

How I missed yesterday

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/77302886) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/77302886>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Heated Rivalry (TV) , Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov , Anyia Ilya Rozanov's Dog
Additional Tags:	Established Relationship , Post-Canon , post The Long Game , Book canon compliant , POV Shane Hollander , Spoilers , Seriously if you haven't read The Long Game this won't make sense , Shane Hollander Loves Ilya Rozanov , Ilya Rozanov Loves Shane Hollander , mentioned irina rozanov , Mentioned Grigori Rozanov , Mentioned Andrei Rozanov , allusions to mental health struggles , Concerns about Dementia , Emotional Hurt/Comfort , Photographs , inspired by a tiktok
Language:	English
Collections:	my fav gay hockey players
Stats:	Published: 2026-01-08 Words: 2,261 Chapters: 1/1

How I missed yesterday

by [QueenOfSwords1312](#)

Summary

Shane has been keeping a secret. One that, until recently, he forgot he was even keeping. It's been locked away in a safe, hidden behind a false wall panel at the cottage, unopened since 2021, if the last thing to be put in it is anything to go by.

Or: The gift of memories.

Notes

Okay, listen... I saw a [TikTok](#) that hurt my feelings, and I needed to write this (even though I swore I wouldn't dive into another fandom).

Thank you endlessly to [Erin](#), [Tara](#), and [Cai](#) for being as insane as I am, betaing, bullying me (I see you Cai) and all around surviving the trenches with me.

TW: There are discussions of dementia and vague allusions to mental health in this, but mostly it was meant to answer the question of "What happened to all those photos they used to send to each other?"

See the end of the work for [more notes](#)

Shane has been keeping a secret. One that, until recently, he forgot he was even keeping. It's been locked away in a safe, hidden behind a false wall panel at the cottage, unopened since 2021 if the last thing to be put in it is anything to go by.

He had only remembered it was there after Ilya said something last week that jogged his memory.

Shane had just finished vacuuming the upstairs area of the house and was heading downstairs to do the rest when he had found Ilya standing in front of the fireplace, looking completely frozen. In one hand he had the duster he'd been using, and in the other, Shane noticed when he approached, was a framed copy of one of their selfies from the NHL awards. Ilya was just staring at it, unmoving even when Shane was standing right behind him.

After a moment, Shane had gently wrapped his arms around his husband's waist from behind, pressing his forehead between Ilya's shoulder blades. Ilya jumped slightly, like he'd been startled awake, but he didn't move away, simply bringing the hand up that was still holding the duster and resting it over Shane's arm on his stomach.

"This doesn't look like cleaning," Shane had remarked, leaning up to press a kiss to the back of Ilya's neck.

"Hmm, no. I was... thinking," Ilya had replied, leaning further into Shane's embrace.

Shane gave him the space to continue, but Ilya didn't seem like he was going to.

"Do you want to talk about it? Or is this a conversation for Galina?"

Ilya had been seeing his therapist consistently for almost three years by this point, and Shane had learned that some of Ilya's thoughts were for him, and some were things he needed to work out with her. Sometimes he'd hear about them later, sometimes he wouldn't, but he didn't push. Ilya had gotten a lot better at opening up to Shane, they both had, and one of the ways Shane had made it clear that Ilya could talk to him if he wanted to was to open the door for conversation himself. This question was one he'd asked before, one that silently said "tell me what you need" with clear options that encouraged that conversation without the expectation that he had to have it with Shane specifically.

Ilya was silent for a moment longer, and just when Shane had been sure Ilya would choose the second option, he spoke.

"I was thinking... about my father."

Shane hadn't known what he was expecting, but Ilya bringing up his father wasn't it. He talked about his mother, sure, told Shane stories of his childhood mostly in the context of her. He's known for years that his father is a sore spot, one Shane is happy to avoid if it keeps his husband from spiraling.

"Oh?" he'd asked, squeezing Ilya tighter.

“Da.”

The simple Russian word had been enough to get Shane to move, releasing Ilya long enough to turn him and pull him over to the couch. He took the duster and set it on the coffee table, but he didn't take the photo from Ilya's hand. Instead, he had pulled Ilya against his side, positioning them so Ilya's head rested on his shoulder, and Shane could still see the photo over Ilya's curly head.

Shane knows there are six almost identical versions of this photo, remembering clearly when they were taken. He remembers when he found out Ilya still had them, how surprised he'd been that Ilya hadn't deleted them right away. It's one of his favorites because it reminds him that Ilya really has loved him for a lot longer than either of them realized.

He hadn't been sure how this photo inspired a thought about Ilya's father, but Ilya told him eventually.

“It was less about him and more about... memories.” Ilya had sighed, leaning more heavily on Shane's shoulder, and Shane had hummed to show he was listening. “At the end, he could barely remember me. Was like Andrei never even existed. But he always remembered my mother.”

Shane had a feeling he knew where it was going, but he had stayed quiet, running his fingers through Ilya's hair.

“I worry, sometimes,” he continued, “that I will be like him. Forgetting things. People.”

You, Ilya hadn't said, but Shane had heard it anyway.

It's a valid fear, of course. They're still young, not even 33 and still in their physical prime, so it's not something to be immediately concerned about. But Shane understands that even the possibility of it far down the line can haunt a person.

“Is funny,” Ilya said. “Well, maybe not funny. What is the word?”

“Ironic?” Shane offered.

“Yes, ironic. The only person he remembered was her. He treated her so badly, but she was still alive in his mind.”

Shane thought that was more sad than anything else, but he saw Ilya's point. If he had to consider the possibility that Ilya would one day forget everything and everyone in his life, he hoped, selfishly, that he was the one person Ilya always remembered.

Ilya cleared his throat and held the picture up more. It normally lives on the mantel, right next to the one of them laughing from that commercial they did together, the photo Ilya gave Shane for Christmas two years ago.

“I always loved this photo,” Shane said.

“Me too. Was first one I saved.” Ilya had sighed once again, dragging his thumb over the glass and leaving a streak behind that would bother Shane until he could clean it off later. “I wish I’d saved more.”

That had been the moment that brought Shane here, to the cottage on their bye week, pulling the panel off the wall and opening the safe.

He has a few moments alone while Ilya throws a ball around with Anya in the backyard, and he uses them to locate what he hasn’t seen in years. It’s a little dusty, but otherwise pristine. It’s actually surreal to even look at it, to remember that even when he’d thought four nights a year was enough for him, he had something he could look at the rest of the time.

He doesn’t open it immediately, knowing what’s in it, and instead carries it outside to the patio. Ilya’s gaze finds him as soon as he emerges, like he always does whenever they’re out of each other’s eyeline for more than a few minutes.

“What is that?” his husband asks, tilting his chin in the direction of the item in Shane’s hands.

“You’ll have to come see,” Shane teases, taking a seat at the table. Ilya throws Anya’s ball one more time before jogging over to him. He pulls one of the chairs closer to Shane before he takes a seat, immediately reaching for the leather-bound book. Before he can open it, though, Shane places his hand on top, holding it closed.

“Before you open it,” Shane says, “I need you to know that... I lied to you.”

Ilya’s brows immediately pinch in frustration and Shane rushes to continue.

“I know, but I had to and I’m sorry. I hope you’ll understand why.”

Shane takes his hand back then, rubbing his sweaty palms on his pants before clasping them together in his lap. Ilya eyes him suspiciously for another moment before turning back to the book. Anya comes bounding over, dropping the slimy ball at Ilya’s feet before laying down on the concrete between their chairs.

Ilya flips the book open and Shane has his eyes on him rather than the pages the entire time. He knows what’s in it anyway.

On the first page, there’s a copy of their draft photo, the one with Korogyi on the far right, though he’s been cropped out. Ilya looks away from the page long enough to give Shane a confused look, and Shane just shrugs before tipping his head in encouragement to keep looking.

The next page features the photo that matches the one Ilya tracked down for Shane from the commercial. Shane fondly remembers the confusion from the photographer when he, too, got ahold of them for a copy.

After that, though, are a couple of photos he’s sure Ilya hasn’t seen since they were originally sent. The first one is a mirror selfie, one Ilya sent from his hotel room when Boston was

playing against Houston. On the same page, is the selfie Shane had sent back. He'd been mortified when he realized he still had it, even more when he printed it out, but they were a matching set, so he did it anyway.

There are more selfies, more photos sent between them that Shane had printed and stashed away in this. At one point, years ago, he had bought a photo printer that was no bigger than his phone, one he could travel with without it being noticeable and printed photos smaller than the average polaroid. He would print things straight to it from his phone and hide them at the bottom of his suitcase, hidden in the lining like a drug smuggler until he could get them back to the cottage. Ilya would send him photos, Shane would print them and delete them. It was easier to get away with print photos because no one was going to go through his bag except CATSA, and while he would sweat bullets every time, he managed to never get caught.

Some of them are... risque, to say the least. Shane can feel his face *burning* as Ilya lingers on them. Looking back at it, he kind of can't believe he was bold enough to print these.

They're interspersed with other pictures, official press photos and things he scrounged from the internet. There's one from the All-Star game in 2017, a blurry snap of the moment Ilya kissed Shane's helmet after the goal they shared. The whole time he was looking for photos, he was surprised how much of their life was captured by fans. Honestly, it's a miracle they weren't found out sooner given how many of these photos clearly showcase the heart-eyes they've had for each other over the years.

Shane reaches down to scratch Anya when Ilya gets to the photos from the first time they were at the cottage, desperately needing something to channel his nerves before he flings himself into the lake.

There's not many, three pages with multiple photos taped to it, but it's *telling*. A documentation of all the times Shane caught Ilya unaware, staring at the sunset or half-asleep making coffee. These are his actual favorite, not because he got to save them immediately, but because they were the first look at the life they could have together if Shane had just been braver from the start.

Ilya takes his time going through every page, and Shane watches him even once his vision starts to get blurry through tears. At one point, Ilya brings a hand up to his mouth, his fingers brushing his beautiful lips, and there are tears in his eyes and on his cheeks. Shane keeps petting Anya even once she's fast asleep, the feel of her fur under his fingers grounding.

The final picture in the book is from February 2021, at the Ottawa Pride Night game. It's a selfie, like many of the ones before, of Ilya in his Centaurs Pride jersey. He's holding his pride tape-wrapped stick with the blade up near his face, pretending to kiss it. It was so cute that Shane wanted to eat the photo once he'd printed it, but he had remained strong and stuck it in the album instead.

Twelve years of photos, and not nearly enough, not nearly all of them, meticulously documented in chronological order.

“You saved them,” Ilya whispers, his hand still flipping pages even though the last dozen or so in the album are empty.

Shane attempts to clear the lump in his throat but can’t. “Yeah,” he rasps anyway. “I’m sorry. I know I lied to you. We said we’d delete them, but I just... couldn’t.”

Ilya nods slowly, flipping back to the photos from the cottage. He stops on the one of them in bed, Ilya asleep and pressed against Shane’s back. Shane had felt like a super spy when he managed to reach for his phone and take the photo without jostling Ilya enough to wake him. It almost felt like an invasion of privacy for Ilya to even see these, like Shane was showing him the inner workings of his heart. But Ilya *is* that inner working, and he needed to see. Needed to know that, despite everything they went through — everything they put each other through during those years — Shane loved him too.

“Is good lie,” Ilya says eventually, closing the book and looking at Shane. His blue eyes are red-rimmed and tear-filled, but he’s smiling in a way that never fails to stop Shane’s heart.

Shane reaches over and plants his hand on the back of Ilya’s head, bringing him forward until their foreheads meet. “You forgive me?”

He can feel Ilya turn his head as he shrugs. “I always forgive you. But especially for this.”

Shane can’t hold back the sobbing laugh that bursts from him, and he pressed forward to steal a kiss. Ilya lets him have it, chasing him when he pulls back.

“You know the best part of this?” Ilya asks as he sits back, cupping Shane’s cheek.

“Hm?”

“I now have proof you are obsessed with me.”

“Fuck *you!*”

End Notes

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