Mr. Land Leopard

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at https://archiveofourown.org/works/77594646.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Categories:	M/M, Gen
Fandoms:	Heated Rivalry (TV), Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander, Ilya Rozanov, Ottawa Centaurs Team Ensemble (Game Changers), Troy Barrett, Zane Boodram, Evan Dykstra, Luca Haas, Wyatt Hayes, Hudson Williams, Land Leopard
Additional Tags:	Crack, Crack Treated Seriously, Post-Book 6: The Long Game (Game Changers), Autistic Shane Hollander, Ilya Rozanov Loves Shane Hollander, Shane Hollander Loves Ilya Rozanov, Married Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov, Hudson Mildred Williams is Shane Hollander's stage name, a little bit of gaslighting as a treat, Mr. Land Leopard, Ottawa Centaurs (Game Changers), Ilya Rozanov is a Little Shit
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2026-01-13 Words: 3,364 Chapters: 1/1

Mr. Land Leopard

by uaigneach

Summary

In a world where Shane was encouraged to do high school theatre because he was socially awkward. The consequences of this live on the internet forever.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Honestly, Shane did his best to try and forget about it.

He may have known pretty early on that he was going to be a professional hockey player — he'd been in skates since he could walk and every scout or coach that had seen him play tried to recruit him for something or another — but that didn't mean he'd been allowed to slack off in school. His mom, despite being the driving force behind his hockey career, had insisted that he have a backup plan.

With a sport as inherently violent as hockey was, one could never really know when their career ending injury would come. Life would continue after retirement no matter when or how retirement came. Shane had to be prepared for that, loath as he was to admit it.

His mom's idea of getting ahead of that was making sure Shane performed well at school too. If he wasn't at the rink, he was at their local Kumon center studying. His mom insisted he stay in public school too instead of switching to a more flexible home schooling situation like Shane knew other young athletes did.

Shane had never been all that sociable. It always seemed like the only place he actually knew what to do was on the ice. He struggled to make friends or even just talk to people his age. His mom insisted that communication was important both on and off the ice, so public school.

Academically, Shane performed well because of course he did. Socially… not so much.

Some of that could be blamed on his poor attendance due to constantly being pulled out for games or travel. It was even harder to maintain relationships when you were MIA half the time… But the rest was Shane's fault. he just didn't know how to connect with anyone when it wasn't about hockey, didn't know how to talk to people.

It was actually his math teacher who suggested he join the drama club. At first, Shane had balked at the suggestion. It was another extracurricular that he didn't have time for, and what did he know about acting? All he knew was hockey… and math somewhat. But he didn't want to disappoint one of the few teachers who actually seemed to like him, so he'd signed up.

It hadn't been the end of the world like he'd been afraid of. Sure, it had been a bit awkward at first, but not any worse than when he first joined a new team and needed to learn how everyone played and clicked together. In a way, drama club was actually very nice. There were scripts and directions on how to act as this exciting new character that was not Shane.

They never did anything too serious — no plays or anything shown in front of a live audience — but they'd had fun making some short films. His name wasn't attached to anything that went online (pretty much everyone involved having chosen some kind of actor/stage name) and honestly, Shane didn't give much thought to it. It was just something he'd done during high school.

Then he'd graduated and been drafted. After that, his life revolved around hockey and whatever sponsorships or ads his mom managed to secure on his behalf. It diversified his portfolio for income streams and made sure his face was everywhere. He wouldn't be swept under the rug just because he was Asian-Canadian. The more unforgettable he was the better.

It wasn't like doing the shoots was all that bad. He was usually given some free shit, and he had gotten somewhat used to being in front of a camera. He knew how the process went even if these shoots were definitely much higher budget and higher production value. It meant he actually looked kind of good so he really couldn't complain.

In a way, his… thing with Ilya Rozanov helped with his visibility too. Shane wasn't just one of the best players in the league, he was the rival of his only real competition. They'd been positioned as rivals their whole careers. When one was mentioned, the other was inevitably brought up. Of course, no one knew that they were secretly meeting up to fuck every time they were in the same city.

Well at least they hadn't known until they were 11 years in and got outed by a fucking FanMail video of all things.

Shane's life had changed a lot of ways since then. He was out to the world and married to Ilya. He was no longer the captain of the Montreal Voyagers and instead now had an A on his Ottawa Centaurs jersey. It was a lot to get used to, but it wasn't a bad change.

He hadn't truly realized how much hiding who he was and who he loved was stressing him out, how much it was hurting Ilya. With the big secret out of the way — albeit with the finer details (like exactly how long they'd been a thing) kept private — Shane felt lighter. It came with its own challenges, but it was worth it. The burden not so heavy.

He'd completely forgotten about what he'd done in high school and how he had another thing he'd rather the public didn't find out about him. It was practically a whole lifetime ago.

In his defense, he hadn't thought the films being found was even a genuine possibility. It was so long ago. They'd been uploaded on early YouTube and weren't exactly short films that the masses were watching.

He'd arrived later to the rink for practice than Ilya. As the team's captain, he'd had some things to talk over with the coaches and Shane had for the first time in a long time, actually wanted to indulge in a slow morning. Things had been going okay. Shane had had a few practices now with the new team and like Ilya had assured him, they were all good guys. It was still a big change, especially with how he'd left things with his last team after spending 10 years there and well… the whole being out thing.

Shane had never really done well with change, but things were better now. He was getting used to it.

He was even feeling good enough to not show up his typical 45 minutes early and had instead settled for a much more anxiety inducing 25 minutes. Still earlier than many of the guys, but Shane was not the first in the locker room.

Which was fine. It wasn't like it was a superstition for Shane or anything. More just a leftover habit that he'd taken with him from Montreal. He was supposed to be proving to himself that changes in routine were not in fact the end of the world like his brain was trying to convince him it was.

This meant that when he arrived in the locker room, there was a small group of the guys that were already there. They were in various states of dress; Troy was nearly fully changed while Wyatt hadn't even started yet. They were all gathered around Luca Haas on a bench, the kid holding out his phone so that everyone in the group could see. The facial expressions ranged too; between amused and shocked.

"Hey guys," Shane called, dropping his bag off in his cubby. Shane wouldn't say that his team in Montreal had been boring, but they certainly had nothing on the energy that Ottawa brought. They were chaotic and loud — same as Montreal had once been — but it was lighter. Less weighed down with expectations and more just… fun.

"Shane!"

"Step-Captain!"

"Shane, you're late!"

A chorus of voices greeted him as they all looked up like dogs that had just noticed a squirrel.

"I'm still early," Shane shot back reflexively.

"Yes," Zane said, planting his hands on his hips. "But you are usually the first person here!"

"I just had a bit of a lie in," Shane replied.

"Okay, what have you done with the real Shane Hollander?"

"Fuck off," he rolled his eyes. "What are you even doing?"

The clump of guys all glanced at each other before seemingly coming to a decision.

"Shane, you *have* to see this!" Troy crowed. "This guy looks exactly like you."

Shane frowned, but he gathered closer and Luca held out the phone to him. The video was paused but Shane recognized it almost instantly.

That was his face on screen. Not from anything even vaguely related to hockey or any of the various commercials and ads his mom had secured deals for, much to his mortification. Nope. He probably could have dealt with it if it was. Shane was a very well known hockey player and those ads really had been plastered… everywhere. He knew that a lot of the younger guys on the team had looked up to him back when they were in juniors, which while embarrassing,

was flattering. He'd gotten a fair amount of practice at navigating that type of interaction when he'd still been in Montreal so it wasn't that foreign at least.

But it wasn't that. Instead it was (horrifyingly) one of the short films that he'd done with his stupid high school drama club that he'd thought had been lost in the ether. He now realized that that was pretty short sighted of him.

What especially didn't help matters was that he instantly knew which short film it was. It was the stupid superhero skit where he was dressed in a stupid tiny leopard print top with fucking whiskers drawn on his face. Jesus Christ.

"What?" he said dumbly.

At least he could be thankful that his default reaction to things was to keep his face and voice neutral. Most people didn't notice the hint of panic or surprise that crept in. Couldn't really tell the difference between that and his normal monotone. Small mercies.

"My friends and I were doing one of those internet rabbit holes?" Luca said, only a tad bit hesitantly. Despite no longer being a rookie, the kid was still somewhat hesitant around Shane despite Shane's best (albeit awkward) efforts. "We ended up on old YouTube videos and we found this."

"He looks *just* like you," Zane crowed. "It's incredible."

"I think his name in the credits is Hudson Mildred Williams," Luca added. "There's more videos on the same channel. It looks like a school thing?"

Zane just laughed. "Whatever it is is hilarious! Can you imagine *Shane* acting like this?"

Of course, that statement made the rest of the little group crack up at the mere suggestion. Shane was abruptly very glad for the fact that his… persona for the hockey world was very boring.

"Well, you know what they say," Shane said, hoping that he didn't sound as awkward as he felt. "There's at least 7 people who look identical to you in the world."

"Doppelgangers," Troy agreed. "Still crazy to think that it is *that* identical though. Like you could be twins."

Shane was honestly incredibly surprised and incredibly lucky that no one had even suggested that Hudson Mildred Williams was actually him.

"Are you saying that just because we're both wasian?"

The words had come out of his mouth before he'd even realized that he was thinking that. He almost instantly slapped his hand over his mouth; as if that did him any good. He'd still said it.

Troy looked mortified, staring at Shane with wide eyes. "Dude."

There really was no good way to dig himself out of this particular hole.

"I'm just saying," Shane replied, a little helpless.

And because the universe seemed to take *some* degree of pity on him, that was when Ilya made his entrance.

"What is this?" Ilya asked, walking towards the clump that they'd formed. "Everyone is too lazy to get dressed?"

"Cap, cap, you *have* to see this," Evan gasped, hand pressed to his chest. "Luca found this *amazing* video."

Ilya quirked an eyebrow, but he did entertain his team's antics — much to Shane's chagrin. He rarely wished that Ilya was a more strict captain (the man could get pretty intense after all) but it was moments like this — moments where Shane was inevitably embarrassed in some way — that he really wished that he was. No matter how entertained the guys were with their shenanigans, he knew that one word from Ilya and they'd all be scrambling to get on the ice for practice.

Still, Ilya did like to indulge them. Claimed it was good for team morale.

Luca held out his phone for Ilya to take, which he did. His eyebrows furrowed in momentary confusion as he looked at the screen.

"What is this?" Ilya repeated.

Instead of saying anything else, Troy just leaned forward and tapped the screen, the video unpausing.

"Listen, Miley Cyrus. You call me gay one more time, I'll drag my wrecking balls across your face."

Shane's teenage voice practically echoed in the locker room, or maybe that was just Shane catastrophizing again. Jeez, had he really sounded like that? He didn't remember sounding like that.

The tinny sound coming from the phone speaker was soon overshadowed by the guys cracking up again — Evan even bent in half he was laughing so hard — but Shane's focus was entirely on Ilya's face.

As the video played, Ilya's eyebrows had steadily climbed his face until they nearly touched his hairline. His eyes didn't once stray from the video, not even when everyone else began laughing. There were more sounds from the phone, but Shane couldn't really hear it over the way Zane was practically barking his laugh directly into Shane's ears.

"That's my favourite line," Zane said. "The delivery? It's so beautiful."

"Can you imagine Shane ever saying something like this?" Wyatt added. "I think he would faint when confronted with the script."

Shane rubbed a hand over the back of his neck, trying to smile genuinely and knowing he missed the mark. "I've had some pretty strange commercial scripts over the years," he joked. "But this… this is something else."

"It's not even the craziest one," Luca added quietly.

"It's just so perfect."

Ilya's eyes finally lifted from the screen and moved to meet Shane's own.

Shane had known Ilya for a pretty long time now — since the both of them were teenagers (and Shane was still in that stupid high school drama club) — and he'd like to think that that gave him a lot of practice at reading what Ilya was thinking.

Ilya had a fairly expressive face. Sure, his resting face was pretty severe, but he didn't shy away from being animated. Hadn't really since he was a rookie and still getting comfortable with English. He wasn't like Shane who was a lot more closed off, a lot more media trained. Still, it was another way to hide vulnerability, and this time, like Shane, that was revealed in his eyes. Shane had spent a lot of time looking there to try and understand what Ilya was *really* saying.

And that was why he was mostly confident that Ilya had clocked that it wasn't just some teenager who looked an awful lot like Shane. The boy in the video actually *was* Shane.

Just great.

All those years ago he'd told Ilya that his literal nightmare had been his dad walking in on them. Getting outed even.

This was somehow worse.

"And you all think that this is some… look alike?" Ilya asked, his distinct, blunt voice breaking through the raucous laughter.

"Well it couldn't actually be Shane," Tanner chimed in helpfully. "It's a high school project. Says so in the description."

"Hey!" Shane protested. "I went to high school!"

"But did you finish?"

"Yeah, weren't you drafted before that?"

"I finished!" Shane replied indignantly. "I'm educated."

Ilya rolled his eyes. "Yes, we know. Perfect, pretty Hollander. Highest hockey IQ in the league."

"Ilya."

"What?" Ilya said, throwing his hands up in the air. "I am complimenting you."

"Maybe we should have Harris reach out," Zane joked. "Get the guy to come to a game for a photo op."

"Is he even Canadian?" Shane wondered aloud, like he wasn't the person in question.

"Unclear," Zane said. "But who would pass up on a chance to come to a game to see The Shane Hollander play?"

"Fuck off," Shane grumbled, wandering away from the group to continue to get ready for practice. "We should all really be getting on the ice by now."

"Relax, Holly," Troy said. "We're still missing like, half the team."

"No, no, my Shane is right," Ilya cut in, although he sounded half hearted. "We must get going. We want to win the cup this year."

"And that starts with practice," Shane chimed in, managing to keep his wincing to internal.

The guys groaned and grumbled like children, but they did disperse back to their own cubbies.

"Yeah, yeah, can't let your husband regret coming to the team."

"Oi!"

Shane had genuinely thought that he'd gotten away with it. They'd finished practice like normal. Shane had gone home early to go take care of Anya while Ilya discussed something with Coach Weibe. Then Shane made them a nice dinner and then went to bed. A perfectly normal day.

Shane himself had almost forgotten about the whole fiasco.

Since Shane had cooked, Ilya did the dishes, meaning Shane was the first to head up to bed. He stripped methodically, climbing into bed with a heavy sigh.

It didn't take long for Ilya to join him, grinning as he stripped. Shane welcomed him with open arms, grinning as Ilya dove in and pulled him into a deep kiss. No matter how long they'd been together, how many times they fucked, it always felt exciting. Even when they took things slower, focusing more on kissing and just *being together* in the way that they got to be now, there was still those electric butterflies in his gut.

He smiled into the kiss, his hands flying up to bury themselves in Ilya's curls, just luxuriating in the soft feeling. He got to have this.

Ilya pulled back, grinning as Shane tried to chase after him. He looked down at Shane, fondness palpable in his gaze. There was also a spark of mischief.

"Is Mr. Land Leopard going to make me purr?"

Shane froze for a second, the smile slipping off of his face. "What."

Ilya's grin grew. "That is what you say in the video, yes? Mr. Land Leopard."

Shane shoved Ilya off of him, the other man landing on the bed with an audible 'oof'.

"Shut the fuck up," he said reflexively. Then he groaned, covering his face with his hands. "You watched the video."

"I watched the video," Ilya agreed. "You were a very cute teenager. Very funny," he continued. "Not boring at all! How could you have hidden this from me?"

Shane groaned louder, rolling over so that he could also bury his face in the pillow. Ilya rolled over onto his back, pinning him to the bed and ensuring that he could not escape.

"It was just a high school thing," he grumbled, his voice mostly muffled by the pillow. "It's not a big deal."

"The YouTube channel has more."

"Don't you dare."

Ilya laughed again. "Shane," he said gently, reaching around to try and coax Shane into unburying his face. "Come on, is funny."

"It's embarrassing."

Shane didn't really fight all that hard, letting Ilya first pull his hands out and then roll him over. Shane met his gaze, only semi reluctantly.

"What is so embarrassing?" Ilya asked. "You were very creative, no?"

Shane sighed. "I only joined the club because my teacher was concerned at my lack of friends."

Ilya snorted, burying his face in Shane's neck. He settled more of his weight onto Shane, but that was fine. He just let it happen.

"See? Cute."

"I never thought that anyone would find it."

"Internet is forever."

"Yeah, Ilya. I know."

Ilya pressed a kiss to his neck. "Fine, fine. I will stop."

Shane let out a sigh, bringing his hand up to run his fingers through Ilya's hair again.

"Mildred?"

"Fuck *off*."

End Notes

idk how happy I am with how this turned out. maybe I'll rewrite it at some point. maybe I'll add a sequel.

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