Bigger than propose

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at https://archiveofourown.org/works/77448806.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Heated Rivalry (TV), Heated rival
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Ilya Rozanov, Shane Hollander
Additional Tags:	emotional meltdown, Shane Hollander Has Panic Attacks, Shane Hollander Needs a Hug, Anxious Shane Hollander, Jealous Shane Hollander, The conversation about marriage for citizenship takes a worse turn, Ilya Rozanov Needs A Hug, Ilya Rozanov choose your words wiser, Emotional Hurt/Comfort, They are so in love, Angst with a Happy Ending, Misunderstandings, Autistic Shane Hollander, Episode: s01e06 The Cottage (Heated Rivalry)
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2026-01-10 Words: 2,391 Chapters: 1/1

Bigger than propose

by Zuccki

Summary

I could marry Svetlana.

A noise built in his head. A steady, growing sound—and the more he thought about what had just happened, the harder it became to hear anything else.

Another rush of noise pulsed behind his eyes. He twisted the tap to icy cold and splashed his face—the same water he'd praised not long ago, feeling sheepish and suddenly not knowing what to say. But they didn't need words anymore. He'd thought so.

His head felt ready to burst. He cupped a handful of water and poured it over his neck, gasping involuntarily. He stood there wet and shaking, water soaking through his shirt. He hated it. He *hated* how sticky it felt, how it clung to his burning skin—hated it as much as he'd hated that godawful ad shoot where they kept pouring water over him and *touching* him —

"Shane?" Ilya's voice cut through the noise, both in his head and through the bathroom door.

Leave me alone.

"Shane, are you okay?"

Please leave me alone. Please do it now so it doesn't hurt later.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

All of it still felt like a waking dream.

Ilya's foot found his again—a firm touch. Shane nudged back, heart beating lively in his chest.

They were quiet. But for the first time in years, the silence wasn't crowded with everything left unsaid. There was still so much to discuss, decisions to be made, impossible compromises to find. And yet, for the first time since that fateful night, Shane felt a startling, simple clarity—

"I could marry Svetlana."

The slow-burning warmth that had filled his chest instantly froze solid, cracking into a map of ugly, brittle lines.

For easy citizenship, he had said. *We are good friends*, he had said, briefly catching Shane's eyes—and Shane had felt his whole body go rigid.

Ilya liked women. Ilya had fucked women—Ilya had fucked Svetlana. It was only logical he would choose her for marriage. It was what was expected of any Russian man.

Shane didn't have the right to demand anything. Ilya had told him many, many times what would happen if someone back home found out about him. Ilya was smart and took precautions. Shane was stupid, naïve, and hopeless.

He tried to stay calm. Tried to be rational about it. *It's fine*, he told himself, even as it grew harder to breathe. *He came all the way to the cottage with you, told you he hasn't been with anyone since you parted ways, whispered Russian endearments into your ear as he tipped you over the edge of sanity over and over again, sucked marks into your skin that would take days to fade. It's perfectly—*

"Be right back," he said, not feeling his own legs as he stood. The warmth that had spread through him from head to toe vanished the moment his feet touched the cold floor.

The bathroom tile was cold, too. His mind felt foggy. He turned on the tap and stood there, watching himself in the mirror. It felt like watching a stranger.

I could marry Svetlana.

Was what they had now… not enough?

Not a single soul had ever been allowed to stay enough to matter here, in this cottage, besides his parents. It was his fortress, the only place he truly called home—and he had finally felt ready to share it with the only person he had, foolishly, begun to associate with it.

With his heart laid so bare, he just felt stupid now. Naïve, truly.

Shane didn't make spontaneous decisions. If he planned something, he thought through each step meticulously. He couldn't take risks—not ever.

Inviting Ilya to share his home had been both the hardest and easiest decision of his life. It had felt like cutting off a piece of himself and offering it on a plate—though, in the end, he barely remembered how he'd brought it up. Even remembering the snippets, he hadn't expected much. Probably hadn't expected anything at that point.

But then—*I'm coming to the cottage*—and suddenly, a distant vision became real.

It was wonderful. Having Ilya here with him was wonderful. Every time they touched in Shane's house, messed around in Shane's master bed, on Shane's sofa, in Shane's kitchen—every time they kissed each other so hard and desperate his lips stung and his voice went raw and his body felt weightless—Shane felt like he was falling. He didn't know exactly where, or how much farther until the hard ground opened up to break him into pieces. But right now, watching himself breathe laboriously in the mirror, he felt something cracking inside with a horrible sound.

His vision blurred.

I could marry Svetlana.

A noise built in his head. A steady, growing sound—and the more he thought about what had just happened, the harder it became to hear anything else.

Another rush of noise pulsed behind his eyes. He twisted the tap to icy cold and splashed his face—the same water he'd praised not long ago, feeling sheepish and suddenly not knowing what to say. But they didn't need words anymore. He'd thought so.

His head felt ready to burst. He cupped a handful of water and poured it over his neck, gasping involuntarily. He stood there wet and shaking, water soaking through his shirt. He hated it. He *hated* how sticky it felt, how it clung to his burning skin—hated it as much as he'd hated that godawful ad shoot where they kept pouring water over him and *touching* him —

"Shane?" Ilya's voice cut through the noise, both in his head and through the bathroom door.

Leave me alone.

"Shane, are you okay?"

Please leave me alone. Please do it now so it doesn't hurt later.

"Shane, answer? Please? Is something bad?"

Please, just—

The door opened with a startling sound—apparently, Shane hadn't even locked it. Pathetic.

Ilya stood watching him with wide eyes—and in the endless blue of them, Shane suddenly saw… fear.

It looked like fear. Even though there was no reason for it.

The ghost of it vanished as soon as Ilya took him in, replaced by confusion and worry. Shane wasn't so sure anymore what he'd seen.

"Shane," Ilya took a step forward. "Hey, hey, what—"

Shane couldn't look at him now. His mind wasn't here; his body wasn't either. He couldn't open his mouth to answer—right now, it didn't belong to him. Ilya tried to catch his eyes; Shane jerked his head away. Too much effort. He knew one look would tell Ilya exactly how broken he was right now—some cruel scrap of pride tried to claw its way up and salvage the last of his dignity.

"Why are you wet, what—look at me." A hand caught his chin, tilting it up against his will. He tried to pull away, but his body felt useless. Despite everything, he didn't have the strength to shove Ilya back.

He didn't want him away. He wanted him as close as he could get. Now, later—in an hour, in a day, in a year. Always.

That thought crashed into his muted mind, harsher than the cold water on his skin.

"Look at me." It wasn't a request anymore. It was a command—stern, almost harsh. And only then did Shane manage to break out of that rumbling void. The sound finally faded, but not the pressure behind his eyes.

Actually, it was a different kind of pressure now. A too-familiar one.

Ilya studied him, still gripping his chin. His other hand came up, brushing the soft skin beneath Shane's eye. It was too much.

Please don't touch me.

Please touch me.

Shane closed his eyes, willing the tears back. He wanted to drown in that touch. He wanted it so badly it hurt—his heart ached with a longing that terrified him. The depth of what they had—of what he wanted—felt like lurking in dark water with no bottom in sight.

He felt blind. He didn't know where to step next. He didn't know where Ilya would meet him on that ground.

"Shane," Ilya said, pulling him from the prison of his own thoughts. "Talk to me, please."

"If you… if you want to marry a woman," Shane began, his voice carefully blank, "you should find one you sincerely l—lo—"

Ilya's face scrunched in mild confusion. "Sin—what? You having breakdown with heavy words, I need your help to understand."

Shane felt like dying. Or maybe like killing Ilya.

Please, get it. Please, don't make me say it out loud.

Please, take the step right now. Just say you didn't mean it.

Don't say anything.

Shane pressed his lips together, wishing his thoughts would disappear. They felt overwhelming in a way he hadn't felt in years. He'd never learned how to deal with them, preferring to ride out the meltdown and forget it—but that wasn't an option anymore.

I am sure I am in love with you and I'm terrified, because one word from your mouth is enough to undo me.

Ilya took his face in both hands, tilting it up—Shane must have looked down again, avoiding him. His fingers drifted higher, stroking the short hair at Shane's temple—and Shane leaned into the touch, because he was desperate and lost and in need of it every minute he breathed.

"You want… that I marry—"

Shane shook his head. A traitorous tear threatened to fall; there was nothing he could do. He was about to rip his heart and soul open for the man he'd wanted to give them to years ago.

Ilya studied his face. Shane dared a look, and the tear traced a path down his cheekbone. It was humiliating. He wanted to escape, to hide somewhere dark and safe.

But there was nowhere to hide anymore. Not here, in his last refuge.

Ilya caught the tear with his thumb—and Shane's meek hope that it would go unnoticed died. He kept stroking Shane's temple gently, thinking.

"You don't want that I marry."

Ilya's touch soothed his frayed nerves. The storm in his mind grew quieter with Ilya so close.

"Don't… don't marry Svetlana. Even for the citizenship. I know it would be easier, but—just don't."

Ilya's hand stilled. Silence stretched between them again, but before the storm could rise anew, Shane felt a warm mouth on his.

The kiss was one Shane had grown used to these last few days: gentle, promising and demanding at once. It lasted and lasted until he felt the ground steady beneath his feet again, until he felt Ilya *holding* him like he *mattered*.

When they parted, neither went far, their lips barely touching, still.

“I would not,” Ilya said, his voice rougher than usual. “Was just idea. Was just stupid idea, just to be to—to be here.” He paused, seeming to collect his thoughts, then raised his head to look at Shane. “Even if I thought, I could not do it. I have a very big problem.” His hands came up, cupping Shane’s face so gently it *hurt*. “This big, boring problem with the… most… stunning freckles I have ever seen, with the biggest hockey obsession—and with teary brown eyes that make me want to kill myself for every wrong word.”

Shane looked at him, awed. The void in his head began to clear for good.

“Also,” Ilya took Shane’s right hand and kissed it quickly, “with very weak backhand.”

Shane gasped, as if an enormous wave about to crash over him had evaporated into nothing but a gust of damp air.

“Weak?” he asked, too breathless to laugh, trying to free his hand. Ilya held on tighter.

“Yes, really weak,” he said, and Shane caught laughter hiding in the curve of those lovely lips. He wanted to steal it, hide it away, keep it forever—so he leaned forward and found Ilya’s mouth with his own. He grabbed Ilya’s shirt, fisting the fabric to pull him closer, not caring about the wrinkles. Ilya gladly obeyed, pressing himself flush against him.

That kiss was different. Heated, messy, lips wet and barely parting—until they finally broke for air.

Shane gasped, and Ilya pressed another kiss to his burning lips—short, firm, confident.

It felt like a promise. Even if none had been spoken.

“Please never ever hide if you are sad,” Ilya murmured against his mouth. “I want to be—I want to see you not only when you are good, but when you are bad, sad, awful. I don’t care how bad - I want to know. Always.”

“That almost sounds like a proposal,” Shane croaked, fighting the embarrassment of having been caught like this, feeling how tightly his whole soul was being squeezed by this sincerity.

“Propose? Is no propose, is demand—I demand you tell me, yes?”

Yes, he thought, feeling the ache finally dissolve from his heart.

“Okay,” he answered hoarsely, gripping Ilya’s shirt tighter. “Okay.”

“Good. Now—” Both of Ilya’s hands slipped under Shane’s wet shirt, skimming his stomach, moving upward, forcing Shane to raise his arms. The shirt got lost somewhere on the floor—something Shane would have complained about if not for the next few seconds, when Ilya suddenly pushed him back until he hit the washing machine. In one motion, Shane found himself sitting on it, legs spread, with Ilya standing between them.

“I think you are cold,” Ilya said, hand curving around the nape of his neck. His warm fingers felt like heaven against Shane’s chilled skin. “Very cold, yes. Need to warm up.”

“Yeah?” Shane murmured, trying to pull him even closer. “Guess you have some ideas already.”

Ilya kissed him, fierce and confident, using his other hand to palm his stomach, then his chest, and Shane let a shudder rack his body.

“Okay, this is serious,” Ilya broke the kiss, but before Shane could complain, he gripped him firmly under the thighs. “Hold,” he said, lifting him in one swift move and heading back to the bedroom. Shane obeyed. “Is warmer in bed.”

Shane huffed a laugh, threading his fingers through the hair at Ilya’s nape. “Naked? Barely.”

Ilya stopped, pressed his lips below Shane’s jaw, and murmured, “Not necessary naked. Clothes can stay. I can still have you how I want.”

“And how do you want?” Shane asked, goosebumps rising on his arms.

I am yours to take. I can’t give myself to anyone but you anymore. It’s your fault. I am really… yours.

He didn’t expect much—another cheeky answer, an embarrassing suggestion. He knew Ilya too well by now.

But he didn’t expect Ilya to go quiet, studying his face for a moment too long. At the end of that pause, Ilya mouthed something in Russian—and kissed him gently, holding him tighter.

They parted, and even though the kiss wasn’t demanding, Shane still felt a little breathless.

“What’d you say?”

“Forgot how in English,” Ilya deflected. Shane sighed, deciding not to press. He knew which words he wanted them to be—he could almost taste them in his own mouth, scary and sweet and *oh* so right. He felt their time had finally come—if not now, then really, really soon.

…He couldn’t have guessed how right he was. That very same night, he whispered them again, and again, and *again*—sincere, relieved, and hopelessly *in love.*

End Notes

Leave me a comment if you liked my version of that scene, I will be really happy about it!

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