

The Art of the Game

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The Art of the Game

by [FromParishWithLove](#)

Summary

Shane Hollander has no reason to own the Ilya Rozanov cover of the MHL PlayStation game and Ilya calls him out on it.

Notes

I'm back with a Hollanov story!!!!

Let it be known that I was, am and continue to be the greatest advocate for the Hayden Pike phonecall scene. I was beside myself when it made it into the show and I think it's one of *the* best intimate Hollanov scenes we have.

That being said, the little moment where we see the boys playing PlayStation together before the call was so sweet and boyfriend coded that it led me to writing this piece. It's my own personal headcanon and I'm sticking with it!

Your kudos and comments are always greatly appreciated and I hope you enjoy!!!

“I’m on the cover of the fucking game!”

*

It wasn’t until the next morning, as Shane carefully nudged the abandoned PlayStation controller off of a coaster to make room for a steaming mug of coffee that Ilya brought it up.

The Russian was sprawled at one end of the couch, looking decidedly familiar in the space despite only having been introduced to it a matter of days ago. Soft morning light dappled his skin – once again he’d dispensed with the need for a shirt, not that Shane was complaining – and his curls were still mussed from sleep. He looked like a renaissance painting and it sent a thrill down Shane’s spine just to look at him.

They were really *here*, at the cottage, with nothing but time stretching out luxuriously before them.

Shane could feel Ilya watching him as he navigated the coffee table.

It was easy to imagine they were back on the ice; his infamous arch rival studying him with the same unwavering intensity. Shane wasn’t entirely sure if Ilya was even aware he was doing it. It had just become something of a habit over the last nine years. Wherever Shane went, Ilya’s eyes unconsciously followed.

He set the cup down, turning it until the handle faced Ilya before retreating to the other end of the couch. He sank into the cushions, pulling out his phone as he did so.

Ilya’s attention remained fixed on the table. He didn’t reach for his coffee.

Shane reluctantly skimmed through a couple of sports articles his mom had sent him a few days earlier. Despite being a professional sportsman, he had very little interest in the wider world of sport. Hockey was the only game he *really* cared about but Yuna Hollander would be damned if her son wasn’t clued up on all the latest news from the sporting community.

Summer was almost always a drag.

“Why do you have my cover?”

“What?” Shane glanced up. He registered the question but was unable to make sense of it straight away.

“The game. The PlayStation game. Why do you have my cover, Hollander?” Ilya’s expression was impassive but there was the hint of something knowing in his voice.

Shane fought the urge to avoid his eye. Instead he feigned ignorance, shrugging as he said, “Everyone has that cover.”

“No. No that is not true. You and I both know it.”

And they did.

When the MHL had first announced the collaboration with PlayStation there had been a constant buzz on the ice, players speculating about which of them would be featured in the game and who would make the coveted spot on the cover art. It had come as no surprise when Scott Hunter was shortlisted but Shane still remembered the shock of seeing his own name thrown into the mix.

His mom had been very keen to capitalise on the opportunity immediately. “Just think how many young kids will want this game! And it’ll be great exposure for your sponsors too, Shane! ”

He’d let her talk, zoning out as he’d studied the other names in contention.

Ilya Rozanov – Boston Raiders.

If Shane had made the list, of course Ilya had made the list.

Shane often found himself wondering whether either of them had actually been nominated on merit – despite being two of the best players in the league - or whether it was just another ruse to keep the media outlets speculating about the longevity and ferocity of their fabled rivalry.

The whole thing exhausted him.

In the end PlayStation had settled on releasing three separate covers in an attempt to appease the fans – Hunter, Hollander and Rozanov. The Metros had each received an advanced copy of the Hollander cover and Hayden had delighted in forcing Shane to sign every single one of them in the locker room after practice one day.

That night his own copy of the game had found its way into the top draw of his trophy cabinet where it still remained, untouched.

There had been an attempt to drum up further animosity between him and Rozanov during the run up to the holidays; various gaming stores ran competitions to see which cover they could sell more copies of. JJ became way too invested in the whole thing, purchasing a further eighteen copies of the game just to push Shane’s numbers up.

Luckily the hype was unsustainable. Advancements in technology saw the game fall into obscurity pretty quickly. Of course hockey fans were still engrossed but Shane’s time in the wider public spotlight was mercifully brief. Occasionally he’d still catch sight of himself in a shop window but for the most part it seemed that Ilya’s cover had circulated most successfully.

Now, as he deliberately made a show of returning his attention back to his phone, he felt the Russian lean forward beside him. Ilya was attempting to catch his eye.

Shane felt the heat rising in his cheeks.

“Shane...” Ilya wheedled. He wasn’t going to let this drop.

Shane huffed out a breath. Had he really been so stupid to think he was off the hook?

He'd been waiting for the realisation to dawn on Ilya during yesterday's game but thanks to Hayden interrupting – and Ilya's insatiable need – PlayStation cover art was the last thing on either of their minds. In fact they'd barely even made it past the loading screen.

Shane hadn't been able to keep himself from reaching for Ilya after he hung up the phone. He just looked so smug, that shit eating grin silently presenting a challenge that Shane was powerless to resist.

There had been a race to see who could remove their clothes the fastest. Of course Ilya had cheated, distracting Shane with messy, open-mouthed kisses as he shimmied out of his shorts. But Shane had been playing this game with Ilya for almost a decade now and he quickly gained the upper hand, trapping the Russian between his strong thighs and pressing him down into the couch cushions. Ilya feigned protest but made no real attempt to dislodge Shane. In fact he'd dug his fingers into Shane's ass cheeks and dragged him closer, much to the other man's delight.

It had been handsy and ridiculous, laughter rumbling through the room like thunder.

Ilya had insisted they go outside after that so the TV had been abandoned and the PlayStation game along with it. At some point during their rough-housing the box had been knocked to the floor, where it remained half hidden beneath the couch until Shane set it back on the shelf before joining Ilya in bed that night.

But now Ilya was reaching for it.

Shane shot to his feet, snatching up the box with the same speed and precision he was famed for on the ice and protectively clutched it to his chest.

The superimposed image of Ilya peaked over Shane's forearm, staring down his real-life counterpart with unrestrained ferocity.

Ilya just stared back, mouth parted.

"I... I bought my own copy," Shane finally announced into the silence.

"With my face on."

"With your face on." Shane agreed shakily.

He'd been flying out of Boston after another away game against the Raiders when he'd purchased the game. They'd hooked up the night before in Ilya's apartment and while it provided the release Shane had been looking for, he'd been left... wanting. It had been like that for so many years and for so many years they'd suffered. Silently for the most part. Separately.

He'd been skirting the crowds at duty free when he'd noticed the mannequin dressed in Raiders colours. Most of his teammates had slowed to peruse the bottles of expensive aftershave and discounted liquor but Shane didn't have the bandwidth to even feign interest.

Instead he'd made his way over to the athletics outlet at the end of the walkway; flags, pennants and posters filled the small space, celebrating the best of Boston's sports teams.

Shane adjusted his ballcap, pulling it down lower as he crossed the threshold. He glanced back over his shoulder to make sure Hayden wasn't looking for him.

For some reason he felt like he was committing a crime by entering the store, as if just being within touching distance of Raiders merchandise would have the whole world jumping to conclusions about him and Rozanov. He had to remind himself that to anyone else he was just a guy in a sports outlet. It was hardly front page news.

He ducked past rails of gym wear, a display of running shoes, protein powders and creatine bars until he found what he'd been subconsciously looking for.

A multitude of miniature Ilya Rozanov's stared him down from a gaming display tucked in the back corner of the store. Shane felt something in his chest squeeze as he studied the image. Everything from Ilya's stance to the set of his jaw was familiar to Shane. How many times had they faced off with one another over the years, Rozanov regarding him with the exact same look of determined complacency? It was as if, even before the first puck drop, the Russian knew he'd already won.

Shane couldn't stop the fond smile from creeping onto his lips as he pressed two fingers to the front of the box.

He stood like that for a full minute before remembering where he was. He dropped his hand, starting towards the exit but he only made it a few feet before he found himself back in front of the display. He snatched up a copy of the game and carried it over to the counter before he could talk himself out of it.

It was stupid. If anyone recognised him - if one of his teammates found him - he'd have a hard time explaining himself. But he couldn't bring himself to leave the game behind.

He furtively glanced around for onlookers. No one was watching him.

A bored looking assistant rang up his purchase, only sparing him a cursory glance as he handed over his card.

"Raiders fan?"

"Yeah, I guess." Shane had said and was surprised to find there was some truth to his answer.

"You don't have to lie," the kid said with a smirk. "Nobody buys this version of the game because they like hockey. That's what the Hunter cover is for."

"Huh?" Shane felt like he was missing something obvious.

"C'mon dude!" The assistant threw him a conspiratorial glance, tapping the image of Rozanov meaningfully before sliding the game across the counter to him.

Shane picked it up, acutely aware his hands were shaking but the assistant didn't spare him a second glance as he ducked out from behind the counter and disappeared into the back room.

"What the..." Shane huffed out under his breath. Dressing incognito might have prevented him from being recognised as Stanley Cup winner Shane Hollander but it had done nothing to disguise his painfully apparent gay agenda. Excellent.

Maybe he needed to consider hiring a personal stylist.

Shane shrugged off his rucksack and was in the process of tucking the game inside when he heard a familiar grunt of disapproval.

"Urgh yuck. Imagine having to work here and getting stared down by Rozanov every fucking day."

Shane straightened hurriedly, heat rising in his cheeks but Hayden didn't seem to notice; he was too busy messing up the display "And you thought you had it bad," Hayden threw over his shoulder as he flipped another box round, efficiently hiding the image of Ilya from view, "At least you only have to face off against him every few months!"

Shane forced a smile that felt more like a wince and hastily changed the subject, "Have they announced the gate number yet?"

"What?" Hayden said distractedly, "Oh yeah! 56B." He stepped back, admiring his handiwork before saying, "It's at the other end of the terminal."

"Typical," Shane rolled his eyes and fell into step beside Hayden as they exited the store.

His bag seemed to weigh heavier on his shoulders, as though he was actually carrying the weight of a fully grown Russian hockey player on his back. But despite his discomfort, he felt oddly calm. And when he finally settled himself on the plane, rucksack wedged under the seat in front, he found himself reaching down under the pretence of searching for his headphones just so he could touch the cover reassuringly.

Now, with the revelation hanging in the air between them, Shane felt ridiculous. Why hadn't he hidden the game before he'd picked Ilya up from the airport? More importantly, why had he even bought it in the first place? He should've thrown it away or kept it at his apartment in Montreal or -

The smile that split Ilya's face was so radiant that Shane had to physically blink it away, as though he'd been left staring into the sun for several long minutes. Even when he closed his eyes he could still see that smile. It was incandescent.

And when he opened them again his entire field of vision was Ilya. Ilya with his nose practically pressed to Shane's, a hand on the nape of his neck, eyes boring into his.

"You bought my cover Hollander." Ilya's breath skimmed over his lips, tantalising as a kiss.

It hadn't been a question but Shane found himself nodding all the same.

“You wanted to fucking own me? That is hot.”

“I didn’t... I just - Fuck!” He swore as Ilya buried his face in the side of his neck, teeth dragging over sensitive skin.

Shane had never thought of it as something possessive before. The idea that he could stake his claim over Ilya Rozanov of all people was blowing his mind a little. But not as much as the man himself.

He groaned as Ilya licked at his pulse point, one hand snaking into his hair, the other already toying with the waistband of his sweatpants.

The PlayStation game fell to the floor between them as Shane grabbed for Ilya, dizzy with relief and desire.

Neither of them bothered to pick it up.

Ilya crowded him against the far wall, narrowly avoiding knocking the TV over in his pursuit of pleasure. His hands were everywhere, his mouth hot and persistent. Shane marvelled at the feel of Ilya pressed against him; the other man was already hard but he batted Shane’s hand away when he reached for him. Ilya seemed content to worship every inch of Shane’s body with his lips, humming his satisfaction against his skin. Each time the sensation sent a thrill ricocheting through Shane’s bones, threatening to shake him apart. Luckily he was well and truly pinned by the weight of the Russian otherwise he was certain his legs would’ve given way beneath him.

He gasped as Ilya nipped at his ear lobe.

“You own me Shane. I’m all yours.”

The hair on the back of his neck was standing on end, goosebumps rising along his arms despite the heat.

“Ilya,” he breathed as Ilya peppered his cheek with noisy, obnoxious kisses, “If this is what you’re like now, what are you going to do when I buy your jersey next?”

The loss of Ilya’s touch almost made him whimper.

The other man had recoiled, standing so far away that even when Shane stretched out a hand to him he remained out of reach.

He fixed Shane with a look so fierce that Shane actually gulped. His knees were shaking.

“No.” he said, “I will burn every shitty replica.”

Shane’s mouth fell open at the ferocity in his tone. The sun, innocently slanting through the windows, set him ablaze. He looked like a warrior about to declare war, swearing to raise kingdoms to the ground.

He stalked back towards Shane, planting a hand on his chest and shoving him back against the exposed bricks, “When you wear jersey Hollander, it will be mine.”

And then he smirked – a slow, wicked curling of his lips - and Shane knew he was done for.

“Fuck me,” was all the response he could manage, needy and breathless with wanting.

He didn’t have to ask twice.

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