

I wish I was there, too.

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/77155316) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/77155316>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid , Heated Rivalry (TV)
Relationships:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov , Luca Haas & Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov , Yuna Hollander , Luca Haas , Wyatt Hayes
Additional Tags:	Hurt/Comfort , Angst , COVID-19 Pandemic , Pre-Book 6: The Long Game (Game Changers) , Post-Book 2: Heated Rivalry (Game Changers) , COVID-19 , Fluff and Humor , Minecraft , My First Fanfic , Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2026-01-12 Words: 5,193 Chapters: 2/2

I wish I was there, too.

by [babyharpsealsarecoolyeah](#)

Summary

March 15, 2020.

The entire Ottawa Centaurs team is mandated to quarantine in New York, as Harris Drover tested positive with COVID during the Centaurs' away game against the New York Admirals. This includes Ilya Rozanov, who is quarantining with Luca Haas in a shabby hotel room. Shane Hollander, on the other hand, moved into the cottage with his parents to hide from all the chaos.

How will Shane and Ilya keep in touch and stay sane while the whole world is on lockdown?

—OR—

Hollanov Covid 19 Pandemic AU

Chapter 1: March 15, 2020

Chapter Notes

FIRST FANFIC!!! technically not, but its the first one that i'll be posting. english is my third language i might explode.

The COVID 19 pandemic gave me a few interesting situations about the Game Changers characters that crossed my mind. It has this sense of dread and angst that perhaps it is the end of the world, especially if you yourself or people close to you were affected by the virus. You get frantic but you can't do anything. My writing sucks ass and i get hella writer's block, and I'm not sure if people have already written something like a Hollanov covid pandemic au, but it would be nice if more people write about it since 2020 in the canon timeline was just briefly passed by lmao.

I used the Game Changers canon timeline from the wiki for this. The important things to remember about the setting is that Ilya (and Harris Drover) has been with the Ottawa Centaurs for 2 years at this point. The only thing I changed for this is that Luca Haas isn't supposed to be with Ottawa until a few months later, so I just inserted him in bc i love him im sorry this is so self indulgent

Anyway hope yall like this fanfic!!

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

March 15, 2020

Shane stood up from the couch and headed to the kitchen for some ginger ale. He couldn't bear to watch the rest of the game on the television. The Ottawa Centaurs played against the New York Admirals, and it was a total shit show. It was 1-6, with the only goal from none other than Ilya.

"Come on, baby, you can do this." Yuna muttered out loud. His parents are still on the couch, clutching to each other, as if they fully believe Ottawa could score 6 more goals in 3 minutes. Shane didn't wanna be the pessimist, so he let them be.

It's been 12 days since he last saw Ilya. Ottawa had a lot of away games—in Boston, New Jersey, then now in New York, which now they're painfully losing. Like the one in New Jersey. And in Boston. And, all of the games so far actually. Shane couldn't bear to be in a team as bad as Ottawa. Even with someone as good as Ilya Rozanov, he can't carry an entire team.

Shane rummaged through the fridge, only to be met with leftover spaghetti and some other condiments. *Weird*. "Uhh, mom, do we still have ginger ale? I can't find any in the fridge."

But there was no response. And weirdly enough, the background noise changed from the hockey game to a bunch of words being spurted out. Shane headed back to the living room, where he found his parents watching something else.

“Mom, what is this?” Shane said—less of a question and more of a statement.

“Shane, dear, just watch!” His mom exasperated, pointing at the television, and her other hand clutched on his dad’s. Shane turned his attention to the flat screen, which seemed to be some sort of news break.

BREAKING NEWS! The World Health Organization has officially announced that the coronavirus outbreak is a global pandemic. Everyone is urged to stay home and practice social distancing. Please follow your local government’s guidelines, and—

“Shit.”

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Shane has been texting Ilya since the game ended at sunset. No replies. An hour later, Shane called his phone. Just a voicemail.

Hey, this is Ilya. I will not be answering your call.

Maybe their new coach is giving them some sort of long speech or something. Or having a long drink with the team? He shook his head, continuing to help his parents carry stuff back to the cottage. The cottage was safer for them after all. Situated in the middle of nowhere; away from people and away from all that’s happening in the world. It would be the Hollander family’s little secluded hiding place until the pandemic all blows over.

Shane honestly didn’t think much of the coronavirus at first. His mom, however, was anxious as hell. Even before the announcement, she was reminding Shane to avoid social events as much as possible and to always wash his hands. But then, the cases started spreading, and there was that unsettling feeling that it might get worse. Despite not being Chinese, Shane couldn’t avoid the growing Asian hate, being the only Asian in the NHL. It was weird and uncalled for, and he never really understood the people heckling him on the rink for it. Shane has never even been to China. That was way back in February—a month ago.

Now, shit hit the fan. The WHO just announced a few hours ago that coronavirus is a global pandemic, and there have been talks of a lockdown, flights getting cancelled, and public spaces being urged to close down. Although it hasn’t happened yet, Shane is just lucky he was already staying at his parent’s house—and now at the cottage—before it all went to shit. Hayden even called him if he was okay.

Shane was laying on his bed when the clock struck midnight. He hasn’t heard from Ilya all night, and it’s gnawing at him from the inside to not hear his boyfriend’s voice again.

Standing up, he decided to give Ilya another call before he could sleep. The phone only rang twice until it picked up, “Shane.”

“Hey, Ilya.” Shane paced around his room. “Where were you? I’ve been calling you all night.”

“I am still in New York. In the hotel room.” Ilya’s voice was rougher than usual. *Peculiar, but okay.*

“That’s good, but um, did you hear the news? This coronavirus thing is getting worse. I heard the NHL is gonna cancel the season, and Ottawa is urging for a lockdown. So, my parents and I are gonna quarantine at the cottage. You should come with—”

“I can’t.”

“It’s going to be nice, and wait what?” Shane stopped in his tracks, “What do you mean you can’t?” He almost thought he was joking, but there was no punch line. A few more seconds passed, and the line was still silent. “Ilya. Why can’t you go?” His voice dropped lower than he realized, as he heard his heart beating in his ears.

A long sigh came from the other side of the phone. “Harris, our social media manager, tested positive. The entire team will be quarantined here in New York for 2 weeks. Or maybe more. I’m not sure.”

Shane felt his stomach drop. *Fuck fuck fuck fuck.* “Oh my god. Ilya. Are you... are you okay? Where are you? Were you tested? Please tell me you’re okay. Fuck, I—”

“Shane.” He cuts him off. “I am okay. I am in our hotel room, like I said. I can’t go out though. Waiting for doctor to come in and test me. I am with Luca Haas, a rookie. Incoming rookie. He is not part of team yet.” Shane shook his head at Ilya’s need to clarify that, ignoring the elephant in the room.

“Ilya.” It was barely a whisper, and he isn’t even sure if the phone could pick it up. “Are you sure you’re okay? I- I...”

“Shane.” Ilya said again but more softly. “I told you I am okay. You do not need to worry.” Then, he paused. Shane could’ve sworn he heard Ilya’s voice shaking on the line, but he lets him speak. “I have no symptoms. No cough, no fever, and I could taste how bitter this cheap hotel coffee is.”

Shane nodded emptily, “Okay... okay...” It felt like he was telling himself that. “Are you—” “How is your mom and your dad?” Ilya very smoothly changes the topic.

Shane frowned, but he decided to humor Ilya, “They’re asleep right now, but uh—”

“Keep talking.” Ilya urged him, “And please, I want to see your face.” Shane nodded weakly, turning his camera on, and Ilya did the same. Shane couldn’t make out what Ilya was feeling with the surgical mask covering most of his face. He doesn’t know if those were tears in his eyes or not. The screen was a bit pixelated with the weak hotel signal. But Shane could see

the minimalist off-white walls of the hotel room that Ilya always disliked and the same blandly colored blanket of the bed he was laying on.

“Uh, mom is as paranoid as ever. She’s been hoarding all sorts of things here at the cottage. Well, she had been for a while, even before the announcement. When there were, like, less than 10 cases here, we already had mountains of toilet paper, masks, sanitizer, and some beer. Oh, and we have stocks of ginger ale here, too.”

“Mhmm.” His choppy voice went through the line, like a signal to keep going.

“Uh, and dad, he’s stoic like always. I helped him carry all the stuff back here. Started complaining about his back, so I finished the rest of the work.” Shane weakly chuckled. “It was mostly just the groceries that mom hoarded that we had to carry. And our clothes too.”

Ilya smiled, or at least that’s what Shane thought he made out through the mask. “I miss them. Your parents.”

“And they miss you, too.” Shane paused. “I wish you were here.” He breathed out, gazing at Ilya’s eyes on the pixelated phone screen.

“I wish I was there, too.”

“I love you.”

“*Ya tebya lublyu.*”

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The call ended. Ilya’s teeth hurt from how much he was gritting his cry back. He can’t show fear. Not now. Not when Shane is away. Not when he can’t hold Shane in his arms and tell him that everything will be alright. Even if they both knew it was a lie. Ilya is a liar after all.

But God, it hurts Ilya to see Shane worry so much like that. Ilya would give anything to be able to reach out through the phone and give him a hug. But he can’t. And he won’t be able to for who knows how long. He has to be the big man for Shane. Showing a sliver of fear in front of Shane will make him worry even more. God knows Shane will overthink himself to death at the cottage. And Ilya can’t live with himself knowing that Shane is worried sick because of him. Oh, mama. What should I do?

His train of thought was interrupted when he heard choked sniffles come from the other bed. Luca Haas was completely wrapped in his blanket. Ilya thought he was sleeping the entire time, but turns out he wasn’t. Or maybe he just woke up. “Haas? Haas. Haasy—Luca.” He said softly this time, “Hey, it’s gonna be alright.”

The blanket rustled a bit before a disheveled Luca emerged. His eyes were red, and his blonde hair unkempt. “Mr. Rozanov?” The soft voice of a tired Luca could barely be heard.

“Just Ilya. Trouble sleeping?”

The poor 19 year old Swiss looked confused, even through his mask. Probably more confused by the fact that *the* Ilya Rozanov was talking to him, rather than his English being not so good. “Yes.” He finally spoke.

“Were you awake the entire time or did I wake you up?”

“I... I just woke up, Mr. Rozanov.” Luca’s accent was unmistakably Swiss, and it reminded Ilya of his own heavy accent when he was still new to the NHL.

“Ilya.” He corrected him again. “Besides the doctors, we’re going to be seeing only each other for the next 2 weeks. No need to be so formal with me. Yay roomies!” Ilya tried to humor with some jazz hands. Luca chuckled weakly, probably out of obligation rather than being humored. “How are you, rook?”

Luca raised his eyebrows at the last word. “Rook? But, I am not part of the team yet.” It was more of a question rather than a statement.

“No. But it is good to manifest, no?” Ilya smiled, forgetting the young Swiss couldn’t see through his mask. Luca wasn’t officially part of the team. He only reached out, showing interest to join the Ottawa Centaurs, and the new coach let him train and even watch a few games of the team. Luca Haas would be set to play during the 2020-2021 season after the official NHL Draft in July, assuming Ottawa gets him. But with the coronavirus happening, they weren’t even sure if it was going to happen soon. Hell, even at all. “Do you want to talk about it?”

The young Swiss turned his head toward him. “Talk about what?”

“You were crying, yes?”

Luca eyes shot up, startled. “I- I wasn’t crying, Mr. Roza— Ilya, sir.”

“Luca. I heard you crying under the blankets. It is just you and me here. You do not need to act tough around me. I am scared, too.” Ilya wished he could’ve told himself this too. What a hypocrite he is. “Have you talked to your family back home?” He asked again softly, not breaking his gaze.

Luca stared down at the floor. For a minute, he was unable to make eye contact with the Russian man. Ilya didn’t want to interrupt the silence. If the kid really did not want to talk, then he wouldn’t force him to. The clock struck another minute’s passing, and Ilya nodded empty. “Okay. We can talk later if you don’t want to—“

“My *oma* tested positive.” He squeaked out. The kid still hasn’t looked up, but even through the mask, Ilya could see his face scrunching and the veins in his forehead and neck popping out.

Ilya scooted closer, now sitting on the bed facing him. “Your *oma* is your...”

“Grandmother. *Oma* is grandma.” The kid’s eyes were red—face contorted painfully and shoulders tensed around his neck.

“I’m sorry to hear that.” Again, there was a long pause, until Ilya spotted a single tear roll down his eye, soaking up his mask. “Hey. Hey...” He stood up, walking towards the kid.

Finally, Luca looked up, but he was scared. He inched back in his bed. “N-no. We can’t, right? Social distancing!”

Ilya almost paused in his tracks, but he couldn’t care any less. Reaching out his hands, he pulled Luca into a big hug. The kid was hesitant at first, but Ilya eventually felt his arms wrap around his back. He then buried his head under Ilya’s chest, soaking up his shirt with his tears. Hearing Luca break down into a cry did it for Ilya—he felt his own eyes get watery. *Fuck me.*

For a moment, he wished it was Shane he was embracing like this. *It’s going to be alright, moya lyublyu.* He almost said out loud, but he swallowed it down. Not now. This kid might never see his family again, because he’s stuck here with him.

They stayed like this for another minute or two, until Luca broke the hug first and wiped his tears. “Thank you. Ilya. I should sleep soon.”

“Hey.” Ilya pulled Luca again and gave him a noogie on the head. “If you cry again, you tell me. You are not alone here. Okay?”

Luca chuckled. And not like the fake chuckle he did earlier. Ilya could tell there was a genuine smile tugging underneath the kid’s mask. That eased him. “I will. Good night, Ilya.” Luca tucked himself into his blanket.

Ilya headed back to his bed. “Good night, Luca.” They really should adopt the kid when he and Shane get married. Hopefully soon. He chuckled to himself, before tucking himself to bed. Fuck this quarantine shit.

Chapter End Notes

I realized that Ilya is more comforting with Luca than Shane in this fic mainly because he isn’t as good with his english or words than he is with being physical with someone. I think the show/series demonstrates that with how Shane and Ilya’s story and emotional progression happens through their physical intimacy rather than verbally. It's their way of communication. So in this situation when they could only talk through the phone, I kinda wanted to make Ilya have this struggle of not wanting to tell Shane everything. Because he knows that Shane will be worried sick and that Ilya won’t be there to comfort and hold him. But when it comes to Luca, Ilya could give the physical comfort he couldnt give to Shane at the time.

Also this was supposed to be exclusively just a hollanov fic, but then suddenly i wrote smth abt luca and i couldnt stop so ig this is just a drabbles compilation fic. Luca is my little baby and I want Ilya and Luca to have a more father son type of relationship.

Chapter 2: March 16, 2020

Chapter Notes

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

March 16, 2020

Ilya was fidgeting on his seat. It was around 6 in the morning. The doctor's visit to perform the covid test kit was supposed to be done last night, but it got delayed to this morning instead due to a supply shortage. Now, he was just sitting on a cheap monobloc chair right outside his hotel room door, waiting in line for the covid test.

The hotel hallway outside his room stretched out—its white minimalist walls could make him go insane if he stared at them any longer. Each door had a boring monobloc chair beside it, which is supposedly at least 6 feet apart from each other. It's perfect for, y'know, social distancing and all that crap. All of the guys in line were silent, and it felt like he was in an asylum.

Ilya didn't have any cough, no fever, no headaches, no nausea, he could taste bitter coffee, and none of that coronavirus bullshit. But fuck, he'd be 99 percent less worried if it wasn't for the fact that you could feel none of those yet still carry the virus. What did they call that? Asymmetric? Assyrian? That's not right. Whatever.

God, if New York didn't have thousands of cases already and understaffed and overpopulated hospitals, then they wouldn't have to do this makeshift quarantined hospital in this shitty hotel. But whatever, it's for the safety of everyone. He has no choice but to abide.

On the chair in front of him was Luca Haas, his roommate. He was hunched over, silently praying to himself. Poor kid. He wasn't supposed to be imprisoned here with them. He could've still been in Switzerland with his family. There were a lot of people before Luca, not that he could immediately recognize them with their masks. Some he knew as his teammates, others were from the Admirals. Ilya heard that the Admirals' Physio Therapist tested positive with covid but supposedly had no symptoms. That's why they're also stuck here with them. He did spot Scott Hunter, closest to the doctor's table at the end of the hallway.

There was no one on the chair behind Ilya, until the door behind creaked and slowly opened.

"Hazy? Is that you?" Ilya couldn't recognize him quickly with the surgical mask and the hood over his head, but another good look at the curly blonde hair poking out confirmed that it was indeed Wyatt Hayes, one of his closer teammates.

"Hey, Roz. Felt like a while since we last saw each other, huh." Wyatt's entire stature was tense, and it hurts to see. They only saw each other yesterday for fuck's sake. Anxiety is taking over the place, and everybody's taking this quarantine shit badly.

Usually, Ilya would dap his friend up or maybe give him a side hug when they meet. But the moment he raised his hand, he stopped himself. "Right. Social distancing." He rolled his

eyes, and Wyatt chuckled softly. He would have ignored the social distancing, like what he did with Luca, but there were far too many witnesses who would chew them both up.

Instead, Wyatt crossed his arms over his chest. "Wakanda Forever, my friend."

Ilya couldn't help but feel a smile tug at his lips. He knew that Wyatt was a comic book nerd and that he loved Marvel. Guess even with the world going on lockdown, there's still some part of Hazy that stays with him.

Ilya did the salute back. "Wakanda Forever, Hazy."

The line kept on for another half hour, until Ilya finally reached the doctor's table. The nose swab was more uncomfortable than he imagined. Afterwards, the doctor and the other attendants in their hazmat suits said some guidelines and crap that he couldn't completely understand. Their muffled voices and his anxiety wasn't really helping all that much for his comprehension. He did remember that they'd get the results either by tonight or the morning after.

Ilya eventually found himself back in his room. Luca was taking a shower and washing the outside away. Staring at the ceiling of their room, Ilya sighed. *Fuck this shit.*

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A yawn came out of Shane. He plopped himself down his bed, tired from the day with his parents at the cottage. March 16. 9:08PM. His phone said. He should call Ilya again. He hasn't been answering his phone again. His covid test should have been done a while ago. What could he be doing?

Ring, ring. Ring, ring.

"Hey, Ilya. How are you? Did you get tested already?" Shane opened his phone camera on, waiting for Ilya to do the same. He was sitting on his bed with glasses on, because he knew Ilya liked to see him with it.

There was no response, just the static from the call. "Ilya, are you there? How uh... how are you feeling?"

"Shane." His boyfriend's voice was a contrast to his own. Breathy, gravelly, and lump of sorrow. Then, his video feed opened up. Ilya's eyes were red, like he cried not too long ago. Even through his mask, Shane could tell what expression he was wearing.

"...No." Tears already formed in his eyes. "No, it has to be wrong. Covid tests aren't one hundred percent accurate!"

"Shane..." And Ilya had the audacity to comfort him, and not the other way around.

“But you said you had no symptoms! You even told me you hated how bitter your coffee was! Maybe you’re just asymptomatic!”

Ilya paused, looking down. “I lied. I’m sorry.” A stray tear rolled down his cheek. His mask then soaked it up.

“You...” Shane grit his teeth. “We promised! Back here, at the cottage! No more lies. We always tell the truth. Remember?”

“I didn’t want to make you worry. I’m sorry.”

“No, fuck you. Don’t be sorry. Please—I...” Shane couldn’t help how shaky his voice was. It made him feel so pathetic. “I love you. So much. And... we haven’t even told the whole world how much I love you.”

“I love you, too, *moya lyubov*.” Ilya shook his head. “What matters is that we know what we have is real. That’s all that I care about now. Don’t you ever forget that. *Ya tebya lyublyu*.”

“I won’t.” A bittersweet smile crept at him. “*Ya tebya lyublyu*.”

There was a painfully long pause between them. It was just Shane’s breathy hiccups and Ilya’s sniffing. “The medics will arrive here anytime soon. I’ll be escorted to the hospital first, and then back here in a separate room.”

“Will I be able to call you still?”

“Yes, I will—“ A wretched cough erupted from Ilya, one that could scratch his throat and bleed it through.

“Ilya!” He screamed out, dropping his phone somewhere on the bed. His hands were getting weak, and his heart was in his throat. He rummaged to get his phone, which wasn’t hard when he could hear more wretched coughs from it.

Ilya’s video was just pointed at the ceiling. Shane couldn’t see his face, and he couldn’t do anything but helplessly listen to his love cough endlessly on the line.

The call abruptly ended. And Shane could not stop the waterfall break on his face. “Oh God. Ilya. Please. Be alright. Ilya...”

“Ilya!” Shane gasped as he jolted upright in his bed. Suddenly, it wasn’t the evening anymore. He was blinded by the sunlight flooding his room through the floor-to-ceiling windows. His glasses were on top of the drawer. Wasn’t he wearing it? And his phone was nowhere to be found.

Shane groaned. It was too warm for it to be just sunrise. *What time is it?* The dried up tears from last night made it hurt to blink. He rolled around his bed, lazily trying to find his phone. 10:08AM. March 16.

That’s weird. If it was the next day, it should be March 17. Unless, was it all just a dream?

Fuck. He slammed his head back on the weighted blanket. It's not often that Shane wakes up past 7AM. And it's much less often when he wakes up past 10AM. He missed his usual morning jog, yoga session, meditation, and breakfast, the most important meal of the day. It's not like him to break routine, let alone several activities in his schedule, and it frustrated him. But not enough, when recollection of what happened in his dream came to him.

Ilya. Where is he?

He held his phone up again. A few missed calls from Ilya at around 8:30AM. That's not good. He could already feel his stomach churning. He pressed call. The phone didn't even ring once when it picked up.

"Good morning, *moya lyubyov*."

"Ilya!" He cried, sounding a bit more desperate, but he couldn't care less. "Are you okay?"

"Woah, you look like you have seen ghost." Ilya snorted at his own joke. Shane frowned. How could he still find humor in this situation? "Yes. I had my covid test earlier this morning."

Shane gulped. "So... how was it?"

"Uncomfortable. They put the nose swab so deep I could feel it tickling my brain." Ilya grumbled, which normally would make Shane snort, but he still can't shake off the feeling of dread. "But the results won't be emailed until tonight or tomorrow morning."

Shane emptily nodded. "Okay." He gazed at the window—it was beautiful. He never really appreciated the view as much as he did now. The lake sparkled under the ray of sunshine, and the trees surrounding it danced under the wind's influence. There was even a loon standing right by the window, staring back at him. It was so peaceful. He wish they were too.

"Love." Shane turned his head back to Ilya on the screen. He never uses English nicknames. "Whatever you are thinking about. Forget it. I am here now, okay? And I am alright. There is *nothing* to worry about. Nothing."

For the first time in a while, Shane cracked a smile. "Fuck you."

"More like fuck me hard. You should say it more."

"Yeah. I should." Shane chuckled. "Do you mind if we keep the call on?"

"No, I don't mind."

There was a long pause of comfortable silence. "So, what are we gonna do now?"

"Well, I have an idea."

=====

“Ilya, I hate you. I’m actually gonna murder you.”

“Uh-uh, no you won’t.” Ilya taunted. Steam was practically blowing off Shane’s nostrils like an angry bull. Well, he looked more like an angry kitten. And, oh boy, the sound of him seething was music to his ears.

“That’s it. I’m gonna kill you.” Shane drew his sword and started swinging at Ilya.

“Hey, watch it!” Ilya jumped back, evading the other man’s advances. “You might break the window!”

“The fuck you mean break the window? You literally bombed the fucking cottage!” Shane charged again at him, but no Russian would back down without a fight. Ilya drew his sword and clashed with Shane. They exchanged blows—hit after hit, slash after slash.

But then, Ilya made a grave mistake. He slipped and fell into a pit, taking significant damage. “*Blyat!*” He cursed out loud. At this rate, Shane might catch up to him and kill him. He scrambled, trying to find a place to hide or take cover, but he couldn’t find any. He was cornered.

Before he realized it, Shane found his way down the pit. And with one final slash, Shane struck Ilya with a critical blow, putting an end to the Russian man’s life.

“HOLLANDER, WHAT THE FUCK?!”

“Uhh…” Luca suddenly spoke up from the other side of the hotel room. “Is everything all right?” The Swiss looked a bit shaken and confused from the loud profanities. *Whoops*.

“Yes, Luca. I’m sorry about the noise.” Ilya honestly forgot he was on the other bed next to him. He got too invested in the game and his boyfriend.

“It’s alright.” The young Swiss chuckled awkwardly. “May I ask, what are you doing?”

“I am playing Minecraft with Hollander. Well, I was. Until he *fucking* killed me!” He held up his phone, showing the death screen to Luca.

You died!

OttawaNumba1 has been slain by ShaneHolland.

Ilya stumbled upon some Minecraft Let’s Play videos on Youtube when he doomscored himself to sleep the previous night. So when Shane called earlier this morning, Ilya insisted on playing Minecraft. Now, they’ve been playing all day nonstop. They even made a nice house together at the side of a cliff, replicating the cottage. That was until Ilya bombed the place because he said it looked too boring. Also, he just wanted to annoy Shane and hear him get angry. Hearing him get mad is much better than hearing him worry. That’s for sure.

“Hollander?” Luca curiously said out loud, until realization settled in. “As in Shane Hollander?!”

“Yes, of course. We are good friends.” He shrugged. “Do you want to join?”

“Oh uh. I don’t know about that. Does Mr. Hollander mind? I don’t want to interrupt.” Luca obviously wanted to join in, if it wasn’t clear enough from his giddy body language and fidgeting hands.

“Oh my God, Luca, you are so boring. Like Hollander.”

“I heard that.” Shane muttered in Ilya’s headphones like a fly in his ear. They were in a discord call together, which, by the way, took a while for Shane to understand and setup.

“Hey, Hollander. My roommate, Luca, wants to join us in Minecraft.”

“Sure, tell him I don’t mind.”

Ilya turned to Luca. “He said he doesn’t mind.” Ilya could practically see stars shine in the kid’s eyes. “Have you played Minecraft before?”

“Yes!” He gleamed. “I love Minecraft! I used to play every day after practice when I was a kid.”

Ilya snorted. “So when was that? Last month?”

“I’m not that young!”

“Yes, you are. Anyway, just join the realm, kid.”

Haashbrown joined the game.

Shane died at least twice from creepers sneaking up behind him and maybe thrice from other mobs. It was a miracle how he managed to kill Ilya with how bad he was at playing the game. As Ilya mentioned, his kill was a stroke of luck—if I didn’t fall on the creeper hole, I would have killed Shane first—or so he said.

Ilya left his laptop at home in Ottawa, so they had to play on Bedrock with him on his phone. He never stopped complaining about his phone overheating though, which Shane made fun of. He lagged a lot, and he died as much as Shane, but mostly from accidentally walking off a ledge. On the other hand, Luca comfortably played on his laptop and Shane on his PC.

Luca got them their first diamonds and even had a full set of diamond armor and tools. Not even Shane or Ilya had a complete set of iron. Of course, the kid is good at the kid’s game. Ilya thought. Luca was also the one mostly doing the work in rebuilding the cottage. He watched Shane’s documentary, so he was quite familiar with the layout, even without either of the two’s help. But he would never tell Shane or Ilya that he watched it.

The three continued to play Minecraft for another few hours. Despite the occasional gamer’s rage, it was quite nice. They could all momentarily forget the reality they lived in and not be

swallowed by their worries.

And Ilya. He didn't know what came up to him today. He should be scared. But no. It was him comforting Shane when he called this morning. He couldn't understand why now, and not yesterday when they both needed it the most.

Ilya missed his mother, but maybe it's too soon to meet her again now. He has to be strong for his love in the living. He needs to grow old and have stories to tell his mom when they go on to the afterlife. Not stories of their hiding. But stories of their wedding, their grocery shopping together, maybe about playing in the same team together when they come out, or maybe just stories about their boring old married life.

Ilya chuckled. He isn't even religious himself. Far from it. His womanizer behaviour is a testament to that. But he believes there is something or someone up there. Someone with a higher power. Maybe that's why he isn't scared. He has to live. He believes in it. *God, if you are out there, please give me this chance.*

Shane's voice then interrupted his train of thoughts. "Hey, Ilya. I'm gonna go mine for more diamonds. Can you come with?"

Ilya chuckled, remembering he was still on his phone playing Minecraft with his love. "Yes, anything for you."

That's right. I'd do anything for him. And right now, I need to live. For him.

Chapter End Notes

Minecraft Bedrock Realms has a username limit of 12 characters. ShaneHollander would be 14, so Shane had to stick with ShaneHolland.

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