

soldier down on that icy ground

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/75838341) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/75838341>.

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
Additional Tags:	Post-Book 6: The Long Game (Game Changers) , POV Alternating , Hockey Injuries , Hockey Fights , Minor Violence , Protective Ilya Rozanov , Shane Hollander Loves Ilya Rozanov , Hurt/Comfort , Married Couple , Implied/Referenced Homophobia , Caretaking , Happy Ending
Language:	English
Collections:	The best pairings to bask in , No thoughts just gay hockey
Stats:	Published: 2025-12-15 Words: 2,562 Chapters: 1/1

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by [justhockey](#)

Summary

Shane kisses the soft green-blue veins beneath the pale skin of his wrist. Feels the flicker of Ilya's pulse against his lips, steady like the wings of a butterfly. He tastes like salt and skin, and something else just beneath the surface. Something sweet and delicate. A gentle, hidden thing - something the rest of the world doesn't get to see.

They get thrown punches, and bruised knuckles, and hissed warnings.

Shane gets *this*.

Notes

Title from *The Great War* by Taylor Swift.

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

Ilya has always been good at hockey. No, Ilya has always been *great* at hockey. From the moment he laced up his first pair of skates and held a stick in his hands that was almost bigger than he was, Ilya has been untouchable.

Sharp, and fast, and cutting; a lightning strike on blades.

He's always liked it. The way it made him feel powerful and honest. You can't lie on the ice, you can't hide. Every truth is laid bare. It was freeing, knowing he was the best. Knowing that no matter what was happening outside of the rink, no one could touch him there. Not his mother's sadness, or his father's anger, or his brother's disdain. Hockey was his escape.

Maybe that's why he never allowed himself to truly love the game: it was too *necessary* to risk loving it, when everything he loved always left him.

But now, with the Ottawa Centaurs, Ilya gets to love hockey.

Or maybe that's just Shane. His husband. The person who has helped Ilya to thrive instead of just survive. The person who makes it all worth it.

Because now - when Ilya laces up his skates and picks up his stick - it's not freedom that he's searching for anymore. He has that already, in every second he spends loving Shane out loud. No, every time Ilya steps onto the ice now, he's searching for the joy that playing with his guys brings. He's searching for the win, not just for himself or to make someone who never loved him proud, but because his team deserves it. Because *he* deserves it. Because Shane deserves it most of all.

He finally gets to love hockey without the fear of it being taken away from him.

His lungs are heaving and his thighs are burning as he flies into the neutral zone with the puck on his stick. They're on home ice, up 3-1 against Florida, and after a careless hooking penalty sent a Panther to the box, the Cens are on a power play.

Ilya has a Florida defenseman breathing down his neck as he passes centre ice, so, without looking - already knowing exactly where Shane will be - Ilya passes to him. It's a perfect tape-to-tape pass, just like he knew it would be. Because it turns out being married to someone, and knowing everything there is to know about them, means you can kind of read their mind. So Ilya is rushing the net in case he needs to scoop up the rebound, just as Shane is lining up to take the shot. And then -

Ilya feels the hit in his bones. It rattles his teeth, seizes his lungs, makes his entire body turn to stone.

And he isn't even the one who gets hit.

It's dirty, a clear boarding penalty as Johnson smashes Shane into the boards. And for a moment, Shane doesn't get back up. He's lying face down on the ice with Johnson standing over him, saying something to Shane that Ilya can't hear. And suddenly, like a car crash he can't look away from, Ilya is bombarded with the memories of the last time this happened -

of a concussion, and a broken collarbone, and Ilya not being able to do a fucking thing about it.

He can't breathe, his lungs refusing to suck in oxygen even as he begins to skate towards the scene of the crime. But then Shane is moving, pushing himself to his knees - winded and wincing, but not down for the count. Hurt, but not injured.

This isn't like last time.

Ilya doesn't have to just stand by and watch, because that's his guy - his teammate, his *husband* - down on the ice.

Ilya sees red.

Instead of going to Shane, he heads straight for Johnson instead. Ilya's teeth are gritted, and his heart is beating too fast, and when Johnson looks away from Shane and sees Ilya barrelling towards him...he fucking *grins*. Arrogant, and smug, and fucking proud that he's hurt Shane.

Ilya is going to kill him.

"You coming to defend your boyfriend?" Johnson teases.

"He's my husband," Ilya corrects him.

And then he drops his gloves and swings.

Ilya doesn't like to fight. After growing up surrounded by casual cruelty - a brother who would rough him up for the fun of it, and a dad who would clip him around the ear if Ilya dared to disappoint him - Ilya has always tried to avoid violence. He's tried to let his skills talk, rather than his fists. And with hands that are worth millions of dollars, he doesn't like risking them in order to teach a dumbass a lesson in decorum.

But this is Shane, and that fucker is *pleased* about hurting him, and you don't learn to play hockey in Russia without learning how to fight.

Johnson doesn't stand a chance.

He's barely managed to drop his own gloves before Ilya is throwing his second and third punch in a row. There's a hand fisted in his jersey, but Ilya manages to wriggle out of the hold before Johnson can get a hit in. Ilya swings again, connecting with a nose that crunches beneath his knuckles, before Johnson slips and goes down.

Ilya almost follows him - almost gets on his knees to finish what that fucker started when he boarded Shane. But then there are hands on him; someone tugs at the back of his jersey, another latches onto his bicep and pulls. He sees the black and white stripes of a referee and briefly considers getting one last hit in, just to teach Johnson a lesson about touching things that don't belong to him.

But then there's a voice in Ilya's ear, quiet but stern. "Ilya, stop. That's enough."

Shane. He's on his feet, with one hand fisting the neck of Ilya's jersey and the other grasping Ilya's hip.

"I'm good," Shane says, quiet enough that no one else can hear. "Let it go."

Ilya heaves out a sigh of relief, and the red-hot rage seeps out of him and sizzles as it hits the ice. Shane is okay. He's warm and steady against Ilya's back, not crumpled on the ice in pain - not being taken away in an ambulance with broken bones and scrambled brain.

Ilya looks down at Johnson, still splayed out on the ice as he holds his bleeding nose, and scoffs.

"Touch him again. I dare you."

He doesn't.

The Centaurs win 5-1.

Ilya is still shaking when they finally make it home.

Shane can see the tremor in his hands as he unlocks the front door, holding it open so Shane can walk in first. He can see the tension in his back as he turns to lock up behind them.

They dump their bags in the entryway closet; a problem for tomorrow, when their bodies aren't aching with bruises and exhaustion - for when they're not both still holding their breath. And then Ilya is heading straight to the kitchen, like a man on a mission.

By the time Shane gets there Ilya is standing over the sink, chugging down a glass of water that he puts down too heavy-handedly once he's finished with it. He barely said a word on the way home, except for checking in with Shane every five minutes to be absolutely certain that he was okay. He's wound tight, like a coil that's ready to snap.

Shane figures he needs to do some damage control.

He steps up behind Ilya, slowly winding his arms around his waist and rolling on to his tip-toes so he can rest his chin on Ilya's shoulder. Ilya immediately sinks into him, leaning back against Shane like he's the only thing keeping him upright.

Shane presses a kiss to the spot just beneath Ilya's ear.

"Are you okay?"

"I'm not the one who got hurt," Ilya responds gruffly.

Shane tightens his arms around him. "I'm not hurt," Shane reminds him. "I was winded for a minute, but I'm fine, Ilya."

Shane feels Ilya's hands cover his own, where they're resting low on Ilya's stomach. He spreads his fingers in invitation and Ilya slots his into place between them, locking their hands together tightly.

"You didn't see his face, Shane. He fucking *meant* it."

Shane snorts out a laugh. "Of course he meant it. He also called me a, well. Y'know."

Ilya spins so fast that Shane's hands fall away from him.

"He *what*?"

"Ilya--"

"I should have fucking killed him."

Shane, seeing the rage starting to build in his eyes again, steps closer. Presses his body against the front of Ilya's. Reaches both hands up to cradle Ilya's face between them. His eyes are wild and there's an angry flush of red kissing his cheekbones.

He looks so beautiful that Shane feels a little bit dizzy with it.

"Baby, I'm okay. I promise," Shane assures him for the millionth time. "Him running his mouth doesn't bother me. He's just jealous because he'll never be as good as us."

Ilya sighs, knowing that Shane is right but not really wanting to admit it. Ilya is all fire and fury, wanting to silence every homophobe who dares to even glance in their direction. But with Commissioner Crowell still running the show, they have to pick their battles. If they bothered to report all the insults that get slung at them during games, Shane's certain he'd find a way to make their lives miserable.

So. It's bullshit, it isn't fair, and they shouldn't have to deal with it. But. The best way to silence the bigots is to keep on winning. And that's one thing Shane and Ilya - and the rest of the Centaurs - are really fucking good at. Their Stanley Cup win last season is proof.

Ilya sighs, bringing his hands up to wrap them around Shane's wrists. Shane brushes his thumbs over Ilya's cheeks to soothe him.

"He hurt you," Ilya says. "On purpose."

"So he's a dick. Who cares? He's a fourth-liner who no one gives a fuck about."

"Shane, we are not talking about Pike right now."

Shane lets out a bark of laughter before his mind can fully process what Ilya said, and then his mouth is dropping open in surprise. It's too late, though, because Ilya is already smirking triumphantly - proud of himself for getting Shane to laugh at a chirp about his best friend. Shane rolls his eyes, amused and endeared and in love.

"I'm telling Hayden you said that," he threatens.

Ilya just shrugs. "Is okay. I can fight."

The words make Shane glance at Ilya's hands, locked gently around Shane's wrists. The knuckles on his right hand aren't split, but they're slightly swollen and starting to turn an unfortunate shade of purple. They look a little bit like the violets that bloom near the cottage during the summertime. Shane can't help himself; he dips his head down, pressing a flurry of soft kisses to his bruised knuckles.

"I know, tough guy," Shane says, and it's supposed to be teasing but it just comes out soft. "Let's ice these before they get any worse."

He ushers Ilya towards the kitchen table and sits him down in a chair, before looping back around to get an ice pack from the freezer. They have a whole drawer dedicated to them, and Shane just grabs the first one he can get his hands on before hurrying back to Ilya.

As Shane approaches, Ilya slides out a chair for him with the toe of his shoe, and Shane sits down beside him. Ilya looks at the ice pack and then at Shane, giving him a *is this really necessary?* kind of look that Shane doesn't even dignify with a response. He simply holds out his hand, curling his fingers towards himself in a *gimme* motion until Ilya reluctantly places his injured hand into Shane's outstretched palm.

Shane sighs as he takes in the extent of the bruising, and takes great care not to hurt Ilya as he runs his fingers over the knuckles.

"They're fine," Ilya says. "Terry said so."

"Yeah, well. I'll be the judge of that."

Ilya laughs quietly. "He is doctor."

"And I'm your husband."

He's expecting some kind of argument, but when he glances back up at Ilya he's met with the fondest expression he's ever seen. Ilya is grinning at Shane with all of his pearly white teeth on display, and the look in his eyes kind of makes Shane want to propose all over again.

"Yes. You are," Ilya agrees. "My husband."

Shane has to roll his eyes before he embarrasses himself by saying something sappy.

He busies himself with checking Ilya's knuckles, then, once he's satisfied that Terry did his job properly, he turns Ilya's hand over. There's no real reason for it because nowhere else is hurt, he just wants to be sure. Wants to take care of Ilya the way Ilya always takes care of him.

He brings Ilya's hand up and meets it half way.

Shane kisses the soft green-blue veins beneath the pale skin of his wrist. Feels the flicker of Ilya's pulse against his lips, steady like the wings of a butterfly. He tastes like salt and skin,

and something else just beneath the surface. Something sweet and delicate. A gentle, hidden thing - something the rest of the world doesn't get to see.

They get thrown punches, and bruised knuckles, and hissed warnings.

Shane gets *this*.

The same hands that score goals and split lips, touch Shane with such reverence - such tenderness - that it's sometimes hard to remember what they're capable of until he sees it in action.

He feels the softest touch beneath his chin: Ilya's index finger caressing him.

"Love you," Ilya whispers.

Shane lowers their hands, taking the condensation-damp ice pack from off the table and pressing it gently against Ilya's knuckles.

"I love you, too."

Ilya leans in and Shane doesn't hesitate to meet him in the middle, offering himself up for a kiss that is slow and sweet and loving. A kiss that says *thank you*, and *I love you*, and *I'll fight for you*.

Shane hums against Ilya's mouth. Sighs when Ilya's lips move to kiss his cheek, then his nose, then right in the center of his forehead.

He'll never get enough of this.

Will never get tired, or bored, or stop feeling thrilled by the most innocent of touches. By the small, simple, every day moments that they share together.

For Shane, icing his husband's knuckles after he fought for him is as exciting as going on vacation together, or making a playoff run with their team, or Ilya fucking him though the mattress. They all make his heart feel like thunder beneath his ribs, because he gets to do all of them with Ilya.

His husband used to call him boring - still does, honestly - but Shane knows what that means now.

Boring means steady, it means reliable, it means *safe*. It means Ilya isn't afraid that he could lose this, and so Shane doesn't have to be afraid either. It means this is forever. No doubts, no questions, just *them* - as in love now as they were when they were eighteen years old.

Shane lifts the ice pack to press a kiss to Ilya's knuckles. Ilya smiles like it's the greatest gift he's ever received.

End Notes

no this wasn't inspired by mack fighting for will, why do you ask?

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