Heart on my sleeve (not where it should be)

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at https://archiveofourown.org/works/78096226.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Heated Rivalry (TV), Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid, Game Changers | Heated Rivalry - All Media Types
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander, Ilya Rozanov
Additional Tags:	Mentioned Hayden Pike, Ilya Rozanov Loves Shane Hollander, Eating Disorder Not Otherwise Specified, Eating Disorders, Shane Hollander Has an Eating Disorder, I don't go into details, they have the conversation i wish had been in the book, Pre-Book 6: The Long Game (Game Changers), Mental Health Issues, Fix-It, lol, idk if they had had this conversation a lot of things would have been different i think, SO, Not Canon Compliant, i guess, also!, Hurt/Comfort, Emotional Hurt/Comfort, Shane does not think he has an eating disorder, He Is Wrong, and so many - Freeform, Forehead Kisses, Author Is Sleep Deprived
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of I could take away the salt from your eyes
Stats:	Published: 2026-01-14 Words: 3,489 Chapters: 1/1

Heart on my sleeve (not where it should be)

by Beibieface

Summary

“But is there anything I say that you would like me to not tease about?” Ilya asked once again, as he put his arm back around Shane's shoulder and used his hand to tilt Shane's head up so he could make eye contact.

“... No I don't think so.” Shane said, looking anywhere but into Ilya’s eyes. Ilya could feel all of Shane’s body tense up as he spoke.

“All these years later and you are still bad liar.” Ilya said, combing his hand through his boyfriend's soft black hair.

Or

A comment from Hayden makes Ilya worried that he might have unintentionally hurt Shane by joking about the wrong thing.

Notes

hi hello would you look at that i wrote something. I was actually writing a completely different Heated Rivalry fic but then at like 3 am last night I got possessed and wrote 1k words of pure dialog and then this morning I wrote the rest. Bon Appetite?

This is set like, exactly one year after the first cottage visit, so I think that is right before Ilya moves to Ottawa? I didn’t think too much about it tbh. It's just, I read The long game and the way Shane thinks about food was lowkey triggering for me as someone with a complicated history with food and I just wish we would have gotten something like this, so I wrote it. I really don't go into details though, it's just things Ilya has noticed that has made him concerned.

See the end of the work for more notes

“Shane?” Ilya said. It was late at night, and the two of them were inside on the sofa in Shane's cottage, watching but not paying attention to the TV. The two of them were all tangled up in each other, Ilya was stroking Shane's hair absent mindedly. The Pike's along with their horde of children had left about two hours ago. It had been an okay evening considering Hayden and Ilya still did not get along.

“Hmm?” Shane answered, tilting his head back so he could see his boyfriend better.

”You would tell if I say something that hurt you, yes?” Ilya asked hesitantly.

“What?” Shane sat up a little straighter, although he was still practically in Ilya’s lap, Ilya's one arm still wrapped around his shoulder. He seemed very surprised and concerned by Ilya’s question. “Where is this coming from?”

“I tease you, say things that get under your skin. It is not meant to hurt. You would let me know if I hurt you?” Ilya asked again. His voice was quiet and low, the way it got when he was being vulnerable. His eyes were full of concern as he tried to make eye contact with his boyfriend.

“Oh, no I know Ilya, it’s your weird way of showing affection, I know it's not meant to be hurtful. It's how we've always been, right?” Shane relaxed a little again as he answered Ilya’s out of the blue question. Ilya did notice that Shane deliberately avoided eye contact.

“Yes I know you know I don't want to hurt you. I just need to know you also let me know if I do, even if I did not mean it.” Ilya clarified. English was hard all of a sudden, and Ilya could switch to Russian. Shane had been making a lot of progress in learning Ilya’s mother tongue and would probably be able to understand. But this conversation wasn’t about Ilya, so Ilya was determined to keep the conversation in English.

“Is this about what Hayden said?” Shane’s eyebrows furrowed. Earlier that night there had almost been an argument between Shane’s best friend and Ilya. Ilya had made some stupid joke about Shane’s new diet and Hayden had been visibly pissed. He had voiced the opinion that he thought Ilya was insensitive and there were things that were off limits to joke about and as a significant other you should know what those are. Jackie had given her husband a look that clearly said stop talking and Shane had quickly changed the subject, while putting a calming hand on Ilya's arm to stop him from escalating the situation. Ilya got the hint but it had been bothering him since. ”I didn't think you cared about what he thinks.” Shane said.

“I do not care what Pike thinks.” Ilya said, a little too quickly. Hayden was Shane’s best friend and Ilya had to admit that he knew Shane pretty well. Ilya had thought before this that he knew Shane well enough to know what he could and could not say, but maybe Hayden was right. Ilya needed to be sure that Shane would let him know if he ever hurt him with his words, even if it wasn’t intentional.

“You really don't have to listen to him about this.” Shane told him, seeing right through Ilya’s lie. “He just wants to have a reason to keep thinking you’re an asshole. I tried to tell him I

like it when you tease me. But he just doesn't get it. I think Jackie understands it though, so it won't be long before she gets Hayd to take the stick out his ass." he continued.

"You are avoiding my question. I do not want to talk about Jackie and Pike's sex life, although you make it sound very interesting." Ilya smirked and Shane untangled himself from his boyfriend as he grabbed a pillow to hit him with. Ilya laughed before his face turned serious again. "Pike thinks I am mean to you, and I do not want to be. So I am asking, if I hurt you with my teasing you let me know?"

"And I am telling you that you've never teased me in a way that has hurt me because I know you don't mean it." Shane said as he cuddled up to Ilya again, hugging the pillow he had hit Ilya with close to his lap. Ilya did not miss how he seemed to be trying to make himself smaller, something he had noticed Shane doing when he was uncomfortable in some way.

"But is there anything I say that you would like me to not tease about?" Ilya asked once again, as he put his arm back around Shane's shoulder and used his hand to tilt Shane's head up so he could make eye contact.

"... No I don't think so." Shane said, looking anywhere but into Ilya's eyes. Ilya could feel all of Shane's body tense up as he spoke.

"All these years later and you are still bad liar." Ilya said softly, combing his hand through his boyfriend's soft black hair. He was mapping all the freckles he loved so much, trying to memorise the exact pattern they made. God he loved him so much it actually hurt.

"It's just really not a big deal, I know you mean nothing by it." Shane tried to shimmy out of the tight grip Ilya had on him, unsuccessfully. Ilya needed him close, and Shane's attempt to detangle himself was only half hearted anyway, Ilya could tell he did not actually want him to let go. Shane stopped trying and instead made himself more comfortable in Ilya's arms.

"Yes but I am asking you to let me know." Ilya insisted. Ilya had been unsure about how much validity there was in Hayden's comment going into this. There had been enough for him to think the conversation was worth having, but by now Ilya was sure that Hayden had been right. Even though that was a hard pill to swallow.

Shane looked away from Ilya and out the window. He was quiet for a long time, Ilya could tell he was over thinking. He opened his mouth to say something, only to close it again multiple times. Ilya did not interrupt the silence. He could tell Shane was about to be honest with him finally, he just needed to give him enough space to think of what to say. "I suppose.. I don't really like it when you tease me about food." Shane said finally, tentatively. It felt heavy for some reason, the confirmation that Hayden had been right about this being a sore spot.

Ilya kissed his boyfriend's forehead before he once again tilted Shane's head back so he could look him in the eyes. "Okay. I will stop." Ilya whispered.

"You really don't have to." Shane whispered back, keeping eye contact with Ilya.

“No I do, is there anything more? Do not lie Shane.” Ilya said, his voice a little above the whisper they had just been speaking in.

“... Maybe about Rose Landry? I feel bad enough about the whole ordeal anyway. And you obviously have nothing to be jealous of.” Shane said after a short silence. This one was not as heavy as the last one, and Ilya suspected this was more of a pet peeve than actual hurt. He would stop anyway.

“Hmm.. Anything more?” Ilya asked, kissing Shane's forehead once again. He couldn't help himself.

Shane gave him a smile and said: “You can stop mentioning my weak backhand.” Ilya chuckled, it was clear by the tone of Shane's voice that he was trying to lighten the mood with the recurring and safe joke. His backhand wasn’t even all that weak anymore, Ilya had seen to that.

“Oh but I do not tease you about that, I tell truth!” Ilya said laughing and was promptly hit with another pillow. Twice. Shane was laughing too, and he tried to smooth down Ilya’s hair as the pillow had made it all static. Ilya pulled him close and kissed him, trying to communicate all those things that were so hard to articulate in English but he felt so deep. They kissed lazily for a while, with no expectation of it going any further. They still had another ten days together at the cottage before they had to go back to normal, something both of them were trying very hard to not think about. For now, they had all the time in the world.

They settled back into the comfortable silence that had been there before Ilya started the conversation. Happy to be in each other's arms, content. But Ilya’s mind would not rest. He thought about the heaviness that had stuck around when Shane had said that teasing about his food was in fact a thing that bothered Shane. He thought about how angry Hayden had been. And he thought about how Shane was bordering on obsessive when it comes to what food he can and cannot eat. How the only food he would really eat was either made by himself or his parents. He would eat if Ilya made something for him, but only if he had seen Ilya make it or he would ask a billion questions of what was in it. It had raised some red flags in Ilya’s mind for sure, but he regretted to admit that he wasn’t around Shane enough to know if it was an actual issue. Hayden on the other hand, was around. And Hayden thought it was insensitive to joke about. If both Ilya and Hayden suspected something, that seemed like maybe there was something to it. Ilya wanted to talk about it with Hayden, see what he had noticed. Maybe also Yuna and David, but since Shane seemed okay with the food they cooked, maybe they hadn’t noticed anything. They saw him about as often as Ilya did, maybe a bit less.. But if there was something to it he would definitely talk to them that was for sure. The more Ilya thought about it the more worried he got. He had to say something, now that he started connecting the dots he could no longer ignore the bigger picture that was emerging. He hoped he was wrong but.. He really did not think so.

“Shane?” Ilya asked, just as hesitantly as he had earlier that night. The vulnerable conversations were not over yet.

“Yes, Ilya?” Shane said, tone teasing and a little flirty. He had apparently not picked up on Ilya’s hesitancy, maybe mistaking it for tiredness. In any other situation Ilya would have

jumped on the opportunity to continue flirting, letting one thing lead to another, but he had made his mind up. He was going to have this conversation, or at least try to have it.

“Is there reason why the food teasing hurts?” Ilya said, wincing at the clumsy English delivery. Shane, who had been completely relaxed, tensed up again.

“I mean.. I don't know. It's just something I care a lot about I suppose.” Shane said, very clearly uncomfortable by the turn the conversation had taken all of a sudden. Shane probably thought they had moved past this painful point already. Ilya kissed Shane's forehead again, trying to comfort his boyfriend in any way he could before he said what was on his mind.

“I just. I worry, sometimes. A little bit.” Ilya whispered, taking Shane’s hand in his own. Shane pulled it out of the way and Ilya ached at the loss of contact.

“About what?” Shane tried to shimmy out of their embrace for the second time this night and this time Ilya let him. He wished Shane wouldn’t but he was already putting Shane in an uncomfortable position as is and he feared he wouldn’t get very far if he didn’t let go of Shane in that moment. Even though he could swear it physically hurt him to do so.

Ilya hesitated again. “About you and food. I know I tease, and I mean it when I say I will stop, but I tease because… I want you to realize …is not normal.” he said. Ilya tried to reach out for Shane's hand once again, but Shane just moved his hand further away. For the first time all night there was no part of Ilya touching Shane. Shane refused to look him in the eyes. The silence that followed was probably not that long, but for Ilya it might as well have been a thousand years. “I do not know if I explain correct, I am sorry, I do not know how to have this conversation.” he said hurriedly.

Once again, Shane opened and closed his mouth like he was about to say something multiple times. Finally he said: “Are you worried I have an eating disorder or something?”

Always straight to the point, Ilya thought. He sighed and then said: “Well, yes?”

“No, Ilya, it's nothing like that. I promise.” Shane offered Ilya his hand as he spoke and Ilya took it as if he might die without it. Ilya wanted to pull him close again, but he knew that was not a good idea right now. He was glad for any contact he could have.

“Well you do not eat or think about food like a normal person.” Ilya said after a while, cringing because he used the word normal again.That was not the right word, but he could not find the right one in English.

“Thats because I'm not. I'm an athlete.” Shane answered defensively. Holding Shane’s hand Ilya could tell Shane's heart rate was going up too.

“I am also athlete, I am surrounded by athletes, no one eats like you. Shane, I am not attacking you, please. I am just worried about my boyfriend, ok?” Ilya said, more careful with his words this time. At Ilya’s insistence that he’s just worried he could see Shane deflate, his walls coming down once again and Ilya took the moment in act to pull his boyfriend into a hug.

“Okay.” Shane sighed into Ilya’s shoulder. Ilya could feel Shane’s heart beating a little more calmly than before but still definitely not at a normal rate yet. He hated that he had caused Shane distress. But he wasn’t sure how to have this conversation without any stress, although he was sure he could have done it better.

“Breathe Shane, it is okay. I am sorry I am doing this wrong.” Ilya said, holding Shane tight and stroking his hair again as Shane took deep breaths. They stayed like that for a while, Shane's heartrate was back to normal but Ilya had no desire to let go.

“I'm okay.” Shane said after a while. He pulled away a little and Ilya let him. They were facing each other now, Ilya still had his arms around Shane’s neck. Then Shane moved back closer to Ilya, making their foreheads touch. “What is making you worried? About me?” Shane said, barely a whisper.

“You do not let yourself enjoy things. You get very stressed if you do not know what is in food. And I think you work out too much.” Ilya said, glad that Shane was willing to listen to his concerns. Shane sat up straighter again, but did not completely move away from Ilya. Their legs were still touching, and when Ilya reached out for Shane's hands he did not pull away.

“Work out too much? Ilya, I am a professional hockey player.” Shane said, a little exasperated. Ilya noticed that Shane did not object to his other concerns.

“Yes you are, but you do not eat enough for how much you work out.” Ilya said, letting go of one of Shane's hands in favor of stroking his cheek. Shaned leaned into the touch. Ilya kissed his forehead once again, he really couldn't resist.

“My diet is very healthy, you know I get blood work done every month, it is all perfectly normal.” Shane said, a little defensively. Ilya noted the use of the word normal. And he had known that was coming, in the past when he teased Shane about his diet Shane would always say he was in peak physical condition. Ilya had privately thought it was despite his diet and not because of it, but it did not seem like a wise thing to say this time either. Anyway, his bloodwork had not been perfect last time.

“Not quite true. Results said you were anemic last time, yes?” Ilya said, thinking of the ungodly amount of spinach Shane was currently consuming.

“...Yes. Lots of people are anemic though.” Shane admitted. Ilya wondered if Shane did not realize Ilya had paid attention to that.

“I am sure. But Shane it is not about physical symptoms. It is not, mentally, healthy to be so obsessive over food. I am just worried, возлюбленный.” Ilya explained quietly.

Shane considered what Ilya said for a while. “I'm sorry, me getting defensive probably isn't helping… “ Shane said, looking at his own hands that were being held firmly by Ilya’s once again. Shane's hands were cold, Ilya wasn’t sure if that was usual or not.

“No it is not.” Ilya confirmed. Shane was quiet for a while, quietly thinking about something.

“Well… what would make you worry less?” Shane asked, looking into Ilya’s eyes on his own accord. Ilya huffed in response, he did not think that after this conversation he would ever not worry. He did not say that however.

“Just think about it. And talk to me. About this and other things. Do not let me say things that bother or hurt you. And about the food, maybe talk to someone. Professional.” Ilya said. At Ilya's words about a professional he could see Shane tense up again a little bit.

“I promise I will think about it and I will talk to you. But I really don't think that professional help is necessary, Ilya…” Shane trailed off.

“I know you don't, but think about that too okay?” Ilya insisted. That felt good, he felt he had done some good with this conversation even though it had been a little rocky.

“Okay.” Shane breathed out.

“Okay, I love you.” Ilya gave Shane's hairline a little peck one more time, to emphasize his words.

“I love you too.” Shane said, and it didn't matter how many times Ilya had heard it before, hearing Shane utter those words still made him feel a sense of relief, it was like coming home after a long day. It was the exact same feeling he had felt almost exactly one year ago when they had exchanged those words for the first time. Shane pulled Ilya into a soft kiss, and Ilya felt like he was melting. After the kiss the two of them sat in silence once again. This time however it seemed it was Shane who was deep in thought. Shane took a deep breath and then, very quickly said: “Since we're talking about mental health, how are you? I worry too, you know. ”

Ilya was caught off guard by the question. “I am okey. Do not worry about me.” he answered instinctively. It felt very weird to be on the other end of the conversation. Ilya wasn't prepared to answer honestly.

“Just okay? And that's not happening.” Shane said.

“Yes you worry too much. About me and everything. This is also reason why I think you should talk to professional.” Ilya said. He could tell Shane did not appreciate his attempt at deflection.

“Ilya.” Shane said seriously, and Ilya instantly felt bad.

“I am sorry. I think it is hard to talk about. I really am okay, I promise.” Ilya said. And he believed it too. He was a little worried about moving to Ottawa and what that would do to his mental health, but currently okay really did feel like a good description of his mental state. At least by Ilya standars… which he was aware was maybe not the same as most people. He was starting to feel a little bit like a hypocrite.

“If I promise to talk to you about whether or not I have issues around food, can you promise me you will let me know if you aren’t okay? And that you talk to me about it?” Shane was saying. Ilya knew this was a fair trade but the thought of Shane being aware of the types of

thoughts that Ilya sometimes couldn’t quite suppress… It scared him. Shane was still talking. “Please don't push me away when I ask, okay Ilya? And I think you should also consider talking to someone. Professional.” Shane added. Maybe Shane suspected more than Ilya had thought.

“I will not lie to you Shane, I will find that very hard to do. But I will try. And I will think about it.” Ilya said.

“Thank you.”

End Notes

I dont know how i feel about that ending but it will do. Ilya is not very forthcoming with his own issues in this, i know, but I wanted to focus on Shane a little. In my mind becasue of this conversation both Ilya and Shane start going to theraphy (in Ilyas case a lot earlier than i canon) and are better at communicating with each other during The Long Game due to that. Anyway, hope you enjoyed my 3 am ramblings! Thank you for reading!

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