

Nowhere to go but on (together)

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Nowhere to go but on (together)

by [DaughterofLegends](#), [ticiakitty](#)

Summary

Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov both need one thing to live their dreams of playing for the NHL: a mating bite.

Shane's an omega, and the League doesn't allow unmated omegas to play hockey. Ilya's a Russian alpha, who needs a mate to get a U.S. visa. Their slightly harebrained solution? Bite each other, and let the unfinished bond fade.

After five years of stupid texts, awkward heat-care packages, and dancing around their feelings, the bond still hasn't faded and ignoring it has become impossible—something's got to give.

--

Contains spoilers for those who have only watched the show, and for The Long Game.

A/B/O AU that very loosely follows canon.

Happy ending!

Notes

I'm supposed to be writing a mildly complex intergalactic geopolitics DinLuke fic right now but Heated Rivalry is taking over my life so please enjoy A/B/O immigration law being impacted by the Obama presidency's "reset" with Russia in 2009 instead.

Betaed by TiciaKitty who also did the work to format the text messages. Everyone say thank you @ticiakitty.

(dedicated to the 23 people who subscribed to the first fic in this series because it was never going to be anything but a oneshot, but I hope this fills that void for you)

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

January 2009 - Regina

The bitter January wind stung the visible parts of Shane's face as he stared out at the city from the roof of his hotel. It wasn't quite as bitter as the defeat Russia handed them a few hours ago, but the stinging in his cheeks was a good distraction from the frustration building inside him.

The year hadn't started even a full five days ago, and it already fucking sucked.

He wanted to blame his less-than-stellar performance at the World Juniors on the news his mom had wanted to keep from him before the championship game today. But, if he blamed his biology every time something went wrong in his life, he'd be half the hockey player he actually was—and exactly the hockey player most of the hockey world liked to think he was.

The email he'd been cc-ed on this morning was burned into the backs of his eyelids.

—

Dear Mrs. Yuna Hollander,

*The Rules Committee has reviewed your appeal, and it has been **denied**. Please see the attached letter for further details regarding the denial. The NHL's first and foremost commitment is to player safety, and as an omega, Mr. Hollander's safety is of paramount concern. The rules prohibiting unmated omegas from playing in the NHL are to ensure the safety of all players, but especially players such as Mr. Hollander.*

However, in recognition of the outdated nature of some of the documentation requirements that, as you have pointed out, intrude on Mr. Hollander's privacy, we have reconsidered the rule that players with a designation of "omega" provide identifying information about their mate.

We look forward to having Shane at the draft this year, should he choose to pursue a career with the NHL. Please see also attached the documents that will need to be filled out to confirm his eligibility for the draft—they have been updated to remove the identification and documentation requirements for Mr. Hollander's prospective mate.

Respectfully,

NHL Rules Committee—Office of Appeals

—

At this point in his life, Shane should have been used to the stupid hoops he was forced to jump through just to play hockey. But, he'd made the mistake of letting himself think the NHL would finally amend their rules for a player with his skill—a predicted number one draft pick at that—and see beyond his designation.

His eyes stung as the wind did its best to freeze the tears that had been gathering. A gentle bump at his shoulder startled him out of his wallowing.

Shane turned his head to see the grinning face of *Ilya* fucking *Rozanov*. Fuck, it would probably go straight to Rozanov's head if he saw Shane's tears. He swallowed his disappointment and blinked hard, like it was the wind that was making his eyes tear up, before turning to face Rozanov.

"Congrats, man, you were great out there today," Shane congratulated, offering his hand out to shake Rozanov's.

Rozanov started down at it for an awkward moment before grabbing his hand and shaking it, "Ah, so you are this friendly even when you lose."

Shane snorted and pulled his hand back. "It might be news to you, but there's this thing called sportsmanship."

"No, never heard of this. Is Canadian thing?" The smirk on Rozanov's face told him that Rozanov was fucking with him.

Shane turned to lean against the railing again before asking, "What are you doing here? Shouldn't you be out celebrating?"

Warmth bloomed at Shane's right shoulder as Rozanov copied him, leaning his forearms against the railing inches from Shane. A faint, but pleasantly warm, ginger and cedar scent surrounded Shane. "Same as you, yes? Getting break," he answered, and blew out a long breath that had no right to sound as exhausted as it did.

"Life too hard as a champion?" Shane asked wryly.

Rozanov barked out a laugh, making something in Shane's stomach flip, "Ah, so you are not really so friendly after losing."

Shane just shook his head, a smile tugging at his lips, and let the sounds of the city fill the amicable silence between them. His thoughts stubbornly turned to the email again, and his shoulders tensed back up as if to protect his neck. What he wouldn't give to be an alpha, or even a beta.

Curiosity and jealousy burned in him as he wondered what Rozanov's plans were. Because he was a masochist, he broke the silence to ask, "Do you know where you'll be playing after Juniors yet?"

When Rozanov didn't respond, Shane turned his head to glance at him again. Rozanov was scowling at the city like it had personally wronged him. Huh, surprising sore spot. Something they had in common.

When Rozanov finally answered, his words seemed careful, deliberate, "I do not know yet. Maybe KHL, maybe NHL."

"Can't choose?" Shane guessed.

Rozanov's scowl deepened, "No. Is immigration thing."

Oh. Not at all what Shane was expecting.

Rozanov turned his head to look Shane up and down, "Easy for you, you go straight to NHL."

It was Shane's turn to scowl, "Fuck off. You know it's not that simple for players like me." He felt a little bad for snapping when Rozanov looked genuinely confused. He sighed heavily, "Sorry, it's kind of a sore spot."

Rozanov made a questioning sound. Shane debated whether or not to say anything to the player that everyone was setting up to be his rival. Rozanov raised an eyebrow in a clear 'go on,' and Shane decided, fuck it. He didn't know any other omega players very well, and if anyone was going to understand stupid rules, it was going to be the guy who apparently had immigration issues affecting his career.

"The NHL doesn't allow unmated omegas," Shane stated simply. Rozanov's face, taking Shane completely by surprise, lit up, and he let out a sharp bark of laughter. "It's not funny." Shane snapped frostily.

"No! No. Is not that," Rozanov immediately tried to assure, standing up and holding both hands out in surrender, "Is just almost same for me. I can't get visa because am Russian alpha."

Shane stumbled through an awkward apology, and Rozanov waved him off. "Not your country's fault. Is America issue because our countries are," Rozanov trailed off like he was looking for words, "not friends? But maybe will change."

"You can't just get drafted to a Canadian team?" Shane asked curiously.

"No. NHL says I must be free to play for every team." Rozanov's voice was subdued.

Fuck, that sucked for him.

"What a pair we make, huh?" Shane commiserated.

Rozanov threw him what Shane thought was his first genuine smile. God, he had no right looking that handsome. "Yes, very sad for NHL, they won't have me, future first draft pick, and you, second."

"Oh shut up."

March 2009 - Ottawa

Ilya hadn't been able to stop thinking about Shane Hollander and his stupid freckles since first meeting him in December. Since their conversation on the rooftop, Ilya *also* hadn't been able to get the way his adorable face scrunched up like an angry kitten when he thought Ilya was laughing at him for being an omega, or the way he smelled like the woods Ilya liked to escape to as a child, out of his head.

He'd been a tightly wound ball of anxious and eager energy since finding out about a week ago that the immigration restrictions on Russian alphas in America were being loosened as part of their new president's plan to "reset" the country's relationship with Russia.

For the first time in his life, losing a game had barely even phased him, with how impatient he was to talk to Hollander off the ice.

Because he had an idea.

A stupid idea.

A *really* stupid idea.

Ilya hadn't heard anything in the media about Hollander being mated yet, and he suspected he and Hollander were both cut from the same hockey-obsessed cloth enough that him being mated would be off the table soon.

Maybe.

He really needed to get Hollander alone to ask.

Ilya's eyes scanned the banquet and landed on Hollander for the hundredth time that evening. He was all dolled up in a suit with his hair gelled into a ridiculously stiff hairstyle that made Ilya want to run his hands through Hollander's hair just to mess it up and see his adorable little scowl again. He'd gotten a glimpse of it on the ice when he'd stolen the puck from him earlier that night.

It wasn't enough.

Ilya had been trying to catch Hollander's eye for about half an hour now, but every time he'd been successful, some other asshole had pulled Hollander into conversation.

He'd almost let out a growl when he saw yet *another* party-goer approach Hollander. At this rate, he'd be back in Russia before Hollander was free. Ilya hadn't failed to notice the attractiveness of the people swarming Hollander more than usual. Speculation about Hollander's mated status had been running rampant in Hockey media since the World Juniors game, and clearly, others also had Ilya's idea.

Ilya, however, had something to offer to Hollander that those predatory alphas didn't—mutually assured destruction.

Hollander seemed to finally, successfully make his excuses, and they exchanged a silent nod toward the banquet room's exit.

"I must ask you something," Ilya began as soon as they were down the hall, out of earshot. Hollander gestured for him to go on. "Not here, somewhere private."

Hollander sounded unsure, "I uhh, don't really want to be on the roof without a coat."

"We can use my room. Is this okay?" Ilya searched Hollander's gaze. Curiosity must have overpowered the uncertainty Ilya had seen in his eyes because after a few moments, he agreed.

Hollander slumped as soon as the hotel room door closed behind him, and Ilya couldn't stop himself from teasing, "Winning is that bad, huh?"

It worked. Hollander came alive with renewed energy and rolled his eyes. "Yeah, winning is so fun when all anyone wants to talk about is if or when I'm mating and with whom. At least whatever you want, it isn't to proposition me."

Proposition? Ilya didn't know that word. "What is," he carefully sounded out the syllables, "proposition?"

Hollander's adorable face turned pink. "Uhh, it's like when you ask someone to have sex, or I guess for my situation, to offer to mate."

Ilya cleared his throat awkwardly, ears burning, and Hollander's eyes widened in horror, "Oh god, not you too."

"Wait, I promise I am not just," he carefully pronounced the word Hollander had used again, "proposition you. Okay?"

Hollander hesitantly nodded, uncertainty and wariness written all over his face as he eyed Ilya like a cornered animal. His scent tinged with a sour note, Ilya did not like.

Okay, that was probably well deserved. Being alone in a hotel room with an alpha who was definitely about to ask about mating was probably a little scary. Ilya took a couple of steps back into the room to give him some space and sat on the edge of the bed, leaving the nearby chair free.

He put his hands up, "I will stay here, okay? You can leave any time."

The sour note left as quickly as it came, and Hollander's nod this time was less hesitant. Good.

"Remember on roof, when I said I had visa problem." Hollander nodded again, this time looking confused. Ilya missed the sound of his voice. "New American president has changed rules."

It was like a sun peeking out from behind clouds when Hollander smiled, and the gentle smell of a forest on a warm summer day filled the air between them. "That's great, Rozanov." He sounded genuinely excited for Ilya, and something in Ilya's chest loosened.

"I am like you now. Just need mate, and I can play for NHL." The smile froze. "I think we can help each other with our mating problems. You are not mated yet, yes?"

Hollander was already shaking his head and backing up toward the door, the sour note tainting the room again. Ilya felt desperation bubble in his chest. He didn't have anyone back in Russia he trusted enough to mate with to fool officials, much less actually mate with, so he quickly blurted, "Just for little time. Not for real."

Hollander stopped inching toward the door. "You do not want real mate, yes? Just hockey?" Ilya continued, seizing the opportunity.

Hollander nodded, still doubtful.

Ilya pointed at himself. "I also do not want real mate. Just hockey. We are same like this."

Silence met his words, so he continued, "I just need bite. Do you need more than just bite?" Ilya's arm reached up, and he felt the crucifix pendant through his shirt. He wasn't really Russian Orthodox, but he was praying that Hollander's answer would be no.

He watched as Hollander's throat worked, and Ilya felt a mix of anticipation and dread sizzle through him.

Hollander answered his prayer in stilted words. "No. I uhh, also just need a bite. Basically. There's a box I have to check off."

Thank fuck. "Yes, box for me too, I think," Ilya breathed with relief.

To Ilya's surprise, Hollander walked over and sat beside Ilya on the bed. Ilya discreetly breathed in Hollander's comforting scent, nostalgia washing over him.

"So, is your plan literally for us to just bite each other?" Hollander asked a little incredulously. "That's it?"

"Yes."

"Won't we feel like, bad if we don't actually," Hollander's cheeks pinked, "seal the bond?" He continued on in a hurry, "And won't people be able to tell we haven't actually bonded if our scents don't change, though?"

Ilya couldn't resist. "You mean fuck?"

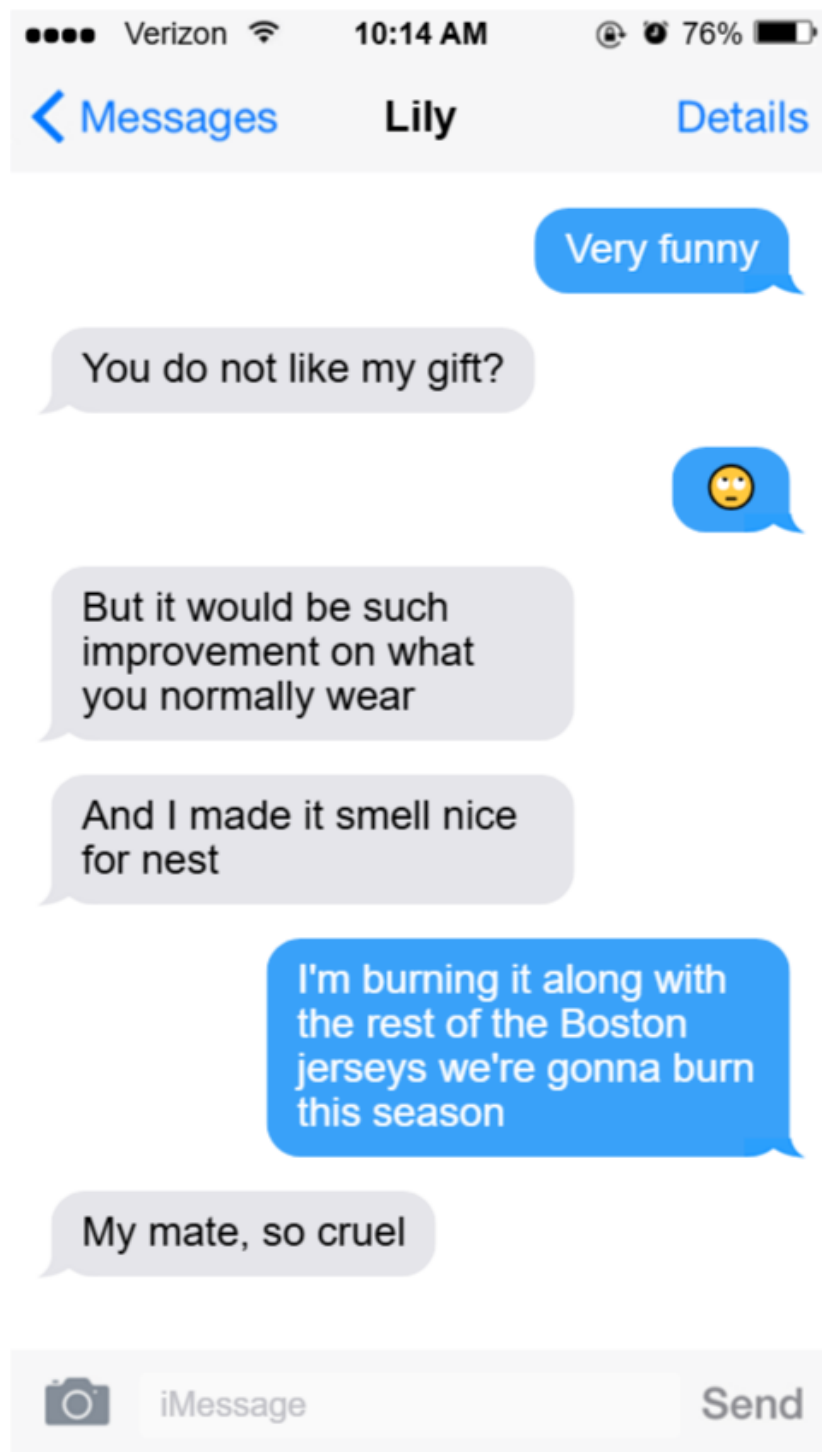
The blush deepened in Hollander's cheeks, making his freckles stand out more, and the tops of his ears turned red. God, he was so cute. Ilya took pity. "Yes, it will not feel good. But only until it fades. We will need scent blockers, but other than this, just bite."

Hollander still looked a little dubious, so Ilya continued, "I am willing to risk feeling bad for little time and to wear scent blockers to play hockey, though. Are you?"

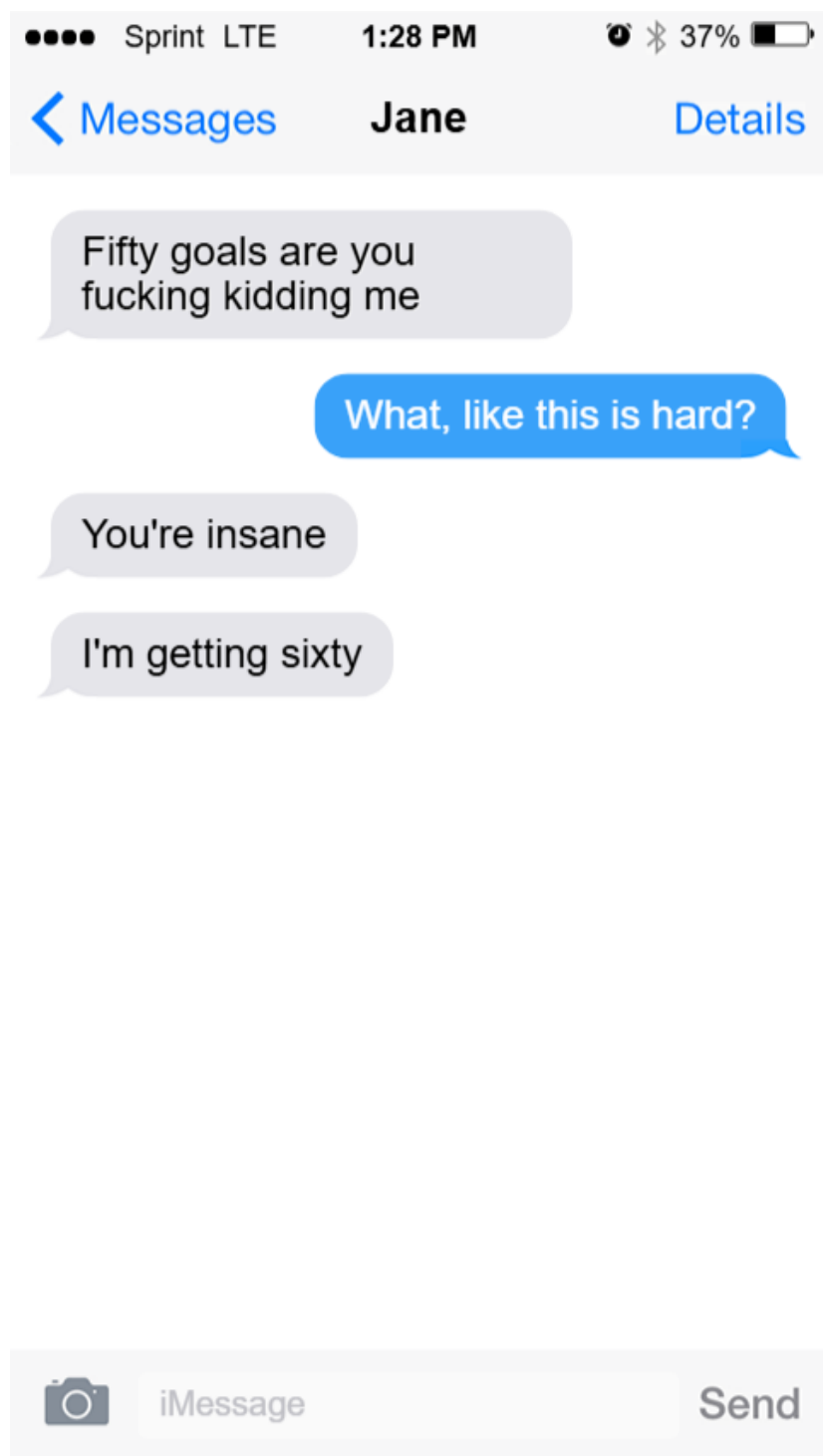
The same steely resolve Ilya saw when Hollander was challenged during a game flashed in his eyes.

"Okay, I'm in. How do you want to do this?"

August 2009



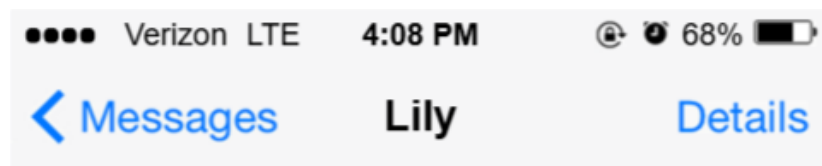
September 2010



October 2010



January 2011



Remember when you
said you'd destroy me at
All-Stars

Who said this to you? Is
lie, liar told you that

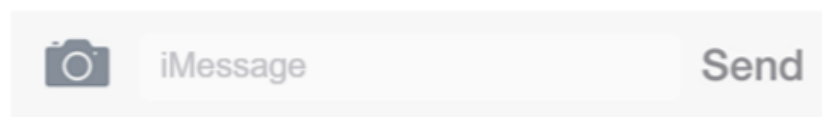
I would literally have
screenshots if we weren't
deleting these all the
time

You are trying to hang
noodles on ears

???

Is Russian saying

English is so boring



February 2011 - Montreal

Shane felt exhausted as he slumped against the shower wall. The constant buzzing under his skin had slowly quieted after the summer of 2009, making Shane think they'd maybe actually gotten away with their harebrained scheme. The mark itself wasn't fading, which Shane was trying not to think about too hard.

Especially since it made things easier in the locker room. No need to whip out his shitty 'oh I have a skin condition' excuse to explain a faded mark just yet.

But.

Seeing Rozanov back to back in September and October had made the unsettling feeling—like he was missing something—flare back up with a vengeance. He ached constantly for the missing piece of him.

The break between the October game and the All-Stars Game in January had almost lulled him back into a false sense of security, only for Rozanov's little smirk, after Shane had immediately broken his record, to set Shane's skin on fire.

And, well, here he was two weeks later, feeling like he was going to crawl out of his skin at any given moment. He'd started and deleted so many texts to Rozanov, wanting to ask, 'Do you feel it too? Is it just me?' He hadn't yet found the courage to ask.

Instead, he was slumped against the wall of the shower with an uncharacteristic level of bone-deep weariness after his team's loss against Boston. Even his teammates were shooting concerned looks his way. Shane didn't have the energy to muster a smile for them. They'd probably chalk it up to their loss against Boston anyway.

Shane scrolled through the consolation messages from his parents before opening the one that had made his stomach flip when he'd seen the notification.



Shane glanced nervously around the hallway as he waited for Rozanov to open the door. He almost tripped over his feet in his rush to get into the room as soon as the door cracked open.

"You are being chased?" Rozanov demanded.

"What? No. Shut up. You had me standing out there like an idiot," Shane accused.

"So dramatic, my mate." Rozanov made sure to look Shane up and down as he said the last two words, making Shane flush. The buzzing beneath his skin heightened to an almost painful degree. Shane closed his eyes, trying to breathe through the feeling.

Rozanov was eyeing him with concern when Shane finally reopened his eyes. He gestured to the bed, "Sit down. We must talk."

Shane obeyed almost without thinking. He was really fucking out of it if he was letting Rozanov tell him what to do. He tensed when Rozanov sat down next to him, remembering what had happened the last time they'd been on a bed next to each other. Shane ignored the urge to bring his hand up to rub along his neck where a perfect imprint of Rozanov's teeth lay.

"You are not well," Rozanov declared.

Fucking alphas. "Oh, fuck you, I lose one—" Shane began protesting.

"—is the bond," he finished. Oh. Shane didn't have much to say to that, so he just nodded.

Rozanov hummed and pulled the side of his shirt from his neck, showing off the mark Shane had left. "Mine is not going away. Yours is not also?"

Shane pulled on the necks of his sweater and shirt to show the still-pink mark. Rozanov's eyes seemed to darken before he abruptly looked away.

Shane cleared his throat, "It's been uhh, getting worse whenever we play games against each other."

"I notice this too." Rozanov's dark gaze returned and pierced Shane's. "I think is because we upset the not-bond and then ignore it."

"So, what?" Shane asked, feeling a wave of panic surge in his chest, "It's just not going to fade like we planned because we keep playing against each other?"

"I don't know. It can take long time sometimes," Rozanov admitted, then grinned lasciviously, "when not-mates are good fit."

Shane groaned. "Please don't say that. You're going to jinx us."

Rozanov's brow furrowed into what Shane called the 'English is stupid and confusing' look. "What is jinx?"

"It's like saying you're bringing bad luck."

Ilya's eyes brightened as he teased, "It is not bad luck to be mated to me, to be mated to you though . . ." he trailed off. Shane shoved him off the bed.

His chest warmed as the empty, inescapable hole in him seemed to fade a little, listening to the peels of laughter coming from Rozanov. He nudged Rozanov's shoulder with his shoe. "What's your plan then?"

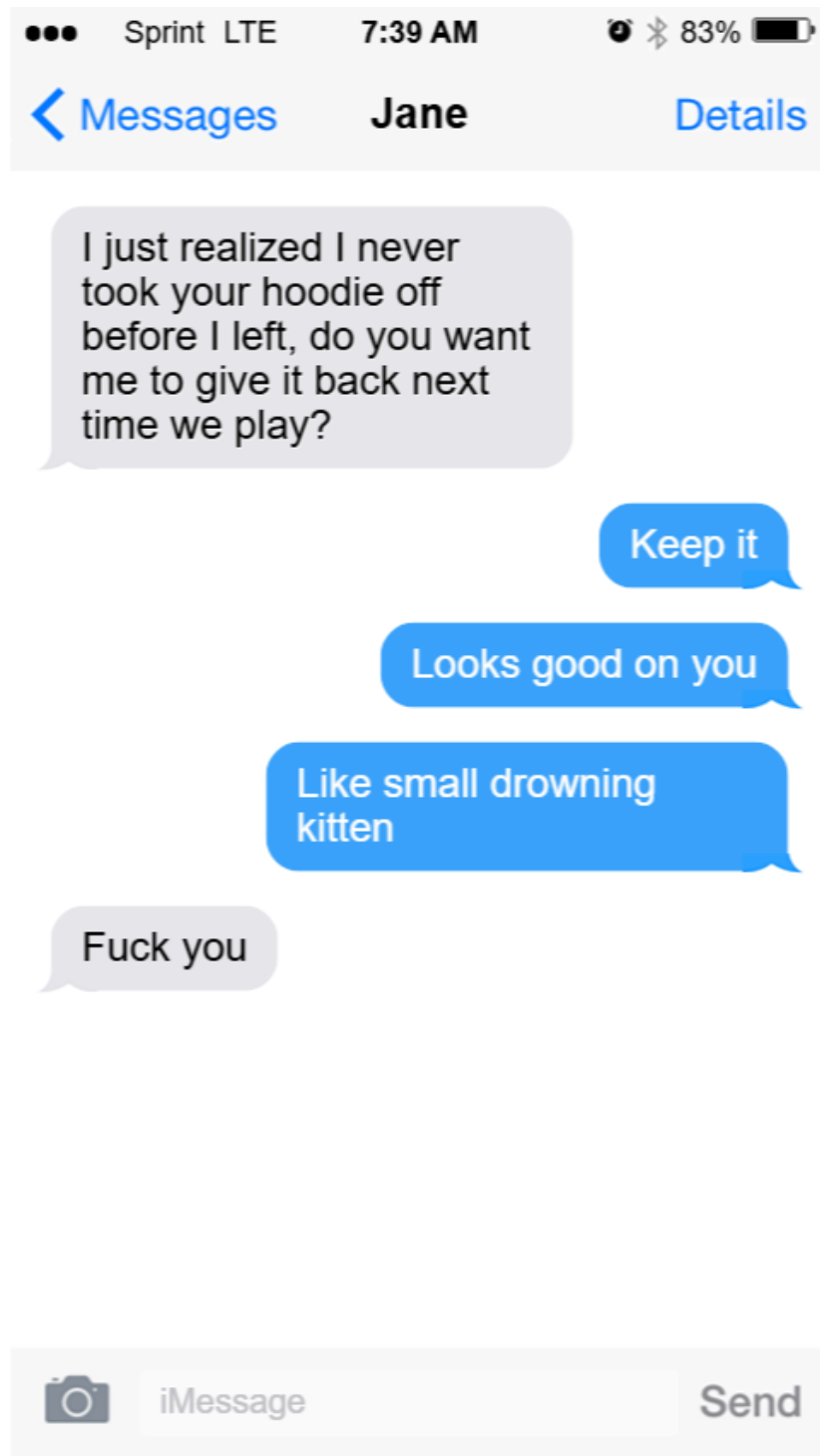
Rozanov pushed himself up on an elbow and grabbed Shane's foot, making his leg tingle pleasantly. Shane's shiver made Rozanov smile, and he gently jostled Shane's leg. "This."

Which is how Shane found himself with his head resting on Rozanov's lap (inches away from Rozanov's dick, but Shane was trying not to think about that), practically melting into him and the bed as Rozanov ran a gentle hand through his hair. They had both taken their scent patches off, and Shane was basking in the way Rozanov's ginger and cedar scent made him feel a million miles away from his problems. Princess Bride was playing quietly in the background, after Rozanov had asked for a movie that could help with his English.

Shane hadn't been able to resist the urge to hear some of his favorite lines in Rozanov's accent. He wasn't disappointed when Rozanov had perked up and paused the movie to try out, "Hello. My name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father. Prepare to die." Shane had been forced to turn his face to bury his adoring smile in Rozanov's thigh.

He tried to remember the last time he'd felt this relaxed—probably sometime before World Juniors. Shane idly drew patterns on Rozanov's thighs and delighted in the little shiver Rozanov would give when Shane got close to the inside of his upper thigh. The third time he got close, the hand in his hair pulled away and flicked him lightly on the top of his head. "Knock it off unless you want real mate tonight."

Shane shook with silent laughter.



April 2011

[← Messages](#)

Lily

[Details](#)

Guess who has fifty goals

Mr. Humble

You're such a sore loser

Season is not over, and I am getting sixty, remember

No, that's what I said I was getting

I think hit you took last night gave concussion



Is head okay?

Yes, not concussed or anything like that

Good



iMessage

Send

June 2011 - Las Vegas

Ilya was smoking again. The shitty nicotine gum the team physician wanted him to chew was nowhere near enough to take the edge off of what he was feeling. Getting dressed and seeing the raised pink skin on his neck, and then feeling the flutter in his stomach as Hollander had received Rookie of the Year, had reminded him just how fucked he was.

He and Hollander seemed to both be dancing around the truth that if the mark wasn't fading after over a year of not sealing the unfinished bond, it probably was never going to go away. A short bark of bitter laughter escaped him. It figured that with his luck, he'd mate the most compatible omega in the world—who didn't actually want him—and wouldn't be accepted by his home country.

Thinking about Russia made his chest clench again. His father's Alzheimer's was getting worse, and he felt like a shit son for wanting to spend more and more time away, instead of watching the man who'd hurt him and his mother diminish into something Ilya had to feel pity for.

"It's not worth jumping over," a too-familiar voice said, pulling Ilya out of his depressing reverie.

He turned to look at perfect Hollander, with his perfect suit, perfect hair, and perfect family. It was too dark to see his favorite feature on Hollander, so he turned back to look out at the city and released a long puff of smoke.

"What do you want?" He asked in a tight voice. Being close to Hollander again tonight had violently reopened the deep well of need that had been a lot better since their accidental sleepover at the hotel in February. He was sure Hollander felt the same, which is probably why he was seeking Ilya out. But Ilya didn't have enough in him to give tonight.

"Just needed some air," Hollander snapped, and Ilya felt a little bad for being a complete dick. "Are you literally up here sulking because I won?"

Oh, fuck him. Ilya was so fucking tired. "Not everything is about you, Hollander."

Hollander, clearly not getting the hint that Ilya didn't want to talk, continued in a low voice, "Or is it the bond? Because that *is* about me. We both know it's getting worse. We can't keep avoiding it."

"Not now, Hollander." Ilya pushed off from the railing, getting ready to head back inside, to be anywhere Hollander wasn't.

A hand grabbed his sleeve, and Ilya stopped and turned to look into Hollander's eyes. "We have to talk," Hollander said softly, "Please."

Ilya saw his own desperation mirrored in Hollander's eyes. That was probably why he had Hollander pushed up against a nearby wall in the shadows, and was kissing him hungrily. Hollander made a surprised noise that snapped Ilya out of the haze of need his mind had sunk under just from being in Hollander's presence. Ilya was opening his mouth, apology ready at his lips, when Hollander surprised him by grabbing the lapels of Ilya's suit, yanking him down, and kissing him back just as hungrily.

It was a sloppy, desperate kiss. Hollander was kissing him like he'd die without Ilya's mouth on his ever again, and Ilya *felt* like he'd die without Hollander's mouth on his ever again. Is this what they'd been missing out on? No wonder he felt like he was going to crawl out of his own skin whenever he was in Hollander's presence without touching him.

Ilya slid his tongue against the seam of Hollander's lips. He opened them immediately, letting Ilya feel the slick heat of Hollander's tongue and taste the sweet champagne still on it. His perfect little omega. Ilya slid his hand down Hollander's shirt and slipped two fingers behind his belt. Hollander made a desperate sound. Ilya needed more, he needed to fu—

Ilya abruptly jerked himself away and stumbled back a few steps, breathing hard. Fuck, that was a mistake. Hollander let out a pathetic, needy whine that made the alpha in him want to scoop Hollander up, drench him in Ilya's scent, and fuck him until all he could say was Ilya's name.

He desperately needed to get a grip. They couldn't do this. Hollander. Didn't. Want. To. Do. This.

"What the fuck?" Hollander asked hoarsely. Ilya just shook his head in denial, backing away toward the elevator.

"Rozanov, we can't keep going like this," Hollander begged. Ilya couldn't do this. He couldn't have the complication of a real bond to a Canadian, male, omega, when his life was going to shit in Russia. It was never supposed to be like this. Ilya's chest tightened uncomfortably, and he continued backing up.

"Ilya, please."

August 2011

< Messages

Lily

Details

What the fuck

You have heat soon

And you decided to break no-contact by sending me a fucking dildo after two months of ignoring me?

Yes

Fuck you

You like?

It's huge

Is copy

Copy of?

oh my god



You're such a fucking asshole



iMessage

Send

January 2012



August 2012

Thank you for the normal shirt, hard pass on the black and yellow monstrosity

What is monstrosity?

The dildo, asshole

Where the fuck did you even find it?

A lady never kisses and speaks

It's a lady never kisses and tells

And if you're a lady I'm the fucking Commissioner

No you are much cuter than Crowell

With pretty freckles

How's your dad doing?

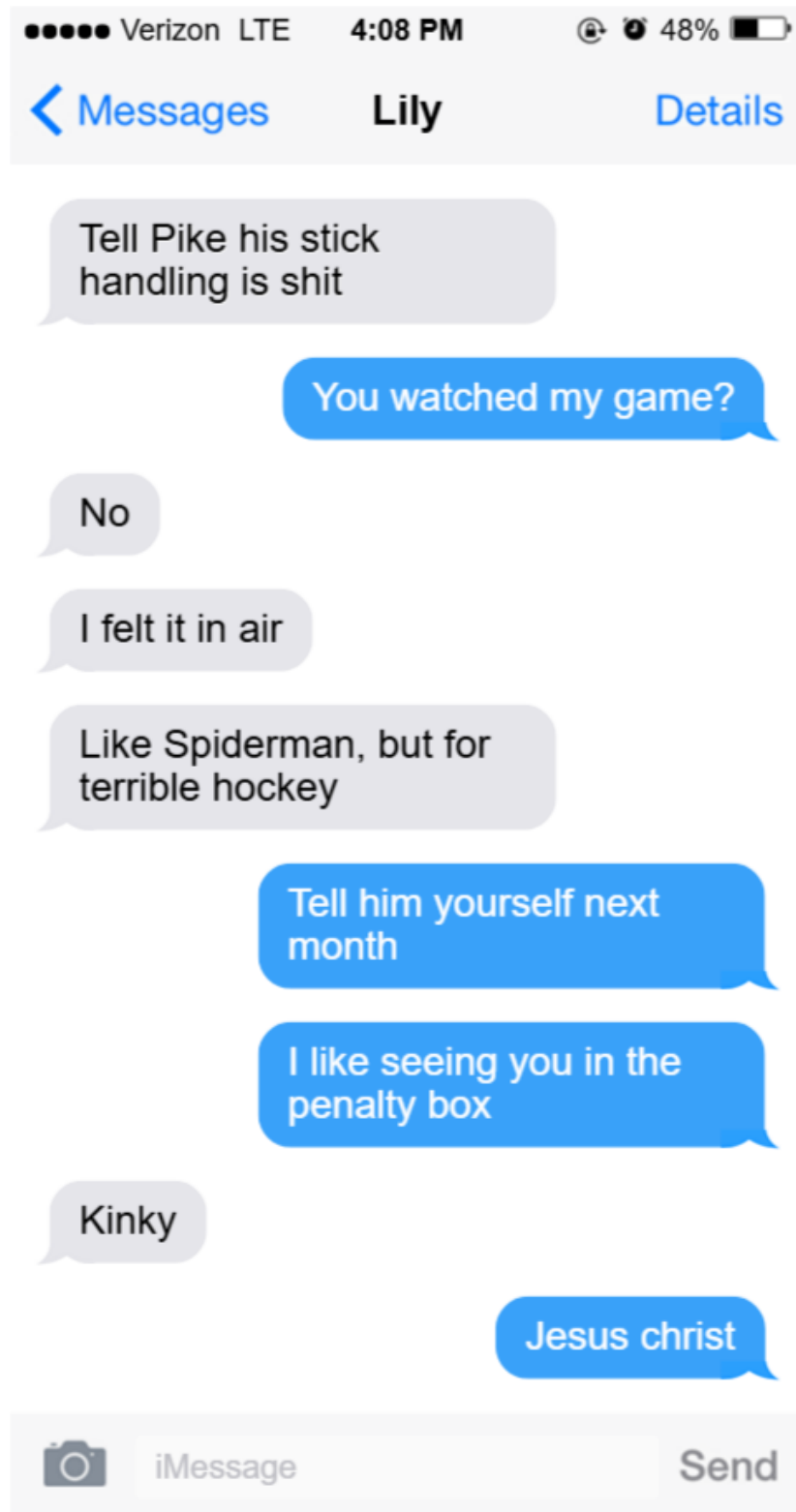
He is same. I am dying

What happened?

The only medicine is picture of your cute freckles

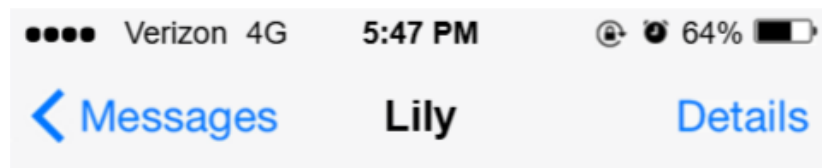


November 2013





February 2014 - Sochi



How are you doing?

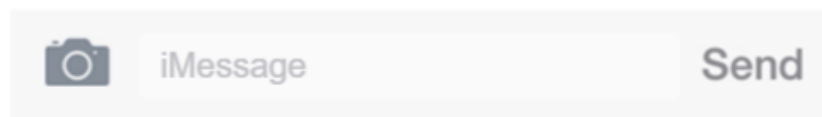
Is everything okay?

Where are you?

Why aren't you
answering my texts?

No, I am not answering
your boring texts. Now
will you leave me alone?

Fuck you



June 2014 - Las Vegas

Shane glared at his reflection in the mirror. He should've been used to the way his skin came painfully alive whenever he and Ilya were in the same place. Five years of throwing a middle finger to their fucked biology, which had sunk its claws too deeply into both of them to let go, had resulted in a lot of trial and error to find a delicate balance.

A delicate balance fucking Rozanov had apparently upset with his shit in Sochi. It was one thing to ignore him in Sochi; Shane had pulled his head out of his ass eventually when he'd remembered how homophobic Russia was, but continuing to ignore Shane even after that?

Shane hadn't reached out. He was petty enough to make Rozanov make the first move.

It was like as soon as either of them found any distance, the bond yanked them back together with a vengeance. The suppressants they made sure to take before being in each other's vicinity clearly weren't working, with the bond seeming to flare brighter tonight just to spite them. He'd barely been able to stand being inches from Rozanov on stage.

Shane met Rozanov's eyes in the mirror as he walked into the bathroom. His shoulder burned where the mating bite—that had never faded like it was supposed to—sat. Well, shit. That was new. Judging by the slight pinch in Rozanov's features, he felt it too.

"Well?" Shane demanded. "Are you finally fucking ready to say something to me?"

Rozanov studied him back in the mirror before his lip curled into a smirk, "I think we should fuck."

"Fuck you!" Shane nearly yelled. "You ignore me for nearly six months, and that's all you have to say?"

Rozanov took several slow, deliberate steps toward Shane until there was only a couple of inches between them, and Shane had no choice but to look up if he wanted to see Rozanov's stormy eyes. He stared stonily straight ahead at Rozanov's bow tie instead. Rozanov's finger traced gently over Shane's clenched jaw before curling under it and pulling Shane's face up until they were looking at each other.

He gently brushed the knuckles of his other hand against Shane's jaw, and Shane wanted nothing more than to close his eyes and just sag into Rozanov's arms. This wasn't fair. He missed Rozanov and his stupid texts, and stupid boxes with the clothes drenched in his mouthwatering scent, and the even stupider heat toys so fucking much. He was tired of ignoring the bond and his growing . . . *something* for Rozanov that he was too afraid to put a name to.

The silence stretched uncomfortably as the itch under his skin heightened. Shane was terrified that Rozanov and his silence meant that Shane's feelings were unreciprocated. The hand brushing against his jaw moved up to brush away a tear making its escape from Shane's eyes. He shuddered and gave in to the urge to wrap his arms around Rozanov.

To his relief, Rozanov immediately hugged him back and made gentle shushing sounds as Shane nestled his face in the crook of Rozanov's neck and nuzzled him, nose searching for

his scent. He let out a soft whine when all he found was the slightly sterile and stale smell of the scent patch Rozanov wore, mirror to his own.

Rozanov's breath ruffled Shane's hair pleasantly when he spoke, "I am sorry." They stood like that, just holding each other, until the fire under both their skins seemed to abate.

Rozanov was the first to pull back, his eyes intense as he scrutinized Shane. Shane knew what he was seeing: the bags under his eyes, the way his suit was slightly baggy, and the pallor of his skin. "We must talk."

Shane nodded.

"Not here, in my room after the awards end," Rozanov qualified. Shane, to his embarrassment, pouted. It made the side of Rozanov's mouth quirk up, "My impatient golubchik."

"What does that mean?" Shane asked, fighting the blush crawling up his neck.

"I will tell you if you go back to your seat and finish ceremony, attend the party, and then come up to my room like good boy," Rozanov murmured, eyes fixed on the collar of Shane's shirt.

Shane's mouth went dry. The glint in Rozanov's eye when he looked back up told him that Rozanov knew exactly what he was doing to Shane.

Fuck.

Two agonizing hours later, Shane found himself in a gorgeous suite looking out at the city. Rozanov was leaning against a wall near the windows, holding a glass of something, his white dress shirt untucked and open at the front. Shane could just see the edge of the imprint of his teeth on Rozanov's shoulder peeking out from the fabric.

Shane's mouth watered. He toed off his shoes in the entryway just for something to do. They stood there, staring at each other until Shane gave in and broke the silence, "Where should we do this?"

Rozanov snorted before taking another sip of his drink and gesturing with the glass. "Come, we can sit on bed."

The buzzing under Shane's skin intensified as they sat shoulder to shoulder, nearly identically to the way they sat together the night that had started this whole mess. Rozanov startled him by demanding, "Take your shirt off."

"What?"

"I want to see my mark on you, take your shirt off," he repeated, deliberately enunciating the last four words. Shane suddenly felt too hot for his own skin as he pulled his shirt up and undid the buttons with shaking hands.

"Better," Rozanov declared, before frowning at the scent patches that were now visible. "We should probably talk before taking the patches off." Shane nodded, not sure he could find the right words for . . . wherever this was about to go.

"I think we should finish the bond," Rozanov said quietly, intense gaze trained on Shane's. "Is getting very hard to ignore."

Shane swallowed the bitter taste of rejection and looked away, glad the scent patches were still there to keep his scent from giving away his feelings. Was that his only reason why? "Yeah," he said dully, before adding wryly, "fade within a year, huh?" He shook his head. They'd been so stupid at seventeen.

"Shane," Rozanov set down the drink and gently grabbed Shane's chin, tipping it back up like he had earlier in the bathroom. "Do not mistake this for unlucky biology. Bond would not be fighting this hard if we were not compatible."

Shane blinked and mouthed 'compatible' to himself. "When did your English get so good?" Rozanov's fingers gently squeezed his chin in reprimand, and the sensation shot straight to his groin. Fuck.

Time to be brave. "Roz—Ilya," he watched as Ilya's pupils expanded, "I want this. I want you. You're all I can think about, and I think I might be—"

Shane was cut off when Ilya kissed him hard, before pulling back just as suddenly. "You are always in my head, too. Your cute freckles and pretty lips," Ilya softly confessed before teasing, "Is very annoying." Shane rolled his eyes.

He wanted to kiss Ilya again and get lost in the sensation, but he had something he needed to ask first. Shane needed to hear it said plainly. He felt immensely vulnerable as he asked what had been weighing on his mind since seeing Ilya backstage. "You want to complete the bond because you want me, want this," he gestured between them, "not just because your body is telling you, we have to do this?"

Ilya poked the furrow on Shane's forehead. "I and my 'biology'," Ilya used air quotes around biology, "as you say, are same. Alpha and I want the same thing," his eyes darkened, and he leaned toward Shane, "you, little omega."

Ilya pushed the shirt off Shane's shoulder before leaning down and licking a long stripe up the side of Shane's neck, avoiding the scent patch. Shane let out a low moan. What he wouldn't give to feel Ilya's tongue without it.

He tried to follow Ilya's head as he pulled back, but Ilya grabbed his chin to hold him in Ilya's steady gaze again. "This is what you want, yes?" Shane nodded. "You must say it," Ilya demanded, "this is for forever, Shane. I do not give up what is mine." Shane's lips parted involuntarily, and his eyes fluttered shut when he heard Ilya call him mine.

"Yes," he croaked, "I want you. I want to be your mate."

Ilya brought his hands up to his own patches and began pulling them off. Shane quickly copied, tearing his off. The skin was red and irritated from where he pulled them off too fast, but Ilya's tongue was soon on them and quickly soothed any pain.

Cedar and ginger ignited in his nose as he breathed in Ilya's scent. God, he missed this. Once Ilya was done with Shane's wrists, he grabbed both of them in one hand and pulled them over Shane's head so he was laid out on the bed. Ilya's tongue and teeth were all over Shane's neck, and Shane gasped and moaned before pushing his head up to lick and suck at his mark on Ilya's neck.

And then it was like they were trying to make up for lost time. Frenzied hands tore at each other's pants until both were naked. Shane kissed down Ilya's chest, but a hand curling in his hair stopped him before Shane could get his mouth on Ilya's cock. The hand tightened to a pleasantly painful degree as it pulled his head up until they were making eye contact again.

"Have you done this before?" Ilya asked. Shane shook his head in denial, feeling the burn of inadequacy heat his cheeks. "Fuuuck," Ilya breathed. He brought his other hand down and pushed his thumb into Shane's mouth. "I am first to have this mouth?" Shane nodded as Ilya moved his thumb in and out in a lewd imitation of a blowjob. Ilya groaned, and he pulled his thumb out of Shane's mouth, leaving a trail of wet saliva along Shane's cheek before pushing his head back down.

Shane wasted no time getting Ilya's cock in his mouth and running his tongue along the veins and head. Ilya cursed colorfully in a stream of English and Russian as Shane took him deeper and hollowed his cheeks as he bobbed his head up and down.

Ilya tugged at his hair sharply, and Shane let out a gasp. "Stop, stop," Ilya demanded, guiding Shane's head back up so they could kiss. Between kisses, he growled, "Your pretty mouth is going to kill me."

Shane basked in the praise, feeling the omega in him delight in pleasing his alpha. Ilya rolled Shane onto his back and began kissing around the sensitive skin on Shane's inner thighs. He brought a hand up to roll Shane's balls between his fingers as he took Shane's cock in his mouth. Only Ilya's firm grip on Shane's hip with his other hand kept him from violently arching off the bed. Shane let out a mewl as Ilya sucked hard.

Ilya grinned when he pulled his mouth off. He let go of Shane's balls and traced his fingers back to circle Shane's hole before lightly pressing a fingertip to Shane's entrance. He sounded incredibly smug when he asked, "Am I also first here?"

Shane nodded. "Did you ever use my gifts?" Shane nodded again, too embarrassed to speak. Ilya's smirk turned wicked, and Shane's stomach churned with a mix of dread and anticipation as Ilya asked his next question, "And my copy?"

"Jesus christ," Shane muttered. Ilya gleefully continued, "What was last time?"

Shane covered his face with his hands and muttered his answer into them. A wet lick at his hole startled him into pulling his hands away. "What was that? Did not hear," Ilya goaded.

"Yesterday," Shane felt like he was going to die.

"Aww, I missed you too, Hollander," Ilya crooned. Ilya's saliva around Shane's entrance allowed him to sink a fingertip in. "I cannot wait until we stop taking suppressants around each other so I can see how wet you will be for me."

Shane immediately missed the feeling of Ilya's fingers and mouth when he went to grab lube. A silver condom packet flashed in Shane's line of vision, "Condom or no?" Ilya asked.

"No condom." If he was going to do this, he was going to be all in. The ginger in Ilya's scent became scorching.

Oh yeah, no condom was definitely the choice.

Ilya stood at the end of the bed, taking his sweet time just raking his eyes over Shane while fisting his own cock, before yanking Shane toward him. His stomach swooped when Ilya bent both of his legs up, exposing Shane to him. Cold lube was drizzled on him before one finger gently pushed in. Shane gasped as Ilya found his prostate and teased it.

"So good for me," Ilya murmured, "I think you can take more." Ilya pushed a second finger in, then a third. Shane felt the pleasant burn of being stretched. He may have fucked himself with a dildo yesterday to try and get Ilya out of his system, but this felt nothing like anything he'd ever done to himself, heat or no heat.

Shane let out a choked moan as Ilya curled his fingers, eyes intent on Shane's face, absorbing every micro-expression as he learned Shane's body. When Ilya pulled his fingers out, Shane let out an embarrassing, quiet whine. "My omega, so needy for me," Ilya chuckled.

Shane felt the blunt head of Ilya's cock being lined up at his entrance. He eyed all nine glorious inches of Ilya's dick with wide eyes. It was one thing to experience it as inanimate silicone, but another to . . . Shane licked his lips.

"Is good thing we know it already fits," Ilya said smugly, before leaning down to bite Shane's ear and murmur, "I already opened you up for me."

"Fuck you, Rozanov," Shane retorted, still unable to get over the embarrassment of being so desperate for Ilya that he'd fucked himself with *the* dildo outside of a heat yesterday.

He gasped as Ilya nipped his neck and pinched his left nipple, hard, in reproach. Ilya pulled his face up to watch Shane's as he brought his other hand up and squeezed Shane's chest. Ilya pinched both of Shane's nipples between his fingers and tugged sharply, making Shane arch as he moaned. A pleased smile played across Ilya's face.

He let go and lined himself up with Shane's entrance. Shane let out a slow breath as Ilya pushed in. They both groaned as they felt a small piece of the tattered bond snap into place.

"Is okay?" Ilya breathed. Shane nodded, and Ilya began slowly thrusting in. When Shane began to push back against him, Ilya picked up the pace and pulled one of Shane's legs over

his shoulder. The deeper angle and bruising grip Ilya had on his thigh almost pushed Shane over the edge.

"Don't," Ilya snarled, "You come when I say."

A bolt of pleasure shot through him at his alpha's command. "Alpha, please," Shane moaned desperately. He was so close, and his body felt almost unbearably alive with sensation as it anticipated what was going to come next. Ilya leaned down to kiss Shane, their tongues sliding together. The kisses turned desperate and open-mouthed, sliding down Shane's neck as Ilya's hips stuttered from their punishing rhythm.

Shane found and sucked hard on the bite he'd left on Ilya five long years ago. Ilya lifted his head from Shane's neck just long enough to order, "Come for me, omega."

Shane bit down just as Ilya sunk his teeth into Shane in the exact same, fated spot. Shane's vision went white. He barely felt his spurts of come hit their stomachs as his orgasm was overshadowed by the ecstasy of the mating bond finally snapping fully into place.

Shane panted as wave after wave of pleasure crested through him. All of his senses sharpened to almost a painful degree, and he screamed.

Adoring kisses pressed to his forehead, eyes, nose, lips, and whatever else Ilya could reach brought Shane back to the present.

His eyes fluttered open to gaze into Ilya's. Shane smiled, feeling his eyes get wet. They were one. They were complete. The pain and discomfort that had lingered since they'd made the best and stupidest decision of their lives was gone.

"Mate," Shane murmured against Ilya's lips.

July 2017 - Montreal

Ilya smiled down at the grumpy omega trying to bury himself deeper into their nest. He gently tugged on the jersey Shane was using to cover his head, unsurprised to see that it was the first jersey he'd ever sent Shane.

When Shane had shyly shown him the nest he'd put together for their first shared heat in the summer of 2014, Ilya had broken down seeing the evidence of the best and worst five years of his life tucked neatly into Shane's nest. Perfectly neat and ordered, just like his mate.

Shane had kept *everything*. Ilya blurted out the words he'd been itching to say since their mating, "I love you."

He hadn't felt that loved since his mother had died.

The nest now was much fuller than it had been three years ago, filled with new memories they'd made together as a mated pair.

Ilya pulled the jersey off and kissed the frown lines away as Shane moaned a long, "Nooo." Ilya laughed and enjoyed the shiver that danced across Shane's skin as his breath ghosted his ear, "Good omegas need protein."

"Dnwanna be good," Shane slurred. Ilya could see the moment the idea popped into Shane's head, and he widened his eyes innocently, "Will you have to punish me?"

Ilya suppressed a laugh and made an exaggerated sad face, "No, I will just be very sad." Shane's pretty lips turned down into a disappointed pout. Ilya couldn't resist kissing them, and they kissed contentedly for several minutes before Ilya remembered that he was supposed to be on a mission.

He pulled away, and Shane whined. "Out. Kitchen. Food. Now." He ordered. And because Shane thrived on praise and positive reinforcement, and Ilya enjoyed making him blush, he purred, "Good boy," when Shane finally rolled out of the nest.

Ilya wasn't disappointed when a cute red flush made Shane's pretty freckles stand out even more.

It took monumental effort, but Ilya resisted the urge to roll his eyes and say 'I told you so,' when Shane absolutely devoured the tuna melt. Ilya was a good, attentive alpha, who only made Shane his favorite foods during heats, and yet, his picky little zolotse seemed to doubt him every single time.

When Shane finished eating, and Ilya could see the glazed, needy look come back over his face, Ilya tossed him over his shoulder and began making his way back to their nest. He slapped Shane's ass when he squirmed, which, he realized a second too late, was exactly what Shane had wanted.

Shane let out a pleased gasp, and Ilya unceremoniously dumped him back on the bed. "Hmm, what should I do with my little omega who does not stay still?"

"Please, alpha, please," Shane begged.

"You beg so pretty for me, Shane," Ilya murmured, admiring the desperate, needy mess that was his mate in their nest. "But I do not know what you want."

Shane keened, "Tie me up and fuck me ,alpha, Ilya, please," he begged, crawling his way down the bed to where Ilya was already standing, restraints in hand. Shane knew exactly what he was doing when he arched his back and placed open-mouth kisses on Ilya's already painfully hard cock.

Ilya hissed out a long, "Fuuuck," as he pulled himself away from Shane's divine mouth. Just like he knew Shane liked it, he roughly flipped Shane onto his front and secured his wrists to the headboard with the soft leather cuffs. Shane let out a delighted, "Yes," when he tugged on the restraints, and they didn't give.

Ilya ran his fingers between the cuffs and Shane's wrists to double-check them before settling himself behind Shane. He was absolutely glistening with slick. Ilya, like with most things, let it go straight to his head.

"So wet for me," he murmured reverently, sliding his fingers along Shane's hole, pushing lightly against his puckered opening. Ilya kept lightly sliding his fingers, touching everything but what Shane wanted him to, until Shane pulled at the restraints as he tried to chase Ilya's hand.

Three fingers slid in easily—Ilya had already knotted him several times. He gently spread his fingers out and moved them in and out, twisting his hand, as Shane whimpered and gasped below him. He came as Ilya curled the fingers, just the way Shane liked it, against his prostate.

But Ilya wasn't done with him. He was pretty sure he could wring another orgasm out of Shane before he knotted him again. Ilya slid a fourth finger in. Shane bucked, and Ilya grinned as he moved his fingers in and out. He loved pushing Shane's limits.

He pulled his fingers away when Shane's pleading turned into one long slurred, "Fuck me, alpha please, Ilya, please," on repeat. Ilya groaned at the exquisite feeling of sliding his cock into Shane during a heat. He could die here and now and be happy.

Pushing more of Shane's buttons, Ilya gripped his hip hard in one hand and buried his other in Shane's hair, yanking his head back. Shane stuttered out a gasp, and Ilya began pounding into him.

Shane's hands flexed in the cuffs as Ilya tugged on his hair in time with his thrusts. There was one thing that could make it better. He let go of Shane's hip, running the hand up to press gently on the sides of Shane's throat as he whispered in a low, throaty voice, "Will you take more for me?"

Shane's nod was frantic, and Ilya crooned, "Such a good boy for me," before pushing back up. Ilya slid the hand that was in Shane's hair to grip the back of Shane's neck, where a nice bruise from Ilya biting and sucking earlier was starting to develop. He pressed just hard enough for Shane to ride the edge of pain. Shane squirmed and panted under him.

His other hand traced and teased the rim of Shane's entrance. Ilya pushed the tip of one finger in, groaning when he felt himself fuck against it as he slid in and out of Shane. Shane pushed back, demanding more, and Ilya added a second finger, pushing both in, in time with his thrusts.

Shane let out a choked sob and writhed. Ilya gently scraped the nails of his hand on Shane's neck down his back and back up when he leaned over Shane to taunt darkly, "I think you can take my hand next time."

Shane screamed as he came, his shoulders heaving from the force of the dry sobs being torn from his throat.

Ilya felt every flutter of Shane's inner muscles as he came, and it was enough to push Ilya over the edge.

The world went hazy for a few moments as Ilya came with a hoarse yell, his own chest heaving in time with Shane's.

Ilya reached up and undid the cuffs before turning them so that they were spooning on the mattress. He gently murmured praises in Shane's ear as he massaged first his wrists, then his arms and shoulders.

Shane lay limp, spent, and content in his arms.

Ilya fucking loved his life.

Epilogue

March 2021 - Montreal

"There are few things in life that I absolutely can't stand," Roger Crowell said. There was a dangerous scowl on his face. "One thing I hate is surprises. Another is disloyalty. And another is *liars*."

And gay, omega, hockey players, Ilya wanted to add.

"But the thing I hate most," Crowell continued, "is being embarrassed. Especially when the League is embarrassed."

His glare was icy as he looked between Shane and Ilya. Shane seemed frozen to the spot, so Ilya took over. He shrugged carelessly, "That does sound bad," he said mildly.

Ilya had to fight to keep the smirk off his face as Crowell's face turned a violent shade of red. Not at all the pretty shade of pink Shane's face turned when Ilya was fucking him.

He needed to stop thinking about fucking Shane, or he'd get hard in the Commissioner's office. *That* definitely wouldn't help their situation. He zoned out as he tried to think about unsexy things.

His brother, his father.

Yeah, those were definitely boner killers.

Ilya tuned back in to hear Shane quietly say, "Ilya and I never lied to the League. I said I had a mate on my paperwork. That's all that was required."

Spit was flying from Crowell's mouth as he bit out viciously, "I am *aware* of the accommodations we made for players with your *condition*." Ilya scowled. "I am also aware how much of a fucking mistake that was. If the Committee hadn't made a fucking exception to protect your *privacy*. I'd have known your *mate* was fucking Ilya ROZANOV, AND NEVER LET YOU GET DRAFTED!" Crowell yelled. His face was now a violent shade of purple, and he was breathing hard.

Ilya exchanged a look with Shane. He was surprised how well Shane was holding it together. Well enough to shoot 'don't you fucking dare' at Ilya with his eyes, while Ilya did his best not to laugh and antagonize the Commissioner even more.

"I think we've heard enough," Shane's voice was steely. God, Ilya was so proud of his mate. "We're not some naive rookies you can intimidate, so here's what's going to happen. You will not retaliate. We will come back and have all-star seasons again next year. And if you do fuck with our careers," Shane menaced, "we will sue the shit out of you and the League."

Crowell seemed to take a moment to compose himself, because when he opened his mouth, it was to quietly threaten, "You do that, and no team will ever sign you after that. Your careers would be over regardless."

And this was the part of the conversation Ilya must have missed thinking about his boner because Crowell hissed, "I am offering you the only option that will save your careers—deny that you and Rozanov are in a . . . relationship, say it was all just a prank between friends who thought it would be funny to *prank* the world into thinking that two rivals might be mates. Or watch your legacies and careers be obliterated. Choose carefully."

There was a long, tense moment where Ilya was pretty sure Shane was trying to kill Crowell with just his eyes. Shane abruptly stood and grabbed Ilya's hand. "I choose my *mate*." Ilya watched with petty delight as Crowell's face twisted in disgust.

As soon as the elevator doors closed, Shane had Ilya's face in his hands, "I'm so sorry if I took over that I—"

Ilya didn't let him finish the sentence as he kissed him hard, backing Shane into the elevator wall.

"That was hottest thing I have ever seen," Ilya breathed against Shane's lips.

Shane was getting anything he wanted when they got home, and for the rest of their lives.

Bonus

June 2022 - Montreal

Shane had one hand braced flat on Ilya's chest and the other tangled in Ilya's hair as he pressed a hot, open-mouthed kiss to Ilya's mouth. They were breathing hard, breaths mingling. Shane was riding Ilya's dick like he was made for this.

Ilya liked to think that he was.

He had no idea how he'd managed to talk Shane into a quick fuck before Hayden and Jackie were supposed to arrive for dinner, but he wasn't about to look at the gift horse's teeth.

Ilya squeezed his hands where they gripped Shane's ass, and Shane moaned into Ilya's mouth.

The moan cut off with a squeak when Hayden's horrified, "Oh *my GOD*," broke through the silence. Shane tumbled off the couch in his haste to grab a blanket to cover himself.

Hayden was staring, wide-eyed at them, while Jackie held a casserole dish and stood grinning from ear to ear. "The door was open, and we were only a like ten minutes early—" Hayden babbled, as he turned more and more red.

Jackie winked at them as she grabbed Hayden's elbow and pushed him back out of the living room. They heard a distant, wounded, "I'm never going to unsee that."

Shane sat up. "This is *your* fault," Shane hissed, jabbing a finger in Ilya's chest, "you did that on *purpose*!"

Ilya shrugged, "Maybe he will learn something for Jackie."

Shane grabbed a pillow and tried to smother Ilya. Ilya laughed.

Yeah, his life was pretty fucking good.

End Notes

Blew more dust off of the mother tongue for this one. Translations (and explanations):

Hanging noodles on someone's ears (вешать лапшу на уши) - lying/feeding someone bs/pulling on someone's leg

Golubchik (голубчик) - dear/honey/little dove (usually an endearment for men)

Zolotse (золотце) - sweetheart/treasure (little gold-literally)

Don't look a gift horse in its teeth (дарёному коню в зубы не смотрят) - What it sounds like, the English equivalent is don't look a gift horse in its mouth

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