

The Love Toe

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/75496971) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/75496971>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid , Heated Rivalry (TV)
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov , Ottawa Centaurs (Game Changers) - Character
Additional Tags:	Post-Book 6: The Long Game (Game Changers) , Canon Compliant , Established Relationship , Fluff , locker room banter , they be chirping , Ilya is delighted—Shane is embarrassed—they're in love. the usual.
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2025-12-09 Words: 1,635 Chapters: 1/1

The Love Toe

by [BluishFrog](#)

Summary

Ilya insists his broken toe counts as sex injury. Shane disagrees both with that statement, and even more with Ilya proudly telling their whole team about it.

or: how a broken toe establishes itself as symbol of love.

Notes

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

If Shane rolled his eyes any harder, he was pretty sure they'd get stuck at the back of his head and then he'd have to spend the rest of his career skating blind and relying solely on echolocation like some kind of Canadian bat. At least, that's what his mom would tell him if she had been part of this conversation. Shane was pretty glad she wasn't.

Nobody wanted their mother to attend the after-practice locker room ribbing. That was sacred territory: the holy land of bad jokes, terrible music, and the faint smell of sports drink powder that somehow lived permanently in the air vents (and a much less faint smell of both fresh and stale sweat).

And definitely nobody wanted their mother to attend the after-practice locker room ribbing when it mostly consisted of their husband telling everyone (whether they wanted to know or not) about his "sex injury." God, Ilya was still going on about it all these years later. Shane had never met a man who wouldn't let something go like this. He loved and hated that at the same time (mostly loved).

"It's not a sex injury!" Shane finally intervened when, the longer Ilya talked, he saw the rookies' eyes go from curious to terrified to *are we allowed to quit the NHL and sell smoothies instead?* To stop everyone from imagining something far more explicit than what actually happened, Shane turned to Ilya to set the record straight: "You got tangled up in the sheets, fell off the bed, and broke your toe."

"Yes. Sex injury," Ilya concluded immediately. He nodded once, decisively.

Shane very much disagreed with that assessment. Shane, in fact, disagreed with so much force that his soul temporarily left his body, hovered above him, and groaned.

"Nobody was having any sex at that point," Shane continued, trying to keep his voice level and failing spectacularly. He could already feel his ears heating up. The team was very aware he had a sex life (well, they were aware Ilya had a sex life, and since Ilya's sex life had only been shared by Shane for years now, the conclusion wasn't exactly hard to reach), but Shane had never quite gotten as comfortable talking about it as his husband had.

"After sex injury is also sex injury," Ilya remarked, tone flat and authoritative, even using his captain voice. Shane did not think Ilya's captain voice should ever be used to discuss their sex life in front of other people. In private? Well, that was another thing, that Shane definitely didn't want to think about right now.

"That makes absolutely no sense," Shane said, hands flying up in protest. "With that logic, everything would be a sex injury as long as you had sex at some point before."

A grin so smug, it could power a small town, stretched over Ilya's face. "Doesn't sound too bad."

Before Shane could come up with a comeback, Ilya draped his arm over his shoulders.

“Is a good story, no?” Ilya asked the room, squeezing Shane’s shoulder affectionately. “Very romantic. Very tragic. A toe sacrifice for love.” Ilya underlined his statement with a quick kiss to Shane’s temple, and Shane had a hard time to keep pretending that he didn’t find Ilya’s bragging and ribbing horribly endearing (still a little embarrassing too, but Shane would endure a thousand tiny embarrassments to keep seeing Ilya this happy).

“Yeah, it’s a good story,” Shane gave in, because at this point resistance was futile, and also because the rookies were staring at him like they would start bawling their eyes out if he shut down their captain’s proof of love. God, they were young. Shane could barely remember being this young.

And, honestly? It was a good story. At least in the sense that it wasn’t one of the terrifying, blood-soaked, season-ending injuries that lurked constantly in the background of their line of work like hockey’s version of the boogeyman. They’d both faced harder hits, worse bruises, stitches in places that should never require stitches. Compared to all that, a broken toe born from a rare lazy morning was practically wholesome.

And it had been quite a wholesome morning. A whole uninterrupted stretch of sunlight creeping through the curtains, no alarms blaring, no practice to rush to, no media to charm or dodge. Just the two of them waking up slowly. First warm and sleepy, then warm and handsy, then warm and—well, very much awake. Then warm and sleepy again.

Then somehow it devolved into a tickle war, because Ilya always played dirty, and Shane never backed down from a challenge, and their sheets were basically designed to be a trap.

And then, suddenly, the lazy morning ended with shrieking as Ilya slipped right off the edge of the bed like a very dramatic, very naked, very surprised boulder, hitting the floor and emerging with one (1) broken toe and exactly zero dignity.

Still.

“I prefer you didn’t get hurt at all,” Shane added, because he didn’t want there to be any possible universe—parallel, alternate, or cursed—where Ilya thought Shane preferred him with injuries.

(Okay. Maybe Shane made one tiny, extremely specific exception for the crescent-shaped scratch marks he sometimes left down Ilya’s back. He couldn’t help it; those marks did something to him. Something that only got encouraged by Ilya parading the marks around for however long they were visible, strutting around the locker room with his shoulder blades on full display.

And if sometimes the scratches were accompanied by love bites that ventured off Ilya’s back and up his neck, well, at least it happened mostly off-season. *Mostly*.

The first time the league fined Ilya for showing up with visible love bites or similarly “unprofessional markings,” Shane had panicked and apologized roughly twenty-three times in a row. (When he told Rose about it later, she said, he should have made it an odd sixty-nine.)

Ilya, meanwhile, had marched right up to the team manager, paid the fine on the spot, and announced loudly and proudly, “worth it.” Shane was torn between affection and exasperation.

But other than that?

No injuries. Zero. Nada.)

Which was exactly why he nudged Ilya’s uninjured foot gently with his own and gave him a look that hopefully conveyed something along the lines of, “I love you more than anything, but please stop weaponizing your broken toe for comedic effect.”

But Shane never found out whether Ilya caught that message, because one of the rookies spoke up behind him. Shane was fairly sure it was Thomas, though with the new guys, he still had a hard time matching voices to faces. They had only been with them for less than a week, and they all still blinked with the same wide eyes and the same careful, overly respectful tone whenever they spoke to him or Ilya.

“So... uh... is that why you skate more on your left foot now?” the probably-Thomas asked. “Because of... the love toe?”

Ilya’s reaction was immediate. His whole expression brightened even more as he swung around to face the rookie fully, shoulders straightening, eyes going soft around the edges. He looked genuinely touched, as if the kid had offered him a medal instead of... whatever that question had been.

Shane felt his stomach sink. He didn’t even need to glance at Ilya to know what was coming. Once his husband latched onto a phrase, he held it like a dog with a chew toy. (Anya was an angel in comparison.) There was no chance he’d drop it now. Not after being fed something this ridiculous and this flattering at the same time.

And (predictably) the rest of the team jumped on it. Several players turned toward them at once, grinning, curious, already whispering to each other. Harris repeated the words “love toe” with an amused snort, and that was all it took. The phrase settled over the locker room and spread from person to person in a matter of seconds.

The Love Toe.

Shane watched the term take hold the way he watched tape stick to a sock: quickly, definitively, and with no hope of removal.

Within minutes, the entire team was discussing it like it was a piece of team history. A couple of players started creating theories—loud, confident ones—about how the toe must somehow be responsible for Ilya’s shooting percentage. Someone else insisted that a toe that broke “for love” had to be lucky, and suggested they all touch it before games (Shane vetoed that one immediately). Troy congratulated Ilya on having “the most dedicated toe in the league,” which earned a proud nod from Ilya and a groan from Shane.

Shane kept up his usual performance: the eye-rolls, the irritated sighs, the muttered reminders that they were professionals. But even if any of the players could have taken his complaints seriously—which they couldn't, because during the whole time, he was pressed up into the side of his husband, regarding him with love struck gazes ever so often—it wouldn't have made a difference. Once the team latched onto a running joke, it was practically unstoppable.

But maybe (definitely) Shane didn't mind as much as he pretended. Because later, out on the ice before games, when the rink was welcoming the players and the stands cheering loudly, he and Ilya developed a habit of their own.

They would skate toward each other slowly, meet at the center circle, and let the sides of their skates touch. Just a faint click, barely noticeable, but intentional. A tiny shared moment before the chaos of a game. It was something soft and simple that made Ilya's eyes warm, and made Shane feel like maybe a ridiculous injured toe was actually quite an effective reminder of their love after all.

End Notes

Shoutout to the lovely [Scoops](#) for beta-ing and come talk to me on [my tumblr](#) :)
Also if you leave a nice comment and a prompt, I might end up writing it! I love working with prompts.

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