

i watched you fall from grace (you were graceful)

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by [worstthingiveverdone](#)

Summary

Ilya and Shane reflect on the past.

OR:

Time didn't quite heal old wounds.

Spoilers for The Long Game specifically. But also random spoilers for other books too, probably. I don't know I read them all at the same time and now my brain can barely differentiate what happened when.

Notes

any hockey inconsistencies should not be blamed on me. I don't do hockey. I really hope this lives up to these characters and that I captured them well.

Title comes from best guess by Lucy Dacus because nothing says MLM like a lesbian song. #solidarity.

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

Ilya was expecting to have a calm night in, comfortably relaxing in his home with his husband.

He and Shane had curled up together on their large couch after a day of grueling drills and practice, Anya happily asleep on her bed beside the couch. The Centaurs took on Montreal the next evening, something that both excited and stressed Shane out.

Playing Montreal for Shane meant facing his former teammates and coaches on the ice. Despite the 3 seasons he had spent apart from the team, many of the faces were familiar if not entirely familial. And while time had healed wounds with many of his past teammates, it was still... fragile.

However, the benefit of facing Montreal was that Shane (and by extension, often Ilya) got to see Hayden and J.J off the ice. They normally got lunch or dinner together the day of a game - if the game was before the meal, then the winner paid. It was cute. Though he loathed to admit it, Ilya did genuinely appreciate seeing Hayden Pike (though he often wished he had brought his much superior wife and children along) and had grown less icy towards J.J over the years.

This was largely due to how happy it made Shane to see his friends. It wasn't easy for him to leave Montreal - despite the choice being correct and beneficial in the long-run. Even after years of playing for his hometown team, the Centaurs, he still hadn't fully recovered from not being a Voyageur. Ilya understood to an extent. Although he had left Boston for less tenuous reasons, he did find himself missing the crowds and the city life he had grown so familiar with. Especially because Ottawa sucked when he had joined.

They didn't suck anymore though.

In fact, The Centaurs were currently sitting first in the Eastern Division and had their eyes set on winning the cup for the third time. They had won against the Admirals during Shane's first season on the team and then had won again last season against Colorado. In 5 years, Ottawa had turned from a death sentence to a newly emerging hockey dynasty. And many people credited the success to Shane Hollander, although that wasn't entirely fair. The team had been getting good the second Wyatt Hayes and Ilya himself had started but had especially

improved with the arrival of Troy Barrett. All they needed was motivation. And Shane's arrival brought plenty of that.

Speaking of his husband - Shane's head was resting on Ilya's shoulder. His eyes were closed, but he wasn't sleeping. Ilya knew this because the evening had consisted of random commentary from Shane piercing the otherwise gentle silence.

It was almost all "game talk" as Shane worked through how he imagined the game to go, who was set to be playing, anything he could think of. Ilya entertained these random thoughts as best as he could, but he also did not burn with the desire to think about hockey constantly the way Shane did.

"So," Shane started, eyes still closed, "I think Wiebe will probably start you as center tomorrow, given the attitude of the Voyageurs right now. You are the perfect person to crack them open and win the initial face-off's, throwing them off their game. You're always better starting against them anyways."

Ilya moved his arm from where it had been resting on the tops of the cushions and brought it to Shane's hair, curling strands around his fingers.

"Do you have any requests for what I should say to Johnson?" Cody Johnson was the center brought in after Shane left, he was only 23 and had ridiculous speed and accuracy but he was also deeply arrogant. This was fine. Ilya loved getting into arrogant people's heads.

Shane finally opened his eyes, turning his head to face Ilya. "No. I don't bleed creativity like you do. Insults aren't my thing."

"Yes I know. You are very boring."

Shane rolled his eyes, but Ilya saw the sparkle woven into them. He pushed Ilya's arm lightly.

“Okay. Guess I’ll just be super boring and go straight to bed tonight. So I can wake up and be productively boring tomorrow. And have a boring lunch with Hayden and J.J.”

Ilya chuckled and patted Shane’s cheek, as if he were a petulant child. “Yes. Boring won you like 3 Stanley Cups. Why stop now? We need one this year. If you get fun all of the sudden then we will lose. This is what matters, Hollander. Routines. And...” he pauses trying to recall the word he was teaching for, “superstitions. Because you cannot score a goal if you don’t juggle three hockey pucks on your right knee every morning.”

Shane muttered something with a huff, sitting up fully against the couch now.

Ilya leaned into Shane and cupped his ear, “hmm? I did not understand. Please repeat.”

“You’re an ass,” Shane laughed as he shoved Ilya backward, “and you’re a liar. You have superstitions.”

Ilya pulled his hand to his chest in mock offense. Arguing with Shane never got old. It almost made him miss playing on opposing teams. Almost.

“Not true! A superstition is something fucking stupid like wearing socks inside out or being boring. I do nothing like those things.”

“You are such a liar.”

Ilya grabbed at Shane’s face - cupping his cheeks in his hands and squishing them together. “I never lie. Never have lied. You know this.”

Shane opened his mouth as if ready to retort, before pausing, obviously trying to think of instances where Ilya has lied to him. Ilya spread his arms out behind him, making himself comfortable as Shane sat thinking. It was always fun to challenge Shane - it had been Ilya’s favorite thing about their interactions outside of well... sexual activities. Their rapport on and

off the ice had always just been more fun than anyone else Ilya interacted with. No one came close to Shane Hollander. In so many ways. In every way that mattered.

Ilya grinned to himself as he took in the serene quiet of their home - punctured only by Anya's sleeping breaths and the crackle of the fireplace. It was still sometimes difficult to accept that this was reality. That Ilya no longer had to wait to see Shane a meager few times a year. That he didn't have to rush with him so that they could maximize their limited time together. That they could just sit like this and not have to miss one another.

Finally, after what felt like minutes of comfortable quiet, Shane looked up at Ilya ready with a response. But his face lacked the light that Ilya was expecting given the tone of the conversation.

"When you said you were fine, or good, or whatever. All those times. All those times you were sitting alone in this house after you lost a match, or had a rough day, and you didn't tell me. You lied." Shane ducked his head slightly, obviously not completely confident in his choice of tone shift.

Ilya felt his smile fall down his face. He sighed, moving his arms so he could scrub at his face before taking a deep breath and moving one of his hands to tip Shane's chin upward while the other covered the tightly clasped hands that sat on Shane's thigh.

"Hey," he started, forcing Shane to look into his eyes. He didn't look regretful or ashamed. He looked sad. He looked tired. This was not something Ilya wanted to talk about. The years of therapy and medication helped massively with his symptoms and thoughts in the present but did little to alleviate the pain that came with his past. "I'm sorry. It was a...difficult time for me. For many reasons. But it was also a perfect time for me. For us. For you. I did not see a point in complaining, in risking all I had because it was for some reason not good enough."

They really never talked much about the season before Shane joined the Centaurs. The season they got engaged, they "came out", the season everything changed. It was something that made both Ilya and Shane uncomfortable. Despite individual therapy and couples counseling, they never rushed to address their feelings with one another during that period of their lives. Ilya much preferred to let the bad memories of that time stay in that time. But it's true. Those few seasons, especially that last season, between Shane & Ilya's becoming an official couple and their marriage were, at their lowest points, nothing short of agonizing for Ilya. Shane too, but for very different reasons.

Shane looked into Ilya's eyes. "But you deserved to be helped. To be heard - good thoughts or bad. I'm sorry you couldn't trust me to hear them. To hear you."

Ilya moved his hand back from Shane's chin to scratch at the back of his head before he looked back into Shane's eyes, as serious as he could possibly appear.

"It was not that I did not trust you, Shane," he sighed, trying to figure out how to best express himself. Despite nearing half of his life spent living and operating in English, he still often found himself grasping for words and clarity. "I don't know. Was difficult. I was confused, embarrassed. And sometimes I was even scared. I could not risk not having you anymore. You were all I had."

Shane unclasped his hands, bringing one to rest on Ilya's face, the tips of his fingers laying on top of Ilya's cheekbone, while his thumb slowly caressed his lip.

Neither Shane nor Ilya were big "criers". Hockey was, at the worst of times, a grossly masculine sport that shunned emotion outside of anger and pride. There were emotional players, sure, but that often didn't result in tears being shed. Through therapy, they had both begun to find more comfort in being emotional and expressing emotions even if that meant through tears, but it still wasn't intrinsic.

"I love you and I wanted to help you," Shane said in Russian. Ilya often found himself proud of his husband's progress, but never surprised. Because Shane was perfect at many things. Most things. Languages were apparently one of them. It would've been annoying if his face wasn't so soft, so intentional. He turned back to English, "I always want to help you. Rain or shine. Good or bad. There is never a time where if you call out my name I won't come running. Then, now, always."

Ilya let out a watery laugh. "Yes. I think you proved that after our first NHL awards." Shane grumbled good naturedly and Ilya sobered up.

They were looking into each other's eyes. It was quiet.

Ilya spoke in Russian, “it has gotten better. The days are so often good that I forget even the slightest possibility of bad.” Shane’s eyes were watery and it made Ilya want to break down and sob. It hurt to remember how lost he was, how desperate. How scared. And he knew that Shane was full of guilt. Despite Ilya’s many attempts to tell him that it wasn’t his fault, or you couldn’t have known, or even just you did what you could. He knew that the idea of Ilya’s lowest points were horrifying to Shane. The implications of what could have happened. What was happening to them by that point.

He switched back to English. “But bad always comes. It always has. And we cannot do anything about it except let it happen.”

“Ride the wave?” Shane’s voice was thick with emotion.

Ilya smiled softly. His love of Shane Hollander was never forgotten, but it was moments like these that made his chest hurt in pure adoration. Despite being together officially for half a decade - and unofficially about 15 years, Ilya was not still fully adjusted to how much he loved Shane. In every way. And he was especially still navigating being the purest form of himself. Not just to Shane. But internally. Accepting his depression had been truly one of the most difficult parts of his life to come to terms with - he hadn’t struggled with coming out like Shane did. Or even being into men like Shane did.

That was a principle difference between them and something that had made Ilya’s depressive state worse in the time before they came out. Ilya had never been shy with his sexuality. Afraid? Slightly. But never shy. He knew the consequences of being into men. He knew them acutely compared to Shane. He could never return to Russia safely once he told the world who he was. Shane had no worries like that. Yet Ilya was the one with more desire to come out, to be honest. Perhaps it’s because he didn’t want Russia. Russia had nothing left to offer him except the memories of childhood with his mother. When happiness poked through the frigid air. When he could forget about his brother, his father, the expectations on his back, and instead spend time with his mother.

But he hadn’t spent time with his mother for a long time. And Ilya was partially convinced his love of Russia died when he found her hand limp. Because after Irina Rozanova’s passing, Russia became nothing except expectations and failures and hiding.

So, it was fair to say that perhaps Ilya had less to lose than Shane did by coming out. Ilya had a supportive team who didn’t hate Shane Hollander, a kind coach, and a LGBTQ+ safe

environment where Wyatt Hayes talked openly about his sister and her wife, where Harris wore pride pins up his entire vest and no one blinked when he was in the locker room.

Shane had come out to his team years before they officially were out together. Ilya actually never got that chance. But Shane's team was cooler, their arms weren't spread as wide. And Ilya had heard some of the shit said by disgusting players like Dallas Kent in the wake of Shane's sexuality becoming known (quietly) league-wide.

But more importantly, Montreal fucking hated Ilya Rozanov. Even after his moving from Boston to Ottawa. Shane's best friends loathed him and the idea of being gay was so very different than acting on it. Acting on it with a direct competitor. Acting on it with someone you could lose for.

Not that either of them had ever done that. They were much too competitive to willingly lose to one another. But the questioning of integrity was something Shane was acutely aware would happen, Ilya knew. And it was something Shane was terrified of because hockey was his life.

This is where so much of that conflict arose. Because Shane was out and no one cared, but he refused to be out with Ilya, because people would care. And that had meant Ilya didn't get to be out. Because it was too obvious. That Ilya couldn't talk about why he was in Ottawa, why he chose one of the worst teams in the league when he was one of the best centers to ever play the game. Or where he went during off days. Or why he was the happiest he had ever been in his entire life.

So when that happiness began to melt away into emptiness, into anger, into desperation, Ilya had felt so lost. And tired. But he knew he couldn't ask Shane to just come out. It wasn't fair to ask him to potentially jeopardize his career so Ilya could stop hiding. So they could both stop hiding. And that led to Ilya trying to bury it away. Which worked horribly, of course. And Shane noticing, to which Ilya shut him down.

Ilya lied to protect Shane and himself. He wanted nothing less to guilt Shane with his feelings. That wasn't the way to build a life together. But he also didn't want Shane to see him as broken or weak. And he knew that was so stupid. He knew mental health was important, they had a whole fucking foundation built to aid mental health services. He was the one who told Ryan Price to quit hockey for his mental health. He was the one who

encouraged Eric Bennett to be honest with himself, the one who sat and watched Troy Barrett carefully until he was able to open his heart.

But Ilya did not do those things. To be fair, he had no interest in quitting hockey. He did truly love playing. It was a vice unlike anything else in his life - something he was just innately good at. And he was confident in his sexuality. But he preached honesty and self acceptance then pushed himself into a corner, hiding his darkness in the deepest recesses of his heart and soul. Letting them build to a fever pitch.

And stupid perfect Shane noticed. Ilya had never been more terrified in his life than when he told Shane he was depressed. That perhaps he had always been depressed. That there was a potential he always would be.

Since that season, since the almost plane crash, since the proposal, the outing, Ilya had worked to be honest with not just Shane but himself. But time had not healed all of their old wounds. And obviously, Shane saw that it was time to finally rip the bandage off and begin properly treating one of the deepest wounds Ilya had. That they both had.

“I should have told you. I remember thinking that if I told you, you would see me differently. That you would realize I was not worth the stress. The hiding. And I didn’t know why I would ever be able to do without you. I had changed my whole life - willingly, eagerly - to be with you and be in your life. I do believe it benefited me too, though. And I do not say that enough I think. I met Hazy because I moved teams. I started going to community events, meeting kids in hospitals. I got to help others. I hated losing. But there was a sort of... freedom in being a losing team. We got to be more fun. We got to build real team. If I had been with Boston, I would still have had friends. But not the same. And I would not have Anya. That is most important.”

Shane gave a wet snort. Tears had escaped his eyes, pulling down past his freckled cheeks. Anya had seemingly heard her name and looked up at Shane and Ilya lovingly before nestling back into her bed.

Shane moved his arms so that he was encircling Ilya and Ilya let himself fall into his arms, placing his head on Shane’s chest. He felt tears prickle in his eyes and let them fall with a blink. Shane kindly rubbed circles into his back, placing his own head atop Ilya’s. The fact this was his reality - spending an evening with Shane with no rush - never ceased to amaze him. Towards the end of their time as a couple in hiding, Ilya often found himself fantasizing

about movements like these, domestic and simple, more than he did about sex. Sex was in many ways less vulnerable than sitting on a couch and crying.

He remembered many freezing Ottawa evenings, after practices or even games where he would come home to his large house alone. Shane would send him congratulatory texts, or call him depending on his own schedule but that didn't change that Ilya was sitting alone in a massive house with no one to kiss his head and hug him. He wanted the soft touches, the kind words, the gentle moments. He wanted the sex too, still. Very much so. But most evenings, he just wanted to be able to smile at Shane face to face and eat dinner with him and wake up unhurriedly beside him.

And now, now he had that. In a way he could not have possibly imagined. He had never once thought he and Shane would play on the same team, live in the same house, hold each other's hands during take-off on the plane. But they could now. And they did.

He no longer had to text Shane "I miss you" while he lay alone in a sterile hotel room. They could lay in the sterile room together. He no longer had to find the time and excuses to watch Shane play hockey on a TV screen - watch his brilliance, his complete and utter determination on the ice. Because he was there to see it every time. And Shane watched him too.

And while he did miss the antagonist rhythm he got into when he and Shane faced one another on the ice, he couldn't possibly compare it to the way it felt to play beside him. Their play styles were very compatible and they both knew this. Everyone knew it. Ottawa had certainly redeemed itself and became a worthy competitor before Shane signed with the team. But afterwards? They were scary on the ice. The Hockey world was aghast the first time Ilya and Shane stepped on the ice together, their strengths on the ice had many differences but together, they played off one another spectacularly. If they weren't playing together on power plays, it was likely that Ilya had taken a winger position to Shane's center. This didn't happen often though, because both Shane and Ilya weren't of the opinion they deserved to be on the ice more than anyone else. And Ilya playing right of Shane meant someone else didn't have the opportunity. So while their individual goals had gone down in the seasons since they united under the Centaurs, it was worth it because they were playing record-setting hockey. And, it was practically impossible to not have one all-star center playing almost all the time.

Ilya had happily taken a pay cut to let Shane be on the team with a reasonable contract. He didn't need the money. He wanted to get another cup. He wanted to not be apart from his husband. A couple million dollars less a year was an easy trade-off.

They sat in silence for a while, Ilya's face burrowed into Shane's chest. He eventually heard Shane sigh lightly.

"You know," Shane started, his voice reverberating off Ilya's skull, "it's much harder for you to lie about your feelings when we're on the same team. No phone screens to hide behind. No aggression on the ice to distract me with."

Ilya removed himself from Shane's chest, moving so his forehead was against Shane's. He laughed lightly, "yes. Is great because I can also see you better too and be able to..." he paused, leaning backwards and away from Shane's face, moving his arm to gesture as he searched for the words, "read your mood?" The last part was said questioningly as he tried to remember if that was the right expression.

Shane broke into a bright smile and nodded. His smile dimmed once he replied though.

"I just hate to think of you feeling so sad. So lonely. I still feel like such a fucking idiot and a dick for missing so many signs."

"I did not want you to see them, though. So really you were just following orders, yes?" Ilya moved his hand to the back of Shane's head, carding the still long hair through his fingers. Shane frowned slightly and Ilya sighed. "Busy lives, Shane. Sometimes we see what we want to see. You are not the only one who did not notice feelings or ignored them. We both know this."

Ilya paused, then in Russian added, "we are both guilty of the same crimes. Even in this moment."

Shane nodded in agreement. Though his Russian speaking was still a work in progress, his understanding was close to fluent. He had told Ilya that he worked hard on it because he wanted Ilya to have space to be his most authentic self to Shane. He wanted Ilya to speak his mind without searching for words in the English language that meant what he needed them to, even if he could only reply in broken Russian. It was one of the most charming and romantic things Ilya had ever seen. So, while often content speaking in English with Shane,

he did choose to switch between the two languages. He knew Shane was eager to learn and integration was the best way.

Ilya leaned into Shane smiling and kissed him. The kiss was not particularly lustful or passionate, instead soft and purposeful. They had both wrapped their arms around each other, pressed against one another. They stayed like that for a while, exchanging gentle kisses and finding solace in each other's warmth.

Eventually though, Shane moved away from Ilya, stretching as he pulled himself off the couch. Ilya liked to call him "old man" sometimes because he knew it drove him crazy, especially as he eased his way into his 30s. Ilya was of course only about a month younger, but he certainly enjoyed any excuse to make Shane flustered.

Anya wagged her tail as she followed him into the kitchen and Ilya found himself laying on the couch, staring at the ceiling. He could hear Shane pattering around the kitchen, the fridge opening as he reached for a ginger ale probably.

Yep, definitely a ginger ale, Ilya thought when he heard the crisp snap of a can being opened.

He liked to joke about Shane being boring. But those were meant unseriously for the most part. What Shane was was consistent and predictable. Ilya had known about Shane's love of ginger ale for almost as long as he had known him - it was one of the first things he knew about Shane outside of hockey and well, sex.

Ilya groaned slightly as he sat up and looked toward Shane who was reentering the living room with a ginger ale and a glass of water.

"Hollander, will you be mad when coach starts me as center again? It's been a while since you were first. I know you think I'll get put in the crack team open but maybe I'll be first because I am always a starter."

Shane laughed as he sat down, placing the drinks on coasters that sat on the coffee table. He gave a weak roll of the eyes, smiling as he retorted, "okay fuck you too asshole. I started against Detroit."

Ilya reaches towards the coffee table, grabbing his glass of water and taking a sip, “that was 2 months ago.”

“You are such a dick, rozanov . You know damn well the Detroit game was barely 2 weeks ago. And I started the 3 games proceeding that too.”

Ilya looked at Shane, eyes sparkling, put his glass down, and leaned into Shane - who immediately wrapped arm around Ilya. “Yes, I know.”

He snuggled into Shane pausing before adding, “but... I will start more.”

Shane looked down at him, exasperated yet fond and played into it. “Okay sure. Whatever. I have more Stanley Cups.”

Ilya laughed, “Right. But those are ancient, Hollander. Your bones are basically brand new since then. Whole new Shane, no cup for new Shane.”

Shane crinkled his nose, “what are you even talking about?”

“Is science. They say every 7 years, your whole body is new.”

Scoffing, Shane replied, “yeah that’s definitely not the full truth.”

“I have won 2 cups in 3 years Hollander, try and compete.”

“I’ve won 3 in 4? Which is way fewer years than 7. Seriously, did you get slapped with a stick at some point today and I didn’t see? Or have you always been this bad at math?”

They both laughed warmly. Ilya loved that they could still banter like they did as kids. He loved that Shane matched his energy, his joy in trash talking. It was one of the things he found so compelling about Shane, because he was an otherwise pretty nonchalant player on the ice. But Ilya brought the sports talk out of him. And it was great fun to see polite Shane Hollander be an asshole.

“But were you MVP? Because I remember being MVP. Twice. But I do not know, maybe my head is wrong.” He pouted toward Shane, who responded with a light slap across his shoulder.

But he was laughing. And there were few sounds that made Ilya happier than Shane’s laughter.

“Would you like to head to the trophy room and count? That way we can see nice and clear who has more awards, trophies, and MVPS. And then you can beg for forgiveness when you realize how many more accomplishments and accolades I have.” Shane said the last part while patting Ilya’s cheek patronizingly.

Ilya smiled brightly, and slightly seductively. He looked up at Shane through his eyelashes, “I was hoping you would say trophy room.”

Shane’s eyes went dark and he moved to get up. “Well, I don’t suppose there’s much else to do this evening. Guess you must count my trophies.”

Ilya feigned nonchalance as he also stood and responded, “race you!” He took off towards upstairs, as he heard Shane groan behind him.

Once they both reached the trophy room, with a slight pant, Shane pointed at him and gave an accusatory glare.

“You are such a fucking cheater!”

“Okay. What do you want to do about it?”

Shane grinned like a mad man.

He opened the door, gesturing with his hand not on the handle, “why don’t you come in and see?”

Ilya laughed and followed him inside.

Not exactly how he was expecting this evening to go, but he supposed it wasn’t too bad.

—

The end.

End Notes

I haven't written fic in forever! So sorry if this is bad. If my grammars bad and it's Ilya speaking - that's on purpose. Otherwise... just ignore it!

I love Ilya and Shane and love character studying them both they are just such fascinating characters & the TV show really brought their subtleties to life.

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