

I want this like a cigarette, can we drag it out and never quit?

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by [brightloveee](#)

Summary

After the “square peg, round hole” convo, Shane takes Rose up on her offer to set him up with Miles, her (gay) co-star.

When Shane brings him to All-Star Weekend in Tampa, Ilya has a LOT of gripes about the new actor douchebag boyfriend and the way he treats Shane.

OR 5 times Ilya noticed Shane’s new boyfriend sucks and he could do better, and 1 time he got to prove it.

Notes

Spoilers for Chapter 15 + 16 of the Heated Rivalry book (if you’re watching the show and trying not to get spoiled) some scenes start very closely with the book then diverge.

We’re turning the dial down on institutional homophobia as a plot point ok lol just roll with it.

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



Fall 2015 - Montreal

After a few months of going out with Rose Landry and a couple of lackluster encounters in the bedroom, Rose invited Shane to a chic upscale bar in downtown Montreal without her normal entourage of hangers-on and celebrity friends.

“I thought it would be nice to have some time to... talk,” Rose explained. “Just the two of us.”

“Sure,” Shane nodded. “Yeah. You’re right. It’s nice.”

“You’re so cute,” she said as the night went on, laughing at one of his jokes over wine and cheese. “Have I told you how cute you are?”

“No,” Shane said, blushing a little.

“You are. I’ll tell you,” she said, leaning in. “Miles, you remember him? My co-star? He is extremely jealous.”

“Of me?”

She laughed. “No silly. Of me.”

“Oh,” Shane let that sink in.

Rose’s eyes bugged out. “Did you not know he was gay?”

“Um, I guess I really hadn’t thought about it,” Shane lied.

“Well he is, and he’s low-key in love with you.”

“Oh,” Shane knew he was beet red.

“I’m sorry,” Rose said. “I’m going about this the wrong way.”

“Going about what?” Shane froze in his seat.

“Shane, I really like you. But I’m getting the vibe that maybe I’m not doing it for you.”

“You are. You do. I like you a lot too.”

“It’s okay Shane, I just get the impression that maybe you would rather be kissing, just for example, Miles.”

Shane didn't know what to say.

"It's okay," she said again. "We're like, a square peg and a round hole." She scrunched her nose. "Ew, no, gross, forget I said that."

He chuckled, and relaxed. Suddenly, the truth didn't seem so hard to face. "I think I kind of prefer being the hole, than the peg." They both laughed.

Later, as they were getting ready to leave the bar, Rose gave him a mischievous look over the rim of her wine glass and said, "So, should I give Miles your number?"

Shane paused. He knew what he should say: *No, thank you*. He needed to figure some stuff out.

He had, of course, noticed how good-looking Miles was more than a few times when he was out with Rose. Who wouldn't? Well, he answered himself, someone who wasn't attracted to men wouldn't. And Shane *was* attracted to men. The thought came to him, so clearly and strongly, refreshing like a cool glass of water on a hot day. Shane was attracted to men. He'd been having sex with a man on and off for six years now. And loving every second of it. Shane was gay.

A laugh bubbled up from his chest. He was gay.

Looking at Rose's non-judgmental face, Shane had never felt so free. He couldn't believe how long it had taken him. He felt a vice loosen from his ribcage. Shane was gay, and the world was still spinning, this bar was still open, playing music, glasses clinking, and Rose was shaking her phone enticingly with the glowing screen lit up.

"Yeah," Shane said. "Okay. Give him my number."



January 2016 – Tampa All-Star Weekend Day 1

For the first time, Ilya was not looking forward to an All-Star Game. Logically, he knew he should be excited. This was the first time he'd been paired up with Hollander on the same team. The league had always used some convoluted excuses to keep them head-to-head against each other, but this year was different.

The press was, of course, very excited about the Hollander/Rozanov duo, making several headlines and dogging him for interviews about it, and Ilya had even received a text or two from Svetlana, who knew nothing of his secret past with Montreal's star player.

Svetlana:

Will you introduce me to Shane Hollander?

Ilya:

Maybe.

Svetlana:

He is the cutest in the league.

Ilya:

OK

Svetlana:

Aww don't worry. We can 3sum.

Ilya ignored this. (He did not, in fact, ignore this, as several jack-offs later would attest.)

Ilya hadn't texted Hollander in over two months. For the first time, he was sure that Shane wouldn't text him back. He'd probably show the text to his movie star girlfriend and the two of them would laugh at how pathetic Ilya was. No, he reasoned with himself. That wouldn't happen. Shane wouldn't do that. Maybe.

Had Shane brought his girlfriend to All-Star weekend? Would he introduce her to Ilya? The two of them had made a lot of headlines in the tabloids lately. Out at bars and restaurants in Montreal and Toronto, surrounded by famous faces.

Ilya ran out of time to fret because at that moment, Hollander entered the bar. Ilya watched him laugh and chat with everyone. He looked relaxed and confident, like a man who had gotten his life together. He looked... Christ, he looked so good.

Maybe Rose had taken him shopping or something. He had on a white button-up linen shirt, open at the collar with the sleeves rolled up. They were in Florida, after all. The shirt led down to charcoal grey trousers with a woven belt.

Ilya was wearing shorts and a shirt that was covered in palm trees, because he thought it would be funny. Now he felt like a fucking idiot. He ordered another drink just so he'd stop staring at Shane. He cursed himself for feeling so gloomy.

Someone moved into the space at Ilya's side. Ilya glanced over, expecting to see Hollander, but instead he was surprised to see it was Marly.

"Did you see that?" Marly said lowly, holding up a finger to the bartender then pointing at his glass to order another round. "Shane Hollander brought a certain actor friend." He raised his eyebrows suggestively.

"Yes, we all know Hollander is dating Rose Landry," Ilya responded, maybe a little more snarky than he meant to. *Shit*, so he had brought her.

"No," said Marly. "Not an *actress* friend. An *actor* friend."

“What?” Ilya spluttered.

“Shane Hollander is here with a *guy*.”

This brought Ilya up short. “Oh.” He turned abruptly back to where Hollander was standing near the entrance to the bar. Ilya must have been so distracted earlier watching Shane that he hadn’t noticed the second man that had come in behind him. He vaguely recognised him as an actor who worked with Rose Landry. Michael or Mark or something. He had a neatly-trimmed short beard and big muscles around his shoulders and biceps. Vanity muscles, Ilya noted. He hated him.

“That’s...?” Ilya trailed off.

“Yeah, brave as fuck, if you ask me,” Marly turned to watch the new couple, much more casually than Ilya had done. “To bring a boyfriend here. I don’t think they’re like *public* public. Not like, in the press. This is like a soft launch.”

“Soft launch,” Ilya repeated hollowly, but trailed off when Hollander caught his eye and began to make his way over. Ilya didn’t miss the way Shane paused to gently put a hand at the actor guy’s lower back to guide him over.

“Hey teammate,” Shane said.

“Hello Captain,” Ilya said, because of course Shane had been selected as Captain of their All-Star team.

“So this should be fun, huh? Always wondered what it would be like to play for the same team.”

“Have you?” Ilya tried to act casual.

“Yeah. Um. Oh! This is my... this is Miles,” Shane stumbled over his words, gesturing to the man standing next to him.

“Hi,” the man – Miles – smiled and held out his hand to shake Ilya’s. Ilya just eyed him. Marly swooped in to extend his hand back.

“I’m Marly, this is Rozy, good to meet you,” Marly was always more charming than Ilya.

“So, are you two like hockey players too?” Miles asked.

“No,” Ilya replied sarcastically. “Just on vacation.”

“Yes,” Marly cut across him, grinning. “We’re on Shane’s All-Star team this year.”

“Oh, cool,” Miles shrugged. “I don’t really follow hockey. Ya know, *sports*. But, that’s all this guy wants to talk about ever,” Miles playfully slapped Shane’s shoulder.

“Oh yeah?” Marly prompted, somewhat awkwardly.

“Yeah, he’s kind of an automaton.”

Ilya had never heard this word, automaton. But he guessed it must have meant some kind of robot, the way that Miles started to move stiffly and mechanically, making his voice sound weirdly computerized. “Hockey stats. Hockey training. These. are. the. rules.” He moved his arms at angles like a dance move from the 2000s. He was clearly making fun of the nerdy way Shane talked about hockey.

Shane looked abashed, hands buried in his pockets, casting his eyes down while Marly and a couple of the other guys nearby laughed at Miles’s impression of him. Ilya couldn’t stand it.

“Of course he talks about hockey,” he butted in firmly. “Hollander is best player in league. He is face of sport.” He was dimly aware his English was getting worse.

Marly, who knew Ilya’s tells, put an arm across his chest to hold him back like he would on the ice. Ilya vaguely realised he had stepped forward to loom over the skinny-legged actor.

“Oh – well,” Miles fidgeted. “Guess I should pay attention then.”

“Yes. You should,” Ilya spat before he turned on his heel and made for the door.

The warm breeze smelled like salt outside the bar. Ilya breathed it in slowly, then out, trying to calm himself. He didn’t usually experience a lot of anger like that. He didn’t often yell. It was something his father did, and his brother. Not him.

“Don’t mind him,” a voice behind Ilya said. He didn’t have to turn to know it was Shane.

Ilya just hummed as Shane came up to stand next to him.

“He’s just,” Shane continued. “Not really a sports guy.”

“Did he take you shopping?” Ilya asked abruptly, gesturing to Shane’s outfit.

“Oh, um, I hired a personal stylist,” Shane tugged at the collar of his linen shirt, smiling bashfully. Cutely, Ilya’s mind supplied. “Don’t, like, tell anybody. Some of the guys in the league are so well-dressed. I’m always in athletic wear. I figured I could use some help.”

“Plus, new actor boyfriend,” Ilya gestured back towards the bar.

“Yeah, that,” Shane shrugged. “He suggested it too. He said I always looked like I was on my way to the gym.”

“What’s wrong with that?” Ilya had not missed that Shane didn’t contradict the *boyfriend* part.

Shane scratched the back of his neck. “I don’t know, I just... wanted to look nice... for him.” And wasn’t that a punch to the gut? Shane hadn’t wanted to look nice for Ilya in all the time they were together. Well, not *together*. It’s not like they had ever been a couple. They had never been involved on any level more than physical. Ilya himself had made sure of that.

There were a lot of reasons for that. It's not like they could ever go places as dates, the way that Shane had done with this Mark person. If they did, Ilya would never be able to go back to Russia. Not that he particularly *wanted* to go back to Russia. But with this father, he would need to.

He wanted a cigarette.

"If I was your boyfriend," he said instead, fingers itching. "I wouldn't make you feel bad about your clothes."

"Well," Shane said drily. "You're not my boyfriend, are you?" With that, he disappeared back into the bar. Ilya watched the ocean for a while.



All-Star Weekend Day 2 - afternoon

It was a fun weekend, with extra time to enjoy the Florida sun on Saturday before the skills competition that night.

Ilya spent the afternoon in the pool with a couple of other players and their kids, being loud and goofing around. Hollander and his new actor boyfriend Miles were on deck chairs under a nearby cabana. The actor was glued to his phone. Shane was alternating chatting with him and watching Ilya in the pool, shaking his head and smiling as he watched Ilya challenge the kids to swimming races. He would lose every time, and then he would act outraged and accuse the kids of cheating. Ilya was practically preening under Shane's watchful gaze.

"Last race," he announced to the kids. "Championship match. Winner takes all. Hollander!" He pointed to Shane. "You watch. Make sure none of these cheaters cheats."

"Okay," Shane answered.

"You kids know who that guy is?" he asked the kids.

"Shane Hollander!" they all answered, almost in unison.

"He's the best player in the league!" One of the little boys shouted.

"That's right. He is," Ilya said, turning to look at Miles pointedly. It wasn't something he would *ever* normally admit, but he had a point to prove.

Miles didn't even look up from his phone.

After the race, which, predictably, Ilya lost badly after pretending to get attacked by a shark midway through, the kids made good on their winnings.

“You said you’d buy us candy bars!” they yelled.

“Damn. Hollander, give me ten dollars.”

“Are they not paying you in Boston?” Shane called back, a teasing smile lighting up his features.

“Just give it to me,” Ilya pulled himself out of the pool, mindful to flex his abs and tense his pecks as rivulets of water rushed over him. He made his way over to where Shane and his douchebag boyfriend sat, then shook his wet hair violently right next to them. He pictured a shaggy dog shaking itself off, as he sprayed droplets of water in their direction.

“Oh my god,” Miles yelped, jumping to his feet.

Shane was a little slower, grinning as he stood. “You are such an asshole,” his tone was more fond than anything. To Ilya’s delight, he began to unbutton some of the buttons of his shirt and fanned it in the breeze to dry it. Ilya wondered, if Shane got more sun on his body, would he get freckles *everywhere*?

“*This top is dry clean only*,” Miles hissed, gesturing to the silky shirt he was wearing.

Ilya waited until he had stormed off towards the hotel before raising his eyebrows at Shane. “Prissy.”

“Shut up,” Shane rolled his eyes at him. “You wrecked his shirt. He’s allowed to be mad.”

Shane was so loyal. It was one of the things Ilya admired about him.

“Tell Max I said sorry.”

“It’s Miles. And I should go follow him,” Shane said. “He doesn’t... he wouldn’t like me to be here talking to you.”

“Why’s that?” Ilya leaned closer to him. In the shade of the cabana, he was pretty sure no one was looking at them, and if they were, he doubted it would look like anything more than friendly banter.

“He’s not comfortable when I talk to other guys.”

“You play men’s hockey,” Ilya scoffed. “You talk to guys all day.”

“You know what I mean,” Shane shuffled his feet. “Romantic interests, or, well, not *romantic*, I mean – you know what I mean.”

“Does he know about us?” Ilya inclined his head a little further, bringing one hand up to run lightly along Shane’s arm.

“No... I... No. I haven’t told anyone, if that’s what you’re worried about.”

“I’m not worried about that,” Ilya said lowly. And he wasn’t. If the reaction from the other guys and the league officials this weekend to seeing Shane with another man as his date was any indication, it wouldn’t be so bad. The press, and his family, and Russia. Well, that was another thing. But standing here, poolside in Florida, with Shane all flushed in his unbuttoned gingham shirt, that all felt a million miles away.

“If I was your boyfriend,” he continued. “I’d trust you.”

“Just try to talk to him okay?” Shane asked. “He’s actually great, once you get to know him.”

“Okay, fine, Hollander,” Ilya shrugged. The kids had come back, tugging at his elbows, begging for their promised candy bars.



All-Star Weekend Day 2 - night

After the skills competition that evening, Shane found himself at a room party in in the hotel. He always found these hotel room parties kind of lame, and didn’t usually attend, but the All-Star weekend was different. A bunch of guys he didn’t normally get to interact with, and, of course, their wives and girlfriends who had used the chance for a Florida getaway. Shane had never attended anything like this with a date of his own.

Shane had never done *anything* with a date of his own. Outside of his thing with Rozanov, Shane had only ever had short-lived relationships and hook-ups. It was a *red flag* about him, Miles had told him on their first date, that he was 25 and he’d never been in a serious relationship. Miles said he was willing to look past it, but Shane felt awkward about it ever since.

“Hell yeah, Cap!” Carter Vaughn, their left-winger for the All-Star game, shouted when he came in. Miles came in right behind Shane. Just like he had at the bar, Shane held his breath for a second when they entered, waiting for someone to say something rude or off-color about them. But nothing of the sort came. He was greeted with backslaps and handshakes over his skills competition win, and Miles was greeted normally. It made something inside Shane unlock a little bit of anxiety. But not all of it. He knew he was on borrowed time while their relationship was low-key. Thinking about that spiked his blood pressure back up again.

Carter, whose room was hosting this little get-together of a dozen-odd bulky men in a too-small room, had covered the hotel room desk in beers and wine bottles.

“What can I get ya?”

“Oh, uh,” Shane scanned the array. “I don’t drink the night before a game. You got any sodas?”

“Here, Hollander,” came a familiar accented voice. Shane hadn’t noticed Rozanov on the tiny hotel room loveseat, crammed in between Cliff Marlow and Carter’s girlfriend. In his extended hand was a can of ginger ale.

“Oh, thanks,” Shane smiled as he took the can from him. The last time Ilya had given him ginger ale had been at his apartment in Boston. With the tuna melts. Right before Shane ran away.

“You got anything stronger than this, boys?” Miles asked as Shane cracked the can open.

“Hell yeah!” Carter crowed, and led them into the bathroom where they’d filled the bathtub with ice and liquor bottles.

“As your captain, I don’t think I want to see this right before the game,” Shane chuckled.

“Oh my god, don’t be such a wet blanket,” Miles chided as he snagged a bottle of tequila from the bathtub and brought it back into the main hotel room.

“Don’t worry, Cap. Most of this is for tomorrow night’s party.”

“Alright—” Shane went to say, before Miles spoke over him.

“He’s always such a spoilsport, don’t ya think?” He asked Carter conspiratorially. Carter, who had only met Shane a handful of times, just laughed and shuffled his feet, but some of the other guys took interest. It wasn’t often that anyone had anything to say about Shane Hollander that wasn’t glowing praise. Shane knew, because he specifically wanted it to be that way. Shane glanced over to see even Rozanov had leaned forward a little, and internally groaned. If this was going to be a dog-pile he was out of here.

“He’s seriously like a freak sometimes,” Miles was sparking to all the attention in the room as different guys turned to face him. He was an actor, and he knew how to work a crowd.

“No way,” one of the guys chimed in.

“No, I’m serious. He has a thing where he has to make the bed immediately once gets out of it. He stands up, turns around, makes the bed. Even if the hotel maid is right outside!”

“That’s just common decency,” Shane argued. There wasn’t much he could say that didn’t make him sound incredibly lame in this scenario. He’d worked hard to earn the respect of his fellow players in the league and he wasn’t about to mess that up by being a bad sport.

“Plus, he always wears socks in bed! Always. And I do mean *always*.” The guys jeered while Shane blushed. He wasn’t used to anyone talking about him this way, the sexual connotations of it. He’d seen the other guys chirp each other, but right now he couldn’t remember how they behaved in response so that he could mimic it.

Across the room, Rozanov was smirking at him knowingly. He'd poked fun at these things about Shane in the past too. Shane knew they were quirks. He supposed a little playful ribbing was a good sign of team camaraderie.

"And don't even get me *started* on what he eats," Miles rolled his eyes playfully as he went on.

"Oh, we've all seen his bird food."

"It's so much more than that, you don't even know," Miles went on, gathering up shot glasses in a row on the table.

Suddenly, Shane felt very vulnerable in this room. He knew he had some unusual things about food that a lot of the other guys in the league didn't seem to have in common. He'd seen it firsthand. It was hard not to notice the differences on the road, at events, at training camps. The things they ate versus the things he ate. But Shane had decided not to chalk it up to anything. Not to bring it up. Not to dwell on it. And definitely not to call attention to it. It wasn't like he had a *problem*. He just had *things* about things. It wasn't about his weight or his appearance. He just... had superstitions. Lots of the guys had superstitions.

"C'mon," he grabbed Miles' arm, trying to gently pry him away from the row of shots he was now pouring.

"*Don't*," Miles said sharply, then quickly schooled his face into an affable grin. "I'm just having fun with my new friends! What do you say, guys?"

The guys cheered as shots got passed around.

"And of course, none for you," Miles visibly passed Shane over for one of the tiny plastic cups, instead handing it over to Cliff Marlow who laughed.

They all began to count down loudly "3... 2... 1..."

Shane took the opportunity, with their heads all thrown back, to slip out the door and down the hall.



All-Star Weekend Day 2 - night continued

Ilya followed him.

It took him a minute to weave his way out of the room, so Hollander was already in the elevator by the time Ilya made it to the hallway. Ilya saw the lights above the elevator door as

it closed. It was going up.

He didn't even have to look once he made it to the roof. Shane was standing at the railing, looking across the view of the beach.

Ilya came to stand next to him.

"If I was your boyfriend, I would never say these things in front of other people."

A long moment passed. The wind rustled the palm trees.

"Why are you with this guy?" Ilya asked finally.

"I... he asked me out," Shane fidgeted.

Ilya scoffed. "Why, really?"

"I just," Shane ducked his head. "I guess I just... Well. First, I'm gay."

"No, Hollander, *really*?"

"Fuck off."

"So you decide to go out with the first guy who asks you?"

Shane tilted his head. Ilya could practically read his mind: *Well, kinda, yeah.*

"It's like training," Shane said at length. "It's a red flag about me that I haven't been in a serious relationship. I need to get practice."

Of course Shane would use that logic. Ilya shook his head. "So date a guy who's not an asshole."

"I don't know any of those," Shane smirked at him.

"Ha. Ha."

"No, really," Shane started again. "I think I realized one of the things that was holding me back from coming out, like, to *myself* was that I believed I'd never get to be in a relationship or get married or any of that. Or at least not until after I retire, and that's like ten years away." He paused to knock on the wood of the banister. Ilya followed suit. "But, I guess, I just... Maybe that doesn't have to be true. Maybe I could be with someone now who's proud to be with me."

"You want someone to be proud of you?"

Shane couldn't suppress his shiver.

Ilya knew he liked praise. That word, *proud*, was a thing for him. Ilya could understand. He had a thing about that word, too.

Ilya wanted to say, *He doesn't seem that proud of you now*. But he knew it would only hurt Shane more. He couldn't believe some of the things he heard Miles say in there. Thinking that he had any right to publicly humiliate Shane Hollander in front of his peers. It wasn't right.

"Besides," Shane straightened his back. "It's not anything you haven't already made fun of me for. I'm tough. I can take it."

Shane was tough. Ilya knew that. Shane was just as strong as he was beautiful. Watching him master himself, play on the ice with such speed and skill, lead his team with steadiness and fairness, do press with such composure. It was amazing to see. So what if he had rules about food and making the bed? Like nearly everything about the man, Ilya found these things to be charming.

Ilya was forming the English words to say this when Shane scoffed and kicked a toe at the ground.

"God," Shane looked down, shoulders dropping again. "You also won't believe it. He says I'm too vanilla. You know, in bed."

Ilya hid his surprise behind a sarcastic gasp. "You? Hollander? *Never*."

"Hey," and Ilya was *relieved* beyond words at the shy grin that broke across Shane's face – he knew this to be a form of Shane's flirting. "I can get... you know... freaky."

Ilya couldn't help laughing. "Oh, I know."

"Shut up," Shane pushed him lightly, Ilya grabbed his arm and pulled him towards him, so their bodies were in close proximity.

"Tell me," Ilya said lowly, into the small space between their lips. "What does he want you to do?"

"Well, I thought of some things to try. But he said–"

"Like what?" Ilya interrupted abruptly. "What did you want to try?"

"Oh," Shane gulped. Ilya watched his Adam's Apple bob. "I thought about like, different things. Like different settings. Not like, in public. Just other... places."

Ilya's grip on Shane's wrist tightened.

"He said that was lame, wanting to have sex in unusual rooms," Shane went on. Ilya immediately thought *not lame*. "I thought about different clothes. You know, like costumes or outfits."

"Tell me."

"I bought something, but he didn't like it."

“*Tell me.*”

“He said it was weird.”

“Jesus Christ, if you don’t tell me right now,” Ilya hauled him in closer by reaching an arm around his waist and pulling him. His grip on Shane’s wrist was so tight he knew it must hurt a little.

In a voice so quiet, it was barely above a breath, Shane whispered, “I bought panties.”

The thought of Shane’s big strong thighs framed by lacy little panties. His hard cock straining against the thin fabric. Shane always got so wet when he was turned on, so much precum. He’d get the cotton all wet and clinging to him. Ilya could see it in his imagination as clearly as if it was right before him. Shane, writhing on the bed, in nothing but his socks and little underwear with a stain on the front. Ilya would give anything to bury his head between those thighs. He’d lick his length through the fabric. Then lick his hole. Maybe he’d rip them off before he fucked him. Better yet, maybe Ilya would just pull them to the side and fuck Shane with them on.

“What color?” he asked, more of a growl than anything.

“What?”

“The panties. What color?”

“The ones I got, they were light blue,” Shane’s voice had an edge to it. He knew what he was doing to him.

“Fuck,” Ilya thought he might cream his pants.

If the moment had gone on any longer, Ilya wasn’t sure what he would do. He was painfully hard. He was seconds away from saying something like *Good Boy*, which he knew would be irresistible to Shane. Who had a boyfriend downstairs. A moviestar boyfriend. A douchebag asshole moviestar boyfriend who didn’t realize he’d scored the biggest prize of all.

A seagull cried as it flew above them. Shane startled, Ilya dropped his hands from his waist and his wrist. Let him step away.

“I should...” Shane trailed off, motioning at the door back inside. He quickly patted down his clothes and his hair.

Ilya desperately wanted to kiss him. To push him up against the wall and kiss him hard, the way he had done last time they were on a rooftop together. He didn’t. Shane turned to leave.

“If I was your boyfriend,” Ilya called after him. “I would never say that you were weird.”



All-Star Weekend Day 3

Game Day

Ilya had moved from center to right wing for the All-Star game on Sunday so he could play on a line with Hollander. He was happy to do it. He'd been waiting for a long time for the chance to play with Shane, and playing with him was everything he had imagined it would be.

He actually felt bad for Carter Vaughn, who was playing as their left-wing linemate. Because, as far as Ilya was concerned, there was no one else on the ice but Hollander.

Hollander could actually keep up with Ilya, and it was like they were reading each other's minds when they passed the puck. They had barely had any time to practice together, they just clicked in a way Ilya never had with any other player. It was exhilarating.

When Ilya assisted him to score the game-winning goal, Shane was beaming, and his eyes were crinkled, and his cheeks were flushed. It was one of the most beautiful things Ilya had ever seen in his life.

Before he could stop himself, he leaned forward and kissed him hard – on the cheek. The audience and the other players laughed uproariously. To them, this was just another one of Rozanov's obnoxious antics. Shane just smiled at him awkwardly for a second, then went off with his arms above his head to cheer with the rest of the team.

Ilya turned to where he had spotted the new boyfriend, Miles, in a seat near the top of the stairs. He'd looked up from his phone just long enough to glare daggers at Ilya. He wasn't down by the rink with the other WAGs. Which was wise, it would probably draw attention and questions. Shane's doing, he was sure. It's not like this actor would have that kind of tact.

After the game, some of the guys offered to go to a Mexican restaurant that one of the Tampa Bay players recommended, others were drinking at the hotel bar. There were several room parties happening too.

Ilya enjoyed a few drinks in different rooms, chatting with the guys and doing shots, and even grabbed a drink at the hotel bar, before he made his way to the beach alone. It was dark. He wasn't drunk, but he was pleasantly buzzed.

As he walked along the beach on the edge of the lush palm trees and foliage of the hotel's garden, he found Shane sitting on the sand. There was something strange about him, the way he was holding his shoulders hunched over. His arms were hugged around his legs.

He barely looked over when Ilya sat down.

"Are you okay?" Ilya asked.

Shane sniffed very quietly.

“Are you crying?”

“No.”

He was. Ilya could tell.

“I feel weird,” Shane unwound one of his arms to swipe at his face

“Where is your boyfriend?”

“He’s inside. He’s... mad at me.”

“Why?”

“He says I’m too... that I’m...” Ilya had never heard Shane struggle with English words. His voice was thin and reedy.

“We had sex. Earlier, after the game,” Shane continued. Ilya wasn’t sure he wanted to hear this, something violent rose up in his throat, but he let Shane continue. “It was... It was like really intense. You know how sometimes it...” The silence lapsed for a long minute.

“Yes,” Ilya supplied. He knew how Shane liked it rough sometimes. Especially after a game. Intense was a good word for it.

“I was... I was being too...”

“What? Too rough? He is not athlete like us, he cannot handle.”

“No. After it was over, I just felt really overwhelmed. Like, it was just too much. I got all... I don’t know. I wanted him to just like. Hold me for a while.”

Ilya hummed. He’d seen the way Shane could get after a rough fuck. Needy. Touchy. Vulnerable. He’d seen the way he’d tamp his instincts down *hard* when that happened, but parts of it still shone through. Ilya had always made sure to give him gentle but firm touches when he got like that, so Shane could feel him there reassuringly but it wouldn’t be too much. The flat of his hand on the back of Shane’s neck or on his knee. He’d lay across Shane as if he was the one who needed to be cuddled, but it gave Shane someone to hold onto. He’d bring him water, which Shane rarely noticed even as he drank it. Last time, when he’d heard Shane’s stomach rumbling, he’d made them sandwiches.

They’d never talked about Shane’s submissive side or anything like that, but he knew that Shane liked to be dommed pretty hard in bed, then afterwards he wanted to be cared for but not coddled. Ilya liked to think he’d developed something of a specialty in that skill.

It was a skill Miles apparently was not versed in, and actually seemed to be neglecting if Hollander’s face was anything to go by. Shane should not be here, alone and crying on the beach. He should be in a bed, warm and comfortable, with someone to hold onto. Definitely not alone. The frown on Shane’s face, visible only by dim moonlight, was etched deeply into his features. Ilya reached up to touch his cheek, as if he might smooth away the lines carved there. Shane flinched when Ilya’s fingers touched him, then relaxed. When Ilya placed his

hand at the back of Shane's neck, feeling the dark, silky hair at his nape, Shane folded. He gave in to Ilya so beautifully, leaning all the way into him until his head was on Ilya's shoulder. Ilya pulled him tighter.

Shane sank into the hollow of Ilya's body. Ilya wrapped both arms around him and held him there for several long minutes. He could feel Shane's hitched breathing ease to steadiness, matching his own. The ocean breeze dried his tears on Ilya's t-shirt.

"If I was your boyfriend," Ilya said quietly. "I would never make you feel this way."

"You keep saying that," Shane answered. "But I felt this way before too."

Ilya's heart thumped painfully in his chest. He knew what Shane meant. *Before*, when they had been sleeping together. Shane had felt this way. Ilya couldn't stand it. How often had he made Shane cry like this? He wanted to rip his own skin off. He wanted to scream and yell at the dark sky above them.

"I thought it would be different with him," Shane's voice was nearly a whisper. "But maybe this is how I'll always feel."

Ilya wanted to say a hundred things. Shane was not meant to feel like this. He was too good. He should have a boyfriend who cared for him properly. Ilya wanted to be Shane's boyfriend. In this moment, that thought felt startlingly clear. He didn't want Shane to date some other guy who made him cry. If it wasn't this guy, it would be another. Shane had realized what he wanted, and once he did that, he didn't stop working until he got it. It was one of the things Ilya admired about him. Shane would find new boyfriends easily. He was beautiful, and talented, and dedicated, and rich. He would have no trouble. Ilya could see it now, the lines of men who would come around if they knew that Shane Hollander was looking for dates. But none of them would fit right. Shane would end up crying. He didn't want Shane to cry at all. Ever. No tears should ever come from Shane's eyes. Except maybe when he choked on Ilya's cock, which Ilya happened to know they both loved.

"If I was your boyfriend," he started again.

"*Stop*," Shane pushed him abruptly, then scrambled clumsily up to his feet on the sand.

"Don't say that. We both know you won't do that."

"We do not *both know* this," Ilya stood too, facing him.

"You *can't*. And you've never wanted it before."

"I was stupid before."

"And, *what*? You're smart now?" Shane's dark eyes glittered in the moonlight. Ilya had always loved it when Shane yelled at him, but not right now. Not with unshed tears gathering in Shane's eyes. "You've had *years*, Ilya. You never wanted that. Now that you can't have it, suddenly you do."

"What can I say?" Ilya tried to deflect.

“*Nothing*. You can’t say *anything*.”

“You never wanted it either.”

“Yeah, well, maybe I would have,” Shane said. “If I’d known that I could.”

That brought Ilya up short. Shane *could* want this. He’d always known that there was a difference between his circumstances and Shane’s. Ultimately, Shane’s family and friends would probably accept him if he ever came out. Those things he said he wanted on the rooftop, a proud boyfriend and a wedding, he could have those things. But Ilya knew that wasn’t the case for him. If he did what Shane had done this weekend, brought a man as a date to a public event, he’d be risking losing his home and his family completely. His only connection to his mother. His last chance with his father.

“You only want me now because you can’t have me,” Shane went on, and Ilya wanted to yell back that it wasn’t true. He wanted Shane *always*. He was never sated of Shane the way he would be with anyone else he’d ever been with. He’d never reached his fill. He doubted he ever would.

“But it’s not fair. I deserve to have what I want,” Shane continued.

“And you think it is Mike?” Ilya roared back. “He doesn’t love you. He hates you.”

“It’s *Miles*! And maybe you two should date then. You seem to have a lot of things in common.”

Hollander turned on his heel and marched back to the hotel. Once again, Ilya found himself staring at the dark, moonlit ocean for a long time.



The next morning found Ilya blearily collecting a cappuccino from the hotel’s coffee bar. It was one of those fancy machines that spit out foamy milk. Not as good as his coffee shop in Boston. He drank it anyway.

With All-Star Weekend wrapping up, a bunch of the guys rolled through the lobby with their suitcases. Ilya paused to bid some of them farewell. He had a couple hours before he needed to check out and head for the airport himself.

He perused the hotel’s complimentary breakfast buffet. After years of cold scrambled eggs and lumpy oatmeal, there was little that could entice him. He’d eaten too many hotel breakfasts just like this. He noticed the greek yogurt and muesli were running low. It was nearing the end of breakfast. He snagged a cup of each and brought it to a table. He went back for some fruit before the staff could clear it away. A napkin, a spoon. A pastry for himself.

The clock ticked past the hour before the elevator dinged again, and Ilya was greeted by the sight of Hollander and Miles.

“Shit, we missed breakfast,” Shane muttered as they neared the buffet.

“Hollander!” Ilya called, waving him over. “I saved this.”

Shane looked down at the assortment on the table. “Oh.”

“Whatever, I’m out of here,” Miles said snippily. Ilya hadn’t noticed that Miles was pulling a small suitcase behind him until he turned and walked away with it.

“Bye Milo,” he gave a big shit-eating grin when Miles turned around to shoot him a withering glare.

“It’s *Miles*.”

“Okay, buh-bye,” he waved. Shane had already taken a seat across from Ilya and pulled the greek yogurt towards himself. “Do you want coffee?” Ilya asked.

“No,” Shane shook his head. “But if there’s water?”

“Yes,” Ilya stood.

“So where is your boyfriend going?” he said when he set the full glass of ice water down in front of Shane.

“He’s not my boyfriend,” Shane answered. He was so cute like a chipmunk when he talked with his mouth full. “We broke up.”

Ilya, who had been prepared to lob any number of snarky retorts, stopped short. “Broke up?”

“Yeah,” Shane chuckled. “This morning, we went for a run. I told him whoever ran the fastest mile wins.”

“What was the prize?” Ilya cut in.

“What? Oh. Let me finish. He said he’s not really competitive like that. He doesn’t understand why people compete for arbitrary things like awards and medals.”

Ilya snorted. “Wrong thing to say to professional athlete.”

“*Right?*” Shane rolled his eyes. “Like who do you think I am? I realized it just wasn’t... we weren’t... It wasn’t what I wanted.”

“Mm,” Ilya hummed. Shane dug back into his breakfast.

Ilya watched him eat for a while. “You do deserve it. To get what you want.”

“I’m not sure I can have what I want,” Shane said quietly, like a secret.

“Do you want to come out?” Ilya asked. “You want big wedding and news article?”

“No, I don’t really want that. I always thought I’d have a small wedding. I want to keep my private life away from all of that.” Shane had always been a private person, Ilya knew that. But he didn’t want Shane to *not* get the things he wanted.

“Then what?”

“I just. I want a boyfriend who’s there for me?”

“You don’t sound so sure,” Ilya pushed.

“I’m not sure what I’m allowed to have.”

“You are allowed to have everything. But some things...” Ilya trailed off. “Some things, I cannot give. Right now. Not forever. Just not right now.”

“Okay,” Shane said slowly.

“Boyfriend, I can do,” Ilya continued. “When we are alone. But my father is sick, and I need to be able to go home. Someday, it will be different.”

Shane nodded. “Okay.”

“Okay?”

“Okay,” Shane nodded again. Their eyes met, and Shane held his gaze. “That’s what I want too.”

“Okay.”

Several long moments passed, while the two of them just looked at each other. A server came and cleared their empty cups and dishes. The lobby bustled with guests coming and going. People took phone calls, dragged sand across the floor, greeted each other, cooed at a lady’s tiny dog. But Ilya’s eyes stayed fixed on Shane. He felt like the entire world was shifting around him and Shane was the center point.

“If I was your boyfriend,” Ilya whispered conspiratorially after a while, bumping his foot with Shane’s underneath the table. “I would definitely race you. Miles is idiot. What was the prize?”

“A blowjob,” Shane’s eyes sparkled.

“Oh!” Ilya crowed, leaping to his feet. “Let’s race now! Actually, I already know I will win. Better give me my prize now.”

Shane laughed and shoved him, “You’re so full of shit, no you wouldn’t.”

“First one back to room wins!” Ilya took off gleefully.

Shane huffed, but he chased him to the elevator.



End Notes

My first (of hopefully many) Hollanov fics! Thanks for reading. All comments are cherished


SHOULD I WRITE A SEQUEL WITH THE PANTIES? YOU TELL ME.

Follow me on tumblr [@brightloveee](#) where I post too much about this stupid pair of idiots.

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