come unfold

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at https://archiveofourown.org/works/75699871.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Heated Rivalry (TV), Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander, Ilya Rozanov
Additional Tags:	Morning Sex, Cuddling & Snuggling, Kissing, Anal Sex, Hand Jobs, Semi-Public Sex, Feelings Realization, Yearning, so much fucking yearning, Idiots in Love, Boyfriends for a day, giving hollanov the day trip of my dreams, Little bit of angst, Mostly Sweet, Banter, Dual POV
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2025-12-13 Words: 7,791 Chapters: 1/1

come unfold

by alspancakes

Summary

"I want one day," Shane interrupted Ilya's inner meltdown with, really, the only acceptable response. "And then we can…" Shane trailed off. "Then we can, I don't know. Reset."

"Reset," Ilya repeated, unconvinced.

"Yeah."

It was another few moments of stunned silence before Ilya spoke again.

"We could go somewhere."

*

or, what if Shane decided to stay, that night… and then decided to miss his flight home the next day.

Notes

a couple things: i wrote this a few weeks ago and it was a while after i'd read the books. so i sort of… forgot? that they're supposed to be playing a game the next day?? i guess i remembered the tuna melt scene differently and thought they'd already played the game earlier that day/night. but who is here for the hockey in the first place… basically, just suspend your disbelief because in my mind those boys didn't have plans tomorrow. thanks.

additionally, not that its really important but: book canon stuff here, so the teams are the voyageurs and the bears, and they're in book!ilya's boston PENTHOUSE, not some fucking chestnut hill mansion apparently ?? god damn jacob where did you get the budget for THAT set

as a local it is very important to me that ilya living in boston enjoys all the benefits of my beautiful home... So here's how i think they would spend a day off on the north shore <3

title is from 'i know places' by lykke li

See the end of the work for more notes

Boston – November, 2016

"If I'm sleeping over, there is one thing you should know."

"Only one?" Rozanov peered down his nose at Shane, one knee on the mattress, one hand reaching to turn off the light. He was blissfully naked, and soft, too. Shane wondered if he'd ever, *ever,* seen this particular side of Ilya Rozanov. Naked and unaroused. Unguarded. The quick, correct answer was a resounding no. The comforter was all the way up to Shane's ears, his bare skin swaddled in Ilya's silky sheets.

"What is it, Hollander, do you wet the bed?"

"Jesus Christ," Shane rolled his eyes as Ilya flicked the light off, cloaking them both in darkness.

"And, what is this, '*if I am sleeping over',* hm? You are snug like a bug, Hollander. You will not leave now." He peeled the comforter back, tucking himself in beside Shane

Suddenly, Shane was very thankful for the dark of Ilya's bedroom. There was no way he could contain the smile that spread across his face at '*snug like a bug'.* There were certain English idioms that didn't quite make it all the way into Ilya's lexicon, and Shane found it adorable whenever he said a phrase that was *almost* correct.

And he *hated* that he found it so adorable.

"I hate morning breath," Shane confessed. He felt Ilya's snort of laughter on his face. "That's what you need to know."

"Okay."

Shane expected more from him, more banter, more back and forth. It was sort of their thing. To put it lightly.

"Okay?"

Ilya snorted again. "You think I am animal, Hollander?"

Shane could hear Ilya's smile as he spoke, and it made Shane feel warm and weak.

Shane, he wanted to say. *Call me Shane again.*

Even though it made my stomach drop. Even though it made me scared to wake up in the morning next to you. Just call me Shane again.

"You see I have toothbrush in my bathroom. Even a spare, just for you." Shane could see the light from the street lamps sparkle off Ilya's fake white teeth as he grinned. "Or, well, any *company."*

"Oh, fuck you, Rozanov," is what Shane actually said, groaning and shoving him away, only to feel strong arms wrap around him in return, burning like a furnace.

"Fuck you, too," Ilya replied, once they were nose to nose. "Now turn over so we can be spoons."

Shane did as he was told, feeling an odd mixture of comfort and excitement and dread swirling in his gut. In eight years, this was, somehow, the first time they'd done this. Sleeping together, yes, obviously, they'd never done that before. And Shane was trying hard not to panic about it. But, more than that, more than sleeping, even, was the part where they were under the sheets, skin to skin, *cuddled up* like they were the last two people on earth.

Maybe tomorrow they'd wake up and that would be true.

Shane almost wanted that. Wanted the world to just… end, around them. If that were the case, it would be a whole lot easier to let himself admit a few things, feel the feelings he'd been *feeling* for months now. Maybe even *years,* if he was being real with himself.

But Shane wasn't being real with himself. None of this felt real at all, actually, so Shane let himself go, bit by bit, until his eyelids felt heavy as lead and he drifted off to sleep, cradled in strong, warm arms.

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Ilya was never an early riser.

He groaned every time practice was scheduled for before nine in the morning, and contemplated quitting his job every time they had to board an early flight. There was simply nothing that required him to be awake before the sun, he thought. He'd made it this far, made it *very* far, in fact. Made it to the Stanley Cup stage, made it to NHL MVP. Nope, no one could tell him he needed to wake up early to *grind* for it. He already had it. The grind didn't need to start at six in the morning. The grind never *stopped* for him, so what was another few hours of sleep?

But, when Ilya awoke that morning with a mouthful of black hair, surrounded by the smell of sex and Shane, he was grateful to have woken so early. To have a moment alone, in the quiet.

To have *this.*

He hadn't actually expected Shane to stay the night. He'd hoped for it. Wished, maybe. He'd gone to the grocery store earlier in the day for food just in case, hadn't he? Replaced the sheets on his bed before the game and all.

He just really didn't think Shane would say yes.

He thought he'd fucked it, royally and completely, when he said his name. Called him *Shane* in the heat of the moment, *moaned it,* crying out for him as he came in Shane's hand like some pathetic baby.

But then, he'd heard his own name in exchange, and it was the sweetest sound.

He watched the panic grow behind Shane's big, deep eyes, the implication of everything they'd just done and said. Shane looked at him like a doe caught in a snare, staring down the barrel of a gun.

Ilya was so certain he'd ruined it, ruined their stupid, horrible, wonderful *whatever* they were. It was like reading Shane's mind, watching his expression morph from arousal to terror to something like… *wonder.*

They didn't talk about it, because of course they didn't. They cleaned up in silence, Ilya walking on eggshells trying not to scare Shane away. It seemed to be working by the time he climbed into Ilya's bed, relief washing over his face as he sank down against the pillows.

Ilya could hardly recall a time he'd ever slept so soundly. In his entire life.

And now, as he woke from dreaming, Ilya inhaled Hollander's heady scent straight from the source, his breath fanning out in his dark, soft hair. He was hard as a rock already, and when he realized that waking up with Shane in his *bed* meant *morning sex,* he felt like his dick could have drilled for diamonds.

But Hollander had one rule.

And though it pained him to extricate himself from the cozy cocoon that he and Shane had created, Ilya really, *really,* wanted to kiss him.

He was back in a flash, curling himself around the warm body in his bed. Shane started to stir, which Ilya took as a sign to dig in.

He rocked his hips forward as his lips traveled down the column on Shane's pale neck, his breath ghosting over the maddening freckles along his broad shoulders. Shane let out a breathy moan, like it'd been punched out of his chest. Ilya's eyes fluttered shut as he let himself just *feel;* feel Shane's muscular back warm against his chest, feel Shane's strong pecs beneath his palms, feel Shane's plush ass rubbing up against Ilya's cock.

Shane, Shane, Shane.

He was so close to gasping his name again.

God, Ilya felt crazy.

"Fuck me," Shane grunted out, his voice sleep-rough and sexy. *"Oh.* Please."

Ilya pawed at Shane beneath the sheets, groping and grabbing and luxuriating in the feel of his warm, smooth skin. His fingers grazed down the cleft of Shane's ass.

"I'm still kinda loose," Shane murmured, "from last night. Just, *ah,* c'mon."

Ilya had to grit his teeth and squeeze his eyes shut to stop himself from coming on the spot, just from rutting against Shane's ass.

Fuck.

Fuck.

Ilya couldn't allow this to remain a one-time thing. He *needed* this again. He brought his fingers to his mouth and slicked them with spit.

Shane sighed as Ilya ran his fingers over his hole, whimpering a shy '*fuck'* as the tip of his middle finger slipped inside. Then Shane cheated his hips just a touch, lifting his leg and putting himself on display for Ilya.

This was new, too. This position. This tender, vulnerable, *sensuous* position that conveyed a certain intimacy they'd never reached before. To fuck like this, half-dreaming and slotted together like pieces of a puzzle.

Ilya wanted to savor every single part of this moment. Shane's sweet little moans, the soft wet heat of his entrance, the way he clenched so desperately. He *wanted* to savor it, but he *needed* to plow into him. Without much preamble, Ilya pulled away, reaching into the drawer of his bedside table, pulling out lube and a condom. Ilya was pretty sure he'd sell his soul to be able to fuck Shane raw, especially now, but he didn't want to take a mile when Shane had already given him an inch. As mutual as things seemed right now, Ilya would do everything he could to keep the status quo. They could broach the condom thing some other time. He had wanted to feel Shane with nothing between them for, well, years. He could wait a little longer.

In a second Ilya was wrapped up, slicking lube up and down his length, notching the tip against Shane's hole.

"Need you," Shane breathed out, his hips twitching over Ilya's cock.

"Yes," Ilya hissed in reply, sliding home in one quick thrust.

"Fuck, Ilya, fuck, oh my *god,"* Shane cried out, voice muffled, face half buried in the pillows.

Ilya.

"Oh, God." Ilya wrapped his arms around Shane's chest, holding each of his strong pecs in the opposite hand, constricting tighter and tighter as he continued to thrust. "So fucking good,

Shane.” Ilya let one hand slide down from where he held Shane’s chest towards his cock, finding him impossibly hard and *wet.*

Shane always got so fucking *wet.* Ilya moaned in his ear just thinking about it, how with just a few minutes of teasing, Shane’s cock was already drooling for him.

Ilya swirled his thumb around the precome welling in Shane’s slit, circling the sensitive head with the slick pad of his finger, paying special attention to the underside just like Shane liked. God, Ilya wanted to give him *everything,* needed him *everywhere.* Wanted Shane in his mouth, wanted to tease him with his tongue, wanted to swallow his load and kiss his mouth and come inside and keep him full and warm.

“Yes,” Shane whined as Ilya started to stroke him, his fist matching the rhythm of his thrusts. “Oh, fuck, Ilya, *please* don’t stop,” he gasped. *“Holy shit, Ilya.”*

Ilya, Ilya. Shane kept saying his name, over and over like now that the dam was broken, he couldn’t stop.

“Never,” Ilya growled in Shane’s ear, chest slicked with sweat against his back. “Want to feel you coming on me, Shane. Want to *feel* you. *Fuck*.”

“I’m so close,” Shane cried. “Oh my god, Ilya, *oh–”*

And then he was coming, beautiful and hot and wet in Ilya’s fist. He pulsed around Ilya’s cock, hole spasming violently as shudders wracked his body.

Ilya couldn’t hold back any longer, white hot bliss flooding through him as soon as he felt Shane let go. He let out a long, low moan as he emptied himself inside Shane, his wet lips at the nape of Shane’s neck, teeth dragging against the damp skin.

Shane’s breathing was heavy and erratic, his heart throbbing like a rabbit’s inside his ribcage. Ilya sucked in a deep breath against Shane’s sweat-soaked skin, trying to bring himself back

under control. He had a wild thought that he might actually *cry,* but he banished it as soon as it came. He couldn't. Wouldn't.

It was, undoubtedly, the most intimate they'd ever been. After nearly eight years of this, it was hard to believe there was more to uncover between them. But this… this was *all* new. And somehow, it made Ilya realize that in eight fucking years, they'd barely scratched the fucking surface.

Still connected, Ilya pressed open-mouthed kisses to Shane's shoulders and neck, feeling the body in front of him start to settle back down. Ilya wondered idly if they'd fall back asleep like that; still connected, sticky and sated. He couldn't deny that he'd like that. He'd like that a lot more than he should.

But it wasn't to be.

"We always make such a mess," Shane murmured, a deep breath heaving through his chest.

"Mmm," Ilya hummed. He didn't have a comeback. Didn't want one. He didn't want the moment to end.

But Shane was probably uncomfortable. So Ilya slipped out and listened to Shane hiss at the loss of contact, pressing himself up and out of the bed.

"Shower," Ilya said plainly. "Will feel better."

Shane scoffed a laugh. "Better than I feel right now?"

Ilya couldn't help the smirk that curled his lips. Again, he was left speechless.

The shower was an honest one, with little to no funny business, which Ilya convinced himself was fine. They were both tired and spent. They just kissed, like the night before. So much… *kissing.* As they toweled off in his bedroom, Ilya realized Shane didn't have a change of clothes. So he tossed Shane a pair of team-issued sweatpants and a plain black t-shirt. Unfortunately, Ilya's dick was *very* interested in seeing Shane in his clothing, watching him move around his apartment in black and yellow of the Boston Bears. But Ilya couldn't bring himself to say anything, not even something sly or wily, afraid Shane would spook.

Ilya left his bedroom to find Shane ducked low, peering into his half-empty fridge.

"You need something, Hollander?"

Shane looked over his shoulder and rolled his eyes, pulling the carton of eggs out of Ilya's fridge. His heart may have hammered in his chest at the scene before him. Unceremoniously, Shane opened and closed his kitchen cabinets, looking for a frying pan, Ilya was sure. He wanted to help him out, he *did,* but there was something so undeniably adorable about Hollander getting all worked up in his kitchen.

"Do you even use your kitchen?"

Ilya laughed under his breath as Shane's back was turned, standing on his tiptoes to reach for the cabinet above his stove.

"Mmm, you cannot reach, Hollander? Allow me," Ilya said at last, finally stepping in to fetch a pan, reaching over Shane's head.

It was a fair call-out; Ilya barely cooked. He'd displayed his cooking ability the night before with the tuna melts, and though it wasn't *nothing,* he wasn't exactly spectacular in the kitchen. The only pan he ever used was in the dishwasher, and Ilya had yet to run it, so. Shane had to get into the unused inventory.

Shane grabbed the pan from him with a scowl. He puttered towards the stovetop, setting the pan down and opening the carton of eggs. Ilya was content to stand back and watch Shane go, but there was toast to be made, so he got to work.

They ate in relative silence, the inevitable goodbye hanging over their heads. How they would ever come back from this one, Ilya had no idea. He wasn't ready to say goodbye.

But he had to rip the bandaid off.

"When do you leave?"

Shane pushed around a pale yellow clump of scrambled eggs around his plate with his fork, eyes down.

"Um," he murmured. "Soon."

Ilya swallowed and nodded. He peered at the clock. It was nearing nine in the morning. Hotel checkout would be eleven, maybe noon if the Voyageurs were lucky and their travel coordinator had asked for a late checkout. Shane would need to leave soon, actually. Very soon.

Fuck.

"Unless," Shane added, even quieter. His eyes roamed the plate.

"Unless?"

Unless? Ilya didn't dare to dream.

“Unless what, Hollander?”

“I don’t have practice today,” he said, voice small, gaze still on the last bits of his untouched food. “Or tomorrow.”

Ilya’s eyebrows jumped. *What?*

“It’s remembrance day in Canada tomorrow,” Shane explained, finally looking up. “It’s, like, a holiday. So. We’re off.”

“I see,” Ilya replied, praying to every god he could think of that his voice remained even. “So, you are saying–”

“I could miss my flight,” Shane interrupted, sounding serious.

“Miss your flight,” Ilya repeated back, like it was the first time he’d ever heard those words strung together. It was *certainly* the first time he’d heard them from Shane Hollander.

“And fly back tomorrow.”

“Fly back tomorrow,” Ilya parroted again, utterly dumbstruck.

“Tomorrow night, even,” Shane went on, his eyes growing wide, still not smiling. Almost like he was figuring something out in real time, like he had no idea what words were about to come out of his own mouth.

“Hollander,” Ilya began. “Are you feeling okay?” He reached his hand forward, as though to check Shane’s forehead for a fever, but Shane caught him by the wrist and swatted his hand away.

“Shane,” he interrupted, eyes soft now, pleading. “You… called me Shane last night.”

It was perhaps as close to an acknowledgement as they were going to get. Whatever this… *thing* was that had grown between them, this was as close as they could get to addressing it.

Ilya shook his head, in utter disbelief. “Shane…” He couldn’t help the nervous smile that formed on his face. He squeezed Shane’s thigh and let go. “You will not like this idea in a few hours, I think. You are thinking with wrong head.”

Now a timid smile crept across Shane’s lips, maybe a perfect mirror of Ilya’s own expression. Incredulous and unsure of the path they stood at the edge of.

“I have two days off,” Shane reiterated, slowly and clearly, then shrugged. “I want to spend it… like this.”

Like this.

Not *‘with you’,* but Ilya could ignore that bit. That’s what he meant, anyway.

“Unless I’m screwing up your plans,” Shane quickly added. Ilya hated to watch as his anxiety crept back into his expression, as his shoulders locked up and his body spoke for him.

“I have no plans,” Ilya replied, a little too quickly. But he couldn’t leave Shane hanging. He couldn’t watch another second of him start to panic.

Shane’s brown quirked. “Not even practice today?”

“Is optional,” Ilya replied with a shrug.

“Ilya,” Shane replied, because apparently they did that now. Using first names as though they had always been. Shane cocked his head to the side, now on his way to a proper smirk. As if he *disapproved* of a captain missing a practice. Like he himself wasn’t a captain missing *a flight.*

“You skip plane, I skip practice,” Ilya went on, feeling pretty justified in his reasoning. They were both smiling now, and it seemed like something passed between them in those few breaths.

“But, Shane,” Ilya added, using his name again, calling him *Shane,* feeling the eggshells he walked on all morning shattering beneath his feet. “Is not real life, you know. We can’t–” Ilya sighed. Shane looked crestfallen. “We aren’t really… like this,” he gestured between them. “I mean–”

I wish we were. I want us to be.

I think I really want us to be.

“But, we can have one day,” Ilya concluded. “If you want.”

Please say you want it.

Shane looked to be contemplating, which he hadn’t been before. He’d seemed so sure of himself, of his plan to stay another day, before Ilya had gone and ruined it. Before he’d injected a dose of reality that, yes, maybe they needed, but they sorely resented. Why did he have to go and fuck it all up? He was so close, *Shane* was so close. Ilya had never even let himself see how much he *wanted* Shane, to be close like this, and now–

“I want one day,” Shane interrupted Ilya’s inner meltdown with, really, the only acceptable response. “And then we can…” Shane trailed off. “Then we can, I don’t know. Reset.”

“Reset,” Ilya repeated, unconvinced.

“Yeah.”

It was another few moments of stunned silence before Ilya spoke again.

“We could go somewhere.”

Shane’s eyes went *wide.*

Stupid, stupid, stupid idea. Ilya, once again, pushing his fucking luck. Smashing every single eggshell beneath his stupid feet.

But, instead of a denial, just like the night before, Shane surprised him.

“Like… like where?”

That was all he asked.

“Anywhere,” Ilya replied, feeling the wind knocked from his lungs.

Shane laughed. “This is crazy,” he shook his head. “We can’t leave this apartment, Ilya.”

No, *no!* He’d had it, he’d had Shane in his grasp. There had to be a way.

“I don’t have food for two days of two hockey players,” Ilya reasoned. “You have seen my fridge.”

“We can get delivery? Pretty sure I saw a McDonalds like, a block away.”

“Now I *know* you are feeling sick, Hollander,” Ilya laughed.

Shane looked hopeful, though hopeful for what Ilya could not tell. It almost seemed like he wanted Ilya to counter him. After all these years, there were some cues that he’d learned to pick up on. Ilya leaned in, both hands on Shane’s knees, remembering again that he was wearing *Ilya’s* sweats. Fuck, maybe they *shouldn’t* leave his apartment.

“No,” Ilya said, voice soft as he came in close. “I want to take you somewhere,” their lips were nearly touching, *“Shane.”*

Hollander closed the tiny gap and brought their lips together, pressing a chaste kiss to Ilya’s mouth that felt like a mark of thanks. Ilya kissed him back, with the promise of more as he swiped his tongue along the seam of Shane’s lips. He opened, and Ilya deepened the kiss, licking into his mouth. Lightheaded, he pulled away as Shane began to laugh.

“This sounds like such a bad idea,” Shane sighed, sounding resolved to go along with said ‘bad idea’, as though he simply needed to voice his grievance once more before they could get on with it. “We’re gonna be seen.”

Ilya scoffed, sitting back in his chair. “You think you are so famous, Hollander? That you get recognized everywhere you go?” Shane’s expression sharpened, and Ilya knew he had a hook in. He kept going. “Canadian hockey boy. No one in Boston will even know your name.”

Shane scoffed, his jaw dropping incredulously. “You are seriously such an asshole.”

“Me, on other hand, I maybe get noticed. I am very famous here.”

“Fuck you, Rozanov,” Shane spit back, no real venom in his voice.

Back on track, then. Just the way they liked it.

“Relax,” Ilya smirked. “We will go somewhere that no one will know us.”

“Oh yeah?” Shane scoffed. “Where?”

“I know places,” Ilya replied.

“Places in *Boston* where no one knows *hockey?”*

“Yes,” Ilya deadpanned.

“Really?” Shane didn’t seem convinced.

“Not Boston-Boston. But, around. Yes.”

Shane’s face was tinged with blush, such an adorable pink blooming beneath the dusting of freckles across his nose.

“You are nervous,” Ilya pointed out.

Shane’s jaw dropped again, and it rattled Ilya’s heart a little. All he wanted to do was lean in and kiss him again. Maybe he could. Maybe they did that now.

“You’re ridiculous,” Shane said through a smirk.

Ilya leaned in for that kiss.

“I think that you don’t mind.”

***

“Your wardrobe really is so stereotypically Russian, it’s almost impressive” Shane muttered, mostly to himself, as he looked back at his reflection in Ilya’s full length mirror.

It had been two hours since they decided their plan. Their plan, which involved Shane wearing an outfit full of *Ilya.*

Shane was sporting a Russian soccer jersey beneath a red adidas track jacket, sleeves rolled up at his wrists, practically swimming in a pair of Ilya’s jeans. And though they were supposedly ‘skinny’, they were loose on Shane, and also cuffed a few times at the ankles.

Shane felt ridiculous. Even more so when Ilya plopped a Red Sox cap down on his head.

“Who is this guy, hmm?” He asked from behind Shane, their eyes locking in the mirror. “Normal Boston guy. Nothing special about him.”

Shane scoffed. “Nothing?”

Ilya smirked at him though the glass, and *fuck* if that didn’t make his knees weak.

It had been a strange morning. Shane didn’t know what he was doing, he *never* broke rules, never strayed from the path. It was ridiculous, but so, so thrilling.

As soon as they decided Shane was staying, he texted Hayden to cover for him. He said he was staying in Boston for their time off, to stay with a friend, carrying over his flimsy excuse from the night before. He ignored Hayden's twelve calls, and dodged giving away any details via text. Most of Hayden's texts had been incomprehensible anyway, so it hadn't been all that hard.

The Voyageurs were heading out of the hotel around 9:30 to head to the airport, so Shane knew he'd be in the clear to sneak back and grab his stuff from the room before the check-out time. He'd taken a cab there and back to Ilya's, his suitcase in hand. In the cab on the way back, he booked a flight home to Montreal, one leaving out of Boston the following morning, during Ilya's practice. Shane worried if he didn't do it then, he may never do it at all.

Once he got back inside, they realized all the clothes Shane brought with him were either formal wear, or Voyageurs gear.

Hence the clothing swap.

Ilya would also be wearing a hat, a scarf, sunglasses, the works. It would have to do. They needed some sort of disguise.

"I look so slavic," Shane snarked. "Like I chainsmoke and, I don't know, DJ on the weekends."

Ilya snorted. "You look like a little сахарная слива."

Shane furrowed his brow. "What's… *sakh,* um, sack," Shane cringed as he fumbled around the Russian words.

Ilya merely smirked. "Maybe one day, I will tell you." He stepped away from the mirror and left the bedroom, forcing Shane to follow. "I will go and get car now. Meet you out front?"

Shane's brows knit together on his face in shock.

“Are you fucking kidding me?” Shane hissed. “I’m not fucking *waiting* for you outside your building!”

Ilya laughed, bringing a hand to Shane’s jaw, his thumb stroking over his cheek.

“Am teasing you, Hollander,” Ilya smiled. “Relax.”

Ilya’s car was, predictably, ridiculous.

It was a horrible thing, a matte orange Porsche Macan, one with black leather interior and stupid orange embroidery on the seats. Apparently, Ilya had a few. In different colors.

It was *so* Ilya.

They sped out of the city, with Shane’s baseball cap pulled low over his brows and sunglasses over his eyes.

He was silent in the passenger seat, only really looking up at their surroundings once they were on the highway.

“Where are you taking me?”

Ilya’s eyebrows quirked and the corner of his lips lifted, his eyes still trained on the road.

“Are you going to murder me?”

At that, Ilya snorted. “Would be way too much work, Hollander. You would put up big fight.” He reached for Shane’s knee, giving it a firm squeeze, making him jump. “Relax. We are going north.”

Ilya’s hand lingered on Shane’s knee another moment longer, before he lifted it to adjust the radio.

It worried Shane how badly he mourned the contact as soon as it was gone.

The colors of fall along the highway had mostly faded by then, though some trees still held onto their faded oranges, reds, and browns. Some of the trees had already lost their leaves. Shane had a wild thought that he wished he’d come earlier, wished he’d visited Ilya when the foliage was at its peak. He ignored the even *wilder* thought that, maybe, if they planned better, he could be there for it properly next fall.

“There is one place in Boston I would take you,” Ilya said suddenly. “But we really cannot go.”

“Oh?”

Ilya nodded. “Brusnika. Is bakery.” Ilya peered over at Shane for a moment. “They know me well. Watch hockey. Like my Russian family in Boston.”

That made Shane’s heart swell.

The few details Ilya had shared with him about his home and family life led him to understand that it wasn’t exactly… good.

“Best vatrushka I can find in this area,” he went on. “I will get for us tomorrow for breakfast.” Shane watched Ilya’s adam’s apple bob as he swallowed. “What time is your

flight?"

"It's during your practice," Shane replied. The muscle in Ilya's jaw jumped as Shane spoke.

"Okay," he replied succinctly.

After a few moments, he spoke again.

"Is enough time for vatrushka."

After nearly an hour of mostly silent driving, Ilya signaled and moved into the right lane, poised to exit.

Off the highway, they traveled down a narrow two-lane road with grassy, open fields on either side. They passed a few paddocks with horses grazing, and Shane noticed a sign for an apple orchard pointing down a dirt road.

"Where are we going?" Shane asked again.

Ilya waved him off. "We are almost there."

As it turned out, *'there'* was a beach at the end of the road.

Two other cars were in the parking lot, which Shane tried not to panic over. It would probably be fine.

Ilya turned off the car as they parked and turned towards Shane from the driver's seat.

"You are nervous," he said softly.

"No," Shane lied, shaking his head. He was, he *was,* but he wanted to try more than he wanted to hide.

"Is okay, we do not have to–"

"No, I," Shane shook his head. "I… it's fine."

With the affirmation, Ilya got out of the car and Shane followed suit. From his trunk, Ilya produced a thicker, longer winter jacket for Shane, which he was thankful for. The grey November sky provided no warmth, and the wind that whipped around them was frigid.

"Is beautiful here," Ilya explained as they approached the entry path. "Very peaceful."

And he was right.

The tide was out, leaving the sand hard and packed and easy to walk on. Behind the hilly sand dunes there was nothing for miles; no houses or shops. Of course, a beach was quite literally *the end of the earth,* but something about this place made Shane truly feel like he was standing at the edge of something. Waves lapped calmly against the shore, the water a murky, deep, silvery-blue color.

Shane couldn't recall the last time he'd been on a beach. A *proper* beach. Not the shores of Lake Ontario or a sliver of sand in front of an overpriced Florida hotel. The last time he walked the beach may have been in Sochi, which Shane shuddered to think about. He didn't want to go back there, not today.

They walked in silence mostly, along the water's edge, their hands bumping every few steps, neither man doing anything about it.

At one point, a dog came rushing over, brown and shaggy with floppy ears and blue eyes. The dog's tongue wagged as he panted, wet and sandy, and Shane couldn't help but smile down at the creature.

As he looked up, he saw two bundled up figures approaching, one of which held a green tennis ball in his outstretched hand. The figures weren't walking along the waterline like Shane and Ilya, they were maybe thirty feet back on the soft sand, walking in the opposite direction down the beach. As they neared one another, one of the figures raised a hand in greeting, which Ilya returned casually. Shane's heart hammered in his chest, panic arising like bile in his throat. *This is it,* his mind unraveled. *They know it's us, they know who we are. They'll take a photo, and it'll be all over everything, and–*

But the pair simply kept walking, and the dog bounded off towards its owners.

As though sensing his fears, Ilya turned towards Shane, a soft, apologetic sort of smile on his lips.

"Do not worry," he offered, tugging down the brim of Shane's ballcap. "Is good disguise."

As they progressed towards the far end of the beach, realizing they hadn't seen another soul since the dog, Shane felt somehow emboldened. The next time their fingers hit as they walked, he decided he'd grab Ilya's hand. He'd cup Ilya's hand with his own, and hold it for a minute or two. They'd walk hand in *fucking* hand. Shane would do it.

But, like with most things, Ilya beat him to the punch.

He reached down and wove their fingers together, his skin dry and cold against Shane's.

"Is okay?"

Shane looked up and nodded wordlessly as Ilya's hazel eyes stared back, wondering if there was a way to convey just *how* okay this was.

They reached the end hand in hand, any future progress down the beach prevented by a smattering of big black rocks, covered in seaweed slime and barnacles. Aside from the gulls passing overhead and perhaps the fish in the sea, they were completely alone.

Again, it was like Ilya could read his mind, because as soon as Shane looked up, Ilya was smiling down. A soft, sweet little thing, so different than the one he always gave when trying to stir up trouble.

The hand not laced with Shane's came up to rest on his jaw, and Ilya's thumb smoothed over his cheekbone.

"Can I kiss you?"

Shane swallowed and blinked up at Ilya, offering a shallow nod before Ilya leaned in.

It was soft, at first. Just a brush of lips, barely even a touch. Ilya's skin was cold against his, the tip of his nose frozen where it bumped against Shane's. But when Shane opened up, Ilya crashed into him. The warm, wet swipes of Ilya's tongue against his own, combined with the way they still *held hands*... It made Shane woozy. They kissed there on the water's edge, *the edge of the world,* for seconds or minutes or maybe even hours. A grunt from deep inside Ilya's chest broke Shane out of his daze. He peered around them again, panicked, though he saw nothing and no one. Shane cleared his throat as he caught his breath, his lips wet and cold.

It almost felt like it didn't even happen, in a way. If a tree falls in the woods and there's no one to see or hear it, does it make a sound? If two men kiss on a beach, with frozen noses and wind whipping and waves crashing, but there's not a single soul to see it, did it even happen?

But it must have happened. It had to. Because Ilya was *beaming.*

“Fuck, Hollander,” Ilya sighed, wedging a thigh between Shane’s legs. “We really are not meant to be in public, I think.”

Shane scoffed a laugh, which turned into a gasp when he felt Ilya’s swollen cock jutting against his hip.

“Jesus Christ,” Shane murmured, rocking himself back against Ilya’s thigh.

Ilya looked down at him with a sardonic grin.

“But we have all night, yes?”

Shane nodded, feeling his cheeks flame with blush.

“Yeah,” he nodded.

“Good,” Ilya grinned. “Because I am starving and don’t think I can fuck you in my car.”

***

Night had fallen by the time they were on the highway back home.

Well, home for Ilya, at least.

Home for Shane… only for the night.

The afternoon had been one of easy quiet. After their kiss on the beach, the pair of them shuffled back the way they came, wind in their faces, effectively killing the mood. But, once they reached his car, Ilya unlocked it and moved to sit in the backseat. And Shane perked back up again, just as Ilya thought he would.

The parking lot was completely empty, after all. It would have been a waste of an opportunity.

Ilya was being honest before; he *didn't* think he could fuck Shane in his car, and he *was* starving. But, as luck would have it, they were both keyed up and achingly hard, and with a few tugs on Shane's cock he was melting in Ilya's hands. They didn't last longer than thirty seconds combined. It was so stupid to fool around in the car, actually, it was so *fucking* risky, and yet something about that made it even hotter. Getting Shane off in the backseat of his car like they were both eighteen again.

Once they were seated correctly in the front seats of the car, Ilya could hear Shane's stomach grumbling and he made a quick call. They drove a few minutes back down the beach road, towards what Ilya recalled was a charming little town. Charming and quiet and hopefully empty.

They passed by a handful of antique stores, some with lights on, though there seemed to be little activity inside. Shane mentioned, then, how his parents loved to go antiquing, teeing Ilya up for the perfect insult. But instead he kept it to himself, rather than doling out another *oh my god, Hollander, you are so boring,* he decided to tuck that piece of knowledge away, perhaps for another day.

When he pulled into the parking lot for the tiny, weathered old clam shack along the side of the road, Shane scoffed a laugh.

"This looks like it's definitely outside of my diet plan."

And it was true.

Their late lunch had been so far outside of Shane's traditional *'clean eating'* grind that Ilya actually worried he wouldn't eat at all. Not to mention the fear of being seen together, which certainly still hung over Shane's head like a sword. But, Ilya went inside and scoped things out, refusing to allow Shane to eat fried clams inside his car. As he had expected, the place was empty, save for the staff behind the counter. It was three o'clock a weekday in November. Ilya could not imagine who else was looking for fried seafood right now. Usually, when people recognized him, it was obvious. The clerks at the grocery store, or people dropping off takeout. Most of them asked to take a selfie. But as luck would have it, the girl behind the counter at the clam shack seemed to be maybe sixteen, popping her gum carelessly with dark eyeliner on, looking like she had probably never even *heard* of hockey, or sports in general. Ilya was sure they were safe.

He placed an order for fried clams and calamari, two cups of clam chowder, french fries and onion rings. Shane insisted on keeping his hat pulled low over his eyes when he finally came inside the tiny restaurant, which Ilya didn't fight him on. It was one thing for Ilya to be vaguely comfortable being seen, but a whole other thing for Shane. Not to mention, the idea of being seen *together.*

Shane grimaced when Ilya placed the plastic tray of food down between them.

"Shane, is fine," Ilya grumbled as he dragged a fried clam through a mess of tartar sauce. "We are breaking all rules today. You can have onion ring."

Warm pink blush bloomed across Shane's freckled cheeks again as he reached for a fry.

When they left the clam shack, the sun seemed to finally decide to greet them, if only for a fleeting minute. Golden, burning light was piercing through the clouds and naked tree branches, glowing over the acres of pale green salt marsh. It was… breathtaking.

The sun would set soon, and they would be another hour closer to sleep, which was close to waking, and soon enough, Shane would be gone.

They hadn't been on their phones all day, so it sort of took Ilya by surprise when Shane pulled his out of a pocket and opened the camera.

They didn't have photos of one another on their phones. As a rule. Ilya deleted everything Shane sent him, only because he knew the opposite was also true. Every dirty picture and stupid selfie of Ilya was getting deleted as soon as Shane saw it.

And they never took photos during their time together. *Never*.

What would they need them for? They weren't… this. Whatever *this* was.

In fact, the only photos of Shane on Ilya's phone were from the NHL awards those few years back, the selfies they took on stage in that ridiculous skit. Those, Ilya figured, he could get away with. He could explain his way out of those.

What he couldn't explain was how often he looked at them.

"Go over there," Shane waved his hand towards the marsh, shooing him away, holding his phone up. Ilya took a step towards it, keeping his eyes on Shane. "And turn around. Look away."

Ilya scoffed. "You will push me in."

"I'm not–" Shane huffed. "Just. Just do it?"

Ilya narrowed his eyes at Shane in a show of his phony suspicion, but he went anyway, taking another few steps towards the marsh, his back to Shane. Thankfully, too. Because he knew he was smiling like an idiot. Ilya heard the sound of the iPhone camera going off behind him.

"Okay, done," Shane murmured. Ilya turned around to see Shane shoving his phone into his pocket, turning back towards the car. Ilya wanted to tease him for it, tease him mercilessly. But Shane's ears were pink from embarrassment and his shoulders hunched, so for the second time that day, Ilya relented. In truth, he understood exactly what Shane wanted. He could not blame him.

Shane wanted a memory from this imperfectly perfect day.

"How did you know about this place?"

Shane's words shook Ilya from his daze behind the wheel, reliving the few hours they spent together, hiding in plain sight.

"Hmm?"

The darkness enveloped them as they drove. Ilya may have been half asleep, had Shane not roused him with conversation. He turned to look at Shane, whose face was alight with ruby red from the taillights in traffic.

God, he was so beautiful.

"How did you know about the," Shane waved behind them, indicating the places they'd been earlier. "The beach, and stuff."

"You think I do not leave my apartment, Hollander?" Ilya scoffed, deflecting. It was so dark outside all of a sudden, with the time change and the season growing colder. It felt like midnight.

"No, that's not–" Shane groaned with a laugh. "It's just far from the city, I mean."

Ilya didn't tell the truth. Instead he played it off, the way he did every time Shane accidentally pressed a little too close to his soft center. The truth was, Ilya had found that beach, and the seafood joint, by accident. It had been a dark time for him, about a year back,

some time after they'd moved their Boston hookups from hotel rooms to Ilya's penthouse. They hadn't seen one another for a while. Ilya needed to get out of his head, stuck inside his apartment with thoughts of Shane lingering like poisonous gas. He needed to breathe, or else he'd suffocate.

With tears in his eyes, he got on the road and drove north. Indiscriminately.

He had a wild thought, that day, that maybe he'd made it all the way to Canada. Maybe he'd drive right to Shane Hollander's front door, show up unannounced and be welcomed into his warm embrace.

But Montreal was a long ways away, and that was a very unrealistic dream, so Ilya had pulled off the road once he couldn't stand it anymore, breaking down in tears at that very beach, hidden and alone in his car in the parking lot.

"I like to adventure," is what Ilya told Shane there in the car, in an act of self preservation.

Ilya could hear Shane chuckle at that, and he plastered a smirk onto his lips to fight back the lump welling in his throat.

Suddenly, there was warmth spreading on his thigh, and Ilya looked down to find Shane's hand laying in his lap. He cleared his throat and smiled, reciprocating immediately, grabbing Shane's hand and weaving their fingers together.

"We're going to need to come up with something for dinner, you know," Shane murmured.

Ilya merely hummed in response, not trusting his own voice to stay steady, certain it would betray him.

"We can order," Ilya said after a moment, his thumb rubbing circles onto Shane's knuckle.

God, he felt like he might be sick. This day had been such a silly, silly idea.

"I was thinking maybe… we could cook," Shane countered, after another moment's silence. "I mean, if you don't mind."

Ilya, stunned beyond words, shook his head no, blinking back the sting of tears.

"I do not mind." He cleared his throat again. "I do not have food, though. You know."

"I can write out a list of what to buy, and you could go into a store?"

He said it so… Like Shane had *thought* about it. Like he'd *been* thinking about it.

It would probably be some horrible meal of bird food that Shane wanted, steamed green beans and spinach, poached salmon and other complicated healthy disgusting foods that only Shane liked. Quinoa, maybe, and God only knew what else.

"Yes. Okay," Ilya nodded. "Whatever."

"And," Shane sounded hesitant again, like every little step he took out of line weighed on him so heavily. "And, maybe some wine?"

Ilya nodded again, silently.

God, this was such a bad idea. This was all such a horrible, stupid, bad idea. To think they could have *'one day',* and then just *'reset'*. He wanted to laugh. Ilya wasn't sure it was possible to reset, not now. He'd gotten to have Shane in his bed last night, gotten to wake up to him in the morning. Got to have him for a whole *fucking day,* parading around in public like they were nobodies.

Like they were lovers.

And there was still tomorrow morning, too.

Fuck.

The same sickness he felt earlier crept higher in his chest, up his neck, along his spine. Ilya dreaded this feeling, this fear. There was a power that Shane Hollander had over him, that made him want to call everything off and run away to Canada, to tie Shane to the bed and never let him leave. They should both retire, retire *now,* today, this very minute. Leave the NHL and live a quiet life together. And the worst part was, he'd do it. Ilya would, in a heartbeat. If it meant they could relive their day, if it meant they could have this again, could have even one more of these days.

With Shane.

Wordlessly, he pulled Shane's hand to his mouth and kissed him there, pressing his lips to Shane's knuckles. Ilya hoped he could convey everything he was feeling, while at the same time prayed that *nothing* he was feeling was coming through.

"Whatever you want, Hollander," he murmured against Shane's skin.

End Notes

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