A Small Problem

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at https://archiveofourown.org/works/77737476.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Heated Rivalry (TV), Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid
Relationships:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov, Yuna Hollander & Ilya Rozanov, David Hollander & Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander, Ilya Rozanov, David Hollander, Yuna Hollander, Anya | Ilya Rozanov's Dog, Hayden Pike
Additional Tags:	Fluff, Soft, Romance, Domestic Fluff, Domestic, Post-Canon, Autism, Autistic Shane Hollander, Husbands, Found Family, Post-Book 6: The Long Game (Game Changers), Spoilers for Book 6: The Long Game (Game Changers)
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2026-01-15 Words: 4,545 Chapters: 1/1

A Small Problem

by Deacon17

Summary

Something has been bothering Shane for a few days and Ilya is desperate to find out and help in whatever way he can
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Ottawa gets new shirts that come with plastic tags that bother Shane. Ilya does everything to find out what's been bothering Shane, and when he does, solves it in a very Ilya Rozanov way.

Notes

This came to me after my work uniform changed and had new tags which I had to cut out because they annoyed me so much. Please enjoy.
Takes place after The Long Game and everything that happens

See the end of the work for more notes

Shane was distracted, and Ilya couldn't figure out why.

It had started at practice. Shane had been fidgeting all through warm up, and kept rolling his shoulders during practice, or twisting his head. No one else had said anything; Ilya was pretty sure Shane didn't even realise he was doing it himself, so he said nothing. If Shane had a problem he'd bring it up.

The next time it happened, Ilya was fully suspicious. Shane was completely distracted during their practice game. Ilya wasn't playing; he'd pulled something in his leg last game and had been benched to warm ups only, until it healed.

There had to be a cause of Shane's behaviour. Every time he wasn't playing, he was twitching or jerking his shoulders, face pulled into a grim expression.

Maybe it was because Ilya wasn't playing. Shane was always a little antsy when Ilya was injured. But this was not even an injury, it was, like the team's doctor had said, preventative measures. He'd be back at next practice like nothing had happened.

Still. He made his way to Shane after practice. He intended to find out exactly what the issue bothering his husband was.

"Hollander. You know I am not injured, yes?" He said, frowning. Shane was wasting no time in shedding his gear, teeth gritted. Ilya reached for the shirt and trousers left in his locker, ready to hand them over to Shane.

"What?" Shane replied, with a small shake of his head. "Of course I know that. It's just to rest it. Right? Why, is there something else wrong?"

Ilya cocked his head and flattened his expression.

"No. Everything is fine. I'm just checking *you* know that."

Shane opened his mouth, still frowning, when they were interrupted by one of their teammates.

"Good work, Hollander, as always," he chirped. "But do you need your husband to dress you now?"

Ilya couldn't help but grin, and Shane glared between the two of them.

"Fuck off," he replied succinctly, grabbing his clothes from Ilya's outstretched hand.

"You're welcome," Ilya purred, folding his hands behind his back.

Shane rolled his eyes, but Ilya could see the way his lips curled as he tried not to smile.

So the problem wasn't Ilya not playing, evidently. As soon as they were out of the rink, Shane was back to normal - no twitching or frowning.

And when they got back home, after Ilya had reheated the dinner he'd made for them in the morning, Shane insisted on giving Ilya a maddeningly slow and gentle blowjob, because he was certain they shouldn't fuck properly when Ilya was on rest. The ordeal started with Shane kissing every inch of him and ended with the two of them spent and curled together in bed, Shane’s head tucked under Ilya’s jaw.

It was almost enough to make Ilya forget there had been something wrong.

Almost. Ilya didn't give up on things easily, evidently.

He made a list of things that could be wrong, everything from problems with friends or family to something hockey related, something he'd seen online, an argument that Ilya wasn't aware of, and several other more far fetched problems.

He started with what was easiest to rule out, starting a proper investigation. Maybe he was getting bored without practice, he realised idly, as he scoured every social media he had for anything on him or Shane.

He knew Shane was rarely on social media. Had never been big on it, even before their abrupt and unintentional coming out occured. But he checked it every now and then, mostly to keep up with their friends or family.

Ilya spent the better half of a day, while Shane was out for some photoshoot for a new apparel deal, searching on every platform he had. He looked under his name, Shane’s name, their team, anything about the two of them. He trawled through a week’s worth of tweets and posts and news articles, anything that mentioned either of them.

It was doing terrible things for his ego, to be honest, but Ilya didn't mind that.

It had been two years since the fateful Hayden Pike cameo, and everything that had come after, and mostly everyone was over it now. Ilya searched through so many posts it all blended together, and every now and then there would be something mildly and generically homophobic, or taunts or criticisms of the pair, statements that their team was biased to have a married couple on the team. Nothing he'd never heard before.

But overall, it was the same as normal. They were both exceptionally gifted and famous hockey players, and now there was a solid group of people obsessed with the fact that they were *together*. There were praises not just for the collective of players who were either openly out or campaigned for inclusion in sport, but also for Shane and Ilya specifically, for being married and open and still excellent players. There were also still many people lamenting the fact that they would never have a chance with two of the hottest players currently known, which Ilya tried not to let inflate his ego much more.

So that was one thing crossed out; Shane hadn't seen something online that had upset him.

Ilya took a break, then, to make some lunch, a pasta salad that Shane could have some of when he got home.

As he cooked, he knocked another option off the list, and called Yuna. He set the phone on speaker on the counter, and waited as it rung.

“Ilya!” Yuna’s voice came through affectionate and cheery. “This is a nice surprise!”

“I know,” Ilya smiled, stirring the pasta. “I just wanted to say hello. Shane is doing that photoshoot.”

“And left you all alone?”

“Yes.”

“My poor boy.” Ilya laughed, shaking his head. “I hope you're resting that leg. When are you back at practice?”

“Next week, hopefully,” he replied. He could hear the switch in Yuna’s voice, back in hockey coach mode rather than mother in law mode. “And I have been resting it, don't worry.”

“Good. Your team will need you strong for the next season.”

“Yes,” he agreed. “Has Shane talked to you recently?”

“I phoned him yesterday morning to ask him abouy the new deal he's taking photos for today,” Yuna replied immediately. “Why? Everything okay?”

“More than okay,” Ilya affirmed immediately. “Definitely okay. He's just been a little weird recently. Fidgety. I wondered if he had said anything.”

“Not to me. But he used to get like that all the time as a child. If his shoes were too tight, his clothes were itchy, once because the soap we'd bought had a ‘funny smell’.” Ilya grinned. He loved stories about little Shane, and always folded them away to use to tease him at a later date. “I'm sure he’ll tell you if something is bothering him, Ilya.”

“Okay,” he replied, nodding like she could see him. “Okay.”

“Knowing Shane, it'll be something small and silly and easy to sort,” Yuna said comfortingly. “It'll be okay, Ilya.”

“I know.”

“Good. What else have you been up to, then? How’s Anya?”

They talked on for another half hour, as Ilya cooked. Chatting back and forth about random, unimportant topics. Ilya loved nothing more. It felt so right, like he'd known and been a part of Shane's family his whole life. It filled his chest with warmth, left him feeling light and happy for days after.

Especially when David came onto the phone next, asking Ilya if he or Shane or both would be round anytime soon because David had a new puzzle for them to work on. Of course, Ilya promised his attendance for that, as soon as they could.

"Well, I should let you go, love," Yuna said. "Let you get to your lunch."

"Alright. Thanks for keeping me company while your son has abandoned me." Yuna chuckled, and Ilya could hear the signature laugh of David in the background too.

"Of course. Call again soon, okay? I love you."

"I love you," Ilya replied, still in awe that those were words he got to exchange with Shane's parents. "Goodbye."

"Bye, Ilya."

He hung up, and picked up his phone, only to see a text from Shane.

Shane: Would you be free to come pick me up?

Ilya rolled his eyes, taking one forkful of lunch to his mouth. He'd seen that Shane had left his car, and made the assumption that he'd decided to run the twenty minutes or so to where the photoshoot was happening.

Ilya: I'm eating my lunch, Hollander

No response, and then a downcast emoji back, and Ilya breathed through his nose, grinning.

Ilya: Just kidding. I'll be fifteen minutes <3

He put both portions of lunch away in the fridge, said goodbye to Anya, and grabbed his keys, heading out to the garage.

As he drove, he considered the problem once again.

The problem wasn't social media, and it wasn't Shane's parents. He was fairly certain that hockey wasn't the issue; Shane had still been playing well, really well, despite the fidgeting.

Whilst stuck at a red light, he quickly sent a text to Hayden, even though they rarely texted, apart from when they were teasing each other over losses or similar things.

Ilya: Don't tell him, but Shane is being weird. Do you know anything?

He put his phone back down, waiting to see a response on the car's screen as he drove on.

It came through just minutes later.

Hayden: Weirder than normal? Nah, don't know, sorry bud.

Ilya exhaled, crossing another item off the list in his head.

Hayden: Got tired of your shit, maybe

Ilya snorted, and pressed a button to let him speak his response into text.

Ilya: Who won MVP again last season?

He earnt a middle finger emoji for that in response, and laughed aloud.

Over the years, they hadn't stopped taunting each other, him and Hayden. But now Ilya knew it was pure affection between them, with only the smallest part of thee fraught history affecting their exchanges.

When he arrived outside the building Shane had been at, Ilya's husband was there immediately, clearly having been waiting inside for him.

He reached over, opening the door for Shane, car still running.

"Afternoon, *moye pechen'ye*," he greeted, reaching out to rub the back of Shane's head.

Shane squinted at him in response, as he sat down.

"That's new," he said. "What's that?"

"You have to guess," Ilya replied, pulling back onto the road.

Shane sighed, leaning back into the seat.

"Did it go well?" Ilya asked, taking side glances at Shane. He looked tired - but no fidgeting.

"Uh, yeah. I think so. They seemed like a nice company," Shane turned and smiled, "and they said they'd be in contact with you."

"Maybe they wanted someone who was more handsome," Ilya grinned.

"Fuck off," Shane laughed breathily, rolling his eyes.

"No," Ilya hummed, moving his hand from the gear stick to rub Shane's knee. "I am glad it went well. I missed you. Anya missed you."

"I was gone for a couple hours," Shane smiled, shaking his head.

Ilya gave him a look.

“Yes.”

“Sorry.”

Ilya smiled, warmth spreading through him.

“Is okay,” he replied, turning to grin at Shane. “I made us lunch.”

“Oh, thank you. They had nothing but weird fancy juices and these little- oh, my god. *My biscuit?*”

Ilya snorted, nodding.

“Good guess, Hollander. You are getting good at this.”

“I have to get a lot of practice,” Shane replied, acting out an exasperated sigh, even as he raised Ilya's hand to his mouth, kissing his knuckles before Ilya had to return his hand to the wheel.

Ilya opened the door for Shane, and Anya came running to the door. Ilya started cooing down at her, crouching down to pet her, as Shane sidestepped past them, scruffing Anya’s hair and then patting Ilya’s head. Ilya grinned up at him, looking through his lashes.

Shane paused, his expression falling into something soft and longing, fingers brushing the side of Ilya’s face.

“Seeing something you like, Hollander?” Ilya murmured, slowly rising to his feet. He took Shane’s hips in his hands, slowly pushing him further into their house, and then brushed his nose against Shane’s, their lips connecting slowly. Ilya could kiss Shane a hundred times and it would still be perfect every time, still ache in his chest in the best way possible.

“I need to go shower,” Shane murmured eventually, eyes closed as he pressed his face to Ilya’s neck.

“Do you want company?”

Shane looked up, raising a brow.

“You're meant to be resting.”

“And what, I can't shower?” Ilya scoffed, squeezing Shane’s sides.

“You know what I mean, and you know I'm right,” Shane replied, kissing Ilya’s throat. “I'm going to shower and then I'll be back.”

“Boring,” Ilya said, shaking his head. Shane chuckled, smiling in the way that broke Ilya’s mind into pieces every time. He slid his hands up Shane’s sides, kissing him again, and then released him. “Go shower.”

Shane smiled, licking his bottom lip before slipping from Ilya's hands and heading for the bathroom.

Ilya watched him go, and then moved to the kitchen, taking out his lunch again, finally. He left Shane's on the counter, and retreated to the couch to eat his food, flipping the tv on to something hockey related.

Anya jumped up onto the couch beside him, curling by his side, and he dug his hand into her fur, stroking her idly as he ate with the other hand.

Maybe, whatever it was, Shane was over it now. Whatever had been bothering him, maybe it was finished.

It wasn't hockey, it wasn't the news or social media. Everything was good with his family, and with Hayden, although he hadn't checked with any of his other friends like Rose or JJ, but he was sure he would have heard if something had happened there. The apparel deal had gone well today, everything was good, *great*, even at home.

He couldn't think what else it could *possibly* be, that it was affecting him enough for Ilya to notice, but not enough for Shane to tell him about.

He thought it over again and again, thinking of every possible explanation for Shane's behaviour. He would just have to ask him. First, he would see if Shane did it again, see if something was still bothering him.

When Shane returned from his shower, still damp and looking pleasantly tired, he was wearing long black trousers and the new Ottawa team shirt. The redesign was nice, Ilya thought, but not everyone had loved it. Still, the players had been encouraged to wear the new ones, rather than the old ones.

Ilya watched Shane pad through to the living room.

"Lunch on the counter," Ilya called, pointing the tv remote through to the kitchen.

"Thank you," Shane replied, walking to the kitchen.

Ilya watched him idly, and then sat up straight as Shane did it again, with his back turned to Ilya.

He jerked his head, twice, quick, and then rolled his shoulders, tense and jittery.

"Hollander," Ilya called, voice flat. "What is wrong? You have fleas?"

Shane turned, frowning at Ilya.

“Fleas- what?” He asked, looking baffled.

Ilya stood up, walking with his plate to the kitchen.

“That,” Ilya said, nodding at Shane’s shoulders. “You keep twitching. Jerking. Like a dog with fleas. What is wrong?”

“Oh,” Shane said, still looking confused. “*Oh*!” His expression changed, shifting from confusion to surprise. “You noticed?”

“Of course,” Ilya scoffed, making a face at Shane. “You were doing it at practice, too. What is it?”

Shane sighed, his shoulders dropping, but made no effort to explain.

“Shane!” Ilya nodded quickly, brows raised.

“The new team shirt,” Shane sighed. “They have these fucking labels. Plastic labels inside. The old ones were fabric, but these are plastic. They annoy me.”

“Oh, my god,” Ilya breathed.

Labels. Yuna had been right; it was something ridiculously trivial. And easy to fix, and by god would Ilya fix it for his husband.

“The label annoys you?” He clarified. Shane nodded, looking sheepish. “Okay. We cut them off?”

“I don't… I didn't think of that,” Shane muttered. “Thought it would be wrong.”

God, but Ilya was so in love with him. He nodded, trying to hide his adoring grin. Like that first time they'd ever hooked up, when Shane had folded his clothes, Ilya had always been obsessed with Shane’s quirks. He adored each and every one, especially when he found a new one, even after so long of knowing each other.

“The label is at the back?” He asked, tilting his head at Shane. Shane nodded, pulling at the back of the shirt’s neck. “Okay. Turn around.” Ilya raised his hand, spinning his finger in a circle. Shane sighed, and Ilya raised his brows. Dutifully, Shane turned slowly, and Ilya stuck his fingers in the back of the shirt, pulling it away.

He hadn't even noticed the labels, really, but Shane was right, they were plastic, and did look like they could be annoying.

“Do you want the scissors?” Shane started, trying to move away. Ilya moved one hand to Shane’s stomach and pulled him back, and then lowered his head to the shirt and tore the label off with his teeth.

Shane turned again in surprise, and Ilya bared his teeth, showing Shane the defeated label like a dog showing its master its prize.

Shane blinked, eyes widening, and Ilya spat the label out, tossing it at the bin.

“That was weirdly hot,” Shane muttered, his cheeks a little red. Ilya beamed.

“Yes. Is that better?”

Shane rubbed his neck.

“Better,” he affirmed. “I love you.”

Ilya huffed a laugh, and pecked Shane’s lip.

“Thank you,” Shane breathed, putting his head on Ilya’s shoulder.

“You're welcome. Can we have lunch, now that you've stopped squirming?”

“Yes,” Shane laughed, and followed Ilya back into the living room, before nuzzling in against Ilya’s side on the couch. Ilya put his arm around Shane’s shoulder, pulling him close as he ate, and scruffed Anya’s head with the other hand, his chest warm and fuzzy.

Ilya had been so glad to have solved the problem for Shane, that he'd completely forgotten that Shane owned practically hundreds of these shirts, so he could always have a fresh one to wear. He only realised the oversight when he was listening in to their coach’s speech as the team got ready during their next practice. Ilya was still, frustratingly, benched; their physical therapist still wasn't happy with the frazzled muscle in his leg, and was certain that a practice just a day too soon would ruin all the healing he'd done.

So Ilya sat at the back of the changing room as everyone got ready, and then noticed with dismay as Shane, in just half his gear, twitched his head and jerked his shoulders.

He waited until their coach was finished, and most of the team had started to head out onto the rink, and then stood and approached Shane.

“Are you sure you don't just want me to put my mouth near you?” He said in a low tone. Shane looked at him, again in confusion, and Ilya nodded at the back of Shane’s shirt, rolling his eyes as Shane’s expression shifted into understanding.

“I forgot,” Shane said, “until I put it on.”

“Turn around,” Ilya commanded again, patting Shane’s back. He leaned in again, repeating his actions from a few days ago, and pulled the white plastic out with his teeth. Just to get another rise out of his husband, he stuck his tongue out to show Shane the result, and then spat it out.

It was good that everyone else had already headed out, because the way Shane flushed at Ilya’s showing off was terrible. His cheeks reddened, his eyes widening, in a way that Ilya

knew meant he had desperately enjoyed that show, and was probably flushed all over his chest too.

“Enjoy your practice,” Ilya said pointedly, letting her hand drag across Shane’s side as he backed away.

“You're an asshole,” Shane said, in way of thanks.

“You're welcome,” Ilya purred, nodding for Shane to head out to the rink. Shane did so, giving Ilya one final yearning look over his shoulder before exiting the changing room.

Pulling labels out with his mouth was a good way of flustering his husband, but Ilya also knew that it wasn't the best way to deal with this issue, especially when he knew Shane had at least five other shirts in his locker.

He should be working out, instead of practicing, and doing the exercises he'd been given for his leg. But instead, he searched through the team’s training building until he found, in an old and cluttered cupboard, a little sewing kit, and took it back to the locker room.

When Ilya had been very young, when his mother was still alive, she used to sew dresses or other clothes at the kitchen table, a favour for her friends and probably something to keep her distracted. Ilya had always liked to sit near her, and eventually, when she was sure he wasn't going to hurt himself, his mother had started giving him some jobs to do. Easy things, like sewing straight lines in old clothes that needed repaired, or, importantly, using that oddly shaped little blade to sever stitches in clothes she was going to remake or recycle.

He’d been very young, then, only just old enough to remember her face and the way she hummed quietly as she worked on those clothes, letting Ilya sit across from her or on the floor at her feet and do anything to keep him from getting bored. He hadn't touched a sewing kit in years; he'd had no need, really. Had always had enough money since then to not need to repair any holes in his clothes, and could afford nice enough clothes that they rarely got damaged, anyway.

But it was easy enough to remember. He pulled from the sewing kit the little seam ripper, and then opened Shane’s locker and set to work.

Once he had meticulously removed the label and any trace of white plastic from the seam without ripping any part of the shirt itself, Ilya replaced all of Shane’s shirts, and then gave a cursory glance over the rest of his gear, glad to find only soft fabric labels in the clothes.

The practice would go on for a few hours, and Ilya wasn't really expected to hang around. Their house wasn't far from the rink away, so Ilya stole the little sewing kit and left the rink, leaving Shane the car. He texted him, telling Shane that he'd meet him at home because he wanted to do his exercises in their own gym. Only a half lie, anyway.

When he was home, after letting Anya out into the garden for a little bit, he headed upstairs to their bedroom, trusty seam ripper in hand, and opened up their closet.

Ilya knew that Shane was particular about his clothes. Ilya rarely bought him clothes, because he knew Shane liked to buy them himself, to make sure he liked them. But not everyone knew that, and Shane was often too polite to say anything or even get rid of the clothes. It wasn't like he hoarded them, but they had a closet bigger than Ilya's childhood room, and there were a couple of boxes at the back of clothes that Shane almost never wore.

So, with Anya watching curiously from the door, Ilya set to work checking each piece of Shane's clothing for any offending plastic labels, severing each one he found with meticulous care. Shane wasn't always good at taking action when something small was bothering him, and Ilya was more than happy to take action into his own hands, especially since Shane was always so good about the big stuff that bothered either of them.

When he was finished and satisfied, he took his handful of relinquished labels to the bin, and, with an hour or so still until Shane would be home, faced the gym for his set exercises.

Satisfied with his day's work, pleasantly aching from his workout, and happily drowsy, Ilya relaxed back onto the couch afterwards, watching as Anya took herself to bed in the other room.

Ilya waited there, half drowsing as some boring show played out on the television.

Shane returned at the expected time, and Ilya raised himself expectantly as he entered. Shane crossed the room, leaning down to greet Ilya with a kiss.

"Did you have a good afternoon?" He asked, pressing another kiss to Ilya's cheek. "How's your leg?"

"Not so bad," Ilya replied, rubbing his thumb across Shane's jaw as the man straightened. "Practice went well?"

"It did, thank you. You'll be back for the next one, hopefully?"

"If not I'll die," Ilya groaned. "So boring."

Shane chuckled, smiling wide.

"Boring can be good," he protested. "We'll have to retire one day, and that could be *very* boring."

"Ah, no," Ilya corrected. "Because we can have sex all the time without hockey to distract us."

Shane snorted, rolling his eyes.

"We do that anyway."

“True,” Ilya admitted. Shane scoffed, expression full of fondness.

“I'm going to get changed. Won't be long.”

Ilya nodded, sitting back against the couch.

Barely ten minutes passed before Shane returned, and without much warning or hesitation, flung himself into Ilya’s lap and wrapped his arms around Ilya’s back, burying his head against Ilya’s neck and kissing his throat.

“Why so excited?” Ilya said in surprise, spreading his knees to let Shane get closer. He definitely wasn't complaining, sliding his hands under Shane’s shirt and pulling him yet closer.

“Ilya, you cut out *all* the labels in my clothes,” Shane said thickly, drawing his head back to stare at Ilya with wide eyes.

“Yes?” Ilya nodded. He'd almost forgotten about it already. “It bothered you, no?”

“It did,” Shane breathed. “But I didn't expect you to do that for me.”

“Shane, I would do anything if it made things a little easier for you,” Ilya said easily, pressing his fingers into the muscles on Shane’s back. “I did the same for your shirts in your locker. You didn't notice?”

“Oh, my god, *no*,” Shane replied, his expression crumpling in affection. “I love you, Ilya.” He pressed closer again, catching Ilya’s mouth in a hot, immediately desperate kiss, his hand dropping to Ilya’s waistband and prying at his trousers.

“I love you, Shane,” Ilya replied with an amused grin, as Shane pressed a line of hot kisses down Ilya’s clothed chest, shifting backwards off the sofa to fall on his knees. “I thought I was meant to be resting,” Ilya commented, as Shane brushed his nose against Ilya’s crotch, moving fast to free Ilya from his trousers.

“So stay very still and let me thank you,” Shane replied, his breaths coming warm and wet against the skin exposed on Ilya’s lower stomach.

He couldn't say no to that, of course, and dug his fingers into his husband's hair, rocking his hips forward and putting his head back.

End Notes

Hope you enjoyed <3 this was very self indulgent but I hope it's nice to read

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