

softer, harder, inbetween

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by [seekingthepearl](#)

Summary

Shane's fingers worked at the straps of his gloves before he could stop them.

They hit the ice with a dull thud, and Ilya turned.

"Well," Ilya said, voice low, almost pleased. "Why the fuck not."

Shane loses his temper and gets physical with Ilya on the ice, risking the perfect reputation he's worked so hard to maintain.

Notes

the show is over... how am i supposed to live my life now...

i wanted to explore shanes relationship with hockey and his reputation... and what would happen if shane and ilya fought on the ice. i also think shane would enjoy being choked :)

enjoy!

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

Boston--2014

Shane Hollander has one rule: no fighting on the ice.

And there have been plenty of times he's wanted to break it.

He's come close. Once, against Scott Hunter at the end of a game, the line blurred. Scott just had a mouth that wouldn't shut up.

Afterward, he promised himself it wouldn't happen again.

The rule was made long before the MHL, before the cameras and multi-million dollar sponsorship deals.

He learned early that fighting was loud and messy and unforgettable in all the wrong ways.

A bad pass could be corrected. A missed shot could be explained -- bad bounce, poor timing. Those things lived within the system. They had causes and fixes.

A fight did not. A fight followed you.

It replayed endlessly on highlight reels, cropped into short clips stripped of context and blasted across social media.

Commentators debated it. Fans picked it apart. It created noise that never fully died down. It carved a version of you that people decided was permanent -- you were emotional and undisciplined.

Shane learned that lesson in juniors.

He was fifteen. One bad hit turned into shoving. Shoving turned into fists. He won, technically -- the other boy went down first -- but Shane spent the rest of the game in the penalty box, hands shaking against his knees, watching his team lose a lead they never got back.

What stayed with him wasn't the fight or loss itself. It was the aftermath. The way the loss followed him home.

His parents didn't say anything the entire car ride. The silence felt suffocating as he was left with his thoughts. Later, his dad sat beside him on his bed and said quietly, "You're too good for that, bud."

Too good to lose control. Too good to be wasting energy on petty things.

By the time Shane reached the Metros, he'd already refined himself into something controlled and efficient.

Some people called his play passive, but that was never true. Passive meant disengaged. Shane was constantly engaged.

Off the ice, things blurred together too easily. Conversations went wrong in ways he couldn't always predict. Tones shifted. Expectations and feelings changed without warning.

Hockey didn't do that.

Hockey had rules. Clear feedback and immediate consequences. If something went wrong, there was tape to review, drills to repeat or another way to fix it. The world made sense to him inside the rink.

That was why losing felt catastrophic.

One mistake leading to a loss could replay itself over and over in his head. Every angle, every alternative decision -- what could have been -- until it crowded out everything else.

His chest would stay tight for days. Sleep came in short, restless bursts.

After bad games, he checked the news compulsively. Articles. Tweets. Comment sections on Youtube he knew better than to open. He told himself he was just "staying informed," just "being prepared," but really he was looking for confirmation, for proof that the damage hadn't spread too far.

One careless headline could undo weeks of clean play. One word -- temperamental, undisciplined -- could stick for years.

That was why fighting was dangerous. He had to be flawless.

So he held the line. No fighting. That was the rule.

It was October 11th, a Saturday. Montreal was in Boston for an away game.

The Garden was loud in a way that felt personal. Rivalry games always were, but Montreal was never welcome in Boston. Shane had always preferred playing at the Bell.

Warmups settled him. His edges bit cleanly into the ice. His hands felt right. Everything checked out, and the familiar reassurance eased into his chest the way it always did before a game.

When the puck dropped, Shane fell into his rhythm. Playing his short, efficient shifts, making smart passes, and staying where he's meant to be. When Montreal presses, Boston pushes back. The game stays even.

For a while, Rozanov was just another black-and-gold jersey in motion.

Then, midway through the period, they crossed paths near the neutral zone, and Ilya's stick tapped lightly against Shane's skates.

"Hey, Hollander," Ilya said easily through his visor. "Miss me?"

Shane exhaled through his nose. "Focus on the game."

Ilya's smile showed instantly. "I am."

Shane skated on, pulse steady. He told himself it was nothing, just Rozanov being Rozanov. They'd done this dance before. He could handle it.

The rest of the period stayed clean, but Ilya began appearing in Shane's periphery more often than chance allowed. Across from him at faceoffs. Lingering a beat too long after whistles. Once, skating away from the boards, Ilya's glove brushed his.

Unmistakingly intentional.

Shane felt it anyway. A faint prickle beneath his skin.

By the second period, the game tightened. The score stayed close. The crowd grew louder and more impatient.

That was when Ilya started talking more.

"You're wound up," he said as they lined up for a draw. "Boston crowd getting to you?"

Shane shot him a look. "You're not as funny as you think."

Ilya laughed. "You say that a lot."

The banter slipped into place with unsettling ease. It felt too private for bright lights and thousands of eyes. Ilya leaned into it, like he always did.

"You look good tonight," he added as the referee skated off to retrieve the puck. "Something about you when you're tense."

"Don't," Shane muttered.

"Don't what?" Ilya asked, amused. "Compliment you?"

Shane didn't answer. He tightened his grip on his stick instead, teeth clenching against his mouthguard. He hated how easily Ilya fractured his focus.

The puck dropped late in the period. Shane swung hard, but Ilya got there first.

Of course he did.

Ilya moved like he'd already decided how the shift would go, cutting across the ice with effortless confidence. Shane pivoted and matched his speed, staying tight, tracking the puck.

Then the puck was gone, cleared down the ice, play moving away from them.

Ilya didn't let up.

He slammed Shane into the boards.

The impact was sudden and brutal. Plexiglass rattled. Shane's breath punched out of him, a sharp hiss coming out behind his mouthguard. His shoulder burned where it met the glass. The whistle didn't blow, and the game continued.

For a split second, the world went white at the edges. Everything was too loud. Too much. Then Ilya was there, too close, with that familiar smirk right in his face.

Shane's hands curled around his stick, knuckles whitening beneath his gloves.

"You okay?" Ilya teased, like it hadn't been deliberate.

That was what did it.

Ilya pushed off him and skated away, already turning back toward the play, like it was over. Like he'd won some small, private game.

Shane followed for a few strides, vision tunneling. Then he skated to a hard stop.

The ice sprayed up around his blades. The sound cut through the arena, sharp enough to draw attention before anyone knew why. Shane noticed, distantly, that his hands were shaking. It felt like his body belonged to someone else.

His fingers worked at the straps of his gloves before he could stop them.

They hit the ice with a dull thud, and Ilya turned.

Surprise flashed across his face, before smoothing into something darker. He shrugged out of his gloves deliberately, dropping them one by one, eyes never leaving Shane.

"Well," Ilya said, voice low, almost pleased. "Why the fuck not."

The crowd erupted.

Shane moved first.

He lunged, the punch snapping out of him clean and fast, all the restraint he'd welded into place over years finally shattering. His fist caught Ilya square along the jaw. The impact rang up Shane's arm, bone to bone, sharp and satisfying in a way he'd never let himself feel before.

Ilya reeled back half a step, skates scraping. Surprise flashed across his face, quickly chased by something darker. His mouth twisted into a grin, breath fogging between them. Shane didn't let up. Another punch followed, harder this time. Ilya's head snapped to the side. A thin line of red split at the corner of his mouth, blood bright against pale skin, and Shane felt a jolt low in his gut at the sight of it.

The ice dissolved into chaos around them. Teammates collided in peripheral scuffles. Referees shouted, skates carving sharp arcs as they tried to intervene.

The noise pressed in from all sides, and the world tilted inward, narrowing until there was only Ilya in front of him, breathing hard, eyes locked on him like this was some sort of dance.

Ilya took the next hit without going down. He shifted, stepping inside Shane's reach, bodies colliding chest to chest. The contact was sudden and close, too close, the force of it driving the air from Shane's lungs.

Then Ilya moved.

In one smooth, practiced motion, he hooked an arm around Shane's neck and hauled him in, the grip firm. Shane's balance vanished. The world tipped, spun, and then they went down hard.

Shane's back slammed against Ilya's chest, the impact rattling through him as cold bit through his gear. His breath tore out of him like a sharp punch. He thrashed instinctively, fists striking at Ilya's shoulder pads and visor.

Hands tugged at his jersey. Someone was shouting his name. It all sounded distant, warped, like it was happening underwater.

The pressure at his throat was intense and inescapable. Ilya's arm locked tight, forearm solid and unyielding against Shane's neck. And instead of panic, something else flooded in.

A heavy calm.

It spread through him slowly, grounding him in his own body. The constant noise in his head went quiet. The fear of mistakes, of fallout, of what this would turn into later all drained away until there was nothing left but Ilya. Just Ilya.

The scrape of ice beneath his hands. The solid heat of Ilya's body pressed against his back. The steady rise and fall of Ilya's chest, the pattern of his breath close enough that Shane could feel it.

His limbs grew heavy. The fight seeped out of him, his arm slipping from where it was braced and fell limply to the ice.

He tilted his head just enough to look back, and their eyes met.

For a brief second, something crossed Ilya's face. The only thing Shane could focus on was the bright red smeared across his lips.

Then the pressure was gone.

Ilya released him, hands lifting in surrender as the referee picked him up and hauled him away.

Shane sucked in air, coughing as he pushed himself upright, palms braced against the ice. It took a few seconds for the world to fully come back into focus.

A shadow fell over him.

“Easy,” Hayden said, close enough to be heard. He hauled Shane to his skates with ease, steadying him. Shane swallowed, throat red and raw.

“M--” Shane stopped, trying again. “Sorry.”

Hayden stared at him for a beat, stunned, then grinned. “Don’t be. I’ve never seen you drop the gloves! About time.”

The words landed strangely to Shane.

Eventually, the referee skated up, unimpressed. “Hollander. Rozanov. Five each. Fighting.”

Shane barely heard him over the chorus of boo’s and cheers. His gaze tracked across the ice.

Ilya was already being guided to the box, helmet off, curls dark with sweat. Shane was ushered to the opposite side moments later, separated by glass and inches that felt louder than the crowd.

Shane leaned forward, forearms on his knees, breathing steadying slowly. His hands still trembled faintly.

When he looked up, Ilya’s gaze met his. He wasn’t sprawled out on the bench or acting carelessly. His legs were drawn in tight, knees pressed together. His jaw flexed. His eyes slid to Shane’s throat, lingered, then lifted again.

Heat curled low in Shane’s stomach.

Ilya’s breathing looked controlled, but nothing about him was calm. Shane shifted, suddenly hyperaware of his own body. Ilya tilted his head, eyes darkening.

And Shane knew, with sharp certainty, that this wasn’t over. Not even close.

Montreal won by one.

The handshake line passed in a blur. Even though they won, Shane kept his head down.

He answered media questions automatically -- almost all of them being about the fight -- showered, dressed, and went through the motions.

By the time he made it back to his hotel room and closed the door behind him, the adrenaline had settled.

He dropped his bag by the door and checked his phone out of habit. He had to fight the urge to open Safari to look at headlines.

He had one new message notification waiting for him.

Lily: *Room number.*

Shane stared at the screen for a while. He should ignore it, he knew that. Tonight had already crossed enough lines. He typed anyway.

Shane: *Fuck off.*

The reply came almost immediately, like Ilya had been watching the conversation.

Lily: *That isn't a question.*

Shane huffed a quiet laugh despite himself, rubbing a hand over his face. His throat still ached faintly. He paced once across the room, then back again.

Shane: *You're unbelievable.*

Three dots appeared.

Lily: *Don't pretend you are shy now.*

Shane shut his eyes tight for a second. He typed a message, then deleted it. Then typed another, deleted, and--

Lily: *You are still typing.*

Shane leaned back against the desk, the edge pressing into his spine. He told himself he was tired. Still riding the win. He told himself this didn't mean anything.

Then he sent the number.

Shane: *508*

There was a pause this time. Longer. Just enough to make Shane's stomach tighten as he stared at the screen.

Lily: *Good*

Lily: *Prep yourself. I want you ready*

Shane slammed his phone face down on the desk.

For a moment, he just stood there. All his feelings tangled together until he couldn't tell where one ended and the other began.

A part of him cursed himself for sending the number at all. He could just not listen to Rozanov. How would he react? He's never really disobeyed him before.

He exhaled slowly and crossed the room.

The bathroom light flicked on. He leaned his hands against the counter, staring at his reflection. He dug through his toiletries, finding a small bottle of lube.

Fuck this. Fuck how Rozanov made him feel.

And so, he stripped his bottoms. He got comfortable on the bed, lifting one leg up over his arm, giving himself leverage.

He always hated the initial stretch. His legs twitched slightly as he pushed his middle finger in, sinking down to the joint. He exhaled shakily, pouring more lube onto his middle and pointer.

He bit the inside of his cheek before beginning to move, tip to knuckle. He pulled up his shirt, clutching at the hem as he rutted helplessly against his finger. He quickly added another, spine arching on instinct.

His cock throbbed from the pleasure, precum leaking from the tip onto his stomach. His body was already hot, skin flushed against the white sheets.

Then, a knock on the door echoed through the room. Shane's legs fell, arms going limp at his sides as he panted deeply. His knees felt weak as he maneuvered his body off the bed, wobbling to the door.

He looked through the peephole (even though his shirt was long enough to hide his dick he was taking no chances) and saw Ilya. He was about to knock again before Shane opened the door, and the other man rushed in.

Shane's back hit the wall as the door slammed shut, then flattened against it as Ilya crowded into his space.

Ilya stopped just short of touching him, but he was close enough that the heat of his body bled through the thin cotton of Shane's shirt, just close enough that Shane could feel the steady rise and fall of Ilya's chest.

Ilya took his time looking him over. His gaze dragged from Shane's face down his torso and his bare legs, then back up again, lingering in a way that made Shane acutely aware of the oversized shirt clinging in all the wrong places.

He was, embarrassingly, grateful for it anyway.

"So?" Ilya said. The word was light, almost lazy, but his eyes were anything but.

Shane swallowed. "So... what?"

Ilya tilted his head. His mouth curved, his lip swollen, just slightly. "So," he said again, softer now, "are you going to kiss me better?"

Shane let out a shaky breath that was half a scoff. "Fuck off." He shifted, but there was nowhere to go. "You--you need to stop getting under my skin during games."

Ilya hummed. "But I love it," he said easily. "You get so worked up. So serious."

Ilya leaned into Shane's ear. "Like angry little dog. Very cute." He nipped at the lobe, making Shane grunt softly.

“It’s not funny, Rozanov! It’s--” Shane snapped, and he moved his head away. Tears began to form at the sides of his eyes.

“It’s not good for my image, okay? I’m being serious. I don’t fight. I haven’t fought in a long time. Or ever, really.” Shane sniffed, wiping his eyes.

Ilya’s expression shifted. He gazed at Shane closely, eyes sharp and focused, like he was looking for something beneath the words.

“Hmm,” Ilya said after a moment. He brought his fingers up to Shane’s under eyes, wiping away the tears. “But you felt better after fighting me, yes?”

Shane’s spine stiffened, and he scoffed in reply.

“I saw your face,” Ilya continued, voice lower now. “That look. The--” He paused, “--euphoria. Or however you say it.”

Despite himself, Shane laughed. Ilya pushed off the wall, giving him some room. “The New Yorker’s teaching you new words, I see.” Shane said, wobbling across the room to sit on the bed.

Ilya smiled and followed slowly. “Maybe. But I saw it, Hollander. You liked it.”

“Don’t act like you didn’t like it too, asshole,” Shane shot back, looking up. “I saw you in the penalty box. You clearly had a boner.”

That got a reaction. Ilya’s smile widened.

“So,” Ilya said, stepping in so that his leg brushed Shane’s, “are we going to do something about that?”

Shane looked away for half a second, then back at him. “I’m still mad at you.”

“That’s okay,” Ilya murmured. “We can deal with that now.”

He braced himself with one hand on the bed, leaning in to kiss Shane.

Shane craned his head up to meet him, lips parting just enough to let Ilya's tongue slip in. The kiss was soft. It was like Ilya was giving him time to change his mind.

Shane didn’t.

For a few seconds, they just kissed. Shane moaned as Ilya ran his fingers up and down his bare legs, but when he got to his inner thigh the frustration surged back.

He broke the kiss with a sudden shove to Ilya’s chest.

Ilya stumbled back half a step, eyes flashing with surprise that barely had time to register before Shane was moving again.

“Don’t,” Shane muttered, as he stood up and closed the distance himself.

He waited a second, eyes flashing to Ilya's bulge and then back up to his face. He was already panting.

Then, in one smooth motion, he grabbed Ilya by the shirt and kissed him again.

The kiss was rough and demanding, all teeth and heat and pent-up anger finally given somewhere to go.

Shane spun, then pushed Ilya back until the backs of his knees hit the edge of the bed, gravity carrying the both of them down.

Ilya made a low sound against his mouth, hands coming up instinctively to grip Shane's sides, but Shane didn't slow.

The kiss deepened, all messy and breathless. Shane's hand slid into Ilya's hair, fingers curling tight, tugging just enough to make his point.

Ilya kissed him back just as fiercely. Shane broke away just long enough to drag in a breath, forehead resting against Ilya's. His pulse thundered in his ears.

“This is your fault,” Shane whispered.

Ilya smiled up at him, breath uneven, *“I know.”*

Ilya laughed breathlessly, but the sound cut off with a *“Mmph,”* as Shane kissed him again, rougher and deeper.

He shoved Ilya down fully this time, following him without hesitation, pulling him close and climbing over him until Ilya was flat on the mattress and Shane was straddling him.

For once, Shane was on top.

He kissed him like he meant to win, like he meant to prove something, hands gripping Ilya's shoulders.

Ilya went still beneath him for half a second, then melted into it, hands sliding up Shane's back, groaning into the kiss like he'd been waiting for this exact moment.

When they finally broke apart, both of them were breathing hard.

There were no words shared between them as they paused, then both stripped frantically.

Ilya's clothes were tossed haphazardly on the floor as Shane kissed and licked at his chest. As soon as Ilya was undressed, he flipped their bodies, pinning Shane down against the bed.

Shane barely had time to register the shift before his back hit the mattress, breath knocked loose in a startled moan.

Ilyas weight settled over Shane just enough to remind him who he was dealing with, large legs and knees bracketing his hips, hands firm where they pressed into the mattress next to Shane's shoulders.

"Yeah," Ilya murmured, voice low and sultry. "How I like you."

Shane lifted his chin, fingers curling into the sheets. "You don't get to--"

Shane's breath stuttered as Ilya dipped his head, tongue trailing along his jaw, leaving a line of spit down the line of his throat. A kiss pressed at his Adam's apple, then another lower, and another.

Ilya took his time, like it was a punishment. "Ah," Shane breathed, the sound slipping out before he could stop. "Rozanov--"

Ilya didn't answer. He kissed lower instead, lips brushing over Shane's collarbone and nibbling gently.

His mouth lingered there, sucking at a small spot, looking up as he did. Shane's eyes were closed, his head craned back towards the ceiling in pleasure.

"God--" Shane choked softly when he pressed an open mouth kiss to his sternum, "Fuck. Don't-- don't tease."

Ilya hummed against his skin, the vibration sending a shiver straight through Shane's body. His hands slid down Shane's sides, thumbs tracing slow, maddening circles into his hips that made Shane squirm beneath him.

"Oh fuck," Shane groaned, eyes shooting open.

Ilya finally lifted his head from where he was kissing his stomach, his curls falling forward, eyes locked on Shane like he was misbehaving. Shane swallowed hard under the weight of the gaze.

Ilya pulled his body back up, squeezing his thighs into Shane's waist. Shane whined, his cock twitching helplessly to be touched.

Ilya took his palm and started to massage Shane's pecs. He tried to squirm, but Ilya kept him firmly in place. His hand lingered over Shane's nipple, then moved down slowly, placing his palm flat over Shane's navel.

Shane's body quivered under the touch. Ilya at him -- for what seems like approval -- and when Shane nodded quickly, he moved his palm down to his pelvis. Shane whined again, gripping at the sheets to his sides.

Ilya raked his finger up Shane's length, rubbing the tip of his pointer against the precum leaking at the top.

"I am glad I was your first fight in a while," Ilya spoke up, slowly wrapping his fingers around Shane's cock, "But, I am going to fuck you so hard that you will forget your name

now, okay?"

"I--" Shane starts, not even sure what he was going to say but it doesn't matter. Ilya dipped down, pulling his hand off Shane's cock before bending the man's legs up. Ilya rested his cheek on Shane's thigh before surging in to kiss the skin.

Shane cried out -- a little louder than he expected -- and slapped his hand over his mouth. His hips jerked up and shook involuntarily as Ilya kissed and bit and licked the tender skin.

He tugged at Ilya's hair, pulling his head up to look at him. "Suck my dick, suck-- suck it," Shane choked out. "Please."

Ilya stopped and stared at him. The only noise he could hear was the soft panting from the man above him. Shane looked down at him from half lidded eyes, his eyelashes fluttering as he blinked, eyes glassy with tears.

Ilya, all show and tell, stuck out his tongue and licked a long line up Shane's shaft, earning a high pitched whine from above him. He could feel Shane's hands grip his hair even tighter -- a plea for him to do more.

Ilya's lips closed around the tip, licking a stripe of precum off the slit. He curiously looked up at Shane, who was half gone by now, and slid the rest of his length deep into his throat.

"Fuhh-- *hah*-- fuck," Shane let out a choaked moan as he arched his back, his fingers pulling at Ilya's curls. He could feel his brain fogging under the touch.

Ilya moaned around his cock, the vibration sending a wave of pleasure down Shane's spine.

Ilya's nose met Shane's skin, his lips encapsulating the whole length. He could feel it pulse at the back of his throat, earning a low groan from the man above.

He quickly found his momentum, everything sticky and wet, the corners of his lips catching and dragging against Shane's skin. Spit pooled and dribbled from the corners of his lips as he fucked Shane's cock into the back of his throat.

"Oh-oh god-- I," Shane could feel the warmth everywhere. "Please," His hips shifted without permission and Ilya's hands tightened in response. The control in it made Shane moan outright.

"M gonna, 'm gonna come... *Rozanov*--" He gasped, but then Ilya pulled off. Shane groaned at the loss of feeling, hands curling into the other's hair as he tried to push his face downwards towards his dick.

It was ultimately no use as Ilya sat up, a long string of spit connecting him to Shane's tip. "Ass up," He instructed as he wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

Shane froze for half a second, breath still uneven, chest rising and falling too fast. Ilya didn't repeat himself during the silence. He just watched, eyes dark and steady, patience stretching tight like a wire.

Then Shane shifted, movements clumsy at first as he turned and braced himself on the bed. He gathered a pillow under his chest, the pillow case bunching his palms. He could feel his pulse everywhere.

He swallowed hard and lifted himself the rest of the way, heat rushing to his face. "Jesus," he muttered under his breath.

Behind him, the mattress dipped. Ilya's presence loomed close without touching, close enough that Shane could feel the warmth of him and sense the focus in the air.

Then, hand slid down Shane's spine, tracing the curve of his back. Shane shuddered at the contact.

Shane whined, his shoulders tensing on instinct. Ilya leaned in, mouth brushing over his lower back, mouth lingering there. The kiss was soft, almost gentle, which somehow made it worse.

"Look at you," Ilya hummed, eyes scanning what he could see of Shane's body. "So small under me, so easy to control."

A sudden loud and long sound ripped from Shane's throat, his hips falling, then stuttering and rutting against the bed. It lasted for a second, and Ilya couldn't help but freeze. Did he do something wrong somehow? Was he sore from the fight?

"Hey," Ilya reached for Shane's sides and rolled him over, and Shane's arms fell lazily to his sides.

Ilya could see a wet spot on the sheets from where he was laying -- right in line with Shane's now wet dick.

"No way you just came."

"Don't -- don't say that." Shane stammered out unconvincingly, cum leaking from the tip of his cock onto his bare stomach.

It was a little too hot for him. "Fuck," Ilya whispered, taking a deep breath before looking back up at Shane's embarrassed, scrunched up face. His hands left Shane's hips, fumbling briefly before grabbing a condom from the nightstand and rolling it on. He adjusted his position between Shane's legs, taking a moment to line himself up.

His tip pressed against Shane's opening, eyes trained on his face, searching for traces of concern as he began to push in. Shane whimpered as Ilya pushed all the way in, gasping as Ilya's skin became flush with him.

"Rozanov," Shane said, the sound breaking apart as it left him. Ilya finally looked up at him, only then realizing how much the stillness was undoing him. "Move," Shane breathed.

Ilya began to move slowly, his hands firm on Shane's hips to steady them both. The pace built gradually, each thrust more sure than the last as Ilya's cock slid in and out of him.

The sounds were wet and loud, nearly lost beneath the broken stream of “harder’s” spilling from Shane’s mouth. As Ilya picked up speed, the sounds only grew louder and more desperate.

“Oh fuck -- yes, *yes, right there*,” Shane cried, but Ilya didn’t slow. If anything, he got harsher, hips snapping forward with relentless force, driving Shane back into the mattress beneath them. Each thrust was brutal, knocking the breath loose from Shane’s chest.

Shane reached up, fingers brushing Ilya’s wrist, guiding it higher with a shaky insistence.

Shane tipped his chin up slightly, offering without asking. “Here,” he whispered, voice rough and wrecked. Shane guided Ilya’s hand to his throat, and his fingers curved around the skin instinctively. “Don’t, don’t let go.”

Ilya slowed his hips. After a second, his palm pressed carefully into the skin. Shane’s head fell back slightly, every nerve igniting under the pressure, chest heaving as Ilya began to thrust again.

Shane’s world narrowed to a pinpoint.

Nothing existed outside the heat of Ilya’s body, the hard snap of his hips, and the firm hand at his throat. His legs trembled beneath him, hips lifting involuntarily as both hands gripped at his throat.

Every breath was a struggle, each inhalation was shallow and ragged, and Shane’s fingers curled into the skin of Ilya’s back. Ilya leaned in closer, lips brushing Shane’s cheek, teeth grazing lightly against the curve of his jaw.

Shane’s chest rose and fell unevenly, and a strangled moan slipped past his lips. His head tilted into Ilya’s palm, and he let himself sink fully into the pressure, hips grinding in desperation against Ilya with the hopes of getting some sort of friction.

“You feel so good,” Ilya said, pulling his hips back until his tip was almost out, then sinking all the way back in.

A deeper flush bloomed across Shane’s skin with each thrust, red spreading from his throat up into his cheeks and ears. He was damp with sweat now, hair sticking to his forehead, chest rising and falling in quick, unsteady pulls.

Shane tried to blink away tears, but one slipped out despite his best efforts. Ilya noticed immediately. He stopped.

Not a gradual slowing, but a full, deliberate stillness. His grip loosened and fell away entirely, his weight easing back while he stayed close enough that Shane could still feel the heat of him inside the steady presence anchoring him there.

Ilya leaned in close, eyes searching Shane’s face as he gasped in air.

“Hey,” Ilya said quietly, concern threading through the rough edge of his voice. “We can stop. Say the word.”

Shane blinked up at him, lashes dark with tears, another shuddering breath pulling free.

His throat worked as he swallowed. His hands curled weakly into Ilya's skin, fingers clutching instead of pushing away.

"It just... feels so good," Shane managed, his voice cracked and raw, like the admission itself left him exposed. "I don't want it to end."

Ilya didn't answer right away. He studied Shane's face, his thumb caressing his cheek with a tenderness that felt almost startling after the intensity of moments ago.

His touch lingered there, before he nodded once. "Okay," he murmured. "I've got you."

That was all Shane needed. He surged forward, arms winding around Ilya's neck as he pulled himself in. His face pressed into Ilya's shoulder, breath hitching as another quiet, broken sound escaped him, muffled against the warm skin.

Ilya reciprocated, arms hugging around Shane's back, holding him there. He lifted him off the bed with his strength, kissing Shane's temple, then his cheek.

His hand slid slowly up Shane's back, fingers spreading wide as if to remind him he was solid, safe, right there. Ilya wasted no time pushing into him, sliding in and immediately resuming his earlier pace. He could feel Shane bend his legs back higher, giving Ilya more leverage.

Ilya took the opportunity to lean down and bite at Shane's bare neck, right under his jaw. Shane whined as his legs were shoved even further up and back, squeezing his eyes shut as Ilya fucked into him even deeper.

"No marks," Shane whined, "you know that."

Ilya didn't reply, just hugged him tighter and closer -- basically lifting Shane off the bed so he's in his lap -- fucking into him. The thrusts were a lot rougher, the sound of skin slapping against skin so loud it drowned out their quieter noises.

"Close," Ilya murmured into Shane's ear.

Shane, already lightheaded from all the choking and and kissing and fucking, kissed Ilya with all he could, letting him pound deep inside him. He almost felt sorry for fighting him earlier.

Ilya didn't have time to pull back and warn Shane with all the tongue in his mouth, it was too late, Ilya was already out of him, pulling the condom off and coming all over Shane's stomach.

They collapsed into the bed together, bodies heavy and spent. Shane lay on his back, chest rising and falling slowly now, sweat cooling against his skin.

Every muscle felt loose in that boneless, wrung-out way that only came after everything. Ilya settled beside him, their shoulders touching and legs tangling without even thinking about it.

For a while, neither of them spoke. Just panting and catching their breaths, holding and brushing up against each other.

Shane broke the silence first.

“I’m sorry,” he said quietly, staring up at the ceiling. His voice sounded tired in a fragile way, stripped of its edge. “I lost it... on the ice. And then here.”

Ilya turned onto his side, propping himself up on one elbow so he could look at him properly. Shane’s expression was softer, like he was about to fall asleep. Ilya reached over and brushed his thumb along Shane’s ribs.

“It’s okay,” he said. “You needed it.” Then, after a beat, “Do you feel better?”

Shane nodded slowly. “Yeah. I think so.” He exhaled, long and shaky, then winced slightly as reality crept back in.

“I’m just... nervous now. About the press.” He swallowed. “They’re going to have a field day with the fight.”

Ilya snorted under his breath and shifted closer, pressing his forehead briefly to Shane’s shoulder. “They always do,” he said. He gave Shane’s shoulder a kiss. “They will talk. They will write. And then something else will happen and they forget.”

Shane huffed a weak laugh, turning his head to look at him. “Easy for you to say.”

“Maybe,” Ilya admitted. He slid an arm around Shane’s waist and pulled him into his body. Shane laughed, and Ilya did too, poking and ticking at his skin. When he stopped, they laid there for a while, before Ilya said, “Just know you are not alone.”

Shane relaxed into the hold almost immediately, his face tucking against Ilya’s chest. The tension in him eased, replaced by the steady rhythm of Ilya’s heartbeat.

“You’re getting your fluids all over you.” Shane murmured into Ilya’s chest.

“Ew, Hollander. Don’t call it that.” Ilya exhaled a laugh, pushing up out of the embrace. He trekked towards the bathroom, wetting a washcloth before returning, sitting at Shane’s side.

The washcloth was warm and faintly damp, steam still clinging to it. He hesitated for half a second, then gently pressed it to Shane’s stomach, careful and unhurried.

Shane made a small, sleepy sound at the contact, muscles twitching before relaxing again. His eyes stayed closed, lashes resting against his flushed cheeks.

Ilya wiped him clean with slow strokes. “There,” Ilya murmured, mostly to himself.

Shane shifted, mumbling something unintelligible, one hand drifting to clutch weakly at Ilya’s wrist as if to keep him there. Ilya smiled despite himself.

He finished up, set the cloth aside, then reached for Shane's boxers from where they'd been kicked onto the floor.

"Up," he said softly, guiding rather than demanding.

Shane cooperated with minimal effort, lifting his hips just enough for Ilya to help him slip into them. It was clumsy, but neither of them minded.

Once they were on, Ilya eased Shane back down, tugging the fabric into place and smoothing a hand over his thigh in a way that lingered just a little.

Shane was already drifting by the time Ilya pulled the covers up over him. Ilya tucked him in properly, adjusting the blanket around his shoulders, making sure he was warm. He brushed his thumb across Shane's throat, wiping away a bit of dried sweat.

Shane sighed, turning his face toward the pillow instinctively. One arm reached out blindly, finding Ilya's arm again.

Ilya stayed. He sat down beside him, close enough to feel his warmth, his palm settling on his cheek. Shane melted into the contact immediately, breathing evening out, the tension finally gone.

Within minutes, he was asleep.

Ilya took that as his cue to leave, slipping on his clothes quietly, careful not to wake him.

He paused at the edge of the bed for a moment, looking down at Shane's slack, peaceful expression, the faint crease between his brows finally smoothed out. Then he grabbed his phone, and let himself out.

Shane woke up the next morning to the buzz of his phone against the mattress.

For a few seconds, he didn't move. His body felt heavy and hollowed-out. The room was dim, morning light leaking in through the blinds in pale stripes. Everything smelled faintly like soap and sweat and Ilya.

The phone buzzed again.

He groaned softly and fumbled for it, squinting at the screen. One new message.

Lily: *Press is handled. Go back to sleep.*

Shane blinked, then scrolled.

Lily: *Told them it was heat of the game.*

Lily: *Mutual, no bad blood*

Lily: *We lost our tempers for half a second and regretted it. Coach backed it. League already moving on. You are fine.*

Shane let out a breath he hadn't realized he was holding. His chest loosened, tension draining out of him in a slow exhale as he sank back into the pillows.

Shane typed back with clumsy thumbs.

Shane: *Thank you.*

The reply came almost immediately.

Lily: *Do you feel better?*

Shane stared at the question for a long moment, thumb hovering over the screen. Yeah, he thought. He did.

Shane: *Yeah*

Shane: *What did you say?*

He typed, then added,

Shane: *Like... exactly.*

The reply came a minute later.

Lily: *Hold on.*

A second message followed almost immediately. A link to a Youtube video.

Shane pushed himself up against the headboard, pulling the sheet higher around his waist as if that somehow made him more presentable, even though he was alone. He tapped the link.

The video opened on a familiar press backdrop. Locker room wall behind Ilya. Looks like he just got in to practice. Reporters crowded close, microphones angled up toward his face, a camera shoved a little too close for comfort.

Ilya looked like he'd just come off the ice. Hair damp and curling at the nape of his neck, a towel slung loosely over one shoulder. A faint cut split his lower lip, clean but visible, and there was already color blooming along his jaw where Shane's punch had landed. He hadn't bothered hiding it.

He stood relaxed anyway. One hand hooked into his waistband, shoulders loose, expression calm in that infuriatingly unbothered way he had.

Someone off-camera asked about the fight.

Ilya glanced to the side, then back at the reporter. He shrugged.

"Things get heated," he said in the clip, voice steady. "It's hockey. We are competitors. Hollander and I both crossed a line for about ten seconds and then it was over."

Another question followed immediately, sharper this time. About Shane.

Ilya's mouth twitched. Just barely.

"I got under his skin," Ilya said. "So he punched me. Simple as that. That doesn't erase who he is."

The words hit Shane harder than he expected.

A reporter pressed again, asking if there was bad blood now.

Ilya shook his head, quick and sure. "No."

He paused, then added, "He's human. People forget that. We both lost our tempers. He owned it, and he beat us. I respect him."

The clip ended there, the screen freezing on Ilya mid-turn as he ducked back into the locker room, towel slipping further down his shoulder.

Shane stared at the still frame, throat tight.

He typed back slowly.

Shane: *You didn't have to do that.*

Lily: *I wanted to*

Lily: *Get some rest, Hollander*

Lily: *The world is not ending today*

Shane huffed a quiet laugh and let himself sink back into the mattress. Outside the room, the season would keep spinning. Headlines would come and go.

But right now, with the phone warm in his hand, it felt manageable.

End Notes

comments, kudos, anything is appreciated!! <3

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