

Elite Conditioning

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/77900356) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/77900356>.

Rating:	Not Rated
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Heated Rivalry (TV)
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov , Yuna Hollander , David Hollander
Additional Tags:	Eating Disorders , Shane Hollander Needs a Hug , Shane Hollander Has an Eating Disorder
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2026-01-18 Words: 3,299 Chapters: 3/3

Elite Conditioning

by [peytatochipp](#)

Summary

Trainers praised his “elite conditioning.” Commentators talked about his jawline, his speed, the way he seemed carved rather than built.

No one asked how he stayed that way.

By twenty-two, Shane’s life ran on control. Ice time. Calories. Sleep. Reps. He tracked everything with the same ruthless precision he brought to his shot. When he was a kid in Saskatchewan, control had been a luxury. His parents’ divorce. The financial stress. The way people talked about him—too flashy, too arrogant, too much. Control was something he built himself. Brick by brick.

Hockey rewarded it.

Chapter 1: Everything

Shane Hollander learned early that hunger could be useful.

Not the kind that made your stomach growl during practice or woke you up at 3 a.m. on a road trip. This was a quieter hunger. Sharper. The kind that cut through noise and left behind something clean and focused. Coaches called it discipline. Trainers praised his “elite conditioning.” Commentators talked about his jawline, his speed, the way he seemed carved rather than built.

No one asked how he stayed that way.

By twenty-two, Shane’s life ran on control. Ice time. Calories. Sleep. Reps. He tracked everything with the same ruthless precision he brought to his shot. When he was a kid in Saskatchewan, control had been a luxury. His parents’ divorce. The financial stress. The way people talked about him—too flashy, too arrogant, too much. Control was something he built himself. Brick by brick.

Hockey rewarded it.

The NHL loved a player who never seemed to need anything.

On the ice, Shane was untouchable. Off it, he was hollowed out in ways he didn’t have language for. Hunger wasn’t a warning sign; it was proof he was doing it right. Proof he was stronger than everyone else. Proof that nothing—no pressure, no expectations, no feelings—could get the better of him.

Especially not feelings.

Then there was Ilya.

Ilya Rozanov was the opposite of control. Loud laughter. Late-night room service. Pasta before games. A body that was powerful because it was fed, not punished. Ilya didn’t think about food the way Shane did. He ate when he was hungry. He stopped when he wasn’t. It seemed careless. Dangerous. Shane told himself it was cultural. Russian metabolism. Genetics.

Anything but envy.

Their rivalry was supposed to be simple. Hate him. Beat him. Prove you’re better.

Except hatred took energy. And Shane was already running on fumes.

The first time it went wrong, really wrong, was mid-season. A back-to-back in Minnesota. Shane hadn’t eaten properly in two days—just protein bars, coffee, water. He told himself he felt light. Fast. During the second period, the rink tilted. His vision narrowed. He missed a

pass he never missed. When he sat on the bench, his hands were shaking so badly he shoved them between his thighs.

The trainers blamed dehydration. Stress. Travel.

Shane nodded and promised to do better.

He didn't.

He couldn't.

Because eating meant giving something up—sharpness, control, the sense that he was winning a private battle no one else even knew existed. He'd built his entire identity around being exceptional. What did it say about him if he couldn't even manage his own body?

Ilya noticed before anyone else did.

Of course he did. Ilya always noticed things Shane didn't want seen.

"You okay?" Ilya asked one night, voice low, eyes too perceptive, as Shane pushed food around his plate without eating it.

"I'm fine," Shane snapped, automatically.

Ilya didn't push. He just watched. That somehow felt worse.

The disorder thrived in silence. In hotel rooms. In early mornings before practice when Shane told himself he'd eat later. After games when adrenaline killed his appetite and he took that as a sign to skip meals entirely. It wasn't about weight anymore—not really. It was about deserving food. About earning it. About punishing himself when he felt weak, when he missed Ilya too much, when he wanted something he wasn't supposed to want.

Especially Ilya.

The breaking point didn't come during a game. It came during a win.

Shane scored twice. The crowd roared. The reporters praised him. In the locker room, surrounded by noise and celebration, his heart started racing for no reason at all. His chest felt tight. His hands went numb. He locked himself in the bathroom and slid down the wall, gasping, forehead pressed against cold tile.

This wasn't control.

This was fear.

He thought about how tired he was. Bone-deep tired. How his world had shrunk to numbers and rules and rituals. How much effort it took just to get through a day without falling apart.

And for the first time, he wondered what would happen if he stopped fighting food like it was an enemy.

Asking for help felt like failure. Worse—it felt like exposure. But the truth had already been leaking out of him in missed practices and shaky hands and hollow smiles. When he finally spoke to the team doctor, the words came out flat and careful, like he was describing someone else.

“I think I have a problem.”

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Ilya figured it out on a Tuesday.

Not during a game. Not during a fight. Not even during one of their too-close, too-charged moments that always ended with both of them pretending nothing had happened.

It happened over room service.

Ilya figured it out on a Tuesday.

Not during a game. Not during a fight. Not even during one of their too-close, too-charged moments that always ended with both of them pretending nothing had happened.

It happened over room service.

They were in Chicago. Late. Shane was sitting cross-legged on the hotel bed, scrolling through his phone, hoodie pulled up even though the room was warm. Ilya was sprawled in the chair, barefoot, menu balanced on his knee.

“You want anything?” Ilya asked, not looking up.

“I already ate,” Shane said instantly.

Too instantly.

Ilya paused. “We just got off the ice.”

“Yeah. And I ate earlier.”

“When.”

Shane shrugged. “Before practice.”

Ilya checked the clock on his phone. “That was... eight hours ago.”

“I’m fine.”

There it was again. Fine. Shane’s favorite word. It meant stop asking. It meant back off.

Ilya didn’t back off.

“Okay,” he said lightly, still calm. “I’m ordering anyway.”

“Why?” Shane snapped, finally looking at him. “You don’t need to—”

“I’m hungry,” Ilya said. “Relax.”

The food came twenty minutes later. Pasta, bread, something fried that smelled amazing. Ilya ate like he always did—unapologetic, messy, entirely present. Shane picked at a salad he claimed he didn’t want but somehow ended up holding.

Ilya noticed what didn’t move. The fork. The food. The way Shane’s jaw tightened every time he brought it close to his mouth.

“You don’t like it?” Ilya asked.

“It’s fine.”

“You keep saying that.”

Shane stiffened. “Why do you care?”

That was the real question. It landed between them, sharp and exposed.

Ilya put his fork down slowly. “Because I’m not blind.”

Shane laughed, short and humorless. “Congrats.”

“You never eat with team. You skip meals. You say you ate, but you don’t.” Ilya’s voice stayed even, but his eyes were too sharp. “You think no one notices. You’re wrong.”

Shane stood up abruptly. “This is none of your business.”

“Then why are you shaking?” Ilya asked quietly.

Shane froze.

He looked down at his hands. They were trembling. He clenched them into fists, like that might fix it.

“Shit,” he muttered.

Ilya stood, slower this time. Careful. Like he was approaching a wild animal.

“Shane,” he said, softer now. “How long?”

Shane swallowed. His throat felt tight, like it always did when things got too close to the truth. “Don’t do this.”

“Do what?”

“Act like you care.”

Ilya's expression changed. The teasing edge disappeared completely. "I do care."

"Why?" Shane snapped. "We hate each other."

Ilya huffed a quiet laugh. "We are very bad at that."

Silence stretched. Heavy. Shane felt cornered, exposed in ways a locker room fight never managed. He turned away, staring out the window at the city lights.

"I just don't get hungry," he said finally.

Ilya didn't answer right away.

"That's not true," he said after a moment. "You're lying."

Shane flinched.

"I know hunger," Ilya continued. "I know stress. This is something else."

Shane's shoulders sagged, just a little. Enough.

"It's not—" He stopped, exhaled. Tried again. "It's not about weight."

"I didn't say it was."

"It's about control," Shane said, voice low. "It's about being... sharp. Focused."

"And fainting on bench?" Ilya asked.

Shane winced. "That only happened once."

"Once is enough."

The room felt smaller. Shane sat back down on the bed, elbows on his knees, hands dangling uselessly between them.

"I don't know how to stop," he admitted.

That was the moment. The real one. The confession he'd never planned to make.

Ilya didn't touch him. Didn't crowd him. He just sat across from him on the bed, close enough to be present, far enough to be safe.

"Thank you for telling me," Ilya said.

Shane laughed weakly. "You're not supposed to say it like that."

"I am," Ilya replied. "This is hard thing."

Shane stared at the floor. "Don't tell anyone."

“I won’t,” Ilya said immediately. Then, more carefully, “Unless you’re in danger.”

Shane nodded. That felt fair.

The next weeks were awkward. Messy. Ilya asked before ordering food. Shane tried to eat, sometimes failed, sometimes succeeded. There were bad days. There were nights Shane snapped and told Ilya to leave him alone.

Ilya didn’t leave.

“You don’t have to fix me,” Shane said once, frustrated and exhausted.

“I know,” Ilya replied. “I just stay.”

That was somehow worse. And better.

When Shane finally went to the team doctor, it was Ilya who waited outside. Didn’t pry. Didn’t demand details. Just stood when Shane came out and said, “You want coffee?”

“Decaf,” Shane said automatically.

Ilya raised an eyebrow. “We start small, da?”

Shane almost smiled.

Recovery wasn’t clean. It didn’t make their relationship simpler. But it made it honest.

And for Shane Hollander, honesty was the hardest fight he’d ever stayed in.

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Shane's first relapse. It is quiet. It is ugly in the way real setbacks are. And it centers the moment Ilya realizes recovery is not linear.

The relapse didn't announce itself.

There was no dramatic breakdown. No argument. No one catching Shane in the act.

It started with a road trip.

Three games in four nights. Plane food. Late practices. Too many people watching him too closely, counting his bites without meaning to. The nutrition plan sat folded in his bag like a contract he hadn't signed in blood but somehow felt bound to.

By the second city, Shane was back to bargaining.

I'll eat after the game.

I'll eat tomorrow.

I don't actually feel hungry.

That last one felt familiar. Comfortable. Dangerous.

Ilya noticed the signs before Shane did. Or maybe Shane noticed and pretended not to.

They were in the hotel gym early, stretching before optional skate. Ilya had already eaten. Shane hadn't.

Again.

"You good?" Ilya asked, watching Shane move through warm-ups with a tightness that hadn't been there a week ago.

"Yeah," Shane said. Too quick. "Just tired."

Ilya nodded, but his eyes didn't leave Shane's face. "You eat?"

Shane hesitated. Just a beat. Barely noticeable.

"Enough."

That was new. Not yes. Not earlier. Enough.

Ilya didn't argue. Not yet.

The game that night was brutal. Physical. Mean. Shane played well—too well, almost frantic, like he was burning something off instead of competing. By the third period, his legs felt hollow. His hands shook between shifts.

He told himself it was adrenaline.

He told himself a lot of things.

Back in the locker room, Shane peeled off his gear fast, head down, already planning how to avoid the postgame spread. He made it three steps toward the showers before the room tilted.

Hard.

He grabbed the edge of the stall, vision blurring. For a second, he thought he might actually go down. That terrified him more than anything else. Not because of the pain—but because someone would see.

“Shane.”

Ilya's voice cut through the noise.

Shane straightened too quickly. “I'm fine.”

Ilya was already there, hand hovering near his elbow without touching. “Sit.”

“I said I'm—”

“Sit,” Ilya repeated. Firmer this time.

Shane sank onto the bench, breathing shallow. His heart was pounding like he'd just sprinted a mile.

Ilya crouched in front of him, eyes level. “When was last time you ate?”

Shane looked away. “I don't know.”

“That's not answer.”

“Today,” Shane snapped. “Okay? I ate today.”

“What did you eat?”

Silence.

The locker room noise faded into background static. Shane's jaw clenched. He could feel the lie trying to crawl up his throat, the old reflex kicking in.

Ilya waited.

Finally, Shane exhaled. “Coffee. A bar.”

Ilya’s face didn’t change. But something in his shoulders went still.

“That was twelve hours ago,” he said quietly.

Shane laughed, sharp and defensive. “Jesus, Ilya, I didn’t starve myself.”

“No,” Ilya agreed. “You relapsed.”

The word hit harder than any check Shane had taken all night.

“I didn’t—” Shane started, then stopped. His hands were shaking again. He shoved them between his thighs. “I didn’t mean to.”

“I know.”

That almost broke him.

They walked back to the hotel in silence. In the room, Ilya ordered food without asking. Shane sat on the edge of the bed, elbows on his knees, staring at the carpet like it had personally betrayed him.

“I screwed up,” Shane said finally.

Ilya set his phone down. “You are human.”

“Don’t,” Shane snapped. “Don’t soften it. I knew better.”

“Yes,” Ilya said calmly. “And you still struggled. Both can be true.”

Shane dragged a hand down his face. “I thought I had it under control.”

Ilya sat beside him, close but not touching. “That voice came back, da?”

Shane nodded.

“What did it say?”

“That I was slower,” Shane whispered. “That I was slipping. That if I just tightened up again, I’d feel right.”

Ilya was quiet for a long moment.

“That voice is liar,” he said. “But it is very convincing one.”

The food arrived. The smell filled the room, heavy and intimidating. Shane’s stomach twisted—not with hunger, but fear.

“I can’t,” he said immediately. “I can’t do this right now.”

Ilya didn't push the plate toward him. Didn't tell him to try harder.

"Okay," he said. "Then sit with me."

Shane frowned. "That's it?"

"That's it."

They sat. The food stayed on the table. Shane's chest loosened a fraction.

"I feel like I failed," Shane said quietly.

Ilya turned to him. "You fell. That is not same thing."

Shane swallowed. "What if I keep falling?"

"Then we keep standing back up," Ilya said. "And maybe next time, fall does not last so long."

Shane looked at him, eyes red, exhausted, raw. "Why aren't you mad?"

Ilya shrugged. "Because this is not about willpower. And because you told me."

That mattered more than Shane wanted to admit.

A few minutes later, Shane picked up his fork. His hand shook. He took one bite. Then another. Slow. Uneven. Real.

It wasn't a victory.

But it wasn't the end.

And for the first time after a relapse, Shane didn't disappear into himself. He stayed. He ate. He let someone witness the mess.

That, too, was part of recovery.



The therapy room didn't look like Shane expected.

No white walls. No clipboard-heavy intensity. Just a soft chair, a couch he didn't plan on using, and a window that looked out over a parking lot dusted with old snow. Neutral. Calm. Almost insulting in how normal it felt.

He hated it immediately.

Dr. Kaplan didn't start with questions. She let the silence stretch, the way people did when they wanted to see what you'd fill it with.

Shane stared at a spot on the carpet. "I had a relapse."

Dr. Kaplan nodded. "I know."

That irritated him. "Then why am I here?"

"Because something happened," she said evenly. "And because you didn't disappear afterward."

Shane frowned. "That's... a weird bar."

"It's a meaningful one," she replied.

He shifted in his chair, crossing his arms. "I messed up. I skipped meals. I got dizzy. My teammate noticed. End of story."

Dr. Kaplan leaned back slightly. "That's not the end."

Shane exhaled sharply. "I knew better."

"Yes," she said. "And you still struggled. Why do you think that is?"

He didn't answer right away. He didn't want to give her the sound bites. Stress. Travel. Schedule. Those were easy. Safe.

"Because I felt bad," he said finally.

"About?"

Shane swallowed. "Feeling good."

She didn't interrupt.

"I was eating more," he continued. "Training felt different. Heavier. Not worse, just... different. And my brain decided that meant I was losing something."

"What were you afraid of losing?"

Shane stared at his hands. They were steady today. That felt suspicious.

"My edge," he said. "The thing that makes me... me."

Dr. Kaplan tilted her head. "Tell me what that edge is."

He laughed under his breath. "You want the honest answer?"

"Yes."

"Being uncomfortable," Shane said. "Being hungry. Being sharper than everyone else because I'm willing to suffer more."

Dr. Kaplan didn't react. "And when you're not suffering?"

“I feel lazy,” Shane said immediately. “Soft. Like I didn’t earn my spot.”

“That’s an interesting word,” she said. “Earn.”

Shane stiffened. “I worked for everything.”

“I believe you,” she replied. “But do you believe you’re allowed to exist here without punishment?”

The question landed hard.

“I don’t think hockey works that way,” Shane said.

Dr. Kaplan leaned forward slightly. “I want to be very clear about something. Hockey rewarded your eating disorder.”

Shane’s breath caught. “That’s—”

“True,” she said calmly. “It rewarded discipline without asking how it was achieved. It rewarded leanness, control, endurance. It praised outcomes and ignored cost.”

Silence filled the room.

“I don’t know how to separate the two,” Shane admitted quietly. “What if the disorder is the reason I’m good?”

Dr. Kaplan didn’t answer right away. She let that fear sit in the open.

“Let me ask you this,” she said. “During your relapse, did you play better?”

Shane thought about the game. The frantic energy. The near-collapse.

“No,” he said. “I played harder. Not better.”

She nodded. “Harder isn’t the same as better.”

Shane rubbed his forehead. “But it feels safer.”

“Because it’s familiar,” she said. “Not because it works.”

He shifted again, restless. “I don’t know who I am without it.”

“That makes sense,” Dr. Kaplan replied. “This disorder didn’t just control your eating. It organized your identity.”

Shane’s throat tightened. “It feels like giving it up means giving something back. Like I owe it.”

“Who taught you that success requires self-erasure?” she asked.

He didn’t have to think long. Coaches. Media. Himself.

“I don’t know how to be elite without being extreme,” Shane said.

Dr. Kaplan met his eyes. “Then that’s what we’ll work on.”

He scoffed quietly. “Sounds fake.”

“It’s uncomfortable,” she corrected. “Which you’re very good at tolerating.”

That almost made him smile.

They talked about the relapse in specifics. The skipped meals. The bargaining. The moment he decided not to tell Ilya. Dr. Kaplan circled that last part.

“What made you hide it?”

Shane hesitated. “I didn’t want to disappoint him.”

“And if you had?”

“He’d worry,” Shane said. “He’d stay.”

Dr. Kaplan nodded. “And that felt...?”

“Exposed,” Shane admitted. “Like if he sees how bad it still gets, he’ll realize I’m not worth the effort.”

She let that land.

“That belief,” she said gently, “is part of the illness.”

Shane stared at the window. “He stayed anyway.”

“Yes,” she said. “That matters.”

By the end of the session, Shane felt wrung out. Not fixed. Not lighter. Just... seen.

Dr. Kaplan handed him a folded sheet of paper. “This is not a punishment plan,” she said. “It’s a relapse response plan. What you do when—not if—the voice comes back.”

Shane looked at it. “You really think it will.”

“I know it will,” she said. “And I know you don’t have to obey it.”

He stood slowly. “What if I fail again?”

Dr. Kaplan met his gaze. “Then we learn faster.”

Outside the office, Shane leaned against the wall for a moment, breathing steadily. He didn’t feel cured. He didn’t feel strong.

But he felt grounded.

Later that night, Ilya asked, “How was therapy?”

Shane considered lying.

“I hated it,” he said instead. “But I think it helped.”

Ilya smiled softly. “That sounds right.”

And for the first time, Shane believed that recovery wasn’t about becoming someone else.

It was about becoming someone who stayed—even when the edge dulled, even when the hunger screamed, even when the lie felt louder than the truth.

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