

Thunder from a clear sky

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Thunder from a clear sky

by [gsmaxwell](#)

Summary

Before he had met the guy, he assumed Price was a bear in human form, recruited straight out of some secret dockside brawling fight ring in Nova Scotia.

He was here to play hockey. Not to make friends. Except for Ryan, his unexpected friend.

Though, it turned out he hadn't been that wrong about the bear part.

Or: Ryan and Shane hit the Village in Toronto.

Companion piece to *There have been threats* and *If you're afraid of wolves*. January 2015.

Notes

I'm actually so grateful there's a few people out here willing to read my fan fiction about my fan fiction. I thought it would just be me kicking around the sandbox, but I'm so happy other people want to keep reading.

Thank you all for your suggestions! I've got a few more ideas planned based on them, but it will just depend on how busy work gets.

Please enjoy! And if you haven't read Tough Guy, I highly suggest it!

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

January 2015, Church Street, Toronto

Shane had never expected to become friends with Ryan Price.

Before he had met the guy, he assumed Price was a bear in human form, recruited straight out of some secret dockside brawling fight ring in Nova Scotia.

With Morozov retiring at the end of the 2014 postseason, the team held the defensive lines steady until a new coach could assess what was needed. Over summer training, Shane worked with Price a lot. They didn't share the same skill set, but Price was willing to put in the work to do more than punch guys out and collect penalty minutes. He also didn't seem to care that as a teacher Shane was methodical and a little impatient.

Ryan signed a second year with the Bears before they hired a permanent coach. Now, he was spending more time on the ice with a puck than in the penalty box and put up more points than his last three years combined, most of those from assists to Shane.

Ryan was a stoic guy, but the first time the crowd chanted "*Go-ing-Dutch!*", the clever new hashtag the social media team had started for a Hollander-Price assist, Shane swore he saw him smile under the beard.

It seemed the locker room also blessed their friendship. The Bears weren't unwelcoming, but the boisterous, young boys club thrived on chaos and adrenaline. Shane, at twenty-three and *assumed* single, should have fit right in. But as the two token introverts, the Hollander-Price duo tended to stick together both on and off the ice.

The two token introverts.

Well, that was the public label.

Pretty early on, Shane had realised that Ryan wasn't trying to be in the closet. It was simply that no one had asked. Apparently, there wasn't a player on the team brave enough to question the apps he used or the people he brought back from clubs no one else went to, and Ryan wasn't the type to volunteer any information.

No one had asked Shane either, though he noticed a few looks the more he hung out with Ryan. He wasn't sure what they were thinking, but it had never seemed to cause a problem. He had noticed the ruckus quiet down a few times when he walked into the room, and there were a lot fewer 'no homo' jokes being thrown around, at least in front of him.

It was probably the best-case scenario, to be honest. And he had no illusions about camaraderie on a team anymore, not after the freeze out from the Voyageurs. Hayden reluctantly had told him half still thought he initiated the trade to make a Cup run for himself, or faked an injury to get out of playing in the Olympics.

No, he was here to play hockey. Not to make friends.

Except for Ryan.

Ryan, his unexpected friend.

Though, it turned out he hadn't been that wrong about the bear part.

The first time Ryan took him to a gay bar in Vegas wasn't the last. The second time, Ryan hadn't invited him so much as Shane had tagged along by accident, just being in the lobby at the right time.

It was just as awkward as Vegas. They sipped beers at the bar while Ryan used some kind of secret signal to summon a guy over. They all walked back to the hotel together, and the guy had looked confused when Shane went back to his own room, alone.

Midway through the 2014-15 season, he had figured out Ryan's pattern. No hooking up in Boston. Apps in Republican or conservative towns. Bars where the queer nightlife was big enough to make it worth the risk.

It wasn't that Shane was *looking*. He made a point to slip his wedding ring from the chain around his neck onto his hand as soon as they entered the club. And it wasn't like he enjoyed the loud music, dancing or dark, claustrophobic places any more than he liked it in straight nightclubs.

But he had to admit, being part of hockey since he was old enough to balance on skates had shrunk his world into something tiny. Even being drafted to Montreal had only brought him two hours away from his childhood home. He spent all day with hockey players or hockey management, and all his off-time with his parents, Pike and Jackie, and now Ilya.

Changing teams had sucked, but it made him realise there was a whole fucking world out there.

He knew Price was from a small town, but having billeted when he was a teenager, then moving to the States to play for the majority of his career had made him more experienced in what Shane's father called 'worldly things'. Ilya had moved across an ocean by himself at seventeen, something that seemed utterly crazy.

Fuck, his world had been such a singular perspective he hadn't even realised he wasn't entirely straight, even though he had been having weirdly intimate hate-love sex with Ilya for five years.

He was determined to expand his horizons, and, much like he had worked with Ryan over the summer on skills, Ryan was the perfect tutor to teach Shane how to be more... gay.

His biggest mistake was telling Ilya.

They Skyped as often as they could, and, luckily, the afternoon game between the Bears and the Toronto Guardians ended early enough that Shane could call before going with Ryan to the infamous Village.

Ilya looked unfairly good on the tablet screen, shirtless and wet from his shower. Shane focused on the two options he had brought from Boston.

“The blue one.”

“Really?” Shane frowned. “I thought it was too small.”

“Yes, exactly,” Ilya rested his head on his hand as he looked at Shane fondly. *“You wear the tighter clothes to the gay club. Did Ryan not teach you this?”*

“I told you, he doesn’t really teach me anything,” Shane rolled his eyes but pulled his hoodie off, trying on the blue shirt. It fit, more snugly than he preferred. “I kind of just watch and pay attention.”

Ilya watched him, distracted. *“I need to take you out. Ryan is edging you into queer culture. I will pop your cherry, truly.”*

“God, shut up,” Shane said as his knee started to dance, his nerves creeping up on him. “I’m just there to see what it’s like. No... popping.”

It wasn’t that he didn’t want to one day go out with Ilya to a gay club and be... more. But, if he were being honest, the thought of going out with Ilya was intimidating, even if they were out and everything was miraculously fine. He knew Ilya could own a room, either through lust, admiration or seething jealousy. And Shane just imagined himself, a lump, next to him.

Shane had already heard the looks and whispers in his mind: *How the hell did a boring guy like that end up with him?*

Ryan, at least, gave no shits about how painfully awkward Shane was in those situations. Shane just had to go out a few more times, poking around in the dark until, maybe, he wouldn’t be so obviously out of place.

Shane used the screen to look at his hair, trying to see if pushing it one way or the other would be better.

“You look hot, kotik, stop worrying. All the pretty men will want to take you home.”

“I just don’t want to look like an idiot.” Shane snorted. “I didn’t have a fuckboy phase like some people.”

“You are a baby gay. It’s endearing.”

“I hate you.”

There was a bit of a pause, and Shane glanced back at Ilya’s window. Ilya really had an open face once you took the time to learn how to read it. Right now, he was looking thoughtful and, even in the pixelated blur, there was something apprehensive to his expression.

“What?” Shane forgot to be nervous for a minute. “What is it? You don’t want me going.”

“No, I want you to go. Have fun. Stay with Price and keep your tracker on,” he added quickly. *“But... I was thinking.”*

“Was it hard?”

“I will make you pay for that next week,” Ilya growled, and Shane grinned. Ilya got under everyone’s skin, but Shane was the only one who got under Ilya’s.

But Ilya paused again, tapping his lip as if he wasn’t sure he was going to continue.

Oh, no. Shane knew that look. It was right before Ilya said something devastating, and that could be good or bad.

“You could. If you wanted to.”

“I could, what?”

“Bring a man back to the hotel.”

Shane thought for a moment the wifi had glitched. His heart pounded like a drum in his throat. Did Ilya really just suggest—

“You want me to *cheat* on you?”

“No, of course not. But it is not cheating. I do not own your body. And it is like... open.”

Shane felt his face heat up, a sudden flash of anger clouding his mind for a second. “Open?” he managed to sputter.

“Yes,” Ilya had on his patient face, and it had only made Shane angrier. *“While we are apart, maybe you can... try new things.”*

“Try new things?” Shane knew he had to say something other than just echoing Ilya’s words. His heart beat in his throat. Not cheating? Was that what he truly thought? Was this his way of gently trying to tell Shane that Ilya had? Shane felt sick at the thought of someone kissing Ilya, touching him, making him smile.

“Is that what— did you—”

“No, no,” Ilya said so vehemently Shane believed him right away. *“Never. I have not had sex with anyone else, not since— Not since before Sochi.”*

“Then why the fuck are you bringing this up? Do you *want* to fuck other people?”

“No! Not for me. But— I am just saying.. You could try with other men.”

“If I want.” Shane knew his voice was too loud, but he was pissed.

“I do not want you to feel like you have... missed opportunities for something.”

“Oh, okay,” Shane couldn’t stop the sarcastic bite from clamping on. Anger, fear, a surprising surge of guilt – it all swirled up inside of him.

Sure, he wanted to broaden his horizons. But he had *never* given more than a passing thought when he was with Ryan, in those clubs, of doing anything with anyone. Every person he looked at and noticed, that he thought *maybe in another life*, all he had to do was compare them with Ilya and they immediately felt like a cheap imitation.

He had thought it was the same for everyone. Hayden had said it once— if you found it, why keep looking?

But maybe... maybe Ilya was different. Shane felt very stupid and naïve suddenly.

“Do you mean I put an end to your... opportunities or whatever?” he said tightly.

“Is not what I said.”

“It’s what it sounds like.”

Ilya muttered something in Russian, but Shane’s still elementary understanding couldn’t pick out anything useful. *“I’m not saying what I want.”*

“I don’t know, seems pretty clear to me.”

“I don’t want you to have regrets,”

“Why would you even think that?” Shane said.

“Because you are young and handsome, you shouldn’t feel like you must only know me.”

“You know, what? Fuck you,” Shane snapped. He hated feeling like he was being condescended. “Maybe you’re right, I should bring someone back to the hotel.”

“Shane—”

“Bye, Rozanov.” Shane ended the call and shoved the tablet back in his bag.

His blood felt like it was boiling, and he could barely see. He paced the room, ignoring the incoming calls until they stopped. It took a while for him to calm down, though the hurt didn’t go away.

Rationally, he understood. It wasn’t even so far off about why he was going to nightclubs with Ryan in the first place, which was maybe why he was so angry.

He knew Ilya was more experienced with men. It was just Shane who pathetically held on to some delusion that he wasn’t gay, he was just maybe *gay-for-Rozanov* for years.

He had thought, since Sochi, since Ilya had fucking risked his life for Shane, that Ilya felt as possessive over Shane as Shane did for him. But apparently, he was just fine with Shane having sex with just about anyone.

I don’t own your body.

Later, he would probably bring this up in therapy and talk through jealousy and empowerment. About why he felt so irrationally betrayed, as if Ilya had told him he didn't love him any more.

Much later he would realize he had somehow decided that Ilya was, in fact, in charge of his body and had developed some kind of subconscious rationale that as long as Ilya was here, watching on the app, like some kind of guardian angel, nothing bad could happen to him.

But for now?

Fucking fine.

I don't own your body.

Then maybe Shane would do whatever the fuck he wanted with it.

He thought for an angry moment about taking off his tracker wristband, a gifted upgrade from CISI of the app on his phone.

If Ilya didn't own his body then what gave him the fucking right to know where he was all the time?

He didn't, of course. It would be his fucking luck to go missing and all the podcasts would have a field day on his idiocy.

Ryan seemed to have great luck picking up men; maybe he could give some advice to poor, pathetic Shane, who had only slept with his stupid, secret, Russian husband.

He knew he must look homicidal because Ryan paused, his eyebrows almost high enough to reach his hairline when he spotted Shane sitting on one of the lobby chairs.

"Uh," Ryan faltered. "You okay, Hollander?"

"Are we going out or not, Price?" Shane asked, even though he knew the answer.

"Yup," Ryan said slowly. "That's the plan."

Shane nodded and strode out until Ryan whistled he was going the wrong way. Shane turned, hating how tight his shirt was under his jacket.

Shane had been to a few queer spaces now in California and Seattle, but Toronto seemed to have its own flavour. January was also a grungy and grey time here, but it made the pops of colour and character stick out. Shane was too stuck in his head to really appreciate it.

Ryan seemed to have a place in mind because he led them through the groups of people bundled up and smoking on the sidewalk despite the frigid temperature to an older-looking building with heat lamps lining the door. There wasn't much of a line to get in this early, but the music was pulsing as they checked their jackets.

He stuck with Ryan as they found an unassuming place along the wall near the bar and just watched the growing crowd, nursing their drinks. Well, Ryan was nursing. Shane was already on his second.

They sat in tense silence until Shane couldn't stand listening to his own thoughts, jack hammering against his skull.

"Are all men such assholes?" Shane decided the best approach was to just ask it. Shane wouldn't be offended if Ryan didn't want to answer.

Ryan's voice faltered. "Uh..."

"He's just so fucking infuriating sometimes," Shane gritted his teeth. "On one hand, he's a fucking Disney prince or something that just swept me off my feet."

"Hm," Ryan said, mildly.

"And on the other, I want to fucking strangle him because who the hell does he think he is? Do you know what he fucking said to me just now?"

"No," Ryan muttered. "But I guess you're going to tell me."

"He told me it was *okay to bring someone else back to the hotel tonight*," Shane hissed. "As if he thinks I missed out on a – a *Girls Gone Wild* era, or something."

That made Ryan seem to think for a moment. "A Rumspringa," he said finally.

"A what?"

Ryan sighed. "Like, it's an Amish thing. Where they send young people out into the world to see what it's like before they settle down. So, they really know what they want."

"What if I already know?" Shane scowled. "Does everyone need to try everything out to know? What if the first thing you try is the best and you fuck it up by searching for something different?"

Ryan didn't answer.

"I don't need to go fucking around like – like some kind of horny asshole to realise I like what I have," he continued. "I know I'm boring, but I'm not fucking *Amish*, am I?"

Shane felt a stab of guilt, so he downed his drink.

"Sorry, ignore me," Shane sighed. "I can head back to the hotel."

Ryan glanced at his watch; Shane knew that if he wanted to go back, Ryan would walk him.

"No, nevermind," Shane shook his head. The alcohol was making him feel off-kilter. He was being a shitty wingman, and Ryan definitely didn't want to have all this bullshit dropped on him.

“Sorry, I’m ruining your chance to—” he grimaced. “I didn’t mean being a horny asshole is a bad thing. I’m just upset. You’re not an asshole. I’m an asshole.”

“It’s fine,” Ryan said. He glanced over as Shane fiddled with his empty glass. “Maybe you should—“

“I really didn’t mean what I said. If you want to get laid, I’m happy for you.”

Ryan shrugged. “It’s okay.”

Shane finished his drink. “Still. I’m sorry.”

“Thanks.”

Shane got another drink, this time paying for and doing a couple shots with a group of drunk lesbians with bride-to-be sashes at the bar because why the hell not. His limbs felt a little more numb than usual as he walked back to join Price, but he stubbornly refused to acknowledge it.

The words sprang out of him, unsummoned. “Is that what you’re doing? A Rumspringa?”

Ryan looked up from his phone. “That kind of implies I have somewhere to go home to.”

“Oh, right,” Shane felt like kicking himself again. “Sorry.”

“It’s okay,” Ryan repeated, and Shane was pretty sure each time he was getting even more monosyllabic.

Great. He had managed to piss off Ryan Price now. He deserved a medal.

There was a long pause before Ryan finally said, “Look. If you don’t want to sleep around then don’t sleep around.”

“I don’t,” he said, miserably.

“But,” Ryan sighed again. “Maybe consider yourself lucky that you found whatever you and Rozanov have on the first try. Not everyone does. And sometimes, even if you do, you fuck it up and lose it anyway.”

Shane was pretty sure that, besides the intense coming out in Ilya’s apartment, that was the most vulnerable thing Ryan had ever said to him. And he was fucking right.

Shane remembered feeling like a bumbling amateur when everything seemed to come easily for Ilya: flirting, kissing, fucking. Shane remembered hating how small and inexperienced he had felt back then.

It was a fucking miracle he hadn’t fucked it up.

And he had too much proof that Ilya’s confidence wasn’t always what it seemed. He remembered Ilya crying in his arms, broken down after Sochi and Montreal, unable to keep it

together. Shane had his parents to deal with the fallout; Ilya had had no one.

Even now, he saw the deflection each time Shane talked about therapy or healing, like Ilya was afraid of those things for himself.

That stupid, fucking, self-sacrificing idiot.

Shane pulled out his phone, ignoring the missed calls and unread texts, and opened the finder app that showed a little dot of Ilya, at home in Ottawa.

Alone.

A surge of his own loneliness washed over him, and he tried to cover it with faltering anger.

He closed the app, the last of his anger draining out of him. He glanced up, but Ryan was staring at the dance floor, his gaze unfocused.

“Hey,” Shane said, and Ryan snapped out of it, looking startled. “Everything okay?”

“Sorry,” Ryan shook his head. “I thought I saw someone.”

Shane took a deep breath.

“Let’s dance.”

Ryan’s eyebrows shot up. “What?”

“I just...” Shane swept his hand out in front of him. “I need to do something.”

He headed out to the centre of the now packed club and just let loose.

He didn’t know the music; he barely knew the beat, but he decided that wasn’t going to stop him. The alcohol helped, and he learned that closing his eyes kept him focused on the sounds, the heat, and the people around him. He opened them when there was a sudden block to one side, and he saw Ryan looked exasperated.

Shane knew he was a bad dancer, he stepped on Ryan’s feet, elbowing him at one point, but he eventually moved in a way that he didn’t feel completely uncomfortable with.

It was better with a friend.

He tried again to picture Ilya here, his body pressed on Shane’s, kissing his neck, laughing in his ear and his firm hands on his hips teaching him how to actually move.

He imagined it again: *How the hell did a boring guy like that end up with him?*

And then he pictured Ilya punching that anonymous guy in the mouth.

His heart felt like it was breaking open.

He fucking *missed* him.

How could Ilya think Shane wanted someone else the way he wanted Ilya?

The alcohol, the heat, the dancing, all rushed over him. He needed air.

He leaned over, shouted to Ryan that he was headed to the washroom, and then pushed his way out of the crowd.

There was a sign for bathrooms in the back, two rooms that both had all-gender labels on them. Shane could hear voices in one so he headed to the other.

Once he finished, he went to the grungy sink to wash his hands, glancing up into the cracked and water-stained mirror. He thankfully hadn't inherited the gene that made him turn bright red when drinking, but he still looked wrecked. He winced, leaning in to push his hair back and try to restore some order.

The world was already fuzzy, and his heart jumped when he blinked. The flickering, harsh lighting made it seem as though the shadows on his face were bruises. A sudden chill washed over him as his body remembered standing in the warehouse bathroom, in his briefs, peeing blood.

He gripped the sink, taking a deep breath and focused on everything else. The sound of the music thrummed through the door. Distance voices and chatter leaked through the flimsy door. The smell of floral soap, not Clorox and bleach. The rainbow Pride stickers covered one crack on the mirror like a mock bandage.

He was safe. He was okay.

The door slammed open, and an angry voice pierced his fragile grip on his peace.

“That’s it, Claude! Go fuck that side piece, if I’m so dramatic!”

Shane's head hurt from where he slammed it on the sink when his knees gave out.

The floor was sticky and disgusting, but he barely noticed as he sat on it, his back to the wall by the sink.

His whole body felt as if it had touched a live wire, chasing all the air from his lungs.

Fuck.

He closed his eyes, willing himself to calm down.

Floral scent.

Music. Maybe Beyonce?

Rainbows.

Clorax. Steel and diesel.

Everything was going to be okay.

He pressed his forehead into his palms, taking shallow breaths.

He was fine. He was fine. Everything would be fine.

The shouting stopped, and he opened his eyes when he felt someone crouch down in front of him, a few feet away.

The world was still spinning and his mind still scattered, but he was able to focus as the world's most beautiful man was peering at him, a worried expression on his face.

Chocolate eyeliner highlighted long lashes and artfully decorated dark eyes. He was wearing dangling earrings, as if he were dripping diamonds, and a matching nose ring that caught the light. His skin was dark and smooth, and he was chewing on his glossy, full lips as he scrutinized Shane, who now felt a flood of embarrassment at being on a filthy floor.

“Are you okay?”

“Yes.” Shane tried to grab the sink over his head to stand up, but he was shaking too much. The man extended a hand, long, elegant fingers grasping Shane’s as he helped him to his feet. “Sorry.”

“Don’t worry about it.” The man was shorter than Shane, but that only made him feel bulky and clumsy. “I didn’t mean to scare you. I was just yelling at my idiot ex.”

Shane gave a shaky smile. “I can relate. Uh, not the ex part. But the idiot part.”

The guy gave Shane a once-over. “That’s too bad. About the not-ex part.”

If Shane’s system hadn’t already overloaded, he would have probably blushed. It wasn’t the first time someone flirted with him during one of these outings with Ryan, but he was normally so flustered they backed away slowly. This guy seemed to take pity on him, but Shane was sure it was because he had found Shane in the middle of a panic attack on the bathroom floor.

“Are you sure you’re okay?” The man looked in the mirror and pulled out a tube of something from a leather purse crossing his chest. He fixed the smear on his lips before capping it. Shane shook himself out of his stupor.

He wasn’t okay—his body felt like a truck had hit it. He was still leaning on the sink, and straightened up to try and come across as normal and put together.

“I’m fine.”

The man arched a perfectly groomed eyebrow. “Should I go get someone? Or are you here alone?”

“I’m here with someone,” Shane said quickly. “I can find him. I’m good.”

“Let’s find him together, okay?” He looped his arm around Shane’s and gently pulled him towards the door. “What’s your name?”

"Shane. You really don't need to—"

“Trust me, it’s not a problem escorting someone as cute as you,” he winked. “Just let me dangle on your muscular arm for a minute to make my ex jealous, okay?”

That made Shane trip a little as he let himself be led. The music hit like a wall, and he felt a nauseous twist in his stomach. He swallowed hard, his early burgeoning enjoyment of the dance floor gone now. He felt drained and too drunk, and he hoped Ryan had found someone to hook up with so they could leave.

He spotted him by the bar and directed the guy still holding on to his arm and keeping him walking in a straight line. “That’s him.”

The man turned and then seemed to freeze. “Holy. Shit.”

Ryan turned around and the colour drained from his face.

The grip on his arm tightened, so Shane looked at the guy concerned.

“Do you two know each other?”

“In another lifetime,” the man let out a breath.

This time it was Shane leading the guy through the crowd until they stopped, the other two men staring at each other as if they were seeing a ghost.

“Fabian,” it was the first time Shane saw Ryan light up like this. No amount of assists would make his jaw go so slack like that.

“You remember,” the man, Fabian, smiled, a genuine smile. “You look... humongous.” His eyes swept over Ryan the same way he had Shane.

“You look good.” Ryan’s face was unreadable.

For a moment, Shane saw Fabian's confidence falter. “I found your boy on the bathroom floor.”

“I’m not—“

“He’s not—“

“We’re friends,” Shane said quickly and flashed his ring. “My not-ex is not here.”

“Oh?” There was a curious tone in Fabian's voice.

“Ryan and I play on the same team,” Shane said, glancing between the two. Fabian smirked, and he quickly clarified: “Hockey.”

“So... you’re still doing the hockey thing?”

Shane frowned; he had never in his life heard someone say the word *hockey* with such an ick in their tone.

“You don’t like hockey?” Shane said, and Ryan extracted him from Fabian’s arm. Shane stumbled a bit. “Who doesn’t like hockey?”

“Uh, sorry. Hollander has a one-track mind, sober or drunk,” Ryan said, his eyes never leaving Fabian.

“I’m not drunk,” Shane insisted.

“Wait – *this* is Shane Hollander?” Fabian said incredulously. “Even I know that name. So, you, like, play for the NHL?”

Ryan coughed and nodded, appearing embarrassed. “Yeah.”

“Congratulations.”

“It’s not a big deal,” Ryan muttered and looked away.

Shane glanced at Ryan. Then Fabian.

What would Ilya do? It wasn’t as if Shane could suggest Ryan and Fabian take a shower and jack off together, because that was the only way Shane knew how to attract a man.

Okay. Maybe he was drunk.

“Do you live around here?” Shane blurted out.

Fabian took his eyes off Shane for a moment to spare him a quick smile. “Not too far.”

“That’s great,” Shane felt like he was talking too loud. “Ryan is a great escort, too.”

Fabian laughed, trying quickly to cover it up with a cough, and Ryan covered his face in sheer embarrassment.

“Hollander, stop helping.”

“Fabian just broke up with his boyfriend.”

That made Ryan look up, a sympathetic look on his face. “Oh... I’m sorry to hear that.”

“I’m not,” Fabian took a step closer. “He was an asshole.”

Shane put his hand square between Ryan’s shoulders and shoved. On a normal day, it would be like trying to push a cement truck, but Ryan seemed so flustered he moved, now standing within arm’s length of Fabian.

“You should walk him home,” Shane said.

“What?” Ryan sputtered.

“That would be nice, actually,” Fabian smiled.

Fabian went to tell his friends he was leaving, and Ryan rounded on Shane with a terrifying intensity.

“Hollander—”

Shane wasn’t nervous. He had been around Ryan all summer to know that although the man could be terrifying and his punch certainly backed up his bite. But even Shane could see the instant chemistry between the two.

“Oh, come on,” Shane rolled his eyes and huffed a laugh. “Even I can tell you two are totally into each other.”

There was a conflicted look in Ryan’s eyes. “But—”

“I can get back to the hotel on my own,” Shane said. “Just don’t miss the flight tomorrow, okay? Or do. I’ll cover for you.”

He stepped away before Ryan could say anything else, grabbing his jacket from the coat check and stepping out into the frigid Toronto air, which cut through the lingering intoxication and nausea quickly.

He just got Ryan Price laid.

He *had* to tell Ilya.

The phone gave half a ring before Shane remembered why he had been so pissed off at the beginning of the night, but the call had already been picked up.

“*Shane, are you alright?*”

Shane pressed the phone to his ear and started toward the hotel. “Yes, I’m fine.”

“*Are you... alone?*”

“Why?” Shane said. “Would it bother you if I wasn’t?”

There was a long pause, and Shane felt for a petty moment that Ilya deserved it.

“*Yes,*” Ilya’s voice was thick, thicker than usual. “*It would bother me.*”

All the residual anger rushed out of Shane. “Of course I’m alone. I didn’t think I had to tell you, but I don’t fucking *want* anyone else.”

He was almost sure he heard a sniff before Ilya cleared his throat.

“*Okay. I was not trying to make you do something you don’t want to do.*”

Shane turned down a side street. “Well, it sounded like you were trying to make me go out and have sex with a stranger.”

“No, not make you. I wanted to give you the option.”

“Well, I choose ‘no’, okay?” Shane paused at a crosswalk. He leaned on the pole, taking a deep breath. It felt like the world had shrunk down to the tinny voice and street corner. “I’m a one-man kind of guy.”

“I know that now.”

“Good,” Shane closed his eyes. He wished he could reach through the phone. “I wish I could see you.”

“Yes.” Shane could picture what Ilya looked like, his shoulders slumped in relief. *“We have not had much make up sex yet.”*

“Don’t worry,” Shane said dryly. “I’m sure we’ll have other fights.”

“Are you back at the hotel?”

“No, I’m walking now.” Shane opened his eyes, realising he had almost missed the light and crossed.

“Where is Ryan Price?”

Shane laughed. “You’re never going to believe me. *I found someone for him.*”

“What?”

“I think they knew each other. But they were really into each other, and I convinced Ryan to walk him home.”

“Who is walking you home?”

“I’m a grown-ass man, Ilya.”

“Your record for going missing in Canadian cities is too high,” Ilya said sarcastically.

“I’m two blocks away from the hotel.”

“Ah, well, you were at your front door in Montreal. It worries me.”

Shane didn’t like hearing Ilya get upset. But he shivered, this time not to do with the cold but with the possessive tone in Ilya’s voice.

“Well,” Shane gripped the phone hard. “You’re here. So... not totally alone, right?”

“No. Never.”

End Notes

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Thank you all for reading!

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