

loser, lover

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Summary

Shane Hollander is what you call a prodigy. Incredibly smart. Talented. Captain of the university's hockey team.

He has no opponents.

That's it, until a mysterious exchange student, Ilya Rozanov makes a surprise appearance. He storms into his life, taking everything Shane has diligently vowed to protect.

Even his own heart.

Notes

This is the first hollanov fic I have ever written. I am kinda nervous, since Shane's character was based on me and my past personal experiences. Regardless of that, I hope you will like it. Kudos, and comments are very much appreciated! :)

p.s: english is not my first language

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

Shane Hollander was born to win.

It was that simple. Everyone knew that. Anyone who tried to compete, ended up losing to him, quite miserably. Why?

Whilst everyone was focused on beating him, he was purely focused on himself. He was his own opponent. His own challenger.

A winner only focuses on winning. A winner doesn't focus on others, but on themselves.

Fortunately, after years of continuous trying, people just gave up on dethroning him.

Shane was just that smart.

Top student in sports science, and the captain of the university's hockey team. People often murmured between themselves, how is he able to balance it all? Perfect GPA, winning streaks in hockey, good social life, and no drama involving him.

People both envied him, and loved him. There was no between. And of course Shane was aware of that, aware of what his presence does to people when he walks into a room, or the ice rink. He can always sense the hundreds of eyes grazing on him, the scorch of hatred and infatuation they have for him.

However, he has never once felt like he is superior, or he is above anyone. He was here for a reason. To study and acquire knowledge. Just because he happened to be an ace in both the study and sports field wasn't his fault. (Although he wouldn't admit it to anyone, he secretly enjoyed the thrill of being on top. Being the best of the best.)

So, in total. Shane Hollander was the guy everyone was whispering about, for years, until an unexpected storm of leaves whirled inside the campus fields in the form of a mysterious, jaw-dropping Russian exchange student.

Ilya Rozanov.

The man with the lustrous ocean blue eyes, messy light brown hair, and thick accent. Everyone became obsessed.

Except Shane.

He knew better not to involve himself in superfluous things such as mad infatuations like most people in his age did. He was certain the sudden rumors of the new, strikingly handsome man would die down over time. He gave it a week or two. Although what he didn't expect is for the exchange student to slowly emerge, climb himself up in the same fields Shane was exceeding at.

It was odd, peculiar even. For someone to actually excel in the same fields as him. Shane tried to not give it any attention, he decided to keep focusing on himself, like he always did. A new face won't change anything.

But he was wrong. *So*, wrong.

And Shane wasn't the type of person to be petty, to even show any sign of agitation on his face. He has learned to mask away any type of frustration, anger, or disappointment. But with Ilya Rozanov around, the cracks came sooner than he expected. The man has succeeded in deconstructing the very thing that hid everything under, without a single punch.

He has crawled himself around Shane, like a shadow. Something Shane couldn't escape from, no matter how much he tried. His fog has enshrouded him, he made him his captive, and Shane felt helpless at first. He didn't understand how he even got in this situation.

Maybe he was like others. Spellbound by the sweet words, and his irresistible charm no one could refuse. Or, it was his eyes that made people fall for him. Those dazzling ocean blue eyes that made people want to drown in them. Or maybe, it was his voice. The smooth slope of his velvety voice which was giving this extra scratch that erupted some underlying sensation from people.

And Shane didn't wish to remain in this fog. He didn't want to be part of this net. He didn't want to become the newest victim Ilya could devour. He was already foolish to let himself be deceived by his exceeding charisma. He didn't want to be distracted. He didn't want to lose focus. He didn't want his brain to be occupied by someone who probably doesn't even mean any of his words. The careless compliments he also charmed others with.

He wasn't willing himself to be misled, or deceived. He has more class than that. Shane is smarter than that. And his skin may have flourished in crimson by the sudden heat that spread all over his body like a wave. Although, it most probably came from the warm thermo clothes he was wearing, and definitely not because of Ilya Rozanov. Of course not.

And even if his face grew red, it was from pure irritation. Nothing else. There was not a single sign of fondness hiding in the depth of his heart in the form of a butterfly, which was ready to erupt from its locked cage, ready to slap its wings freely, to paint everything with vivid hues. It's definitely not there, it surely doesn't want to break free and fly towards Ilya.

Shane won't let Ilya dethrone him. He is aware that's what the exchange student has planned from the start.

The hockey captain is certain that Ilya has schemed this, to also charm Shane off like he did with others. But as he previously said, he won't be the victim of the well proportioned Russian man with glistening eyes and inviting heart shaped lips. Certainly not.

And now, he can draw out his form, Ilya sauntering towards him in the hallway, carrying himself with such compelling confidence that awoke people's attention instantly, whipping their heads in his direction, because his presence is *that* sensible.

The horde has slowly formed into a horizontal line, as if he was some celebrity, and Shane has found it ridiculous. To be this extremely over the heels for someone they didn't know four months ago. Hilarious, really.

As the distance has reduced between them, Shane had two options. Stay, and properly analyze the official list that contained the names of the top students for this semester and let Ilya's presence engulf him, because he's sure he's coming to talk to him again. Or, he should say fuck it, and do a quick sprint before Ilya could catch him, then check the list later.

Which is inconvenient for him, since he and patience have never been best friends. And he has quite the curious nature, so this mix doesn't blend well.

His ponderings were interrupted when another body was powering next to him, making it impossible to slip away.

Ilya is here. Standing right next to him. And his presence was radiating, Shane could feel it. It was lively.

Shane hadn't said a word. He pretended as if he didn't feel his body next to his, pretended as if he couldn't feel his unyielding gaze on him, probably wearing that annoying grin that made Shane's skin ablaze most of the time.

Just like now.

"Hollander."

"Rozanov."

"You look pretty today." Ilya grins, stepping closer to Shane, taking his hand out of his pocket, letting it hang loosely next to his side.

"Fuck off." Shane simply said, trying to sound unaffected by the compliment. Ilya always does this. Charming him with sweet words, trying to make him feel special. "I am busy right now."

He heard a short chuckle emitting from Ilya. "Not busy enough if you talk to me, yes?"

Shane inhaled a deep breath, letting it set in his lungs before he exhaled it. He's trying to compose himself, but it's impossible with the Russian man around.

He decides to remain quiet this time, not giving any of his attention to Ilya. Shane is aware it's what he wants. Shane's attention. That's what he is thirsty for. But he isn't giving any of that to him.

The hockey captain steps closer to the billboard, letting his finger touch the paper, thoughtfully drawing his fingers on the list, from bottom to top. He hums, oddly surprised by some results.

Shane takes some internal notes, and goes on analyzing the list for a couple of few seconds, before his gaze finally reaches the first ten students' names.

He can feel the side of his mouth curving upwards, already sensing what the results will be. Shane Hollander has always been number one.

He has never been once topped.

Pride fills his chest as his eyes reach the top five. And when he finally finds his name the blood in his body freezes, his body transforms into an ice cube.

University student rank:

1. Ilya Rozanov
2. Shane Hollander

No.

This isn't possible.

There has to be a mistake.

There is no way Shane was topped by Rozanov.

It must be a glitch. Shane had excellent scores from every mandatory subject this semester. And of course he is aware Ilya studies a different field, and that is calculated differently, but still. How is that even possible?

No.

He is hallucinating.

Shane must be having a nightmare. He needs to wake up. Right fucking now.

Because there is absolutely no way that someone managed to dethrone him after three years.

Impossible.

His previous statement of not focusing on anyone but himself goes in vain. Because his own challenge has been beaten by someone he knows for four months. Someone who has reached the final red ribbon in the race before him. Someone who tried to get into his mind and lose focus.

Because he indeed *lost* focus.

And the harsh reality is looking back at him. Laughing at his face.

Second.

Shane Hollander came in second.

And suddenly everything makes sense now.

The whispers at the billboard area when he was approaching. Their not-so subtle glances at him. He should have known. He should have fucking know something isn't right.

He can sense the quiet murmurs around him, students gathering from all sides to see the results for themselves, to see who has dethroned him. For the first time ever.

“No way, Hollander is second? Did someone really score higher than him?” “I didn't expect for Rozanov to beat him.” “Hollander has gone soft it seems.”

Shame fills him. And he wants nothing more than to disappear. To hide away from the prying eyes in his dorm under the safety of his blankets and cry out this humiliating feeling.

He was so used to winning, he didn't even think for a second someone would beat him. And that's an ineffable feeling he hasn't felt before.

“It seems like I beat you.” Shane hears the russian man say, in a teasing tone which makes the hockey captain feel even worse. He parts lips for a response, but nothing comes out. His mouth ran dry, as if he was walking in a desert for three days without water.

He feels his vision blurring. Tears fill his eyes, yet he doesn't let them fall. Refuses to. His pride refuses to let anyone see him break down, especially *him*.

Shane blinks away the tears, gulping down the knot that is making him choke. It takes him almost a minute to croak out a reply. “Congratulations.”

You won.

Saying the word felt heavy to say out loud, especially in front of everyone. Admitting his defeat.

Shane doesn't say anything after, because his mask officially shatters on the ground, breaking into millions of little shards. The damage on the mask can't be glued together.

Ilya made sure of it.

He made Shane Hollander lose focus.

But why did it have to be him? Why did it have to be him winning over him? How did he even achieve it and Shane couldn't?

What if it will continue to happen from now on? What if Shane will keep slipping? What if he won't be able to top things? Maybe his luck has run out. Or maybe he wasn't as smart as he thought he was.

No. He is smart. And as painful it is to admit, Ilya Rozanov is smart as well. He saw him exceeding on the ice, he saw him acing in school projects. He shouldn't have underestimated him. Shane should have known he got in this exchange program for reasons.

His university doesn't accept many students, and Ilya was one of the few whose application was accepted. He shouldn't have thought of him so little. Because the man not only possesses striking features, but a high IQ as well.

God. He really needs to get out of here. Everything feels suffocating. The voices around him became a blur, and if he won't get out of here in the next two minutes he will surely lose his shit in front of everyone.

Shane whirls in a sudden swift and breaks his way through the crowd without a word. He doesn't really care how pathetic he looks, rushing away with his gaze solely facing the floor. His pace fastens as he scoots through the hallway, with every pair watching as he dashes out.

He doesn't even realize he has been running until he feels his chest tightening, his pulse accelerating.

His palm finds the center of his chest, and he grasps onto the material, crumpling it, inhaling deep breaths with his eyes closed. He knows he is overreacting, but he feels incredibly overwhelmed because it's something he hasn't experienced before. This shock. This shame. This fear. This anger. All at once.

And he wants to blame Ilya, for successfully charming him off with his compliments. Because after all, he managed to make Shane feel things he hasn't before. He opened some doors in his heart no one was able to before.

He kept these doors locked, but Ilya somehow found the keys and entered. And it's Shane's price to pay.

“Fuck.” His hand grasps onto the railing, as he drags himself down on the stairs, with his hand pressed at his chest.

Everything feels like a slow motion, as he keeps floundering down the stairs. Fortunately, there weren't people around who would look at him with concern in their eyes. He doesn't want anyone to catch him in the middle of a breakdown.

He can't let anyone see him like this.

Shane senses sudden movements from the stairs, and they are coming incredibly fast. He decides to hasten his motions and scans his head around the area where he spots a restroom at the end of a hallway with a “*in renovation*” sign. But Shane doesn't have time to care about that, he needs to find a place to calm his throbbing heart and labored breathing.

The hockey player tears through the hallway, droplets of sweat running down on his nape as he grabs a hold onto the knob, kicking the sign out of his way. His feet barely hold himself together as he keeps bending his weight on the knob.

It's closed.

Shit, shit, shit.

He is desperately twitching the knob, but it won't open. The panic in him expands to its tenfold, as he is pulling the door but it won't crack. It remains locked. His eyes register that it can be unlocked with a key, and he doesn't have access to that since he's just an undergraduate here.

A curse escapes from his mouth, and he bangs his head to the solid surface. It's cold. He can sense that.

A shaky breath leaves his lips. He is trying to compose himself but it's a strenuous task to do. Shane finds himself losing his balance, and before he could grasp onto the knob, his already sweaty hands slip, causing him to fall on his side, right onto the kicked sign.

His palm finds the flooring, trying to put his weight on it, yet his body feels so shaken up it feels like it weighs a tank. He rolls onto his stomach, pushing up his upper body first, both arms stretched out, palm resting on the flooring.

He manages to get on all fours, however it feels grueling to push his sole onto the floor, so he keeps crawling until he reaches the nearest bench. Shane can sense the presence of someone near him. He can hear their breathing, it's uneven.

He already knows someone has caught him in this vulnerable situation, and that makes him feel even worse. Someone witnessing him breaking down over a stupid thing.

And he blames himself for that.

But what can he do to get better? He doesn't know. He doesn't know anything. And he doesn't really care right now. He just wants to be over this overwhelming sensation that is consuming him, his body.

He's freezing. He's freezing so much, even though he's wearing layered clothes. He just wants to lay down on this flooring and catch his breath. But it's hard. It's difficult to breathe. It feels like his lungs don't get enough oxygen.

He's panicking.

Shane thought he overcame this some time ago, but it seems like the worst has reached him. One of his hands grasp onto the edge of a bench, trying to pull himself up but he ends up crashing back on the ground.

Maybe it's better this way, to have more space. But he needs to grab onto something, to give him safety he can hold onto. His other hand finds his chest again, slowly sneaking higher until he is messaging the part between his chest and collarbone.

“Hey, hey, hey. Hollander.”

Fuck.

It's him.

He's even more mortified now.

“Shh, shh. It's okay. I am here. You are okay.” Ilya scrunches down onto the ground, right next to him. “You will be okay.”

“Can't. Breathe.” Shane manages to say. His eyes are focusing on the sight of Ilya's thighs, knees falling to the ground.

Ilya takes a hold of Shane's hand, and the hockey captain squeezes it as if his life depends on it. He is holding onto the other like he is scared he will be left here, alone. That Ilya will leave.

But he won't.

He would never leave Shane.

He cares too much about him, more than he dared to admit. He cares too deeply about this beautiful boy and his pretty freckles.

“Let's breathe together, yes?” Ilya says, his ocean blue eyes boring into Shane's brown ones. “Inhale, hold, release. Do it with me. Okay?”

Shane does as Ilya instructed, and mirrors his breathing. He inhales the air through his nose, and keeps it in there for two seconds before he slowly releases it. He repeats his previous movement, his eyes scanning Ilya's every movement, following him.

A few minutes passes and the tormenting weight Shane felt on his chest lessens, as if it's being lifted. His hand is still holding onto Ilya's firm ones, giving it a small squeeze as a thank you, for being here with him, for helping him.

“Shane.” Ilya says softly. “Five things you see. Tell me.”

Sudden confusion splashes on Shane's features. “Uh..” He begins, averting his eyes from the man, scanning his surroundings. “Bench. Wall. Floor. Ceiling. You.”

“Good.” Ilya nods, satisfied. It fills Shane with warmth. “Four things you feel.”

“Cold floor. Sweat on my neck. Warmth from your hand. And safety.” Shane responds without actually comprehending what these words are doing to Ilya.

Warmth. Safety.

Shane feels safe with him.

Oh my god.

“Tell me.” Ilya pauses for a second, trying to withhold himself from jumping into the air with a victorious fist raise. He notes to himself, he can do that later. “Three things you hear.”

“Your voice.”

Ilya completely folds inside. But he holds himself together. Hardly, though. “Is not enough. More.”

“You.” Shane responds again. “I hear you.”

He's going to lose his mind right now.

“Moy krasivyy tsvetok.” (*My beautiful flower*) Ilya lets himself be selfish for a moment, and he reaches out his hand, cradling Shane's cheek in his palm, caressing it.

“I love your voice.” Shane mumbles, closing his eyes, completely lost in the tenderness of Ilya's touch. “What does it mean?”

“I will tell you later.” Ilya promises him.

“Okay.”

“Shane.”

“Yes?” He quietly says, feeling so lost in the gentleness of Ilya's presence. He feels secure.

“Two things you smell. Tell.”

“Hm..” Shane takes a deep breath, inhaling through his nostrils. “Your cologne, and.. smoke.” He pauses for a second, gulping. His entire throat feels dry. “I am thirsty.”

“I will get you some water, moy lyubimyy.” Ilya promises him. “One last thing.”

“Yeah?” Shane feels a bit drowsy as the panic has completely dissipated. He feels calm now. All thanks to Ilya.

“One thing you can taste.”

“Oh..” Shane chuckles, the somnolence taking over. “Dryness. Thirsty.” He flutters his eyes open, but they feel heavy. “Water, please?”

“Of course.” Ilya nods, cradling Shane's face once more. “I don't have water here. I can take you to my room. Yes?”

“Okay.” Shane complies. “Carry me.”

Ilya just chuckles, shaking his head. He's completely fond of this adorable man. And it's not like he can say no to him.

Without a word, he hovers over the other man and lets Shane fold his arms around his neck for support. Ilya's breath catches in his throat when Shane buries his head at the dip of Ilya's neck, his warm breath tickling his skin.

He needed to get a grip and hold himself together, to not fold right here with Shane in his embrace. Ilya secured the other man, and straightened himself.

Ilya was carrying Shane through the hallway in a bridal style.

As much as he wanted to dance in triumph, he knew this is also not the time, nor situation for that. He can do that later when they are both in his room without prying eyes ogling at them.

The last thing he wanted is to gain attention. He is certain Shane doesn't want that either. So, he scooted through the hallway, carefully sauntering down the stairs until they were out of the building. After studying here for months now, Ilya has a mental map of the university, since he has memorized most parts of it (especially the way towards the sports science building and Shane's dormitory, but that's not really important, his infatuation with the man is completely average).

And of course, there were a few people chatting outside, although Ilya was swift enough to dash through the garden, which led him to another building. It took him around ten minutes, instead of three, to safely get into his own dormitory. He kept Shane safe from any curious eyes, hiding behind bushes, trees and walls.

He didn't want anyone to start gossiping about Shane. He knew how people can be. Today's events were clear signs of that. He saw the displeased complexion on his face, how the light had left his eyes as people began whispering. He saw how uncomfortable Shane looked.

And Ilya felt shit, still does.

Because if he knew this is how Shane were to react, he wouldn't have gone through with this plan. He wouldn't have taken extra classes, doing extra projects in secret for extra grades to take over his first place.

He should've found another method to impress him. Ilya thought that if he were to beat Shane in his game, then Shane would look at him differently. He knows it's stupid. But he was just a man trying to impress his crush. And he's not going to lie, achieving all of that made him lose his mind sometimes. There were too many words. But he had a goal waving in front of him, and he didn't want to give up on that.

He was so smitten by the hockey captain and his beautiful freckles, and stupid smile that Ilya tried everything just to get his attention. Even for a single second.

He even tried to flirt with others in case Shane would look in his way, but it seemed like Shane remained unaffected.

He shrugged off Ilya's advances, however there were times when he caught a glimpse of crimson blooming on his cheeks and Ilya thought, maybe things aren't entirely lost. Maybe he has a chance if he tries more, and harder.

And the things Shane has said not even half an hour ago, makes Ilya wanting to lay on his bed and kick his feet in the air like a high school girl because her crush asked her out on a date.

But most importantly, Shane felt safe with him. He felt his touch. He smelled his cologne. He sensed his voice. He could have said anything else, but he was embracing Ilya's presence,

bubbling things that made his heart roar in triumph. Ilya felt like he was on cloud nine, because even these simple statements made him feel like the happiest man on earth.

And Ilya has him. Here in his dorm. Sleeping.

Shane Hollander is literally in his bed, and Ilya tries not to freak out.

But how can he not? He's cutely snoring in his bed, head buried deep in his pillow, body wrapped in a blanket that Ilya got from his late mother when he was a child.

He still had it. Ilya kept it because it gave him comfort. It was one of the things his mother left behind, and it was precious to him. And whenever Ilya felt like he was all alone in this world, lost and trapped, he just wrapped the blanket around himself, letting the softness completely embrace him, giving him warmth, like his mother's hug felt like once.

Ilya hopes that one day he can tell stories about his mother to Shane. Telling him how beautiful, wonderful she was. The only person in his life who understood him. The only one who protected him from the harshness of his family. He loved her dearly. And Ilya misses her every day. It may be a decade since her passing, but there isn't a day when he isn't talking to the sky, hoping she would hear him. Ilya hopes that she's looking down on him, being proud of the man her little boy has become.

And Ilya hopes that she will like Shane as well. Just like how he adores him.

"Ilya.."

His deep ponderings were cut half when a groggy sound hit his ears. Shane still had his eyes closed, but he was mumbling things mutely Ilya barely heard. "Thirsty."

As the word left Shane's mouth, Ilya sprung up from his seat and complied to Shane's request. He poured water into a glass, sauntering towards Shane, gently holding out for him to take. His eyes followed Shane's movements, who pushed himself up on his forearm, trying to balance his half-awake body.

He quietly took the glass from Ilya, and for a moment their fingers brushed leaving both of them paused. It was electrifying. Although Shane didn't want to give away much from his reaction, so he emptied the whole glass instead, while he had Ilya's unremitting gaze on him. "Thanks."

"Nyeh za shtoh." (*You're welcome.*) Ilya says in response. He takes the glass from Shane, placing it on the bedside table, before he sits down on the mattress. He turns his body, so he could have a better view of Shane. "Better?"

"Yes." Shane responds without making eye contact. And the other man must notice that when he straightens his arm, thoughtfully placing his hand on top of Shane's.

"You scared me." Ilya admits.

"I am okay now." Shane mumbles, his eyes observing their linked hands instead. He hears Ilya shifting in his place, until his knees are dipping on the mattress, his other hand reaching

out to take a hold of Shane's cheek.

“Shane.” Ilya says his name in a soft manner which makes his heart flutter. “I am sorry.”

The sudden apology made Shane frown. He knits his brows together, as he raises his gaze up on the man in front of him. Ilya was still caressing his cheek. “What?”

“I am sorry.” Ilya repeats the previous apology once again, causing Shane to grow even more confused. “I did not want to hurt you.” His words are sincere, yet Shane still doesn't understand what Ilya is talking about.

“Hey, hey.” Shane earns full consciousness now, the drowsiness leaving his system. He squeezes Ilya's hand in his. “It wasn't your fault. It was me, not you. Okay?”

Ilya doesn't seem like he was convinced.

“Ilya, it's me who should apologize. Instead of congratulating you like a normal person should, I ran away like those children from Monster Inc.”

The man blinks. “I do not understand. Monster ant..?”

“Monster Inc. Have you not seen it?”

“I don't know. Is it like Masha and the bear?”

“What the heck is Masha and the bear?” Shane knits his brows together, and blinks.

“Russian show. Is nice.” Ilya tells him. “Does Monster ant have big bears too?”

“It's Inc.” Shane corrects him, but he knows it's no use. “And I don't know, maybe. Not sure.”

Ilya puffs. “Masha is better.”

Shane just chuckles, finding Ilya's huffing endearing. “Alright, alright. You won.”

A moment passes, none of them talk for a minute. Ilya breaks the silence. “Why?”

Shane blinks rapidly, he's confused. “Why, what Ilya?”

“Why, run away?”

Oh.

The hockey captain tears his gaze away from the man. He remains quiet for a while, before he parts his lips to speak. “I felt embarrassed, and angry. Mostly at myself. I..” Shane chuckles. “Guess you could say I can't handle others coming before me.”

Ilya hums, then a grin expands on his face. “Coming before you?”

Shane's face goes crimson. “Don't take it literally. You know what I mean.” He looks at everything in the room, but Ilya. However, the man doesn't let him escape from his gaze. Ilya

slides his fingers underneath Shane's jaw, making the hockey captain face him.

"Look at me, Shane." Ilya asked, eyes fixated on Shane.

"No."

"Smotri na menya." (*Look at me.*) His voice came out more demanding than before, causing Shane cheeks growing warmer. He internally scolds himself before he impels himself to lock eyes with Ilya, who already had his steady gaze on him. "Good boy."

"I am not a dog."

"Clearly." Ilya says, and his eyes travel around Shane's entire face, taking in his features, as if he hasn't done that a million times before. He has his perfectly vaulted features craved in every part of his brain. Just like his beautiful freckles. "Why puppy eyes then?"

"Continue and I will actually bite you, like an actual dog." Shane warns him, and Ilya just chuckles. He knew Shane was all talk, yet it still intrigued his mind.

"Please, bite me." Ilya leaned closer, grinning. He savoured every second of Shane reddening cheeks. "Then I will claim you."

"Idiot." Shane mutters, then retreats. His gaze pauses on a lower point, most specifically on Ilya's heart-shaped lips, before he slowly looks back up, meeting those captivating ocean blue eyes. "I mean it though."

"That you want to bite me?" Ilya smiles. He's such a tease. "I want to bite you too. Your cheeks."

Shane's eyes widened, face flushed. "Why my cheeks?"

"They are round." Ilya simply says.

"I don't have a round face, the heck." Shane huffs endearingly, but the man in front of him just shakes his head in disagreement. It makes Shane even more confused.

"I was talking about your ass, moy daragoy."

Shane's jaw drops.

And Ilya, just smirks.

For a good half minute none of them speaks, and silence is what penetrates through the air.

Meanwhile, Shane's already divine skin is being enhanced by the orange hues that pervade through the window, right next to Ilya's bed, painting him in a more sumptuous light, and Ilya is completely bewitched.

His eyes can't get enough of the sight, he tries to devour everything he can. Yet, he still feels like he isn't full. Shane is one of those rarities that is impossible to find, and Ilya was the

lucky one who found this treasure. How is he supposed to comprehend this? How is he supposed to look away? It's like an impossible task.

He wants to trail his fingers on all of the segments, discovering every hidden detail he hasn't seen before. He deeply longs for Shane to allow him to travel through on those perfectly vaulted convexity, thoroughly sliding his fingers on the smooth surface of it, his lips pressing on its diviness without leaving out a part. He wants to appreciate all of it, slowly, without any hurry in the world.

Ilya has never been this smitten by someone before. Surely, he had his journeys, but nothing has compared to the emotions he is feeling while looking at Shane. This magnetic man with the most beautiful freckles he has ever seen in his life. Deep down, he just wished he had more time to run his fingers on his face to properly count them. One by one.

“What are you looking at?” Shane breaks the peaceful silence.

“Your freckles.”

“What about them?”

“They are beautiful.” Ilya said with such simplicity, yet Shane felt his cheeks grow even warmer.

“No, they are not.” Shane disagrees, feeling abashed for a minute. And Ilya, he wasted no time to lean closer, while his hold was still secure on Shane's face. “What are you doing?”

“Can I..” Ilya begins, his warm breath hitting Shane's mouth. He's near, a few centimeters separates their lips. Shane gulps. “count them one day?”

Shane is truly flabbergasted.

“What?” He breathes out. “Why would you want to do that?”

“Because they are a part of you.” Ilya confesses. “And I want to know everything about you, Shane.”

“Ilya..” Shane feels like his brain has caught in a short circuit. He is unable to respond. No one has said something like that to him before. “Why?”

“Why, what?”

“Why do you want to know everything?” His eyes barely can hold contact with Ilya's ocean ones.

“It's simple.” Ilya says plainly, and the corner of his mouth curls upwards.

What Shane doesn't know is that underneath this confident persona he is showing off, his heart is about to come out of its place with the intensity it's pacing right now.

“Cause I like you.”

“What..” Shane blinks, lips parting. He's trying to comprehend what he has just heard. “I don't understand.”

“I like you, Shane Hollander.” Ilya confesses. The truth is officially revealed, the cap of the bottle is removed, he can't undo it. “I like you so much, and I don't know what to do about it.”

“Ilya.” Shane says, completely dumbfounded by the other man's confession. He hasn't expected it, at all.

“I..” Ilya chuckles, retreating when Shane doesn't say anything for a moment. He has fucked up, hasn't he? He shouldn't have been this forward, he should have remained quiet about this, he shouldn't have poured out his feelings on the very first chance.

He removes his palm from Shane's cheeks, and even the motion hurts. He wanted to hold him forever, he wanted to stay like that until the end of time. He wanted to be enshrouded by Shane's presence. He wanted it all, but he is unsure if Shane wants to do the same.

Ilya was about to unfold his other hand from Shane's hold, but the other man yanks him back with a slight force that made Ilya pause in his movements and look back at him. His cheeks were warmer than before, and his eyes were glistening.

“Is it true?” Shane carefully asks, gulping. He wants conformity.

“Why do you think I studied hard?” Ilya responds back, and he feels his cheeks growing warmer. “I wanted to.. impress you.”

Shane tilts his head, slight confusion sits on his face.

“I thought if I study hard you will look at me. And I like your attention. This is why I kept talking to you everyday.” Ilya explains, and Shane just listens.

“But the others..” Shane begins but he gets cut in half.

“I wanted to make you jealous. They never really mattered, I just wanted your attention.” Ilya admits. “I know it was not the best approach, but I was.. how do you say it in English, um, yes desperate.”

“You really like me?” Shane's eyes suddenly sparkle with unshed tears that block his vision. He feels overwhelmed.

“So much.” Ilya admits, and his head hangs low, staring at their linked hands. He feels vulnerable in ways he hasn't allowed himself to be in years. “I understand if you do not feel the same.”

“Ilya.” Shane takes a hold of his cheek, cupping it gently. “Can you look at me, please?”

Ilya bit on his lips, his teeth scraping the flesh. “Okay.” He numbly said, eyes meeting with Shane's brown ones. They are so captivating.

“Ilya.” Shane begins.

“Yes.”

“I like you too.” Shane confesses, his face beams. “I like you too, so much.”

Ilya stills, and the air stuck in his chest for a short moment. His eyes widened as his brain finally registered the sacred words that left Shane's lips.

His eyes scan Shane's face, trying to catch any sign of lie, but he can't find anything. Shane looks at him in a way that makes his heart accelerate. It's beating in a pace it hasn't before.

Ilya leaps forward, pressing their foreheads together, and his hand covers the one Shane has put on his cheek. His eyes bore into Shane's brown one, noticing the glass layer that sits there, the tears filling those gorgeous orbs. And Ilya isn't any different. His tear tucks were filled with salty water, ready to cascade from relief.

None of them speak. They let their emotions fill the air, processing the silent confessions they told each other. It's an overwhelming sensation they haven't felt before.

Relief. Ease. Blissfulness.

Emotions that were unfamiliar for them before. Their lives were so engulfed by dark clouds they didn't even know what it's like to have the light beaming at them, the sun embracing them in its warm hug.

Shane doesn't know when he has closed his eyes, he doesn't even know who has leaned in first, all he felt is euphoria spreading all over his body as he felt Ilya's lips inviting him in a sway. It was slow at first, getting to know the feel of each other's lips, careful to not hurry this dance at all. They repeated the same moves for a few times, before the pace quickened, transforming into a more intense, fierce one.

He felt like everything around them was burning with fire, the flames reaching the ceilings, yet the scorching heat wasn't reaching them. They stood in the middle, a circle forming around them. They kept dancing with such intensity none of them had sensed the outer world. And Shane has found himself laying down, body met with softness as Ilya hovers over him.

Their dance has continued, whilst exploring their hands on each other, running their fingers on their heated skin, finding themselves snaking underneath the layers, just to feel the other's warmth. It was dangerous, but they didn't care. All they focused on was each other and they both loved every bit of it.

They parted when they felt like they needed to breathe for a second, although it didn't last long because their intense dance continued with Shane's fingers skidding through Ilya's hair, tugging the soft curls. And Ilya just groans as Shane tries to have him closer, because even with their bodies pressed against each other wasn't enough. They couldn't get enough of each other.

“Ty takoy krasivyy. Chto ty delayesh' s moim serdtsem?” (*You're so beautiful. What are you doing to my heart?*) Ilya mumbles against Shane's skin, burying his head at the very depth of his neck, kissing the heated skin.

“What does that mean?” Shane breathes, his chest heaves and falls. Ilya keeps mumbling things he can't understand.

“Ya tak schástliv.” (*I am so lucky.*) Ilya murmurs before he detaches himself from Shane's neck, raising his head just to press his forehead against his. “I feel so happy.”

And Shane just smiles.

“Me too.” He gently cups Ilya's face with a hand, caressing his soft skin. “Ilya..”

“Hmm.” Ilya hums, pressing a kiss at the tip of Shane's nose, then the side of his head, his cheeks, his jaw, the corner of his mouth.

“Do you want to be together? For real?” Shane asks, a hopeful smile spreading all over his face.

Ilya doesn't say anything, and that unnerves Shane for a second, before Ilya takes a hold of his free hand and places it at the center of his heart.

Shane understands it then.

“I want to be your lover.” Ilya says, and Shane just chuckles, all the previous nervousness dissolves. “What? You do not want to be lovers?”

“Ilya, let's just say boyfriends, okay?” Shane beams at him. He feels joyous. Happiness he hasn't experienced before, all because of Ilya Rozanov.

“Boyfriends.” Ilya tastes the word. “I like it. So, am I your boyfriend now?”

“Do you want to be?” Shane teases.

“God, so much, yes.” Ilya captures his lips in his. “My boyfriend, my boyfriend, my boyfriend.” Ilya lets his body be wrapped with Shane's, his body weightening him.

He felt such happiness he hasn't felt in over ten years. All because of Shane. He has brought it back, painting his life with vivid hues. The colors he has missed. Life feels so colorful now.

“Ilya.” Shane says, as he caresses Ilya's hair. The other just hums, feeling completely relaxed with the way his boyfriend is stroking his hair. “Your exchange program ends in four months.”

“And?” Ilya mumbles, his eyes are closed. His face rests on the left side of Shane's chest, listening to its even beating.

“You will leave.” Shane states, his voice quietening. He hates how his brain can ruin his good mood.

His caressing stops, and Ilya instantly lifts his head, to properly look at him. He perceives some tears at the corner of Shane's eyes, who's trying to blink them away.

"Shane." His thumb lovingly slides over his cheek. "I will not leave."

"You will, and I.." Shane begins, but he is unable to express what he really feels now. "I don't want you to."

"I will stay." Ilya tells him, sending an encouraging smile in his direction. "I will not leave you."

"But eventually you have to." Shane mumbles, looking away.

"Hey." Ilya cups his cheek, forcing Shane to look him in the eye. "I will not go back. I will stay here."

"How.. that's your home." Shane reminds him, but Ilya just emits out a loud sigh.

"Russia was home, but it has not been for a long time. I found a new home." Ilya tells him, staring at him fondly. He hopes Shane believes him.

"But your family. Won't they be too sad?" Shane inquired. Ilya just shakes his head in response.

"They all hate me." Ilya tells him, closing his eyes for a moment. "Why stay then?"

"What about your mom then? I am sure she would miss you at least."

Ilya doesn't say anything, he just stares at a point on Shane's skin without blinking once. His hand travels back to his necklace, squeezing it. The silence scares Shane. Has he said something wrong? Did he go over limits? He tried to not cross boundaries, but with how quiet Ilya has gotten he thinks he screwed up.

"My mother is dead." Ilya quietly admits, his hand is still grasping around the cross necklace he is wearing.

Oh.

"Ilya, I am so sorry."

"It's okay. It happened when I was a child." Ilya chews on his lips before he continues. "I still talk to her sometimes."

"I am sure she loves hearing the stories you tell her." Shane tells him, trying to comfort him by pressing a kiss at the crown of Ilya's head. "She must have been lovely."

"She was." Ilya tells him. "She would've liked you, like I like you."

Shane's heart skips a beat at that. He is at loss for words. He doesn't say anything but copies his previous move, placing another kiss on Ilya's head, and pulling him closer, enshrouding

him in his hold even more.

“How will you stay then?” Shane asks, trying to divert the topic a bit. He doesn't want to overwhelm Ilya too much. He has already removed the bandages where the scars were hiding.

“Simple.” Ilya says. “I registered here.”

Shane knits his brows. “I don't understand.”

“I applied here. The principal has accepted my request. I study here.” Ilya explains, however, the amount of English begins to tire his brain. “I will apply for citizenship.”

“You want to stay in Canada?” Shane gasps, his heart accelerating. “You won't go back?”

“No, I will not.” Ilya confirms. “When I came here, I brought everything. Clothes, documents.”

“Did you already plan this? To stay here?” Shane asks, his gaze is unrelenting. He can't look away from Ilya.

Ilya hums. “I wasn't sure at first.” He tells him, pausing for a while. “But I have a reason now. To stay, forever.”

“A reason?”

“You.” Ilya says, a small smile tugging on his lips. “You are my reason.”

Shane's eyes once again fill with tears, and Ilya just leans closer, kissing away the tears that began to cascade down on Shane's cheeks.

He has never thought he would be enough for someone one day. He has never thought he would be someone's reason to stay.

“You are so pretty.” Ilya tells him, and Shane just chuckles with dried tears sticking on his cheeks.

“I am literally crying, you idiot.”

Ilya just stares at him lovingly, before a different type of smile expands on his face. “You will look pretty crying when I make you come.”

Shane lightly slaps his arm. “Stop being horny. We are having an emotional conversation here.”

“Sorry, moy dorogoy. I just look at you and my friend here..” He grinds himself against Shane, who has to contain himself from any unhinged noise escaping when he feels Ilya's hardness. “Gets excited.”

“Take me on a date first, and maybe I reconsider meeting your.. friend.”

Ilya grins. "Deal." He shifts his position a bit, laying his head at the side of Shane's chest. He feels relaxed, and drowsy as the minutes pass by.

"By the way." Shane ponders out loud, breaking the tranquil silence, not giving Ilya the time to neglect english for a good five minutes. "How did you do it?"

"Shane, I want to sleep. No English, please."

"But I am curious."

Ilya just groans against Shane's chest. His hand resting at his pecs. "Ask."

"How did you get first?" Shane inquires, his curiosity once again won't leave him. He is aware that he has asked before, but the topic was diverted incredibly fast, and his brain needs more detailed answers, for reassurance.

"Studied hard. Took extra classes." Ilya grumbles, half-awake. "Mozhno mne pospat' seychas?" (*Can I sleep now?*)

"But why?" Shane blinks, his gaze lingering on Ilya who already has his eyes closed. "Ilya, don't sleep yet."

"You."

"Me?" Shane furrows his brows.

"For you." Ilya admits, while he's already sailing to dream world. "Wanted you to like me."

Such a simple statement shouldn't make Shane's heart roar, but it does. And if he couldn't like the man more, he sure does now. His adoration for him expanded.

"You like me that much?" Shane asks, grinning. He can't stop smiling.

"Very." Ilya mumbles. "My pretty Shane.."

"You are so cute, Ilya." Shane tells him fondly, but the latter doesn't respond. He probably dived deep into dreamland.

And Shane realizes in this silent, peaceful moment, he may have lost today, but he has gained something more valuable, more precious, which is worth more than all of his previous wins combined.

A love that will surely last forevermore.

End Notes

I hope you guys enjoyed this fic. I really enjoyed writing it. I will try to write more in the future!

And if you wish to be moots let's follow each other on twitter, my user is @heatedvk

Have a nice day! :)

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