every moment in between

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at https://archiveofourown.org/works/77703146.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Heated Rivalry (TV)
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Ilya Rozanov, Shane Hollander
Additional Tags:	Episode: s01e05 I'll Believe in Anything (Heated Rivalry), Feelings, the impossibility of pushing away someone who refuses to go, slightly angsty ending until you remember what comes next, Canon Compliant, Podfic Available
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2026-01-15 Words: 1,737 Chapters: 1/1

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by AirgiodSLV

Summary

Shane slides onto the bar stool next to him. Elbow-to-elbow. In public, in the light of day, in front of everyone else in the bar. He doesn't even hesitate. Ilya hadn't thought Shane would be that brave.

or

Shane settles into himself. Ilya spirals.

Shane walks into the resort bar like he owns it. Shoulders back, relaxed. He looks like he's on set for one of the commercial shoots that Ilya will never admit he saves to watch when he's alone. Ilya has seen him in a blazer before, of course. Ilya has seen him in tuxedos, head down and awkward like a kid trying on a grown-up costume.

He doesn't look like that now. He looks like a man dating a movie star. He looks like someone told him he's Shane fucking Hollander, and he finally believed them.

The butterflies that have been fluttering in Ilya's stomach all morning concentrate into a knot of tension. Shane doesn't play it cool or pretend not to notice him. He heads straight for Ilya.

It's the first time they've been in a city together when the hum of anticipation hasn't built up under Ilya's skin. The first time he's been counting down the days with dread, as well as hungry, unacknowledged longing.

Ilya gives himself a pep talk as Shane rounds the bar, and downs what's left of his liquid courage. It's time to act casual. What does it matter that Shane has a girlfriend he can be photographed in public with, who can make him smile without the need to hide it, who the world thinks is perfect for him. Ilya couldn't care less.

Shane slides onto the bar stool next to him. Elbow-to-elbow. In public, in the light of day, in front of everyone else in the bar. He doesn't even hesitate. Ilya hadn't thought Shane would be that brave. But maybe that isn't important since they're nothing anymore, with nothing to hide.

Okay, Ilya tells himself. *Let's do this.*

Shane takes his duties as team captain seriously. Ilya should have expected that, even at the All-Star game, where no one takes anything seriously.

Shane brings a different energy than Ilya to the role of captain. He's calm and focused, attending to details and pre-show rituals like this is any other game of the season. Where Ilya hypes his team up before a game, Shane is the eye of the storm. The rest of the team whoops and jokes in the locker room before they take the ice, and all of them orbit around him like he's their center of gravity.

Ilya is more aware of Shane than he's pretending to be, which is why he notices Shane circulating. He works his way through the team to speak with each player in turn. He mentions a highlight of their season so far, calling out a standout game or a specific play. He remembers something significant about every single one of them.

Of course he does. Ilya wants to roll his eyes, but he has the feeling this isn't only Shane's encyclopedic knowledge of hockey at work. Their captain has done his homework. He knows how they shine brightest. Tonight, this is *his team*.

Ilya leans casually against the wall when it's finally his turn. "Saving best for last? You are here to tell me sweet words about your star player?"

Shane's expression is serious when he says, "Congratulations on not losing every game to Montreal this season."

He can't hold onto it for long. The corners of his eyes crease and his lips curl up when Ilya dramatically clutches his chest and exclaims, "Everyone else in this room gets compliment."

"I had to think about yours for a while. That's why I left you for last." Shane's eyes dance, bright and warm. "I know you're not used to a fast center setting the pace. Try to keep up out there, okay?"

Ilya doesn't need to try. He and Shane move together on the ice like extensions of one thought. It's automatic. Easy.

Shane makes a blind pass to him and doesn't look back, like he trusts Ilya to always be exactly where Shane needs him to be.

Shane disappears early from the afterparty. Ilya spends half an hour pretending he's not searching the room for one particular person before he gives up and leaves.

Shane doesn't even glance up when Ilya sits down next to him on the beach. As if he knew Ilya would find him. As if he knew Ilya would look.

Before the game, Shane had smelled of a new aftershave or cologne, something cool and spicy. It must have worn off by now, replaced by sunscreen and sweat, or the inoffensive soap from a post-game shower. They're too close to the ocean, and too far apart from each other, for Ilya to tell.

The sunset paints Shane gold. He'd stayed outside today long enough for the sun to bring out every freckle, a thousand constellations across his cheeks and the bridge of his nose. Ilya hasn't been able to keep his eyes off him.

By the pool, Shane's pretty brown eyes had been covered by dark sunglasses that hadn't actually hidden anything. Ilya would bet that Shane's gaze was fixed on the water running down his chest and abs more than on his face.

Shane has always been a contradiction. He's all dedication and focus in the rink, and awkward uncertainty once his skates are off. It's a combination that had fascinated Ilya in their early days—Shane's capable self-assurance when they played against each other, contrasted against his willingness to let Ilya mold him like clay into the shape of his desire.

He carries himself now like he's as confident off the ice as on it, finally sure of himself. His fingers brush against Ilya's in the sand without a glance to see who might be watching. He asks for Ilya's room number as if it's a foregone conclusion where they'll end up tonight.

Maybe it always has been.

After the argument that leaves as much unsaid as spoken aloud, the one that ends with Shane in his lap and rocking him while he cries, Ilya doesn't know whether they're going to hook up.

He still wants Shane. He always wants Shane. But now there are things he can't acknowledge because the weight of them is too great, and his walls are crumbling.

Ilya knows how to push Shane away. He's done it deliberately before, careful to maintain a safe distance between them. He's even done it by accident, getting close enough to send Shane running all the way to a celebrity whirlwind romance.

He'd tried it tonight. Closing himself off, choosing words cruel enough to drive the final nails into their coffin. The only thing he hasn't done is light a cigarette and blow smoke into Shane's face, and he doesn't honestly know whether that's because he can't bear to hurt Shane anymore, or because he doesn't believe it will make a difference.

Shane is an immovable boulder. Ilya can't create distance between them, because Shane won't let him.

Shane's touch gradually shifts from comfort to caress. Ilya's hands roam without his conscious permission, and their lips find each other again.

Shane pulls him down onto the bed, certain of what he wants. He's come out tonight, even if it is just to Ilya. He's chosen a label. He's chosen Ilya.

It should scare Ilya. It *does* scare him. But not enough to stop.

"Like this," Shane says. He makes room for Ilya to settle between his legs.

Ilya's hand slides up Shane's thigh, beneath the hem of his shorts. "Ah, you want to use me to stretch your hips."

"I want to see you," Shane says, and Ilya kisses his smile.

Ilya strips off Shane's shirt. Their fingers tangle together on his own, Shane already tugging it under his armpits. They have to stop undressing so they can kiss again.

"Hey," Shane says. "Remember when you made me come without touching me?"

"Which time?" Ilya asks. It doesn't happen often, by any means, but that first time hadn't been a fluke.

Shane doesn't rise to the bait. He gets single-minded in his focus when there's something he wants to say. "Think you can do it again?"

Ilya kisses him twice while he considers his answer, and works on finally peeling Shane out of those shorts. He knows what Shane is doing.

This isn't Shane's favourite position to start in, but it will let Ilya feel in control again while he's reeling from everything else. He needs to move, needs to feel connected. And now Shane is laying down a challenge. He's giving Ilya something to focus on—a goal he can achieve.

"You have a game tomorrow," Ilya reminds him. If he's going to fuck Shane hard enough to make him come untouched, Shane will be moving gingerly afterward.

"It's an evening game." Shane traces Ilya's eyebrow with his thumb and stretches up to claim another kiss. His bare thighs squeeze tight around Ilya's hips. "Make me feel it."

All of the careful barriers they've put in place come tumbling down, one after another. Shane asks about Ilya's father, because Shane knows things about Ilya's family now. Shane cares about Ilya's life. They never talk on the phone until they do—until Shane picks up the phone and calls him, and then they don't stop. They see each other on Skype almost every night.

Whatever this is, it's getting out of control.

Ilya sees Shane go down during the game and feels his heart stop. The enormity of what he stands to lose feels overwhelming, when he still won't let himself acknowledge that he has it.

In the hospital, Ilya traces the dark bruise blooming under Shane's freckles and thinks, *I can't do this again.*

Shane asks him to stay. Shane looks at him with hope and warmth and something that Ilya refuses to name, and Ilya knows there's no way to come back from this.

Ilya will have to be the one to end it. He'll have to go back to Russia and break this off, because Shane won't let him go for anything less. Shane knows what he wants now, and what he wants is Ilya.

It's exhilarating. It's terrifying.

There's no future for them. No way forward. They're too greedy for each other. They always want to be closer, to take more. There's nothing they can have together that will ever be enough.

Ilya wishes he could steal one last kiss before he leaves the hospital.

Maybe it's better that he can't. He's not sure he'd be able to walk away.

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