The Newlywed Games

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at https://archiveofourown.org/works/63718786.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander, Ilya Rozanov, Harris Drover, Anya | Ilya Rozanov's Dog
Additional Tags:	Married Life, Social Media, Fluff, Domestic Fluff, Established Relationship, Married Couple, Unconventional Format, Eating Disorders, basically shane thinks about his performance diet a little thats all, the premise is they play silly couple games in a video together, brief protective ilya moment included, and irina foundation promo, Post-Canon, POV Shane Hollander, Spoilers for Book 6: The Long Game (Game Changers), Written before Heated Rivalry (TV)
Language:	English
Series:	Part 3 of they say that the world was built for two
Collections:	HollaNov fanfics I Love, my fav gay hockey players, fanfics that i keep coming back to read, 🏒Heated on Ice🏒, The best pairings to bask in, Broc's Hollanov Oneshots, *Heated rivalry melts my heart*, Fragments of Ice, No thoughts just gay hockey
Stats:	Published: 2025-03-09 Words: 6,448 Chapters: 1/1

The Newlywed Games

by broccolicheddarchicken

Summary

The video returns to the set, with the camera on Harris, Shane, and Ilya again. Harris flips to the next question card.

Harris: Who expressed interest in the other first?

Shane and Ilya each raise the other's shoe.

Harris: Ooooo! You disagree!

Ilya: Shane. We both know that it was you.

Shane: You were showing off! On purpose! You wanted me to react.

Ilya: If that helps you sleep at night.

Harris: Care to tell the story?

Shane and Ilya speak over each other.

Shane: No way in hell.

Ilya: After the cameras stop.

Shane and Ilya, freshly married and days away from their first game together, agree to make a silly video as a couple for the Centaurs' social media.

Notes

TW: brief mention of disordered eating. Basically Shane thinking about that "performance diet" he was on in The Long Game.

Hi guys! Please send help. I have IRL responsibilities, I cannot keep writing Hollanov fanfic at this pace. I have a midterm tomorrow lol. Anyway, we're trying something a little different for this one.

As always: I hope you enjoy reading this at least half as much as I enjoyed writing it :)

See the end of the work for more notes

When Shane got pulled into Harris's office one afternoon during his first month of practicing with Ottawa, he assumed Harris would be asking him to use his Instagram more. For whatever reason, all the Centaurs were really active on the app. Ilya said Harris made them do it, but also that it was actually fun once you got into it.

Shane didn't imagine that would be true for him. He was fiercely protective of his personal life and sick of people poking their noses in. He found the red door of Harris' office and knocked, fully prepared to tell him *I'm sorry, but no*.

Ilya was the one who opened the door.

That kind of threw his whole theory off. Why did *Harris* need to talk to both of them at once? Was something else about them getting around again?

"What's going on?" Shane asked as he stepped inside, trying not to let any anxiety through in his voice.

"Harris says he has an idea for us," Ilya answered. Shane heard the door click behind him.

Harris seemed to pick up on the fact that Shane was apprehensive. "Don't worry, guys, it's super lighthearted and chill. I just had an idea for a video you can be in, if you want."

"Okay," Shane said cautiously.

"Basically, we're trying to get into making longer-form content with the players on the YouTube channel. But not about the sport, about you all as people. With you two being so popular online right now, we thought you'd be a really good place to start. Plus, Shane, you need to be introduced to the Centaurs fanbase, and you both kind of need to be introduced as a couple."

Introduced as a couple. Shane did not like that phrase. Ilya had sat on the couch in Harris's office, so Shane sat down next to him. Harris turned to face them both.

"What would the video be?" Shane asked.

"It's nothing too crazy. And if you don't like this idea, you can say 'no' or suggest something else. But you know those silly games that couples sometimes play at their weddings or bachelor parties? The shoe game, the newlywed game, stuff like that? We thought we'd bring you two down and play one or two. You can't preapprove the questions, because that defeats the purpose, but we'll cut anything you don't want to answer. And we won't ask anything raunchy or invasive, obviously. You're in the driver's seat."

Shane didn't… *hate* that. But he didn't like it either. He didn't like the idea of sharing his private life on camera. He didn't like the idea of people online picking at his relationship. He turned to look at Ilya, who wasn't showing any strong opinion either way.

"Who would be doing the video?" Ilya asked.

"I will," Harris said. "Usually Erin would do this kind of thing, but you'd have to pay me not to handle this one myself. It would be way too fun."

Ilya laughed. Shane was not so amused.

Shane sighed. "Can we talk about this in private and give you an answer next practice?"

"Of course," Harris said. "Just let me know."

Shane turned to Ilya, who was smiling warmly. They got up and left the room, heading out to the parking lot. Shane tossed his bag in the backseat and got in the car. He let Ilya drive despite his better judgment.

Neither man spoke as Ilya pulled out of the arena. The second they were on the main road, Shane turned in his seat to face his husband fully.

"Okay, spill."

Ilya swallowed. Shane watched his Adam's apple move when he did it. "I think we should do it," he said.

"Doesn't it seem too personal to you?"

"It's Harris. He's always very respectful," Ilya said. "And if one of the questions is too much, we can just tell him we don't like it and he'll cut it out of the video. Just like he said."

Shane looked out the windshield. It was going to rain today if the clouds in the sky were any indication.

"I just don't see why we have to be a couple at work," Shane said. "In a video for the entire world to watch, in fact."

It took Ilya a second to respond. "But we are a couple. At home, at work, everywhere." There was a tinge of desperation in Ilya's voice that worried Shane.

Shane turned back to Ilya, watching his face. He made his tone as gentle as he could manage. "Why do you want to do this so badly?"

Ilya flinched, like he didn't understand the question. He recovered quickly.

"I think it will be good for us," Ilya answered plainly. "Things are different now. We will be very professional on the ice, but I want the fans to think of us as a pair in our private lives. I want them to see a little bit. I don't want them to see the exact same Hollander and Rozanov as always and only kind of sort of know that we might kiss in private."

Ilya stared out at the road. A moment passed before he spoke again. "I want people to know how much you mean to me."

Shane turned to look out the window once more with a light sigh. He couldn't deny Ilya that. Not after all Ilya had done for him. How much hell Shane had put him through.

Besides, it might be good to learn to face his fears. Ilya was not something he needed to hide anymore.

Shane squeezed Ilya's hand at a red light, prompting him to look over. Those hazel eyes were so wide and almost scared.

"Okay," Shane said. "We'll do it."

The video begins with a shot of a small, comfortable looking set. There's a simple background with some hockey memorabilia and photos up on the walls, along with a few potted plants and a floor lamp on the ground. On one side of the shot is a small couch, on the other is an armchair. The two are only a few feet apart and slightly angled towards one another, but still mostly facing the camera. There is a small end table next to the armchair with a stuffed centaur on it.

Harris is sitting in the armchair in a Centaurs-branded windbreaker and khakis. Shane and Ilya are on the couch. Ilya is wearing a navy blue Nike crewneck with a tiny embroided swoosh on the left chest, along with a pair of gray cotton joggers. Shane is dressed similarly, but his crewneck is dark red and logoless, and instead of joggers, he's wearing black polyester track pants with a thin white stripe on the outside hem.

Harris: Hi, I'm Harris Drover, director of communications with the Ottawa Centaurs. I've got Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov here, first husbands of hockey, ready to play some games with us. Shane, Ilya, how does it feel being married?

Shane: Really good, actually. Our honeymoon was incredible, we've totally got the newlywed bliss thing going on. We spent so long in hiding that it's really nice to just be able to come here and say we're married, and it's not a big deal.

Ilya: Oh, it's a big deal. I'm going to start kissing you every time you score.

Shane: Do that and you'll never *score* again.

Ilya: Why, because you will shove me away so hard I won't be able to play anymore? Are you already threatening me in our second month of marriage?

Shane: I'm not threatening you. Not physically, anyway. You're thinking of the wrong kind of scoring.

Ilya looks directly at the camera and gulps.

Harris: So you guys just finished practice, right? How did that go?

Ilya: It was good. Shane got some good work in, but he still needs lots of improvement with his backhand. I can teach him.

Shane rolls his eyes.

Shane: You're such a [two bleeps].

Shane gasps and twists his head to look at Harris with a panicked expression.

Shane: Wait, [bleep], I'm sorry. Can we curse in this thing?

Harris laughs.

Harris: Yes, you can curse. We'll just censor it out.

Shane: Great.

Ilya: You never used to swear for press stuff before.

Shane: This isn't press, it's *Harris*. Besides, you ruined my good boy image. Now I can spread my wings.

Ilya: By publicly saying [bleep]?

Shane: Exactly.

Shane and Ilya both crack up. Harris smiles.

Harris: You guys ready to play?

Shane: Yep.

Ilya: Mhm.

Harris: Perfect. We're gonna start by explaining the rules. First up is the newlywed game. You're each getting a whiteboard. I'm going to ask questions, you'll both write down your answers, and then you flip them and we talk.

Shane: Do we flip at the same time?

Harris: It depends on who the question is about. If I were to ask what Ilya's favorite animal is, for example, you'd give your answer first. But if I ask a question about you, Ilya flips his board first.

Ilya: Simple enough. My favorite animal is a dog, by the way.

Shane: Oh, really? I'd have never guessed.

A production assistant brings Shane and Ilya each a whiteboard, a marker, and a cloth to erase with. Ilya immediately begins drawing on his. Shane leans over to look.

Shane: What are you doing?

Ilya ignores him and flips his board to the camera. There are two stick figures–one is nearly the height of the board, the other barely reaches to the first one's hips.

Ilya: It's us.

Shane scowls.

Shane: Oh my god, erase that. You're so annoying.

Ilya: You are going to make the fans think you don't like me very much if you keep talking like that.

Shane: I *don't* like you. But for some godawful reason, I love you.

Shane is still scowling, turned away from Ilya. Ilya gazes at him, clearly lovesick.

Ilya: I love you too, sweetheart.

Shane turns to face him and his expression softens. He leans over and pecks Ilya on the cheek. Ilya freezes.

Harris: Adorable. Are you ready for the first question?

Shane nods, sitting up straight and putting his whiteboard in his lap. Ilya, mostly recovered, does the same.

Shane: How do we know who wins?

Harris: There's no winner. It's just for fun.

Shane: Oh. Damn, I wanted something to hold over him later.

Ilya laughs, head tilting forward, hair hiding his face.

Ilya: You are ridiculous.

Shane: I know.

Harris is smiling as he speaks, reading off of the pre-prepared question cards.

Harris: First question: who is Ilya's celebrity crush?

Ilya laughs again as he writes. After a few seconds, Shane shows his answer. He didn't write any words–just drew an arrow pointing up at himself.

Shane: It better be Shane Hollander.

Ilya is shaking his head.

Harris: Oh? Trouble in paradise?

Ilya flips his board, which very clearly says 'Rose Landry'. He looks at the camera.

Ilya: Call me up, baby. I can treat you better than he ever did.

He winks as he speaks and tilts his head towards Shane at the word 'he'. Shane hides his face in his hands, cheeks going red.

Shane: Christ. She's definitely going to text me about this.

Harris: You still talk to Rose Landry?

Shane emerges from behind his hands.

Shane: Yeah, we're actually really good friends. She doesn't hold our relationship going poorly against me.

Ilya: On account of the whole 'he's gay' thing.

Ilya turns to face the camera again, doing the "call me" gesture with his hand.

Ilya: But I am not. Rose, if you're listening–

Shane pushes Ilya's hand down. He's laughing.

Shane: Stop it!

Ilya laughs too, but stops. Harris prepares the next question.

Harris: I better distract you guys before Rose Landry shows up to homewreck. Next question: What does Shane find most attractive about Ilya?

Shane: Like, physically? Or in his personality?

Harris: Let's do both.

Shane gives Ilya an exaggerated look from head to toe, as if he were trying to select the best steak from a butcher case. Ilya smiles at him and bats his eyelashes. They both turn down to their boards and write.

Harris: Ilya? What was your answer?

When Ilya shows his board, it says "Hair", then "Funny".

Ilya: I put my hair, because he is always touching it. I think if I cut it off he would divorce me.

Shane: That's not true.

Ilya: So am I allowed to cut it?

Shane: No. Don't be insane.

Ilya rolls his eyes playfully.

Harris: And for your personality?

Ilya: I said sense of humor. I don't think Shane would have fallen for me if I couldn't make him laugh. We have a lot of fun together, which is good. He's my husband, but he is also my best friend. Even though that's very cliché.

Shane puts his head on Ilya's shoulder.

Shane: Ooo. You speak French now?

Ilya: No. I will never learn French. English was enough.

Shane shows his own answers with a smile on his face. He doesn't lift his head.

Shane: It was really hard to pick, but physically I said his smile. He has this one, specific, kinda crooked smile, and when he looks at me with it my brain actually starts melting. I become completely incapable of making good decisions. It's really bad.

Shane laughs as he speaks.

Shane: His hair was the runner up, though. Then his eyes. Then his thighs, probably. Or maybe his height. *Anyway*. For personality traits, I said how selfless he is. Uhm… I don't want to get too sappy, but like–everyone basically knows now that the main reason he came to Ottawa was to be closer to me, right? So that was really sweet. But not just because he does things for me. He's also super generous with his time. He visits the pediatric ward of Ottawa General at least twice a month. He always spends lots of extra time helping the rookies and newbies to the team feel comfortable. He's just… he's a really great person, honestly. I feel lucky to be with him.

Ilya looks at Shane softly, then puts his head on top of Shane's.

Ilya: Next question?

Harris smiles.

Harris: This one's really fun. If Ilya wasn't a professional hockey player, what job would he have?

Both men sit up straight. Ilya writes his answer immediately. It takes Shane a minute to come up with something, and then his face lights up and he writes it down.

Harris: Shane, are you ready?

Shane nods and shows his board. It says "executive chef".

Shane: Okay. So. Ilya and I have been watching *The Bear* on Disney Plus, and if that show is anything like reality, I think he'd actually be really good as a chef. I mean, he loves to cook. And it's always delicious. You have to be the best to succeed, but he's a professional athlete, obviously he has the drive to excel at something. He's a really great leader. Those kitchens can get really toxic, but he's tough enough to take it. He literally has a bear tattoo. I think he's incredibly qualified.

Ilya turns to face his husband.

Ilya: You know he is called "bear" because his last name is "Berzatto", right? And it doesn't actually have anything to do with being a chef? So my tattoo is not relevant?

Shane: Yeah, whatever.

Ilya: Is a good answer, though. I didn't think of it till just now, but it makes sense. I could be a chef. Is not what I *would* be, but I could be.

Shane: Who even asked for your opinion?

Ilya: Harris. Like a minute ago. And this is my answer.

Ilya flips his board. It just has a picture of a car.

Ilya: If I was not a hockey player, I would be a Formula One driver. Obviously.

Shane rolls his eyes and mimics Ilya's accent.

Shane: Obviously.

Harris: So if you weren't a professional athlete, you'd be a professional athlete?

Ilya: Exactly.

Harris: Fair enough. What's Shane's favorite thing to do during his time off?

Shane and Ilya both write without hesitation. They both finish quickly, then Ilya flips his board.

Ilya: Go to the cottage. If Shane's doesn't say the same thing I will do fifty push-ups right now. This one is a freebie.

Shane laughs very hard as he flips his board, which reads "hang out with Ilya at the cottage". He continues to laugh through his words as they erase the ink.

Shane: I kinda wish I'd put something else, now. I'd love to see you do fifty push-ups.

Ilya: Remind me when we get home.

Harris flips to the next card and reads it.

Harris: Shane. What is Ilya's most prized possession?

Shane: Other than me?

Ilya visibly holds back a laugh.

Harris: Yes, other than you.

Shane's glance catches on Ilya's chest as he writes. Ilya, busy scribbling away on his own board, doesn't notice. Shane shows his answer when he's done.

Shane: Ilya's most prized possession is his crucifix. It belonged to his mother, Irina, who we named our charity after. I've never once seen him take it off in the ten years we've known each other.

Ilya blinks a few times at Shane and flips his board.

Ilya: I said my World Juniors gold medal from when Russia beat Canada, but that was mostly a joke answer. Shane's right.

Ilya brushes his fingertips over his crucifix. Shane looks directly at the camera.

Shane: Speaking of the Irina Foundation, go check out our website. It's W-W-W-dot-Irina-foundation-dot-com. Irina is I-R-I-N-A. We're now an official charitable partner of the Ottawa Centaurs, and we have a joint fundraising ten-K in three weeks, so if you're watching this, consider signing up. There's a competitive race in the morning- which Ilya and I will be running in, by the way, so if you sign up you can see us- and a relaxed fun run in the afternoon. And whether you run or not, if you donate one hundred dollars or more you get a meet and greet with us.

Ilya looks at Shane for a moment, still touching his crucifix. He seems impressed.

Harris: Some very well timed self promotion. We'll put a link to the race sign-up in the description. Now, last question. If Shane could take the two of you on vacation to any country in the world, what country would he pick?

A moment passes as they write. Once they're ready, Harris gestures for Ilya to flip his whiteboard. He does so with a smile.

Ilya: I said Japan, because Shane always says he wants to visit it at least once. His mom– shoutout Yuna Hollander, I love that woman–went a few times when she was little. But Shane's never been. So if he could go anywhere, he would pick Japan.

Harris: You seem very confident. Shane? Was he right?

Shane shakes his head, which leaves Ilya looking extremely confused. He shows his answer. The board reads "Россия" in neat handwriting, with a small drawing of a cartoon bear head under the word. He seems shy about his answer. Ilya's face goes slack when he leans over to see it.

Shane: I said Russia, uhm, because Ilya tells me about it a lot, and I think it would be really nice to see the places he grew up and learn more about his culture. I mean, I learn a lot

through just being with him and reading about it online, but actually seeing it firsthand would be nice. I do also want to visit Japan, but it's not like I grew up there or anything. I'd rather see all the places that mattered to Ilya when he was younger. And I know it would mean a lot to him for us to go together. It sucks that we can't go, but if we could, that's what I'd pick.

A beat of silence passes.

Harris: Ilya? What do you have to say to that?

Ilya turns to look at Shane.

Ilya: That is very sweet, Shane.

Shane smiles shyly, looking down at his board as he erases it.

Shane: I just–I'd really like to see the actual streets you used to walk down, I guess.

Ilya pushes Shane's hair behind his ear to kiss his temple.

Ilya: Ya lyublyu tebya.

Shane: Ya tozhe tebya lyublyu.

A beat passes as Shane finishes erasing his whiteboard. Then he looks up.

Shane: It's time for the next game, right?

Harris: Right, yes. Sorry, you were both being so adorable that I forgot I was doing my job. Thanks for playing, guys.

Harris turns towards the camera.

Harris: We're gonna cut and get ready for the shoe game, but to you it'll be instant.

He winks cheesily and clicks his teeth.

Harris: See you in a second!

There's a transition screen, then the video cuts to a plain set with a white backdrop. Shane and Ilya are sitting back to back, only an inch or two separating them, on matching blue bar stools. Harris is standing a few feet away with his cards in his hand.

Harris: Okay, the second game is called the shoe game. You guys are each going to take off your shoes and trade one, so you each have one of your own shoes and one of your husband's shoes. I'll ask a question–for example, who snores louder–and if you think you snore louder, you raise your own shoe. If you think your husband snores louder, you raise his.

Shane: Ilya snores louder.

Ilya: I do.

Harris: Good to know. Are you ready to begin?

They both nod.

Harris: Cool. Take off your shoes.

Shane bends over in his seat, carefully untying his sneakers. Ilya kicks his off, then leans down to collect them.

Ilya: Thank god we're wearing sneakers and socks today. No feet for free.

Shane: What the actual [bleep] does that mean?

Ilya: I could tell you, but you're not online enough to get it.

They turn and trade one shoe each.

Shane: Did you not untie yours?

Ilya: Don't worry about it, Hollander.

Shane is holding Ilya's sneaker up to his own. Ilya's is obviously bigger.

Shane: You and your [bleep]ing flippers.

Ilya smirks.

Ilya: Well, you know what they say about big feet.

Shane: Hasn't held up, in my experience.

Ilya frowns as they turn back-to-back again. Harris looks directly at the camera.

Harris: So–before we get started, let's be clear, these questions were not preapproved or whatever. Shane and Ilya have no idea what's on these cards.

Harris waggles the cards in his hand.

Harris: If they don't want to answer one, we'll just cut it and you'll never know.

Ilya smiles. Shane is drumming his fingers on his leg, seemingly worried about what might be in stock for him.

Ilya: It will be our little secret, yes?

Harris: Exactly. Okay, first question. Who's scoring more goals this season?

Both men raise their own shoes.

Harris: I don't think I need to say anything for you guys to know how you answered.

Ilya: Shane is very confident. It will be sad when I have to break him down.

Shane: Oh, please. I'm taking that 'C' off your jersey by the end of the month. And when I'm through with this team, every fan in those stands is gonna be wearing number twenty four.

Ilya: In your dreams, Hollander. I'm on the first line.

Shane: All fun and games until I turn your career into a footnote, Rozanov.

A beat passes. Harris is mildly shocked.

Harris: You two are… intense.

Shane: What, you think just because we're married we're not competitive? Hell no. I'm gonna grind this man into dust. And then take him home and bake cookies with him or whatever.

Ilya laughs as Harris switches to the next question.

Harris: Who's the first to apologize?

Shane holds up his own shoe. Ilya thinks for a moment, then also holds up his own shoe.

Harris: Oh wow. You both think you apologize first.

Shane: I mean, honestly, we're pretty good at knowing when we were in the wrong with the big fights and apologizing. So I don't know if that counts, because whoever *needs* to apologize first does it. When it comes to the little fights, I think I usually apologize first, because I get [bleep] when I'm annoyed and then I feel bad.

Ilya considers what Shane said for a moment, then switches shoes.

Harris: You changed Ilya's mind. Look at that. That's beautiful.

Shane smiles. Harris moves to the next card.

Harris: Who's messier?

Both men immediately hold up Ilya's shoe, without a second of hesitation from either.

Shane: Is this a serious question? Harris, you've met us before, right?

Ilya: Shane is a neat freak. It is very bad. I try to help him relax.

Shane: I'm not a neat freak, I'm just not a total hurricane like you.

Ilya: I am not a hurricane.

Shane: Really?

Shane turns to look at Harris.

Shane: Go take a picture of my stall and then Ilya's and put it in the video, and then the commenters can tell me whether or not he's too messy.

Harris shrugs at the camera in a 'why not?' gesture.

A plain white screen with centered black text appears. "In the interest of journalistic integrity…"

The video cuts to a shot of a woman with dark hair, filmed from slightly below. It's clear she's holding the camera herself–it shakes slightly as she walks. A hallway and ceiling lights are visible in the background.

Erin: Okay, hi, Erin here. I've been sent to go gather footage of their stalls as evidence. So we're gonna pop in the locker room and see if Shane's accusations are true.

There is the sound of a door opening and closing, then Erin turns the camera around. The locker room is empty.

Erin: So this is the Centaurs locker room. We already had someone come in and make sure it was empty, because it would be really messed up to film if people were here. Don't worry–everyone packed up and left already.

Erin films the ground as she walks, looking for either Shane or Ilya's stall. She lifts the camera to herself again and whispers to it.

Erin: Okay, guys, we've found one. So this is Shane's stall.

The camera turns around. At the top of the stall is a nameplate which reads "Shane Hollander, 24". The equipment in the stall is neatly laid out–helmet in its appropriate slot, practice jersey hung up, shin guards stacked on top of each other, skates tucked away. She flips the camera back.

Erin: Pretty nice. That's more or less exactly how the stuff is laid out for them before a game. Let's find Ilya's.

Erin keeps the camera on herself as she walks. She catches sight of something, laughs, and covers her mouth on an exhale.

Erin: Oh. Oh dear. Found it.

Erin pans the camera again. The nameplate at the top is partially obscured from where a practice jersey has been strewn over it, but the visible portion says "Capt. Ilya Ro–". Ilya's skates are shoved where his helmet is supposed to go, his gloves are thrown about. Only one elbow guard is visible. Erin moves the camera to show that the other one, for some reason, is in Zane Boodram's stall.

Erin turns the camera back around to face herself.

Erin: Well, at least he's good at hockey, right?

The same white screen as before appears. This time, the text reads "Back in the studio…"

The video returns to the set, with the camera on Harris, Shane, and Ilya again. Harris flips to the next question card.

Harris: Who expressed interest in the other first?

Shane and Ilya each raise the other's shoe.

Harris: Ooooo! You disagree!

Ilya: Shane. We both know that it was you.

Shane: You were showing off! On purpose! You wanted me to react.

Ilya: If that helps you sleep at night.

Harris: Care to tell the story?

Shane and Ilya speak over each other.

Shane: No way in hell.

Ilya: After the cameras stop.

Harris shakes his head as he moves to the next card.

Harris: Who's better at faceoffs?

They both raise Ilya's shoe.

Shane: Only because he always has some bat[bleep] insane comment to throw me off. Dirty tricks.

Ilya: No, I have better reaction time.

Shane: Shut up.

Harris: You two bicker like you've already been together a decade, I swear.

Shane turns his head back to face Ilya and Ilya does the same, all without any verbal communication. They share a private look, something an outside observer can't parse the meaning of. Ilya chuckles as they face away from each other again.

Harris: This one's interesting. I didn't write this one. Who has better handwriting?

Ilya: In what language?

Shane: Which one do you think?

Both men raise Shane's shoe.

Harris: Wait, does Shane have better handwriting in *Russian?* Isn't that a whole different alphabet?

Shane: I mean, it kind of depends what you mean, because a lot of the time I have to ask him for help, like, spelling or whatever. So without him I sometimes wouldn't be able to write anything down, period, and then it's a nonstarter. But if we're both writing the same sentence and I know what I'm doing, mine will come out neater. He'll be done way faster, though. It takes me forever.

Ilya: Since when do you need good penmanship to play hockey?

Harris: Fair point. Let's do some quick ones–minimal commentary. Who's better at keeping secrets?

Ilya and Shane both answer "Ilya".

Shane: But given our history, I'd rather say both.

Ilya: Right.

Harris: Who likes shopping more?

Shane lifts Ilya's sneaker. A moment later, Ilya lifts Shane's.

Shane: Ilya buys a car every time he gets bored.

Ilya: Not anymore! And you're always buying things online for the house.

Harris: Who hogs the blanket?

They both answer "Shane".

Harris: Who fell in love first?

They both answer themselves.

There's a cut in the video–the only one since cutting back from Erin. Shane's lip is caught between his teeth. Ilya is settling back in his seat, something slightly hard in his expression. The discomfort in the room is only noticeable to a perceptive viewer. Both men relax when Harris asks the next question.

Harris: Okay. Who's more stubborn?

Shane answers himself, Ilya answers himself.

Harris: You disagree again. You both think you're the more stubborn one.

Ilya: Shane can be stubborn sometimes. I am very good at changing his mind, though.

There's a decidedly flirtatious lilt to his voice. Shane laughs but doesn't comment any further.

Harris: Who's funnier?

Shane answers Ilya, Ilya answers Shane.

Harris: Aww, you both make your husband laugh. How cute. Who will want kids first?

Shane raises Ilya's shoe before Harris even finishes his question. Ilya follows a moment later.

Shane: Ilya basically wants them now.

Ilya: Not *right* now. But soon.

Harris: That kid better be a Cens fan. Last question. Who's the sappy one?

Ilya blushes and raises his own shoe. Shane does the same with a fond smile.

Harris: You both said Ilya. Why is that?

Shane: He puts on this snarky front when we're in public, but you have *no idea* what he's like behind closed doors. That man worships the ground I walk on.

Harris: Ilya? Would you say that's an apt characterization?

Ilya hesitates.

Ilya: What's an apt characterization?

Shane: Like, does what I just said describe you well?

Ilya: Oh.

Ilya takes a second to process, then nods through his blushing.

Ilya: I can be… a little mushy. At times.

Shane: He spoils me.

Both men, not looking at each other, were smiling.

Harris: Well, that's an incredibly sweet place to wrap things up. Did you have fun?

Ilya and Shane both nod. They trade shoes again and start putting them back on.

Shane: More than I was expecting.

Harris: Awesome, I like to hear that. Thank you guys so much for coming out today. Hockey's favorite couple. Certainly mine, anyway.

He turns to the camera.

Harris: Make sure to follow the Centaurs on Instagram and Twitter if you'd like to see more posts about the first husbands of hockey! Or the rest of the team, y'know. We do have a few other players. There's a new episode of BBQing with Bood coming out next week. Say bye to the fans!

Shane and Ilya face the camera together, Ilya's arm wrapped around Shane. They'd stood up while Harris was giving his promotional spiel. Ilya starts waving goodbye.

Ilya: Goodbye, hockey fans! I am going to take Shane home and put on a YouTube compilation of every time I've stolen the puck from him, I think. Only because he said he'll outscore me this year.

Shane groans.

Shane: Bye, everyone. Please wish me luck, I have to put up with him every day for the rest of my life. I need thoughts and prayers.

Ilya looks down at Shane with a small smile, his grip around Shane's waist visibly tightening.

Ilya: You love it.

Shane sighs heavily, as if his upcoming admission is physically painful.

Shane: I do.

The video ends on a promotional outro screen.

Once the recording was done, Shane and Ilya packed up their things *(oh my god, Ilya, it's even more of a mess than usual. Should we tell them not to use that clip?)* and left the arena.

The roads weren't busy and Ilya was feeling quiet, so Shane let his thoughts wander a little. He found himself feeling glad he agreed to make the video. Ilya was clearly ecstatic that there'd be public evidence of them being affectionate and in love (other than the FanMail video, but that hardly counted). And while the questions had been personal, they didn't cross lines or make him feel uncomfortable.

Well. Most of them didn't.

"By the way, thanks for asking them to cut that one question," Shane said as he pulled into the driveway.

Harris, not knowing any better, had asked *who eats more junk food?* during the shoe game. Shane froze, not wanting to answer and knowing it was a dumb question to get hung up on. But he was in therapy now, trying to work through the shock of being outed along with some of his deeper issues. With his therapist's help, he'd come to realize that the way he'd thought

about food for the last year was, if not an eating disorder, certainly not healthy. Certainly on the edges of one.

Shane was still learning to be okay with eating "junk food". He didn't want to mentally tally what he and his husband ate in a typical day and come back with an answer. A question like that made him deeply uncomfortable in a way he hadn't been able to predict.

Ilya, sensing Shane's trepidation without even looking at him, had flatly said "we won't be answering that". Harris wouldn't have argued, but even if he'd wanted to, the firmness in Ilya's tone made it clear that it was a bad idea. Just like that, it was dropped. It was the only question they'd needed to cut all day.

"Of course," Ilya said, mildly surprised. "You don't need to thank me. Nothing that you don't like. Harris never would've included that if he'd known."

Shane sighed as got out of the Mercedes. It was cold out, so he didn't want to spend too long outside.

"Yeah, I know. But I still felt a little stupid for not wanting to answer. It was an innocent question."

"It doesn't matter if it's innocent if it makes you uncomfortable," Ilya said with his head in the backseat. Shane wasn't sure what he was digging for, but it was freezing and he didn't want to wait. He headed inside.

Shane opened the door to his home and found Anya bounding across the house to greet them. He bent down to pet her as Ilya came in behind him, carrying both of their bags.

"Are you finally accepting princess treatment?" Ilya asked as he set Shane's bag next to him.

Oh. That was what Ilya had been grabbing.

"Nah," Shane said. "I just forgot about it. It's cold"

"You did say I… what was it? Worship the ground you walk on? Of course I carried your bag in."

Shane flushed. "Well, you do."

"I know. You are my everything," Ilya said. Like it was simple.

While Shane tried not to keen too much at the feeling in that statement, Ilya leaned down to join Shane in petting the dog. Anya, already overwhelmed at getting double-handed pets from one of her dads, looked like she was about to explode from pure joy.

Ilya, funny enough, kind of looked the same.

"I'm glad we did that," Shane said. "It was cute. I had fun. But it was also way more real than any interview I've ever done. You were right, it's a good thing to let them see a little bit."

Ilya was still petting the dog, but he looked up at Shane as his hands kept working. "I'm glad we did that too," he said, pausing momentarily to scratch Anya's head. "I was not expecting you to kiss my cheek."

Shane blushed. "Well, you were being sweet. I had to. And when it inevitably gets made into a gif on Twitter, I can just text it to you every time I want to send you a digital kiss."

Ilya smiled far too fondly at that. "I'm glad I kissed you back, then. I need a gif, too."

Shane couldn't help but lean over and kiss him again, on the lips this time. He stopped petting Anya and cradled Ilya's head in his hands.

The kiss was weird because they both couldn't stop smiling, but Shane didn't mind. He loved the physical evidence of Ilya's joy. He knew that it was often hard-fought for and hard-won.

Shane thought that letting the outside world see a fraction of something this perfect would ruin it, but instead it made it even better. Shane, for not the first time, was grateful.

When they pulled back, Shane gave Ilya a hard look.

"I'm never doing that again though," Shane said. "Just to be clear."

"Mm," Ilya replied, disbelieving. "We will see."

Shane rolled his eyes. "Yeah, okay. You've got some push-ups to do, by the way."

With a wicked grin, Ilya picked Shane up and carried him to the gym.

End Notes

So, I actually wrote one more question for the shoe game and cut it because it was invasive and I didn't think Harris would ask this question in the first place. However, I still thought it was a little funny, so here it is for your reading pleasure.

Harris: Okay, so for this one you don't have to give commentary or anything. You don't actually have to answer. We can cut it, like I said. But… who's better in bed?

Shane: Nope.

Ilya tips his head back so his head lands on Shane's shoulder. His curls bounce when he does it.

Ilya: Aww, it will be fun. We won't give details.

Shane: You just want to do it because you think we're both going to say you.

Ilya: Then answer the question and prove me wrong.

A beat of silence passes.

Harris: So… are you answering it?

Shane: Fine.

Ilya sits back up.

Harris: Okay. Three, two, one.

Both men raise one of Ilya's sneakers. Ilya is smiling lazily. Shane's entire face is red as he scowls.

Two final notes/inaccuracies/whatever: first, I haven't read Role Model, so my experience with Harris is purely what we see in The Long Game. If he was OOC, I'm sorry. Second, The Bear came out a couple years after they got married, but I don't care. It was too perfect for the answer.

Alright, I'm gonna go study for my exam now. I know this format was a little different, so tell me if it's something you'd want to see more of! Comments are super motivating for me.

Thank you so much for reading! Every single kudos and comment is so so very appreciated :)

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