

we'll let everybody stare, i don't care

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/84972516) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/84972516>.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Heated Rivalry (TV) , Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov
Additional Tags:	Book 6: The Long Game (Game Changers) , Missing Scene , Slice of Life , Domestic Fluff , Grocery Shopping , Established Relationship , Shane Hollander Loves Ilya Rozanov , Ilya Rozanov Loves Shane Hollander , Autistic Shane Hollander , Public Display of Affection , Ilya Rozanov is Shane Hollander's Baby , No Angst , Happy Ending
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2026-05-16 Words: 3,822 Chapters: 1/1

we'll let everybody stare, i don't care

by [justhockey](#)

Summary

Shane thinks this is probably the first - and last - time in his life that he's ever been excited about grocery shopping. But it's their first time doing it together, as a couple, out in public where other people can see them. Where, finally, they don't have to pretend to be something they're not.

It's such a small thing - insignificant to most people, probably - but it's a luxury Shane never thought he would be allowed to have.

Notes

Title from *Make It All Better* by Holly Humberstone.

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

The grocery store has never been Shane's favourite place to visit.

The fluorescent lights, and the same songs playing over and over again, and all the people who act like it's their very first day on earth - it's too much for him. Makes his clothes feel too scratchy and his hands too clammy, and he becomes suddenly, painfully aware of the feel of his teeth inside his mouth.

He remembers once, when he was maybe six years old, being dragged into the grocery store by his mom after hockey practice. He'd ended up on the floor in the middle of the pasta aisle, hands over his ears, crying and begging his mom to get him out of there.

So, it's safe to say he doesn't love it here. But, needs must.

He's not like Ilya, who just sets up a standing order and has it delivered to the house on a weekly basis. Shane has to go out and get them himself, no matter how much he hates it, because he doesn't trust anyone else to pick out the right produce for him. They'll choose too-ripe bananas, or onions with the skin half peeled off already, or the grapes that are mushy instead of crunchy. It's just easier to do it himself.

"Give me the list," Ilya says, wiggling his hand at Shane as they step inside the store.

"It's on my phone."

Ilya pauses, one hand on his hip and a gleam in his eyes. "Oh, I cannot see your phone now? You are hiding something from me?"

Shane rolls his eyes, but the grin on his face kind of ruins the look he's going for. "You're such a baby," he teases.

Ilya hums in agreement. "Yes. *Your* baby. Now give."

Shane let's go out of the shopping cart long enough to pull his phone out of his back pocket and hand it over to Ilya. He unlocks it with the passcode they both share - 2481 - and navigates his way to the notes app. Between commentary about the Cens powerplay during their latest playoff run, a bunch of Russian phrases and their English translations, and random thoughts that popped into his head in the middle of the night, Ilya finds their grocery list.

Their grocery list.

Not Shane's, not Ilya's, but the one they share. Because they live together, now. Because they're engaged and getting married soon. Because the whole world finally knows about them, and they don't ever have to hide again.

It happened in probably the worst way possible, and for a hot minute there it felt like Shane's entire world was imploding around him - the Voyageurs, and the people he thought were his friends, and busybodies on the internet with no life and *definitely* no hockey skills - but now things have settled down a little.

Now, instead of panicking about every little thing, Shane gets to just enjoy it.

He gets to enjoying loving his fiancé out in public, for the first time in the thirteen years they have known each other.

Shane thinks this is probably the first - and last - time in his life that he's ever been excited about grocery shopping. But it's their first time doing it together, as a couple, out in public where other people can see them. Where, finally, they don't have to pretend to be something they're not.

It's such a small thing - insignificant to most people, probably - but it's a luxury Shane never thought he would be allowed to have.

Ilya is bouncing along beside him like an excitable, oversized puppy. It's so fucking sweet that Shane wants to stop and just...kiss him. Right here, in the middle of the store, with everyone and their mother around to see it. He doesn't, though. Something holds him back. And he wishes so desperately that he wasn't, but there's a part of Shane that is still terrified. That he still feels like if he kisses Ilya here and now, he will get *caught*.

That's the thing about spending so long hiding: you forget how to exist when other people are watching you.

"Okay. First up is kale, apparently," Ilya grumbles.

"You like kale."

"Uh, no. That is a lie."

"It's in the smoothies I make us," Shane points out, and watches as Ilya's jaw drops open.

"You feed me vegetables in a drink?" Ilya gasps, sounding like Shane has just admitted to poisoning him. "That is not a smoothie, Shane, that is cold soup."

"Gazpacho," Shane says.

"Bless you."

Shane laughs, bumping into Ilya's hip as they walk. "That's the name of cold soup."

"Well, whatever it is called, I don't want to drink it for my breakfast," Ilya complains.

He's smiling though, that big, bright one he saves for Shane and for animals, and absolutely nothing else. It still feels like an honour getting to witness it, even after all these years.

"You're so dramatic," Shane says, but it sounds an awful lot like *I love you*.

"*Fine*," Ilya sighs. "Kale. Where is that?"

"Oh, I write the list in order. The produce section is first."

Ilya stops again, forcing Shane to stop alongside him. He turns, almost in slow motion - Shane doesn't call him dramatic for no reason - and looks at Shane with wide eyes that are being swallowed up by his pupils.

Shane knows that face very well. It's perhaps his favourite face, because it's Ilya's turned on face. But...

"You write it in order of the store?"

"Yes? Why is that?"

"You are so *hot*, Shane," Ilya groans. "You can't make me hard in the grocery store."

Shane laughs, reaching out a hand to playfully shove Ilya's shoulder. God, he's impossible. He should have known Ilya had some kind of kink for competency from that very first time in Toronto, when he'd practically drooled watching Shane fold his clothes. It's only gotten worse in all the years since.

Ilya once walked in on Shane fixing the leaky shower in the bathroom, and, well. They made good use of it after it was fixed.

"You're such a weirdo," Shane teases him, but Ilya grins like it's the biggest compliment. "Come on, or we'll be here forever."

They get the kale, even though Ilya continues to whinge about it. Then they pick up the rest of the produce, Ilya holding each item up so Shane can inspect it before placing it in the cart. And through every step - every time Shane tells him to pick a different item, or put it in the cart in a different spot - Ilya just smiles. The whole damn time.

He doesn't complain that Shane is too fussy, or neurotic, or demanding. Doesn't whine that it's taking too long to pick the perfect bag of apples. He smiles, and laughs, and bumps their elbows together like he needs to touch Shane every thirty seconds or he'll combust.

No one has ever seen Shane as clearly as Ilya does.

He's never once questioned why Shane is fussy about the texture of certain foods, or grumbled when he feels too overstimulated to cuddle in bed. He has never treated Shane like there's something wrong with him - he's never even *asked* about it. Ilya just watches and pays attention, and then he adapts. He accommodates Shane's needs, instead of expecting Shane to change.

It's the first time in Shane's life that he hasn't felt like a burden.

"You're happy," Shane states.

"Of course," Ilya agrees. "This is fun."

"You think *grocery shopping* is fun?" Shane asks in complete disbelief.

Ilya just shrugs his shoulders all nonchalant, and says, "It is fun when it's with you."

Fucking hell.

Shane can't help but take hold of Ilya's hand and bring it up to his mouth to kiss Ilya's knuckles.

He's just...he's *perfect*. The best thing that has ever happened to Shane, his most favourite person in the whole world. He'd drop down to one knee and propose right here in front of the mangoes if he hadn't already done it, if they weren't already wearing engagement rings - on their fingers now, not on chains around their necks.

Ilya gives him another heart-stopping smile, where his eyes crinkle at the sides and Shane can see Ilya's crooked teeth that make such beautiful marks against Shane's skin. Fuck. Now *he's* about to get hard in the store.

"Come on," Shane says. "Drinks next."

Regrettably, he has to let go of Ilya's hand to push the cart, and he misses the contact between them almost instantaneously.

But then Shane feels a tug at his hips, and he looks down to see that Ilya has hooked a finger through one of Shane's belt loops. When he looks back up at his fiancé, they're so close that Shane can't stop himself from leaning forward and brushing their lips together for the briefest of moments.

He feels himself flush at the uncharacteristic public display of affection, but the answering smile he gets from Ilya is worth it. It almost flattens Shane.

They wander around the store slowly, not at all like Shane's usual trips here. Normally he gets in, gets his stuff, and gets out as quickly as possible. He has no time for dawdling, and certainly no patience for browsing. But, with Ilya's finger in his belt loop, they walk around the store like they don't have anywhere else to be.

They walk aimlessly down the snack aisle that Shane usually avoids completely, and yet, somehow - with Ilya's adorable pouts and filthy promises - they end up with a cart filled with things Shane hasn't let himself indulge in, in - god - *years*.

That seems to be a theme for him, though. Denying himself the things that he wants.

Shane can't believe he almost denied himself *this*. Can't believe he ever thought he could spend another ten or more years pretending that loving Ilya isn't the greatest thing he has ever done.

But they're here now, even if it wasn't in the way that they had planned. They have family and friends that love them, and a new team that supports them. They have an entire life stretching out ahead of them, where they can do anything they want. Where they can *be* whoever they want. And it might be scary - Shane might still hesitate to hold Ilya's hand, or kiss him in public sometimes - but it's okay. Ilya has never once rushed him.

And they've got all the time in the world.

“Ilya, baby, we hate olives,” Shane points out when he notices the jar Ilya is putting in the cart.

“Hm, yes,” he agrees, “but Yuna and David are coming round for pasta tomorrow and they love them.”

Shane frowns. “Since when?”

“Since last night? Do you not read the group chat?”

Shane huffs. No, he *doesn't* read the group chat. Every week or so he scrolls through the messages that have built up, but he's had it silenced almost since its inception.

It was cute at first, seeing Ilya and his parents conversing so casually; it made his heart feel all funny, knowing his two worlds had finally collided. But it got old pretty quickly when his mom started sending baby pictures, and his dad started sharing articles about birds with Ilya, and Shane had to read his partner and his mom arguing about Scott Hunter's fucking backcheck.

“You couldn't have warned me?”

Ilya grins, all wolfish and taunting. “It is not my fault I'm their favourite, sweetheart.”

“I hate you,” Shane huffs.

“No. You don't.”

No. He doesn't. He loves Ilya so much it makes him feel stupid, sometimes. Or, if not stupid, then at least reckless.

He gets a brief flashback of their meeting with Crowell, when the commissioner had played on every one of Shane's biggest fears. Where he had threatened both of their careers if they didn't go along with whatever he wanted from them. Where Shane had made the second easiest choice in his entire life when he'd said, “*I choose him*,” and walked out of that office.

The first easiest choice was loving Ilya.

Not *love*, the noun - the feeling. That had never been a choice. But *love*, the verb. The action. Shane could have chosen to walk away a million times over the years - so could Ilya - but instead they chose to keep trying. To keep fighting. To keep loving each other, even when it had seemed so impossible.

“Come on,” Shane says. “We'll be late to Harris and Troy's housewarming if we don't get a move on.”

“You think they'll mind if I bring Anya with us?”

“She can stay home for a few hours, Ilya. She'll be fine.”

“You would leave our child by herself all evening?” Ilya gasps, a hand splayed over his chest in exaggerated horror. “You are terrible father, Shane Hollander.”

He’s laughing as he says it, though, and then he tucks his finger into Shane’s belt loop again, and follows along obediently.

They stop again in the cereal aisle, this time for Shane’s sake. He’s been eating overnight oats for breakfast for a couple of months now, but yesterday when he tried to eat them they suddenly felt too slimy in his mouth and he’d had to throw them away.

So. Shane is perusing all the cereal options available, when he feels a pair of arms wind around his waist.

Ilya presses his chest to Shane’s back, tightens his hold, and rests his chin on Shane’s shoulder. Ilya tilts his head just enough to press a kiss to the underside of Shane’s jaw, and my god, he loves Ilya so much.

The feeling completely overwhelms him.

He melts into Ilya’s hold, and Shane’s eyes get kind of misty. He never thought he would get to have this. He still can’t quite believe it’s real, that his fiancé - almost his *husband* - can just hold him like this, out in the open, in the middle of the goddamn grocery store.

Shane has literally dreamt about this. About doing mundane, everyday things with Ilya, like shopping, or walking Anya, or going out on dates.

He still struggles to believe that it’s real.

For a moment they just stand there, caught up in each other. But then Shane feels Ilya shift uncomfortably behind him, and when he glances to the left he spots why.

There’s someone standing at the end of the aisle in a Centaurs cap, and they’re frozen still as they watch Shane and Ilya. They even have their phone in hand, trying to subtly take a photo but failing spectacularly.

Shane tenses for a second - his body so conditioned to hide - and Ilya almost lets go of him. But as soon as Shane feels Ilya’s arms slacken around him, he knows that he doesn’t want to pull away. He squeezes Ilya’s hand where they rest over Shane’s stomach, and he relaxes into back into him.

“Let them stare,” Shane says softly.

“Yes?”

“Yeah. I don’t care. It’s nice, letting people see us together.”

Ilya is quiet for a brief moment, and then-

“Ah. You have exhibitionist kink.”

Shane snorts out a laugh, digging his elbow into Ilya's ribs as he chortles loudly. "Fuck off."

He turns around in the circle of Ilya's arms, and tilts his chin up in search of a kiss. Ilya enthusiastically obliges him with a sweet, brief peck to his lips.

"We are going to end up on Twitter," Ilya warns him.

Shane just shrugs his shoulders. "Well, it wouldn't be the first time."

Ilya laughs like it has been startled out of him. He shakes his head, but then kisses both of Shane's cheeks right above the freckles he loves so dearly.

"Shane, if you wanted people to watch--"

"Oh, shut *up*," Shane laughs, pulling out of Ilya's arms and trying his level best to glare at him.

It's unsuccessful; Ilya's smile is too soft, his eyes too bright, his heart too visible on his sleeve.

Ilya is so happy that it's shining out of him like little rays of sunlight, warming everything that it touches.

He's Shane's own personal sun.

And he's like this - happy, and carefree, and playful - because he loves Shane so much, and he's excited that he finally gets to show it. They've been out in public together before, of course, in the weeks since they were outed - on a couple of quiet dates, or walking Anya - but the novelty of it hasn't worn off yet.

Shane doubts it will for a long time. They've got a decade to make up for, after all.

They make it through the rest of the store pretty quickly, after that. A few more people notice them, but no one approaches until a young girl - maybe thirteen or fourteen - spots them. Her eyes go wide and she freezes in the middle of the aisle, her mouth opening and closing like she wants to say something, but isn't sure if she should. She's wearing a Centaurs jersey that's about three sizes too big for her.

"Hello," Ilya says, waving to her.

"Um, hi," she mumbles, so quiet Shane can barely hear her.

"I am Ilya Rozanov. This is Shane Hollander."

Her cheeks turn red as she looks down and kicks the toe of her converse against the linoleum floor. "I know. I'm a huge fan."

"Yes? What is your name?"

"Sky."

“It’s nice to meet you, Sky.”

“Yeah,” Shane finally speaks. “It’s nice to meet you. I like your jersey.”

She blushes again, then turns her arm so they can see the *81* on the side of it. Shane glances at Ilya, and watches as a look of sheer delight crosses his face.

“Ah, so you have very good taste,” Ilya says. “Would you like me to sign it, Sky?”

She nods her head so fast it’s a wonder she doesn’t give herself whiplash. “Yes. Please.”

Ilya doesn’t think, just holds his hand out to Shane, palm up, and curls his fingers in a *gimme* motion. Shane - prepared as always - retrieves a sharpie from his jacket pocket. He was used to carrying them around in Montreal in case he got stopped for a picture or autograph. Ilya used to tease him for it.

Sky turns around and Ilya crouches behind her. He talks quietly with her as he scrawls his signature across the number 8, and Shane feels overcome with a feeling he can’t quite place.

Ilya is just so...so *good*.

The version of him that everyone else sees - it isn’t the version that Shane gets to have. *His* Ilya is kind, and gentle, and sweet. His heart is the biggest that Shane has ever known, and once he trusts you - once he knows you won’t leave him - he’s so fucking eager to give it away, so selfless in the way that he loves people.

He’d be a really good dad, Shane thinks, and not for the first time.

Once he’s written his signature, he draws a smiley face underneath it. And then he asks, “Would you like Shane to sign as well?”

“Please. If that’s okay.”

Shane takes the marker from Ilya’s outstretched hand and swaps places with him, kneeling behind the kid to sign the number 1. When he’s done he stands back up, and Sky turns to face them again.

“I think you’re really brave, y’know, for coming out,” she says. “I’m - well, I *think* - I mean, me too. So. Thank you.”

Shane feels his heart swelling with pride and gratitude for this stranger - this *child* - who already knows herself, and feels brave enough to say it out loud. He wouldn’t change the life he’s lived, but *god* does he wish he could have been as brave as she is a little bit sooner.

He feels overwhelmed with emotion, and when he looks at Ilya it’s clear that he is too. His eyes are glassy, like he’s trying to hold back tears.

“Thank *you*, Sky,” Ilya says. “I’m so happy we could meet you.”

“Goodbye,” Shane says, waving as she rushes off towards the man who’s standing waiting for her.

For a couple of minutes neither of them say anything. Shane’s throat feels all clogged up, like if he tried to speak his voice would crack.

They’ve had messages of support online - they’ve read the comments, and the emails, and the DMs - but it’s the first time someone, a stranger, has approached them to say something like that. To say that Shane and Ilya loving each other out loud matters. And to hear it from someone so young...*fuck*.

This was never supposed to be a political statement, never supposed to be some kind of activism, he and Ilya just wanted to be together. Just wanted to love each other. But Shane figures their very existence - especially in their sport - is inherently radical.

The fact that they exist - that they love each other and are no longer hiding it - means something to people.

Shane is no stranger to being the token player on a team. When he was drafted by Montreal they didn’t hesitate to parade him around like some kind of diversity hire, just because he’s Asian. His mom used to tell him how much it mattered, being in that locker room and playing on that ice; she used to tell him that thousands of kids would finally get to see themselves represented in a place they hadn’t been before.

It used to feel like a burden.

Shane didn’t want to be *The Asian Player*, and he definitely didn’t want to be *The Gay Player*, either. He just wanted to play hockey, and wasn’t sure why any part of his identity needed to play a role in that.

But now, instead of feeling like a burden, it feels like an honour. His visibility in this sport matters, and he won’t ever shrink himself again.

“This is the real gay agenda, Shane,” Ilya says, breaking their silence. “We are inspiring baby gays everywhere.”

Shane sighs, pinching the bridge of his nose and shaking his head. He can *feel* Ilya grinning at him, but he doesn’t dare look.

“*Please* don’t say that to any journalists,” Shane begs, as he begins pushing their cart towards the checkout. “The last thing we need is *another* scandal.”

“But scandals with you are so fun, my love,” Ilya insists, and Shane can hear the playfulness in his tone.

He looks at Ilya - his fiancé, the love of his life - and he thinks, *everything is so fun with you*. He thinks, *I can’t wait to do this for the rest of our lives*.

“Let’s go,” Shane says. “Before you find a way to get us in trouble.”

Ilya presses a kiss to Shane's temple and then falls into step beside him, because there's nowhere Shane could go that Ilya wouldn't follow. No bridge he wouldn't cross, no lengths he wouldn't go to, and no risk he wouldn't take.

God, aren't they lucky? To have a love like that.

End Notes

just something silly :)

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