the shape of your hands made me brave

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at https://archiveofourown.org/works/92478166.

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:	Ilya Rozanov, Shane Hollander
Additional Tags:	Post-Book 6: The Long Game (Game Changers), Married Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov, Minor Injuries, Light Angst, like barely any, Ilya Rozanov Loves Shane Hollander, Shane Hollander Loves Ilya Rozanov, Domestic Fluff, Mild Sexual Content, Healthy Relationships, Shane Hollander Calls Ilya Rozanov "Baby", Ilya Rozanov Takes Care of Shane Hollander, Happy Ending
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2026-09-12 Words: 3,710 Chapters: 1/1

the shape of your hands made me brave

by justhockey

Summary

"Loving you - *being loved by you* - has made me feel brave," Shane says, like it isn't the most important thing anyone has ever said to Ilya.

He feels like he is floating.

Ilya's chest is warm and fuzzy, and he is so overcome with affection and happiness, that he doesn't know what to do with himself. He doesn't think there's enough room in his chest for all the love that he is feeling right now - for his husband, for the life they have built together, for the future they have fought for.

Notes

Title from *Afflictions* by Gracie Abrams.

See the end of the work for more notes

Shane's first injury with the Centaurs happens about halfway through his first season with them.

Much to absolutely no one's surprise, they're killing it this season. The Centaurs had been steadily improving since Ilya first signed with them, but having Shane on the team feels like the final jigsaw piece being slotted into the puzzle. They're complete, now, and it shows. Perhaps because Ilya is complete; his whole heart resides in Ottawa now, instead of half of it living in Montreal.

The team is sitting comfortably on top of the league standings by, honestly, a pretty remarkable margin. Some days it feels like they simply can't lose.

Every other team in the league is terrified of them.

It's such a rush, being this good again. Playing with his husband and his friends, for a franchise that genuinely respects them, is more than they could have wished for. Ilya hasn't loved playing hockey this much in, god, *ever.* He's fallen in love with the sport all over again.

So it stands to reason that their uncomplicated joy wasn't going to last forever.

The injury is nothing too major, in the grand scheme of things. A dislocated shoulder from a clean hit by a Minnesota defenseman, that just landed badly. Terry pops it back into place in the med room at the Tire Centre, fixes it in a sling, and wagers that Shane will be as good as new in a week or so. Two, maybe three missed games, and he'll be back where he belongs: terrorising the league with his husband.

Ilya holds his breath - and Shane's hand - through the whole assessment, through the diagnosis and the treatment and the aftercare instructions. He's still holding his breath on the ride home, along the ice-slick roads of Ottawa in February.

The heat is on in the car but their breath still fogs the air a little at first, as Shane hums along to the radio that's playing quietly between them. His uninjured arm is stretched out across the console, hand splayed possessively over Ilya's thigh like that's exactly where it belongs. Like even the car ride home is too long to go without touching.

And it is, now, after so many months of being inseparable. Any time at all without his husband touching him feels like too much. They've earned the right to be embarrassingly clingy and codependent, and neither of them intend to do anything to rectify it.

Ilya has loved Shane through a lot of injuries.

He remembers the time Shane sprained his ankle years ago, when they were still barely more than kids, and he had to miss three whole weeks worth of games. He remembers the MCL strain that took Shane out for six weeks right before a playoff run, and then the overachiever went ahead and made it all the way to the conference finals anyway.

He remembers, probably best of all, Shane's broken collarbone and concussion, and the sick feeling that lived inside of Ilya for weeks after, every time his brain cruelly decided to replay

the hit again.

More than anything, though, Ilya remembers how fucking *difficult* Shane can get.

He understands it, of course. They're professional athletes who live and breathe hockey, so any time away from the game is considered too long. But Shane…Shane is a different breed entirely.

He's gets grumpy, and quiet, and whiny. He can get mean, too, sometimes, when the injury is taking longer to heal than he'd hoped for. Which, for Shane, means anything more than a couple of days. Ilya is familiar with the look Shane gets in his eyes, that lost, fearful expression, like he doesn't know what to do with himself - doesn't know who he *is* - when he isn't playing hockey.

So Ilya is waiting for the other shoe to drop.

Because Shane had been frustrated when Terry was fixing him up, of course, but in a way that made it seem like this was just a mild inconvenience rather than something to get worked up over.

He'd sighed when he was told how long he might be out, but then scrunched his nose up and giggled when Ilya peppered little kisses all over his face, relieved that the injury wasn't worse.

Afterwards, Shane had laughed easily with the guys in the locker room while they celebrated the win and commiserated Shane's injury. He'd laced his fingers with Ilya's on the way to the car, their hands swinging between them as they rushed to get out of the cold. Then he casually mentioned their plans to grab dinner with his parents tomorrow, instead of asking if they could cancel.

Shane is taking the whole thing remarkably well…and it's kind of making Ilya nervous. He's used to Shane's panic and frustration, used to his complaining and pushing himself too hard, too fast. Used to his steadfast determination making him prickly, and short-tempered, and impatient.

Ilya is used to his fear - the kind all athletes know - that every injury could mean the end of his career.

Ilya isn't used to *this:* the way Shane seems mostly unaffected as he bends down to kiss Anya's head when they walk through the front door, like nothing at all is wrong.

"Are you okay?" Ilya asks carefully, as he fills Shane a glass of water.

He slides it across the kitchen island, and Shane grabs hold of it with his good hand. He lifts it to his mouth and swallows half of it down in one go, then puts it back down again. He wipes the corners of his mouth with his index finger and thumb.

"I'm okay, I promise," Shane responds, a soft, knowing smile on his face.

Ilya is a worrier, especially when it comes to his Shane. He worries about him being hungry, or cold, or in pain - worries about him feeling overwhelmed, or if he got enough sleep, or if his new shoes are comfortable. He can't seem to help himself.

And Shane, his wonderful, perfect husband, is always impossibly patient with Ilya.

"I know it sucks that you're gonna miss some time, but-"

"It's only a few games, Ilya," Shane laughs. "I'm sure you guys can find a way to survive without your best player for that long."

Ilya rolls his eyes. God, his husband is an asshole. He fucking *loves* it.

Loves mean, bitchy Shane, whose chirps are so fucking brutal that they leave grown men slack-jawed as he steals the puck from them. He loves confident, self-assured Shane, who knows he's so fucking good that no one - except for Ilya - even comes close to being at his level.

It's so fucking hot, even now when they're both tired and achy from a game that went to over time, and Shane has his arm strapped to his chest in a sling.

"Fuck you," Ilya jokes.

Shane's eyes glimmer with mirth as he says, "Promise?"

Ilya laughs. "You're hurt," he reminds Shane, as he makes his way around the island to where his husband is perched on a barstool.

Shane swivels around in his seat, then opens his legs so Ilya can step between his thighs. He winds his functioning arm around Ilya's waist, pulling him closer to eliminate any and all space between them. Then Shane tilts his chin upwards, his lips puckered in search of a kiss.

Ilya has never been very good at denying Shane anything, but now that they're married he is entirely incapable of it.

He leans down and kisses Shane, close-mouthed and sweet, yet it still sends a thrill coursing through Ilya's body. Even after all these years, even now they're out and married and basically attached at the hip, kissing Shane still lights him up from the inside, out. It still feels like a gift he can't believe he is worthy of.

He trails his lips from Shane's mouth, along his jaw, and down to where his pulse is flickering in his neck. Ilya kisses there, too, and Shane hums pleasantly.

Ilya pulls back just enough to look Shane in the eyes.

He catalogues every single detail of his husband's face: the perfect constellation of freckles across his nose and cheeks, the faintest hint of crows feet crinkling like crushed velvet at the side of his pretty brown eyes, the way he looks at Ilya like he, too, can't quite believe his luck.

Ilya has to kiss him about it again.

Shane brings his arm up so he can scratch his fingers through Ilya's unruly curls, and Ilya finds himself melting into the touch. He kisses Shane once, twice, three more times, then he pulls back again.

He takes careful hold of Shane's chin as he says, "Sweetheart, it's okay if you are frustrated."

Shane shrugs his good shoulder. "I mean yeah, of course I am, but…"

"But what?"

"It's only a couple of games, baby. It's not that big of a deal."

Ilya feels his brows furrow in surprise, or maybe something closer to concern. He raises his arm, pressing the back of his hand against Shane's forehead like he's checking for a fever.

He's joking…mostly.

Shane laughs, playfully slapping his hand away. But then he laces their fingers together anyway, bringing them up to his mouth so he can press a kiss to Ilya's wedding ring.

"I'm *fine,*" he promises.

"Who are you, are what have you done with my husband?"

Shane rolls his eyes, but he's still smiling - not forced, not his media-trained smile, just the soft, genuine one that he saves for Ilya.

Years ago, when Shane had his MCL strain, he and Ilya had been in a complicated place. It had been before either of them could even admit to themselves, let alone each other, that what they were doing was so far beyond casual. Ilya had text Shane anyway, when the news came out. And when Shane had text him back…

It was a rambling, pain-killer infused message about how scared Shane had been. About how he didn't know who he was without hockey - how he felt worthless if he wasn't playing, wasn't winning.

Ilya had done his best to calm him down, to soothe his worries, and then a few days later, once Shane was off the strong stuff, they'd just pretended that conversation never even happened.

Ilya has never forgotten it, though.

He has never stopped worrying about what will happen to Shane when the day finally comes where he has to hang up his skates. That day isn't today, of course. It won't be for many, many years, he hopes. But the anxiety is still there - the fear that if Shane loses hockey, he will also lose himself.

Ilya has seen flashes of it in every one of Shane's injuries. He's seen it in the way Shane is always itching to get back on the ice before his body is ready, like he'll sink through the floor if he stands still for too long.

He doesn't see it now, though. Shane just looks…settled. Steady.

He presses another kiss to Ilya's knuckles, before saying, "It's just a week or two, baby."

"I know. I know that," Ilya tells him. "But normally you-"

Shane raises a single eyebrow. "-I?"

"You get very, I don't know, antsy? When you are hurt. Impatient. Like if you don't play, you'll explode."

Like you'll die, Ilya thinks, but doesn't dare to say out loud.

"I know," Shane acknowledges, "but I guess - I guess it doesn't matter quite as much, anymore?"

There's silence, for a moment. The deafening, ear-ringing kind of silence that comes after an explosion in a movie. Ilya opens his mouth to speak, but closes it again when, for the life of him, he can't think of a single fucking thing to say.

Shane is looking up at him with shiny eyes and flushed cheeks, and he's chewing nervously on his bottom lip.

"Shane, sweetheart, did you hit your head? I'm serious-"

"*Ilya,*" Shane half laughs, half groans.

He tips forward until his face is smushed against Ilya's sternum, and, instinctively, Ilya winds both of his arms tightly around his husband. He bends just enough to press a kiss to the top of Shane's head, because he doesn't know what to say.

Never, in the fourteen years that Ilya has known him, has Shane ever, *ever* said that hockey doesn't matter.

It has been the most important thing in Shane's life since he was old enough to pick up a mini stick. The most important thing in his life until *Ilya.* It's one of the biggest reasons they hid their relationship for so long - because they were both so desperate not to lose hockey, because they couldn't imagine their lives without it.

And now Shane is saying…

"I just mean," Shane pauses, sighing as he tilts his head up to look at Ilya. "Don't laugh at me?"

Ilya frowns. "Of course not."

“Or, like, make fun of me for being sappy, or whatever.”

“*Sweetheart.*”

Blushing, Shane presses his face back into Ilya’s chest, and Ilya runs his fingers through the longer hairs at the nape of Shane’s neck.

“It’s not as scary now that I have you,” Shane mumbles.

Ilya feels his heart skip a beat, and it’s a wonder that Shane doesn’t feel it too.

“What do you mean?” Ilya asks quietly.

Shane takes a slow, deep breath, and then he pulls back so he can properly look at Ilya. His hand slides up Ilya’s chest, fingers playing idly with Ilya’s crucifix as he explains.

“Hockey - it used to be everything I was, everything I had. I didn’t know how to exist without it, so the thought of losing it…” Shane shakes his head.

Ilya squeezes him, careful not to put any pressure on his injured shoulder. He leans down and presses a kiss to Shane’s forehead, too, because he simply can’t *not.*

“But now, now I know that it isn’t everything. I have you - my *husband* - and. I don’t know. Life after hockey doesn’t seem so daunting anymore?”

“Shane-“ Ilya’s voice cracks.

“I still love it, of course. I love it even more, now that I get to play with you. I don’t *want* my career to be over any time soon,” Shane elaborates. “I just - I know, now, that my life won’t end when hockey does. We’re gonna have a wonderful life, even when our careers are over.”

Shane caresses Ilya’s face with such tenderness, wiping away a tear Ilya hadn’t even realised had fallen.

“Loving you - *being loved by you* - has made me feel brave,” Shane says, like it isn’t the most important thing anyone has ever said to Ilya.

He feels like he is floating.

Ilya’s chest is warm and fuzzy, and he is so overcome with affection and happiness, that he doesn’t know what to do with himself. He doesn’t think there’s enough room in his chest for all the love that he is feeling right now - for his husband, for the life they have built together, for the future they have fought for.

He cups Shane’s cheeks in his hands, looks deep into his eyes, and then he kisses him.

Slow, and deep, their tongues winding together like they’re the very air they each need to breathe. His hands tremble as he cradles Shane’s face, and his heart is beating so fast it feels like it’s tattooing Shane’s name onto his ribcage.

Ilya thinks, maybe, he has never felt so happy in his entire life.

“I love you,” he says, a little breathlessly. “I love you so fucking much, Shane, oh my god.”

Shane laughs, a sparkly sound that Ilya can almost taste on the tip of his tongue.

“I love you, too, my baby,” he murmurs. “More than anything.”

Ilya has never really *feared* for their future. Not since the moment they both decided they were in this for real.

They’re both exceptionally determined people, and if they set their minds to something there’s never any doubt that they’ll achieve it. So Ilya has known for many years that he’s going to spend the rest of his life with Shane, even long before they put rings on each other’s fingers.

Throughout all their struggles, and hardships, and through being outed, Ilya has never even entertained a future that didn’t include Shane.

But.

There was always a part of him, small and usually hidden away, that wondered what it would look like. That wondered if Shane could ever be truly satisfied without hockey. That, perhaps, worried if Ilya could be enough on his own to keep Shane happy.

Now, as he holds his injured yet still-grinning husband in his arms, Ilya knows he doesn’t have to wonder anymore.

Their life is going to be beautiful, because they’re going to live it together.

“Let me run you a bath,” Ilya says, kissing Shane’s cheek as he finally steps away.

“Join me?” Shane asks, all wide, pleading eyes and kissed-pink lips.

“Whatever you want, sweetheart,” Ilya says.

And he means it.

There’s nowhere Shane could go that Ilya wouldn’t follow. Nothing he could ask for that Ilya wouldn’t provide. He’ll spend the rest of his life making sure Shane is as happy as he is right now, in this moment.

The water is hot enough that it turns their skin pink and makes the bathroom window and mirror steam up. It’s hotter than Ilya usually likes it but it’s the perfect temperature for Shane, who’s between Ilya’s thighs, lying back on his chest as they soak their postgame aches away.

Shane’s sling has been removed so he’s keeping his arm close to his chest, and allowing Ilya to gently clean his body with a wash cloth. He hums contentedly, turning his face inwards so his nose brushes along the length of Ilya’s throat. He kisses him there, hot and open-mouthed, until Ilya forces himself to pull away.

“Behave,” he warns, earning a precious giggle from Shane.

“You’re hard. I can feel it,” Shane points out, wiggling carefully.

The pressure on Ilya’s cock is torturous.

Ilya hisses through his teeth, his hand tightening on Shane’s hip to keep him still. God, his husband is a fucking menace. The problem with never saying no to Shane, is that it’s turned him into a spoiled brat. Ilya fucking *loves* it - loves that Shane knows Ilya will never deny him a single thing. But it becomes especially inconvenient in times like these, when what Shane wants isn’t what is best for him.

“You can still fuck me.”

Ilya leans down and nips gently at Shane’s earlobe. “No physically activity for the next three days. That’s what Terry said.”

“Baby…” Shane pouts.

“Don’t *baby* me,” Ilya warns him. “No sex until I know it won’t hurt you.”

Shane sighs morosely. “Fine.”

As a reward for behaving, Ilya drags the washcloth down down down, slowly cupping Shane’s half hard cock.

“Mean,” he whines.

“Just cleaning you, sweetheart.”

Shane laughs. “You liar,” he argues, turning around just enough to look Ilya in the eyes. “I love you, though.”

Ilya leans in to kiss Shane’s nose first, and then his perfectly pouty lips. “I love you, too.”

This life has been fourteen years in the making, and yet sometimes it feels like everything happened so fast.

One day they were planning for *someday,* and then suddenly the whole world knew about them, and they were saying *I do,* and now they’re playing together on the same team.

It still catches Ilya a little off guard, that this is his life now. This is the way it’s going to be forever. There’ll be no more hiding or secrets, no more long distance, no more surviving on a few stolen hours wherever they can grab them. They get to always be like this, now, so tightly bound together that they can’t tell where one of them ends and the other one begins.

Though, hasn’t it always been like that?

For Ilya, hockey has always been synonymous with Shane; they used to be one and the same. From the moment they first met, in that snowy Saskatchewan parking lot, Shane has been a

part of him.

He thinks it's probably fate, that they ended up here. Like maybe all the stars aligned perfectly, and from that very first meeting they were destined to wind up exactly this: happy, together, in love. And even if that wasn't the case, well. They would have found a way no matter what.

The stars have got nothing on them.

Ilya drops the washcloth into the water and lets his fingertips gently trail up and down Shane's arm, being extra careful every time he nears his shoulder.

"You know, when we *do* retire…" Shane begins.

"…many, *many* years from now," Ilya continues for him.

"Exactly," Shane laughs quietly. "Many years from now, when we retire, I'd really like for us to have a family. Kids. What do you - what do you think about that?"

Ilya's heart feels like it's about to beat right out of his chest.

He kisses Shane's head, his temple, the high point of his cheekbone, and the curve of his jaw, until Shane turns his head just enough for Ilya to claim his lips in a loving kiss.

They've talked about kids before, of course, but more so in an abstract kind of way. A maybe - a possibility, way, way into the future. But this, the way Shane said the words so carefully, so intentionally, it makes Ilya want to weep with joy.

"I think…Shane, I think there's nothing I want more than to have that with you."

"Yeah?"

"Yes, sweetheart, of course."

"You'll be an amazing dad, baby. I just know it," Shane says, tears gleaming in his eyes.

The thought of a child with chubby cheeks and Shane's freckles calling Ilya *papa* - it's almost too much to bear. He's hit with such an intense wave of longing, the desire for something he'd spent years believing he could never have. But he can.

He can have hockey, and Shane, and a family. They can have everything they've ever wanted, and they can do it together.

"So will you," Ilya whispers.

"Together," Shane says.

"Always."

It's a promise he'll take with him to the grave.

End Notes

hello my dears :) i had planned to be much more active this summer but that didn't work out the way i planned, & then someone unfortunately plagiarised one of my fics. it was taken down very quickly, but it kind of put me off writing for a while.

anyway, this is just something short and sweet. love u all!!!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!