the space between

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by animeboysruinedmylife

Summary

> “The fuck are you wearing, Roz?”
>
> Ilya jerked his head up and turned around. Cliff Marleau was staring at him with a puzzled expression.
>
> “A t-shirt, Marly,” Ilya said. “You’ve heard of them?”
>
> “Why the fuck are you wearing a Metros shirt though?” Marleau crossed his arms across his chest.
>
> *What?*
>
> Ilya was about to retort, something about Marleau taking too many hits to the head, but when he glanced down, he was surprised, then horrified to see the red and blue Montreal Metros logo in the dead centre of his white shirt.
>
> Shane’s white shirt.
>
> *Fuck.*

Notes

> my small offering to the church of Hollanov before i lose my mind with episode 6 😔
> A very slight canon divergence from ep 4 where maybe Shane doesn't get freaked out and leave Ilya's house. Though he does still leave in a hurry... and that's where the fun begins :)

See the end of the work for more notes

There weren't many things to like about Boston, but getting to wake up in Ilya Rozanov's bed was undoubtedly the best one. Though Shane's also always liked that bridge between Boston and Cambridge. A distant second.

Rozanov – no, *Ilya* – looked much softer in sleep, his curls fanned out around his head like a halo. The gold cross he wore around his neck rose and fell with his slow and steady breathing. He almost looked innocent like this. Shane nearly made himself laugh with that thought. *Yeah, right.*

They'd never done this before – fallen asleep and spent the night together. Shane actually couldn't remember the last time he'd shared a bed with *anyone*. With his last girlfriend, maybe. Or maybe it was that time they'd played in Vancouver and the hotels had been booked up, so he'd had to share a bed with Hayden. Which had sucked, because Hayden fucking flails in his sleep. Jackie deserved some kind of award for putting up with him.

Waking up in the same bed as Ilya was different. It was different getting to see him like this, so unguarded, so at peace here in his bedroom, looking fucking *angelic* in the morning sunlight filtering through his curtains.

What would it be like – that fantasy life where he got to wake up every day next to Ilya Rozanov? Shane allowed himself a moment to think about it. Lazy weekend mornings where he woke up with strong arms around him. He'd try to keep still, so he didn't wake Ilya (he obviously doesn't know, but imagines Ilya is a deep sleeper).

In that life, Shane decided, he'd read the paper in bed in the morning. When Ilya woke, he'd make fun of Shane's reading glasses, and Shane would tease Ilya about his snoring, even though he didn't. They'd laugh, and tease some more, maybe fuck, the kind of sex that felt indulgent and unhurried. And then they'd have breakfast. Ilya would cook, using way too many pots and pans, and Shane would clean all of them up. Time wouldn't matter. They'd have nowhere to be, after all. No one to hide from.

In *this* life, Shane shook his head, the fantasy dissipating in front of him. There was no world in which that would even be a sliver of possibility. There were no lazy weekends for them. They didn't live in the same city. They weren't even together. They weren't *anything.* Shane had played that conversation in his head more times than he could count, and every time, it ended with his heart sinking. Sometimes Ilya laughed in his face. Sometimes he got angry and left. Sometimes he looked heartbroken too. *We can't,* he'd say, looking down at his feet. *You know we can't.*

That one always hurts the most.

Ilya stirred in his sleep, letting out a sound halfway between a sigh and a groan, and Shane turned back around so he didn't get caught staring.

"Morning," he heard behind him. Ilya's voice was thick with sleep, his accent rolling the R in a familiar way that made Shane smile. A hand snaked its way around Shane's waist, coming up to settle against his sternum.

“Morning,” Shane said, putting his hand over Ilya’s.

“You were watching me sleep.” Ilya said – it wasn’t really a question.

“No I wasn’t,” Shane said quickly, but Ilya tutted at him, clicking his tongue softly.

“I’m sharing my bed with a pervert,” Ilya said, and Shane turned back over to see the Russian grinning at him, one eye still closed.

“I’m not,” Shane said.

Ilya shrugged. “It’s okay. I don’t mind.”

He poked his hand out from under the covers to slide a finger up the bridge of Shane’s nose and between his eyes. “I like this,” he said, smoothing the pad of his index finger over the wrinkle between Shane’s eyebrows.

Shane frowned slightly, undoubtedly making the lines more pronounced. “My wrinkle?”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

“It’s cute,” Ilya said simply. He kept running his finger over it, up and down, over and over. It was very soothing, and Shane closed his eyes.

“It’s only there when I’m annoyed at you.”

“I know.”

“You like when I’m annoyed at you?” He opened his eyes. Ilya was grinning at him.

“Mm, not *only* when you’re annoyed. But that happens a lot.”

Shane reached up to bat Ilya’s hand away, but Ilya was too fast, grabbing Shane’s wrist with his other hand.

“I also like these,” he continued, moving his finger down to sweep a line under Shane’s eyes, up his cheekbone.

“My freckles?”

“Yes,” Ilya confirmed. “Also cute.”

Shane smiled. “Anything else?”

“Mm, yes.” Ilya traced his way down Shane’s jaw and rubbed his thumb against Shane’s lip. His mouth fell open, just a little, maybe on instinct, and Ilya slipped the tip of his thumb into Shane’s mouth.

“This,” he said, watching where his thumb had disappeared.

Shane felt himself frown again. “You think my tongue is cute?” he asked, the words coming out slightly garbled around Ilya’s thumb.

Ilya’s gaze flicked up to meet his eyes. “Not cute,” he said seriously. “Talented. This is very good tongue.”

Shane rolled his eyes and moved his head back, making Ilya’s thumb fall from his mouth.

“Oh my god, Hollander, the things this tongue can do!” Ilya covered his eyes with his hand, falling back against his pillow dramatically. “I can’t believe it! Is maybe your best feature!”

“Fuck off,” Shane pinched Ilya’s thigh under the covers, and Ilya rolled back over, reaching around to grab Shane’s ass.

“Okay, okay,” he said, “is close second to this. *This* is my favourite.”

“Better,” Shane said. “What about-”

Ilya slid his hand up to Shane’s hip and flipped him around, pulling him right against his chest. “Don’t worry,” he said in Shane’s ear. His hand was wandering lower again. “I didn’t forget about Little Shane. He gets bronze medal.”

“Excuse me?” Shane protested. He tried to turn around, but Ilya was holding him tight. “He is not *little*-”

“Is little compared to you, yes?” Ilya said, as if this were a perfectly ordinary conversation.

Shane squirmed in Ilya’s arms and huffed when he couldn’t move. “How would you like it if I started calling your dick ‘Little Ilya’?”

He could *feel* Ilya smile behind him. “No, he is not little.”

“Fuck you,” Shane laughed.

“Mm maybe after breakfast,” Ilya said, his mouth pressed against Shane’s skin. “I’m hungry.”

“What time is it?”

“Do I look like clock, Hollander?” Ilya pulled him closer, nuzzling his nose into the back of Shane’s neck.

“Asshole,” Shane muttered, though he was too endeared for the word to have any real bite to it. He stretched his arm out, reaching for his phone on the nightstand. Still half-asleep, or maybe being lulled back into an in-between state by the soft kisses Ilya was pressing into his back, it took Shane longer than it should have to read the numbers on his phone. *8:51.*

“Shit!”

He flailed his arms under the sheets, pushing them away and whacking Ilya in the chest in the process.

“Ow, what the fuck?” Ilya sat up, more slowly. He rubbed at his collarbone.

“It’s ten to nine!” Shane half-shouted, scanning the floor for his clothes. Fuck, they were all over the room. What had they been thinking last night? He grabbed the pair of boxer briefs that most looked like his and tugged them on.

Ilya was watching him with a bored expression. “Okay. And?”

Shane snatches a pair of pants off the floor and pulled them on, hopping around when his foot gets stuck. “I’m gonna be late for morning skate.”

“Oh my god, relax,” Ilya drawled, leaning back on his elbows. “We skate first, and you don’t see me panic-hopping around room.”

Shane glared at him, standing on one leg trying to force his socks on. “Well you aren’t thirty minutes away from your fucking hotel. Plus I have to shower, and-”

“So shower here,” Ilya said, waving his arm towards the ensuite – the very nice ensuite they’d enjoyed thoroughly the night before. *Focus, Shane.*

“That’s a bad idea, and you know it,” Shane said. He turned around, trying to locate his shirt. Ah, there. He pulled it off the windowsill and tugged it over his head. “I’ll see you later.”

“Hollander, wait.” Ilya called, but Shane was already out the door, phone in hand. He jogged down the stairs and grabbed his jacket off the back of the couch. *Shoes. Where the fuck are my shoes?*

“Okay, thank you,” Ilya said into his phone. He walked down the stairs at a much more leisurely pace, black sweats hanging off his hips in a way that should be illegal when Shane was in this much distress.

“I called cab,” he said, tossing his phone onto the kitchen island and leaning forward on his arms.

“Thanks,” Shane said, shoving his arms into his jacket. “To, uh-”

“Yes, to the corner.” Ilya rolled his eyes. “Is not my first time.”

“Obviously,” Shane said, and allowed himself a small grin, which Ilya reciprocated.

“Too bad you’re in rush to leave, Hollander,” Ilya said with a sigh, pushing off the counter and turning to open his fridge. He looked over his shoulder. “I was going to make you breakfast.”

Shane laughed, exhaling sharply through his nose. Something in his heart twinged. “Next time, I guess.”

“Yes,” Ilya said, turning back to his open fridge. “Next time.”

“Okay, uh…” Shane tucked his hands into the pockets of his jacket. “Well, I guess I’ll… see you out there, huh?” Ilya shut the fridge, setting a container of yogurt down on the counter. He didn’t say anything, just stared. Shane could feel the weight of his gaze.

He cleared his throat and looked away.

“Okay,” he said, and headed for the door.

“Wait,” he heard Ilya say behind him for the second time. “You are forgetting something?”

Shane turned around. “What?”

Ilya grabbed him by the back of the head with one hand and pulled him in for a kiss. Shane responded on muscle memory alone, parting his lips to feel Ilya’s between his for a few fleeting seconds before Ilya leaned back.

“Good,” he said simply, flashing Shane a smile. “Okay, now you can go. You’re going to be late.”

Shane rolled his eyes. “I’m going.”

Ilya smacked Shane on the ass as he turned towards the door. “Enjoy walk of shame, Hollander.”

“Fuck you, Rozanov,” Shane called back, and pulled the front door shut behind him.

* * *

“Whoa, he lives!” Hayden said as Shane burst through their hotel room door, only slightly out of breath from running up the stairs. What should have been a twenty-eight minute ride had turned into over an hour in a cab that smelled like artificial pine trees, stuck in gridlock traffic. Definitely *not* on the list of things he liked about Boston.

Hayden waggled his eyebrows. “Someone’s in the same clothes they were in last night.”

‘Yeah, obviously,” Shane said, unzipping his jacket. “I wasn’t planning to stay, I just-”

“Hey, I’m not judging,” Hayden said. He went back to tying his laces and stood up. “I’m proud of you. All grown up and having one night stands-”

“It *wasn’t*,” Shane insisted, but Hayden just shook his head, smiling way too big for someone who was going to let this go.

But then he froze, that grin still plastered on his face but with a slight furrow to his brow.

“What?” Shane looked down instinctively, scanning himself for something he might have missed. His shoes were tied – normal. Pants were normal, if a bit wrinkled from spending approximately sixteen hours on the floor of Ilya’s bedroom. Shirt was normal – white, not stained with anything suspicious, maybe just a little bit sweaty, but nothing damning. He still smelled like Ilya’s sheets – definitely no time to shower now. He hoped Hayden wouldn’t notice.

Shane looked back up at Hayden, who was still giving him an odd smirk.

“Hayd, what?”

“Nothing, weirdo,” Hayden replied. After a beat, he looked up, meeting Shane’s eyes. He fixed his smile – normal. “Just glad you had a nice night with *Lily*.”

Shane rolled his eyes. “I told you, I was just meeting-”

“A friend,” Hayden interrupted, “I know, you said.” He grabbed his bag off his unmade bed. “Alright, well… we gotta go, so…are you gonna change, or-”

“No time,” Shane said. He threw some shit into a bag and zipped it up. “Let’s go.”

* * *

“The fuck are you wearing, Roz?”

Ilya jerked his head up and turned around. Cliff Marleau was staring at him with a puzzled expression. But that was nothing new. Cliff Marleau was a bit of a moron. Nice guy, but…

“A t-shirt, Marly,” Ilya said. “You’ve heard of them?”

“Why the fuck are you wearing a *Metros* shirt though?” Marleau crossed his arms across his chest.

What?

Ilya was about to retort, something about Marleau taking too many hits to the head, but when he glanced down, he was surprised, then horrified to see the red and blue Montreal Metros logo in the dead centre of his white shirt.

Shane’s white shirt.

Fuck.

It hadn't been intentional. Obviously. Ilya had taken his time in the shower after Shane had left, and just threw on the clothes he'd found littering his bedroom floor. He hadn't been wearing them for long yesterday anyway; it hadn't seemed like a big deal then.

Fuck, fuck, fuck.

Ilya looked up. "Is joke," he said coolly. "To get in their heads."

"That's kinda fucked," Marleau said, but turned back to his own locker. "Even for you."

"Rozy's playing mind games," Connors said, coming around the corner to slap Ilya on the shoulder. "Honestly, whatever it takes to kick Montreal down a peg or two. Should we all start wearing Metros shit?"

"Fuck that," Marleau snorted. "I'd rather sit on hot coals with my bare ass than wear a shitty Metros jersey."

"Can I watch?" Ilya raised an eyebrow, and Marleau scoffed.

"You fucking wish," he laughed. The mood shifted back to normal, once someone shouted across the room about playoffs, and Ilya slipped away.

He leaned on the counter of the bathroom, hands on either side of the sink and looked at himself in the mirror. Couldn't help but chuckle, just once. Seeing himself in a Metros shirt was so fucking surreal.

Did that mean Shane was in his shirt? It must. Ilya couldn't remember what he'd been wearing yesterday. Another white t-shirt, he guessed, if Shane had grabbed it by mistake. Selfishly, he hoped it was something with his name on it. The thought of Shane in something with Ilya's last name on the back was doing funny things to his insides, like cartwheels in his stomach.

Ilya pulled out his phone and snapped a picture in the mirror. He attached it to a text to Shane, thumb hovering over *Send*, but something made him pause. The thought of Shane seeing it and spiralling, maybe.

He slid his phone back into his pocket, and pulled the shirt over his head before heading back into the locker room.

It still smelled like Shane.

* * *

Shane was freaking out. He'd scarfed down two protein bars on the ride to the arena for morning skate, which had made him slightly nauseous. Too many people had noticed he was wearing the same outfit he'd flown in yesterday. And for some reason, Ilya hadn't texted him

yet. Not that that was weird, necessarily. It's just that he usually did, the morning of a game. Shane was trying not to dwell on it.

"Hollzy, did you see this?" JJ bounded into the locker room holding his phone.

Shane sighed. "Not now, JJ-"

"No, Cap, you're gonna wanna see this." Miity followed in behind JJ, dropping his coat on the bench. "What a fuckin' asshole."

"Who?" Hayden turned around, pulling his practice jersey over his head.

"Who do you think?" JJ made a face. "Rozanov."

Shane looked up. "What about him?"

JJ shoved his phone in Shane's face. "Some fans saw him showing up to morning skate in a Metros shirt. What kind of fucked up game is he playing?"

Shane squinted at the picture. It was blurry, clearly taken with a phone camera at max zoom, but it was unmistakable. Ilya Rozanov walking to the arena in a Montreal Metros shirt. A Metros shirt that had a very distinct orange stain on the hem in the vague shape of Lake Michigan, that Shane himself had left after a clumsy incident with his mom's new cold press juicer.

That was *his* fucking shirt.

"Oh god," he breathed out, unable to stop it from slipping out.

"Let me see," Hayden said, reaching across to take the phone. "Oh shit, that's… why?"

"Who knows?" JJ took his phone back. "But if he thinks he can fuck with us-"

Shane's focus started to fade, feeling his blood run cold. JJ's voice sounded like it was underwater. If Ilya was wearing his shirt… He unzipped his jacket, just a little bit, and snuck a look down, *praying* he wouldn't see what didn't want to see.

But there it was: a tiny black and yellow Raiders logo embroidered on the chest, right over his heart.

"Right, Hollzy?"

Shane swallowed a gasp, zipping his jacket back up in a flash. "Huh?"

JJ was staring at him, still holding his phone up. "You okay?"

Shane floundered for a moment, his mouth opening, then closing. Hayden took pity on him, slinging an arm around Shane's shoulders.

“Cap’s a little sleep deprived,” he said, grinning in Shane’s direction. “His Boston girl must’ve kept him up all night. Rozanov’s probably the *last* thing on his mind.”

Shane shook himself out of it. His heart was in his throat. “Yeah,” he said, then cleared his throat. “I’m good. Don’t worry about it boys, he’s just trying to shake us. Don’t let him make you lose focus.”

“That’s fuckin’ right!” JJ said, tapping Shane’s chest. “We’re gonna *kill* them tonight.”

“Hell yeah!” Hayden cheered. JJ wandered off, but Hayden kept his arm where it was. “You’re welcome, by the way,” he said, more quietly, just for Shane.

“Uh, yeah, thanks,” Shane said. “For…what?”

“For keeping your secret.”

Shane froze, then forced himself to clear his throat and look over at Hayden. “What secret?”

Hayden grinned and leaned in closer. “That you’re hooking up with a Raiders fan,” he whispered.

Shane could hear his heartbeat in his ears. He was flooded with the feeling of relief, and physically felt the tension in his shoulders disappear.

He shrugged Hayden’s arm off. “Yeah man, uh… thanks.”

Hayden turned back to his own locker. “This Lily better be hot,” he said.

Shane made a noncommittal sound, maybe a laugh, maybe not. He took a quick look over his shoulder to make sure no one was looking before unzipping his jacket and pulling his shirt over his head, inside out. He balled it up in his hand and shoved it deep into his bag.

Don’t lose focus.

* * *

“Tough night,” Hayden sighed. He tugged his toque down on his forehead.

“Yep.”

“Don’t let it get to you, man,” Hayden said. “No one really showed up tonight. Except Rozanov, I guess.”

“I guess,” Shane said.

His phone vibrated in his pocket.

Lily [10:51pm]:

Have you left yet?

Jane [10:51pm]:

No, heading for the bus.

"Four goals is insane though," Hayden continued. "I hope this doesn't become a thing. Him wearing our merch, I mean."

"Hope not," Shane said, still looking at his phone.

Lily [10:52pm]:

Come to lot F.

South side.

Shane looked up again, glancing around. A giant sign to his right read *Parking Lot G*.

"I, uh… I think I left something in the locker room," he said, stuffing his phone into his jacket pocket. "I'll meet you on the bus."

"Alright man," Hayden said, and continued on towards the bus idling by the gate.

Shane doubled back a little, ducking behind one of the white vans before cutting over towards the parking lot. He followed the curve of the arena until he spotted the giant red F. Ilya was standing just past it, leaning against his car – bright red and pretentious – and smoking a cigarette. Of course he was.

Shane walked over, glancing around to see if anyone else was around. It seemed to just be staff parking, but you could never be too sure.

"What do you want?" he asked as soon as he was within earshot. "We shouldn't-"

"Relax," Ilya said. He reached in through the open window of his car and handed Shane a white square. It took him a second to recognize it as his shirt, folded neatly into a tiny palm-sized square. "Thought you might want this back."

Shane grabbed the shirt and shoved it into his pocket. "Did you do that on purpose?" His tone comes out more accusatory than he'd intended.

Ilya rolled his eyes. “It was honest mistake, Hollander. You put on a shirt, I put on a shirt. They were wrong ones, big deal.”

“Someone took a picture of you in that, you know,” Shane said. “It’s all over the internet.”

“Then it was on purpose.” Ilya took another drag of his cigarette, blowing the smoke away from Shane. “I did it to fuck with your head. And look at that, it worked.” He smirked.

Shane breathed out a laugh. “You’re such an asshole.”

“You like it.”

He couldn’t really deny it, so Shane just shook his head. “Um, I can give you yours-” He started to unzip his bag, but Ilya shook his head.

“Is okay,” he said. “You keep it. As consolation prize.” He stuck his cigarette back in his mouth.

“Fuck off,” Shane said.

“You can give it to me next time,” Ilya continued. “We play you again in December.”

Shane bit the inside of his lip to keep from smiling. “Next time, huh?”

Ilya grinned around his cigarette. “Unless you are too busy for me?”

Shane did laugh at that. “Fuck you, Rozanov.”

“Mm, maybe next time.” Ilya winked at him. He took one last drag before dropping his cigarette butt to the ground and pressing it into the pavement with the heel of his shoe.

A side door to the arena banged open, and Shane jumped. Someone dragged a black garbage bag over the threshold and wrestled it into the dumpster.

“I should go,” Shane said. He didn’t want to.

“Okay,” Ilya said. “Have fun in New York.”

Shane turned away slowly. He wasn’t ready to leave, but he knew he couldn’t stay.

“Hollander,” Ilya called after him, and Shane stopped. He looked over his shoulder.

Ilya rubbed the space between his own eyebrows with one finger. “See you in December.”

Shane smiled. He glanced over to the side door, to make sure that arena employee had left before sticking his tongue out at Ilya.

And Ilya laughed, which surprised him. And then he got into his car and turned the key, the engine roaring to life. The headlights lit up Shane’s walk back around to the exit gate, where his team bus was waiting.

“All good?” Hayden asked when Shane dropped down into the seat next to him.

“Yeah,” Shane said, tugging his hood over his head. “All good.”

Shane’s pocket vibrated as the bus pulled out of the lot and towards the highway. After making sure Hayden’s eyes were closed, Shane pulled his phone out, keeping it angled into his chest.

This photo wasn’t blurry, taken under fluorescent lights at close range. It was easy to tell that it was Ilya Rozanov, in the Raiders’ locker room bathroom, wearing Shane Hollander’s stained Metros shirt.

Shane smiled to himself and saved the photo before replying.

Jane [11:03pm]:

Looks better on me.

Lily [11:04pm]:

I disagree.

It looks better on the floor.

End Notes

i can't wait to cry together when the last episode comes out 🥲

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