

Boxes

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/76670186) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/76670186>.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Heated Rivalry (TV) , Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov
Additional Tags:	Eating Disorders , Mental Health Issues , Racism , Anxiety , Angst , Hurt/Comfort , Angst with a Happy Ending , Post-Book 6: The Long Game (Game Changers)
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2025-12-29 Completed: 2026-01-03 Words: 4,754 Chapters: 2/2

Boxes

by [vesper_mucha](#)

Summary

Shane spirals after a disastrous interview.

Notes

I am starting to feel parasocial about Hudson (microaggressions) and Shane (ED/Autism TLG “slander”), and I am hoping writing this will get that out of my system.

Not that I need to caveat this, but I will, I drew on my own experience as a half Asian and experience with ED, probably not super healthy but alas.

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

Chapter 1: The Spiral

2:04AM

Shane blinked at his phone. His heart was racing, his mind wouldn't *stop*. He couldn't fucking relax.

Ilya adjusted in his sleep, giving Shane room to slip out of bed.

He thought about leaving his phone and headphones in the bedroom but after a moment of hesitation he brought it down with him. He went to the kitchen and opened the fridge, his stomach doing a flip at all the options.

He hated eating. Sometimes he wished he could just eat a pill every day that had all the required nutrients and calories he needed and then he wouldn't have to think about it.

He wasn't really that hungry but maybe if he had something small now, he wouldn't need as big of a breakfast. He was really trying to enjoy food again, to try and be a little looser with his diet. He did love cooking with Ilya. It was fun. He liked working with ingredients, separating them out, mixing them together, getting the temperature just right, adding the right mix of spices and flavouring. He liked the science of it.

It's just that, sometimes all he could think about *was* the nutrients. Or the lack thereof. How many calories was in a meal? Was it the right kind of calories? What was the fat content? How much sugar? How much salt had they put in?

He really wanted to cut out carbs, but he knew Ilya wouldn't like that. He had gotten away with skipping them for the odd meal or day when he went hard on training, but if he pushed it beyond that he knew Ilya would roll his eyes or get frustrated with him.

At least during the week there was a chance Ilya would just make some sort of smoothie in the morning. Shane preferred those days. He could put it in an opaque tumbler and Ilya wouldn't notice how much he drank.

The days when Ilya wanted to make a full breakfast with eggs, sausage, pancakes, bacon...those were the hardest days. Shane would get nauseous thinking about the fat content. Anya liked it because Shane pretended to be weak to her puppy eyes and would give her scraps from his plate. He didn't like getting her in the habit of thinking food from the table was hers, but he was so strict with her in other areas that the appearance of looseness in this area made Ilya happy.

He grabbed an apple and some leftover brown rice.

He sat down on their couch and opened his phone; he'd done a big app purge yesterday. No more social media.

He'd even deleted the NHL, Sportsnet, and TSN apps.

Harris or his mom would text him when it was all clear to at least download those again.

He wished he hadn't done that interview.

Fuck.

He'd been in his fair share of hostile interviews, but they were always around hockey. He could handle those. He was trained for those.

Maybe doing an interview with an outlet called *Vulture* was a bad idea. Rose had said they were legit. He just hadn't expected such an aggressive interviewer. Harris had sensed something was off and had gone with him. Even though it wasn't his job, Shane was still appreciative. Harris said he knew the interviewer and that was why he prepped Shane, at the time Shane thought it was unnecessary, now he was incredibly grateful. It was probably the only reason it hadn't been a total disaster. He was going to have to send Harris a gift or something.

Almost the first question he was asked was "he going to take Ilya to Japan?"

Fuck he didn't know! Shane hadn't even been to Japan himself! They'd been so focused on hockey his whole childhood – his whole life – it had never come up. He didn't even like travelling that much. He did it so much for work, when he was on vacation he just wanted to stay home. He didn't speak Japanese either, he spoke three languages but apparently that didn't fucking matter.

Do you feel like you have overall been a good representative for Asians in the NHL?

You don't really come off as gay, has that made navigating the hockey world easier?

Do you think how you present yourself might change now that you are out?

What are you going to do to change the culture around hockey?

Do you feel like you are a positive representation in hockey?

Are you involved in the queer community?

How did your mom feel about you dating and marrying a white man?

That had only been the tip of it, he hadn't expected to be the be-all end-all of Asians and gay people in hockey. He had somehow managed to muddle his way through it, but fuck what a disaster.

Then the article came out.

He hadn't even realized some of the questions had been innuendos about his sex life. His mom and Harris had gotten some of them cut but apparently not enough for the internet to make memes.

He really hated the size comparison ones. It felt weirdly targeted. He and Ilya were roughly the same size, both like in actual body size and in dick size. Sure, Ilya was a bit bigger, but he had never felt small before. He also was pretty sure he wasn't. He hadn't even thought about it before. Now he thought about it too much. His mom had raged about it, the assumption that Asian guys had small dicks. It was awkward enough having your mom talk about your penis size, let alone defend it.

Then the reaction pieces came out. The opinion pieces. *Was* he good Asian representation? Did he even get to speak on behalf of Asians because he was *only* half? Was he an actual good gay? It doesn't seem like Shane Hollander knows anything about the gay community; can we trust him to be good representation when he has so little experience and connection to the community?

He'd told his mom and Harris he was done. He deleted everything. Didn't want to respond to anything. He would *not* make another statement. Harris did convince him to let him log in into his account and like a few "really good" response pieces, and to let those be his very subtle unofficial response. After that Shane was done.

He didn't want to talk about it. He didn't want to think about it. He just wanted to play fucking hockey. He just wanted it to be about hockey. He wanted to not think about the outside world and just focus on the task at hand, the next game, the next period, the next goal. That's the stuff that got him through *everything* in the past. Now he felt like he was losing that.

Shane wanted to throw up. He wouldn't, because that felt like a slippery slope. But he couldn't help but feel that he would feel *better* if he did.

He crouched down onto the floor. He was getting worked up. He hugged himself, trying to centre himself. Fuck.

After taking a few steadying breath's, he pulled himself up and went down to the basement and into one of their spare bedrooms and pulled out his weighted blanket. He hadn't used it since he and Ilya fully moved in together, but it helped in the past on the days and nights Ilya wasn't around.

He pulled it onto the spare bed. It wasn't that he didn't want to go back up to bed with Ilya, but he was beginning to feel so overwhelmed he was worried – he was worried... he didn't know, but it was just too much.

Shane had his life in boxes in his head.

He had his family box.

His hockey box.

His friends box.

His Ilya box.

His identity box.

His public persona box.

Having them that way made sense to him. It helped him understand them. Himself. Helped him figure out what to do next. He could make lists. Clarify. He didn't have to muddle things up. It was getting harder lately.

He'd felt decently secure about who he was most of his life. Now he wasn't so sure. He was told he was bad Asian male representation for being the bottom in his relationship. Not that he had said that in the interview, but people assumed that. Which was also fucked up! Then, there were the responses to that! Then people asked him to comment and clarify! Someone on the street had even approached him with their fucking phone in his face to ask! Ilya had put a quick stop to that, but then of course that just added fuel to the fire.

Then there was the whole conversation if he was *actually* Asian since he was only half. Which had enraged him and his mom. The world sure made him feel that he was only Asian up until a year ago and now suddenly maybe he shouldn't be counted because he was a gay bottom.

Some popular social media people on Instagram had apparently disavowed him since he was "barely gay". Ilya apparently got a pass because he had been pictured at a few gay clubs, but Shane didn't *like* clubs. Then of course him and Ilya turning down an appearance at Ottawa Pride because it overlapped with hockey school was brought back up *again*.

Couldn't he just be a fucking hockey player?

He understood he was different. He wasn't fucking blind. He *got it*. It had been drilled into him since his rookie year how important him being in the NHL was. How he was paving the way. Making the next kids' life easier. But that didn't mean he didn't struggle with the pressure. Was it really that crazy that he just wanted to be left alone? He just wanted to exist in fucking peace. Did he *have* to be all these things? Was that the deal he made when he decided to be a hockey player? Was that what he signed up for?

But Ilya loved all of it. Not the racist-homophobic shit. He just liked having everything mixed up together. He liked being everything and doing everything. He didn't need boxes like Shane did. He wanted everything overlapping. Like a paint canvas where all the colours have been mixed.

He loved Ilya so much. He made everything better. He was so overwhelmingly happy he sometimes didn't even know where to put that happiness.

But god he worried about him. Next to his Ilya box was his mental health box. Shane was trying his best to be supportive without crossing into overbearing. He had thrown out any sleeping pills they had in the house; he'd gone through their whole medicine cabinet to look up what could happen if you took too many of one. He'd also gone into their shed and removed anything that was rope-like. Their landscaper had been annoyed with him. He had all of Ilya's medication written down and was still in the process of reading medical journal articles he only half understood about them. He had also bought a Kindle so he could read

books about depression. He wanted to understand depression as much as possible. He wanted to know how to help Ilya. He didn't *ever* want to miss the signs.

Fuck.

He just wanted to turn his fucking brain off.

Shane pressed the palm of his hands into his eyes. Hard. He tried to take steady breaths. His skin felt prickly. He could feel *everything*. He just needed everything to stop moving. He just wanted everything to go back into their boxes.

He forced himself to lie under the weighted blanket. It helped a little. He set an alarm for 5 AM, enough time that he might be able to get back into bed with Ilya before he woke up. He put on his headphones, he'd never found those like sleeping podcasts or books very helpful in quieting his mind, but he recently had started listening to an audiobook of War & Peace in Russian. He found it relaxing. He could only understand the odd phrase or word but it often did the trick. Just hearing the language, the cadence of the words, it made him relax.

He pressed play and tried to block out the world.

*

When Shane's alarm went off, he had probably been asleep for an hour. It didn't feel like a real sleep, always just barely floating and never sinking into it, but it was better than nothing. The grogginess *did* help. He made his way back to their bedroom. Anya lifted her head when he came back in, but Ilya was still sound asleep. He crawled back in and let the exhaustion take over.

*

"Did you sleep all night?" Ilya asked, coming back into the kitchen with Anya right behind him, he had just taken her for her morning walk.

Shane smiled and pushed the breakfast he had made for Ilya towards him. He had his own plate in front of him that he had made look like he'd eaten. Egg residue, some leftover hashbrowns, the crust of the toast. He fed Anya the crust and gave her head a scratch, "Did you have a good walk?" he asked her.

He looked up at Ilya who was using his fingers to throw hashbrowns in his mouth.

"Not all night, woke up to pee and then got distracted by my phone." He tried to say easily, taking a sip of his tea. He turned away to put his dishes into the dishwasher, he could feel Ilya's gaze on him, but when he turned back to him Ilya put a sausage in his mouth and waggled his eyebrows.

Shane laughed and threw a rag at him, “Don’t even think about it, we’ve got practice this morning.”

If he just put these things in their boxes everything would be fine.

Chapter 2: Lists

Chapter Notes

My apologies to the knitting community

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

Ilya: Are you hiding in the car?

Shane: I'm not hiding.

Shane: I'm waiting in the car.

Shane was currently lying in the backseat, which didn't exactly help his argument, but the windows were tinted, and he just didn't feel like looking at anyone. Even people he knew.

Ilya was doing press. Or he had been doing press. There was an agreement that Shane wouldn't have to do any press for the next few games. Even though Harris had advised that getting it over with would help it become old news.

"Just tell them to fuck off." Ilya grinned, leaning against the wall as Shane spoke to Harris in the hallway.

Shane ignored him and Harris laughed and added, "But in a nice way."

"In nice boring polite Canadian way." Ilya translated.

Shane felt like dealing with the press when they were in this kind of a frenzy, desperate for a soundbite, was like dealing with a drunk guy at a bar who had just stolen your drink. A waste of time and energy, and you weren't going to get your drink back.

Ilya: I'll be there soon.

Shane went back to googling. He was trying to find a hobby. Something that could help distract him or take his mind off things. Knitting didn't sound fun. Maybe carpentry? They didn't really have a great set up for it. Maybe something with adrenaline. Something that didn't send him into a panic attack at the thought of him or Ilya getting killed. He'd like an activity. They could get into hiking with Anya. Maybe down the road, when he didn't dread the thought of running into other human beings who might recognize them.

He was still working on his Russian, maybe he could try translating something? Work on his writing? It might be fun to text Ilya in Russian. He chuckled to himself, maybe sexting would be easier in another language.

“What’s so funny?”

Shane jumped, dropping the phone on his face.

Ilya laughed as he opened the door, closing it behind him with his foot as he crawled into the backseat on top of Shane.

“I was just thinking about you,” Shane smiled, kissing him lightly on the side of his mouth.

“I don’t know if you should be laughing thinking of me,” Ilya’s hand roamed down and squeezed Shane’s dick through his sweats, “I’d prefer a different reaction.”

“But you’re so funny, practically a comedian,” Shane teased, pulling Ilya down for a proper kiss, “I think you should rethink careers.”

“I would, I would,” Ilya said back, breaking the kiss and starting down Shane’s neck, “But see, I’ve worked so hard to not travel without my husband that I think I’m just stuck.”

“Too bad, I hope you won’t be too disappointed.” Shane laughed as Ilya kissed his stomach, then moaned when Ilya went lower.

“Never,” Ilya growled, kissing his dick through his sweats.

A barrage of car honks suddenly sounded off.

“Fuck!” Shane yelled, jumping up. He knocked into Ilya who yelled out similarly though for different reasons.

He looked out the window and saw that it was an altercation between two other cars and not them.

“Shit, fuck! Sorry!” Shane said, moving closer to Ilya who rubbed his nose.

“You remember we are married? It would not be shocking that we do things in a car.”

Shane sputtered in horror, “I do *not* want pictures of us like *that* ever out there,” then added, “Even if we were a straight couple!”

Ilya gave him a look that Shane didn’t like, like he was looking for something. Shane turned away and crawled into the driver’s seat.

Ilya followed him to the passenger’s seat then kissed him on the cheek, “At home?” he asked, “This is okay?”

Shane looked at him, smiled and gave him a proper kiss on the mouth, “Of course it is.”

*

“It’ll be fun,” Ilya implored, following Shane into the bedroom.

“I know it’ll be fun, for *you*, which is why you should go!”

“But I want to have fun with *you*.” Ilya corrected him, pulling on Shane’s wrist so he had to look at him.

Shane knew there was a possibility that once he had just the right amount of alcohol and enough friends around him, he *could* have fun, but “I just don’t want to go out right now,”

They both knew what he meant.

“Shane. You cannot let things like this control you.”

“I don’t like clubs.” Shane said defensively, not appreciating that comment.

“We don’t have to dance.”

“People who stand in the corner of clubs not dancing are creepy.”

Ilya let out a loud laugh at that.

Shane lightly pushed him away, “Go. Go out and have fun. Let me stay home and be boring.”

Ilya held on to the hand Shane used to push him away, beginning to slowly pull him in closer to him.

“Ilya,” Shane warned playfully.

“Shane,” Ilya responded, drawing out his name. He pulled him in close and brought their lips together, not even pretending to be chaste before Ilya’s tongue slipped into his mouth. Ilya’s free hand cupped the side of his neck, his thumb moving firmly against his chin until it slipped into Shane’s mouth.

Ilya pulled back a breath away, “I will always rather be boring with you,”

Shane moved to kiss him again, but Ilya took a step back. Shane tightened his grip on Ilya’s hand as Ilya began to walk the two of them out of the bedroom.

“Where are we going?” Shane asked.

“To eat dinner,” Ilya said casually.

Shane pursed his lips, “You already ate.”

“I know, but you haven’t, and what I have planned I want you to be energized for.”

Fuck. Had he noticed? Shane *had* been eating, just not the things Ilya thought he was. He had been throwing out and pretending to eat the food they made together way more often than he used to, but he was still eating. Just, other things.

Ilya patted the barstool for Shane to sit at as Ilya moved around the kitchen. Ilya grabbed a ginger ale from the fridge and handed it to Shane, which he didn’t open but was happy to have something to fiddle with in his hands.

“Are you sure you don’t want to go out?” Shane tried again.

Ilya briefly looked back at him and smiled, “There will be other nights.”

“Fuck, I hope not,” Shane joked, and was pleased when he got a bark of a laugh out of Ilya, “What are you making?”

Maybe he could mentally prepare himself for it.

“I’ve been thinking you haven’t liked some of the meals we’ve made?” Ilya offered out casually, “So I asked Yuna and she said I should try fried rice. I looked up a recipe.”

Shane laughed a little at that, “You don’t need a recipe for fried rice. It’s leftovers.”

Ilya eyed him mischievously, “Okay Mr. Burgers.”

Shane tried to wiggle his shoulders to loosen the tension in them. He could do this.

Ilya pulled out the olive oil, Shane wished it had been the avocado oil. It would have been less fat

He grabbed the leftover white rice, even though they also had brown rice.

Eggs, so high in cholesterol and fat. He would prefer just the egg whites.

Chilli Oil, delicious but empty calories.

Soy sauce, way too high in sodium he really should have thrown out that bottle.

At least the vegetables were fine, he told himself, but still. Shane put the ginger ale down and massaged his neck, he felt nauseous.

He didn’t remember it being this bad before.

He was being an idiot; he should just talk to Ilya about this. Say it out loud. Ilya had, had his therapy appointment today. Sometimes he felt quite raw after them, maybe tomorrow would be better? Then Shane could plan out what he was going to say.

What would he even say? He knew something was wrong, but it just didn’t feel as big as other things. He didn’t think about killing himself. He wasn’t *not* eating. He just didn’t really like eating, he didn’t want to be hungry, he just wanted it to be easy. Healthy. Good for him. It really wasn’t that bad. He wasn’t throwing up, even if he sometimes wanted to. But it’s not like he actually did it. It wasn’t really worth worrying Ilya over.

*

Shane finished the bowl of fried rice. He was very aware of himself eating. Was he chewing too much? His swallowing seemed so performative. He could feel Ilya trying not to watch him eat. Which made him all the more self-aware while he was eating.

His stomach made an uncomfortable flip as he passed the bowl to Ilya to put into the dishwasher. He took a big swig of the ginger ale.

Shane stood up and walked over to the living room, which also didn't feel natural. How did he used to move about the house? He felt like he was performing.

"Hello Mr. Rozanov," Ilya's voice glided over Shane's ear as his arms wrapped around his waist.

Shane smiled, trying to relax into the touch, "Hello Mr. Hollander," turning his head so Ilya could kiss him.

Shane turned in his arms and pulled Ilya down onto the couch.

Ilya leaned down to kiss him, "You taste like chilli oil,"

"Hot," Shane joked.

"You are always hot," Ilya said, pressing another kiss to his lips and taking a nip at his bottom lip.

"Shut up," Shane replied, pulling at Ilya's hair.

"Never," Ilya kissed his cheek, "the world must know," he kissed his other cheek, "that I have the hottest husband in the world."

Shane kissed Ilya back. He wasn't feeling good. This wasn't making him feel good.

He pulled at the hem of Ilya's shirt. Ilya got the message and broke the kiss to pull off his and then Shane's shirt.

This would have been more enjoyable if he hadn't eaten, or if he'd eaten something else.

Sex always helped, Ilya always helped. He could stop thinking. He'd stop thinking any moment. All he would feel is Ilya.

Ilya kissed down his shoulder. Shane kissed and nipped at any piece of skin he could get his teeth on. Trying to be engaged. Ilya pulled out their cocks and began to slowly rub them together.

See, Shane thought, not that much difference.

"Okay?" Ilya asked.

"Yeah," Shane responded, he was. He was totally okay.

The pressure on his cock suddenly disappeared and instead Ilya pulled his and Shane's sweats back on.

"Shane." came Ilya's stern voice.

He opened his eyes. He hadn't even realized he'd closed them.

"What's wrong?"

Shane just lay there, staring at the ceiling. He felt so uncomfortable.

Shane sat up. He could feel Ilya was looking at him but he wouldn't meet his eyes.

When he saw Ilya reach out for him, he jumped up off the couch and made a beeline for the bathroom.

He didn't know what came first, the need to throw up or his stomach suddenly gurgling, but as soon as he was over the toilet he emptied out everything. Ilya must have been right on his toes because he could feel his hand on his back rubbing circles.

When he thought he was done, when that acidity in his stomach had burned its way up his throat and his stomach felt empty again, he took a shaky breath, and he spat into the toilet a few times and flushed.

Ilya was still right next to him, but he ignored him and went right to the sink, turning it on and scooping water into his mouth and spitting it out. He glanced at himself in the mirror, eyes red from the strain and sour smell of his puke. He didn't look at Ilya. He just sat on the ground and buried his head into his hands.

He could feel Ilya slide down to the floor with him.

After a moment he felt his hand on his, and Shane interlocked their fingers. Ilya moved in closer with that, wrapping him in a hug.

"I don't know why..." *I'm so bothered by this, but* he couldn't finish, he didn't realize how on the verge of tears he was.

"I'm right here,"

When you're ready.

Was what was unsaid but Shane knew.

Shane leaned into him, just feeling Ilya's hands as they held him, squeezed him, rubbed his shoulders and his back, kissed the top of his head.

Ilya was doing it in a rhythm. Shane focused on that rhythm.

After a few long moments Shane lifted his head and looked up at Ilya.

"There you are," Ilya smiled.

Shane laughed, a pathetic tear-filled laugh, but a laugh all the same.

“I don’t know why I can’t let it go,” Shane admitted, knowing Ilya knew what he was talking about, “It’s *all* I can think about.”

Ilya brought his fingers up to rub at Shane’s freckles, “As a very wise, very boring person once said to me. I think you should see a therapist.”

Shane leaned into the touch, “Okay,”

“The eating thing,” Ilya said more slowly, more carefully, “I think we should also talk to Terry.”

“Okay.” Shane answered, a little more miserably.

“I love you,” Ilya said, as if to remind him.

“I love you too,” Shane said, meeting Ilya’s eyes, though he still felt so small.

“We’ll make a list,” Ilya stated.

“You hate lists.”

“Lies.”

“You won’t even take one to the grocery store.”

“I like to wander.”

Shane smiled, but felt very tired, and a little done with the day.

“Hey,” Ilya said again, leaning in to give Shane a comforting kiss, even though he must taste and smell disgusting, “Let’s make a list.”

Shane just nodded.

“First, we will talk to Terry. Tomorrow. Then we can look up therapists, maybe Terry or Galina can recommend. Then we’ll make a list of them. List in a list. One thing at a time.”

Without prompting, Ilya stood up and dragged Shane up with him.

Shane felt a little like a zombie as Ilya walked them to their bedroom, helping Shane change out his clothes, and sending him to the washroom to brush his teeth, and then bringing him to bed.

Shane felt desperate for Ilya’s warmth and cuddled in as close as possible, “I’m sorry,” he finally said, “I didn’t want you to have to deal with this,”

Ilya leaned his forehead against Shane’s, “I’ll take care of you, you take care of me. That’s the deal. Okay?”

Shane smiled and kissed Ilya, “Okay.”

Chapter End Notes

Wrote this in far less of a rage than chapter 1, might even go back and make that more cohesive.

There was a lot more I had to say about what Shane's feeling vs what will inevitably be his role in NHL for the rest of his career, but ultimately I couldn't find a way that didn't feel like I wasn't standing on my soapbox. Maybe that's a future fanfic.

End Notes

Sort of written in response to me hearing people viewed Shane negatively after The Long Game, which was news to me. If Rachel Reid does decide to do a third book I hope we can spend some more time with Shane's ED. Or if she doesn't (which totally fair she isn't obligated to) that Jacob Tierney addresses it in S2 (I appreciated how he expanded on Shane's mixed race).

Also I was deeply annoyed at that carrot meme in one of the interviews Hudson and Connor did.

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