

my hero

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/66918031) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/66918031>.

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
Additional Tags:	Post-Canon , Mild Hurt/Comfort , Married Life , Shane dives for it ofc , Spoilers for Book 6: The Long Game (Game Changers) , Written before Heated Rivalry (TV)
Language:	English
Collections:	HollaNov fanfics I Love , Fics that drag me back into obsessions , The best pairings to bask in , Broc's Hollanov Oneshots
Stats:	Published: 2025-06-26 Words: 2,088 Chapters: 1/1

my hero

by [broccolicheddarchicken](#)

Summary

"I don't know, I only just noticed, I didn't—"

"We would've heard if it fell on the dock, right? The *clunk*?"

Shane's heart broke a little, because it meant Ilya had finally come to the same realization as him.

The crucifix was in the water.

Ilya's chain breaks without him noticing. Shane comes to the rescue.

Notes

I hope you enjoy reading this half as much as I enjoyed writing it :)

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

Shane thought that perhaps he'd managed to find heaven on earth.

It was a lovely day on the lake—the sky was a bright blue, with a few playful clouds that served as decoration, rather than threatening rain. The water was flat and glass-still, the perfect cool temperature to offer a respite from the hot summer day. It was beautiful. It had always been beautiful; he'd been admiring this lake since he was a child.

The man he loved was far more stunning.

He wasn't sure what he'd done to deserve such perfection, or a husband to share it with. Ilya was always gorgeous, but he was particularly striking in the summers. His hair lightened, his skin tanned, and his smiles grew wider. Pure radiance. Shane was helpless to do nothing but soak it in.

They were spending their afternoon swimming, albeit with frequent pauses to make out on the dock. Shane couldn't help it. Not when after years of hiding and sneaking and pleading, Ilya was *his*, and everyone knew it. Things that had once seemed like such impossible luxuries were now everyday bliss: lunch dates, chaste kisses in public, holding hands. The hollow of Ilya's throat was a territory Shane wanted to claim, over and over and over again. And he *could*.

It changed things, even when they were alone. Even when they were in the privacy of the cottage. There was no more tension between them, no more fear. Nothing except for the perfect, endless stretch of a million summer days before them.

The wood under Shane's back had been hot, but as the water on both their bodies soaked in, its temperature thankfully cooled. Any shifting from Ilya above him caused the dock to bob slightly within the water, but Shane barely noticed. All he cared to give his attention to was Ilya. Ilya's mouth, soft and skilled, working messy adoration into the hinge of Shane's jaw. Ilya's hands, large and warm and oh-so-safe, on either side of Shane's head, supporting his weight. Ilya's hair, soaked through, falling in messy curls against them both.

Shane had him. Ilya was *his*. Yet he wanted. Every second of every day, he wanted more. He'd never been so greedy for anything.

Maybe it was the high of Ilya's touch. Maybe it was the too-warm sun, beating down on them both. Maybe it was the knowledge that this was Shane's and Shane's alone, now and forever.

In any case, Shane wasn't aware of a thing, except the gentle rocking of the dock and Ilya, Ilya, *Ilya*.

That was probably why it took him so long to notice that Ilya's cross was gone.

Ilya lifted his head and said something, and he was smiling down at Shane, so irrepressibly happy, but Shane hadn't heard. All he could focus on was the chain, and the way it hung in two strings on either side of Ilya's neck instead of meeting in a loop. The marked lack of crucifix hanging in the space between them, brushing Shane's chest as they kissed.

"Ilya," Shane said, but Ilya had leaned in close to kiss his cheekbone, undoubtedly making his acquaintance with the little constellations he loved so.

"Shh," Ilya murmured against Shane's skin. "I've got you."

Shane permitted that for about two seconds. "*Ilya*," he repeated, and Ilya tilted his head up again and listed, albeit visibly sad to have been interrupted. His expression changed when he saw Shane's face—open concern, plain to see.

"What's wrong?"

"Your—the chain. The cross."

It wasn't a great explanation, but Shane was panicked. Ilya, mostly confused, reached up and ran his fingers along the chain.

Shane would never forget the way Ilya's eyes widened when he felt the break under his fingertips.

Ilya jolted back, coming up onto his knees, scanning the dock wildly for his mother's crucifix. Were circumstances different, Shane might've admired the way the summer sun outlined his broad shoulders, or the strain of his thighs against his wet swim shorts.

As it was, Shane was just barely not freaking out. The only reason he was able to keep his head was that he knew *Ilya* needed him.

"How long has it been like that?" Ilya asked, continuing to sweep his eyes over the part of the dock they'd been laying on. It was no use. Shane could already tell—it wasn't on the wood.

"I don't know, I only just noticed, I didn't—"

"We would've heard if it fell on the dock, right? The *clunk*?"

Shane's heart broke a little, because it meant Ilya had finally come to the same realization as him.

The crucifix was in the lake.

"Ilya, I think..."

Shane trailed off. It was enough. Ilya swore in Russian and sat on the dock, running a hand through his hair.

"The water?"

Helplessly, Shane nodded. Ilya pulled the severed chain off of his neck and threw it in frustration. The gold glinted in the air as it flew, then bounced against the grass.

Shane wanted to ask Ilya if he remembered seeing it while they were swimming, but he was muttering in Russian again, and Shane thought he might be better off keeping his mouth shut.

Meanwhile, Shane's brain tried to form a plan.

The lake was gigantic, and they'd been swimming for hours. Shane wasn't sure what to do. He imagined the little gold cross, sunk in the bottom of the water, Ilya's past absorbed by his present. One more bit of himself that he'd be forced to give up.

Ilya, for his part, was still sitting on the dock, one leg straight, the other knee tucked against his chest, hands over his face. His shoulders were shaking. He looked frustrated, and sad, and —

And if Shane didn't know any better, he'd think Ilya was *crying*.

That simply wasn't allowed. Not on such a beautiful day. Not when seconds earlier, they'd been kissing and touching and smiling, and things had been so idyllic that Shane kept waiting to wake up from his good dream.

Still, there was nothing Shane could do. It was gone.

He looked over at the shimmering surface of the lake, and the dark water underneath it, and realized that there was was *one* thing he could do. It was a long shot, but he had to at least *try*.

Shane wouldn't try. He'd do it. He'd find it for Ilya, and Ilya would be happy, and everything would be just fine.

"Ilya?" Shane put his hand on his husband's bicep. "I'm going to find it. Don't be upset, okay? Just give me a minute. I'm gonna look for it, okay?"

Ilya was still crying, full-on, even as he nodded from behind his hands. It was quite possibly the worst thing Shane had ever seen. He wanted to make it stop. Shane would do whatever it took, as long as it made Ilya smile again.

He lowered himself into the lake and dove. Shane loved this lake for so many reasons, and the clear, clean, spring-fed water was definitely one of them. Normally, you couldn't have paid him to open his eyes underneath the water—he'd be too worried about strange bacteria or parasites.

Now, though, his eyes were wide open, and while the water stung slightly and his view was a little murky, he didn't really care. All he cared about was finding a little golden glint among the muddy lake bottom.

A few moments of searching later his lungs burned. He came up for a breath, and found Ilya watching him intently, eyes red and legs half-crossed, a silent question on his face.

Shane shook his head, grabbed a breath, and dove again.

The second dive was as fruitful as the first. He sunk his fingers into the murky bottom, he moved the little plants and scared some tiny fish, but there was nothing along the bottom except decomposition and rocks.

He had to come up again. And then, because he was still empty-handed, he had to dive again.

There was no real strategy to this—it was simple mindless searching—but he thought maybe under the dock was a solid bet. They'd stayed directly next to it for most of their swim, and it wasn't impossible it got swept under in the water.

Over and over again, he searched and dove and snagged breaths, and got glimpses of his heartbroken husband. He wasn't going to stop, damn it. Not until Ilya had his mother's cross again. Truly, Shane never should've found it. Two inches of metal, and a small city's worth of water.

But the sun was going down, and light was coming into the water at an angle, and a single sunbeam caught on a little golden crucifix, just under the edge. Shane saw the flash, the blinding white reflection, and he locked on like a shark to blood. He dove, and he grabbed, and he *had it*.

It almost felt better than winning the Stanley Cup. It was best medal he'd ever received. Once the cross was safely tucked into his hand, he pushed himself back up onto the dock and knee-walked until he and Ilya were only a few inches apart.

"Ilya." Shane ran a hand along his shoulder, holding the little piece of metal in his open palm. "Ilya, look. It's okay."

Slowly, Ilya looked up again. Shane could see every emotion on his face—the original misery, then the shock of seeing what was in Shane's hands, and then the smile and tears as the relief set in.

Shane had never seen such reassurance overtake his husband's features, and *god*, was he grateful for it, was he grateful to see Ilya's pained expression turn calm. Sure, a few leftover tears spilled, and yeah, Ilya was still hiccuping, but he wasn't *crying*. He was happy again.

"I didn't... I thought it was sweet of you to look, I did not think you would..."

Poor thing. He could barely even talk. Shane shushed him gently and kissed his nose.

"You married the most determined man in the NHL, remember? Of course I found it."

"The luckiest, maybe."

"Maybe the universe helped me find it."

Ilya turned the cross over in his hand. "It seems to help us a lot." He was still sniveling.

With a wet, cold hand, Shane pushed Ilya's hair out of his face and cradled his cheek. "We'll get two chains, okay? Thin ones. And if one breaks, the other one will be there as a backup. You'll be wearing it again tomorrow."

Ilya nodded slowly, staring into Shane's eyes, as though they were the only thing that could rescue him.

"Thank you," he whispered, leaning into Shane's hand.

"Of course," Shane said, soft as he could manage. "I'm just glad I found it. I hate to see you so upset."

Ilya half-smiled, a welcome contrast to his red-rimmed eyes. "I did not realize you were a... underwater man. With the oxygen tanks. A diver? Is a silly word."

Of course, Shane was very proud of how fluent Ilya was in his second language, but he still found it adorable the way his husband explained things when he'd forgotten a word. "A scuba diver?"

"Yes! A scuba diver."

"I mean, I'm not, but I made it work. I'd drain that lake for you. I don't know how, but I'd figure it out."

Ilya laughed quietly, and it was such a lovely noise that Shane couldn't help but join in. They both ended up cracking up, not even because anything was particularly funny, but because they needed the emotional reset after the last ten minutes.

"C'mon." Shane stood up, once they'd both recovered. "Let's go inside and put that somewhere safe for now. We can get the chains tomorrow?"

With a nod, Ilya got onto his own feet, going from being at the level of Shane's hip to five inches above him, his crucifix tucked safely in his fist, and all was once again right with the world.

"My hero," Ilya joked.

Shane shoved him playfully. Even if the praise was making him preen on the inside.

They held hands as they walked back into the house. Shane already knew where he was going to suggest Ilya stow it—tucked behind the framed wedding photo that sat on the living room bookshelf—and maybe after that, he'd watch Ilya play Call of Duty, or they'd take Anya for a walk, or they'd make out some more upstairs.

Whatever Ilya wanted, honestly. Anything to make him smile.

End Notes

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

SOCIAL MEDIA:

[Tumblr](#)

[Instagram](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Bluesky](#) (not active, but I check my DMs every now and then)

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!