Chirp Chirp

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Chirp Chirp

by OikawaHajime13

Summary

It's a known fact that Shane Hollander is bad at chirping. The summer hockey camp coaches decide to do something about it.

Notes

I read Hudson's interview where he talked about the fight and everything he yelled, which was hilarious and terrible. Also, I feel like he'd never tell Ilya what set him off to go after Hunter like that which led to *waves hands* this fic

Chirping = shit talking an opponent

See the end of the work for more notes

The living room of Shane and Ilya's Ottawa house is a disaster zone of empty beer bottles, pizza boxes, and eight professional hockey players sprawled across every available surface like they're still teenagers at a house party instead of grown men. The week-long hockey camp wrapped up this afternoon, and somehow Shane got roped into hosting the post-camp gathering because Ilya had invited all the coaches over for a celebration.

Shane's nursing his second beer on the couch, half-listening to Wyatt and Troy argue about the best poutine in the city, when Scott Hunter clears his throat from the armchair.

"So," Scott says, and the room goes quiet in that way it does when a veteran's about to say something. "We need to talk about something, Hollander."

Shane freezes. "What?"

"The fight," Scott repeats, and there's something dangerous in his smile. "Our fight. The one and only time Shane Hollander and I dropped gloves on the ice."

"Oh fuck," Shane mutters.

Ilya perks up from where he's been scrolling through his phone, wedged between Shane and the arm of the couch. "The fight? The famous fight? Shane would never tell me what he said or why he tried to hit you."

"There's nothing famous about it," Shane says quickly.

"Bullshit," Bood calls from the floor, where he's lying on his back on the carpet. "That fight is legendary. I've watched the footage like twenty times."

"Why the fuck would you watch it twenty times?"

"Because," Ryan says, grinning from the other armchair, "your chirps were the worst thing any of us have ever heard."

The room erupts. Troy's laughing so hard he's wheezing. Hayden's got his phone out, presumably pulling up the video. Wyatt's shaking his head like he's disappointed in Shane on a spiritual level.

"They weren't that bad," Shane protests weakly.

"'Fuck you, go home,'" Scott recites from memory, his voice pitched up in a terrible impression of Shane. "'Go home. You're 45 years old.'"

"You were like 35 at the time," Shane argues. "That's basically 45."

"I was 29, you asshole."

"Yeah, you're ancient," Bood chimes in. "That's what you said next. 'Yeah, you're ancient.' Like you were 12 years old and learning to shit talk for the first time."

Shane takes a long pull from his beer. "Well...he pissed me off."

"You called him a dinosaur," Ryan adds helpfully.

"A dinosaur," Troy repeats, wiping tears from his eyes. "Not even a specific dinosaur. Just dinosaur. Singular."

Ilya's shaking with silent laughter against Shane's side, which is traitorous and rude and exactly what Shane should have expected. "What else?" Ilya asks, delighted. "What else did Shane say?"

"'Ice your knees, old man,'" Hayden supplies, looking up from his phone. "And then—oh fuck, this is the best part—'Where's your cane so I can kick it.'"

The room loses it. Bood rolls onto his side, clutching his stomach. Wyatt's got his face in his hands. Even Scott's laughing now, shaking his head.

"In my defense," Shane starts.

"There is no defense," Scott interrupts. "Those are the chirps of a man who has never chirped before in his entire life."

"I've chirped."

"Name one time."

Shane opens his mouth. Closes it. Opens it again. "I told a guy his breath smelled once."

"That's not a chirp, that's telling the truth," Troy says.

Ilya pats Shane's thigh consolingly. "Is okay, Shane. You are very good at other things."

"Like what?"

"Hockey. Being pretty. Making me come."

"Jesus Christ, Rozanov," Scott groans, but he's smiling.

"We're getting off track," Wyatt says, sitting forward. "The point is, we need to teach Shane how to chirp properly. This is a matter of team honor."

"Team honor," Shane repeats flatly.

"You're a Centaur now," Bood says, finally sitting up. "You can't go around chirping like that. It reflects poorly on all of us."

"I just signed here like five days ago," Shane protests. "Give me a break."

"Five days is plenty of time to learn how to chirp," Wyatt argues. "But clearly Montreal didn't teach you shit."

"Montreal taught me plenty."

"Yeah?" Hayden challenges. "Then why do you chirp like a twelve-year-old who just learned his first swear word?"

"Shut up, Hayden, you Montreal traitor."

Scott stands up, and suddenly he's in veteran mode, all business. "Alright. Chirp school is in session. Shane, you're the student. Everyone else, you're my teaching assistants."

"This is stupid," Shane mutters, but he doesn't move from the couch.

"I'm here for one more night," Scott says, pacing in front of the TV like he's drawing up plays. "And I'm not leaving until we fix this. First lesson: a good chirp is specific. You don't just call someone old. You reference something specific about their age that'll get under their skin."

"Like what?"

"Like," Troy jumps in, "you could say 'Hey Hunter, I saw your rookie card at an antique store' or 'Didn't you play against Gretzky's dad?'"

"Those are good," Bood nods approvingly. "Or 'Your birth certificate is in Roman numerals.'"

"'You're about as relevant to the outcome of this game as the Zamboni driver,'" Ryan adds.

Shane's writing this down in his phone now, because fuck it, if they're doing this, he's doing it right. "Okay. Specific. Got it."

"'If you want more ice time, I hear they're hiring a Zamboni driver,'" Wyatt throws in with a grin.

Scott points at Wyatt. "See, that's good. That's the kind of shit that gets in someone's head."

"Second lesson," Scott continues. "Timing is everything. You don't just blurt shit out. You wait for the perfect moment."

"Like when they fuck up," Wyatt says. "They miss a pass, you hit them with 'I've seen softer hands in a room full of statues.' They take a bad penalty, you go with 'Good job, you just gave us a power play, genius.'"

"Or when they're already pissed off," Hayden adds. "That's when you really twist the knife. 'Does your coach know you're out here?' when they're having a shit game. That'll send them over the edge."

Ilya's nodding along like he's not the master of chirping. "This is very educational. Continue."

"Third lesson," Scott says, holding up three fingers. "Know your target. You chirp differently depending on who you're chirping."

"Explain," Shane says, actually invested now despite himself.

"Okay, so," Bood sits up properly, getting into it. "If you're chirping a rookie, you go after their inexperience. 'How's your first time on real ice?' or 'Does your mom know you're out this late?' Shit like that."

"If you're chirping a veteran," Ryan picks up, "you go after their age, their declining stats, their injuries. 'Remember when you could skate?' or 'How many Advil did you take this morning?'"

"'Did you get lost on the way to the AHL?'" Troy adds. "'Because this is the big leagues, kid.'"

"If you're chirping a goalie," Troy says, grinning, "you just tell them about every goal you've ever scored on them. Goalies are fucking psychos, they remember everything, so it really gets to them."

"'I'd tell you to keep up, but I know your knees can't handle it,'" Wyatt contributes.

"And if you're chirping a pest," Wyatt finishes, "you just ignore them. That pisses them off more than anything."

"'Hey, remember that five-hole goal in the second? Yeah, me too,'" Hayden demonstrates. "'I think about it every night.'"

Shane's phone is filling up with notes. This is actually useful information. "What about enforcers?"

The room goes quiet for a second.

"You don't chirp enforcers," Scott says carefully. "You just fight them and hope you don't die."

"Unless you're Rozanov," Bood adds. "Then you chirp everyone and somehow don't die."

Ilya preens. "Is because I am very charming."

"It's because you're fucking insane," Troy corrects. "There's a difference."

"Fourth lesson," Scott says, getting them back on track. "Delivery matters. You can't just say the words. You have to sell it."

"Show him," Ryan says to Scott. "Do the thing."

Scott skates—well, walks, but it's got the energy of skating—over to where Bood's sitting. He leans down, gets right in Bood's face, and says in this perfectly casual, almost friendly tone, "Hey Boodram, I heard your mom's disappointed in you. Not for hockey. Just in general."

Bood flips him off, but he's laughing. "See?" Scott says, turning back to Shane. "Casual. Conversational. Like you're just making an observation."

"The more casual you sound, the more it pisses them off," Hayden explains. "Because it seems like you're not even trying, which means they're not worth the effort."

"That's psychological warfare," Shane says.

"That's hockey," Scott corrects.

"Okay," Wyatt says, standing up. "Pop quiz. Shane, chirp me."

Shane looks at Wyatt. Goalie, calculating, top player. "Uh. You have slow hands?"

The room groans in unison.

"No, no, no," Troy says, shaking his head. "You can't make it a question. You have to commit."

"Try again," Scott says. "Think about what would actually bother Hayes."

Shane studies Wyatt for a moment. "You have slow hands and I'm gonna score on you again."

"Better," Bood says. "Still not great, but better."

"My turn," Ilya announces, standing up. "I will show Shane how is done."

He walks over to Troy, looks him up and down, and says in perfect English, "Barrett, I would chirp you, but your own stats do that better than I ever could."

Troy clutches his chest like he's been shot. "Fuck you, Rozanov."

"See?" Ilya says, turning back to Shane with a bright smile. "Is easy."

"That's because you're a natural asshole," Shane says, but there's affection in it.

"Is a gift," Ilya agrees.

"Alright, Shane," Scott says. "Chirp me. For real this time. Pretend we're in a game."

Shane stands up, rolls his shoulders. He thinks about everything they've just taught him. Specific. Timing. Know your target. Delivery.

He looks at Scott. "Hunter, keep your chin up, there’s always beer leagues for old guys like you."

The room goes silent for a beat.

Then everyone erupts.

"Holy shit," Bood says.

"That was actually good," Ryan admits.

"Dark," Wyatt adds. "But good."

Scott's grinning. "Now that's a fucking chirp. See? You can learn."

Shane feels weirdly proud of himself. "Yeah?"

"Yeah. Still not great, but you're getting there."

"Try another one," Troy says. "Chirp Price."

Shane looks at Ryan. Ryan's solid, dependable, retired from the league forever. "Price, You're like a fireplace, all you do is keep the bench warm."

Ryan smiles wryly, "Oh, ouch."

They spend the next hour running drills. Shane chirps everyone in the room at least twice. Some of them land, some of them don't. Bood teaches him the art of the backhanded compliment ("'You're playing way better than I expected' is a classic"). Troy shows him how to chirp without moving his mouth so the refs don't catch it. Hayden demonstrates the perfectly timed laugh that makes guys think you're laughing at them even when you're not.

"Here's another one," Ryan says. "'Nice shift. Did you get tired walking to the bench?'"

"Or 'I'd say good game, but I don't lie to my opponents,'" Wyatt adds.

"'You skate like you're wearing concrete boots,'" Bood contributes. "'Were those on sale?'"

"'I've seen faster players in beer league,'" Troy says. "'And they're all forty-five and drunk.'"

Ilya mostly just watches, looking pleased with himself, occasionally offering commentary now and again.

By the time they're done, Shane's got a phone full of notes and a new appreciation for the psychological warfare that is professional hockey.

"Final exam," Scott announces. "Shane, chirp Rozanov."

Everyone goes quiet. This is the real test. Chirping your boyfriend in front of his teammates.

Shane looks at Ilya. Ilya looks back, eyebrows raised, waiting.

Shane takes a breath and smirks over at his husband, "Rozanov, do you wish you knew what it feels like?"

Ilya's eyes darken as he says, "What what feels like, Hollander?"

"To hold the Cup three times?"

The room loses it again. Troy's on the floor. Bood's crying. Wyatt's got his phone out, probably recording this for posterity.

Ilya grins, slow and devilish, "Very good, Hollander. Very good. But I've heard better chirps from a dead wolf bird."

"Wait! No, you can't turn it on me! That's not how chirping works," Shane protests.

"Is exactly how chirping works," Ilya says, kissing him quick in front of everyone. "I win. Always."

Scott's shaking his head, but he's smiling. "Alright. Class dismissed. Hollander, you pass. Barely."

"What's my grade?"

"D plus. Maybe C minus if I'm feeling generous."

"I'll take it," Shane says, pulling Ilya back down onto the couch.

The party winds down slowly after that. Bood falls asleep on the floor and has to be woken up by Wyatt throwing a pizza crust at his head. Troy and Hayden get into an argument about whether a hot dog is a sandwich that nearly turns physical. Ryan referees while Scott just watches, looking like a dad who’s out too late.

By the time everyone leaves, it's past midnight. Shane and Ilya are alone in their disaster of a living room, surrounded by empty bottles and the lingering smell of pizza.

"So," Ilya says, tucking himself against Shane's side. "You have fun today?"

"I learned that my teammates are insane."

"Yes. But also, you learn to chirp."

Shane thinks about it. "Yeah. I guess I did."

"Is good. Next time you fight someone, you will not embarrass yourself."

"I wasn't embarrassed."

Ilya looks up at him. "Shane. You asked Scott Hunter where is his cane so you can kick it."

"It was a heat of the moment thing. He told me I was starting to sound like you."

"That is insulting to me. Was very bad chirp."

"I know," Shane admits. "But I'm better now. Thanks to the guys. And Scott."

"See? Is good to have friends who visit to teach you things."

"He didn't come here just to teach me how to chirp."

"No. But it was good bonus."

Shane kisses the top of Ilya's head, breathing in the familiar smell of his shampoo and sweat and home. "You're ridiculous."

"Yes. But you love me anyway."

"Yeah," Shane says. "I really do."

They sit there for a while, not talking, just existing in the comfortable silence of their living room. Outside, Ottawa is quiet. Inside, Shane's phone buzzes with a text from Scott.

Hunter: Good job today. Welcome to the club of properly trained chirpers. You're still terrible, but at least now you're terrible with potential.

Shane shows it to Ilya, who grins.

"See? You are learning."

"I'm trying."

"Is all anyone can ask."

Shane thinks about that. About this house, this city, these people who've become his people. About wearing the Centaurs jersey, about being part of this team. About Ilya, always Ilya, the center of everything.

"Yeah," he says finally. "I guess it is."

His phone buzzes again. This time it's a group chat that Shane's been part of for a few days now, labeled "Centaurs Chaos."

Boodram: Hollander's first assignment: chirp someone at practice tomorrow

Barrett: Twenty bucks says he chickens out

Hayes: Fifty says he tries and it's terrible

Boodram: I'll take that bet

Haas: What is happening?

Ilya's reading over his shoulder, laughing. "You have to do it now. Is team bonding."

"I hate all of you," Shane types into the chat.

Rozanov: He will do it. I will make sure.

Boodram: How?

Rozanov: I have my ways 😏

Barrett: GROSS

Hayes: We don't need details

Harris: Rozanov, stop traumatizing the children

Rozanov: They are not children. They are professional athletes. They can handle it.

Shane takes his phone back before Ilya can make it worse. "You're not helping."

"I am always helping," Ilya says, kissing his jaw. "Is what I do best."

"I thought what you do best is hockey."

"Hockey is second best. First best is loving you."

It's sappy and ridiculous and exactly the kind of thing Ilya says that makes Shane's chest feel too tight and too full at the same time.

"Come on," Shane says, standing up and pulling Ilya with him. "Let's clean this up tomorrow. I'm exhausted."

"Is because you work very hard at chirp school."

"It's because your teammates are exhausting."

"Our teammates," Ilya corrects as they head upstairs.

Shane doesn't argue this time. They are his teammates now. He's a Centaur, wears the jersey, lives in this city with Ilya. This is his team, his home.

His phone buzzes one more time as they're getting ready for bed.

Hunter: Seriously though. Good job today. You're going to fit in just fine with those lunatics.

Shane stares at the message for a long moment. Then he types back:

Hollander: Thanks, old man. Try not to break a hip before our next game against New York.

The response is immediate.

Hunter: That's more like it. B minus.

Shane's grinning as he plugs his phone in and climbs into bed next to Ilya.

"What are you smiling about?" Ilya asks, already half-asleep.

"Nothing," Shane says. "Just thinking about how I'm going to chirp the shit out of everyone tomorrow."

Ilya's laugh is soft and warm against his shoulder. "That is my Shane. Always wanting to be the best."

"Always," Shane agrees.

And when he falls asleep, it's with Ilya's arm around his waist and the sound of his teammates' laughter still echoing in his head, and the strange, unexpected feeling that maybe, just maybe, he's exactly where he's supposed to be.

End Notes

Comments and kudos are always appreciated!

Update: I saw on threads where someone mentioned Shane had won 3 cups so I've changed the line here in the fic 🤦‍♀️🤣 y'all got to mention that sooner 😭

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