Adjustment Period

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/74752471.

Rating:	Explicit
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, Ottawa Centaurs Team Ensemble (Game Changers), Anya | Ilya Rozanov's Dog
Additional Tags:	Canon Compliant, Post-Canon, post TLG, Slice of Life, Emotional Hurt/Comfort, Explicit Sexual Content, Eating Disorders, Fluff, Hockey Fights, Communication, Anxious Shane Hollander, Domestic Fluff, Captain kink, Married Life, POV Shane Hollander
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2025-11-25 Words: 7,946 Chapters: 1/1

Adjustment Period

by sixlane

Summary

Sometimes Shane forgets that this is real, that he's married to this man he's spent so long wanting, that he has the life he was sure was just a fantasy. He forgets he plays on the same team as Ilya, that his days off are Ilya's days off, and that they can spend them together doing whatever they want. It hasn't quite stuck yet, and Shane still feels his attachment to the Voyageurs like a phantom limb.

Notes

Thank you to my friend and beta Renn for all your help on this. I appreciate you endlessly.

Also, I'm just starting to learn the actual rules of hockey, so forgive me for any inaccuracies.

See the end of the work for more notes

Shane wakes beside Ilya on one of their rare days off. The sun is just barely starting to stream through their curtains, and Shane knows Ilya won't be up for a couple more hours. Careful not to wake his husband, Shane brushes his lips against Ilya's exposed shoulder and whispers "I love you" into his back.

Sometimes Shane forgets that this is real, that he's married to this man he's spent so long wanting, that he has the life he was sure was just a fantasy. He forgets he plays on the same team as Ilya, that his days off are Ilya's days off, and that they can spend them together doing whatever they want. It hasn't quite stuck yet, and Shane still feels his attachment to the Voyageurs like a phantom limb. A part of him still thinks it's time to get in his car and drive back to Montreal before an afternoon practice, but that feeling has been quieter lately… for the most part.

Still, Shane's body is on a strict schedule, and he knows he won't be able to fall back asleep now, so he quietly pads into the closet to pull on a t-shirt and a pair of sweatpants. A morning jog always helps reset his mind and ground him back in the present.

Anya perks up when she sees Shane getting ready. He kneels down to see if she's interested in going with him, but she cuddles further into her bed, wanting a few more hours of sleep with her dad. Shane's on his own for this one.

Shane has never *liked* running. He's always seen it as more of a necessary evil, just one more step in his regimen, one more thing that would help him be the best. But lately he's been enjoying himself. He takes it slow when he wants to and focuses on the cold air filling his lungs. He likes the sound of gravel crunching under his feet, and he likes the running playlist Ilya made for him a couple months ago.

"No more running in silence," Ilya had said. "Is much more enjoyable this way."

Shane has never been someone who was interested in music, so he didn't see how this could make the chore of running any better, but he trusted Ilya, and it turns out he was right, as he so often is. Not that Shane would ever admit that to anyone, especially Ilya himself.

Their neighborhood is private, but Shane still feels the occasional rush of anxiety when he steps out of the bounds of their property, like there could be a camera lurking around every corner. For all his years in the spotlight, he's never gotten used to being scrutinized.

But no boogeymen pop out, they never do. It doesn't stop Shane from worrying.

When he makes it back to the house, Ilya is still asleep. Shane had hoped against his better judgement that he'd be awake so they could share a morning shower, but knowing Ilya is getting some well-deserved rest is almost better.

Shane showers quickly and dresses in the pair of Ilya's old Bears sweatpants that have a hole in the pocket. Even though they're both die-hard for Ottawa now, Ilya didn't want to donate them, and Shane can't pretend he doesn't like wearing them. They're a reminder of where

they both came from, and a symbol of how far they've made it. Or they're just old sweatpants, and Shane is being way too sappy for his own good this morning.

Before heading down for breakfast, Shane leaves a note on Ilya's nightstand: *Breakfast is waiting downstairs.*

Anya follows him, and he feeds her first before letting her out and getting started on their meal.

Shane enjoys cooking. It's something he and Ilya have gotten into over the past few years as a way to do something different, keep things interesting and romantic from the comfort of their own home. That said, they have very different approaches in the kitchen. Shane is a big proponent of mise en place and cleaning as you go, of measuring and following a recipe. And Ilya is, well, the opposite. He leads with his heart and not his head, tasting and seasoning along the way, experimenting with new techniques and fusions. It's fun, if not stressful, to watch, but Shane secretly savors the moments he gets alone in the kitchen, when it's quiet and he can focus on making something delicious.

Today, it's strawberry pancakes. They're one of Ilya's favorites, and Shane loves them, too. He's looking forward to eating them. He really is.

He combines the ingredients in a bowl, stopping every so often to double-check the recipe. It's hard not to think about the empty calories here. Simple carbs. Processed sugar. But he's been good about his diet recently. He can stand to have one unhealthy meal on his day off. He knows it won't kill him.

While he's flipping his first pancake on the stove, he hears the soft thump of footsteps on the stairs.

"Took you long enough," Shane says, turning over his shoulder.

Ilya waves Shane's comment away with his right hand, still rubbing sleep out of his eye with his left. "Smells good."

Shane turns back to the stove, smiling to himself. "Strawberry pancakes."

"You spoil me," Ilya says next to Shane's ear, wrapping his arms around his husband and letting his lips drag along the curve of his shoulder.

Shane suppresses a shudder. If he gives in now, the pancakes will burn and his hard work and planning will have been for nothing.

He shrugs Ilya off with a soft laugh. "Later. Go sit down."

Ilya drags his teeth over the exposed skin of Shane's neck but must be too tired to argue, because he does as he's told.

Shane plates up two stacks of strawberry pancakes and brings them to the table. Ilya digs in before Shane has even gotten the syrup out, but that doesn't stop him from slathering it on once he has the option.

“Delicious,” Ilya says around a mouthful of food. “You should quit hockey. Cook full time.”

“Oh, you want me to be your housewife, do you?”

Ilya shrugs and looks at Shane with a wry smile. “Could think of worse things for you to do.”

Shane rolls his eyes and picks up his fork to take his first bite. The syrup glistens on the top of the stack, reflecting the kitchen light in a gooey, warped way. The strawberries are placed evenly in a circle, because Shane has to be a perfectionist in everything he does.

They look so good, and yet he can’t bring himself to take a bite. He thinks about what the extra calories and lack of protein will do to his body, to his game in practice tomorrow. He’ll feel awful for the rest of the day, like he’s leaking sugar out of every pore. He can’t do it.

“You’re not eating,” Ilya notices, pointing his fork toward Shane’s plate.

“Yeah, I’ve just… I think I have a headache, and I’m worried the sugar will make it worse.” Shane hates lying to Ilya. It’s not something he does often, but he doesn’t want to turn this into a conversation, especially with how persistent Ilya can be when it comes to Shane’s eating habits. “I think I’ll just make a smoothie. I’ll wrap these up in the fridge, and you can have them later.”

“Are you sure?” Ilya asks, visibly skeptical. “Will not be as good later.”

“Yeah, it’s fine. I think I just need to put something neutral in my stomach and lie down.”

Shane can tell Ilya doesn’t want to let it go, but he does. Maybe because he can see it’s what Shane needs right now. “Okay. We can do a big lunch.”

Shane nods as he brings the pancakes back into the kitchen. “Yeah, sounds good.”

***

The next morning, Shane wakes Ilya up early with a long, languid blowjob, which turns out to be incentive enough for Ilya to join him for optional morning practice. They’re playing Montreal in a week, and it’s all Shane can think about when he’s not actively being fucked.

It’s been months since Shane joined Ilya on the Centaurs, but facing off against his former team stings just as much every time. It’s hard to play against the guys he was once so close with, once spent so much of his time with. Shane knows this is just another part of hockey and players get traded or move to new teams all the time, but he never thought that would be part of his story. He’s still getting used to it.

In the weeks before their games, Shane hits new heights of neuroticism. He’s in the gym every day, on the ice whenever he can be, and today is no exception.

He gets Ilya out the door at 6:00 a.m. so they can be in the rink by 7. He’s keeping them on a tight schedule today and for the rest of the week so they can be at peak performance when the time comes. It’s important that they win. It’s *always* important that they win, but even more so when they play Montreal. Shane wants to show them what they lost, what they could’ve

kept if they had the decency to trust that their captain would never jeopardize his integrity. He wants them to be jealous of the Centaurs. God, he sounds like a jilted ex.

“Shane,” Ilya says, snapping him out of his spiral. “Green light.”

“Shit.” Shane hits the gas a little too eager, making them jolt forward. He’d honestly forgotten he was driving.

Ilya brings his hand to the side of Shane’s face, tracing a path down to his shoulder. “You are too stressed for 6 a.m.”

Shane takes a deep breath in, then out. “We have a lot going on.”

“You always get like this before Montreal. They have only beat us once this season. Is not tough competition.”

Once is too many times. “I just… I thought it would be easier by now.”

Ilya considers this. “You trusted them to have your back and they didn’t. That will take time to heal from. Lucky for you, you have a new, better, hotter team to get back at them with.”

Shane knows before he even looks at Ilya that there’s a smirk on his face. “Right,” Shane says, deadpan.

Ilya *is* right, though. Shane needs to get out of his head about this. There’s no avoiding Montreal, so he needs to put everything he has behind his new team. Eventually it’ll feel just as much like home as Montreal did.

“Ottawa has the two best hockey players in the world. We are unstoppable,” Ilya says, opening his palm.

Shane interlaces their fingers. “Me and you,” he says with a small smile.

Ilya grins. Shane knows it means he’s about to say something stupid. “I was talking about me and Troy, but yes, you are good too.”

Shane throws Ilya’s hand back to his side of the car. “Fuck you.”

“I thought you would never ask. Back of the car in the parking lot or supply closet in the rink?”

Shane hates himself for laughing.

“I love you,” Ilya says, leaning over to kiss Shane’s shoulder.

Shane rolls his eyes, but he can’t help the way his stomach swoops at Ilya’s soft touch. “I love you too, asshole.”

***

“Are you kidding me?” Shane yells. “That was a perfect play.”

Ilya shakes his head, skating over. “Not aggressive enough. You are fucking around too much at center ice. Too many opportunities for takeaways.”

“No,” Shane argues, “it’s a strategic fakeout. As long as Bood stays open I’ll be able to make the shot almost every time.” He can feel his adrenaline spiking. The play *had* been good. It had hit the back of the net, after all. Just because Ilya likes to rush the net doesn’t mean that’s always the best strategy.

“Wrong. Will not work. Unless the other team is blind and stupid, I suppose.”

“Then apparently *you’re* blind and stupid, because you’re the one who handed me the opportunity to score.”

Ilya waves his comment away. “Was focused on whatever Haas was doing with Dykstra against the boards. Are you planning on having them to distract the opponents every time you make this play?”

“Fuck you. This is good and you know it. Your ego is just too big to accept that I was able to get around you.”

Something flickers across Ilya’s face before he sets his mouth in a straight line. “I am your captain, Shane. Is my call.”

Shane’s eyes flick down to the C on Ilya’s chest. Not being captain anymore has been an adjustment, to say the least. He and Ilya are both incredibly talented, but they have different styles, and that can lead to clashes on the ice every so often.

“Fine, whatever,” Shane grumbles. “I’m taking five.” He skates off the ice toward the locker rooms, acutely aware now of his teammates’ eyes on him. It’s not every day he gets this heated, but with Montreal coming up, he wants their plays to be perfect. He’d been trying out something new, something he’s sure could get past Montreal’s defences, and Ilya had shot it down completely without even a conversation.

Shane takes a seat, putting his head in his hands. He’s embarrassed that he yelled on the ice, that his teammates were watching, that he was obstinate and spoke against his captain, against Ilya. It’s not the impression he wants to set. He wants to be a leader for the younger players to look up to, a good example.

He used to know what that felt like with the C on his jersey, but without it he feels a little lost. He hasn’t quite found his place yet, hasn’t struck the balance between leader and follower.

Shane sits up, reaching for his water bottle right as Ilya pushes the door open. Shane squirts a stream into his mouth, eyeing him as he sits down next to him.

“Are you okay?” Ilya asks at the same time Shane says, “I’m sorry.”

They both smile softly, huffing a laugh.

Shane looks back down at his hands. “I shouldn’t have questioned you like that. At least not in front of the team.”

“No. Was not your best moment.”

Shane nods. “I keep forgetting I’m not a captain anymore. I think I’m still trying to hold onto that control.”

“I know this about you. Always needing control. Is nice to let go sometimes, too. Is good for you.”

“I just get so focused out there. I forget where I am, and then I look up and everyone is wearing the wrong jerseys and the wrong faces.”

Ilya’s brow pinches in concern. “Do you wish you still played with the Voyageurs?”

Shane tilts his head, thinking. “It’s complicated. I love playing with you and the other guys. This team is so much better than them in almost every way, but I had a plan for what the rest of my career would look like, and now it’s all different. Better, I think, but different.”

“I understand,” Ilya nods. “Was difficult for me moving to America, playing for an American team. Russia was still hanging over me, even though I hated it. It was my home.”

Shane blows out a big breath. Ilya’s ability to make him feel better with just a few words will always astound him. He’s never alone. He needs to remember that.

“Thank you. I promise I’ll do better.”

Ilya laughs, bumping Shane with his shoulder. “Good. Your line is looking miserable out there. They need a good leader.”

Shane huffs. “Thought we just established that it’s *your* team, *captain*.” He emphasizes the last word with exaggerated sarcasm.

“No respect,” Ilya says, standing and shaking his head. “We will need to do something about that. Back on the ice, Hollander.”

Shane feels a swoop in his stomach at Ilya’s implication, but he does as he’s told. He’ll keep himself in line for the rest of practice. His team, and his captain, is counting on him.

***

As soon as Shane and Ilya get back from practice, Anya greets them at the door. Ilya kneels down to pet her immediately, and Shane watches on with fond amusement.

Things had gotten tense between the two of them in the car, with Ilya’s hand placed firmly on Shane’s upper thigh, but the tension is cut now, and Shane is simply enjoying watching his husband roll around on the floor with their dog.

“Were you a good girl while your dads were away? Were you?” Ilya asks Anya in a high-pitched voice as she attempts to lick the inside of his mouth.

“Brush your teeth before you try to kiss me with your dog mouth,” Shane says, sidestepping them to bring their things up to the bedroom.

“You love my dog mouth,” Ilya calls after him. “Does incredible things to your cock.”

Shane is glad Ilya can’t see the blush that stains his cheeks as he walks away. He throws their bags in the closet and deposits their sweaty clothes into the laundry baskets. He’s debating whether he should throw a load in the wash when he hears the bedroom door click shut.

“Shane?” Ilya calls.

“In the closet.”

“Hm. I am not sure if that will work. Everyone knows you are super gay.”

Shane snorts. “Shut up.”

Ilya walks in and looks at Shane with a brow raised. “I thought we had fixed this attitude problem of yours. That is no way to speak to your captain.”

And just like that, the tension snaps back into place.

Shane feels his cheeks heat once again, and this time he’s sure Ilya notices.

“You are so pretty when you are embarrassed,” Ilya says, low and smooth, pushing a strand of hair behind Shane’s ear. “Should put you in your place more often.”

Shane lets his eyes flutter closed, focusing on the way Ilya’s hand feels in his hair, how light his touch is when Shane knows just how rough it can be.

“Look at me, Shane.”

He does as he’s told, staring up at his husband without an ounce of defiance in his gaze. He wants to be good for Ilya now, give up control and let Ilya take the lead.

“Take off your clothes and get on the bed. I will join you in a moment.”

Shane’s breath hitches, but he nods in acknowledgement. He can feel himself filling out in his sweatpants, turned on just by the sound of Ilya’s voice. He takes a step around his husband, stripping off his clothes as he makes his way to the bed. He positions himself against the headboard, awaiting further instructions.

Ilya joins him a minute later, naked save for the smug expression he wears when he has something planned. “On your stomach,” he says, gesturing for Shane to flip over.

Shane complies without question, trapping his leaking cock against the sheets. Before he can even start to care about the mess, Ilya is dragging his fingers up his calves, then the backs of

his thighs.

“So,” he says, “you threw a bit of a tantrum in practice today, yes?”

Shane blows out a breath and hides his face in the crook of his elbow. That’s one word for it, sure.

“Shane,” Ilya says, punctuated with a slap to his ass. “Answer me.”

Shane tenses, shy and embarrassed, but relaxes when Ilya massages the sting away. “Yes,” he whispers.

“Mm. Forgot who you were talking to.” Ilya traces his lips along the same path as his fingers, and Shane shudders at the contrast between the softness of his mouth and the rough scratch of his beard. “How do you address me on the ice?”

Shane knows where he’s going with this, what he wants him to say. “Ilya—” he breathes, but he’s cut off by Ilya’s teeth sinking into the soft flesh of his ass. “Ah— fuck.”

“Wrong answer, Hollander. Who am I?” He licks softly at the tender skin, almost an apology, but not quite.

All the blood from Shane’s head rushes directly to his cock, still trapped and untouched beneath him. He tries to get some friction, thrusting lightly into the mattress. “You’re my captain,” he says.

Ilya hums. “Good boy. Stop moving.”

Shane beams internally at the praise, following Ilya’s command and letting his mind clear of anything that isn’t Ilya’s voice, Ilya’s touch.

“Am going to open you up now,” Ilya whispers close to his ear. “Then I will fuck you while you address me as your captain. You will keep saying it until it sticks. Yes?”

Shane lets out a pathetic whimper, painfully hard and barely coherent.

Ilya chuckles lightly. “Words, Shane. My cock is not even inside of you and you are already stupid for it.” He kisses a path down Shane’s spine to the curve of his ass, soft and tender even while he speaks such filth.

“Yes, God, *please*.” It’s all Shane can manage before Ilya’s tongue begins to circle his hole in languid strokes. It’s not often he gets to feel Ilya’s tongue on him like this, so he savors every moment, trying to tuck it away in his memory for safe keeping.

Ilya hums against him, sending shockwaves throughout Shane’s body, but he forces himself to relax into the bed, to get himself ready for Ilya.

His tongue pushes in, and Shane welcomes the slight burn.

After a minute of blissful exploration, Ilya pulls away. Shane whines at the feeling of emptiness, but Ilya returns a moment later, squirting lube on his sensitive hole.

“You want my fingers?” he asks.

“Yes, captain,” Shane responds without hesitation.

Ilya makes a throaty sound behind him, like he hadn’t been expecting the name to affect him so much. Shane grins into his arm. He loves knowing that even when he submits to Ilya, he still holds all the power.

Ilya traces a circle around Shane’s entrance before pushing one finger in, all the way to the knuckle. There’s nothing like this, the feeling of being stretched, of being full. Shane craves it. He can’t live without it. After all their years together, Ilya knows Shane’s body better than Shane knows it himself. He knows just how to curl his digits to hit Shane’s prostate and send him reeling. It’s a gift Shane’s been given, someone who will touch him just right, in exactly the way he needs each time.

“Fuck, Shane, you love it,” Ilya says as Shane pushes back on his finger.
“More, please, captain,” Shane begs, unashamed.

Ilya adds another finger, gently fucking in and out as his other hand massages Shane’s ass.
“So good for me. So pretty like this.”

Ilya knows those words always go straight to Shane’s head, making him dizzy and scattered, sending him hurtling closer and closer to the edge. Shane needs Ilya’s cock now, prepped or not.

“Need you,” Shane whines. “Fuck me, please.”

Ilya removes his fingers, leaving a gentle kiss against Shane’s hole, and runs his hands greedily up Shane’s back, digging into the muscle to the point it almost hurts.

“What is my name?” he asks.

Shane moans, loud and dirty, into his arm, pushing his ass up into the air in offering.
“Captain,” he says. “Please, captain. Need to feel you.”

Ilya mumbles something in Russian that Shane can’t fully hear, but he translates the word “slut” easily enough, and it sends his eyes rolling back just as Ilya’s cock presses against his entrance.

Ilya pushes in slowly, careful not to thrust too hard when Shane hasn’t been fully stretched, even if Shane might want him to. It’s torturous, glorious, world-endingly perfect. It’s everything Shane needs and more.

Ilya grunts when he bottoms out and doesn’t move for a few seconds, breathing hard above Shane. “That’s right, Hollander,” he breathes. “Made to take your captain’s cock.”

“Yes,” Shane whines. “Made to take your cock, captain.”

Ilya pulls out slightly just to push back in. "*Fuck me*," he says in Russian, his accent thick and dripping. Shane loves when Ilya loses himself in these moments, when he can't find his English words, buried beneath the feeling of Shane's body around him. It makes Shane feel powerful and *so fucking horny*.

He needs Ilya to move *now*.

And Ilya does, without Shane even having to ask. He thrusts into Shane hard and fast, his fingers digging into Shane's hips. He hits Shane's prostate with a slight change of his angle, and from there Shane is lost in the feeling. He's going to come just from this, just from the feeling of Ilya inside him, filling him up, making him his.

"Yours," Shane manages.

"Mine," Ilya returns with a particularly deep thrust. It makes Shane see stars, and then he's coming all over the bedsheets and himself. His cock kicks so hard he thinks he feels his cum hit the bottom of his chin.

Ilya fucks him through it until he follows right behind, spilling deep inside Shane and collapsing on top of him. He rolls his hips a few more times, lazily, and Shane savors the feeling of them together like this. Impossibly close, so sweaty and so in love.

Ilya leaves a lingering kiss on Shane's shoulder before slowly pulling out. Shane moans lightly into the sheets, and reaches back to grab Ilya's hand.

"Stay, just for a minute," he asks.

"Of course, moya lyubov," Ilya says. He rolls over and tucks Shane into his side, the two of them breathing in tandem. In and out.

Shane loves these moments, before he can care that the mess is too sticky, when he can simply hold Ilya and remind himself that he's the luckiest man in the world. They stay like that for a while, Shane isn't sure how long, until Ilya kisses the top of his head and walks to the bathroom. Shane appreciates the view as he goes.

They clean up and shower together, and Shane doesn't complain when Ilya gets on his knees to suck him off below the hot shower stream. It leaves him boneless and in desperate need of a nap.

"I will change the sheets," Ilya says as they dry off, like he can see Shane's eyes getting droopy.

"Thanks." Shane smiles sweetly in his direction.

The domesticity of it all never ceases to knock Shane on his ass. He wants a lifetime of this, a forever of sweet gestures and breakfasts and snide comments and waking up together. And he gets to have all of it with the man he loves more than he's ever loved anyone. He gets to have it with Ilya.

***

Shane pulls air into his lungs and pushes it out in a controlled rhythm. He focuses on the sound of his feet as they hit the treadmill. He keeps a steady pace, running his average speed, being sure not to overdo it. They play Montreal tomorrow, and Shane can't afford to lose. He has to be at the top of his game. He has to be perfect.

His timer goes off, and he hits a button on the treadmill to switch to a comfortable walking speed. He gulps some water. He visualizes putting pucks in nets. He visualizes—

"Your ass looks good when you run," Ilya says from the door. It startles Shane out of his flow. "I am usually beating you when we run together, so I do not get to look at it much."

Shane rolls his eyes, panting. He hits the stop button on the treadmill and tries to catch his breath. "Did you need something or did you just come down here to talk about my ass?"

Ilya is looking at him like he wants to do more than just *talk* about his ass, but Shane knows he needs to keep his focus on his training. He'll be pissed later if he lets himself get distracted.

"Lunch is ready. Come eat with me."

Shane realizes belatedly that he is actually pretty hungry. He had a protein shake that morning and a handful of nuts before his workout, but Ilya's right, he needs to eat something else before he continues with his routine.

"Okay, thanks, yeah. Just give me a minute to change, and I'll come up."

Ilya shakes his head. "Do not change. You are nice to look at when you are sweaty. So shiny." The corner of his mouth ticks up in a smirk, and Shane almost sinks to his knees at the sight of it, but no. Lunch. Right.

Shane follows his husband to the kitchen, where he's prepared something simple: grilled chicken and a salad. It's a recipe out of Shane's approved cookbook collection. The food is mostly lean meats, protein dense and no simple carbs. It makes him feel good, clean. He knows what to expect, what it will taste like and how it will affect his performance. It's reliable, easy.

"Thank you for this," Shane says, sitting down. "I lost track of time on the treadmill."

"I had a feeling you were…" Ilya waves his fork in Shane's general direction, "stuck in your head."

Shane nods and takes a bite of chicken. He chews it and swallows, then takes another bite and repeats. A simple set of steps. Bite, chew, swallow. He takes a sip of water, then moves onto his salad.

"Sweetheart," Ilya says gently.

His tone snaps Shane out of whatever he was thinking about, he can't remember. Ilya only sounds like that when he's worried. Shane's heart kicks up a notch. "What is it?"

“Your eyes,” Ilya says, staring at Shane intently. “It is like you are not here.”

Shane doesn’t really know what to say to that. “Of course I’m here.”

Ilya puts his fork down and holds his hand out across the table to Shane. Shane takes it easily.

“I worry about you when you are this stressed. It is hard to see you so buried under your own thoughts. I feel like I lose you for a week.”

Shane feels his cheeks begin to heat. He knows he can be a bit… intense before some games, especially when they’re as high pressure as this game against Montreal, but he thinks that’s pretty normal for a star athlete. It’s how he’s been his whole life.

“If I’m not at the top of my game, it’ll be my fault that we lose. I’ll be fine after this game, I promise.”

“Is a team sport, Shane. Even if you are off your game, which is very rare, it is your team’s job to pick up the slack,” Ilya says insistently.

“I know that.”

“Then why always this pressure on yourself? You do not let yourself eat what you want to, you are tense even on your days off. Is too much. I worry you will burn out.”

“I eat what I want,” Shane cuts back. He doesn’t want to talk about this.

Ilya levels him with a stern look. “We both know that is not true. You have been better, yes, but sometimes you take it too far. A diet is one thing, Shane. Feeling like you will fail our entire team if you eat pancakes is something else. Is not healthy.” He squeezes Shane’s hand for emphasis.

Shane has never really thought about it that way. “Isn’t everyone like that?” he asks. He’s embarrassed at how small his voice comes out.

Ilya’s brows knit together, and Shane hates that he’s made him so upset. “I do not think so, no.”

Shane is at a loss. He feels like he’s been thrown overboard, endless open ocean all around him. He needs to be fine, he needs to stay afloat for Ilya and his team. He needs to get this under control.

“I don’t want you to worry about me,” he says. “I’ll be fine.”

“You do not have to be fine,” Ilya says, squeezing his hand again. “Is okay to need help sometimes. You are not alone, Shane.”

And that kicks the wind right out of Shane’s lungs, harder and faster than any check ever has. Somehow he keeps forgetting that, no matter how many times he’s reminded.

“Ilya—”

“We do not have to decide anything now, but I have been thinking…” he looks nervous in a way Shane rarely sees him. “Therapy has been very good for me. Hard, but good. Maybe could be good for you too.”

Shane presses his lips together, his brow furrowing. It’s not something he’s ever imagined for himself, and while he knows it’s helpful for Ilya, he can’t see himself sitting down and telling a stranger his deepest, most private thoughts. But the way Ilya is looking at him now, with concern and so much love, Shane wants to do anything in his power to make him happy.

“Can I think about it?” he asks.

“Of course.” Ilya nods. “We will talk about it more after the game.”

Shane looks down at his food. He doesn’t really feel hungry now. “Yeah, thanks,” he says. “I love you.”

“I love you too, Shane. Very much.”

Shane knows this must have been difficult for Ilya to bring up, maybe more difficult than it was for Shane to hear, and even though he feels weird and awkward about the whole thing, he can’t help but be grateful to the man sitting in front of him. For always being there, even when it's hard. He wants to try, for Ilya.

“I think I do feel… kind of anxious… sometimes,” Shane says. It feels weird to talk about because he’s never even let himself think about it, but he knows it’s true.

Ilya nods. “I have noticed.”

Shane laughs lightly. Of course he has. “And I want to try to get better about it.”

“That is all that matters,” Ilya says. “We will win this game, then we will look into it. And I will have your back, on the ice and off it.” He squeezes Shane’s hand again.

“Thank you,” Shane says. He couldn’t ask for anything more.

***

The game against Montreal hits Shane hard. They’re tied 2-2 going into the third period, and it’s getting violent on the ice. Montreal has been coming at them fast, but they’ve been able to keep their cool so far and capitalize on the inevitable power plays that come their way.

Power plays are Shane’s favorite, because he gets to play on a line with Ilya. They’re electric on the ice together, acutely aware of each other at all times. Their passes always connect, and the puck finds the back of the net more often than not.

Shane sets up for the first face-off of the third period, he’s sweaty and tired and feeling so alive. Mikhaylov, Montreal’s new center on Shane’s old line, bends in front of him, ready to send the puck back to his team. It stings a little, seeing someone else so easily take his place, but now’s not the time to dwell on it. He needs to keep his focus on his team.

Shane wins the face-off.

He nudges the puck to his left, where Bood is waiting for it. He skates it back a little into their zone, looking for a pass, then sends it right over to Hass, who handles it easily. He takes it up the ice into the offensive zone, and Shane follows him on the other side of the ice.

Hass risks a long pass through Hayden's legs, and Shane picks it up, taking it deep. He maneuvers around a few guys, then passes it back off to Bood when he sees J.J. coming his way.

J.J. slams him into the boards, and Shane feels his shoulder twinge, but it's a clean hit and Shane skates it off, never taking his eyes off the puck.

Bood shoots, but the Montreal goaltender saves, and the Voyageurs take possession. Shane chases after Hayden as he moves up center ice with the puck. He's able to poke the puck away and pass it off to Troy just as his shift ends and he skates toward the bench.

Then Ilya's out on the ice, his eyes hungry, his mouth pulled up in a perpetual smirk. Shane thinks he's never looked fucking hotter.

Troy gets the puck to his captain, who skates it through the neutral zone and into Montreal's territory. He ends up along the boards, stick locked with Mikhaylov as they fight for the puck. It ends up going to Reeves, another Montreal player, but as Mikhaylov turns around to push off the boards, his stick catches Ilya in the face.

Shane is up off the bench before he knows it, heart racing as Ilya clutches his face with a gloved hand. It looked like a genuine accident, and Ilya skates it off back to the bench as the high-sticking penalty is called.

"You okay," Shane asks as Ilya swings his legs over the boards.

"Yes, is nothing."

Shane brings his hands to the spot where Ilya was hit. He's not bleeding. The stick must have just barely grazed him, thank god. And it means they'll be on the power play now.

"You good to go back out?" Shane asks.

Ilya grins. "Let's score, yes? That should shut them up."

Shane laughs. "I don't think a puck to the teeth would shut them up, but I like where your head's at."

Ilya winks at him as they skate to the face-off spot. Shane rolls his eyes because now he's thinking of Ilya's head in a place he'd like even *more,* and he needs to focus.

Ilya wins the face-off, passing to Shane immediately. Shane skates it to the right, passing it to Haas so he can get in position. Haas passes it back and Shane fakes a shot, passing again to Ilya without even looking.

Ilya shoots, but the goaltender saves, catching the puck in his glove and stopping play.

They reset, and Ilya takes the face-off again. This time Shane is close enough to hear him chirping at Comeau.

“I will save a spot for you at our camp this summer. Is a lot you could learn.”

“I’m not interested in coaching your stupid fucking camp, Rozanov.”

“I was not offering you a job,” Ilya says with a smirk.

Shane rolls his eyes fondly. Ilya is asking to get punched.

The ref drops the puck a second later, and Ilya wins the face-off. He passes it to Troy, who takes it from left to center, then leaves it for Shane, who’s coming up right behind him.

Shane handles the puck, taking it deeper into the zone, and passing back to Ilya.

The puck connects with his stick and he shoots, but Shane doesn’t have a second to register that it hits the back of the net before Comeau takes the shaft of his stick right to Ilya’s head in a brutal crosscheck. Ilya’s head snaps back, and then he’s on the ground. The crowd is a mixture of cheers for the goal and boos for the nasty hit, but Shane can’t focus on any of it, not with Ilya on the ice and Comeau’s smug fucking face staring down at him.

Shane’s gloves are off in an instant. A second later his fist is colliding with Comeau’s jaw. He’s not in control, his body simply acts on instinct. He grabs the front of Comeau’s jersey and rains down hit after hit.

Comeau has always been an asshole, and he fucking deserves it, coming at Ilya like that. Coming at *Shane’s husband* while Shane is on the ice. How fucking *dare* he. If Ilya is hurt… Shane’s going to commit a fucking murder.

Shane and Comeau go down, and one of Comeau’s punches sends Shane’s helmet off. The refs break them up quickly after that, but Shane is still seeing red. That is until he hears Ilya behind him, feels him pulling him back by the shoulder.

“That was so fucking hot,” Ilya says, close to Shane’s ear.

Shane turns to look at him, dazed. “What? When did you— are you—?”

Ilya pats him on the back as the ref takes him to the box. “Is fine, moya lyubov. I am okay. You did good.”

Shane is lost. Everything happened so fast he can’t begin to process it until he’s sitting in the penalty box. Five for fighting. Jesus fucking christ.

Shane has never had a five minute major in his whole career. He’s prided himself on that, but he can’t say he regrets his actions. Comeau got what was coming to him, and it still wasn’t enough. Shane would’ve kept going if he could.

Comeau gets a game misconduct penalty for the crosscheck and is off the ice for the rest of the game. Serves him fucking right. Shane's hands curl into fists involuntarily as he watches him disappear on his way back to the dressing room, and he lets the sting on his knuckles ground him back in the game. They still have to finish this.

The Centaurs are on the penalty kill now since Mikhaylov's high-sticking penalty ended when Ilya scored, so they'll play short-handed for the next 5 minutes. It doesn't seem to matter, though, because the Centaurs are fucking intense. They don't give an inch, somehow managing to get in 2 shots on goal even without a fifth player on the ice. Shane is proud to call himself part of their team.

Shane looks at Ilya, across the ice on the bench, and he can see the fire in his eyes as he watches his teammates. He cares so much about his team, even when he has a million other things to think about, even when he takes the hardest hits and ends up face down on the ice, even when his best players lose their cool and end up in the box. He wants his team to win, and Shane wants the same.

Once he's back on the ice, Montreal is going to fucking wish they'd kept him.

Shane's penalty ends, and he throws himself right into the mix. He connects with every pass that comes his way, dodging around other players and taking every opportunity to get the puck into the back of the net.

He's successful just 45 seconds later, and his teammates rush him, cheering him on. It feels so good to know they have his back, that they want him to succeed because his wins are theirs, too. It's a community he never quite had with the Voyageurs. They were his coworkers, the Centaurs are his friends.

The rest of the period flies by. It's fast and precise, and Shane nets one more goal before it's all over, leaving the score at 5-2. A major upset for the Voyageurs. Shane couldn't be happier.

The dressing room is buzzing as the Centaurs celebrate their victory. It's toothachingly sweet, especially for Shane, and his team knows it.

"That's what I'm talking about, Hollander!" Bood says, slapping him on the back. "That's how you do it!"

The rest of the team joins in on the cheering, and then Ilya finds him and practically tackles him to the floor.

"Oof," Shane says as they crash into each other.

"You were beautiful out there," Ilya says, low, just for Shane to hear. "I'm going to suck your dick so hard later." He feels his cheeks begin to heat, which isn't helped by the way the Centaurs start *ooing* and *awing* as they hold onto each other.

Eventually, Wiebe gets everyone's attention at the front of the room for the post-game speech.

“That’s right boys, amazing game. I’m always proud to be your coach, but I’m just a *little* prouder on nights like this.” The team laughs, and Shane glances around at the looks on his teammates faces. They love their coach, they respect him because he respects them. It’s a beautiful relationship they’ve built, and Shane is lucky to be a part of it.

“Ilya, you stayed solid out there,” Wiebe continues, “and I’d tell you to try to keep your mouth shut, but I know that would be no use.”

Ilya just shrugs, and Shane can’t help but smile.

“Haas, great work, beautiful stickhandling, keep it up. And Shane, our MVP.” His teammates “whoop” around him. “Five minutes is longer than we’d like to be without you, but good job standing up for the team. We’re lucky to have you.”

Shane nods at his coach and feels like he could cry. This team has taken him in and made him feel like he belonged from the very first moment. Maybe it just hadn’t clicked until now, but Shane knows he’s in the right place. He’ll fight for this team because he loves it, and he’ll keep fighting until the very end.

***

“Fuck, Ilya, yes,” Shane moans as his husband licks a long stripe from the base of his cock to the tip.

They’re just inside their front door, where Ilya had dropped to his knees and pulled Shane’s pants down around his thighs, unable to wait to get his mouth on him.

He sucks at the tip, looking up at Shane through his lashes. He’s so perfect like this, his hair still wet from the showers, his lips slick and swollen.

Shane runs his hand through his curls and pulls at them the way Ilya likes. He moans around Shane’s cock, sending shockwaves up his spine.

Winning against Montreal is always nice, but this is the real win, getting to come home and be with Ilya, to have him in every way he wants.

Ilya digs his fingers into Shane’s ass and pulls him deeper into his mouth, swallowing around his length. Shane moans, and Ilya pulls off with a pop.

“Fuck my mouth,” he says.

Shane gets impossibly harder at the way his voice sounds strained and desperate. “You sure?” He runs a finger over Ilya’s bottom lip, spreading the spit and precum there.

“Yes,” Ilya breathes, opening his mouth for Shane.

“Fuck.” Shane slides his cock onto Ilya’s tongue, going slow until he hits the back of his throat. Then he holds onto Ilya’s hair and loses himself in the wet heat of his mouth.

***

Three weeks later

Shane sits nervously in the waiting room, his knee bouncing up and down. He keeps thinking about the questions the therapist, Dr. Miura, will ask him. Will he have the right answers? What if she thinks he's making everything up? What if she tells him he needs to quit hockey? There are just so many possibilities and Shane has no idea what to expect and—

Ilya sets his hand on Shane's knee, just a soothing touch, and Shane exhales a long breath. He looks at his husband sitting next to him and gives him an apologetic smile.

"It will be okay, sweetheart," Ilya says. "Is just a consultation. If you do not like her we will find someone else."

Shane nods. He's grateful that Ilya came with him, he knows he couldn't do it alone. He can't believe Ilya ever had to.

"Thank you, for everything," Shane says. "I love you so much."

Ilya grabs Shane's hand and brings it to his mouth. "I love you, too." He presses a kiss to Shane's knuckles, and Shane forgets about being scared. He has the best partner in the world, and he knows he can face anything, as long as he has Ilya right beside him.

End Notes

SHANE GOES TO THERAPY. EVERYONE CHEERED. As soon as I finished TLG, I knew I had to write this because I see a lot of myself in Shane (and in Ilya, but that's a different fic). I hope you enjoyed and felt like this did him justice.

Come hang out with me on tumblr if you want :)

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