

nice try

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nice try

by [azablue](#)

Summary

“It’s one of your superstitions, right?” Hayden asked. “Like my hat. It’s your good luck shirt.”

Shane felt a chill run down his spine.

He hadn’t thought anyone would notice. In truth, he’d barely noticed himself. It wasn’t something he was actively doing. It wasn’t like his weight circuit or his diet or his night routine. It wasn’t meditation or yoga or cross-training. Those were all things he did with meticulous, painstaking purpose. This was just... this was something else. This wasn’t thought driven. If he was being honest, it barely had to do with hockey. It maybe was one of the only things in his life that didn’t have to do with hockey. If he was stressed, he wore the shirt and it made him feel a little bit better. It just so happened that most of the time he was stressed about something to do with hockey. That was it. It was just a feeling.

A feeling of calm that came from Ilya Rozanov’s shirt.

OR: Shane accidentally wore Ilya's shirt back to the hotel after it things started to feel Too Real. What if he kept the shirt?

OR: 5 Times Someone Noticed Shane's New Favorite Shirt + 1 Time Shane Realized Ilya Still Had His Too

Chapter 1: Shane

Chapter Summary

Shane realizes Shane still has Ilya's shirt

Chapter Notes

im so excited about this!! let's go!

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

Shane didn't realize he wasn't wearing his shirt until he was back at the hotel. Actually, he didn't realize he wasn't wearing his shirt until he was packing for the rink. It took everything in Shane not to rip it off while Hayden was packing beside him. He'd been so overwhelmed when he returned to the room he could barely string more than two words together. It was the furthest from *aware* of his body that he'd been in a while, possibly years. But that was what Ilya did to him. He let him unwind. He let him loose control.

The shirt still smelled like him. That was maybe the worst part. *Or the best part.* That was still up in the air. It was *a* part, definitely. Ilya smelled nice. He smelled like sweat and salt mixed with bergamot and sandalwood. His natural smell wasn't bad, it was frustratingly sexy, actually, but he also cleaned up nice. Shane had a theory that Ilya was spending a lot more on body wash, lotion and cologne than he'd ever admit to. He was sure that Ilya hadn't noticed that Shane had noticed. Shane had been waiting, actually, for Ilya to make another comment about his shoes or his clothes or his *boringness* to bring up the hefty price Ilya was likely dropping on travel sized top-shelf toiletries, but he hadn't found the right moment.

Shane cradled the shirt in his hands like it was his grandmother's pearls. Like it was priceless. Like it was something from a different time. Like it was the last of something.

But it wasn't supposed to be *anything*.

Shane had been swearing to himself that that was a release was all they were. It was all it could be. They were like a valve for each other. Tempering the pressure. Shane slept better after. Ilya seemed sharper after. They both played better after, that was just a fact. It was a way have semi-regular sex and still have the lives they both fought tooth and nail for. That's what this was.

Or at least, that was what Shane said to himself. That was the lie he clung to when he found himself wondering what Ilya was doing during the summer. When he grew disappointed if

the camera panned away from him during a game. When a wave of jealousy washed over him if a teammate mentioned that the Raiders were spotted at a club. They didn't need to mention Ilya for Shane to know he was there, and that he was with someone. The mere concept of it churned his stomach.

Those weren't thoughts you were supposed to have about... about whatever it was that they were.

And Shane had nearly convinced himself that it was true. And then Shane was in his house. He was on his couch. He was eating his food. And Ilya was saying his name. And Shane was saying his. Not Hollander. Not Rozanoff. Not Holly or Roz.

Shane and Ilya.

And Shane and Ilya and the years of texting and hotel rooms and apartments and secrets that had piled up all came crashing down.

Because Shane and Ilya couldn't be Shane and Ilya. They couldn't be Shane and Ilya and be captains. They couldn't be anything and be *anything*. They were both so close, too close. Shane was achieving everything he'd ever set out to achieve. Ilya, he knew, felt the same. It was the two of them at the top. They'd climbed here together, and they were going to stay up there together. That didn't include this. It couldn't.

And Shane knew that. Hockey would be first, always. But leaving Ilya's house felt like leaving a piece of his heart on the floor. It was a pit in his stomach and a shake in his hands. And for the first time in a long time, hockey was out of reach.

Hayden had to remind him, more than once, that it was nearly time to go. That had never happened before, not once. Shane didn't have the strength to explain why packing for the rink, a thing he could do in his sleep, was taking him fifteen extra minutes. He didn't have the strength to explain it to himself. All he knew was that he'd ended it, he'd done the thing he kept telling himself to do, and it felt awful. It felt worse than he could've ever imagined.

All he knew was that he really, really liked the way Ilya's accent changed his name. How he swallowed the 's' and lengthened the 'a.' All he knew was that he wanted to say Ilya's again. That he wanted to look up the proper Russian pronunciation and practice so that he could say it the way his parents had intended.

But none of that could happen. None of it would.

Shane should've left the t-shirt. It could be chalked up to an innocent mistake, something that happened all the time to players. When you traveled as much as they did, you were bound to leave something behind.

But Shane didn't toss it. He folded it and placed it neatly at the bottom of his bag.

Because really, if he really thought about it, it was just a shirt. Just like how Shane and Ilya were just... whatever they used to do.

Chapter End Notes

aaaa! this is my first time writing these guys, so i would love to hear any and all feedback/thoughts/opinions!

ive had this idea for a minute, i know many people have theorized on The Shirt, and i thought this could be fun:)

the next chapter will be longer!!!

Chapter 2: Hayden

Chapter Summary

Hayden's Noticing

Chapter Notes

Posted this on my phone so sorry if formatting is weird

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

A few months later

Shane thrummed his fingers against the arm of his stiff chair. Sometimes it seemed like airports found the most uncomfortable material and standardized them for every terminal in North America. And Shane would know, he'd been to most of their large airports. There was some variation, sure, but mostly it was the same black faux-leather material. All metal and slick. Stain and bed bug-proof, which he supposed he was grateful for, but otherwise deeply uncomfortable to be waiting for copious amounts of time every week. It made Shane nervous. All he could think about before they boarded a flight was how the chair wasn't good for his back, how that would impact his routine and if it impacted his routine he would be off at the game and they couldn't afford for him to be off, not now, not-

"Dude, can you stop tapping your foot?"

Shane blinked. Hayden, seated beside him, was staring pointedly at his left leg. It looked like he'd been shaking the small, practically pointless table between them. He cringed internally.

"Oh. Sorry." Shane muttered. Hayden gave him another look.

"You know we've got this in the bag." He said, slipping off his headphones.

"I know." Shane said, a little too quickly. He took a practiced sip of his tea, green with no honey or milk.

"J.J got cleared." Hayden said, repeating the good news they'd all heard this morning. "With him back on the starting line, Jersey's toast."

"I know that." Shane said again. Hayden looked unconvinced. Shane tightened his arms against his chest. "Do I seem stressed?"

“I mean, always.” Hayden snorted. “But you’re wearing the shirt.”

“What?” Shane gawked.

“It’s one of your superstitions, right?” Hayden asked. “Like my hat. It’s your good luck shirt.”

Shane felt a chill run down his spine.

He hadn’t thought anyone would notice. In truth, he’d barely noticed himself. It wasn’t something he was actively doing. It wasn’t like his weight circuit or his diet or his night routine. It wasn’t meditation or yoga or cross-training. Those were all things he did with meticulous, painstaking purpose. This was just... this was something else. This wasn’t thought driven. If he was being honest, it barely had to do with hockey. It maybe was one of the only things in his life that didn’t have to do with hockey. If he was stressed, he wore the shirt and it made him feel a little bit better. It just so happened that most of the time he was stressed about something to do with hockey. That was it. It was just a feeling.

A feeling of calm that came from Ilya Rozanov’s shirt.

“This isn’t my good luck shirt.” Shane bristled.

“You only wear it before games that feel dicey.”

“The game isn’t dicey.” Shane rasped. He glanced around to his teammates, to ensure no one else was listening. “We just been in a small rut and-”

“And we need some good luck.” Hayden said, at full volume. Shane might kill him. Hayden poked his sleeve. “From your lucky shirt.”

Shane only started wearing the shirt a few months ago. Before then, it sat in his travel bag, neatly, taking up space. He dragged it across the country, back and forth for weeks. And then the All Stars Game happened. And he took it out of the bag.

Shane only started wearing it after told Ilya he liked him. He told Ilya Rozanov he liked him and shockingly, he didn’t die in the process. In fact things got better. They were texting again, almost daily. It felt like it did before, before Rose, but also a little different. The phone calls when Ilya’s father passed away had changed things. Shane wasn’t sure in what way, but it had. It had been confirmation of sorts that they were unquestionably more. They were something, even though they probably shouldn’t be. And as terrifying as that was, it was also really nice. There was a piece of Shane that knew it probably wouldn’t last, but he was willing to try to make the feeling stay as long as possible.

The shirt was a small reminder of that. Of him. It was like he could hear Ilya’s voice in his ear, chastising his nerves.

You worry too much, Hollander. He’d say. *It’s not Boston. You should save your worrying for when we crush you next week.*

And Shane would scoff or tell him to fuck off, but there was no bite behind it. Because he knew that it was Ilya's way of getting him out of his head. Because on top of everything else, he was really good at that. He was maybe the best at that. Privately, it was how Shane knew Ilya was probably one of the best captains in the league. He listened to people. He watched them. He didn't make anything a bigger deal than it needed to be. And he stayed, even when Shane knew he was being particular and difficult and *boring*.

"It's just a black t-shirt." Shane lied, swatting his finger away.

"And this is just the hat Jackie got me on my birthday the year we met and, incidentally, the year we won our first cup," Hayden said, tapping the white brim of his baseball cap.

Shane hesitated. For a single, bold moment, he entertained what it would be like to say yes. Yes, it's actually exactly the same. It's the thing he wears from the person he really, really likes that makes him feel better when they're apart. It was terrifying to admit it to himself, but now that he had he was tired of pretending, at least in his own mind. Although Ilya hadn't gifted him the shirt, technically, it was as close as they could get. Like all of their time together, it was something stolen. It was a secret, right in plain sight.

"It's not my good luck shirt." Shane repeated. Hayden laughed, but conceded.

"Okay, bud." He said, putting his headphones back on. "Either way we don't need it. We've got this."

Shane nodded, mechanically. That, he could answer easily.

"Damn right we do."

Shane took out his phone, did his compulsory glance around to ensure no one was paying attention, and opened his conversation with Lily.

Shane: About to crush Jersey

Lily: Oh, is the whole team sick?

Shane: Fuck you :/

Lily: That's next week :)

Chapter End Notes

Yayyyy

Chapter 3: Yuna

Chapter Summary

Yuna wonders why Shane likes an old shirt

Chapter Notes

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

Several weeks later

“Get off your phone. No screens.”

Yuna stepped into his room with a large cardboard box under one arm. She was giving him the same look she used to have when she found him reading past bedtime.

“Mom.” Shane huffed. He scowled, but conceded, turning it off and putting it facedown on his bed.

He was being childish, he knew that, but a week of being under his parent’s nose could bring that out of him. After his injury, they’d brought him back to their home to recover. In a few days, they’d be heading to his family summer house, all together. It made sense, Shane needed to be monitored and have someone remind him to take his medication. With his collarbone he was fairly limited in terms of mobility. It was much easier to have someone else make him meals and do his laundry. His mother could be a little overbearing and his father would ask a few too many times about his head, but it was all coming from a place of such endless, overflowing love that he’d get over his longing for independence.

Shane loved his parents. He always had. Even when he was a teenager and some of his friends started to complain about their own folks, Shane could never relate. He understood why his parents did what they did. The choices they made were reasonable, given the stakes. They’d built their entire lives around his dream, his mother especially. They had his best interests in mind. It never occurred to him to sneak out or break his diet or do any of the other things his other club teammates started to do in high school. This was his life. Professional hockey wasn’t just his goal, it was theirs too. Why would he jeopardize that?

Neither Yuna nor David had actually asked if Shane wanted to recover at their home. It had been a given for them. And for Shane, too, obviously. There wasn’t another plan, there couldn’t be. He’d need help and there wasn’t someone else.

Well. There was *someone* else. But that someone was heading to the playoffs. And while Shane finally, officially, admitted his feelings, it didn’t mean that they were at that stage, even if Ilya wasn’t busy with their shared dream.

“Have you made your pile?” Yuna asked, setting the box at the foot of his bed. She had announced yesterday that they would be spring cleaning before heading to the summer house, which meant making boxes of clothes to donate.

“I already got rid of a ton of clothes with Serena.” Shane muttered. His stylist had encouraged him to toss nearly fifty percent of his wardrobe in exchange for new clothes. He sat up in bed, folding one leg over the other.

“I know, but recovery is a great time to go through some things.” Yuna countered. “I want to get rid of this stuff. You’re not using it.” Much to Shane’s chagrin, she began to collect the contents of his drawers and place them on the bed. “Here you don’t even have to move I’ll just hold it up and you can tell me.”

Shane chewed on the inside of his cheek. In her defense, his childhood bedroom had not changed all that dramatically since he moved out, close to a decade ago. The fact that there were still clothes in the drawer was a lot. He knew that was abnormal. He had an apartment and a summer home of his own. His parents could’ve turned this into an office or an exercise room by now. But they hadn’t. They reasoned that they didn’t need the space. They liked that it was ready for him when he stayed for Christmas. It worked for them.

“You don’t have to do it for me, mom.” Shane coaxed. “I really will do it myself. Later.”

“When do you have this kind of time?” Yuna asked. Shane hesitated. Frustratingly, she was right, as she often was.

“Alright, let’s do it.” Shane said, sitting up.

Together they went through the pile of clothes, most long-forgotten sportswear that was far too small now. Most of them were shirts from hockey camps or hockey tournaments or hockey scrimmages. A few were charity runs and other athletic-based philanthropic ventures that made Shane look like the perfect candidate for the league in the years before he was drafted. It was like a tapestry or a mausoleum of the life he lived when this was his room. Each one represented a choice. A carefully calculated move. To attend one camp over another. To train with the right coach and get on the best team. To skip birthday parties and school plays in favor of away games and off season training. They made the plan and he followed through. Be the best now. Not one day, but right this minute.

Shane was so lost in a complicated nostalgia, that he hadn’t realized his laundry had gotten mixed in with some of his old clothes. It wasn’t until she fished out a particular black t-shirt that he snapped out of it.

“Yeah, okay, we can get rid of this one.” Yuna said, shaking the shirt out to get a better look.

Shane’s mouth went dry.

“What?” He said, eyes wide. “No. It’s just sleep shirt. It’s fine.”

“Really?” Yuna wrinkled her nose. “It looks worn out.”

"I brought that with me." Shane explained.

He could feel his heart beating in his ears. It looked so strange in her hands. Two vastly different parts of his life were colliding in a way that made his head hurt.

"This is an expensive brand." Yuna muttered, looking it over. "When did you get this?"

"A while ago, I don't know." Shane mumbled. He was transfixed on the shirt. He considered, briefly, throwing caution to the wind and trying to reach for it, collarbone be damned.

Shane wanted to save the shirt from the box. From obscurity. He liked it. He needed it. And, he wanted to save his mother from whatever it was that he was. Whatever it was that he was doing to their dream by falling for his rival. They'd started on this road together, she'd forged this road for him, and he'd been lying to her for the better part of a decade. There was no reason she'd connect the dots now. It would be impossible to realize that the shirt in her hands was Ilya Rozanov's. But, if there was one person who somehow, some way, would be able to figure it out, it would be his mother.

Because Yuna Hollander knew a lot about Ilya Rozanov. Because she hated him. She hated him for Shane. Because that was what they were supposed to be doing. What they'd agreed to do together.

"We might not even be able to donate this one," Yuna continued, scrunching her nose. "It's so dingy."

"Great." Shane squeaked out. His chest was tighter now than when he'd broken his collarbone. "Then I can keep it?" He asked, reaching out a hand.

"I mean, we can just get you another sleep shirt."

"No." Shane said, a little too loudly.

Yuna gave him a look. It was equal parts concern and surprise. It was also a gentle warning, the same way she looked when he hadn't tightened his skates before a game. *What are you doing?*

"It's a lucky shirt." Shane said, finally. He'd fished the memory of Hayden in the airport from the edges of his fuzzy mind. "It's a hockey thing."

"Oh." Yuna raised her eyebrows. "I didn't know you were that superstitious." She folded the shirt, neatly, and placed it in the 'keep' pile.

"Well. I am." Shane lied. "About the shirt. It's a new thing."

"Okay." Yuna said.

And that was that. Yuna would need no other explanation. A hockey thing overrode everything else. She returned to the pile, and Shane forced air back into his lungs.

Shane picked up the shirt and held it in his lap. He didn't care that now it was wrinkled and that he wouldn't really be able to refold it with his arm in a sling. He wondered, briefly, what he would have said if things were just a little bit different. If he told her a version, a fraction of the truth. The thought only sent spikes of anxiety through his body and reignited the dull ache in his head. He leaned back against the pillows, trying and failing to settle his mind. He had amazing parents. They'd dedicated so much to him. That had been it for a long time. It had all been that simple.

But if he was being honest with himself, things hadn't been simple all that long. In fact they'd been complicated for a while. And the *complicatedness* felt good. It felt really, really good. And the scariest part was that it felt just as good as what he'd been working his whole life for. It actually made it better. It was better to do all of this with Ilya. He wasn't sure he ever wanted to do it without him.

Shane pinched the shirt between his fingers. If he could just find a way to have all of it at the same time. If he and his mother could go through old clothes and one of the shirts could be Ilya's

"What about this sweater?" Yuna asked, holding up a blue crewneck.

"You can donate that." Shane said, barely glancing at it.

"Thank you."

Chapter End Notes

I love the Hollanders!! They love their son so desperately!

Chapter 4: Rose

Chapter Summary

Rose notices

(post-Cottage)

Chapter Notes

ack! so SO sorry for the delays!! the beginning of Real Life and not Vacation really got to me, but we should be back on track

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

A few months later

“We should’ve done this when we were dating.”

Shane nearly choked on his ginger ale.

“Rose!” He laughed.

“I mean it.” She insisted, pulling the blanket further onto her lap. “You have a huge TV.”

“It’s not huge.” Shane said. “It’s what fits in the space. It’s a big wall, a smaller TV would throw off the room.”

“Alright.” Rose smirked.

They’d started the movie nights a few months ago, just after they broke up. It had been Rose’s idea, a way to decompress after shooting on nights when they were both in Montreal and neither had the energy to go out. Shane had been wary at first. He wasn’t very good at having friends outside of the league, and he was completely unprepared to hang out with someone who *knew* about him. The only person before then had been Ilya, and that was obviously different. Rose didn’t share his secret, she was just holding his. It was slightly unnerving. The first time she came over for movie night, he’d spent an hour cleaning his house just for something to do that stopped his heart from falling out of his chest. He felt stripped bare, here. Like he was on the ice without any padding. There was nothing to hide behind.

But Rose was sweet, and patient and completely and utterly *normal*. And slowly, over the course of the first evening, she made him feel normal too. Now, a few weeks into reshoots, they had a routine. Shane really did like Rose. He liked her humor and how she moved her hands a lot when she told stories. He liked her laugh and deeply admired her ambition. She was truly a wonderful person, someone he kind of couldn't believe would trade one of their precious free nights to sit on his couch and watch an old movie with him. She really could be doing anything. But despite his early doubts, it appeared, at least for now, that she also enjoyed his company.

"Do you and Matt watch movies?" Shane asked.

Matt Colt was her costar on her most recent project and, as of about a month ago, also her new maybe-kind-of-sort-of boyfriend. The press hadn't gotten ahold of their romance yet, which he was sure she was grateful for. Still, aside from her confession of having a new beau, they hadn't really talked about him.

Rose tensed, slightly, under the blanket.

"We have." She said, vaguely. Rose reached for her glass of wine, which he'd really only kept in the house for her. Shane raised an eyebrow.

"But?"

"I don't know." Rose huffed back into the couch, running both hands over her face. "I'm having a lot of fun, you know? He's so nice and he's funny and gorgeous... but I don't think he's the one."

"Fun can be nice, though." Shane said, gently. "It doesn't have to be forever right now."

"But that would be so nice." Rose gushed. "Just not to have to date anymore. Just have your person."

Shane felt something catch in his throat. His person.

After what had felt like an endless summer, the season started up with full steam. All gas, no breaks. And Shane loved it, he was raised on it. In many ways he didn't have another gear. But something had changed at the cottage. It was like his life, in all its specific certainties, expanded into something deliriously bigger. He'd never thought of himself as having something narrow, but now it was clear he might as well have been walking on one straight line.

Ilya Rozanov was his boyfriend. They were in love. And in just one season, he would be just two hours away, all year. They would make a life together, however they could. They would carve it into being if they had to, and they had to.

But first they had this season. They'd never done long distance like this. Well, in many ways they'd only done this, but never with all of their cards laid out. Never with Shane's heart sewn to his sleeve. Before, he'd been able to subsist seeing him every few weeks for a handful of hours. He'd survive off of their little tiffs over text until next time. But then Ilya

came to the cottage. And he woke up with him for thirteen days in a row. For fourteen nights and thirteen days when he reached over in bed, Ilya was next to him. He was next to him when they made breakfast and when they worked out. They played video games and sewer ball and swam. He was an arms-length at most. Fourteen nights, thirteen days.

Shane didn't know how deeply you could miss something you'd barely had. It awakened something in him that made him feel like heroine of their slightly dated movie, panicked and unmoored without her leading man. He'd found his person, and he wanted him. Here. Now.

"Yeah." Shane muttered. "It would be."

Shane got up to get more popcorn, suddenly less interested in stewing in the wonderfulness of *forever*.

After the movie, Shane helped Rose set up the guest bedroom. Rose didn't always stay over, but on longer days it just made sense. Typically, he had it all ready before her arrival, but between the season starting and his vague melancholy, he hadn't remade the bed after his parents stayed the weekend before. It was slightly embarrassing to make his friend, who only had endless patience, wrangle a fitted sheet after a fifteen-hour day, but here they were.

"Hey so tomorrow I was thinking of popping into Frame," Rose said, stuffing a faux-down pillow in one of his silk pillow covers. "Would you want to come?"

"Frame?" Shane asked. He was half-listening and half trying to re-button the duvet cover. "Are you getting a painting?"

"No, the clothing store." Rose said, rising from her side of the bed.

"Oh. Yeah, sure." Shane mused. He had a game tomorrow, so practice would start later. If they went early enough he could swing it. And after this sheet debacle, he felt like he owed her. "I've never been."

Shane was sitting on the opposite side of the bed and was paying a little too much attention to the buttons, so he didn't Rose raise an eyebrow.

"Your shirt's from there." She stated.

"What?" Shane looked at her. And then the shirt. And back at her again.

Shit.

"This is their old logo." Rose said.

She reached across the bed and pressed on the stitched emblem on the front of his shirt. It was black thread on a black tee, so if Shane was being honest with himself he'd really never paid it much attention. The tag had been faded when it got to him, and the detailed 'F' hadn't felt like a lot to go on. Besides, *where* the shirt was from wasn't really the point for him, it was more the *who* he'd stolen it from.

“Oh.” Shane said. His mouth open and closed, reaching for something, anything else to say. “Oh right, of course.” He shook his head, hoping that settled it.

“Did your stylist get that for you?”

Shane hesitated. That would be the easy answer, wouldn’t it? Serena picked it out. It’s vintage. It’s something she thought he could try.

But the other thing that had changed at the cottage, beyond his burgeoning, electric new outlook, was that he realized he was really, really tired of lying. The exhaustion of it hadn’t hit him until he’d accidentally outed himself to his dad. When he and Ilya finally returned from that first fateful family meal, Shane felt like he’d been hit by a truck. The feeling didn’t really go away, not for a few more days. It wasn’t until later, when his mother brought up in passing if Ilya would want to spend Thanksgiving with them this year that he realized why he’d been so wiped out. Hiding took a lot of work. It took a lot of energy. And he was growing tired of holding it all.

“She did not.” Shane said, vaguely. He wasn’t entirely sure where he was going with this, but it felt better than the alternative. That was their plan now, wasn’t it? Finding the version of life that’s better than what they’d been enduring, and also possible.

Rose’s eyes widened.

“Shane?”

“Rose?” Shane threw back. Realization was dawning across her face. He bit back a giddy, near-nervous smile.

“That’s not your shirt.” Rose said.

“I-”

“Shane!” Rose said, throwing a pillow at him. Shane caught it, began to smooth out the creases with his hands, nervously.

For a single moment, Shane regretted it. He wanted to put it all back in its nice little box. He wanted it all to be narrow and devoid of color and have it all be under his control. But in the back of his mind, he could hear Scott Hunter’s speech, the one he had bookmarked privately on his computer. Lonely. That had been his word to describe it all. It was really, fucking lonely. Shane didn’t want to be lonely.

“It is not my shirt.” He said, quietly.

“I knew it!” Rose declared. Shane snorted.

“No you didn’t.”

“Okay, no I didn’t, but that doesn’t matter.” Rose waved her hands, as if wiping away the brewing argument over technicalities. She folded her legs up to her chest, turning towards him. “You’re dating someone.” She declared.

Shane felt heat rise to his cheeks.

“I... It’s... I mean-” He stammered. He hadn’t done this by choice before.

“Okay, you’re *with* someone, in some capacity, enough to wear his shirt.” Rose said, filling in the blanks for him.

“Yeah, yeah I am.” Shane said, taking a breath.

Rose moved closer, folding both of her hands over his. She met his eyes with an amount of generosity and love that he always felt slightly underserving of.

“We can talk about this, if you want.” She said, earnestly. “This is the kind of stuff we can talk about.”

“I know.” Shane said, quickly. “I know.” He took a deep breath. “And I want to it’s just... it’s complicated.”

“I know.” Rose said, gently. She squeezed his arms. “But here, with me, it doesn’t have to be.”

Shane chewed on the inside of his cheek. Rose was a good person. She was also a good secret keeper. He would never, under any circumstances, tell someone about Ilya without asking Ilya first. That was an unspoken rule between them, a given. But he could tell her some things.

“Thank you.” Shane said, squeezing back. “Yes, I’m seeing someone. He’s my boyfriend. But I can’t get into it more than that.” He said, honestly.

“Okay.” Rose nodded. “Is he nice?” She asked, after a beat.

A sickly sweet smile spread across Shane’s face.

“Yeah.” He said, sappily. “Yeah, he’s nice.”

“Good.” Rose said. “I’m happy for you.”

“Thanks.” Shane took a deep breath. “I’m happy too.”

Later that evening, once Shane was tucked into his own bed, he pulled out his phone and scrolled to his most-used text conversation.

Lily: Enjoying your sleepover?

Shane nearly laughed out loud. He could hear the thinly veiled jealousy dripping off of every word. He could picture his face, twisted into a particularly adorable detestation.

Shane: You bet.

Lily: If I didn’t have to destroy Tampa tomorrow I would be on a plane to Montreal

Shane: I'm GAY

Lily: So you claim

Shane: I kind of told her about us. Not you, obviously, but that I'm seeing someone.

Ilya typed for a long time.

Lily: How did it feel?

Shane mulled over their conversation. He didn't feel as tired now. He wasn't wiped out. In fact he felt lighter.

Shane: Good, I think. I miss you.

Lily: I miss you too. Win for me tomorrow.

Shane: You too.

Shane: Also I know, obviously, but can you delete the I'm gay text? Just to be safe.

Lily: Already did. Go to sleep. My boyfriend can't lose to Cincinnati

Shane: :) Don't lose to Tampa. I love you.

Lily: I love you too.

Chapter End Notes

okay. guys.

the FUCKING SHIRT. i search FOREVER every screen grab, every reddit post and i COULD NOT FIND THE ACTUAL BRAND! I'm losing my mind, slightly, but here we are. anyways, frame is a real store in Boston (on Newbury Street for any Bostonians hi sorry im in ur walls) and also it HAD a store in Montreal before 2020 (can we tell i went crazy) so let's all suspend our disbelief cause I couldn't find the real brand. but it felt very Shane Hollander to not know and also to think Frame was a frame store so i kept it. but if anyone knows the actual brand pls help a girl out.

anyways, i hope you enjoy. i love them and miss them and hope you stick around!

all love,

aza

Chapter 5: Ilya

Chapter Summary

Ilya realizes

Chapter Notes

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

Months later

It was finally, finally summer.

Ilya was back at the cottage. This year, they fell into their routine almost instantly. They woke up together, worked out together, ate together, swam together and watched movies together each day. Often they showered together too, unwilling to part for more than a few minutes. Shane liked having him at his fingertips, always.

That had actually started on the ice, at first. That was where Shane learned to move when Ilya moved, and vice versa. In every game against him, Shane knew, acutely, where his alleged rival would be. It didn't matter if they were on opposite sides of the rink, he needed to know where he was. It was the only way, at first, that Shane felt he could beat him. Know his moves. Know his rhythm. Know, by one sound or breath or clack of a stick, how Ilya Rozanov would move next. As they grew closer, and Shane got better at beating Boston, it became second nature. It wasn't something he thought about, after that first season, it was just something he did. And the same was true at the cottage.

This afternoon, Ilya convinced Shane to jump in the lake with him after their afternoon workout. Shane was hesitant, but as with most things Ilya suggested that he'd probably enjoy, he came around. They stayed in for a while, cooling off and soaking in the sun. Shane was always enamored by Ilya's body in the water. It felt like the lake was moving with him. He was always beautiful, but there was a special brilliance to him here.

After some coaxing, Shane eventually wrangled him out of the water and back into the house to shower and get ready for dinner. They got ready in tandem. After last summer, Shane had another dresser installed in his room, allowing Ilya to have his own space when he stayed. Their dressers were right beside one another, and it made Shane a little too excited to see Ilya's watch and sunglasses arranged beside his.

"My parents want to do steaks tomorrow," Shane said, running through the week plan in his head as he tossed on a clean pair of shorts and tugged a shirt over his head. "And so I was thinking that tonight we could roast some of the-"

Shane stopped talking. Ilya was staring. It seemed he'd frozen in place, his hair dripping beads of water onto his tank-top. His face was entirely unreadable.

"What?" Shane raised an eyebrow.

Ilya pointed a finger at Shane's chest. His finger was centimeters from making contact, and Shane felt the buzzing of heat from it, though that could be in his head.

"That's my shirt." Ilya said, his eyes wide.

"What?" Shane blinked.

"You're wearing my fucking shirt." He repeated.

"No I'm not." Shane said, turning red.

"No you're not?" Ilya raised an eyebrow. He was calling his paper-thin bluff immediately.

"I- look-" Shane rambled.

Ilya took one of Shane's shoulders under his grip, and pulled the sleeve with the other hand, as though feeling the fabric would give some sort of other confirmation.

"That's my shirt!" Ilya said again.

"Yes, fine, maybe." Shane said, shoving him off, playfully.

Shane wasn't embarrassed that he wore something of Ilya's. Maybe he would've been a year ago, he definitely would have two years ago. The year he accidentally took the shirt, he would've flat out denied it and run for the hills, probably. But that was then. Now they were boyfriends. They texted and called daily. They were building their lives around each other. Next season, Ilya would officially be an Ottawa Centaur and they'd be two hours away from each other, all year. Wearing his t-shirt wasn't embarrassing.

Keeping *this* shirt, though, wasn't great. This wasn't a gift, nor was it something Ilya left at his apartment after a beautiful reunion and a wonderful evening. No, this was something else. This was from *before*. From when they were denying that part of things. When Shane wanted it so badly and knew, so certainly, that they could never have it, that the only solution was to run away. This was a secret he'd kept for what was closing in on a decade. Which wasn't an amazing look.

That, and Ilya and Shane would still be Ilya and Shane no matter what. They really were *rivals*. And this was terrible, wonderful fodder.

Ilya's face broke out into a wide smile. He *cackled*, maybe louder than Shane had ever heard him, or at least this up close. The mixture of joy and jeerful energy that was spreading through his frame was, until now, specifically reserved for chirping during games they played against each other.

“I’ve been *looking* for it for-” Ilya sputtered, clutching his stomach. It looked like if he didn’t have the dresser to hold him up, he might collapse. “This *whole time*?”

“Maybe-” Shane said, flushed. He crossed his arms tight across his chest. “I don’t know. It was just in my drawer here and I-”

“Bullshit.” Ilya said, wagging a finger in his face. Shane swatted it away. “You brought it here. I bet it was in your apartment just *waiting* for me to find it.”

“It wasn’t waiting for you to find it.” Shane scoffed. He closed his drawer and started for the kitchen.

Ilya, all too pleased with himself, followed at his heels. Shane glared, but there wasn’t any real bite behind it.

“It’s just a comfortable shirt.” Shane argued. He opened the fridge, not looking for anything in particular. “It’s breathable.”

“It better be.” Ilya said, leaning against the kitchen island. “It was sixty dollars.”

“Sixty dollars?” Shane whipped around. Now *he* pressed his hand into Ilya’s chest. “You let me take a sixty dollar shirt?”

“Let you?” Ilya cocked his head to one side. “You ran away.”

“True.” Shane mused. “I would’ve left it behind if I knew it was sixty dollars.”

Ilya’s hands found their way back to Shane’s shoulders, and he slipped them around to his neck, pulling him in. He leaned in, so close that Shane could smell the lemon flavor of Ilya’s electrolyte drink from earlier on his breath. Ilya pinched the fabric of the shirt pulling the collar to the side to get a better look at it.

“Seems like you’ve gotten a lot of wear out of it, no?”

“Maybe.” Shane shrugged.

“*Aww*.” Ilya drawled, pulling him closer. Shane let himself be drawn into a tight hug.

“What?” He asked, his voice muffled by Ilya’s shoulder.

“You like me.” Ilya said, in a sing-song voice.

“That much is clear, yes.” Shane said, giving him a quick kiss before pulling out of the embrace.

“But not just now. You’ve liked me for a long time, too.” Ilya corrected, kicking himself up onto the island, a practice that Shane would detest if he didn’t look so unabashedly comfortable. “Long enough to wear my shirt out.”

“Maybe.” Shane said. He fished two beers out of the fridge, and cracked them open, before passing one to Ilya.

“I can get you a new one.” Ilya said, taking a sip of his drink. “A nice, new sixty dollar shirt.”

“No.” Shane said, quickly. Ilya waited, eyeing him curiously. “I like this one.”

“I like it on you too.” Ilya said, softly. “*bop*.”

Shane raised an eyebrow.

“What does that mean?”

“What?” Ilya said, crossing his legs. “The owl hasn’t gotten to that word yet?”

Shane smiled. *The owl* was what they’d taken to calling his Duolingo Russian lessons.

“I’m still on household items.” He confessed, leaning against the counter opposite his boyfriend.

“Then I guess you’ll have to wait and find out.” Ilya smirked.

“I guess I will.” He sighed.

And if he really thought about it, Shane was content with that. He’d wait and see. They had the time.

Chapter End Notes

bop is thief in Russian :) <3

The chapter i've been waitingggg for !!!!!

i hope u enjoyed the insane amount of FLUFF

Chapter 6: +1 Ilya

Chapter Summary

SPOILERS FOR THE LONG GAME

+1, Shane Realizes Ilya kept his shirt too

Chapter Notes

again!! Spoilers for The Long Game!! If you haven't read it and don't want spoilers!! pls turn away!

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

Two Years Later

Ilya was buzzing. The whole team was, really. Tomorrow, they would be playing in the first round of playoffs. It wasn't the first time they'd made it before, but that didn't settle anyone's nerves. They'd had a good season. They'd had a lot of good seasons, actually, but this one had felt particularly strong. The team was *clicking*, Ilya was having more good days than bad, and like icing on the fucking cake, his husband was on the same team. Hollander was part of the reason they'd had a good season, too. Playing with him felt like swimming alongside a fish sometimes. He knew the game like he knew how to breathe, and with him he brought a new drive to the Centaurs. Shane's bar for *good hockey* was ridiculously high. As his husband, this sometimes gave Ilya pause, but he could see the value in it as his captain.

Their last home practice before the game was going to be intense. That was a given. Ilya and Coach Weibe had had many conversations about how to best manage these moments, how to use the nervousness instead of letting it fester. Apart of that, they decided, was keeping it light off the ice. This included moments during transit, meals and in the locker room.

"Stop scratching, Haas." Barrett said, for the umpteenth time Ilya didn't need to look up from his stall to know that Luca was picking at his face.

"It's *barely growing*. And it itches." Luca lamented. He was leaning back on their bench beside Troy, dramatically. "Please let me shave."

A cacophony of *nos*, *fuck nos*, and *absolutely not's* erupted from every corner of the locker room. Ilya met Shane's eyes with a knowing smile. Nearly all of the Centaurs had vowed to grow the playoff beard this year to give them some extra *luck*, and for the first time Lucas

had volunteered. Ilya had been skeptical at the time, but didn't think that expressing doubt would help with morale. Now, he regretted that decision. Shane to everyone's surprise, had also joined in. To Luca's chagrin, he'd had much more success. Ilya didn't really know what to do with Shane's new look. In over a decade of staring at his face both in and out of a helmet, it hadn't really changed. He'd aged and his hair had grown, sure, but that was different. This was something else. Sometimes, Ilya regretted growing his own beard, if only so he could better feel Shane's on his face. He'd have to make Shane keep his for at least a day after he shaved.

"I thought you'd be all over this kind of thing." Troy continued, watching as Luca pouted his way back to his stall. "You're a bigger hockey nerd than Hollander."

"When it's actually about hockey, yeah." Luca huffed. He didn't even take the bait on being called a *nerd*, though Ilya supposed he might see that as a compliment. Shane didn't say anything either. If anything he might actually be offended at his title of *biggest hockey nerd* was being usurped.

"Oh, come on." Luca groaned, motioning to Boodram, who was putting on his skates at the bench him.

"What?" Zane raised an eyebrow.

"So we're really all going playoff crazy, now?" Luca said, pointing to Zane's feet. Ilya recognized the old, hole-ridden pair of socks as his *winning socks*. He'd worn them when he scored his first goal his rookie season. Now, they were thread-bare and stuffed under his compression socks.

"It's not crazy if it works." Zane shrugged, continuing with his routine. "It's like science."

"Science." Luca said, flatly.

"It's psychology, I think. I read about it somewhere." Zane said, patiently. "My skates feel the same every time. It's comforting."

"Alright." Luca conceded, beginning his own routine. Ilya had hoped that would be the end of this fledgling tirade, but he was sorely mistaken.

Not ten minutes later, Luca, standing in all his gear except his helmet, was back at Zane's side with another question.

"Okay, explain the science of Rozanov's lucky shirt." Luca pressed. "He doesn't wear it during games."

Across the room, Troy snorted.

"Of course you'd notice Rozy had a lucky shirt." Troy said.

"Shut up." Luca called back.

Ilya fought a small laugh as he tugged his pants over his shin guards. It wasn't often that Haas got this bitter or irritated like this. It was clear the pressure was getting to him, and right now he was taking it out on the concept of superstitions he couldn't execute with the same grace and perfection he did everything else. In these moments, Haas reminded Ilya of Shane when he was younger. So fixated on his goal everything fell to the wayside, even the things he normally coveted, like anything that had to do with hockey.

Ilya was about to put on his skates as he ran through the growing mental checklist of things he needed to do between now and their next game. This whole affair was making him realize he probably needed to check in on Haas. Maybe he could invite a few members of the team over tonight for dinner, something casual to get their mind off things that didn't include copious amounts of alcohol or staying out too late. The sheer mundanity and *boringness* of the thought almost surprised him. If his twenty year-old self could see him now.

He was about to make an announcement, it was time to pick up the pace and get on the ice, but before he could, Shane pipped up.

"Roz has a lucky shirt?" Shane asked.

He was standing by his stall, ready for practice from the waist down. His face had twisted into a careful curiosity as his eyes darted between their teammates and his husband. It was only then that Ilya's stomach dropped.

Oh fuck me.

Ilya hadn't kept Shane's t-shirt on purpose. He'd actually forgotten all about it until long after Shane had left that day. It wasn't until that night, when Ilya forced himself to go back upstairs that he found it. It was strewn across the floor of his messy room, a remnant of such a beautiful, wonderful experience that had so quickly fallen apart. Ilya had tried, for the better part of the day, to convince himself that nothing had actually happened. Shane got spooked over something silly and foolish. They'd said each other's names before, obviously, in the years of press conferences and award shows. Why would this be any different?

But it was different. It was all different. And it wasn't just that he said his name, or that Ilya let himself be comforted, even if Shane didn't know what he was comforting him about. They did a lot of things that day that they didn't do, not with each other. Ilya didn't make food for people that weren't his friends and family, weren't his *loved ones*. And Shane didn't let himself settle like he had in Ilya's home. The sight of it, honestly, surprised him more than anything else. He'd come to know Shane Hollander as someone who existed in boxes. He saw it in every hotel room and even, honestly, at his apartment. Everything had a place, every surface had a purpose. His toothbrush even went on the same side of the sink each time, gently set on a small towel. Shane was organized. Shane lived his life in discrete, clear boundaries.

But Shane threw his shirt on the floor of Ilya's bedroom. He tossed without a second thought. And he forgot about it. He let himself exist in more than one room, more than one neat little box, in Ilya's house. The thought alone made his chest swell. Shane had made himself at home here, even if it was just for an hour or two.

“No.” Ilya said, far too quickly to be nonchalant.

“Yes.” Luca said, at the same time.

Ilya turned to him, the traitor, and glared. Luca, laden with a patchy beard that really did look uncomfortable, just raised an eyebrow.

“No.” Ilya repeated, hoping, praying, he’d get the message.

“Yes?” Luca said.

When Ilya first found the shirt, his first instinct was to toss it. But that was when he was still angry, nursing his wounds with the rest of his now-flat beer as he cleaned two dishes. In the end, he washed it with his other clothes. The smell of Shane’s cologne, the brand he’d modeled for last season, was wafting off of it in a way that made him feel as crazy as it always did, but also now threatened to open the pit in his stomach tenfold. It was a nice brand, ridiculously expensive and the scent had a stupid name like *leather smoke* or *cedar bullet* or something else to signify that it was indisputably *masculine* because Shane Hollander was a *man* and a *professional athlete* and that came with expectations and assumptions.

So Ilya washed the shirt. And then he folded the shirt, along with his other clothes, while he was watching clips of the truly awful game they played against each other that week. And when it came time to put his clothes away... he did something he didn’t completely understand. He put the shirt in his closet. It wasn’t his drawer, but it wasn’t the trash. It was away. Safe. Here.

And it stayed there until the All Stars Game in Tampa. And after that trip, it ended up in his travel bag. And that season, Boston made the playoffs. And it went in the bag when they did again next season.

He’d never thought about telling Shane. After that first run, it wasn’t something he thought about as much as he thought about other rituals during playoff season. Have coffee by a certain time. Go to the same deli when it was a home game. Wear the white t-shirt at the rink during the playoffs. Kiss his mother’s cross necklace before stepping onto the ice. It was what made him feel comfortable and powerful and ready. And yes, a big part of that was wearing Shane’s shirt. But much like Shane had been hesitant to tell Ilya about keeping *his* shirt, it was from a chapter he didn’t need to reflect on.

That, and they really had been *rivals*, once. They would still be Shane and Ilya, no matter the context. And this was terrible, wonderful fodder.

“No. You’re mistaken.” Ilya shook his head. “I don’t have-”

“Yeah, you do.” Wyatt Hayes pipped up.

Ilya looked anywhere but his husband, mentally cursing he’d ever grown close to any of these people. Though he supposed with Hayes it wouldn’t have mattered if they’d ever spoken. He noticed *fucking everything*. Like now, when he’d been doing his stretches on the

floor with headphones on for the last fifteen minutes. Apparently, they hadn't been loud enough to block out this conversation.

"It's the shirt you wear during the playoffs." Hayes explained. "Hollander hasn't seen it cause we haven't been in any with him 'till now."

For a moment, everything was silent. Ilya, begrudgingly, turned to his husband. If he had any doubt before now, confirmation was surely written across his face. There was really only one reason Shane wouldn't have seen the shirt. After Ilya found out that Shane had kept *his*, he'd asked after the white tee, and Ilya had given some vague answer about it being lost to time. Now, though, it was crystal clear. Realization dawned on Shane in waves, as he twisted from curiosity into something far more dangerous: a sickening, frustratingly sexy, smugness.

"No way." Shane said, a small laugh escaping his lips. Their stalls were right beside one another, so he felt particularly trapped under his gaze. Most of the time Ilya enjoyed the closeness. Today, though.

"Shut up." Ilya said.

Shane took a step towards Ilya's stall, undoubtedly reaching for his bag, but Ilya blocked his path.

"Show me." Shane said.

"Guys?" Luca called, from his bench.

"Show me the shirt, you asshole." Shane smirked.

"No *fucking* way." Ilya countered, matching his intensity.

"What the fuck is going on?" Troy said.

Shane and Ilya kept it fairly professional at work, so this was a rare sight for their locker room. Ilya barely registered their teammates, though. He was fixated on the man standing eye to eye with him, wondering how long he'd fight for it. Shane seemed to be doing the same thing, his eyes darting across Ilya's face, making an assessment of how long he'd hold out. Ilya didn't miss playing against Shane. He adored being on the same team as his husband. But there were some moments, fleeting and far between, where he was reminded of *this* feeling. The tantalizing thrill of wanting to win and wanting the other not *just* to lose, but to watch you beat them.

"Fine." Ilya relented.

In one swift motion, he unzipped his bag, pulled out a fading white t-shirt and threw it, unceremoniously, at his husband. Shane caught it, and held it out in front of his face.

"This is my shirt." Shane confirmed.

"Oh. Is it?" Ilya said, sarcastically.

“You wear my shirt.” He said again. Shane’s voice was dripping with an odd mixture of both deep love and triumph.

“It was your shirt.” Ilya said, reaching to snatch it back, but Shane moved out of the way. “Once. A lifetime ago.” He shrugged. “But then you abandoned it and it needed a new home.”

That, made Shane burst into laughter. His cackles were louder than he’d heard in a while, definitely the loudest laugh he’d had in this locker room. It seemed like his voice was bouncing off the walls, further confusing an already stymied team.

“You gave me so much shit for-” Shane wheezed. “You’ve had it the whole time?”

“Where did you think it was?” Ilya scoffed, but there was no bite behind it.

“Wait... was this for the Centaurs only or in Boston too?” Shane asked. Before Ilya could return with a quip, his *wonderful* teammate beat him to it.

“It seemed pretty established when he got here.” Wyatt pipped up, again.

“Hayes!” Ilya groaned. He rested his head against his stall, mock-dramatically.

“My shirt is your playoff shirt.” Shane said, tauntingly.

“It’s a comfortable shirt.”

“And has been for *years*.” Shane was practically beaming.

“How did you not notice he had your shirt?” Troy asked. Ilya glanced at the rest of the team, who’d watched the whole affair with curiosity and amusement. “You guys are married.”

Ilya mused. It hadn’t been a secret, they were working really hard not to have those anymore, this was something else. This was a remnant. A odd vestibule from when their relationship was a combination of texts and a handful of hours every few weeks. When it was stolen and secret and probably should’ve felt a lot more scary but it didn’t because being with Shane felt *so good* everything else seemed like it was worth the risk. But now they were on the same team, in every sense of the word. And the shirt, truly, could just be a shirt now. A shirt that he liked that used to be his husband’s.

But that was a long, complicated answer. So Ilya said something else.

“I do the laundry.” He shrugged.

“Okay, not always.” Shane countered, gearing up to protest. Ilya quirked up. In the blink of an eye he had the upper hand once again.

“Most of the time.” Ilya goated.

“Well-” Shane stopped himself. “I’m getting off track. You kept my shirt.”

“Yes, fine, shut up.” Ilya shook his head. “You know I kind of like you. Sometimes.”

Shane’s face relaxed into a sickly, sappy smile. If Ilya wasn’t at work and about to make him skate until he physically couldn’t anymore, he’d have closed the gap between them and not opened it again until the sun came up.

“My shirt.” Shane gushed.

“Alright. We get it. It’s his shirt.” Troy said, waving a hand like he was mock-snapping them out of it. Shane turned away, slightly embarrassed, but Ilya didn’t mind. He knew half of his prickliness was that Harris had been gone all week for a corporate PR trip. “Can we focus? On the playoffs? Maybe?”

Ilya grinned.

“You heard the man. Roll out!” Ilya barked. With a few grunts and calls of confirmation, the locker room began to empty out.

“Haas.” Ilya called, beckoning the right wing player before he could go.

“Yeah?”

“I’m sorry, but you have to keep the beard.” He started, placing an apologetic hand on his shoulder. “Next season get a necklace or make the same smoothie, or something. But it’s too late now.”

Luca raised an eyebrow.

“Next season?” He said, almost bashfully.

“For our second cup. After we win one this year.” Ilya confirmed. He gave him another pat and nudged him towards the door. “Let’s move!”

Ilya turned back to get the rest of his gear, which Shane had already grabbed and was holding out, somewhat expectantly. He’d already tucked the stolen t-shirt back into Ilya’s bag, and now waited with his pads in one hand and the jersey in the other. Ilya reached his hands up and let Shane put on his shoulder pads and check each strap. It wasn’t often that they did this for each other, but it was always grounding for Ilya.

“Are you trying to get on your captain’s good side?” Ilya said.

“I don’t know if I need to.” Shane said, sliding on his elbow pads. “I heard a rumor he wears my old clothes.”

Shane unfolded his jersey and slipped it over Ilya’s gear.

“You’re funny.” Ilya said, softly. “When did you get funny?”

“Shut up.” He said, fixing it so that the ‘C’ was in the right spot on his chest. “I think our little conversation loosened everyone up.”

“Good.” Ilya mused. “They need to relax so I can properly stress them out.”

“They will.” Shane said. He handed him his helmet, and then put on his own. "And you will."

“First we have practice. Then everything else.” Ilya said, quoting the motto he’d adopted since moving to Ottawa.

Shane leaned in, and Ilya did the same, bumping their helmets together affectionately.

“Let's do it, captain.”

Chapter End Notes

YAY!!

okay - i know that this chapter has Luca Haas fairly out of character, but for me at the place that the team is at, i think that he would be the most likely to be a little pouty (over say, Troy, who's Been Growing And Healing) and I also think that he is very much like Shane, in that he gets a little in his head, but also if you have musings/disagreements abt the characterization i would love to hear feedback! this was my first time writing The Whole Gang and tbh i was INTIMIDATED but also it was SO FUN and made me want to write them more

anyways! i hope that you enjoyed this! this was my first dip into the wonderful Game Changers world and i would love to continue

please be kind to yourself and others.

Stay Gold,

xoxo,

aza

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