

There's nowhere to go but on

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/76866036) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/76866036>.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid , Heated Rivalry_(TV)
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov
Additional Tags:	Hurt/Comfort , Emotional Hurt/Comfort , Anxiety Attacks , Panic Attacks , set at the cottage , Author has read the books , I'm Bad At Tagging , Vulnerability , Abandonment Issues , soft intimacy , Emotional Intimacy , But this is based on the TV show , Author loves the em dash and will die on that hill
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2026-01-01 Words: 2,554 Chapters: 1/1

There's nowhere to go but on

by [dovaogedys](#)

Summary

The first night they spend together at the cottage, and the emotions of the day overwhelm Shane. Ilya gets caught in the crossfire.

Notes

I got stuck in my head about panic attacks. So, there.

I have read the books, but this is based on the show. I've seen the show enough times that they should probably take my internet, but because I'm bad at processing I'm still in my feels about the tuna melt(down). So, you know. There.

Over 20 years of writing and this is the second time I publish, please be gentle.

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

Shane wondered how long he had been staring when he noticed his eyes stinging, and he forced them to blink. He could hardly make out the shapes of the trees outside the window but tried to trace them anyway, just to keep his mind occupied. It was something, and it was just enough to allow him to control his breathing and keep the enormous wave of emotion at bay. It had been such a perfect day he didn't want to end it by fighting against tears, but he couldn't help it. The rollercoaster he'd been on had left him breathless, and now it felt like instead of pulling to a stop he was in free fall, hurtling toward – something, he didn't know.

He counted the branches that he could see sticking out over the edges of the window frame, tried to concentrate on making out one from the other. It was too dark, he couldn't focus. He closed his eyes tightly enough for stars to burst into his vision, then opened them again and stared out into what he could see of the room.

Five things I can see, he thought. He wasn't panicking, he didn't think so, but he felt like anything might push him over the threshold and he would be damned if he allowed it. Not here, not today. He glanced at the soft light of the clock on the bedside table, the lamp he wished he could turn on, the curtains. The trees swaying softly outside, the little sliver of the lake he couldn't really see but knew was there.

Four things I can touch, he forced himself to think, and closed his fingers around the sheet under his hand. He closed his eyes again and focused on the feeling of clothes against his skin, the feeling of the cool air on his shoulder and arms, the tickle of his hair on his forehead.

Three things I can hear, he repeated in his head. *Fuck, myself being an idiot*, he thought. He sighed and pushed himself to focus on sounds outside of his head. The soft rustle and hum of the noise outside of the cottage was so familiar, and it usually could lull him into sleep. The sound of some bird, somewhere.

The sound of soft, slow breathing behind him.

He turned, careful not to jostle the bed more than necessary, and settled on his back. Taking a moment to take a few deep breaths, he turned to look to his right.

In the low light in the room he couldn't exactly make out Ilya's face, but he knew it so well by now that he could fill in the blanks. Even in the dark, Ilya was breathtakingly beautiful. Shane wondered if he would ever be able to put it into words, describe how every time those eyes met his he could feel himself simultaneously being grounded and floating on air. Every time that low voice rumbled in his ears he felt like he was laser focused and falling into space at the same time.

Ilya sighed in his sleep and his left arm moved until the back of his hand was pressed against Shane's hip. *Two things I can smell*, Shane thought vaguely, his eyes locked on the curve of Ilya's gently parted lips, but the thought didn't make it further in his mind. His attention was firmly divided on the sight before him and the touch at his hip.

He's here, Shane told himself, *he's here and this is something*. He turned his head until he was staring at the ceiling, fighting against another crash of emotion that felt like a band around his chest. He drew in a sharp breath when he felt prickling at the corners of his eyes, blinking fast to try and stave it off. Trying to steady his breathing felt like an insurmountable task, he was losing his grip as he tried to control himself.

The day had been all he could've asked for, everything he had let himself hope for when he wasn't catastrophizing over things that could go wrong. Ilya was here, he'd made it through the airport without being recognized, first hurdle done. Shane had picked him up and they'd made it to the cottage, where everything was perfect, he had made sure. They had enough food, nobody would bother them. *I remembered to buy the coke*, he frantically reminded himself, as if that hadn't been at the top of his shopping list and the first thing in his cart.

He squeezed his eyes shut, horrified to find tears pushing themselves out despite his efforts. His breath stuttered and a gasp escaped his lips. He fidgeted like he was trying to force the soft sound back into his mouth, but instead let out another one –

“Shane?”

His eyes flew open as he sat up quickly, pressing his hands on his own chest. *You woke him up*, he scolded himself, *you idiot, stupid, stupid, stupid*.

“Shane,” he heard again. The voice, rough with sleep, cut through the noise ringing in his ears. He flinched when a warm hand pressed on his bicep. “What is it?”

Shane forced himself to pull in a breath, shaking his head quickly. He wasn't going to do this, not today, not here, not when he finally had – not when Ilya was finally here. He squeezed his eyes shut tighter and leaned closer to the heat radiating off Ilya's sleepy skin.

“What can I do?” Ilya asked quietly, his thumb drawing circles on Shane's skin and his warm breath ghosting over his bare shoulder.

“Nothing,” Shane choked out, going for as normal a tone as he could but even to his own ears it sounded tight, pained. Ilya shifted closer and his hand tightened on Shane's arm. “I'm just – I can't –,” Shane tried, then groaned and let his head hang closer to his knees. He couldn't explain, he hated it. How was he supposed to tell Ilya what he was feeling, that the fact that he was feeling *so much* was what was the matter, it sounded insane in his head.

“You can't what? Hollander, look at me,” Ilya said. Shane heard his tone change, something sharper, and knew he was fucking this up.

“No,” he mumbled, “I can't, I can't – I'm sorry,” he bit out, shaking his head again. He took in a strained breath, gripped the sheets in one hand, and started counting in his head. First in English, then in French. Then, with what felt like enormous effort, he counted in Russian, as far as he could remember. He mixed up six and seven, like he always did, and tried again. In his head he slowly enunciated each word, concentrating on the different s-sounds. He had listened to number six so many times, trying to pinpoint and mimic the sounds.

Slowly, painfully, his breathing started to feel like something his body was supposed to do, instead of some unnatural process he was forcing on it. His hand relaxed from its grip, and pins and needles exploded in the tips of his fingers. He winced at the feeling, but it helped clear his mind. He drew in more breaths, each steadier than the last, controlling each exhale carefully.

Suddenly he became aware that the warmth was gone from his arm. The place where Ilya's hand had been felt cold. He opened his eyes, blinking stars out of them, and turned to his side. He realized the lamp on the other side of the bed was lit, bathing the room in soft light.

Ilya was staring at him, and for a horrifying second Shane didn't even recognize him, the look on his face so unfamiliar. His eyes were wide, staring at him unwaveringly. His mouth was open just a fraction, like he had stalled just as he was about to say something. His hands were in his lap, open and limp, and his chest was hardly moving.

Shane's brow furrowed and he gulped in a final, steadying breath before he could trust his voice. "Ilya," he said, softly enough that it almost didn't make a sound. Ilya didn't react. It was like he was frozen in place.

Shane's frown deepened and he made an aborted move to reach out, stopping himself from touching just a few inches from Ilya's hand. He wasn't sure what made him stop, but something about the hollow look in Ilya's eyes made Shane think of a caged animal, something to approach with caution. He tried to ask, but he managed only a small sound. His mind supplied possible reasons, each worse than the one before, of how Ilya was disgusted with him, how he thought Shane was weak, how he wouldn't want someone so fragile.

The look on Ilya's face wasn't disgust, though. Shane hadn't seen this expression on him before, but he had seen something similar, something close to this, and he realized what he was looking at was fear. Visceral, deep-rooted fear.

"Ilya," he breathed again, relieved to hear his voice sounding like something he recognized. He moved his hand the last few inches to grip Ilya's hand. It felt cold in his. "I'm okay, I'm fine," he said, squeezing Ilya's fingers.

The soft orange light of the lamp bounced off the skin on Ilya's throat as he swallowed, his Adam's apple bobbing up and down. Shane shifted, turning to face Ilya. His mind still felt like he was trying to think through molasses and he frowned deeper, as if scrunching his forehead could actually make him think harder.

"Ilya, what –"

"Please," Ilya whispered, still staring at Shane, "don't." Shane opened his mouth again, to ask, to clarify, when he remembered the only other time this had happened. When he had panicked in front of Ilya, with the taste of tuna and cheese still coating his tongue, with his skin still burning everywhere Ilya's hands had roamed, with his own first name still ringing in his ears.

I can't – I can't do this. I'm sorry.

“No.” The word slipped from his lips before his head caught up, but when it did a different kind of panic roared into life, instead of paralyzing it forced him to move. “No, no, not that,” he said, scrambling to his knees to face Ilya fully and lifting his free hand to touch Ilya’s cheek. Ilya’s unwavering stare finally faltered at the touch, he winced and closed his eyes.

“Please, don’t leave me again,” he murmured, his voice breaking on the last word, and Shane was horrified to realize Ilya was fighting against tears.

“No, Ilya, I wasn’t – look at me, please, I’m not going anywhere,” Shane said frantically, his other hand bracketing Ilya’s face now, trying to force his eyes back on him. Ilya’s breath shuddered, his lips pressed into a sharp line. Shane did the only thing he could think of, throwing the sheets off them and his leg over Ilya’s, straddling him and pressing his lips to Ilya’s forehead.

“I’m sorry, it wasn’t that, I was just overwhelmed,” he murmured between kisses. Ilya wrapped his arms around Shane and leaned into him, his grip tightening like he was trying to merge them together. “I promise, Ilya, I’m not going anywhere. I’m not letting you go, either.” Somewhere in the back of his mind Shane was startled at the conviction in his own voice, but he brushed it off.

Ilya finally opened his eyes and Shane almost whimpered at the sea of emotion he saw swimming in the blue. He pressed their foreheads together and let one hand trail to Ilya’s chest, pressing over his sternum. His fingertips touched the cross, warm from resting against skin. He took a deep breath, wordlessly begging Ilya to match him, and almost cried out when, stuttering, Ilya did.

“I’m not going anywhere,” he whispered again, trying to press his body closer to Ilya and hating the way the man was trembling in his arms. He kept his breathing steady, concentrated on the rise and fall of Ilya’s chest under his hand, steadier with every breath.

“Sorry,” Ilya mumbled after what felt like a small eternity, leaning back enough to lift his head but not quite meeting Shane’s eyes. “I should not have – I wanted to help you.”

“You did,” Shane said quickly, and when Ilya let out a singularly mirthless chuckle Shane shook his head. “No, I mean it. You being here, it’s..” he trailed off, trying to find the words. Ilya glanced up at him before shifting his eyes back down again, but it was enough for Shane to see the edges of fear still lingering in his eyes. “I’m so happy you’re here. I just got in my head about all this, I didn’t mean to scare you.”

“Not scared,” Ilya muttered right away, and Shane couldn’t help smiling at the sulking he clearly heard in the tone. He risked trying to guide Ilya’s face up again, and this time Ilya let him, letting their eyes meet and linger.

“Okay,” Shane allowed, the smile still on his face. Ilya’s eyes flickered to his mouth and back again, and the corner of his lips twitched. “I didn’t mean to *worry you*, then.” Shane corrected. Ilya scoffed softly, like he knew Shane was humoring him. They looked at each other a long time, until one of Ilya’s arms unwrapped itself from Shane’s waist with what looked like considerable effort, and he lifted it to trace Shane’s cheek with his thumb.

“You are okay?” Ilya asked softly. Shane could almost feel Ilya’s gaze on his skin as his eyes mapped the freckles on his cheekbones.

“Yes,” Shane answered. “Are you?”

Ilya took his time before looking at him again and something like a smile fell on his lips. “I am with you,” he said softly. Shane inhaled what he hoped didn’t sound like the whimper it was and pressed their lips together. They kissed slowly, softly, nothing like the frantic press of lips and clash of teeth that they were used to. Shane thought they were both getting accustomed to the idea that neither of them had to worry about catching a plane or making it to a game or practice, and it felt incredible that this was just the first day of their weeks – *weeks!* – together, alone.

When they broke apart to breathe, Ilya slowly settled back on the bed again, pulling Shane with him. Shane shifted to press his body into Ilya’s side, one leg tangled between Ilya’s own and an arm around him. Ilya reached blindly for the lamp, almost knocking it over and drawing what Shane would never admit was a giggle from him, but managing to turn it off.

Ilya wrapped him in his arms and sighed, his breath tickling the hair on Shane’s forehead. Shane tilted his head up and was almost startled to find Ilya looking at him. He thought, for once, that he recognized the emotions he saw, maybe because they were undoubtedly mirrored in his own eyes.

Ilya muttered something in Russian and pressed a kiss between Shane’s brows. Shane smiled, sleep already pulling him under as he made a mental note to ask about it later. When they woke up together, or over any of the days they would have, just the two of them.

End Notes

Kudos/comments/stones hurled at me are greatly appreciated.

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