

time after time

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time after time

by [TheMalapert](#)

Summary

It's not a big deal. Shane gets a new watch from his Rolex sponsorship. They want him to promote it for Valentine's Day.

It's a fine watch. They always are. It has a second face, ticking away inside the larger one. He can set it to a different timezone, so he always knows what time it is somewhere else.

He sets it a lot nowadays.

...

Or - Five times Hayden notices something is up with Shane's fancy watch, and one time he knows better.

Notes

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

It's not a big deal. Shane gets a new watch from his Rolex sponsorship. They want him to promote it for Valentine's Day. One of the email chains had the phrase "like the Bachelor."

It's a fine watch. They always are. It has a second face, ticking away inside the larger one. He can set it to a different timezone, so he always knows what time it is somewhere else. *For the traveling couple*, is the tagline, but Shane thinks it'll go mostly to businessmen keeping track of the Nikkei opening.

He sets it a lot nowadays.

...

Hayden is in his boxers when Shane gets back from the showers. JJ is already giggling, bouncing around on the balls of his feet like they haven't just had a more grueling practice than Navy Seals, and Hayden is in his boxers, Shane's Reebok sneakers, and Shane's new Rolex.

"*Phenom* is the word they usually use," he declares, and Comeau snickers into his locker. "Though they've added a new one recently."

"Fuck off, Hayden," Shane groans, and he pulls his hair towel in front of his face.

Hayden takes a step up onto the bench like he's having a stroll, and he tosses his head back, carding a hand through his still-wet bangs. He puts as much mustard on it as he can, swinging his hips and saying, "*Heartthrob!*"

"Seriously, JJ, I'll leave you everything in my will if you just smother me right now," Shane says, hardly muffled by the fabric. JJ claps him on the shoulder, then raps his knuckles there.

"No chance, Capitaine," he drawls. "Not when we have a shot at the Cup this year."

"Then, can you shut him up?" Shane peeks out from underneath the terry, turning to grab his clothes.

JJ is winding up a towel when Shane pulls his shirt over his head. He hears a snap and a yelp and the pounding of feet against wet concrete.

"Seriously, Mr. Variety Sports," Hayden says, skidding up to Shane. "How do you even find the time to do all of this shit?"

He rattles the Rolex on his wrist. Shane shrugs.

"I don't have two kids," Shane says, and Hayden nods, lips sucked against his teeth.

“Maybe I could sell one—*ack!*”

JJ snaps him again, and the crack of it is *wicked*. Shane’s usually left out of the towel games, but even he knows from experience the terror of JJ’s whip.

“I’m telling Jackie you said that,” Shane mutters to the scoff of his best friend.

“I do it in front of her,” Hayden retorts.

“Give me my stuff, dude. I want to go home and do an ice bath or something,” Shane says as he pushes his feet through his sweats. Hayden deflates like a balloon animal left in the car, and JJ cackles at him, feather-dusting his bare back with the towel.

“Shit’s so fancy, even your watch has a watch,” Hayden grumbles, taking it off with a flick.

“That is for his lady love, no?” JJ pushes his face towards the watch dangling from Hayden’s fingers, and Shane grabs it before JJ can swallow it whole.

“It’s not. It’s just a cool thing about the watch. I can set it to whatever,” Shane says. He turns to put his body between them and the watch he slips over his wrist.

“But it’s set to *Boston*, isn’t it?” Hayden grins.

“It’s set to my fucking timezone. It’s the same timezone,” Shane says even though explaining anything to them when they’re like this is like explaining hockey to a dog.

“He knows it’s the same timezone,” JJ says like it’s an Omen with a capital O.

Hayden holds up Shane’s Reebok, speaking into his rubber microphone, “Two young lovers. One timezone.”

Shane snatches the shoe, and he’s *so* close to being able to bolt out the door.

“Hm, maybe I should start hooking up with Boston girls,” JJ muses. “One fucking at a time, we could convert the whole city.”

“If anyone could do it, it would be you,” Shane says diplomatically, and JJ preens, swiping his thumb over his jaw. Shane doesn’t mention the fact that, statistically, they’d only be able to convert like twenty percent of the population, considering age and gender ratios.

“But would it really be worth sullyng yourself like that? Your body is a temple, dude,” Hayden says, and then adds a quick—“No offence, Shane.”

“Yeah, sorry, Shane, but *fuck* Boston. Not *fuck* Boston, you know?” JJ claps him on the back with a grin, and Shane gives a half hearted smile-and-nod in response.

It’s stupid.

He shouldn’t feel worse about the whole *Boston* thing than he does the whole gay thing, but somehow, it feels like his buddies would be more offended by the *Ilya Rozanov* of it all than

the taking it up the ass.

“As if I would take dating advice from either of you,” Shane mutters, and it has the intended effect.

Comeau *oooohs* from the other side of the locker room, and JJ busts up laughing. They rib him for saving all his chirps for off the ice, and he’s able to duck out in under three minutes.

...

“Hey.”

Shane has his knees against his chest, face pressed into his thighs, arms shrouding his head. It’s not exactly *safe* in the humid pocket he’s created for himself, but it’s quieter and darker, and that’s much the same.

“I’m okay,” he says. “I just need a minute.”

He hears the swish of a jersey as Hayden crouches next to him.

“Fifty seven. Fifty six. Fifty five.”

“Okay, okay.” It comes out hoarse, and he clears his throat, lifting his head to find his best friend staring thoughtfully at Shane’s watch.

“It was a brutal fucking game,” Hayden leads off with. Shane wonders if it’s the same tone he uses when his kids get bee stings.

“We were leading *the entire time*,” Shane says. It’s not a whine or a bitch or a moan like what’s happening in the locker room right now. It’s a statement of fact. They scored in the first ten minutes; they were practically skating victory laps until one of Nashville’s enforcers took Andropov out, and then it just... fell apart.

“I’m not letting my kids watch Cinderella again, I tell you.”

Mr. Hollander! It’s your first game of the season as Captain. How does it feel to be the wicked stepmother to the Trappers’ Cinderella story?

“A fucking late game hat trick,” Shane hisses.

“It’s not your fault, you know,” Hayden says.

“Sure.”

“Do we need to get you drunk?” Hayden knocks Shane’s shoulder with his elbow. “Or laid?”

“No, Hayden.”

“Look, give me your phone. I’ll call up Boston Lily even though she’s in—”

Shane yanks his wrist away from Hayden’s puppy dog head tilt, but not before the wheels start turning.

“Mountain timezone—”

“It’s Pacific,” Shane sighs.

“—Pacific timezone,” Hayden says with a nod. “I’ll fly her out, and we’ll celebrate the first of *many* games to come.”

“No impulse purchases over two hundred dollars,” Shane reminds his friend, and Hayden scoffs.

“Jackie’d buy the tickets herself if it means cheering you up,” Hayden says, the boyish honesty so plain across his face like he’s about to hold up three fingers and declare *Scout’s honor*.

Shane’s porcelain castle cracks, and he unfolds himself, a tiny, awkward smile pulling clumsily at his lips.

“It’s not for anyone,” Shane lies, turning his be-watched wrist.

Rozanov is kicking LA’s ass right now.

“Okay, sure, lover boy.” Hayden coaxes him up, and Shane lets himself be mother henned.

“Can we go back inside now?” Shane asks as if he’s not the one who took advantage of the broken fire alarm on the roof access door.

“Yeah, but you have to stay six feet away from me. You could have at least showered first, man.”

Hayden’s arm around his shoulders allows him to do no such thing.

...

Shane is fiddling with it when Hayden comes up to him, a maple leaf only slightly smeared on his forehead and a jack-o-lantern pretty expertly done on his cheek.

“Heyo, how’s the real estate on el Capitán over here?” He’s herding a young girl, fidgeting with her paint pens.

The sounds of the festival around them leak in through the cracks of the bulletproof focus Shane has had on his watch. It's easier to ignore jeering crowds with a puck in front of him—harder to ignore these shrieking kids, but he's trying his best. Adjusting the secondary watch back and forth between mountain and eastern has been doing the trick.

"I think I've still got some room here," Shane says and points to the side of his neck.

Shane's face is covered. No less than two butterflies, one snarling pumpkin, a skull and cross bones, and the ghost with its tongue out emoji. He supposes he's just glad they aren't auctioning off the poop emoji.

It's all for charity, right?

"Hi," the girl says, and she sticks out her hand. He gives her a professional shake, and then she drops onto the artist's stool. They've done this event in the past, but it's the first year they've let the donors sponsor a kid from the hospital to do the actual drawing. It's nice, in some ways. It's a nice idea. But he prefers when they're assigned amateur artists because then they usually give up on small talk pretty quick.

"So, um. I'm Shane Hollander," Shane says.

"I know. I'm Bailey Hidaka," she replies, laying out her markers. "Can you look—there? For me?"

She points to the streetlamp jutting out from the middle of the parking lot. He dutifully shifts his gaze to present his neck, but not before clocking the straight black hair, the features just excusable enough not to stick out from a school photo.

"Do you draw a lot?" Shane asks.

"Not as much as I'd like. It hurts my hands too much," she says bluntly.

"I'm honored to take up some of your time."

"Your throat moves when you talk," she says, and Shane fights a smile.

There's not a single similarity between the delicate art she's practicing in her spare time and the brutish enthusiasm he finds as his career, but there's a kindred thing here nonetheless. A candid thing. A bird of a feather who won't quite look the other bird in the eye. Shane lapses into a mutual silence, breathing in paint fumes and the crisp Montreal autumn.

Rozanov's plane touches down in fifteen minutes. They're cutting it ridiculously close, but frightening weather kept them grounded in Colorado. TORNADOS weren't supposed to happen that far west. Anywhere with enough snow for a ski resort wasn't supposed to get *tornadoes*. He'd almost texted Rozanov about it, for Christ's sake! He didn't, but he was halfway through typing out the taking shelter rules before he remembered that Boston's assistant coach is from one of those boring middle-of-USA states.

Boring because they have no major hockey team. *That's* boring, Shane thinks spitefully.

But in this case, bumfuck nowhere knowledge would come in handy. To avoid himself the humiliation of checking in, Shane simply has to have faith. He read the Wikipedia article for tornados four times with the weather report on in the background. Everything was fine; they're just cutting it close.

He's not relaxing, though, until he knows Rozanov is on the ground.

God, he's going to be insufferable once he actually starts dating someone, isn't he? If he's this neurotic about a guy who probably, *probably* just likes getting his dick sucked by a better skater. Of course, these are all things he really shouldn't be thinking about with the scent of paint marker making him lightheaded.

"My parents love hockey," Bailey says after a while. She has four different pens open on her tiny work table. None of them are Halloween colors, but Shane can't find it in himself to be concerned about multiple things right now.

"Mine too," Shane replies, and it actually gets a smile out of her, stilted and small.

"I didn't really care that much until a few years ago," she says. "You're my favorite."

"I hope so, if I've trusted you with my face." Shane gestures without shifting her canvas.

"You can trust me," she says very seriously, and Shane resists the urge to nod. She lapses back into silence as she finishes up her detailed drawing.

When she's done, she sits back and wordlessly gives him the hand mirror.

"Shit," Shane says, and then his tongue fumbles over itself. "I mean—"

"Yeah," she says, hands balling into fists and lip curling into a snarl. "You're gunna *shit* on Boston."

Shane doesn't quite hold back his scoff of a laugh. Across the side of his neck is a Boston Raiders cannon, cracked in half by a giant M.

"This is very well done," he says diplomatically. "I'm feeling very inspired."

"*Yeah!*" Bailey hisses, and Shane holds his hand out for a high five. She channels all of her coiled energy into an echoing *crack* of a hit, so loud that Shane's mom pauses her chat with Coach Theriault to glance their way.

"My first goal—that one's for you."

Shane's pretty sure if not for her skin, she would vibrate right out of her body.

"That's *awesome*," she says instead, her eyes fixed on the still-drying paint. "I want it right in Rozanov's *face*."

Shane's next laugh is brittle, and he starts to heard her back to the crowd of parents. She drifts off like she's on skates. Shane wonders if he can bow out of any more of the auction.

Surely, he's covered enough? Like she's sensing his hesitation, Yuna appears at his side, hand on his shoulder as she bends down to check the latest graffiti.

"That's really good. I'm going to take a picture for your socials," she says, phone already in hand.

"Don't post it unless we win." Shane doesn't know why he says it.

"It'll be fine, Shane," she says. "It might get more people to the game tonight."

"It's already sold out," Shane whines, but she's done.

Not a full minute later, after his mom has whisked off to talk to some of the big donors, Shane's phone vibrates in his pocket.

It's from Lily.

It's a screenshot of Shane's Instagram, the demolished canon proudly on display. Shane's gut twists as he flinchingly reads Rozanov's message.

I know where I'm coming tonight.

Heat cracks through Shane's ironclad control like magma forcing its way through rock. It's stupid. He should feel weak, but he doesn't. That doesn't come until later—until Rozanov puts his hands on him. Now, it's just the unstoppable drive to get there.

Shane cocks his wrist to officially adjust his watch. Rozanov is on the ground, already yanking Shane's chain, and soon, they'd be helmet to helmet in the cacophony of Metros fans.

"Okay, last one. Coach swears! Then we're on for warmups," Hayden says, guiding a bespeckled boy with a tracing paper clenched deathly tight in his hand. Hayden has another pumpkin on his cheek.

Shane punches the button back in on his watch, tension sagging from his shoulders as a much more genuine smile tugs at his face.

"What are we doodling today?" Shane asks.

The kid doesn't faint, exactly, but despite Hayden's best dad efforts, the kid doesn't come within arm's length of Shane.

They wrap up their part in the festival, heading over to their social media director to each get spritzed in the face with some sort of makeup witchery. She says it'll hold up even if they get dunked, but Shane has more faith in his teammate's abilities to sweat than he does Sephora.

The players all pledged to match the donations to their new bodywork, and all told, they raise seventy six thousand dollars for Bethlehem House that helps families sick-proof their houses and helps with travel funds for rural parents with children in treatment. Shane really likes the

program. It's not a bad place to find himself, after hockey is all over and done with. It's not like he'll really need to *work* ever again.

Shane hardly needs to work for his rousing speech tonight. The guys are always fired up after a charity event. JJ in particular touches each of his Halloween doodles like they're a rosary, and then he kisses his knuckles.

"We know exactly who's counting on us," Shane says, waving his hand in front of his face. "So let's do this!"

There's an accompanying roar, and then the Metros head out to represent. Coach sends them each on a couple rounds about the ice, so that the Jumbotron can point out each of their tattoos in turn. The kids are sat in the good seats—the family seats—and Shane gives a salute to Bailey when her art is showcased. The stadium goes wild, and Shane's pretty sure he watches his father start the chant.

On est chez nous!

The Metros certainly did have the home advantage this time. Shane's skating on pure electricity.

The Raiders aren't on the ice for warm ups. When they march into the rink, it's like they're headed off to war, and their faces are indistinguishable under their helmets.

They've done something for Halloween too.

Shane hardly recognizes him when they get to the first face off. His curls are slicked back, invisible, and the paint warps his sharp cheekbones into something... wicked. It's supposed to be a skull, but the black is smokey across Rozanov's face, and the white splits his lips like he's caught a few haymakers. His eyes glow next to the dark ink, and all Shane can think of is Rozanov's painted lips stretched around his cock.

Rozanov wins the face off, but the Metros win the game. It's their year, after all.

...

"I thought Rose was in Vancouver?"

Shane has a dozen other watches. He doesn't have to wear it while they're jogging. He doesn't have to keep wearing *this* one, doesn't have to keep staring at the second face, stubbornly stuck on Eastern time. Rozanov isn't even in Boston right now, and he hates that he knows that.

"What are you talking about?" Shane asks, going for ignorance and hitting wide. He strikes *irritation* instead.

The Little Engine That Could Skate that is his best friend slows to a sad chug. Shane matches the cooldown pace. Sputtering and stilted, Hayden says, “Well, your—you used to adjust it all the time. I haven’t seen you mess with it in forever.”

“It’s never been for anyone. It’s not for Rose. It’s not for *Lily*—”

It’s *not*.

“—It’s just a watch, man,” Shane says like if he keeps saying it, it’ll pick out the pesky Ilya-colored threads the Fates have sewn into him.

“Okay! Damn.” Silence is not one of Hayden Pike’s natural modes, so the air between them is radio static. Shane can imagine the whole show going on over there, and for once, he’s glad for the bad connection.

“We still have half the trail left,” Shane says. He leaves Hayden’s mumbled echo behind him.

...

Shane *never* gets to relax like this.

He should get slammed down emergency style more often.

The angel and devil on his shoulders are both shaped like Ilya, and the former chastizes him for even thinking that. The latter suggests a different kind of slamming.

It’s just depressingly true, isn’t it? There’s always a trickle of thought, no matter how well he dams up the rivers of his mind. The only time he even remotely lets his head drift is also when his body is wound up tight, waiting to burst.

But this? It’s like his body doesn’t even exist. It’s awesome.

“Honey?”

He blinks until his mom is standing by his bedside. He smiles at her even though it hasn’t worked to soothe that knot between her brows. She smiles back, but not really.

“Are you feeling up for visitors?” She asks.

“I’m feeling *so* up for visitors, Mom. I’ve never been more up,” Shane slurs, and that gets a teensy tinsey smile out of her.

“Yes, I can see that,” she replies. “I’ll let them in.”

Maybe it’s Ilya again. Shane is always up for Ilya.

They keep the room dark, but it still feels better to close his eyes. When he opens them again, Hayden has replaced his mother—something he’s been trying to do for years, honestly—and JJ is lingering near the door. They don’t look happy either which is such a bummer. Nobody has looked *happy* to come see him.

“Heyyyyy, you guys,” Shane says. He gropes upwards until Hayden brings his face closer, and Shane brushes his knuckles to Hayden’s cheek with an explosion noise.

“Hey, buddy,” Hayden says. “How you doing?”

“I’m good, man. I’m out, you know, but I’m *good*. You can stop with your worried face.” Shane tries to pat Hayden’s fatherly concern but ends up slapping him a little bit. Hayden takes Shane’s hand, probably to protect himself because Shane is immensely powerful yet tragically doesn’t know his own strength. Like a Saint Bernard.

Shane sighs wistfully at the thought of carrying one of those barrels full of whiskey—no, vodka—around his neck.

“I need to ask you something, buddy,” Hayden says, and he glances at JJ, so Shane glances at JJ too. He hasn’t come away from the door, staring intently out the window like the nurses are going to ambush them. The night nurse does know judo.

“I am an open book,” Shane assures him, but that’s not super true. His eyes flutter shut as he adds in a whisper, “Except for the parts that are closed.”

“I know it’s a sensitive kind of subject, but I think it’s gotten out of hand,” Hayden says.

“Totally.”

“Shane,” Hayden sighs, and JJ clicks his tongue against the roof of his mouth.

“Just ask him, already!” JJ hisses. Shane is grateful for the pause, though, because it lets him think about his surprised face. Eyebrows will definitely be involved.

Absolutely not, he’ll say. *How could you accuse me thusly? Your truest friend? Never have I enjoyed the company of men, yourselves included!*

“Are you having an affair with Cliff Marleau’s wife?” Hayden spits out like someone snuck him a sugar free Gatorade.

Am I—?

“What?”

“We’ve noticed, okay? Your watch and Boston Lily. She has to travel with them, right? At least some of the time, and the way you got hit—”

“Is Marleau married?” Shane interrupts. “Good for him.”

“Look, you can tell us if your girl is a Raider’s wife. That’s why you’ve been so secretive, isn’t it?” Hayden looks a bit like he’s going to throw up, and Shane almost offers his antiemetics before he realizes he’s taken them already. His mom has the other ones.

“We just need to make sure no one is going to show up at your house, eh? Those guys are insane,” JJ says.

“Nobody is showing up at my house, guys,” Shane says, wagging his head in a way that makes the room blurry.

However, Ilya Rozanov will be showing up at my sex apartment. And hopefully my cottage. Which will then turn into. My sex cottage.

He’s fairly confident he doesn’t say those thoughts out loud.

“So she’s not—?”

“I’m sandalized—I’m—I’m *scanladized*. I’m. I’m fucked up that you’d even think that,” Shane says because the sword of guilt is a family heirloom.

“I’m sorry, man.” Hayden’s pinched expression gets worse like a towel getting wrung out, and he squeezes Shane’s hand as he says, “It was just really scary watching you go down like that.”

“You thought someone *must* have put a hit out on me?” Shane’s honestly flattered. Or his pain meds are kicking in again. It’s hard to say.

“We wouldn’t put it past those fuckers,” JJ says, finally peeling himself away from his watch station. “But if you say that’s not the case, then that’s not the case. End of.”

Shane doesn’t try to puff up his chest because that’s a major thing not to do with a fractured clavicle, but he puts on his best impression of Coach Theriault. He says, “That’s right! You have to trust your Captain that he’s not fucking the enemy’s wives!”

“They are probably all witches and harpies anyways,” JJ says with a grin.

“Isn’t that one guy dating a literal supermodel?”

“I’m not fucking the anemone’s wives!” Shane declares, and JJ barely catches himself from socking Shane in the shoulder.

“That’s good to hear, Capitaine!” He pumps his fist in the air instead.

“It’s way worse than that,” Shane sighs, and their mouths drop open at the same time like they do synchronized skating.

“What do you m—”

“Hi there, Mr. Hollander! Who’s joining us this time?” Priya, the afternoon nurse, says as she bustles through the door. Shane’s mom is right on her heels, and she’s got her phone on

facetime.

“Sorry, guys. Duty calls,” Shane faux-whispers, and they are gently herded out the door.

...

The Florida heat has everyone in a mood. Like children on their way home from a field trip, grown men are leaning over bus seats and throwing rolled up socks at each other’s heads. One point if you connect. Three points if they don’t notice it coming. Shane has his headphones in and is listening to a playlist Rose sent him entitled *music even you will like*. His fingers drum across his knee not in any particular rhythm.

He’s been back to Tampa plenty of times since that All Stars game, and it always makes him a little lighter on his skates.

A piece of paper sails past him, and Shane presses his lips together. They’ve graduated into full paper airplanes mode. It might be time to pull out his Captain’s authority. He swipes the crudely folded thing off of the floor, and he pauses, finding his name smeared across the wings.

His eyes trace backwards over the trajectory, and that’s definitely Hayden hiding behind his seat two rows back. A sock ball sails over his head with a courteously high arc as he unfolds the paper.

Did you know? Scrawled in a ballpoint on its last drip of ink. *Arizona is one of two US states that doesn’t observe daylight savings?*

It takes Shane a full processing cycle for the knot between his brows to flatten and his lips to fidget against each other. He folds the note in half, hiding the evidence, and he holds it up with two fingers.

Really? He mouths over his shoulder to Hayden who’s grinning, halfway into the aisle. Hayden lurches forward, weaving around Andropov’s stretched leg, and he skids to a stop on his knees next to Shane’s seat.

“You like a fun fact!” Hayden says, innocence like cheap paint across his face, peeling at the edges.

“You’re as bad as he is,” Shane mutters, and Hayden’s expression melts into a scoff.

“I don’t appreciate getting compared to the likes of—” And he performs the same motion he always does to indicate the *Ilya* secret—holding out his thumb, pointer, and middle fingers like a Frenchman counting to three and then proceeding to... Shane’s not entirely sure, but it sort of looks like jacking a cigarette against his face. Which is pretty accurate to Rozanov’s whole *thing*, actually.

“Well, maybe if you two weren’t assholes to me, constantly,” Shane retorts, and he flicks his wrist to check his watch.

Fuck.

The second face is wrong. If Arizona doesn’t have the hour offset, that means he’s a full hour off, and *that* means Ilya’s not just ignoring him—

“Yeah, they’re probably still at practice,” Hayden says smugly.

“Shut up.”

“You do this thing when something’s not going how you expect,” Hayden explains, gesturing towards his face which Shane promptly covers with his hand.

“Fuck *off*.”

“Now that I know what to look for, I can’t *believe* I never realized what was going on,” Hayden crows as he straightens up, leaning his elbows on either aisle seat. “And *you* won’t believe how long I’ve been waiting to catch you with that one.”

He winks, shooting off exaggerated finger guns at the paper creasing in Shane’s grip. Shane folds it briskly and shoves it into the side of his backpack in the seat next to him. When he pulls his hand out of the netting, his middle finger is out, and he swivels to present Hayden with it.

“Fuck you,” Hayden laughs, and he drops his head to grind their temples together.

“You wish,” Shane says back, and Hayden saunters away with a fresh draught of laughter on his lips.

As Shane fiddles with the tiny gear to fix his Ilya tracker, JJ pipes up behind him—“Hey, what’s so funny?”

“It’s a sophisticated joke between me and Cap. You wouldn’t get it.”

Hayden falls for the distraction, and Miity gets three points for beaming him with a pair of maple leaf socks.

Shane’s watch clicks into place, and it’s always the small things that keep him from going insane. He won’t see Ilya for another two weeks, but instead of gnawing his arm off to escape the enclosure he put himself in, he’ll look up timezones, set his watch, and probe the distance between them like a day-old bruise.

One day, he won’t need the watch anymore.

End Notes

I couldn't resist the title

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!