i know you by your heart (i will call you by your name)

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at https://archiveofourown.org/works/75717496.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid, Heated Rivalry (TV)
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Ilya Rozanov, Shane Hollander
Additional Tags:	Episode: s01e04 Rose (Heated Rivalry), Fix-It, Emotional Hurt/Comfort, Breaking Up & Making Up, Getting Together, Love Confessions, Lack of Communication, POV Ilya Rozanov, loverboy ilya rozanov, Mutual Pining, Angst with a Happy Ending
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2025-12-13 Words: 2,419 Chapters: 1/1

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by justhockey

Summary

He wanted to take it back instantly. Wanted to swallow his name down, down, down, shove it back into his heart where he's been hiding it for - god - *years*. He wanted to go back in time a few seconds, to just before the moment when he ruined it all. He'd call him Hollander, instead. He'd whisper something sweet in Russian so Shane would never know - so Ilya could speak his feelings into existence without Shane hearing them.

He'd do anything at all to fix it.

(Or, Shane leaves. Then he comes back.)

Notes

Title from *Rubber Band Man* by Mumford & Sons and Hozier.

See the end of the work for more notes

It just slipped out, a thing he couldn't hold back. It tumbled from his lips unbidden, like a plea or a prayer, in reverent adoration. It felt good, the way his mouth held his name - the way his tongue curled around the word. It felt *right.*

Then Shane had said it back; *Ilya,* whispered against his lips in shock and awe.

And then he felt Shane's entire body freeze, as if he were bracing for a hit on the ice. He was tense in his arms in a way Ilya had never experienced before, because he's so used to Shane melting for him. So used to him being soft and sweet and pliant the second Ilya gets his hands on him.

He wanted to take it back instantly. Wanted to swallow his name down, down, down, shove it back into his heart where he's been hiding it for - god - *years.* He wanted to go back in time a few seconds, to just before the moment when he ruined it all. He'd call him Hollander, instead. He'd whisper something sweet in Russian so Shane would never know - so Ilya could speak his feelings into existence without Shane hearing them.

He'd do anything at all to fix it.

He'd said Hollander like *it's okay.* Like *this is nothing.* Like *we can go back to normal, we can pretend this never happened.*

And then he said Hollander like *please.* Like *stay.* Like *don't walk away from this. Us.*

It wasn't enough.

Ilya hasn't moved. He *can't* move. He's frozen in the exact same position that Shane left him. Their come is drying on Ilya's stomach, he can still taste Shane on his tongue, and he can feel Shane's absence in every corner of the room. In every beat of his heart. It's so potent that Ilya aches with it, a real, visceral pain that starts in his chest and blooms outwards, like his blood is carrying it through every inch of his body.

He's been so careful for so long. He's held all his too-big, too-scary feelings locked beneath the cage in his chest. He's hidden it, buried it, denied - even to himself - that it ever even existed. For years of his life, Ilya has pretended that he doesn't love Shane Hollander.

But then he'd thought - well.

It was stupid. Silly. A childish, impossible dream. He thought he could maybe dare to want more. He thought he might be allowed to ask for that. But Shane is good, and honest, and kind. He has friends, and family, and a whole country that worships the ground he walks upon. He is too good for Ilya. Too sweet for someone so broken.

He knows that Shane wants him, of course. He isn't stupid and he isn't blind.

Shane's texts are always eager, especially the closer they get to playing each other - the closer they get to *seeing* each other. He messages Ilya first, sometimes, when Ilya is trying to push

his luck and see if he can get Shane to break first. He does, when the anticipation is too much and he can't stand to wait a moment longer.

And when they finally get those stolen hours together, Shane is…incandescent.

He lights up around Ilya, like he finally gets to drop the act and simply be. He seeks Ilya's touch like a moth seeks out the flame, even knowing it could burn them. He soaks up Ilya's praise like he might die of thirst without it. He's lighter with Ilya. More honest. More *himself.* Like a flower unfurling its petals.

Ilya knows that's why he ran.

He'd been so careful, the way he'd planned it all. The way he'd asked Shane to stay, without any pressure or expectation, when was relaxed and satiated after sex. The way he'd cooked for him without making it into a thing. Every single step had been so thoroughly curated to *not* trigger Shane's startle reflex.

And then one single slip and…boom.

He saw it on his face the moment Ilya said his name - the moment Shane said it back. He saw the panic and the fear as the realisation hit: *this thing between them is real.* It's not just sex (though even when it *was,* it was because that's all Ilya had to offer him). It certainly isn't anything close to casual. Shane wants Ilya, and Ilya wants Shane, and when confronted with that reality - and the fact that no matter how much they *want,* it doesn't mean they get to *have* - Shane felt like he had no other choice but to run.

It's too much. Too big of a risk. If it was just sex it would have been easier to hide. If it was just sex, it wouldn't feel so scary. But it's not. It has never been just *anything* with them. It's a messy, tangled heap of feelings that neither of them know what they're supposed to do with, or how they're supposed to make it work. And Ilya is simply not worth that kind of risk for someone like Shane.

Ilya doesn't blame him. He never could. But that the doesn't ease the sting of his heartbreak.

It doesn't change the fact that it feels like he's been split in two - like Shane plucked his still-beating heart right out of his chest and took it with him when he walked away. And now there's nothing left of Ilya except *this,* a lifeless, empty carcass, still struggling to catch his breath. Still trying to make himself move from the spot he has been glued to since the door slammed on Shane's retreating back.

Ilya knows Shane better than Shane thinks he does. Better than most people know him, probably. So he knows that Shane is scared. Ilya is scared, too. He just wishes they could be scared together.

It feels like his bones are made of lead as he pushes himself up into a standing position. Like the weight of the world, and a team, and his heartbreak are all bearing down on his shoulders and Ilya has nowhere to put it all down. He's slow as molasses as he moves through house, and it kind of feels like he's wading through waist-high snow - like there's some resistance that's fighting against him.

He's almost to the stairs when his doorbell rings.

Ilya thinks about ignoring it. There's only one person he wants to see right now, and it's not going to be him. There's not a single other person in the city - on the goddamn planet - that Ilya has the energy for right now. But then there's a quiet knock on the door, hesitant and unsure, and something in Ilya's chest twists hopefully.

He's certain he's about to be disappointed. Certain that what's left of his heart is going to break for a second time tonight. But the possibility, the quiet *what if,* is enough to have Ilya turning around heading towards his front door.

He holds his breath as he pulls it open.

He can't quite believe his eyes when he sees who's standing there.

"Sh-" Ilya begins, his name on the tip of his tongue before he swallows it back down. Corrects himself. Hides it all behind an ill-fitting mask. "*Hollander.*"

Shane winces. Ilya can barely look at him. He can't stand to see whatever expression he's wearing on his too-pretty face.

"Can I come in?"

The crack in Shane's voice feels like being raked over broken glass.

This man, with his big brown eyes and his sweet freckles and his gentle smile, has shattered Ilya's heart once already today. Ilya had handed it to him freely, open and honest and vulnerable, and Shane had thrown it back in his face. He'd walked out on him after Ilya had cracked his chest open and shown Shane the terrifying truth that lives inside of him.

Ilya holds the door open for him anyway.

"Okay," he says.

Because he thinks Shane could break him a thousand times over and Ilya still wouldn't be able to say no to him. He's ruined for anybody else.

As the door clicks shut behind Shane, the silence that surrounds them is awkward, stilted, hollow. It's strange for them. Right from the very beginning they've never been lacking in things to say to each other. Chirps, or light teasing, or raw, unfiltered flirting. And then, eventually, they would let their hands and bodies do the talking for them.

Now, though, there's nothing. Just an aching chasm stretching between them, filled with all the things they can't say. Or, perhaps, all the things they *shouldn't have* said.

Shane clears his throat but doesn't say anything. Ilya finally dares to look at him, and the sight absolutely guts him.

Shane looks, well, *wrecked.*

His hair is all over the place, like he's been running his hands through it over and over again. His eyes are glassy and ringed with red, as if he's been crying or very close to it. He's still dressed in Ilya's t-shirt and sweats that are too big for him, hanging loose off his lithe body. One of his hands in curled around his elbow like he's trying to hide away, close himself off, keep Ilya from seeing him too clearly.

But the thing is, Ilya has always been able to see Shane. Right from the very beginning.

From that very first moment in Regina, Saskatchewan, at the WJHC, Ilya has been able to see through Shane's carefully curated exterior. Past the golden boy image - past the perfect son, and hockey player, and teammate - Ilya has seen right down to the heart of Shane. To his soft, gooey center; to the boy who just wants to be good enough, exactly as he is, and is absolutely terrified that if people knew the truth about him they would look at him differently. See him as less than, simply for who he is. For who he *loves*.

"I'm sorry," Shane whispers, his quiet voice splitting the silence.

Ilya doesn't know what he's supposed to say to that, but Shane doesn't give him much time to think anyway.

"I shouldn't have reacted like that. I shouldn't have - I don't know." Shane sighs, runs his hand through his hair. "I shouldn't have walked out on you."

"No," Ilya says. "You shouldn't have. But is okay. I understand."

Shane grimaces, shaking his head. "No, no it's not okay. You were - *god.* You were perfect, Ilya."

His name on Shane's lips sounds like heaven.

It draws a quiet gasp out of Ilya, and he can't help himself when he takes a stumbling step forward. He just needs to be closer, needs Shane to touch him. But he stops, holds back, doesn't dare push this any further. It might kill him if he has to watch Shane turn his back on him again.

"You were so fucking good to me, and you asked me to stay, *fuck.*" Shane sounds agonised. "I was scared, Ilya. I was so scared, but that doesn't mean…it doesn't mean I-"

He falters, waves his hand around like he's searching for the right words but can't quite grasp them. He looks at Ilya, his expression so open and honest that every single emotion is written plainly across his face. His eyes are wet with unshed tears and it makes Ilya want to fold him into his arms and never let go, but he's still so scared.

So afraid he'll do something wrong again.

"*Ilya,*" Shane whispers.

And then he's crossing the distance between them, crashing into Ilya like he can't bear to be apart from him for a single moment longer.

For as long as they've known each other they have used their bodies to talk when words have failed. This is no different.

He clings to Ilya, winding his arms around his waist and burrowing his face into the curve of his neck. His palms press against Ilya's back like he's trying to merge them into one being, and Ilya can feel the frantic pounding of Shane's heart against his chest. Slowly, hesitantly, he allows himself to wrap his arms around Shane. And Shane…he softens into him, his whole body going lax as he allows Ilya to hold him up.

He presses frantic kisses to Ilya's neck, and jaw, and the top of his shoulder. He murmurs against Ilya's skin, words that Ilya can't hear but he can feel as Shane's breath fans hot against his throat.

"I'm scared," Shane says, pulling back to look at him. "I'm so fucking scared, Ilya, but I *want* you. I, god-"

It's like the words are lodged in the back of his throat but he can't shake them loose. He can't find a way to say them out loud.

Ilya takes pity on him and says them first.

"I love you."

He's thought the words a dozen times at least, has rolled them around his mouth and tested the weight of them on his tongue. Nothing feels quite as good as saying them, though.

Except. Ilya is met with silence; Shane is frozen in his arms, his eyes wide and his lips parted on a shocked inhale.

"I know I'm not supposed to. I know this was never supposed to mean so much. But-"

"I love you, too."

Shane's voice doesn't tremble. His hands don't shake. He meets Ilya's eyes with a clear-cut certainty. There's no doubt or confusion. There is no shame.

He's scared, yes. But he loves Ilya just like Ilya loves him.

"You - yes?"

English fails him, his mind too filled with love for him to focus on anything other than *ShaneShaneShane.*

"Yes," Shane says, and it sounds a lot like promise. "Yes, Ilya. I love you."

"*Shane.* Ya lyublyu tebya."

Shane kisses him. Slow, and deep, and long. All hot breath and wandering hands and tiny little whimpers that Ilya feasts on greedily. He can't get enough of this, of him, of this beautiful boy with freckles who finally, *finally* loves him back.

“Stay,” Ilya begs.

“Okay. Okay, I’ll stay.”

There’s so much to talk about, so many things they need to figure out, but none of that matters right now. All that matters is this, *him,* in Ilya’s arms, exactly where he has always belonged - the one place where he never has to hide.

Ilya is going to have this forever. He doesn’t know how, but he knows that it’s true.

“Shane,” he whispers again, just because he can.

“Ilya.”

And he is home.

End Notes

i fear they have consumed my every waking moment

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