# Hands off

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# Hands off

by wolfsbanex

Summary

> “Teammates,” Taylor echoed, his gaze drifting. Slowly, deliberately, to the ring on Ilya’s left hand. He did not look away immediately. He let the silence stretch until it became noticeable.
>
> Shane felt the first flicker of unease then—not jealousy, not yet, but something colder. A sense of being assessed.

Notes

> come explore the Jealous Shane Agenda with me.

See the end of the work for more notes

The first snowfall of November came quietly to Ottawa, not with the dramatic sweep of a storm but with a patient, deliberate hush, as though the sky itself had decided to lower its voice. By morning, the city had been remade in pale white—sidewalks softened, parked cars rounded into gentle shapes, the hard geometry of concrete and glass blurred into something almost tender. Snow clung to the iron railings outside their townhouse and gathered in the crooks of bare branches along the street, frosting them in fragile lace.

When Shane pulled back the curtains, the light that filtered in was diffused and pearled, turning the kitchen tiles silver and the air faintly luminous. For a fleeting moment, he felt as if the world had been scrubbed clean overnight—every mistake buried, every bruise concealed beneath that forgiving layer.

Ilya was already awake.

He stood in the kitchen in gray sweats that hung low on his hips, hair still tousled from sleep, broad shoulders cut into silhouette by the pale glow from the window above the sink. Steam curled upward from his mug, drifting past his jaw in soft spirals. He stirred his coffee with slow, absent motions, the spoon tapping porcelain in a gentle, rhythmic chime. There was something deceptively relaxed in the line of his body—weight balanced evenly, muscles at ease yet coiled beneath the surface. Even at rest, he carried himself like something powerful that had chosen, consciously, not to strike.

Shane lingered in the doorway longer than he meant to.

He had been watching Ilya like this for years now—watching him as if he might vanish if not observed carefully enough, as if the life they had built together might dissolve the moment Shane blinked. Even married—especially married—there were mornings when disbelief crept in around the edges of his certainty. Rivalry had once defined them; tension had once been their oxygen. Now there were rings on their fingers—brushed platinum bands that caught the light when they moved their hands—and a mortgage, and matching travel schedules, and the quiet domestic rituals that came with shared mornings.

They had been married two years. Teammates for three.

The Ottawa Centaurs had been a risk that the league dissected for months. Ilya had signed first, leaving behind everything he had constructed in Boston with a decisiveness that had stunned reporters. Shane had followed a year later, and the hockey world had erupted in equal parts outrage and fascination. Rivals turned linemates. Enemies turned husbands. Management had capitalized on it shamelessly—co-captains by the second season, dual press conferences, jerseys stitched with both their numbers side by side.

And somehow, against the odds and the noise, it had worked.

They were better together than apart. The ice seemed to open for them in ways it never had before. Off the ice, too, they moved through space with a familiarity so ingrained it was almost instinctive—hands brushing in passing, shoulders aligning without thought.

“You’re staring,” Ilya said without turning, voice still thick with sleep.

Shane smiled, stepping forward. “You like it.”

A faint snort. Then Ilya glanced back over his shoulder, and his eyes—clear and startling even in low light—were softer than they ever were at practice. “I like it when you stare for good reasons,” he replied. “Not when you’re planning something.”

Shane crossed the kitchen and wrapped his arms around Ilya’s waist, pressing his cheek between his shoulder blades. The warmth of him seeped into Shane’s chest, steady and grounding. “I’m not planning,” he murmured. “I’m appreciating.”

“Appreciate after coffee,” Ilya said, though he leaned back into the embrace without hesitation.

They stood that way for a long time, snow drifting past the window in lazy spirals, the coffee machine humming like a distant engine. In that quiet, the rest of the world felt impossibly far away—no cameras, no analysts, no expectations heavy on their shoulders. Just breath and warmth and the soft creak of settling wood.

Training camp had begun the week before. The Centaurs were coming off a playoff run that had ended in the conference finals, and the city’s optimism was sharp-edged, expectant. The roster had shifted—veterans gone, trades made, rookies called up with fresh contracts and brighter dreams than experience.

“You meeting the new kid today?” Ilya asked eventually.

“Which one?”

“The winger. Eighty-three. Management won’t shut up about him.”

Shane searched his memory. “Moreau, right?”

“Taylor Moreau.”

The name meant nothing then. It carried no weight, no omen.

Shane tightened his hold slightly. “He’s on your line?”

“For now.”

“Lucky him.”

Ilya’s mouth curved faintly. “We’ll see.”

If there had been a warning in that moment, it was too subtle to notice.

—

Taylor Moreau was all angles and contained energy when Shane first saw him in the locker room—twenty years old and still wearing the look of someone who had stepped into a world he had studied from afar. His build was lean in that unfinished way young players often were, as though he were still negotiating with his own frame. Dark hair fell into his eyes when he bent to tie his skates, fingers quick and precise.

When Ilya walked in, Taylor's posture changed.

It was almost imperceptible, a straightening of the spine, a fractional widening of the eyes—but Shane saw it. Awe flared first, bright and unguarded. Then something else slid beneath it. Something sharper. Measuring.

"Good morning," Taylor said smoothly. "Sir."

Ilya paused, one brow arching. "Sir?"

A flash of a smile. "Habit."

"We're teammates," Ilya replied evenly. "No sir."

"Teammates," Taylor echoed, his gaze drifting. Slowly, deliberately, to the ring on Ilya's left hand. He did not look away immediately. He let the silence stretch until it became noticeable.

Shane felt the first flicker of unease then—not jealousy, not yet, but something colder. A sense of being assessed.

—

It began subtly.

In video sessions, Taylor leaned forward with intent focus, dissecting Ilya's movements frame by frame.

"Pause," he'd say, voice respectful but assured. "Watch the way he shifts weight before the cut. If I time my acceleration to that, we create a seam here."

He spoke not to Coach, but to Ilya.

As though they were already a pair.

In drills, he anticipated passes before they were called. He drifted instinctively into Shane's usual lanes during transitions, forcing adjustments that were small enough to seem incidental, disruptive enough to be felt. When he intercepted a puck meant for Shane, he offered a mild shrug.

"Misread."

It wasn't.

During one break, Taylor reached out and adjusted the strap on Ilya's elbow pad without asking.

"It was twisted," he said.

Ilya flexed his arm once. "I would have fixed it."

Taylor's smile was faint. "I know."

Shane's stomach tightened at the quiet familiarity in that exchange—the assumption of closeness.

-

The first real shift came during a team dinner after a home win.

Shane excused himself to take a call outside. When he returned, he saw Taylor in his seat.

In Shane's seat.

Close to Ilya. Too close.

The team was laughing at something Taylor had said. Ilya's expression was relaxed, engaged.

"You were saying?" Ilya prompted.

Taylor leaned back casually, one arm draped along the back of Ilya's chair.

"I was just asking about your offseason training," he said. "Thought maybe I could join you next summer. Learn properly."

Shane stepped up behind them. "He already has a training partner."

Taylor looked up at him slowly.

"Of course," he said smoothly. "I didn't mean to intrude."

But he didn't move.

Ilya noticed the tension then. His hand slid to Shane's thigh under the table, grounding.

Taylor's gaze dropped to the contact.

And something dark flickered there.

-

Taylor improved fast.

Too fast.

He stayed late after practice, but not with the open eagerness of a starstruck rookie. He asked precise questions. Requested video clips. Broke down defensive structures with an intensity that bordered on obsession.

“You read the weak side before anyone else,” Taylor said one evening, circling something on the tablet screen. “That’s why they trust you to drive the line.”

Ilya shrugged. “Experience.”

Taylor tilted his head. “Or instinct.”

Shane watched from the doorway.

When Taylor glanced up and noticed him, he didn’t look embarrassed.

He smiled.

It wasn’t warm.

—

Media day sharpened the edge further.

Under the glare of studio lights, Taylor stood beside Ilya against the Centaurs backdrop, answering questions about chemistry and the future of the franchise.

“Some connections are instinctive,” Taylor said, tone easy. “It doesn’t matter how long you’ve known each other. Sometimes you just see the game the same way.”

Shane watched from across the room, feeling the weight of that sentence settle into his chest like a stone.

It wasn’t what was said.

It was what was implied.

When Taylor stepped down, he brushed past Shane deliberately.

“You don’t mind,” he murmured. “It’s good for the team.”

Shane met his eyes. “Be careful.”

“Of what?”

“Confusing attention for importance.”

Taylor’s smile didn’t falter. “History fades,” he said softly.

—

The antagonism grew bolder.

In the weight room, Taylor slid into Shane's rack mid-set.

"You're slower off the mark this year," he observed casually.

Shane lowered the bar with measured control. "Concerned?"

"Just competitive."

In scrimmages, Taylor called louder for passes, cutting across Shane's lines with calculated precision.

-

Taylor started feeding the press subtle lines.

"Playing with Ilya is incredible," he told a reporter, voice bright. "He pushes me to be better every shift. Honestly, I think we've got something special developing."

The clip circulated.

Commentators speculated about "chemistry." About "the future of the franchise." About how "youth and experience" made a dynamic pairing.

Shane watched it alone in the hotel room.

The knock at the door came minutes later.

Taylor stood there.

"Can we talk?" he asked.

Shane didn't invite him in.

"What do you want?"

Taylor's expression shifted—dropping the polite façade.

"You're in my way," he said calmly.

The bluntness stole Shane's breath.

"Excuse me?"

"Ilya's game is evolving," Taylor continued. "He needs someone who can keep up long-term. Someone who doesn't rely on history."

"You think that's you?"

"I know it is."

Shane felt his pulse pound in his ears. "You're twenty."

“And you’re comfortable,” Taylor replied. “Comfortable gets complacent.”

There it was.

Not a crush.

A challenge.

“You think you can just…replace me?” Shane asked.

Taylor’s eyes were cold now. Focused.

“I don’t have to replace you,” he said softly. “I just have to prove I’m indispensable.”

He stepped back then, polite smile sliding into place like armor.

“See you at practice, CoCaptain.”

—

Shane didn’t tell Ilya that night.

He wanted to. The words burned in his throat. But something stubborn and wounded kept him quiet.

Instead, he watched.

Taylor increased the pressure. He anticipated Ilya’s moves before Shane could. Inserted himself into plays. Took hits to set Ilya up. Built highlight reels that paired their names together.

Fans started chanting for their line.

It wasn’t imaginary anymore.

It was deliberate.

-

The confrontation came during a late practice.

Taylor skated too close during a drill, shoulder-checking Shane harder than necessary.

“Careful,” Shane snapped.

“Sorry,” Taylor said flatly. No remorse.

Ilya blew the whistle. “Enough. Reset.”

Taylor looked between them.

“You two don’t communicate like you used to,” he said casually. “It’s noticeable.”

Silence fell over the ice.

Ilya’s gaze sharpened. “What did you say?”

“I’m just saying,” Taylor shrugged, “maybe it’s time the system evolves.”

That was the moment Ilya understood.

He skated forward slowly. Controlled. Dangerous.

“You think this is a system?” he asked quietly.

Taylor didn’t back down. “I think teams change.”

Ilya stopped inches from him.

“Listen carefully,” he said, voice low enough that only the three of them could hear. “You are talented. You are ambitious. That is good.”

Taylor held his stare.

“But you mistake proximity for importance,” Ilya continued. “You think because you skate beside me, you stand equal to what he and I built.”

Shane’s breath caught.

Ilya didn’t look at him.

His eyes never left Taylor.

“You are not competing for ice time,” Ilya said. “You are competing with a marriage. And you will lose.”

The words landed like a blade.

Taylor’s jaw tightened. For the first time, uncertainty flickered.

—

That night, Shane finally told him everything.

The hotel room felt smaller somehow.

“I should’ve said something,” Shane admitted.

Ilya’s expression darkened with every word.

When Shane finished, Ilya exhaled slowly.

“He came to our door,” Ilya said, disbelief threaded with anger.

“Yes.”

Ilya stepped closer, hands framing Shane’s face the way he always did when something mattered.

“You are not replaceable,” he said. “Not on the ice. Not in my life. Not anywhere.”

Shane searched his face. “You’re not tempted?”

Ilya looked almost offended.

“By a boy who thinks ambition is love?” he asked. “No.”

Shane laughed weakly.

“I chose you when it was inconvenient,” Ilya said. “When it was difficult. When it cost me. Why would I choose someone who offers only ego?”

The tightness in Shane’s chest eased.

-

The rink was nearly empty, the only sounds the scrape of skates and the distant hum of the Zamboni. Shane had been lacing his skates when he noticed Ilya standing at center ice, eyes fixed on Taylor like a predator sizing up prey.

Taylor was pacing slowly, stick in hand, pretending to work on drills but clearly watching Ilya with an intensity that made Shane’s chest tighten.

Ilya didn’t wait. He skated toward Taylor, slow, deliberate, measured. Shane followed, letting him take the lead.

“Taylor.” Ilya’s voice cut through the quiet rink, sharp enough to make Taylor freeze mid-stride.

Taylor straightened. “Yes?” His tone was polite, but Shane saw the edge of challenge underneath.

Ilya stopped a few feet away, his posture rigid, eyes locked on Taylor’s. Shane positioned himself slightly behind, a silent pillar of support.

“We need to make something very clear,” Ilya began, his voice low but carrying across the ice. “There are boundaries here. On the rink. Off it. With me. And with Shane.”

Taylor tried a small, easy smile. “I—”

“You don’t get to ‘try,’” Ilya interrupted. “Your proximity to me doesn’t give you rights. It doesn’t give you influence. It doesn’t give you permission to test me—or Shane. Do you

understand?”

Taylor’s jaw tightened. “I…think so.”

“Think so?” Ilya’s voice grew harder. “No. You will understand. You are here to improve as a player, not as a project, not as a competitor for what Shane and I have built. Not as a substitute for him in my life. Not ever.”

Shane stepped closer, placing a hand lightly on Ilya’s shoulder, a grounding presence. Ilya gave a subtle nod, but his focus never wavered from Taylor.

“You’ve been overstepping,” Ilya continued, “hovering, leaning in, studying every move I make, as if proximity equals power. It doesn’t. And it never will. Shane is not yours to undermine. I am not yours to manipulate. If you try—if you test that—I promise you, you will regret it.”

Taylor’s eyes flicked to Shane, who stood silent but steady, the unspoken message clear: he would not let Taylor threaten what was theirs. Taylor’s usual cocky confidence wavered.

“I’m…understood,” Taylor said finally, voice clipped. He was cornered—but polite enough to keep his pride intact.

“You will respect our boundaries,” Ilya said, voice even but ironclad. “Focus on your own game. On your own career. Your ambition is yours—keep it that way. Do not confuse it with entitlement.”

Taylor nodded again, the defiance in his eyes dimming for the first time.

Ilya’s gaze lingered, hard and unwavering. “Good. Now, get to work. On the ice. Not in our lives.”

Shane let out a quiet breath he hadn’t realized he was holding. Ilya skated past Taylor, every movement calm but absolute, every step a reminder that he controlled the space.

Taylor watched him go, a flicker of calculation still there—but tempered now with caution.

Shane stepped up beside Ilya, resting a hand on his back. “You okay?”

Ilya gave a small, satisfied nod. “Boundaries are set. Now the kid can play hockey—or he can leave.”

Shane exhaled, a weight lifting. Taylor might still try, still push, but he knew exactly where he stood. And Ilya’s warning wasn’t just words—it was steel.

-

The next morning, lines shifted at practice.

Coach announced it without drama.

“Moreau, you’re moving to second line.”

Taylor didn’t argue.

But as he skated past Shane, their shoulders brushed.

This time, the contact was light.

Measured.

A warning deferred.

Shane met his gaze steadily.

He wasn’t afraid anymore.

Because ambition could mimic devotion.

It could imitate chemistry. Manufacture headlines. Stir speculation.

But it couldn’t replicate years of rivalry turned tenderness. Couldn’t counterfeit the quiet mornings in a snow-covered kitchen. Couldn’t replace the choice made over and over again.

Taylor might still try.

But Ilya wasn’t something to steal.

And Shane wasn’t someone who would step aside.

End Notes

i'd be very thankful for kudos and comments!<3

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