

Watch You Fall

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/76402316) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/76402316>.

Rating:	Not Rated
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
Additional Tags:	Mild Hurt/Comfort , Tooth-Rotting Fluff , Good Significant Other Ilya Rozanov , Shane Hollander's Cottage , Christmas Fluff , Ice Skating , Accidents , Cuddling & Snuggling , Boys In Love
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2025-12-25 Words: 2,168 Chapters: 1/1

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by [ompalompap](#)

Summary

Then the sound comes. It isn't like the other creaks. It's sharper. Deeper. Wrong. Shane feels it before he understands it, a sudden vibration beneath his feet, a jolt straight through his bones. He looks up, mouth already forming Ilya's name.

The ice fractures under Ilya in a split second. There's a crack like a gunshot, the surface splintering outward, and then Ilya is gone. Swallowed by black water that surges violently up through the hole.

"Ilya!"

Shane's skates scrape uselessly as he tries to stop, heart slamming so hard it knocks the air from his lungs. He drops to his knees a few meters back, terrified to get closer, terrified not to. Steam curls up from the water like breath in the freezing air.

Time breaks. One second. Two. Three. Nothing.

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Shane and Ilya enjoy their Christmas break at Shane's cottage, until Ilya falls through the ice as they skate on the lake.

Notes

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

The snow has already erased the world by the time morning finds them. It presses thickly against the windows, piling on the sill, muting every sound beyond the cottage walls. Inside, everything is slow and warm. The fire has burned low overnight, embers glowing faintly, the air smelling like pine and ash.

Shane wakes up first. It takes him a moment to remember where he is, to register the quiet, the weight draped over him, the steady breath at the back of his neck. Ilya is spooned around him, one leg tangled with Shane's, an arm heavy across his stomach like it belongs there permanently. His hand rests just under Shane's ribs, fingers curled, warm.

Shane lies still, afraid to break it. He stares at the pale morning light seeping through the curtains and listens to Ilya breathe. Every exhale brushes his skin, grounding him. Safe. Here. Together.

Ilya shifts slightly, nose nudging into Shane's hair, and murmurs something half-formed, still asleep. His grip tightens unconsciously, pulling Shane closer. Shane smiles despite himself. He turns carefully, slow enough not to wake him, until they're face to face. Ilya's lashes are dark against his cheeks, mouth parted, relaxed in a way he rarely is when he's awake. Shane reaches out and smooths a thumb over Ilya's knuckle, then traces the familiar line of his jaw. Ilya hums, eyes fluttering open.

"Morning," Ilya says, voice rough.

"Morning," Shane whispers back.

They don't rush it. They never do, mornings like this. Ilya leans in for a lazy kiss that turns into another, deeper but still unhurried. Shane's hand slips under Ilya's shirt, warm skin against cold air, and Ilya grins, tugging him closer again. Eventually, hunger wins out.

They pad into the kitchen in socks, shoulders brushing constantly. Shane puts coffee on while Ilya cracks eggs, bumping hips with him just to get a reaction. Eventually Ilya gives up on the eggs, resorting to wrapping his arms around Shane and breathing him in. Shane pretends to be annoyed, but absurdly wide smile on his lips says otherwise. Snow keeps falling outside, fat flakes swirling like the world has been shaken.

They eat at the small wooden table, knees touching, steam rising from mugs between them. Shane watches Ilya laugh at something dumb he just said and feels that familiar swell in his chest, the quiet, overwhelming gratitude of this. Of having him here. Of the way the cottage feels like theirs.

After breakfast, Ilya presses his palms against the window, peering out at the lake. "It's perfect," he says. "You see that?"

Shane follows his gaze. The lake is a smooth white stretch, untouched and vast. Beautiful. And terrifying, if he lets himself think too hard.

"What? For skating you mean?" Shane says, to which Ilya nods excitedly. "You sure that's safe?"

Ilya turns, expression softening. "Yes, I checked yesterday. Is thick. People skate on lakes like this all the time in Russia." He steps closer, cups Shane's face. "I won't let anything happen."

Shane nods, even though his stomach tightens.

They bundle up, scarves and gloves and skates slung over shoulders. The cold hits them immediately, sharp and clean, making Shane gasp. Ilya jokes about how Canadian winters are nothing compared to Russian winters, and Shane rolls his eyes at him, making him laugh even more. Snow crunches underfoot as they walk down to the lake. The air smells like frost and woodsmoke.

The ice creaks when they step onto it, quiet, low sounds, like the lake breathing. Shane's muscles lock.

"Ilya-

“Hey,” Ilya says gently, squeezing his hand. “That’s normal. Ice makes that sound.”

They lace up, sitting side by side on the old bench near the shore. When they stand, Shane’s first steps are cautious, stiff. Ilya pushes off easily, gliding ahead before looping back around him.

“Come on,” he teases. “Aren’t you the best skater in the world or something?”

Shane huffs out a breath that turns into a cloud in front of his face. “I’m good on rinks,” he says, carefully pushing off. “Rinks don’t crack under you.”

Ilya laughs, bright and unbothered, skating backward in front of him. “You worry too much.”

“Someone has to,” Shane mutters, but his mouth curves despite himself.

They move farther out, the snow dusting their skates as they glide. Ilya shows off, sharp turns, easy speed, arms loose at his sides like the ice belongs to him. He loops back again and again, grabbing Shane’s gloved hands, pulling him into gentle spins that leave Shane dizzy and laughing in spite of the tension sitting tight in his chest.

“See?” Ilya says. “You’re fine, Bambi.”

Shane nods, breathless, trying to convince himself of it. He focuses on Ilya’s smile, the way his cheeks are pink from the cold, the familiar steadiness of his hands. The lake stretches endlessly around them, white and quiet, snow still falling like a curtain.

For a while, it’s good. Really good. They race, they almost collide, they laugh too loud in the open air. Shane lets himself relax, just a little.

Then the sound comes. It isn’t like the other creaks. It’s sharper. Deeper. Wrong. Shane feels it before he understands it, a sudden vibration beneath his feet, a jolt straight through his

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"Ilya, please!" Shane gasps, voice shredding. His hands dig into the ice, useless, shaking so badly he can barely hold himself up. His mind floods with every terrible possibility at once, images crashing over each other until he can't breathe.

For a moment, he considers jumping in there himself. Then, movement.

A hand breaks the surface. Then another. Ilya's head bursts up with a choked gasp, water streaming from his hair, eyes wide and shocked but alive. He coughs something in Russian.

"I'm-" he coughs, in English. "I'm okay-"

Shane doesn't let him finish. He lunges forward just enough to grab Ilya's wrists, hauling with everything he has. The ice groans under the strain, but holds. Ilya scrambles out, collapsing hard onto the surface, chest heaving. Shane drags him farther back, arms locked around him, pulling until they're well away from the hole. Only then does he realize he's crying, breath coming in sharp, broken sobs he can't stop.

“I thought you-” He can’t finish. He can’t even look at the water again.

“I know,” Ilya says hoarsely, still shaking, wrapping his arms around Shane instead. “I’m here. I’m here. I’m okay.”

They don’t argue. They don’t joke. They just get up and go, Shane keeping one hand fisted in Ilya’s jacket the entire walk back, as if letting go might undo reality. The snow keeps falling, indifferent, softening their footprints almost as soon as they make them. Shane’s fingers are numb inside his gloves, but he doesn’t loosen his grip on Ilya’s jacket for a second. Every few steps he glances sideways, checking, breathing, color, movement, like if he looks away too long something terrible might correct itself.

Ilya lets him. By the time they reach the cottage, Ilya’s teeth are chattering hard enough that Shane hears it even through the wind. That finally snaps him into motion.

“Inside,” Shane says, voice tight. “Now.”

The door barely closes before Shane’s already tugging at their zippers with shaking hands. Wet gloves hit the floor, then scarves, then jackets. Ilya sways slightly as Shane takes his skates come off, water pooling on the wood beneath him.

“Hey,” Ilya murmurs, trying for light, failing. “I’m really okay-”

“Shower,” Shane cuts in, too sharp, panic bleeding through the edges. “You’re freezing.”

He turns the water on too hot without noticing. Steam blooms instantly, fogging the small bathroom, curling around them like a cocoon. Shane helps peel the rest of Ilya’s clothes off, fingers clumsy, apologizing under his breath when he fumbles.

Under the spray, Ilya exhales a broken sound, half relief, half shiver, as warmth hits his skin. Shane steps in with him, and doesn’t even flinch at the heat. His hands move automatically, rubbing Ilya’s arms, his shoulders, his back, as if friction alone can erase what just happened.

“Ilya,” he says quietly, finally, voice cracking on the name.

“I know,” Ilya answers just as softly. He cups Shane’s face, thumbs brushing under his eyes where tears have started to gather. “I scared you.”

Shane swallows hard, nods once. “You disappeared,” he whispers. “You were just- gone.”

“I came back,” Ilya says, steady. “I came back.”

Shane presses his forehead into Ilya’s shoulder and breathes. In. Out. The sound of the water fills the space where his thoughts keep trying to spiral. He stays like that until Ilya’s shivering slows, until some of the color returns to his skin, until Shane’s own hands stop trembling enough that he trusts them.

They dry off in silence, wrapped in towels, then pile on sweaters and thick socks. Shane lights the fire again with hands that still aren’t quite steady. When it finally catches, the room fills with heat and soft orange light, chasing the cold back inch by inch.

They curl up on the couch beneath a pile of blankets, Ilya pulling Shane into his chest without a word. Shane doesn’t resist. He tucks himself close, knees drawn up, fingers clutching the front of Ilya’s sweater like an anchor.

Only then does the shaking really start.

Ilya feels it immediately. He tightens his arms, rubs slow, deliberate circles into Shane’s back, grounding, patient.

“Hey,” he murmurs. “You’re safe. I’ve got you.”

“I’m not worried about me,” Shane mutters quietly.

“I’m safe. I got up.”

Shane’s breath stutters. “I know, I just- I keep hearing it,” he admits, voice muffled against Ilya’s chest. “The crack. Over and over.”

Ilya tilts his head down, pressing a kiss into Shane’s hair. “I know. That’s adrenaline. It will pass.”

“You don’t get to say that like it didn’t almost-” Shane stops himself, jaw tightening. He shakes his head. “I can’t- I don’t want to picture it.”

“Then don’t,” Ilya says gently. “Look at me instead.”

Shane lifts his head. Ilya’s eyes are calm now, steady and real and very much alive. He cups Shane’s cheek, thumb warm against cold skin.

“I’m here,” Ilya says again. “I’m not going anywhere.”

“Sorry, I don’t want to make this about me,” Shane sighs, guilt washing over him along with everything else.

Ilya exhales softly, the sound warm against Shane’s hair.

“Hey,” he says, gentle but firm enough to cut through it. “You’re allowed to feel things. This doesn’t make it about you in a bad way.”

Shane shifts, uneasy, fingers tightening in Ilya's sweater. "I just— you're the one who fell in. You're the one who—" His voice falters. "I'm the one shaking."

"That's because you were watching," Ilya says quietly. He smirks looking down at Shane. "And because you love me."

Shane smiles stupidly. "I do, don't I?"

"I love you too."

Shane leans up, pressing his lips against Ilya's. Shane sighs against him, feeling himself relax a little more. He pulls away slightly, staring at Ilya with all seriousness. "Just- promise not to scare me like that again."

Ilya doesn't joke this time. The smirk softens into something quieter, more serious, like he understands exactly how close Shane still is to the edge. He brings his forehead down to Shane's, noses brushing.

"I promise," he says, his voice soft. "I don't ever want to be the reason you feel like that again."

Shane exhales, the last of the tension leaking out of his shoulders. He nods once, then twice, like the promise needs to settle into his bones. "Good," he says quietly.

They stay like that, foreheads together, breathing each other in. The fire crackles low and steady behind them. Outside, the snow keeps falling, sealing the cottage off from the rest of the world, but inside everything feels contained, warm, intact. Shane settles back against Ilya's chest, finally letting himself rest. Ilya tightens the blanket around them both and presses a lingering kiss into Shane's hair.

The fire burns lower. Snow continues to fall outside, sealing them in. Eventually, Shane's breathing evens out completely, his body heavy and warm against Ilya's.

Ilya rests his cheek against the top of Shane's head and closes his eyes, holding him through the aftershocks, through the quiet, through the relief, grateful, fiercely, to still be here, and to be held like this by someone who would fall apart at the thought of losing him.

End Notes

Well Ilya, you couldn't keep that promise, could you?

Lol, hope you all enjoyed!

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