprised to find their faces so close together, Ilya looking at him with a soft, pensive expression on his face. “Hollander,” he starts, his voice low. “What is it like? To... be, how do you say, trans? In hockey world?”

Shane goes very still. The question hangs in the air between them, not like a challenge, but like an... offering? Ilya isn’t asking for gossip or a trauma ledger. Shane knows him better than that. He’s asking to see a map of a country he can never visit, but whose borders touch his own.

“It’s like...” Shane begins, his voice slow and thoughtful as he searches for the metaphor. He’s hyper-aware of the solid weight of Ilya beneath him, the anchor keeping him from floating away on this current of truth. “It’s like playing on a road team. Forever.”

Ilya’s brows draw together slightly, listening.

“You know the feeling,” Shane continues, his fingers tracing idle patterns on the back of Ilya’s neck. “Everything is just... a little off. The locker room smells different. The towels are the wrong kind of rough. The cheers are for the other guys. You have to be hyper-aware of everything—the codes, the language, the way you move. You perform your belonging so perfectly that sometimes...” He pauses, the truth clicking into place. “...sometimes you

forget you're performing. Until you look in the mirror in a strange room and think, 'Oh. Right. That's not really me they see. Or... not all of me.'"

Ilya's arm tightens around him, and Shane hears the unspoken promise as clearly as if he'd spoken them aloud: *I see you.*

"And the game itself," Shane murmurs, the words flowing now from a deep, previously untapped well he normally keeps boarded up. "It's the only place where it doesn't matter. Where the pattern is just... the pattern. Skates, ice, puck, net. Physics. It's the most honest thing in the world. My body does the true thing, the *pure* thing. It's the space between the games where the fiction lives."

He turns his head, nuzzling against Ilya's shoulder, inhaling the familiar scent of him—clean sweat, expensive cologne, and now, a faint trace of weed. It's the scent of this moment, this truce.

"You asked me once," Ilya says, his voice a rumble in his chest against Shane's ear, "why I always try to get under your skin. At the beginning."

Shane smiles against his shirt. "Because you're an asshole."

Ilya huffs a laugh. "*Da*. But also... I could see the performance. The perfect Canadian golden boy. It was a magnificent statue. And I..." He shifts, as if the admission is physically uncomfortable. "I wanted to find the cracks. Not to break it. To see what was shining underneath. I thought it would be anger. Or pride. I did not know it would be... this. A different kind of strength. A fortress built on a fault line."

The words settle over Shane, warm and heavy. No one has ever described him that way. A fortress on a fault line. It feels more true than any scouting report ever could.

"It's exhausting," Shane confesses to the hollow of Ilya's throat, the final, simple truth of it. "Being a secret feels like... like static. In the back of your mind. All the time. The knowledge that I can't... I can't ever be fully myself. Not really."

Ilya is quiet for a long moment. Then, he says, "You are not a secret to me. You are a... discovery." His hand comes up, fingers carding gently through Shane's hair. "And the static... here, now... it is gone?"

Shane listens. To the loon, far away. To the lap of water against the dock. To the steady, strong beat of Ilya's heart under his ear.

The relentless, buzzing static that has lived in his bones for as long as he can remember... is simply not there.

It's been replaced by a profound, humming quiet.

"Yeah," he whispers, awestruck. "Yeah, it's gone."

The realization is so vast, so simple, it steals his breath. He lifts his head. Ilya is already looking down at him, his face open in the moonlight, stripped of all its usual ironic armor. He

looks young. He looks real.

“Ilya,” Shane says, and the name feels like a prayer, a key, a fact.

“Shane,” Ilya replies, and it’s not a challenge or a tease. It is an answer. “My Shane.”

And Shane... understands. The confession is already there, in the space between their shared breaths. It doesn’t need to be said.

But Shane *wants* to say it. He wants to give it words, to make it part of the universe tonight.

He opens his mouth, and Ilya quickly slaps a hand over it. “No!” He crows. “Let me be first. Please?”

And Shane... Shane is utterly undone by that “please.” He nods, and doesn’t even lick Ilya’s hand, even though he really, *really* wants to.

“*Моё сердце*. My heart. It has been yours since the first time you checked me into the boards and then apologized with your eyes, with your fucking *freckles*. This... this between us? It is not the game. It is the *reason* for the game. It is... my only truth.” He takes a deep breath. “*Я тебя люблю*. I love you.”

Shane could cry, he’s so happy. The words tumble out of him, then, muffled behind Ilya’s hand. “*Milubyouchoo*.”

Ilya laughs, a soft, wet sound, and removes his hand. “Say it again, Hollander. Like you mean it, *da?*”

“I love you,” Shane breathes. Then, louder, shouting across the lake: “I LOVE YOU, ILYA ROZANOV!”

Ilya slaps his hand over his mouth again, laughing. “Shhh, shhh, you’ll disturb the loon.”

They’re gone after that, a giggling, heartfelt mess, both of them with tears in their eyes. They stay like that until the stars wheel overhead, Shane tucked into Ilya’s chest.

It is the only place other than the ice Shane has ever felt like he truly belongs.

End Notes

Come find me and yell about Trans Shane with me elsewhere!

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