being with you, has opened my eyes

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at https://archiveofourown.org/works/77178106.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Heated Rivalry (TV)
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander, Ilya Rozanov
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence, Post-Scene: Ilya Rozanov Makes Tuna Melts in Episode: s01e04 Rose, Hurt/Comfort, Emotional Hurt/Comfort, Angst, Protective Ilya Rozanov, Hurt Shane Hollander, Mildly Dubious Consent, NOT ilya, Caretaking, Fluff, Fluff and Angst, Denial of Feelings, Internalized Homophobia, Drinking, Anal Sex, Rough Sex, Recovery, Blood and Injury, Ilya Rozanov Loves Shane Hollander, Shane Hollander Loves Ilya Rozanov, POV Shane Hollander, Angst and Hurt/Comfort, Hopeful Ending
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2026-01-06 Words: 10,818 Chapters: 1/1

being with you, has opened my eyes

by imbihesgay

Summary

“Why are you out here alone?” Ilya asks. “Who left you here?”

Hesitantly, Shane’s eyes cast up at the apartment building. Ilya follows his gaze, confused.

“I’m sorry,” Shane says softly, “I went home with someone.”

Ilya’s head snaps in his direction. “What?”

-an episode 4 au where shane goes home with the bartender instead of rose, and it goes very, very poorly-

Notes

PLEASE SEE BIG BRIGHT RED WARNINGS BEFORE READING !!!

this fic includes the following themes/subject matter
-dubious consent (shane is intoxicated and not communicating well during the sex scene, but it is put to a stop rather quickly)
-mild injuries
-a sex scene that depicts blurred, unhealthy boundaries (not with ilya)
-dubious morality
-general heated rivalry-esque angst
- very mature/potentially triggering subject matter please read with discretion !! you've been warned, this may not be for everyone!!

(i was thinking about that line in HR where ilya asks if shane has been with other men and shane says yes, and ilya says did he hurt you? and shane says no. what if the answer wasn't no? what if rose and shane never happened? what if what if what if! also for context, this happens the same day as the tuna melt, so still in boston!)

that said, post-angst, there is very much caretaking fluff and this fic has a very hopeful ending.

i hope you enjoy and thank you so much for reading

See the end of the work for more notes

The most vibrant emotion, is shame.

Shane Hollander is no stranger to this feeling. He feels it, well, fucking constantly. Anytime he screws up a play during a game and costs them goals. Any time he can't nail an endorsement shot on the first take. Anytime his mom looks at him with that sort of sad glint in her eyes, like somehow she knows there's something about him under the surface, but can't figure out what it is.

Of course, nothing has ever felt…quite as shameful as what he did to Ilya today.

He's scared, if you want to know the truth. This thing with Ilya is fucking confusing the longer it goes on. They're fuck buddies, nothing more. And- and Shane likes girls, because he *has* to. Because being a gay, out, NHL hockey captain just isn't a fucking option. Because, like his mom always says, he has kids looking up to him, and if he's honest about-

Not…not *honest.* No, that's the wrong word.

It's all too confusing to think about anyway. So he stuffs it down. He runs from Ilya's house, the sound of his name on Ilya's lips still ringing in his head.

Shane.

The tight hurt in his eyes, as he tried so diplomatically to walk it back,

Hollander.

Shane shudders just thinking about it. And how cowardly he'd been, running out instead of facing the truth about what he was feeling, at the sound of his name so tenderly from Ilya's mouth.

So, shame is a good emotion to wallow in tonight.

Unfortunately, J.J. doesn't give him much opportunity to wallow for long. Somehow he's convinced Shane to come out to this stupid bar. He doesn't want to be here, not at all, but he also doesn't want to be at his hotel in the quiet, thinking about Ilya's mouth and the rough callouses of his fingertips and his beautiful d-

Yeah, no, not things he's supposed to be thinking about.

The bar is not bustling when he arrives, hesitating briefly outside the front doors. He can see warm orange lights illuminating the booths and small clusters of patrons. It smells like bar food and vodka when he walks in, resisting the urge to grimace. He's on his macrobiotic diet still, and even though he'd broken it earlier eating tuna melts with Ilya, that doesn't mean he has to throw the whole thing out. He doesn't need another thing to feel ashamed about.

The team is excited to see him, and he tries to put on a smile, but it's especially difficult tonight. His face feels tight with discomfort, his mind a whirlwind with thoughts of Ilya. He's

like a poison, seeping into Shane's veins and unrelenting, clinging to each fiber of his being with no signs that it will ever let up.

Shane has never liked things like this -the nightlife scene. He doesn't party or particularly enjoy clubs, or drinking too much. He doesn't like having to figure out how to make small talk, or when the point in someone's story takes a turn that's actually funny and he's supposed to laugh. The only person it's ever been easy with is-

Stop it, he tells himself, as he shuffles awkwardly up to the bar to get a Ginger Ale. He needs to do something with his hands, something to keep his mouth occupied so he isn't forced to answer so many questions. A drink will accomplish this.

"Hi," he says to the bartender, smiling tightly. "Do you have Ginger Ale?"

The man behind the bar is attractive, with a close-cropped beard and well groomed hair. He's wearing a flowy white button-down, and his skin is glowing in the orange lamplight. He's objectively really good looking, big shoulders, thick forearms.

"I do," the bartender replies with a quirk in his lips, "but for Shane Hollander? I have so many better options."

Shane lets out a nervous laugh, breaking eye contact almost immediately with him. His gaze is intense, Shane feels like he's being flayed alive. Not in the exciting way, like it is with Ilya. More like, medieval torture, honestly.

"What did you have in mind?" Shane asks, leaning against the bartop and hoping he appears…*normal.*

At that, the bartender's smile grows. A spark in his eyes, something like desire, though Shane must be mistaken. That can't possibly be directed at him, can it?

He's never been with another man besides Ilya. The women have been few and far between. He's not exactly desirable. He's awkward, and socially inept and hyperfocused on hockey. No one besides Ilya has ever *really*-

Stop it!

The bartender winks, and it makes Shane's back stiffen a little. Was that supposed to be flirty?

"How about I make you my signature?" he offers, already reaching for ingredients Shane doesn't recognize.

He's moving too fast for Shane to do anything but nod. He sits down on one of the backless stools, drumming his fingers anxiously on the bartop. It's cool and smooth under his fingertips, the sensation helps keep him grounded in his body.

Finally, a drink is set in front of him. It's colorful, with swirls of grenadine pooling on the sides. Immediately dubious, he picks up the glass and inspects it.

“It’s good, I promise,” the bartender says with a smirk.

Shane really just wants a fucking Ginger Ale, but somehow he’s gotten himself this deep into this interaction, and he doesn’t know how to get himself out of it. So, with a tight-lipped smile, he picks up the glass and takes a tentative sip.

Blegh.

It’s far too sweet, making the edges of his tongue feel tingly. It’s got some sort of fruity syrup in it, and it’s fucking *strong.* Like, so strong he pulls back almost instinctively, worried about how much of this he can even handle. He doesn’t drink all that often, so his tolerance is kind of shit.

“Not for you?” The bartender asks, and Shane can’t help but notice the small note of hurt in his voice.

Guilt sweeps him. What does it look like to this guy? Some cocky pro athlete sauntering in, getting a special made drink and being ungrateful for it?

Shame.

“It’s great,” Shane lies, taking another big pull from the glass. “Really.”

“Okay, good.” The bartender flashes his teeth in a smile, and against his will, Shane wonders what Ilya would’ve said if he’d lied to him about liking something.

You think I am stupid, Hollander? I know your face better than that.

Still, Shane does not want to be rude, so he sits there and sips the drink, ignoring the burn in the back of his throat and the weird tingle on his tongue. The bartender talks his ear off about what other celebrities he’s served lately, apparently this bar is a hotspot for big names. It’s not particularly interesting conversation, but it is a welcome distraction from what’s going on in Shane’s mind. I.E. relentless thoughts of a beefy Russian hockey player.

The bartender's name is Steven, Stevie for short. He talks to Shane while Shane drinks the first of the fruity beverages, and then when he offers to make him a second, Shane does not know how to say *no thanks, that sucked.*

So, an hour later, he’s slogging through his second fruity, boozy cocktail, feeling pretty tipsy already. J.J. and some of the guys swing by the bar and bid him goodnight, apparently leaving to go play poker at an underground club. They ask if he wants to join, but the thought of committing to an even longer night of socializing is too daunting, so he says he’ll catch up with them before the game tomorrow.

“So, what’s it like?” Stevie asks, as he takes Shane’s empty glass and slides him another drink without asking. This one, luckily, isn’t a cocktail, but just a tequila shot.

Shane kicks it back, wincing at the burn and sucking on the lime provided for him. “What’s what like?”

“Being you,” Stevie replies with a chuckle, leaning against the bar. The rest of the place is starting to clear out, couples breaking off out the front door, though a few singles remain, dejected at the bar being served by the other staff.

“Being me?” Shane asks, genuinely confused. *Being socially awkward? Being Asian? Being Canadian? Being five-foot-ten?*

*Being…*well, the thing he can’t bring himself to admit.

“Yeah, you, Stanley Cup winning hockey team captain,” Stevie replies, “on every fucking Rolex ad this side of the Missisipi. Gorgeous.”

Shane’s face feels warm. He blinks, glancing down at the empty shot glass still sitting between his fingers. He feels Stevie’s eyes on him, but he isn’t sure what the lingering gaze means.

“Sorry, didn’t mean to embarrass you,” Stevie adds, chuckling. “But I’m sure you get that all the time.”

Shane huffs a laugh. “Gorgeous? Not so much.”

“I don’t believe you.”

“No I mean, I get *good at hockey,* and uh, *not the most sociable.* Not so much gorgeous.”

Only when Ilya says it.

Stevie shakes his head. “That’s insane. I would think a guy as good looking as you would be fighting people off with a bat. Or should I say a hockey stick?”

Shane offers him a polite laugh. “Yeah, not batting anyone away.”

Well, not before today…

“Neither am I,” Stevie replies, leaning forward a bit until their eyes meet, “hard to find good guys who are into guys nowadays, you know?”

Shane swallows, throat tight, saliva sticky going down. “Oh, y-yeah I could see that being… difficult.”

“Do you…” Stevie hesitates, only briefly, before deepening his gaze. “Do you find it difficult? Being in your position?”

Shane’s face flushes bright red, and he removes his fingers from the shot glass. “Uh, I’m sorry, I don’t know what you mean.”

“Oh. I was feeling confident I didn’t misread you,” Stevie arches an eyebrow. “Are you not into-”

“Misread me?” Shane interjects, head feeling fuzzy and floaty. “Is there something about me that’s…” He falters, unsure of what he’s trying to ask. He feels confused.

“I get it,” Stevie says, voice quiet. “Not something you’d broadcast, I totally understand, in your position. But, listen, I’m off in fifteen. My apartment is just a few blocks from here. And if you want to be discreet, I know how to be discreet.”

Stevie flashes him a dazzling smile, and Shane blinks, trying to comprehend what he’a asking.

Discreet.

“Discreet is good,” Shane finds himself saying. That’s what it is with Ilya- discreet. A secret. Something shameful, to be kept hidden away.

No, not shameful. Not Ilya.

“I thought so.” Stevie winks. “Just meet me outside in fifteen. I’ve got my car.”

Shane finds himself nodding, though he doesn’t know why.

Fifteen minutes later, he’s standing outside the back entrance to the bar, hands in his coat pockets, swaying on his feet. It’s a cold night in Boston, and he wonders what Ilya is doing right now. Is he out too, enjoying himself? Is he even thinking about today, the way Shane is? Did it matter to him at all?

“Hey.”

Shane startles a bit, turning to see Stevie coming toward him.

“Hey,” Shane replies, voice a little wobbly.

Stevie scrutinizes him for a moment, then chuckles. “Okay cutie, come on. My car’s just around the corner. You’re looking a little unsteady.”

Unsure of what else to do, Shane follows him.

Somewhere in the back recesses of his drunk, confused brain, he knows this is a really stupid idea. This guy could be like a serial killer or something. Though, he isn't getting those vibes.

What exactly is his plan here? Is he going to….*hook up* with him or something? Is that something he even wants to do? With someone who isn’t Ilya?

Stevie’s car has cool leather seats that crinkle under Shane’s butt when he sits. There’s a low radio station with music that Shane thinks Ilya would describe as *“crybaby American folk”*. Stevie doesn’t say much as they drive, and Shane mostly just tries to swallow back vertigo from how fast they’re going.

He’s not paying much attention, as Stevie parks in a garage and leads him through the back entrance of an apartment building. He’s shuffling on unsteady feet, head swirling and

throbbing, throat still hot from the liquor. He hasn't had so much to drink in a long time, and whatever was in those cocktails was *strong*. He feels fuzzy and overstimulated. His heart is pounding against his ribcage in a way that's painful.

The apartment door shuts. Stevie turns to him, shedding his coat. "You want another drink?"

Shane shakes his head. No, he thinks…he thinks he's kind of drunk already.

"Forgive me, I'm gonna make myself one." Stevie smiles briefly as he heads for the kitchen. "Make yourself at home."

The lights are dimmed to a nice orange, which is calming. Shane looks around at photos of Stevie and his friends and family on the walls. It's a lived-in, nice place. Lots of memories.

"Are you out?" Shane finds himself asking.

"Oh yeah I am." Stevie returns with two glasses of clear liquid. He passes one to Shane. "Here, just in case."

Shane takes the glass, expecting water. He winces slightly when vodka drizzles down his throat. Stevie drinks his own, his dark eyes fileting Shane, undressing him from a few feet away.

"Not much of a drinker?" Stevie guesses.

Shane shakes his head, setting the now-empty glass down on the table beside him. "Not really."

"Well, I thought it might help you relax." Stevie smiles, finishing his own drink before he too sets it down. "Have you ever done this before?"

Nervously, Shane nods.

Stevie looks surprised. "Oh, wow."

"You can't tell anyone," Shane says. He's not sure if he's even making sense. He's starting to forget why he's even here.

"Don't worry, I won't." Stevie shakes his head, stepping forward until their fingertips brush. "I've been with a lot of down low guys, some celebrities. Like I said, I'm discreet."

Shane swallows the lump in his throat, eyes frozen on Stevie's face.

"God, you're so nervous." Stevie chuckles. "Like a little baby deer. Come on, let's go to the bedroom."

He slides his fingers into Shane's, tugging him along through the foyer into the adjacent bedroom. It's a bit messy, clothes askew on the floor, some loose belongings on top of the comforter. Stevie sweeps them off onto the floor mess. Shane resists the urge to bend down and pick them up.

He turns to look at Stevie, only to be surprised by a pair of harsh hands on his shoulders, shoving him backward onto the mattress. Shane catches himself on his hands, looking up at the other man with surprise.

“I assume you like a dominant man?” Stevie guesses.

Does he? Shane does like it when Ilya takes control, tells him exactly what to do, what he wants from him. He likes being able to turn off his brain.

God, that would be good right now. Turning off his brain. Can this guy help him do that?

He nods again.

“Noted.” Stevie winks. He shrugs out of his button down shirt, revealing a toned abandon and thick arms. He reaches for Shane, who’s mostly frozen, unsure of what to do.

It’s easy, with Ilya. He doesn’t really have to make any decisions because he’s moving on autopilot. It’s like, his body is pre-programmed to want to be close to Ilya, so his muscles move there without it being a choice. It’s easy. Simple.

Stevie slides Shane’s jacket off his shoulders for him, and the touch of his fingers is unsettling, surprising. He looks up at Stevie, wide-eyed, feeling dizzy and weird. He thinks he’s had too much to drink.

“You gonna submit to me?” Stevie asks, voice husky and low. “Do whatever I want?”

Shane blinks up at him.

“Jesus, you’re easy,” Stevie laughs. “I can do whatever I want with you?”

Will that help his brain turn off?

“Yeah, okay,” Shane finds himself saying. He lets Ilya do it, so, why not?

“Damn, that’s hot.” Stevie is touching him again, sliding off his shirt, pulling back with eagerness in his eyes. “Fuck, your body is insane.”

“T-thank you,” Shane manages. “I have a strict regimen-”

“Shhh, don’t talk.” Stevie shakes his head, pressing a finger to Shane’s lips. His hands smell like cheap vodka. “Don’t want to hear you talk, just want you to do what I say.”

“Okay.”

Stevie leans in, presses their lips together, silencing anything else Shane might’ve had to say. He tastes like vodka and mint gum. His lips are full and thick, which should be nice, but… Shane is so used to the shape of Ilya’s, the little bow in the top, the flat curve where skin meets the pink flesh. They always part Shane’s perfectly. This feels weirdly different.

He feels like he can't breathe, as Stevie presses forward. Shane's back hits the mattress, and he feels Stevie's weight on his hips. He's kissing back, he thinks, but he feels like he's suffocating.

Should he tell him to stop? Or is he just nervous because he hasn't been with another guy? Or, is he just a little too drunk to be thinking properly? Maybe he *is* enjoying it, but he's confused because he's drunk.

He's definitely fucking confused.

Stevie's hand travels down his bare torso, and the skin-to-skin contact makes Shane feel sort of nauseous. Sweat beads on his forehead, and he gasps a little as Stevie's hand clenches around his groin.

"You like that?" Stevie breathes, misinterpreting the startled noise.

Shane opens his mouth, not sure what he's even going to answer, before Stevie presses a hand to his lips again. "Shhh, be a good boy and take it."

Shane blinks up at him through his eyelashes, stilling. Maybe he's resisting too much, and that's making it less fun. He should listen to Stevie. Do what he says.

The buckle on his jeans is undone the next moment, and they're sliding down his legs.

"You're so hard already," Stevie murmurs, pressing his lips against the fabric of Shane's briefs.

Is he?

Shane doesn't bother looking down, eyes unfocused and hazy on the ceiling fan. Stevie has one of those popcorn ceilings, and it's a little distracting, the texture. He wonders why they make ceilings like this. It's not pleasant to look at.

Then, he feels his briefs swept down his legs, and he's naked in front of this stranger, and all the hair on his body is standing at attention. His spine tingles, in a way that sober Shane might recognize as a warning. Right now though, he's too overwhelmed with sensation and disorientation to properly understand what's happening inside of him.

Without asking, Stevie pops Shane's dick into his mouth.

It's different. It's not bad, not at all. It does feel good. Shane finds himself exhaling breathlessly, eyes closing against the sudden feelings of pleasure spilling into his body. The warm, wet stripe of a tongue, the slick spit and expert mouth, none of it is *bad.*

But…but it's really different. It feels wrong. He can't explain why.

Tears prick the edges of his eyes as Stevie pops his mouth off and gruffly says, "your turn. Get on your knees."

Shane crawls off the bed to the floor, on his knees in front of Stevie, who slides his own bottoms off quickly. He studies the dick in front of him for a moment. It's nice, objectively, large and hefty and well groomed.

It isn't Ilya's, which he surprises himself with how much he's come to know. He can envision every contour, every throbbing vein, every curve and arch, everything. His mouth waters thinking about it.

He gasps a little, when he feels Stevie's hand on the back of his head, urging him toward the hard dick. He submits, because he doesn't know what else to do right now.

Usually, at this point, Ilya's asked him a few times if he likes this, or if this is okay. Has Stevie asked, and Shane just wasn't paying attention? Should Shane ask Stevie? He told him not to talk. Shane doesn't understand the rules right now.

Not that he could answer anyway, with his mouth full of Stevie's cock.

"God that's fucking good," Stevie moans, "you're so good, so obedient, fuck. Good boy."

Shane blinks tears out of his eyes. When Ilya says stuff like that to him it feels like praise, like cherishment. It feels…condescending, coming from Stevie.

Stevie continues to urge his head down deeper and deeper, until Shane is gagging and choking. Hot tears stream from his eyes down his cheeks, and Stevie brushes one off with his thumb, licking it away from his own skin.

Abruptly, he pulls Shane's head off of him by his hair, and he yelps in surprise. The other man grips his bicep and pulls him roughly to his feet. He stops his momentum with a harsh kiss, noses mashing together. It hurts. Shane feels a tooth graze his upper lip, and tastes coppery blood.

"On the bed," Stevie says when they part, panting.

Shane crawls on to the comforter, blinking up at him unsurely. He wipes blood off his mouth with the back of his hand, blanching at the sight of it smeared across his skin.

"God, that's hot," Stevie purrs, "you like it rough, don't you?"

Shane hesitates. Is he supposed to talk? His head is starting to throb. He's going to have such a fucked up hangover tomorrow. His stomach hurts and so does his jaw and the backs of his eyes.

Stevie grips his hips and flips him over aggressively, so Shane is on his stomach. His heart thunders in his chest, quick and panicky. Is this about to happen? Is he really about to let someone other than Ilya-

"You bottom, right?" Stevie checks, and Shane sees him grabbing lube and a condom from his end table.

Shane hesitates again. Is he supposed to talk?

“You can answer.”

“Y-yes,” he rasps. Objectively, it’s true. He does bottom. He likes it. When Ilya does it.

“You don’t seem like the kind of high-maintenance bottom who needs a lot of prep,” Stevie muses, and Shane feels something cold drip down his ass. Lube.

High maintenance?

Shane, against his will, hears Ilya’s voice in his head. One of the last times they’d hooked up, Shane had apologized for how tight he was, how long it was taking to get ready, comfortable so Ilya could enter him.

Hollander, relax, if it does not feel good for you, what is the fucking point? We will take our time. Why would I want to rush this anyway?

Face pressed into the comforter, Shane hears the condom wrapper open. He feels Stevie’s warm body crowd his. He feels something prodding at his entrance, and then, *pain.*

It’s white hot. He gasps, entire body clenching up, fists gripping the sheets as he lets out a ragged noise of discomfort.

“God, you’re tight,” Stevie breathes.

“W-wait,” Shane gasps.

Stevie goes still. “Are you okay?”

No.

“That hurts,” he manages to get out.

Stevie stays still, though he’s still half-sheathed inside Shane. “Okay, I’ll hold on a sec. Let you adjust.”

Okay, okay, that will help, he’s sure. Ilya does this sometimes, though it’s usually after *much* more…well, preparing. Even then, sometimes Shane needs him to just give him some time to stretch. Ilya is always happy to do it, or at latest, he says he is.

It feels like a nanosecond before Stevie is moving his hips again, and Shane whimpers, knuckles going white. This doesn’t feel the way it does when Ilya does it. This doesn’t feel good. This feels *wrong.*

“Please stop!” Shane exclaims, finally finding his voice even through his confused, drunken stupor.

Mercifully, Stevie stops. With a huff, he draws back, removing himself from Shane, while the other man’s hips hit the comforter. Pain radiates through his lower half.

“Are we doing this or not?” Stevie complains. “I thought you said this wasn’t your first time.”

Shane sits up, blinking tears away as he scrambles off the bed. His drunken legs betray him and he loses his footing, taking a header into the coffee table at the end of the bed. Pain zigzags through his face, and he curses.

“Jesus!” Stevie shouts. “Dude, you’re fucked up!”

“I- I know,” Shane stammers, fumbling around the messy floor for his pants. He feels something warm and wet on his forehead. He finally locates his pants and slides them on over his trembling legs.

“You need to just go,” Stevie snaps, crossing his arms with anger and disdain written across his face. “Just get the fuck out. Clearly you can’t handle this.”

“Y-yeah,” Shane agrees clumsily. He throws his t-shirt on backwards on his torso, and slides into his coat. His feet find his sneakers, sans socks, and it’s the worst sensory nightmare.

Stevie watches him head for the door, jaw clenched.

Shane pauses with his hand on the doorknob, hesitating. “You won’t-”

“No, I’m not going to fucking tell anyone we had shitty foreplay and *barely* any sex!” Stevie snaps. “Get out!”

Somehow, Shane makes it down the stairs, through the back door, and into the alley behind the apartment. It’s dark outside, streetlights illuminating his stumbling walk out to the front of the building.

His vision is blurry, but he’s not sure if that’s the booze, or the way he hit his forehead on the edge of the coffee table, or the fact that his entire body feels like it’s slipping off the edge of a building. He feels gross and weird and *used* in ways he’s never felt before. He has to sit down or he’s going to pass out.

Shane plops down on the curb, wincing at the sharp pain in his lower half and shifting his hips to try and relieve the pressure on that area. He’s been sore there plenty of times, with Ilya, but it’s never felt *painful* like this.

For a few moments, he just breathes raggedly, trying to stop the dizziness. Everything seems to be shifting on its axis- the world, his heart, everything. He wishes he could rewind time, go back to Ilya’s place earlier today. Eat his sandwich and make Ilya come and hear his first name drip off the other man’s lips, and not panic like a fucking idiot.

As if Ilya could ever want him now. After this. What the fuck was he thinking? Hooking up with some random guy at a bar. How could he be so stupid?

Fuuuck everything fucking hurts. He feels crazy. Something’s wrong. Everything’s wrong.

He glances up at a street sign near the intersection down the way, and realizes with a start, he has no idea where he is. Somewhere in the middle of Boston, in a neighborhood nowhere near Ilya's place.

Ilya.

What would he say if he were here right now? Probably make fun of Shane for getting so drunk he tripped into a coffee table. Probably some sort of joke about how he's boring and can't handle anything other than Ginger Ale.

But, would he know what to do? Ilya has so gently walked Shane through so much of this stuff- this *being with guys* stuff. Would he know how to help? Shane hurts, *down there.* Does Ilya know what he should do? And Ilya lives in Boston. Would he know where Shane is, how to get him back to his hotel?

Not that he could fucking call anyone else.

Hey Hayden! Surprise, I just came to this guy's apartment and sucked his dick but he stuck it in me too hard and now I'm hurting. Can I get a ride? Oh, yeah, I'm gay!

Fuck. Is he fucking gay?

Ilya won't even answer, he's sure of it. Not after the way he ran out of there today.

Still, his shaking fingers, bloodstained, press the name in his contacts list.

Lily.

It rings and rings and rings. He knows a voicemail message is coming, so he braces himself.

But, finally, after what feels like an eternity, someone picks up.

"Why the fuck are you calling me?"

Ilya.

The sound of his voice settles the blood rushing in Shane's ears. He exhales, like someone's rubbed a soothing balm on aching muscles. Something in that low, familiar accent makes Shane feel…god help him, *safe.* Something he's now realizing, he hasn't felt all night.

"Ilya?" he says quietly, braving the first name in the hopes that it might soften him.

There's a long pause.

"Hollander, why the fuck are you calling me? What if I wasn't alone?"

"Are you alone?"

Another pause.

“What is wrong with you? You sound…” Ilya’s angry voice goes smoother around the edges. “Where are you, Hollander?”

“I was hoping you could help me,” Shane says matter-of-factly.

“What? I asked where you are. Why are you calling me?”

“There’s a street sign here that says *Franklin Ave.* Is that near the Pembrook Hotel, at all?”

Another lengthy pause.

“Hollander, what the fuck is going on? Where the fuck are you? Are you alone? Are you *drunk?”*

Is he that obvious?

“So, it’s not near Pembrook?” he asks.

“No. Are you on Franklin Ave, right now? What the fuck are you doing there?”

“Sitting on the curb,” Shane says. He winces and presses a hand to his forehead. “Just, bleeding.”

“What?”

“I think I’m okay, I just need to know where my hotel is,” he informs him, voice going sloppy at the end of his words. “Do you know where the Pembrook Hotel is?”

“Jesus fucking Christ, Hollander. Where are you? Tell me now.”

“I’m in front of this apartment building.” Shane turns and squints. “*Brookstone Apartments.”*

“What the fuck are you doing there? Why are you outside? Did you say you were *bleeding?”*

At that, he winces, but it’s too many questions in a row to try and answer. “What should I do?”

“Are you *alone?”*

“Yeah.”

“And you’re drunk?”

He blinks. “I think so. I had um, one…two…three…four…I had some drinks. But I don’t usually do that. I ordered Ginger Ale, I swear, but that isn’t what I drank.”

“Jesus Christ.”

“So, should I-”

“Stay fucking put, Hollander. I’ll be there in fifteen minutes.”

The line disconnects.

Shane exhales, setting his phone down beside him on the curb. He tucks his knees up against his chest, wincing again at the pain in his bottom. He rests his chin on his knees, closing his eyes. The blood has dried on his eyebrow, and it feels tacky and gross. He has nothing to wipe it clean with though. Maybe Ilya has wet wipes or something in his car.

Not likely.

He loses track of time, sitting there, curled in on himself. His body is buzzing, pain and weariness settling into his muscles. He wants to disappear- wrap himself in a big weighted blanket and turn off all the lights in the world. Nothing would fix him more than that, right now.

The sound of a car engine pulling up gets his attention, and he lifts his head, blinking blearily at the expensive sports car screeching to a stop at the curb. The next second, Ilya is getting out of the car, racing toward him with a surprising amount of urgency.

He looks so *handsome.* Curly hair a mess, like he'd been sleeping. He's wearing a pair of track pants and a hoodie, the gold crucifix still around his neck. He's moving *fast,* so fast rushing over to where Shane is huddled up on the curb like a turtle hiding in its shell.

"What the fuck happened to your face?" Ilya demands, kneeling down beside Shane on the cement. He reaches a hand out and cups Shane's cheeks in two fingers, squishing his lips as he focuses his intense gaze on Shane's bleeding forehead.

"Hit a coffee table," he slurs.

Ilya's eyes burn intensely on him. "You're fucking wasted, Hollander."

He's so disappointed. He must hate Shane now, after all of this. The feeling creeps back up again on Shane's shoulders, heavier this time, thick with the weight of what he's done tonight.

Shame.

"Why are you out here alone?" Ilya asks. "Who left you here?"

Hesitantly, Shane's eyes cast up at the apartment building. Ilya follows his gaze, confused.

"I'm sorry," Shane says softly, "I went home with someone."

Ilya's head snaps in his direction. "What?"

"The bartender." Shane sniffs, surprised when tears begin to pool at the corners of his eyes. He's so humiliated. He doesn't want to cry in front of Ilya, but he can't help the influx of emotion. "He gave me some drinks, and said he was discreet, and I got in his car and he took me here."

"And *did that* to your face?" Ilya growls.

Shane is confused. Why is that what Ilya's asking about? Why isn't he more mad about what *Shane* did?

"N-no," he stammers, "I fell."

"You fell," Ilya repeats flatly. "You think I am fucking stupid, Hollander?"

"I swear I fell," he insists, "I was getting off the bed too quick, I was rushing to get away because it hurt and I'm drunk and I wasn't-"

"What hurt?" Ilya snaps sharply.

Shane feels the blood drain from his face. He's sure he's ghastly pale. How can he possibly say it outloud?

He doesn't have to, because realization seems to strike then. Ilya's eyes darken, something akin to horror filling his gaze, only to be replaced with a fiery rage. His nose curls, lip drawing back over his teeth.

"What fucking apartment?" he seethes.

"No, no," Shane says, shaking his head even though it makes him feel dizzy. "I want to leave, please Rozanov, please. I need to get back to my hotel."

"He-"

"No, he wasn't trying to hurt me," Shane slurs, "I'm just drunk, and it wasn't like with you. It wasn't *you.* I couldn't take it. I didn't want it. It wasn't you. I-I don't want to be here anymore."

Ilya's jaw is clenched tightly, the intensity in his eyes can only be described as *crazed.* Shane is sort of afraid of what he might do if he really gives him Stevie's apartment number. He honestly doesn't even remember it though. Everything that happened in the apartment feels like it's clouded over with a dark haze.

"Can I just get a ride?" Shane asks, voice breaking a little. He reaches a hand out, feeling helpless.

Surprisingly, Ilya takes it. Slowly, he helps Shane to his wobbling feet. Shane stumbles, but Ilya's firm body braces him upright.

"Jesus Christ, Hollander, you're drunk," he says, teeth grinding together. "And probably fucking concussed."

"Not my first one," Shane says, hoping it's reassuring. He adjusts his hips, wincing, and Ilya notices, gaze traveling down to Shane's lower body.

"Does it hurt?" Ilya asks, voice softening fractionally.

Shane nods, humiliation burning his cheeks. "I'm sorry."

“Stop apologizing. Get in the car.”

Ilya walks him over to the passenger door, opening it for him and waiting for him to lower himself in before he shuts it. Ilya gets behind the wheel, glancing sideways at Shane’s face.

“Put pressure on that,” he says, passing Shane a few napkins from the glove compartment.

“On what?” he asks.

“Your fucking forehead, Hollander. Fuck.”

Oh, right.

Shane presses the napkins to his face, grimacing. It feels horrible, the dry napkin against his bloody skin. Ilya’s hands are tight on the wheel, and he’s still looking at the apartments like he wants to knock on every door.

“I don’t remember what apartment,” Shane tells him, “it’s useless to keep staring.”

Ilya’s jaw clenches, and he puts the car in drive.

Shane leans back against the seat, looking out the window. Now that he’s here, wrapped in the familiar smell of Ilya’s cologne, pressed against the seat, his live-wire body is starting to feel…*exhausted.*

“I won’t get blood on your seat,” he assures him quietly.

“Jesus Christ, Hollander.”

Shane pats his jeans pockets, blanching as he realizes something. “Shit.”

“What?” Ilya glances at him immediately with concern etched into his expression.

“I don’t have my hotel key.”

“We aren’t going to hotel.” Ilya shakes his head.

“Oh. Where?”

“The fucking emergency room, Hollander, you are bleeding!”

Panic strikes through Shane’s chest, freezing his limbs. Eyes wide, he turns desperately to Ilya. “You can’t, Rozanov. People are going to recognize me, and ask questions, and-”

“It will be fine-”

“No!” Shane wipes at his forehead with the napkin, grimacing. “Look, I’ve had worse cuts after rough practices, I’m fine. Please don’t take me there. No one can know. Besides, what if someone sees you dropping me off?”

“I was going to go in with you, idiot,” Ilya says brusquely.

“Please, don’t.”

Ilya debates quietly, and Shane can see the internal struggle in his eyes. His jaw clenches, forehead wrinkling, but after a moment, he exhales, obviously seeing the conundrum.

“Fucking, fine.”

Relieved, Shane sits back against the car seat, blinking tiredly.

“Do not fucking fall asleep,” Ilya growls at him.

“I wasn’t!”

“That is first rule of head injury, you should know that, *captain.”*

“I’m not sleeping!”

“You are right, you’re not. List to me all of the Stanley Cup winners for every year of the past twenty years,” Ilya says firmly.

“Fucking what?”

“I know you know every goddamn one. List them. Now.”

With a huff, Shane crosses his arms petulantly, but in a low voice, begins to recite the winners. He does know them, just like Ilya knew he would.

The repetition keeps Shane alert during the drive back to Ilya’s house. It’s just as he remembers it from earlier today. When he’d shown up this morning it was warm and inviting, not ominous the way it is now, in the dark.

Ilya must be so furious with him. After running out today, calling him in the middle of the night, drunk and having fucked someone else? Genuinely, has Shane lost his fucking mind?

The car parks, and before Shane realizes it, Ilya is at the passenger door, pulling it open. He’s extending his hand, waiting for Shane to take it instead of just grabbing him.

Perplexed, Shane accepts his hand.

As he lets Ilya lead him into the house, he can’t help the whirlwind of his brain. He’s expecting Ilya to be angry at him, and he would understand why. It would be so well deserved.

But, the other man doesn’t seem angry. He seems…worried? It’s hard to tell. Shane’s not always the best at interpreting what other people are feeling.

Ilya makes Shane sit at the kitchen table. He pours him a glass of water and tells him to drink it while he heads for another room.

Shane sips delicately at the water, listening to Ilya rifle through what must be a first aid kit. He returns with cleaning wipes and gauze bandages, kneeling in front of the chair with a firm expression.

“Do you know what you’re doing with that?” Shane asks, blinking slowly.

Ilya scowls. “You think you are the only one who gets hurt at practice? Move the napkin.”

Shane realizes he’s still holding the blood-soaked napkin to his forehead, and he pulls it away. Ilya’s eyes go tight around the edges at the sight of Shane’s messed up face, but he doesn’t speak as he begins to clean away the dried blood from his skin.

They’re so close like this. Ilya smells like shampoo and deodorant, clean, crisp- he must have showered right before bed. His soft cotton clothing is brushing against Shane’s arm, and he wishes he wasn’t wearing restrictive jeans and a tight jacket. His sockless feet are sweaty and damp in his tennis shoes- it’s awful.

“This might hurt,” Ilya tells him quietly, and Shane feels the burning sting of antiseptic on his cut.

“Is it deep?” he finds himself asking.

“No. No stitches.”

Okay, so the ER would have been unnecessary.

“Are you hurt anywhere else?” Ilya asks, eyes focused solely on the cut on Shane’s forehead as he works to clean and bandage it.

Shane’s skin flushes warm at the question. His ass actually *is* hurting a lot. But there’s nothing Ilya can do about that, and it would be way too humiliating to admit.

In response to his silence, Ilya speaks again, cautious and careful. “You told me you were trying to get away because *it hurt.”*

Shane clears his throat. He doesn’t remember telling Ilya that. “Oh, yeah.”

Ilya exhales, shoulders stiffening as he pulls back to look at Shane’s bandaged forehead. His eyes linger on the gauze for a moment, until they dart down, meeting Shane’s. There’s an intensity burning there that he isn’t used to seeing.

“Did he-” Ilya hesitates, swallowing thickly like he’s having trouble getting the words out.

“No, no,” Shane says quickly, “he stopped when I told him to.”

There’s visible relief on Ilya’s face, though he tries quickly to mask it with something like neutrality.

Shane’s chest feels funky at that- the thought of Ilya being so worried about him, needing to be reassured that Shane hadn’t been- hadn’t been-

“But you are drunk,” Ilya prompts, glancing back over at Shane's face. “And he hurt you.”

“Not on purpose. He thought I wanted it.”

Ilya recoils.

“I didn’t,” Shane adds quickly, “that’s why I told him to stop.”

“That is not the point,” Ilya says, this time through his teeth, “you are *drunk.* And he should have-”

He stops himself short, exhaling still through his tightly gritted teeth. He flexes his hands into fists, and then out again, like some sort of calming ritual. He mutters something under his breath that Shane can’t decipher, probably Russian.

“Hollander.” Ilya reaches out and gently takes Shane’s face in his hand, tilting his head up until their eyes are locked together again. “Are you *okay?”*

Shane knows he should say yes. He should tell Ilya everything is fine, and he can drop him off at his hotel right now. He doesn’t need Ilya to do him any more favors than he’s already done tonight.

But he’s drunk, and in pain, and his heart hurts so fucking badly he’s afraid it might just collapse inside his chest and kill him.

So, with tears threatening to spill from his eyes, he just shakes his head. *No.*

Wordlessly, Ilya sweeps into action. He scoops Shane up into his arms, hoisting him up so his legs are wrapped around Ilya’s waist, head resting in the crook of his neck. Ilya grips him firmly, and carries him out of the kitchen, down the hall, past the orange fireplace, and into his bedroom.

Shane’s body settles with a surprising amount of ease against Ilya’s. It isn’t like Stevie. It’s warm, familiar, safe, content. It’s *Ilya.* He knows every contour of this man’s shoulders, every mole on his neck, every curve in his beautiful, statuesque face. His Ilya.

When Ilya delicately sets Shane down on the closed lid of the toilet in his en suite bathroom, Shane doesn’t even flinch. He just looks up at Ilya, eyes flooded with trust and the unfailing faith that Ilya would never do anything to harm him.

Ilya walks over to the shower and turns the water on. Shane watches steam rise up from the top of the glass doors, filling the room with thick air. It wraps around his shivering body like a cocoon.

“You should take a shower,” Ilya says gently. *“Please* tell me he used a condom.”

“Yeah,” Shane replies, nodding.

Ilya nods back, jaw clenched. He watches, like he’s waiting for Shane to move himself, to undress.

But Shane's limbs are frozen, muscles taut and pulled tight. His body won't let him move, won't let him function. He feels like he's being tied up in knots from the inside, forced to stay stagnant even though he's willing himself to get up and get this done.

"I need help," he rasps, humiliated.

Ilya wastes no time, once he has permission. He carefully undresses Shane until he's bare naked, and gently nudges him toward the shower. Shane takes a few shuffling steps, before Ilya stops him with a soft hand on his bicep.

Shane turns to him inquisitively.

"Is it still hurting?" he asks, gesturing downward.

Hesitantly, Shane nods. "Not a lot, anymore. Just…sore."

"Do you want me to make sure it is okay?"

The offer is blindingly intimate- Ilya asking Shane if he wants him to *inspect* his asshole, to make sure it's not damaged. He can't even believe they're standing here right now, in a moment in time so comfortable that Shane is genuinely okay with Ilya Rozanov making sure he didn't ruin his butthole. How does a person get here? Is this a thing anyone else in the world has ever had to do besides him? Has there ever been a more abnormal person on the planet than Shane Hollander?

Still, he nods again. "Yeah, please."

Ilya kneels down, fingers moving delicately over Shane's thighs, and then his bottom. He feels the flesh part, and inhales shakily, eyes squeezing shut.

"You are okay," Ilya tells him gently, "just be gentle. It is swollen. No blood."

Shane doesn't speak. How do you thank someone for doing what Ilya just did?

Instead, he shuffles into the shower, shivering against the beat of hot water on his skin. He just stands there, unsure of what to do with himself right now.

"The soap," Ilya murmurs, resting his body against the shower door, "wash yourself."

He follows the instructions dutifully. The cleaning is quick and perfunctory, and once the water is turned off and Shane is wrapped in a fluffy white towel, the events of the evening really start to weigh his shoulders down. He feels exhausted. His head is throbbing, his chest feels concave. He doesn't know how any of this happened or why he's here or what he's going to do next.

He looks over at Ilya in the dim lights of the bathroom, expression desperate, searching.

"I'm sorry," he says, voice breaking.

Ilya shakes his head, dragging his teeth over his lower lip. “Is not your fault, Hollander. You are not…experienced, like I am.”

Shane scoffs. Is that some sort of dig?

Ilya arches an eyebrow at his clear offense. “You would argue with me?”

Well, he isn’t wrong.

“I guess not,” Shane admits, dropping his head shamefully. Water droplets trickle off his eyelashes. “You’re the only guy I’ve ever been with.”

Not that many girls either.

“Or, you *were,”* he adds, grimacing. His stomach churns.

Ilya’s teeth grit together again, audibly. “Hollander, I really do not give a shit what you do in your free time, but do me a favor, and don’t *ever* get in the fucking car with some stranger who gets you drunk again, okay?”

Shame. It’s suffocating. Shane tries to breathe through it, but it restricts his ribcage around his lungs like a cage. He knows Ilya is right. This is all his fault.

“Do you know what could have happened?” Ilya presses on. “What if he hadn’t stopped? What if- what if he had done *worse?* Have you ever heard of serial killer?”

“I’m a grown man, I can take care of myself,” Shane bites back defensively. He knows even as he says it, that it’s fallen flat. Here he is, needing Ilya to fucking *undress* him just so he can wash his shameful body.

“I know that,” Ilya replies, much kinder than Shane deserves, “but fuck, Hollander, you have to care more about yourself.”

“It was my fault, I get it,” Shane insists, shaking his head, averting his gaze. “I just- I don’t know what I was thinking.”

“Is *not* your fault.” Ilya steps forward, expression deadly serious. “When you are with someone you…you fucking *take care of them.* You do not hurt them. You are drunk, Shane. He should not have taken advantage of you.”

“He had a drink too,” Shane insists, not sure why he’s defending Stevie right now. He doesn’t like the implication that he’s been *taken advantage of*, even if it might be true.

Ilya’s eyes narrow. “He is bartender. You are boring health nut who does not even drink beer. Who do you think was more drunk?”

In spite of it all, Shane manages a small, breathless chuckle at this. It sounds stilted and awkward coming out of his mouth. “You’re the only asshole in the world who would fucking insult me right now.”

“Is not an insult, is true. You are boring.” Ilya crosses his arms over his chest. “This is probably the most exciting night you’ve ever had. But do not repeat it. I mean it, Hollander.”

Shane wants to fight back. He wants to ask Ilya who the fuck put him in charge.

But the truth is, *Shane* did. Over, and over, and over again.

“I won’t,” he says breathlessly, “I don’t know what I was thinking.”

“Is okay that you wanted to hook up with someone, Hollander, is normal,” Ilya says, “just, be fucking careful next time.”

Shane glances at him hesitantly. “You aren’t…mad at me?”

At that, Ilya does look perplexed. “Why the fuck would I be mad at you?”

Because I fucked someone else and then called you crying about it?

Shane shrugs unsurely.

The other man sighs, shaking his head. “I don’t fucking own you, Hollander. You don’t own me. You are allowed to…” he shakes his head again. “You are drunk, we will talk about this in the morning.”

It’s true, what he’s saying. They are in no way exclusive. Ilya hooks up with Svetlana and probably whoever the fuck else he wants, whenever he wants. And Shane should be allowed the same luxury, if he chooses it.

The thing is, he hasn’t *wanted* it. Not with anyone but Ilya. Not for a long time.

He isn’t…he *isn’t* Ilya’s- but that’s the problem. He really wants to be. And that’s fucking scary.

“How is your head?” Ilya asks, speaking again when Shane just stares at him silently.

“It hurts,” he admits.

“Come on. Will give you something for it, and then you will lay down with an ice pack.”

Shane follows Ilya into the adjacent bedroom, where the other man hands him a pair of soft sweatpants and a t-shirt. He dresses quickly, stopping when Ilya also hands him two fluffy white socks. It feels so nice to have his feet warm, dry and contained again.

In the kitchen, Shane takes a few ibuprofen tablets and drinks another glass of water because Ilya makes him. Then, the other man gives him an ice pack for his head and walks him back to the bedroom. Shane is too tired to do much arguing, so he plops down on the mattress, ice pack pressed to his forehead.

Ilya pulls the comforter up to his chest, patting it down almost like it’s a reflex. It takes Shane a moment to register that he’s just been *tucked in* for the first time since he was…maybe five.

“I’m sleeping here?” Shane asks tiredly.

Ilya nods. “Yes. I will take other room. Do you…” He falters, glancing at the door, then Shane’s face. “Need anything?”

Shane’s heart goes haywire in his chest. He shakes his head.

Ilya nods once, then spares a lingering look at his bandaged face, before turning for the door.

Shane isn’t sure what part of his body makes the decision. If it's his brain or some deep-seated reflex- what makes him do what he does next. It’s not something he’s usually brave enough to do. He certainly wasn’t this brave earlier today.

He reaches out and grabs Ilya’s wrist.

“You need something?” Ilya asks roughly.

You. I need you.

Shane stares at him desperately, hoping the thoughts in his brain are conveyed on his face. They usually aren’t.

“You have to say it, Hollander,” Ilya murmurs, “you have to ask for it.”

Shame.

“I want you to stay,” Shane whispers, blinking back tears. Ilya’s pulse thrums underneath his fingertips, steady and even. Something sturdy to ground him- the life radiating off of this beautiful, confusing man.

“Okay.” Ilya says it so quickly, as if leaving was never really an option.

The next moment, a warm body slides into the bed beside him. Shane feels Ilya’s arms wrap around him, clutching him against a thick, sturdy chest. Shane feels breath on his ear, Ilya’s plush lips brushing against his skin. His arms tighten around Shane’s midsection, like he’s trying to hold him steady amidst the waves of a choppy sea. That’s sort of how it feels.

“Ilya,” Shane chokes out through a sudden bout of hot, thick tears.

He hears the man behind him shudder and inhale, like he’s drinking up the sound of his name on Shane’s lips.

“Shane,” Ilya croaks, fear and uncertainty tinting the word. He is so brave to do this again after what Shane did to him earlier today. To say the thing that split this rift between them. To open his heart in ways Shane had never expected him to want to do.

“Please stay,” Shane weeps.

“Okay,” Ilya agrees.

Shane doesn't pay attention to anything else, after that.

He wakes to sunlight warming his face.

If it weren't for the splitting headache, and the nausea coiling in his stomach, and the soreness of his muscles, and the way his eyes are dry from crying too much, Shane would probably be…content.

Ilya is still in bed with him, chest warm against his back, face nestled where his neck meets his shoulder. And it's soft, quiet, intimate.

Shane remembers everything.

He takes a slow, deep breath, willing the nausea to abate. He hasn't had a hangover in a long time, but he's sure today will be the day. *Ugh.* They have a fucking game this afternoon.

Adjusting slightly, he cranes his neck, jostling Ilya a bit. The other man blinks into awareness, looking startled momentarily, before his hazel eyes land on Shane's face. Framed by his dark eyelashes, Shane takes a moment to appreciate the deepness of Ilya's eyes. There's so much emotion in his gaze, even right now as he just wakes. Something deeper, richer, more complex than Shane could've ever expected from the beefy, stoic Russian boy he met outside so many years ago.

It's been so many years.

Neither of them speak, not knowing how to break the silence. For once in their lives, not wanting to be first.

Shane figures it's only fair if he takes the bullet.

"I am sorry about last night," Shane says, voice raw and cracked. "And yesterday. All of it."

Ilya hums quietly in his ear. The noise almost says something Shane thinks he can decipher, even though it isn't words.

You're going to have to do better than that, Hollander.

"I was afraid," he whispers, lashes fluttering, eyes unable to meet Ilya's intense gaze. "Because, the truth is, Ilya…yesterday something was different. *We* were different."

Ilya clears his throat. "We are fuck buddies, Hollander. Is not a big deal."

"No," he says, "you know that isn't all this is."

Ilya exhales, nodding slightly. "Okay, if we are going to do this, I need some fucking food first."

Perplexed, Shane watches as Ilya rises from the bed. He stretches his muscles, moving leisurely. Shane follows suit, swallowing back nausea and rubbing his eyes as his head

throbs.

“Let me see,” Ilya says, coming around to his side of the bed like lightning. He takes Shane’s chin in two fingers, tilting his face up to examine the gauze.

Shane can’t help but stare at the contours of his face- his strong nose, the curve in his lips, that pretty little mole on his cheek. Against all impulse, he resists the urge to reach out and kiss it.

“It looks better,” Ilya says thoughtfully, “but we should change the bandage out.”

“Okay,” Shane says.

They make their way into the kitchen. Shane’s equilibrium feels off, so he’s moving slow. Ilya falls into step with him, watching from his peripherals like he’s afraid Shane’s about to take another header into a table.

Mercifully, he makes it to the kitchen no problem, and lowers himself into a chair while Ilya resumes his nurse activities from the night before. He cleans and redresses Shane’s wound, which is so tender and intimate it almost feels suffocating.

Then, when his hands are washed, Ilya stands at the sink and asks, “if I make you more food, are you going to eat and then run away again?”

Shane sighs. He probably deserves that.

“I couldn’t eat right now,” he admits, “I feel like I’m going to puke. And uh…I’m not really in a position to do any running. You drove me here.”

“Mm.” Ilya nods thoughtfully, like he hadn’t considered that. “I have hangover cure. You will eat breakfast and it will help.”

Shane doubts it, but things feel…*civil* between them right now, so he doesn’t want to fuck it up.

Ilya makes a truly disgusting-looking breakfast of greasy sausage and fried eggs, with a mug of black coffee. He slides it all over to Shane, who recoils from the strong smell.

“It will fix,” Ilya insists.

This is not part of Shane’s macrobiotic diet, but Ilya has his arms crossed expectantly, so he figures he’d better just comply.

They eat together in mostly silence. The coffee helps, and somehow, so does the food. Shane feels a little more normal after mostly cleaning his plate and draining the mug.

Ilya’s coffee is blonde from cream and sugar, but he eats the same breakfast and drinks his beverage at a leisurely pace.

“So,” Ilya says conversationally, picking at his teeth with his pinky finger. He doesn’t follow that up with anything, which is frustrating.

“Don’t be an asshole please,” Shane says, even though he knows he doesn’t have the right to accuse Ilya of being anything of the sort right now. He’d cared for him last night like he was some sort of wounded bird. He’s earned some attitude.

Ilya spreads his hands across the table, like he’s laying something flat. “You want to talk, Hollander, talk.”

“Do you want to know why I went home with that bartender?” Shane asks, voice flat and gruff.

Ilya’s eyes flash with emotion, but his tone remains neutral. “Because you wanted to get off?”

“No.”

“I don’t know, Hollander. Why the fuck did you?”

“Because I was so fucking ashamed of myself that I just…didn’t know what to do. I wanted to forget.”

Ilya glances at him, jaw clenched. “Forget me?”

No. Never.

“Forget what I did, and what I was feeling,” Shane admits, shaking his head. His eyes are threatening to water, but he blinks it back desperately. He doesn’t want to cry in front of him again. “I freaked out because, Christ, you said my name like it *meant* something, and to me… I guess it really did.”

Ilya watches him silently, leaving the air thick and heavy between them.

“I think I’m gay,” Shane mutters, eyes falling down to the empty, brownstained mug.

Ilya snorts, and his head snaps up.

“No shit,” Ilya says.

“This isn’t as easy for me as it is for you,” Shane bites back icily. “You don’t have to always treat me like I’m some idiot schoolkid.”

“Then why do you act like one?” Ilya demands. “You are gay, we fuck, what is the big deal, Hollander?”

“I don’t think I can keep pretending I don’t like you!” The words break from his lips in a hurried, unplanned mess. He hadn’t meant to say that outloud, but it’s out there now. Everything is on the table, if it hadn’t already been, after last night’s show of vulnerability.

Ilya shakes his head fractionally, dropping his eyes to his own mug. “You don’t like me.”

“Yeah, I fucking do.” Shane’s teeth grit. “Even though you’re an asshole who makes fun of me and calls me boring and drives me fucking insane. I *like* you, Ilya, so much…and I don’t know what to do with that. So, I freaked out.”

The tension in the air feels like an anvil.

Ilya glances up at him through his eyelashes. His expression is hard to read- *god* Shane wishes he were better at this kind of thing. Ilya’s jaw clenches again, lips drawn tight.

“Do you…*at all* feel the same way?” Shane asks, voice distraught.

The other man exhales, the breath shaky. “I don’t know what you want me to say. Sometimes we speak the same language, Hollander. Hockey, and sex, we understand each other there. It is easy. On the ice and in bed…it all makes sense, da? But everything else…” Ilya chews on his lip. “I think we have language barrier. Not just because I am Russian.”

Shane inhales, trying to process his words.

“I thought things were going so well yesterday,” Ilya says, and there’s a surprising openness to his voice. A hurt, that’s tinged red with anger. “I spent all day wondering what the fuck went wrong.”

“Well, I’ve had my fair share of those days too,” Shane mutters. More like *six months* of it after their first time fucking.

“Is my point,” Ilya agrees. “How could this ever work? It can’t. We can’t be anything.”

And really, Shane doesn’t know the answer.

It’s quiet then, and they both stare at each other.

Ilya is right of course. It could never work. They can’t exactly *come out.* They can’t be open about their relationship, if that’s what this even *is*. They could never be…*free.*

And moreover, do either of them even fucking know *how* to be with someone? At least in the way they’re talking about?

“If you believe that,” Shane says, ashamed at how fragile the words come out, “why did you come get me last night? Why not just…leave me to figure it out?”

Ilya’s shoulders go tense, like the mere thought of having left Shane alone on that curb last night is too much to bear.

“I do not know,” he admits, “I should have ignored your call.”

“But you didn’t.”

“No, I didn’t.”

Their eyes meet again. It's confusing, and devastating and so overwhelming Shane feels like his veins are going to set ablaze inside his skin.

There aren't words that either of them can say. Nothing that will fix any of this, or change anything. They can't change the world, they can't change hockey, they can't change who they are or where they've carved out lives for themselves amidst it all.

Still, Ilya gets up from his chair. Shane does too.

They meet in the middle, and their lips press together in a fumbling, desperate, pretty pathetic kiss.

Ilya's hands cup the back of his head, cradling him like he's something precious. His lips grapple for rhythm with Shane's, tongue gliding across the arc of his upper lip. It's so familiar, so perfect, so *Ilya.*

And that's the whole crux of the thing, if Shane really slows down and thinks about it all. It's not about hockey, or the world, or even his own shame.

It's about *Ilya.*

Nothing could ever make him feel the way Ilya does. He could live a thousand lives, go home with a thousand bartenders, spend every day trying to convince himself he's something he's not.

And none of it would ever breathe life into him the way Ilya Rozanov does.

When their lips part, both of them panting and slick with spit and vibrating with energy, Shane doesn't know what to say. He doesn't know where to go from here, or what happens next. He knows nothing has changed, but in a weird way, it feels like everything has.

"This is so stupid," Ilya whispers against his lips, "we are so stupid."

"Yeah," Shane agrees, breathing heavily. "I don't want to stop."

"Neither do I," Ilya says.

They kiss again, Ilya's hand coming back up to cup his cheek. His thumb draws small circles on Shane's freckled cheek, the touch is so affectionate and tender it makes Shane feel like he can't breathe.

When they part, their eyes meet. Fear and uncertainty align in their gazes. It's as if they're on the precipice of something, even though they both know that they aren't. Not in a way that matters, really.

Still, into the silence, Ilya breathes his name. It's hungry, and seeking, and hopeful in ways that he hadn't been before this moment.

"Shane."

And instead of running, instead of hiding and deflecting, instead of feeling ashamed, Shane brushes their noses together, and answers.

“Ilya.”

End Notes

please be kind and considerate, if it's not your thing, just hit the back button!

im not a professional and this is unbeta'd character exploration for fun!

you can find me on twt @ -imbihesgay-

thanks for reading!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!