

Love is just too weak of a word

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Love is just too weak of a word

by [Karaxuno](#)

Summary

He's already an inch from Shane's face, closer than any two rivals should ever be.

And then finally, finally, he gets his kiss. He's long and lazy with it too. There's no rush. Let them film it. Let them air it for anyone to see. They're Ilya Rozanov and Shane Hollander, the best fucking players in the league.

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AU where instead of Scott winning it's Ilya, and so instead of kissing Kip on the ice he kisses Shane.

(+ a little bit of the media's reaction to that)

Notes

My keyboard has never been battered with an idea so quickly after watching episode 5, and this is what I came up with lol

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

“Congratulations.” Shane says through the tinny speaker as soon as the call connects.

Ilya hums, the only noise he’s able to make through tired sips of water, “Thank you.”

Shane’s laugh is quiet, almost missed, “I need to recover quicker. You’re catching up to me. I’m only one cup ahead now.”

There’s a moment. A silence that lands between them. The deciding game isn’t until next week. Ilya’s skates are barely off the ice tonight, let alone ready to step back on for a final. But Shane thinks he can win, knows it like an absolute.

“Come.” Ilya blurts, then winces. He didn’t mean to say that.

“I do. Plenty.”

This time, it’s Ilya’s turn to laugh. Wheezing and harsh. Since when did Shane make jokes like that? Recovery must be making him bored. The most boring player in the league, bored. They’re all doomed.

“Yes. But you know what I meant.” Ilya presses, “Come to game.”

“It’s in Dallas.”

“So? You buy ticket. I buy ticket. I do not care. Come. Please. Only Svetlana use my seats.”

Another pause. This time, they’re not on the same page. Ilya is burning with embarrassment, yes, but also now want. He wants to win. He wants to see Shane in the stands when he does. He wants he wants he *wants*.

“Okay. I’d like to... meet her, anyways.”

“Is yes?”

“It’s a yes.”

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The atmosphere in the rink is... well, Ilya isn’t sure he’s ever seen a rink quite like this before. Not the first time he won the cup, a fresh-faced rookie, barely off his training wheels. Not even during the fan-packed All-star games.

There’s something different in the air tonight. It’s crisper, sharper.

Though that might just be because he’s heaving so hard from exertion, favouring one leg over the other because he’d over-extended just that little bit too far to score that last goal. A goal that had made him a champion, again. The second time over. He can’t fucking believe it. The recovery will be more than worth it.

The cup makes his tired arms ache as he hefts it into the air, lips stinging with the cold from where he’d kissed it. Just before his numb biceps might actually collapse in on themselves, the rest of his team is suddenly all around him. Cheering. Pushing. Shoving. Grinning. Helping him hold their victory up for the whole world to see.

It’s all just so much, and it’s not going to end any time soon. Ilya barely managed to shake the officials’ hands before he’d snatched the cup, and now he’s lowered the cup it’s already being passed from person to person, teammate to teammate. Everyone wants a turn. For a lot of these players, it’s the first time they’ve ever been so close. For all of them, it could very well be the last.

Eventually they relent, and instead the rookies all cuddle around it in awe, not wanting to let go even as the floodgates are opened.

Kids dash onto the ice. Wives and girlfriends slide up to their husbands and boyfriends. Parents tip-toe up to their kids. There's even a few who must be grandparents.

The first one Ilya actually recognises is Marleau's father. He's a nice guy, they've met before. Tall and broad and built for hockey himself, though he's never played a game in his life. For a moment, Ilya lets himself watch them, still heaving cold air out of his lungs too harshly to move, and he thinks his own father might be next onto the ice.

When he'd won his last cup, he had earned himself a smile from the man. Only a tiny little flick of his lip up at the corner, but... it had still been a smile. Rare and unusual and to be savoured.

What Ilya wouldn't do for a smile right now...

Suddenly, he turns, muddled mind pulsing with the thought of a *different* smile. He spins thrice over, looking for a head of burgundy curls next to a garish hospital-blue sling. He'd found them before the game and honed in on their seats, reassuring himself he had someone at his back. That he had someone to win for, like Marleau and his Dad.

Now he feels lost in the haze of that win. It takes him a moment to re-orient himself, colours flying past his vision as he spins- *oh*.

Svetlana has her arm around Shane, and they're cheering and whooping what must be twice as loud as anyone around them.

For a second, Ilya can't breathe. The cold air stops being a constant thorn in his throat. There's just nothing. There's only that memory again, his father's face with that tiny smile. The warmth he'd felt in his chest when he saw it, lapping it up like a dog being thrown crumbs from its master's plate.

A snap of a hockey stick behind him and it's gone, and all he can see is Svetlana and Shane screaming for him, smiles so wide their faces might actually split in two. Why would he wish for anything else? Even he cannot hold back his own smile. To hell with his reputation. He drops his gloves and brings one hand to his lips blowing them a kiss and a wink.

Svetlana laughs with her head thrown back, and catches the kiss. Shane is the opposite. He stills slightly, cocking his head. He knows the wink was for him. Ilya can't actually be sure if he winked back or not, he's too far away to tell, but he knows he did.

Somebody skates past him. Pats him on the shoulder. Ilya turns instinctively, watching him go to his knees and scoop up his kids, the last ones to clatter onto the ice. His wife curls around him, giggling as her shoes slip.

He can't watch for long, can't keep himself away from his own family. So he turns again, resetting himself back to Shane and Svetlana. Now that he's looking at them, he doesn't want to ever look away. It almost feels like the ten rows of seats and stairs and layers of boards aren't in the way. It's just *them*.

That's the way it should be, shouldn't it? That's why they bring the families onto the ice. Because celebrating alone isn't really even celebrating.

Before he knows what he's doing, Ilya lifts his hand. It's not to blow another kiss. He flicks his finger, beckoning.

Shane doesn't move.

Maybe he didn't see him, so Ilya lifts his other hand. Does it again. Still nothing.

Frustrated, Ilya feels his skates float a little backwards as he nods his head and gestures one final time.

And he- he knows it's a lot to ask. He knows that so acutely it hurts when he thinks about it. But that night in Florida. All those calls in Russia. That afternoon in the hospital... that invitation to his *fucking* cottage. All those things were a lot to ask of someone.

And Shane is still here, because he asked.

Doesn't that mean something?

He can feel the cold creeping in again, the doubt. Maybe he should call it what it is- reality. They can never have what his teammates have. It was a stupid idea. He is stupid for suggesting it and it's only going to scare Hollander into running again and-

Ilya blinks, because Shane isn't in his seat anymore.

Then blinks again, because he's halfway down the steps.

Absently, he knows most of the cameras have zoomed in on him, floating on the ice away from the team. He knows the rest are on Shane. Can feel their confusion. But everything behind him is blurred around the edges, and the only thing in laser-sharp focus is the man hopping the boards right in front of him.

His face isn't bruised anymore. His eyes aren't swollen. He's still smiling, even though he must be terrified. If there wasn't so much adrenaline pumping through his own veins, Ilya knows he would be terrified too.

"Congratulations." Shane starts, and this time it's not distorted by some shitty phone speaker, or muffled by the rustle of sheets and clothes.

It's real. It's in front of him, said in a puff of cold air.

For once, Ilya can't get his words out. He can't remember the last time he was speechless, the last time both English and Russian failed him.

"I-"

"That's where you say thank you." Shane steps forwards, balancing himself with his good hand on Ilya's shoulder. There'll be a picture of that all over Twitter, later.

"You are the real asshole." Ilya mutters. But he's already inclining his head. He's already an inch from Shane's face, closer than any two rivals should ever be.

And then finally, finally, he gets his kiss. He's long and lazy with it too. There's no rush. Let them film it. Let them air it for anyone to see. They're Ilya Rozanov and Shane Hollander, the best fucking players in the league.

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The post-game press is a fucking mess. Obviously. Everywhere Ilya looks, people have stills and replays of the kiss on their phones. Some even already have it printed out to accompany their question sheet. How, he has no idea.

There's so many microphones in his face that for once he's a little overwhelmed. But Shane is there waiting in the wings, and that makes him feel strong again, just like on the ice.

They ask a lot of questions, and he answers most of them. Ignores some, yes. But the most important:

"Rozanov! Mr Rozanov! Can you confirm *why* you kissed Shane Hollander?"

He takes a deep breath, "Is obvious, no? We are partners."

“Partners on opposite teams, isn’t that a conflict of interest? How will you deal with that going forwards?”

One last glance at Shane to give him strength.

“There is no... as you say... going forwards. I play league hockey nearly a decade. How long have you been hockey reporter?”

The woman pauses, as if she cannot believe the questions have turned on her. Nervously she answers, “Six years.”

Ilya nods once. Sharp. “Then you do not know a hockey where Shane Hollander and I have not been partners.”

When everyone starts yelling over each other, Ilya stands, turning away and heading straight behind the curtain. And straight into Shane Hollander’s arms.

Shane holds him as best he can with the sling, “So that’s yes to the cottage, then?”

End Notes

Title from Inventing from Matilda Mann <3

Sorry if you saw this twice in the listings I f'd up when I posted it and backdated it and couldn't figure out how to fix it!!! I didn't know it made it jump around :(

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