Hidden Flames on Ice

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Hidden Flames on Ice

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Summary

During a high-stakes game between their teams, everything changes when Shane takes a brutal hit and goes down hard, blood staining the ice. The arena falls into stunned silence as trainers rush forward and fans hold their breath.

All eyes turn to Ilya.

The question hangs heavy in the air, unspoken but undeniable:
How does a rival react when the man he loves is lying broken on the ice?

The arena shook with thunderous energy. Thousands of fans dressed in rival colors waved signs, shouted chants, and slammed their palms against the boards. It was a spectacle every time the two teams met, but tonight felt charged—dangerous, electric.

Shane Hollander skated warmup laps, feeling the weight of all those eyes. Cameras followed him as usual; he was the league's golden boy, the face of his franchise. A clean-cut hero.

The perfect foil to Ilya Rozanov.

Shane allowed himself one quick glance toward the other end of the rink. Ilya was stretching near the blue line, long legs and broad shoulders outlined in his dark away jersey. He looked like a storm contained within a man—intense, focused, carved from granite.

Everyone saw rivals. Polar opposites. Enemies destined to clash.

No one saw the truth.

The hands tangled beneath blankets.
The whispered confessions in Russian and English.
The quiet mornings in Ilya's apartment, sunlight spilling across intertwined legs.
The soft kisses before they split for practice, pretending they weren't choosing love over the expectations of an entire league.

Shane dragged his gaze away as the whistle blew. He couldn't afford to get lost in thoughts of Ilya—not when they were minutes from going head-to-head. Not when every camera zoomed in for the slightest hint of tension.

But his chest tightened with something warm and painful.
Tonight, they'd have to pretend they didn't matter to each other.

Midway through the second period, Shane felt good—sharp. His skates cut through the ice like they were part of him. He took a pass, dodged a defender, then stole the puck right off a stick. The crowd roared, vibrating through his bones.

Ilya was on the ice too, shadowing him from a distance that would look normal to anyone else. But Shane recognized it—the protective tether Ilya couldn't fight, even in a rivalry game.

Shane accelerated along the boards, eyes locked on the net. He had a lane. One beautiful, narrow lane.

Then he never saw the defender coming.

A massive body slammed into his blindside. Shane was lifted off his feet, crashing into the boards so hard the impact rattled his teeth. His helmet snapped back. Pain exploded behind his eye. His breath vanished.

The world tilted.

The puck slid away as Shane crumpled, his cheek hitting the ice, coldness searing his skin. A metallic taste filled his mouth. He lifted his hand, blinking at the smear of red on his glove.

Blood.

He heard the crowd gasp. Distant shouting. The shrill whistle of the refs. But it all sounded muffled, underwater.

Then he heard something else. A roar—angry, feral, unmistakable.

Ilya.

Ilya Rozanov was already moving before any whistle blew. His eyes widened the instant Shane hit the ice—an expression so raw, so terrified, that his teammate beside him startled.

But Ilya wasn't afraid of losing momentum.

He was afraid of losing Shane.

He threw his gloves down so violently they slid across the rink. The defenseman who delivered the hit barely had time to straighten before Ilya collided with him like a freight train.

"What the—Rozanov!" the player barked, raising his hands.

Too late.

Ilya's fist slammed into his jaw with a crack that echoed. He grabbed the man's jersey, hauling him down, yelling in a mix of Russian curses and English threats. His fist rose again —

Two teammates tried to drag him away.

He elbowed one in the ribs and threw the other off with a growl, all restraint gone. More players poured in. Sticks flew. Helmets toppled. Punches landed in a frenzy.

A full-team brawl erupted—one massive, chaotic explosion across the ice.

The crowd rose to their feet, torn between horror and exhilaration.

But Ilya saw none of that.

His gaze kept darting toward Shane's motionless body. His chest heaved. Panic twisted his face in a way no broadcast replay could quite capture.

He wasn't fighting to win.
He was fighting because someone had hurt the man he loved.

And if someone was going to pay for it, it wouldn't be Shane.

Shane blinked through the blur, forcing one eye open. His cheek stung. His head pulsed. Voices swirled around him.

Then he saw him.

Ilya—helmet gone, eyes blazing, hands bloodied—being dragged backward by two officials and a teammate. His chest rose and fell like he'd sprinted miles.

"Ilya…" Shane whispered, though it hardly came out at all.

He reached out weakly as trainers rushed toward him.

Everything hurt, but the fear in Ilya's expression hurt worse.

Ten minutes later, Shane sat on the exam table in his team's locker-room treatment area. His pads had been stripped off, and his undershirt was cut open to check for rib damage. Trainers cleaned the gash on his cheekbone, talking in calm, practiced voices that didn't match the frantic pounding in his head.

"You'll need stitches," one trainer said. "Possible concussion. Stay awake for now."

Shane nodded, wincing as the antiseptic burned.

His teammates muttered angrily nearby, replaying the hit, complaining about dirty play. But Shane wasn't listening.

He was listening for footsteps.

Because he knew Ilya.

He knew anger would carry him straight here.

He wasn't wrong.

The door slammed open so hard it ricocheted off the wall. Everyone turned.

Ilya Rozanov stormed into the room.

His chest rose and fell sharply, jersey half-torn, knuckles scraped raw. His hair stuck to his forehead with sweat. His eyes—dark, frantic—scanned the room until they locked on Shane.

The trainer nearest the door stiffened.
"Rozanov, you can't be in here—"

Ilya didn't even slow down.

"Move."

His voice was a growl, low and dangerous, the kind that made rookies avoid eye contact in hallways.

The trainer stepped back instinctively.

Shane's teammates surged forward.

But Ilya only saw Shane.

One of Shane's defensemen, Mason, pointed angrily.
"Hey! Get the hell out, man! Training room is off-limits!"

Ilya didn't spare him a glance. He reached Shane's side in three strides and cupped his face, hands trembling as he tilted Shane's chin up to inspect the cut.

"Shane… baby, look at me," Ilya whispered, voice breaking.

Several teammates exchanged looks.

"What the—did he just call him—"

"Rozanov," the trainer snapped, "back off before security drags you—"

Ilya turned his head slowly, eyes ice-cold.
"Touch me, and I break your wrist."

The room froze.

Shane lifted a hand, resting it on Ilya's forearm.
"Ilya, hey… I'm okay."

"You're bleeding," Ilya whispered harshly. "You weren't getting up. I thought—" He swallowed, voice cracking. "I thought you weren't breathing."

Shane's heart twisted painfully.

Mason stepped forward again.
"Back away from him. You're the enemy—"

That snapped Ilya's control like dry twigs.

He whirled. "The man who hit Shane is the enemy," he hissed. "Not me."

His accent thickened, vowels sharper, emotions cutting through every syllable.

Everyone went silent.

Shane squeezed Ilya's hand.
"Hey," he murmured, voice soft but steady. "Look at me."

Ilya did, eyes glassy with fear he couldn't disguise.

"You didn't lose me," Shane whispered. "I'm right here."

Slowly, painfully, some of the tension drained from Ilya's shoulders. He took a shaky breath and pressed his forehead to Shane's.

"I would kill him for touching you," Ilya whispered, voice low enough only Shane could hear.

Shane's lips twitched, despite the throbbing.
"I know. But preferably don't. I like when you're allowed near me."

Ilya almost smiled—almost.

The trainer cleared his throat.
"Hollander needs stitches. Rozanov… if you're staying, stand back."

Ilya didn't let go of Shane's hand.
"I stay," he said simply.

The team stared.

No one knew what to do with this version of Ilya—raw, unguarded, protective in a way that stripped rivalry of any meaning.

As the trainers worked, Ilya hovered, keeping steady pressure on Shane's hand, thumb rubbing gentle circles against his skin. His other hand rested lightly on Shane's knee, grounding him.

When the needle pierced Shane's skin, he winced.

Ilya leaned close.
"Breathe," he murmured, voice softer than anyone in that room had ever heard him speak.

Shane exhaled slowly, letting Ilya's presence anchor him.

One of Shane's wingers whispered under his breath, "Dude… are they—?"

Another replied, "Oh my god. They are."

Shane didn't care who was watching.

For the first time, he didn't feel like hiding.

When the medical staff stepped out for supplies, the room quieted. Shane and Ilya were finally, blissfully alone.

Ilya touched Shane's cheek gently, avoiding the stitched area.
"I was so scared," he admitted, voice cracking. "I've seen players fall like that before. They don't always get up."

Shane looked up at him with softened eyes.
"You always worry too much."

“Not enough,” Ilya responded immediately. “Never enough when it comes to you.”

Shane leaned closer, tugging Ilya down by his jersey.
Their foreheads met, breath mingling in the small space between them.

“Ilya,” Shane whispered. “Thank you.”

“For what?”

“For coming for me.”
“For choosing me.”
“For not pretending you didn’t care.”

Ilya swallowed hard.
“I couldn’t pretend. Not tonight.”

Shane’s lips brushed Ilya’s—barely a touch, soft and trembling.

A promise.

A confession.

A secret both too heavy and too beautiful to hide forever.

The door creaked, and Ilya pulled back just in time as a trainer returned—but the look in their eyes said they’d seen enough.

The secret wasn’t invisible anymore.

When Shane was finally cleared to sit up fully, dizziness faded, stitches complete, Ilya lingered by his side. The head coach tried to lecture Ilya about barging in, but even he seemed unable to shake Ilya’s fury-fueled devotion.

Eventually, officials forced Ilya to leave, muttering about suspensions and supplemental discipline.

But before he stepped out, he paused in the doorway, turning back toward Shane. His eyes softened, all storm and fire replaced by something achingly gentle.

“I’ll come to you after,” Ilya murmured.

Shane nodded, heart swelling.
“I’ll be waiting.”

Ilya’s lips twitched into the smallest, real smile.

Then he was gone.

The team pretended to ignore the obvious.
Reporters circled outside like sharks.

Social media replayed the fight.
Fans speculated.

And Shane…
Shane felt the cracked-open truth beating like a second heart inside his ribs.

He and Ilya weren't just rivals.
They weren't just teammates on opposite sides of a feud.

They were something bigger.
Something stronger.
Something worth fighting the world for.

Tonight, the secret had hemorrhaged onto the ice.

Maybe it was time to stop running from it.

Maybe it was time to choose love—out loud.

Shane moves slowly, leaning most of his weight onto Ilya's side. Every step sends a dull throb up through his ribs and into his temples, but having Ilya's arm wrapped firmly around his waist makes the pain feel distant, almost muted.

Behind them, Shane's teammates follow like a protective wall — some confused, some exhausted, some simply done fighting the inevitable. They've collectively realized that stopping Ilya Rozanov is pointless. The man is a tank with emotions he only shows for one person.

Shane.

"Take it slow," Ilya murmurs in Russian, his voice low and soft.

Shane replies in a whisper, "I'm okay… I just feel like I went through a woodchipper."

Ilya's jaw tenses. "He hit you dirty. You should not feel anything like this."

Shane squeezes his hand. "Ilya. I'm alive. And you're here."

That softens something in Ilya's expression. His grip tightens, protective and warm.

They turn the corner of the hallway—

And stop.

The man who hit Shane sits on a bench outside the trainers' office, ice pack strapped to his jaw, another to his ribs. One eye is purpling fast. His lip is split. There's dried blood along his hairline.

Courtesy of Ilya.

He looks up when he hears voices—then freezes when he sees who's approaching.

The hallway thickens with tension instantly.

Shane's teammates straighten behind him like wolves bristling.
The injured player stiffens, fear flickering across his eyes.
But the most terrifying thing is Ilya's silence.

His entire body goes still.

His hand around Shane's waist tightens just enough for Shane to feel the tremor under his skin.

The player swallows. "Look… Hollander… I didn't mean to—"

"You did," Ilya growls.

The words reverberate through the narrow hallway like a warning siren.

Shane feels Ilya shift, weight changing like he's preparing to move forward. Shane immediately grips his forearm, grounding him.

"Ilya," he whispers. "Stop."

But Ilya's eyes stay locked on the man who blindsided Shane. His stare is sharp, dark, and far too calm — the kind of calm that means danger is seconds away.

"You think saying sorry is enough?" Ilya asks, voice low, accented, deadly. "You almost ended his season. You could have ended more."

The player's gaze flicks to Ilya's bruised knuckles, to the livid fury simmering under the surface. He flinches.

"This is hockey," the man mumbles defensively, though his voice shakes. "Hits happen."

"Not like that," Ilya snaps. "You knew what you were doing."

Shane steps slightly in front of Ilya — or tries to. Ilya immediately shifts with him, refusing to let him take even the smallest risk.

Shane's teammate Mason crosses his arms. "Dude, you deserve every bruise he gave you."

The player glares weakly. "Yeah? So what, Rozanov gets to—"

He stops when Ilya takes a single, slow step forward.

It's enough to make him go pale.

Shane lifts a hand to Ilya's chest. "Ilya. Look at me."

But Ilya doesn't.

Not at first.

His jaw twitches, muscles ticking in silent rage. His breathing is heavy, shoulders rigid as steel. The hallway seems to tilt — energy crackling like a storm about to break.

Finally, after several thick seconds, Ilya tears his eyes away from the injured player and meets Shane's.

And just like that, the storm breaks.

Not in violence.
But in vulnerability.

His anger melts into worry, into the raw fear he's been hiding under adrenaline and instinct.

"You're hurt because of him," Ilya whispers, voice more broken than furious.

Shane cups Ilya's cheek gently, ignoring the eyes watching. "I'm hurt, yes. But I'm not dead. And you didn't lose me."

Ilya's hand lifts to cover Shane's, fingers trembling.

Behind them, teammates shift awkwardly, pretending not to witness the intimacy settling like a soft blanket between them.

The enemy player stares, confused, uncomfortable, and maybe a little guilty for the first time.

Shane holds Ilya's gaze. "You already defended me. You already fought for me. You don't need to do anything else."

Ilya exhales sharply through his nose, the anger bleeding out. Slowly, he steps back—just one step—enough to show he's not about to lunge again.

But he doesn't look at the player.

Not once.

All his focus stays on Shane.

As they begin walking again, Ilya pauses, turning his head just enough to speak over his shoulder.

"But if you ever touch him like that again…"
His voice drops into something colder than ice.
"…I won't stop at bruises."

The player swallows hard. Doesn't dare reply.

Shane lightly elbows Ilya.
"I think he gets the message."

Ilya leans down and presses a soft kiss to Shane's temple — quick, hidden by the angle of their bodies, but unmistakably intimate.

"I don't care if he gets it," Ilya whispers. "I said it for me."

Shane blushes, leaning into him as they continue down the hallway.

Their teams following behind.

The man who hit Shane staying very, very still.

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The drive is quiet.

Not uncomfortable—just soft, heavy with exhaustion and everything they're not saying out loud yet. The city lights blur past the windows as Shane leans back in the passenger seat, eyes half-closed, head resting against the glass. Every bump in the road sends a dull ache through his ribs, but Ilya's hand is on his thigh the entire time, grounding, steady.

"You okay?" Ilya asks for the fifth time.

Shane smiles faintly. "Still alive. Still stubborn."

Ilya exhales something that sounds dangerously close to a laugh.

When they reach Ilya's apartment, he parks crookedly, barely caring. He's around the car in seconds, opening Shane's door, helping him out with slow, careful movements.

"I can walk," Shane mutters.

"I know," Ilya replies gently. "Let me help anyway."

Shane doesn't argue.

Inside, the apartment is warm and quiet, lights low, the familiar scent of coffee and clean laundry wrapping around them. Ilya kicks off his shoes, guiding Shane straight to the bedroom like it's instinct.

He helps Shane peel off his jacket, then his shirt, movements reverent, cautious around the bruises blooming across Shane's skin. Ilya's jaw tightens at the sight, but he doesn't say anything—just presses a kiss to Shane's shoulder, careful, apologetic.

"I'm fine," Shane murmurs.

"I know," Ilya says. "Let me take care of you anyway."

He eases Shane down onto the bed, stacking pillows until Shane's comfortable, adjusting them until the pressure on his ribs eases. Then he disappears briefly, returning with water and pain meds, kneeling beside the bed to hold the glass steady while Shane drinks.

Their eyes meet.

The adrenaline is gone now.
What's left is tenderness.

Ilya sits on the edge of the bed, brushing his thumb lightly over Shane's knuckles. His hands are still bruised, scraped raw from the fight.

"You scared me," he says quietly.

Shane squeezes his fingers. "You saved me."

Ilya shakes his head. "I would do worse than fight for you. You know that, yes?"

"I do," Shane whispers. "And I'd do the same for you."

The words hang between them—simple, heavy, true.

Ilya leans down, pressing a soft kiss to Shane's forehead, then to his temple, then carefully to the corner of his mouth. It's not rushed. It's not hidden.

It's home.

Ilya pulls the blankets up around Shane, tucking them in like something precious, irreplaceable. He turns off the lamp, leaving only the glow of the city filtering through the curtains.

"I'll stay," Ilya murmurs.

Shane's eyes drift closed, a faint smile on his lips. "I know."

Ilya settles beside him, one arm protective around Shane's waist, careful not to hurt him. Shane breathes in, slow and steady, finally safe enough to sleep.

The world can wait.

Tonight, they have each other.

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