

growing pains

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/74878506) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/74878506>.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid , Heated Rivalry_(TV)
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov , Yuna Hollander , David Hollander , Minor Original Supporting Characters
Additional Tags:	Blood and Injury , Tooth Trauma , Pneumonia , Hospitals , Whump , on-ice emergency , but he's really gonna be fine i promise , me: I love this character (sticks him in a blender) , Post-Canon , Book-compliant , this would probably count as sickfic if hockey players weren't insane , one blink-and-you-miss-it sex scene , One-shot , just made minor edits because i noticed an error that was bugging me sorry
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2025-11-28 Words: 7,451 Chapters: 1/1

growing pains

by [ausgezeichnet](#)

Summary

In which Shane Hollander strains a tendon, cracks a tooth, breaks a rib, and tries not to put a dent in his marriage.

Notes

I love Shane Hollander. Time to beat him up.

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

Shane felt sweat prickle at his hairline as he moved his way through the third chaturanga of his yoga practice for the day. Sometimes he liked the restorative element of a slow yoga session, but today he felt like pushing himself through the most challenging fast-paced vinyasa flow he could find on youtube.

The instructor on his phone screen was annoyingly cheerful, giving encouraging instructions in a bright voice as she pushed her way through the chaturanga and worked back up towards standing poses. Shane prided himself on his core strength, essential for strong skating, but he could feel himself start to shake after about fifteen seconds of holding extended side-angle pose. The more challenging version with both arms raised above his head, of course.

He felt the weight of eyes on the back of his neck and, in his peripheral vision, spotted Ilya observing him from the open doorway of their home gym. Shane ignored his husband's heavy gaze. He could look all he wanted. It certainly wouldn't affect what *Shane* was doing for his own health.

The instructor moved them to forward fold. Shane released his upper back, reaching towards his toes, but before he could fully relax the instructor announced another chaturanga. Shane swore internally. He was a professional athlete, for fuck's sake. The twenty-something blonde woman on his screen should not be doing better than he was. He silently vowed to find someone else's tutorials to follow in the future. This woman was clearly insane.

He pushed back into down dog, and heard Ilya let out a low whistle behind him as he raised his hips and ass. He moved through the chaturanga, trying not to let his arms shake with Ilya watching as he slowly lowered himself to the mat. Another down dog as the instructor gleefully commanded another round. Blonde yoga instructors were not to be trusted.

As Shane pushed back up into down dog yet again, it was possible that he pushed it just a little bit further that time, trying to reach his heels to the floor, even as he tried to match the rapid-fire pace of the instructor. He definitely was not trying to show off in front of his husband, who certainly did not work on his flexibility like Shane did, as evidenced by the yoga that Shane was definitely not struggling through.

Shane's mind started wandering as he began to wonder how quickly he could get Ilya to interrupt his yoga session and fuck him. Probably pretty quickly, if the instructor would let him stay in this position for more than two seconds. He pushed his heels towards the floor, trying to push his ass slightly further in the air, and almost immediately felt an unsettling pop in his right Achilles tendon. He immediately dropped out of the pose onto his hands and knees.

"Fuck," he said, reaching back to rub at his ankle.

"What?" Ilya asked, stepping into the room.

"Nothing," Shane said, cheeks flaming. "Felt something odd with my Achilles."

Ilya chuckled. "I cannot believe this," he said.

“Fuck off.”

“No, no. Is too good. Professional hockey player spends all day with knives on his feet, gets injured during yoga? You are unbelievable, *moy malenkiy krendel*.”

Shane flopped down on the ground and rolled his legs in front of him as the chirpy yoga instructor on his phone slid smoothly into half moon pose. He rolled his ankle in the air and felt a distinct twinge. Definitely at least a strained Achilles, which shouldn’t affect him too badly, except that tendon injuries were always a bitch, slow to heal and difficult to address directly. And the playoffs were looming on the horizon – if, of course, they managed to qualify.

Shane reached out his arm and scrabbled single-handed at his phone to hit the power button and shut the tutorial up. Ilya walked closer and extended his hand, and with a sigh, Shane accepted the help to his feet.

“Krendel?” he asked belatedly. His Russian was getting better, but that one was unfamiliar.

“Yes. My little pretzel,” Ilya answered, snaking his arm around Shane to press a kiss to his sweaty head.

Shane’s ankle twinged with every step towards the kitchen.

The team physio’s room was large, strewn with adjustable tables and cabinets of bandages and braces of every variety, complete with an ice bath pool in a separate annex. It was perfectly serviceable. Shane tried very hard not to compare it with the Voyageurs’ objectively larger and better-funded facilities. He was grateful to be here, with this organization, attempting a single-leg pistol squat on a bosu ball that had seen better days.

Rosie, the physio on staff today, frowned at him as he flinched.

“Your range of motion is significantly compromised compared to your left side,” she said.

Shane liked Rosie. She was a no-nonsense Chinese woman, and sometimes it was just nice to see another Asian face around the hockey rink. As a further bonus, she was a lesbian. This team really was super gay. Plus, he had a good track record of getting along with people named Rose.

“Yeah,” he said, trying to squat again and feeling that telltale twinge in his tendon. “I can feel that.”

It wasn’t an agonizing pain, like a break or tear. It was more like a sore tooth that you couldn’t stop feeling with your tongue. He kept wanting to flex his ankle, to poke at the pain and see if he could somehow make the tendon click back into place like tightening a loose cog. He dropped lower into the squat, and now the ache was a burning, twisting discomfort wrapping its way around his tendon like a clawed hand.

“Hey, don’t push it,” she said. “This was for assessment purposes, not a workout.”

Shane sighed, stepping off the bosu ball and sitting down on it instead.

Rosie squinted at his calves. “Well, no yoga for a little while. Or at least nothing intense for a few weeks. Try to ease off running, as well. Anything that can put stress on the tendon while you try to heal, especially with the playoffs coming up. Skating should be fine.”

Shane was an adult man. He was not going to start pouting at the medical professional who was just attempting to make him better so that he could do his job as an elite-level athlete. It was just... he liked his routine.

“And strained Achilles usually comes from an imbalance. Usually weak calves.”

“But I’m a hockey player.”

She shrugged. “Strong legs, but you can still have weak calves compared to the rest of your posterior chain. Start with calf raises. Straight-leg, then bent-knee. Start with two sets of 20 every day, then increase as you get stronger. That ankle will probably be sore for a while. We can talk about taping options for games if necessary.”

He nodded at her, mentally adjusting his timetable in his head. He internally vowed that he would have the strongest calves in the NHL by the time playoffs rolled around.

Before she turned to leave, Rosie fixed him with a hard glare. “And *don’t* overdo it,” she said. “You’ll only make it worse.”

Shane sighed, adjusting his mental schedule yet again. Perhaps an hour of calf raises daily was a little much.

Shane sometimes forgot that he had married a comedian. Ilya was delighted with his new calf raise obsession. He alternated between staring at Shane’s ass as it flexed (not that that was anything out of the ordinary) or adding sound effects to the raising and lowering of Shane’s heels. Eventually, Shane would get annoyed and tackle him to the bed. This was, perhaps, encouraging Ilya’s sound effect habit, which was slightly sillier than his usual brand of smart-mouthed teasing.

Shane’s tendon was still tender. They had two weeks left in the regular season and were hovering between third and fourth in the Atlantic Division of the Eastern Conference, which meant that a playoff berth was close but not guaranteed. Montreal was in first, and while they were currently tied with Detroit, Tampa was only one point behind. He needed to strengthen his calves, and Ilya was *not helping*.

Or so he told him, before Ilya leaned in to kiss him and all his worries flew right out of his head.

His ankle was taped for their next game, away at Detroit. Shane still felt a twinge whenever he stopped too short, but hockey skates were already designed for maximum ankle support

and he could honestly say that the injury wasn't bothering him too much. The goal and assist that he had managed to put up so far would support that conclusion.

They were tied 2-2, ten minute into the third. They had been playing hard all evening, the kind of game that came with late-season grim determination to make it to the playoffs, and the knowledge that the season was far from over. Wiebe had been clear in the locker room: no stupid penalties that could cost them the season. Keep it clean, play their game, get the points.

Shane caught the puck on his tape and found himself face-to-face with Thompson, the enormous Detroit defenseman. He feinted left, then deked right, and there he was with a breakaway. The Detroit stadium erupted in boos as he accelerated towards the other end of the ice, scanning for an opening as he charged forward. He could hear the Detroit defenseman hot on his heels. Trying not to let the opportunity get away from him, he flicked the puck towards the upper right corner of the net, only to watch the shot get deflected off the goalpost.

Damn.

The puck was still loose, but now Thompson was there. But so was Haas. They ended up in a pile in front of the net, the Detroit goalie clearly annoyed by the scrum right at his goalbox. They would be lucky as hell not to get a goalie interference call on this play. He caught sight of the puck, but so did Haas, and so did Thompson, and they all ended up nearly crashing into each other as Haas somehow managed to jab the puck through the goalie's flailing legs.

The goal buzzer sounded in the disappointed arena. But Shane nearly didn't hear it, instead doubling over to grasp at his mouth. Haas had turned to him, clearly expecting a celly before he realized that something was wrong. The jabbing motion that Haas used to poke the puck into the goal had somehow sent the butt of Haas' stick right into Shane's teeth. Of course he was wearing a mouthguard, but it had been a hard, direct hit.

"Oh my god," Luca said. "Oh my god. Are you okay?"

Shane waved a hand at him, sliding away from the Detroit goal. He snuck a glance up at the scoreboard, where he could see his own doubled-over form projected large on the jumbotron. Of course. Fuck, this hurt like a bitch. His whole mouth was vibrating, and the tooth that had been hit most directly still felt like it was vibrating from the impact, but at least the refs didn't seem to have discounted the goal. 3-2. That was good. That was worth it.

He pulled his mouthguard out, then stared down into it as he saw a significant portion of his front left tooth sitting inside the mouth guard. His gums were also definitely bleeding. His whole mouth was throbbing. Fuck. This was going to make blowjobs really complicated, wasn't it.

"Fuck," Shane said, staring down at the pearly white of his tooth. He wasn't vain, exactly, but he really liked his teeth and had worked hard to keep them as intact as he could manage while working as a professional hockey player. Certainly more intact than Ilya's hodge-podge of a mouth. Images flashed in his mind of that Chicago defenseman from the playoffs a few years prior, toothless after catching a puck to the mouth.

“Oh my god,” Luca said. He was watching ashen-faced over Shane’s shoulder. “I am so sorry. Holy fuck. I have broken Shane Hollander.”

Shane straightened, and made eye contact with a concerned Ilya as he skated towards the bench. Haas was certainly more comfortable in his sophomore season, but he knew that he still idolized Shane and Ilya. This probably wasn’t going to help his nerves around them.

“It’s fine,” Shane said to a still-stricken Haas, skating right beside him as they headed to change lines. “We’re hockey players. What are a few broken teeth, eh?”

To add insult to injury, they went into overtime when Detroit scored a few minutes later. Shane had never been more grateful than when Ilya scored the game-winning goal in the first overtime period, nearly guaranteeing them a playoff spot if they won at least one of their games next week, assuming Tampa also lost at least once. He let out a sigh of relief from the bench, but still smiled wide. The playoffs were coming, and he already felt like he was falling apart.

Back in Ottawa, Ilya went out of his way to buy a physical copy of the newspaper, because he had a sentimental streak a mile wide and was actually quite unapologetic about it. The sports section featured a full-color photograph of Shane smiling from the bench with his bloody mouth and cracked tooth, under the headline “No Longer Toothless: Cens Likely Heading to Playoffs.” Ilya was going to frame it. Shane hated him.

He wasn’t really supposed to run, and he had already taken a light five-kilometer jog that morning, which he had decided didn’t count. He couldn’t do yoga without risking further strain to his Achilles. So Shane spent the morning sitting on the couch, not-watching some kind of cooking show. He also ran a load of laundry, carefully matched and folded all their socks, vacuumed despite Ilya yelling from the other room that they paid their house cleaner for a reason, and answered some emails from his accountant and personal stylist. He brushed Anya until her coat was gleaming and clipped her toenails. None of it distracted him from prodding at the empty space in his mouth with his tongue.

He had an emergency dentist appointment arranged later in the afternoon. It was probably not a good sign that they had an emergency dentist on speed dial, but to be fair, it was usually Shane calling on Ilya’s behalf to schedule the appointment. Ilya had no problem making business phone calls in English, but Denise, the receptionist at their dentist’s office, simply *adored* Shane, and Ilya loved to tease him about their impending marriage. Never mind that they were already married to each other.

When Shane had finally run out of tasks and was simply sitting on the couch, mostly staring off into space, Ilya flopped down on the couch beside him. “You are still beautiful, you know.”

“What?”

“Even with fucked-up teeth. You are beautiful,” he said.

“Thank... you?”

Ilya rolled his eyes. “You are moping.”

“Am not.”

“Good. You should not be worried. The fucked-up teeth make you look a little less like a kitten. Very dangerous. Is sexy.”

“No, fuck off. I’m not *moping*. I just can’t do anything interesting.”

Ilya shifted, turning towards him more fully. “You have not been injured often like this,” he observed. “Small, but persistent. Nothing to do.”

“No,” Shane agreed. “Not compared to most hockey players.”

“Yes. Is because you are old. Body is falling apart. Very tragic.”

Shane shoved him hard, surprising Ilya, who fell backwards on the couch and started laughing. The sight of his beautiful husband laughing, of course, made Shane climb on top of him and start kissing him senseless.

The kiss quickly grew heated as Ilya stuck his tongue into Shane’s mouth and bucked up his hips, and Shane cradled Ilya’s head so he could dive in deeper. He was just starting to think about pulling off his shirt and probably also his pants, when it occurred to him that he hadn’t checked the time in a while. He looked up at the clock on the wall. Fuck. He was going to be late.

Shane pulled back from the kiss. “I have to go to the dentist,” he said, breathing hard.

Ilya threw an arm over his eyes. “Of course. Your one true love.”

Shane climbed off of Ilya. He looked down at his crazy grinning husband, then blinked. “Your teeth are bloody,” he said.

Ilya ran his tongue over his teeth, then smiled again and looked up at Shane. “I think I cut my tongue. What I get for having a hot hockey player husband with fucked up teeth.”

Shane gets a temporary cap put on his tooth that afternoon, and definitely doesn’t jerk off in the shower to the image of Ilya’s bloody, feral, possessive smile.

They made the playoffs, ending up in second place to the division while Detroit ended up in third after a hard-fought win over Tampa. So it will be Detroit again for the first series, but Ottawa will have home-ice advantage for the first two games.

The first game was a rout, Ottawa confident and fueled by the roar of their home crowd. It was almost as overwhelming as the roaring of a Montreal playoff crowd. Maybe even more

overwhelming. There was a difference between rabid fans waiting for the return of a dynasty and fans who had never won a cup, waiting for the first taste of glory.

The second game was physical and nasty, in a way that the previous game had not been. Wiebe kept yelling from the sidelines about the refs missing sticking and holding calls, and Shane ignored his twinging ankle and throbbing tooth to throw everything he had into skating. They were tied 1-1 in the second, thanks to a goal from Haas and their shitty penalty kill.

He was racing down the left side of the rink, fighting for control the puck against Detroit's Berglund when Thompson found him again, this time with a hard, clean body check into the boards. Shane managed not to go head-first, but his left side collides with the side of the rink at an awkward angle and he felt a bright burst of pain in his ribs.

It took him a second to catch his breath, by which time Detroit had iced the puck. He took deep breaths, feeling the precise point when breathing turned into pain. Fuck. Definitely at least one cracked rib.

He stood up and found Ilya's eyes. He nodded, once, before he skated over to take the face-off. Bruised ribs in the playoffs would be a bitch and a half, but that was hockey. He tried not to skate scared for the rest of the night, although he did feel slightly more tentative. Shane struggled to find scoring chances for the rest of the night.

They lost. After the game, Dr. Terry determined that Shane had a cracked rib. Big surprise. He would rather have three more cracked ribs, if it meant winning.

Ilya was quiet when they got home. They both were. Between the stop at Dr. Terry's office and scarfing down some food, it was already late. Anya was already at her pet hotel, since they had to leave for Detroit on an early morning flight tomorrow. The house was oddly silent without her.

Shane followed Ilya to their bedroom, letting him take the lead as he suddenly turned and pulled Shane's shirt over his head. He ran gentle fingers over the vivid bruises already starting to form, and Shane hissed even at the light pressure. Ilya pulled back his hand, then reached down to grab Shane's hand and kissed the back of it in silent apology.

It was strangely chaste and silent, though not awkward. They were both exhausted, even though standing shirtless in front of Ilya was making Shane feel vulnerable and therefore predictably horny.

Ilya noticed, and smiled that infuriating crooked grin. He used his grip on Shane's hand and led him to the bed, pushing him down and unceremoniously pulling down his post-game sweatpants. They did little more than rut together, Ilya on top. They breathed hard, nosing at each other's hairlines as Ilya's big hand around their cocks brought them to completion.

Ilya accidentally collapsed on top of Shane after he came, perhaps more due to exhaustion than the release. The sudden pressure on his ribs made Shane yelp, and Ilya mumbled an

apology before settling down beside his husband and pressing more apology kisses to his temple. They drifted off to sleep, after Shane triple-checked all fourteen of his alarms to wake them up for their morning flight.

Shane started coming down with a cold the day of their third playoff game, which was a bitch and a half with broken ribs. The main symptom was a deep, wet cough, and he spent the morning before the game curled in bed in their hotel room. The plane had been awful. The airport was a hellscape at the best of times.

Ilya, for once, was the one up and moving around that morning. He brought Shane a smoothie from a shop down the street, then ordered them room service paninis for lunch. He doesn't say much, and Shane, for once, was grateful for whatever mood Ilya was in. He couldn't endure Ilya's teasing right now, even if he misses his husband's voice.

They had to leave soon. Shane had to get up and get ready and they had to leave. The bus was scheduled in about half an hour. It was a short drive from the hotel to the rink and then the game would start, without the advantage of their roaring home crowd.

Shane sat on their bed massaging his temples, trying to convince his pounding headache to go away. It was probably all the dry air from the hotel air conditioning. His ankle twinged as he folded his legs underneath him, his ribs sent a fresh stab of pain with every heartbeat, his head was killing him, his lungs felt like they were filled with soup, and he couldn't stop running his tongue over the temporary cap on his broken fucking tooth. He should take his painkillers, but they made him dizzy, and he had to play. And the playoffs were only *starting*.

"Sweetheart," Ilya began tentatively. "Maybe... maybe is better to sit this one out?"

Shane looked up at his husband through his fingers as he kept the pressure on his aching head. His husband, who was clearly out of his mind. He would love nothing more than to be home in their bed and pass the fuck out, but they had a game in about six hours. After everything they'd sacrificed to get to this moment, Shane couldn't possibly sit this one out. Ilya deserved this cup so much. The whole team did. Shane did, after the fucking year they'd had.

"What are you talking about?" he asked. "We're down in the series."

"We are," Ilya agreed. "And you look like you recently survived a long winter war. It is not a problem, to take one game off."

Shane huffed an annoyed breath, ignoring the way that the air crackled through his lungs.

"It's some bruised ribs! And a cold. What do you want me to do about it?"

"Hmm. Rest? Heal? I am worried about the way your lungs sound."

"Who are you and what have you done with Ilya Rozanov? This is the *playoffs*."

Ilya visibly hesitated. Shane knew he was just as competitive as Shane himself, but his protective husband instincts were making him into a worrier. A flash of annoyance raced through him. He loved how careful Ilya was with him, but they were professionals, and he didn't want to be coddled by his captain. He had spent so much of his career being called a pretty boy and a pussy, and so much of his career proving that he was just as tough and even more talented than the rest of them.

"If I was any other player on the team, would you be telling me to sit this out?" he asked.

Ilya hesitated again, but nodded. "You could be... what is it? A liability out there. It could be dangerous."

Shane rubbed his temples more intensely. Fuck this. "Oh, now I'm liability?"

"Not like that. I mean you could get hurt worse, make stupid mistake because you are sick. We need you for the rest of the playoffs. It is *one game*."

Shane glowered at him. This was not romantic. It was overprotective and overbearing and ridiculous and certainly not charming.

Ilya flashed his ridiculous crooked smile. "This team has never won the cup. What is one more season, huh?"

Okay, fine, he was a little charmed. He always was. But that didn't mean that Ilya was right.

"Fuck that," he said. "We're winning this. Because I'm playing,"

Ilya only sighed.

At Ilya's insistence, Shane found himself back in the physio suite for a meeting with the team doctor before the game. Ilya didn't quite frog-march his husband through the halls after the bus arrived at the rink, but it was a near thing. Dr. Terry was perfectly nice, but Shane still frankly thought this was unnecessary. He was a hockey player, and he had a job to do. If he was still upright, he would be fine.

Dr. Terry frowned as she pressed her stethoscope to his back, listening as he tried to take deep breaths in and out, interrupted by one coughing spell.

She took the stethoscope out of her ears as she stepped around the examination table to face him. She had curly, sandy-blonde hair that reminded him of Ilya, who was waiting on one of the physio tables outside of Dr. Terry's guest office in the Detroit rink. He could see his husband tossing a ball of bandages back and forth between his big hands through the half-drawn blinds. Some Detroit player was having his hamstrings stretched out on a table across the room.

Dr. Terry stepped over to the computer terminal and made a note of something before she spoke. "Frankly, I'm concerned about the level of bruising on your ribs and the way your

lungs sound. I'm hearing a crackling sound that I don't like. I would recommend a chest scan to check for pneumonia."

Shane could feel the crackling with every breath. Okay. That was fine. He could do a chest scan, if it meant keeping himself healthy for the rest of the playoffs.

"Okay," Shane said. "Can you get me an appointment for tomorrow?"

"Sure, we can set that up for you," she said, typing something else into the computer.

Shane fidgeted his thumbs, and tried to take another deep breath. He really did not feel great, but it would be fine. "What about tonight?" he asked.

She sighed. "If you were any other patient, in any other situation, I would say absolutely not. I'm inclined to bench you."

Shane's stomach dropped through the floor. He had sat out playoff games before, mostly after the concussion, but the idea of missing *this* game in particular was sending a swirl of panic through his whole body. Surely this was different. Playing after a concussion could be life-threatening. He was playing injured, but it was a series of small things that he could absolutely shake off. He really felt fine.

"What's the worst that could happen?" he tried.

Dr. Terry leveled him with an assessing gaze. "Strenuous physical activity is not recommended for possible pneumonia patients. Or you could hurt your rib worse, collapse a lung. That would be the worst-case scenario, in my assessment. I'm about to send off the report to Wiebe recommending that you be benched."

"No, please – I have to play."

"Do you?"

He nodded, meeting her eyes and pouring every drop of Canadian sincerity into his pleading gaze. "It's the playoffs and we're down 2-1. I have to be there."

She narrowed her eyes. "You are very expensive, Mr. Hollander. I won't be held liable for breaking you. I have a job to do, for this team."

"So do I."

She sighed, pinching the bridge of her nose between her fingers. He thought he heard her mutter something about hockey players under her breath.

"You'll go to the scan tomorrow?" she asked.

He nodded. Fuck you, Ilya, this was going his way after all.

"And the scan tomorrow determines that you have pneumonia, you will accept the course of treatment and the determination of the doctors who may recommend that you sit out a game?"

Or even two?”

Shane nodded more.

“Fine,” she said. “I’m telling Wiebe to put your line on shorter shifts, since your aerobic capacity might be more limited than usual, and to be mindful of resting you. And for the love of god, don’t take another hit to the ribs.”

Shane left her office with a small smile and an appointment at a local Detroit hospital saved in the calendar on his phone. Ilya stood up and dropped the ball of bandages he had been tossing as soon as Shane entered the main physio area. “What did she say?” Ilya asked as they began walking out of the medical suite together.

“Chest scan tomorrow just in case, but I’m cleared to play for tonight.”

“Why the chest scan?”

“I told you, just in case. I’m fine.”

“In case of what?”

“In case of... just in case, that was all she said. Now would you stop worrying? I’m fine.”

Ilya was silent as they walked together to the locker room to get changed, but Shane could feel his husband’s eyes tracking him, even when his line was preparing to take the first shift on the ice. He tried very hard not to cough, to not look as bad as he felt. They had a game to win, and neither of them could afford to be distracted.

After a sticking penalty actually gets called correctly for once in the first, Ilya and Shane are on the power play together. Playing together was always easy, always intuitive and a little bit magic. But playing together in the playoffs, with the entire Detroit arena chanting for the downfall? There was hardly anything more satisfying.

Shane slid a clean pass to Ilya, who passed it right back. They wove their way down the ice, passing back and forth. It was like there was nobody else on the ice at all, like they were playing around in practice rather than in one of the most competitive games of their lives. Shane saw an opening, but Ilya was better positioned to take it. He looked left and passed right, but didn’t have a chance to hear the satisfying thwack of the puck finding his husband’s tape, because there was *fucking Thompson* again, barreling down at him and checking him as if he hadn’t noticed that Shane was already passing the puck. *This will be a penalty for sure*, he thought, before Thompson was crashing into him and he was crashing into the boards again.

The pain was worse this time, sharper and more insistent. He tried to get up and skate it off, but suddenly he realized he couldn’t draw in a full breath. He started gasping, hunched forward in a kneeling position. His ears were ringing.

Suddenly, someone was leaning over him, a gentle hand resting on his back. *Ilya*. He was saying something. Shane couldn't hear him. He couldn't catch his breath.

He sat down on the ice, Ilya's hand on his back the only thing keeping him upright. He could see other teammates making a loose circle around him on the ice, to protect them from prying eyes, but there was no way that this moment wouldn't go super viral on the internet in the circles that loved to love and loved to hate them. Ilya was still talking to him. He was suddenly so tired. He wanted to lay down. He pushed back on Ilya's hand and felt himself gently lowered to the ice.

It felt like there was an anvil sitting on his chest, and every breath seemed to ratchet up the sharp, stabbing pain in his back. The medics were arriving, pushing their way through the protective ring of players, and suddenly Shane could hear again.

"Sweetheart," Ilya said. "Shane."

"I can't breathe," he gasped.

"You can," Ilya said. "In, out. Match me."

Shane shook his head. He really, actually, couldn't. It was starting to become a problem. He felt dizzy and weak. Ilya's worried face was a blur outlined in a halo of spinning lights.

He was quickly bundled off the ice, and then the medics were loading him into an ambulance, saying something about a collapsed lung. That didn't sound good. Shane was only looking at Ilya, who looked ashen and terrified. Shane wished there was something he could do. He wished they could get back on the ice. Had Ilya scored off that pass? He hadn't been able to see.

Then he realized that Ilya was still in the ambulance with him, and they were in the first period of a playoff game. That wouldn't do. "Get back out there," Shane said. Ilya shook his head at him, and the ambulance pulled out of the rink. The sirens weren't even on, so that meant it couldn't be too serious, even as the paramedics were poking something into his chest to release the air building up in his chest cavity.

Needless to say, Ottawa lost the game. A part of Shane – perhaps not the most rational part, or the part he was most proud of – wanted to yell at Ilya for coming with him. But he was too busy having nice doctors fuss over his lungs, with Ilya a looming presence in the back of the room.

Shane profusely thanked the doctors as they left his room, after informing him of the diagnosis: additional trauma to a cracked rib, which had caused a punctured lung on the ice, with the fun addition of a nasty case of pneumonia likely related to the first cracked rib.

Ilya was oddly quiet in the chair beside the bed, still in the pensive mood he had been in since the playoffs started. Shane didn't quite know what to make of him. Sure, this was bad news:

he would be out for the rest of the series, at least. But it wasn't entirely his fault. Bad luck and bad hits. That was hockey.

"Bad luck, eh?" Shane said. "Fucking Thompson."

"Yes," Ilya said. "Fucking Thompson."

Shane narrowed his eyes at his husband. "You okay?"

"Am *I* okay?"

"Yeah. You're being... y'know. Quiet."

Ilya studied him intently. There was something hurt in those hazel eyes.

"What did Dr. Terry tell you?"

"What?" Shane said. That didn't matter now. "I told you. Cracked rib. Guess she was right, huh?"

"No. Before the game. What did she tell you?"

Shane hesitated. "She was concerned about the bruising. And she wanted a lung scan."

Ilya stood abruptly from his chair and began pacing the small length of the hotel room.

"You said 'just in case.' You did not say she was already concerned about the pneumonia. She was, yes? Did she want to bench you?"

"Yes, but she agreed that I could play."

"Oh, because you asked real nice? Too Canadian. No one can say no."

Shane was starting to get annoyed. He was the one sitting in a hospital bed, and it was all going to be fine. Why was Ilya being like this?

"I'm a hockey player, Ilya! We play hurt *all the time*. Have you seen that clip of Campbell finishing a shift with a broken leg? You can't treat me like some kind of exception just because I'm your husband."

"We play hurt, yes," Ilya said. "But not *stupid*. You have pneumonia and your lung collapsed on the ice. You could not breathe."

"I know."

"This is not like you," Ilya said. "You are not reckless, not..." He flailed his hands searching in vain for a word, as he so rarely did these days.

Shane nodded, feeling tears prickle in his eyes.

Ilya turned, pacing back across the room. "Imagine I am there on the ice, watching you die. From what? From two bad hits and bad luck?"

"I'm here," Shane said weakly.

Ilya heaved a steadying breath, then bent down to press a kiss to Shane's forehead. Shane blinked at the unexpectedly tender gesture, and more tears slipped out. It was possible that he had been a little bit foolish.

"I love you," Ilya murmured, then pulled away. "I need some air."

He left, and Shane sunk into his hospital bed feeling very stupid and very small.

His parents came into the room as soon as Ilya left. They had been sitting in the waiting room to give Shane and Ilya their space. Apparently Ilya had stopped by to let them know that he was taking a walk, and asked them to come into the room so that Shane wouldn't be alone, which was so considerate and so Ilya that it almost made Shane mad.

"I just... I just wanted to win it for him," Shane said, tears slipping down his face. He felt about a million years old. His ribs hurt even through the painkillers and the antibiotics were helping but he still couldn't draw a full breath and he had a cracked fucking tooth underneath the plastic-y temporary cap and this was all so, deeply, incredibly stupid.

"We're married now. It feels like we shouldn't be fighting like this," he continued.

"Oh, honey," Yuna said. "You scared Ilya half out of his mind. You scared all of us. I'm not surprised he's reacting like this."

"If marriage was the cure for arguments, there would be a lot less divorce in the world," David added.

Shane sighed. He knew all this. "You two never argued like this," he muttered. It was true. Of course they didn't agree on everything, but they never blew up at each other like he and Ilya sometimes did.

Yuna fixed him with a flat stare. "We never took the kinds of risks you take. The playoffs matter, but not more than your life."

Shane slumped down further in the bed. He knew that she was probably right, but the more he thought about it, the worse he felt about the comparison between his parents' marriage and his own. They were nice, steady, normal people. He had always envisioned that for himself, until he fell in love with his asshole rival. Who he loved, deeply. But still.

He didn't know why these arguments were still happening with him and Ilya. Oh, god, were they headed for divorce already? It would be so embarrassing to be the first gay divorced NHL players. That was far worse than being the first gay married NHL players, which was already embarrassing in its own way. And then which team would take him once they broke up? Ilya would certainly get the Cens in the divorce. He was the captain.

Yuna put a hand to Shane's forehead as if she was checking his temperature, like he wasn't hooked up to a million hospital monitors. Still, the gentle pressure steadied his racing mind. He realized the heartbeat monitor had been ticking up and up as he began to panic.

"I'm sorry," Shane said, and tried to calm his breathing. Fuck, it still felt like his chest was stuffed with cotton. Yuna busied herself with fluffing the pillows behind his back. He felt about 12 years old, staying home from school with the flu and being forced to drink endless cups of steaming water and bone broth.

"Just focus on getting better," David said, lowering himself into the chair at the side of the bed. In that moment, for the first time, it occurred to Shane that his father looked old.

"Ilya will be there. That boy loves you," Yuna said. She had apparently determined that the pillows were satisfactory, and she gently stroked her son's dark hair.

Shane closed his eyes and let the now-steady beep of his own heartrate monitor lull him into an exhausted sleep.

When he woke up again, Ilya was back, sitting in the chair by his bedside with an untouched cup of tea in his hands. He smiled at Shane, even though he looked exhausted.

"I'm sorry," Shane said, as his opening. It was true.

"I know," Ilya said, and waited.

"I should have been honest with you about what Dr. Terry said. She was concerned about the pneumonia. She wanted me benched and I insisted on playing."

Ilya leaned forward and remained silent. Shane continued, somewhat desperately.

"I still don't think it was the wrong decision to play. I just got unlucky with the second hit. But I should have been honest with you and let you know what was happening."

"I'm your husband," Ilya said.

"Yes. Exactly," Shane said, and felt more tears gather at the corner of his eyes. This was so stupid. "We're a team. Well. We're on a hockey team, but we're also our own team. We make decisions like that together."

Ilya nodded and leaned forward, taking Shane's hand in his own. He seemed to be chewing something over. Shane waited breathlessly for him to speak, and not just because of the pneumonia.

"You say you choose me over hockey," Ilya said.

"Of course," Shane answered, uncomfortably aware that his answer would not always have been so automatic.

“And you know I choose you over hockey, as well.”

“Yes.”

“Then why not choose *yourself* over hockey? I know you are competitive son of a bitch, but you do not have to prove anything by puncturing your own lung. We are too old for this kind of stupid.”

“I... it’s not about hockey, necessarily,” Shane said.

Ilya raises his eyebrows at him. He looks unfairly hot with the extra stubble of a playoff beard. Always golden. “No? Then what?”

“You’re going to tell me I’m being an idiot,” he said.

“Probably. Out with it, Hollander.”

“I just... Ottawa took a risk, taking me on. Taking on all the media scrutiny and the salary cap space, and... all of it.”

Ilya scoffed. “Oh, yes, big risk. Get second-best player in league to join best player in league. So generous.”

Shane swallowed instead of taking the bait. This mattered. “And... I know I haven’t acknowledged this enough. But you gave up so much for me, Ilya. I see that. And I wanted to make this shitshow of a year worth it. I wanted to get you another cup.”

Ilya still hadn’t let go of his hand. He rubbed a gentle thumb along Shane’s knuckles.

“There is no I in team, Hollander,” he said.

“But there is an I in ‘suck my dick,’ right?”

Ilya smiled at that ghost of a memory. “You understand I do not need another cup to be glad that my husband is playing with me?”

“Yes.”

“And you do know that this team is lucky to have you, and anyone who cannot see what you have contributed this year has pulled their toque over their eyes?”

“Yes.” Shane definitely was not blushing. It was simply unfair that Ilya could still do this to him.

“And you do know that there is not anything in the world I would rather have than my husband, with two lungs that work? Even a Stanley Cup? Even twenty Stanley Cups?”

Shane was definitely blushing.

“Of course, Ilya. I- of course.”

“Hmm,” Ilya said, leaning back in the hospital chair without letting go of Shane’s hand.
“Good start. But I am not all the way convinced. We will have to revisit this, when you are better.”

Shane let out a deep breath, which hurt like a bitch, which he quite possibly deserved.

He was looking forward to revisiting that idea, though.

Detroit knocked Ottawa out of the playoffs in the first round, which sucked. But despite his aching body, Shane felt lighter as they wrapped up their lives in Ottawa for the season and started to head for the cabin. No one could doubt his commitment to the team now, he supposed. His husband loved him, no matter what. He had so much to be grateful for.

Plus, he finally had time to make a proper dentist appointment, which he was perhaps unreasonably excited about. Whatever. Ilya could make fun of him all he wanted.

They’ll get it next year. He knows they will.

End Notes

Hope you enjoyed! I wrote this in two days after reading both Shane/Ilya books in a week after seeing the trailer for the show. To say that I am excited... might be an understatement.

Edit 12/7: I'm on tumblr @oldguardians! Also I made a very detailed timeline for the book and show, which you can find [here](#)

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!