

Cracks in the Facade

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/77103016) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/77103016>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Heated Rivalry (TV)
Relationships:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov , Shane Hollander & Hayden Pike
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov , Hayden Pike , JJ (Heated Rivalry)
Additional Tags:	Hurt/Comfort , Anxious Shane Hollander , Shane Hollander Needs a Hug , Protective Ilya Rozanov , Cuddling & Snuggling , Eating Disorder Not Otherwise Specified , Insomnia , Nightmares , Literal Sleeping Together , Developing Relationship , Episode: s01e05 I'll Believe in Anything (Heated Rivalry)
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2026-01-04 Words: 1,991 Chapters: 1/1

Cracks in the Facade

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Summary

If he could just get everything right then he wouldn't be having these problems, he told himself.

If he could stick to his shitty fucking diet which he hated, and his grueling workout routine, and manage his schedule to fit in more brand deals and advertisements, if he could fit in extra hours of practice, and on and on and on.

Of course, he thought with spite, this would all be better if he could fucking sleep.

Or, Shane is falling apart and Ilya is there to pick up the pieces.

“I- I’m sorry, I think this season has just been more stressful than usual,” he had tried to tell Rose Landry as she gathered her clothes from the side of the bed.

“Of course,” she’d said and offered him a small smile.

They both knew he was full of shit, but one thing wasn’t a lie: this season had been stressful.

Shane could feel his control slipping despite his best attempts. No matter how many times he tried to tell himself that he needed to get his shit together his grip on normalcy was loosening.

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It started about a month ago with one restless night and had spiraled from there. Usually Shane fell into a deep sleep after a long day of practice and workouts and whatever else he was doing but lately he just lay in bed, heart pounding, thoughts racing, and definitely not sleeping.

Or, if and when he did manage to fall into a fitful sleep his dreams consisted of his own worst nightmares: losing the cup, everyone finding out about him and Ilya, the flash of cameras in his face, or once even a dream that featured Ilya somewhere in Russia being hurt because of Shane. Always, the dreams concluded that whatever bad things were happening were because of Shane and Shane had a hard time not believing that himself.

He’d wake up in empty hotel rooms, a twisted scream escaping his lips, panting and sweaty and alone.

Of course people had noticed, Rose had noticed before they broke up and Hayden kept asking him if he was okay at practice and Shane brushed them all off. He was fine, he had to be. So what if he wobbled on his skates and always felt like he was seeing through a thick layer of fog.

The only person he really wanted to see, the only person who he could imagine would treat him normally, would probably never want to speak to him again. Not after he left, not after he’d dated Rose fucking Landry.

God, he needed to get some fucking sleep, he thought, burying his head in his hands and blocking out the fluorescent lights.

“Hey,” Hayden said cautiously, “you alright buddy?”

Shane snapped his eyes open, “I’m fine,” he growled.

Hayden took a step back, his hands raised in surrender, and Shane couldn't even bring himself to feel bad for snapping at his best friend.

"Okay, I'm gonna go get some snacks, maybe try to get some rest on the plane?" Hayden offered, disappearing into the chaos of the airport.

Yeah, Shane thought sarcastically, because it's that easy.

On the flight to Florida he determinedly ignored Hayden's concerned looks in favor of reading one of his hockey books until his best friend fell asleep and Shane looked at him with envy. By the time they landed he was ready to collapse into a hotel bed and hopefully never wake up but he knew both of those things were impossible.

When they dropped their bags off in their rooms Shane caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror hanging next to the bed. He looked like shit, he thought, carding a hand through his dark hair in an attempt at looking presentable. Even in his newly styled clothes there was no hiding the dark purple circles under his eyes, the new lines of stress wrinkling his forehead, or how pale he'd gotten.

"You look like shit," was the first thing Ilya Rozanov said to him, coming over to sit next to Shane at the bar.

"Fuck off," Shane responded, even as his hands shook as he raised his glass of ginger ale to his lips.

Rozanov hummed, "and you're sure you can play tomorrow? Or I need to score all the goals for both of us?" He said with a smirk.

Shane glared at him but he was pretty sure he wasn't imagining the undercurrent of concern in the Russian's voice.

"I'm fine," he muttered.

"Okay," he didn't sound convinced, "see you tomorrow then."

"Y-yeah, see you," Shane muttered as he hastily stood up and left. Fuck.

That night he lay wide awake, staring up at the ceiling above him. Rozanov was here, and he didn't seem to completely hate him. That had to count for something, right? So why couldn't he calm the fuck down, why was his heart still racing with anxiety?

He blinked at the sleeping figure of Hayden in the bed next to him, passed out without a care in the world. Why couldn't he just be normal like that?

Instead he watched the clock tick ever closer to sunrise until it was six am and time to get up.

"You gotta eat something man," JJ pointed out.

They were sitting in the hotel lobby and Shane was picking at an orange, peeling it slowly.

“None of this fits in my diet,” he said. It was true, and the reason he hated hotel breakfasts.

JJ looked up from his own plate of waffles and bacon. “Who the fuck cares man? We’re basically on vacation.”

Shane raised a brow, “you better not let coach hear you say that.”

JJ rolled his eyes, “would you please relax for once?”

God, Shane wished he could. He shook his head, leaving the orange and heading to the gym.

He hopped on the stationary bike, ignoring the way his head swam and his vision blurred. There were no excuses for missing a workout especially during the season, and he would just fall behind everyone else if he didn’t workout.

His lungs burned and his muscles cramped, sweat dripped into his eyes. His head felt like it was stuffed with cotton and he wasn’t even biking that fast. God, he was so slow today, he just needed to be better, to be faster, stronger, if he could just-

“Hollander?” A voice rang out, breaking through the fog that was Shane’s head.

“Wh-what?” he muttered, confused, he slowed down then stopped.

Ilya was walking towards him. Now it definitely wasn’t his imagination, the russian looked worried.

“What are you doing here? We have game in few hours,” Rozanov said, standing next to where Shane perched on the stationary bike.

Shane shook his head, trying to clear his thoughts, “it’s fine, I still need to get a workout in.”

He felt Ilya’s eyes sweep over him, taking in his pale, sweaty, shaking form.

“Get off the bike.”

And because he’d never really been able to not listen to Ilya, Shane swung a leg over the bike and promptly tumbled towards the ground, his vision going black.

Ilya caught him, strong arms wrapping around his middle and holding him in place for a long moment before he righted him and kept a hand on Shane’s shoulder when he felt him sway unsteadily.

“I thought so,” Ilya murmured.

Shane stared at the ground, his cheeks hot.

“I’m-”

“If you say fine one more time, I- ебать,” Rozanov cursed, shaking his head.

Shane stared at the ground silently.

“You're not playing today,” Rozanov decided.

“What?” Shane’s head shot up, “you can’t do that!”

“Da, but I can,” the russian said firmly, meeting Shane’s gaze and daring him to argue. “I will tell them we’re both sick and cannot play.”

It took Shane a moment to process that. “Both of us?”

“Someone has to make sure you don’t fall and break your pretty face,” Ilya said, one arm wrapped around Shane’s shoulders, tugging him out of the gym, “c’mon.”

He was too stunned to protest when Ilya led them back to his room and deposited Shane on the bed. He sat there silently as Ilya picked up the phone to inform the organizers of the All Stars that neither of their two biggest stars would be there.

When he was done Ilya sat down next to him on the bed and gave Shane one of his looks, the one that meant: you better start talking.

“I- I guess this season has been really stressful,” Shane started, “but I’m fine really, I just need to get my shit together.”

Ilya hummed, “but you have not been eating, not been sleeping, are, how you say...smaller?”

Shane shrugged, staring at the carpeted floor, “thinner, yeah I guess so.”

“It’s just, nothing fits in this diet!” he protested.

Ilya turned to look at him, “so why stick to fucking diet then Hollander?”

He didn’t say: because I hate myself, because I deserve this, because I am not allowed to have fun.

“Becuase I have to be the best!” He said.

“Well, is already too late for that,” Ilya said seriously, "because I am best.”

Shane’s eyes widened, “fuck you!”

Ilya shrugged, a twinkle in his eyes, “maybe later.”

“Now though, we order room service and the great Shane Hollander will eat a fucking burger and go to sleep.”

He found that he really didn’t have the energy to argue with that.

Their burgers arrived a few moments later and Shane picked at it, taking a few half hearted bites of the meat. It was good protein at least.

“God, Hollander,” Ilya groaned, “I must do everything for you, da?”

He picked up a handful of fries and held them out towards Shane, using the same voice he used in the bedroom he said, “open.”

And Shane fucking listened to him, brain melting away in favor of the sound of Ilya’s voice, the harshly russian-accented syllables telling him exactly what to do. He ate the fries and most of the burger that way.

When they were done Ilya put the plates aside and turned off the lights and turned on the tv to some mindless action movie. He shimmed down under the covers and patted the spot next to himself.

Shane froze, and in a voice smaller than he’d like to admit, he said, “Ilya, I can’t sleep.”

They both paused for a beat at the use of his first name but then Ilya just cocked his head to the side curiously and asked, “why?”

“I- I just can’t, or when I do I have these awful nightmares, and-” he could feel his body tensing again at just the thought of laying silently next to Ilya wide awake and unable to do what was asked of him, he just wanted to be good and-

“Okay, is fine,” Ilya reassured him, “I will scare the nightmares away if they come, I am big scary Russian, yes?”

He swallowed, “okay.”

Slowly, he settled down next to Ilya under the covers and laid on his side. He froze when he felt big hands adjusting him until his head was pillowed on Ilya’s chest, then a hand began to softly run through his hair and Shane couldn’t help himself, he melted against the soft, warm strength of Ilya’s body.

“Is okay?” Ilya asked gently.

Shane nodded. He could feel his eyes slipping closed finally and he wanted to cry from relief.

“Goodnight Shane,” Ilya whispered and just before he fell asleep he felt a soft kiss being pressed to his forehead.

He woke up hours later, having slept soundly without nightmares. In the dimness of early morning, Ilya was still asleep beside him, his big arms wrapped firmly around Shane like he was never letting go. Shane allowed himself a small smile for the first time in months and closed his eyes again, nestled further into the warmth of the man beside him.

He could afford to miss an early morning workout just this once.

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