

so take a step before you start falling

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so take a step before you start falling

by [thaws](#)

Summary

Set post-*The Long Game*

Since becoming captain of the Centaurs, commentators say that Ilya Rozanov has made a point to tone down his antics on the ice in. Comparatively speaking, he's become a serious, well-rounded player in recent years.

Except, of course, when something involves his husband.

Notes

andy sent [this clip](#) and said "type of shit to involve ilya tbh" + "ilya when someone trips shane: IM OUT FOR BLOOD" so naturally i felt the need to put it in fic form.

this one goes out to all my fellow hockey watchers/sufferers who also light up like they're 5 lamps hooked up to a powerstrip when guys start pushing and shoving each other on the ice

title from [darling by jackson marshall](#)

Since becoming captain of the Centaurs, commentators say that Ilya Rozanov has made a point to tone down his antics on the ice in. Comparatively speaking, he's become a serious, well-rounded player in recent years.

Except, of course, when something involves his husband.

It happens as often as one would think. Someone always has something to say, a chirp ready for him—and Shane is used to this. Shane, who was *born* to play hockey until the ice swallowed him up, has rarely ever responded to a chirp or taunt. It's simply not his style. Even after being outed, he prefers proving himself the superior player with the superior team—even if the Centaurs go home with a loss. Even if he's the only one to score a goal for all sixty minutes.

As Montreal's captain, he stepped up when he needed to. Became more aggressive and checked other players into the boards in response to a hit he didn't like or a missed call. Legal, of course—all within the bounds of the game, of course. Because that's part of the responsibility of being captain. But he's just as famous for his composure as he is his point-streak records.

When he comes to the Centaurs, that responsibility comes to rest on Ilya's shoulders. It's one he takes on gladly—a little too gleefully, Shane discovers.

The first time it happens, it's against Montreal. Of course it is. “Fucking Montreal,” Ilya mutters, chewing on his mouth guard as they skate out onto the ice.

Shane made him promise to behave. Ilya promised him that he would *try*—not a guarantee. The semantics, Ilya knew, would be important later.

In Ilya's defense, he doesn't start it. It's one of Shane's former teammates, a defenseman who Ilya thinks should have retired three seasons ago and hadn't done a thing to earn any of the Cups Shane earned for Montreal while he was there.

But, as Shane crosses into Montreal's zone with the puck, the defenseman trips him. It's clearly a trip. Ilya doesn't need to see the replay on the screens above to know it is even as the defenseman makes his excuses to the referee while Shane gets to his feet.

His husband looks only mildly exasperated as he turns and skates away without even so much as a backwards glance. Ilya knows that, in Shane's mind, he's already filed it away as a feeble attempt to disrupt his game and distract him.

The trip isn't called. The fans in the Ottawa arena get to their feet, booing and yelling “*refs you suck!*”—a chant Ilya has heard for as long as he's been on the ice—echoes across the arena,

and Ilya bites back a smile as the referees pointedly ignore the crowd and skate into Montreal's zone to drop the puck for a face-off.

It's common knowledge that Ilya goes to bat for his teammates, whether he wears the *C* or not. But as captain of the centaurs, he takes his position *very* seriously.

He pretends not to see Shane's narrowing eyes or the warning shake of his head as he glides down the ice towards the face-off circle. He waits until the very end of his shift to check the defenseman into the board. He makes sure it's legal, that the guy has plenty of time to see the hit coming and decide whether to take it or try and dodge it. The way he crunches against the board with a heavy *oomf* is very satisfying to Ilya. Even more satisfying is the eruption of cheers as the crowd recognizes it as a response to the uncalled trip.

On his way back to the bench, Ilya finds himself on the receiving end of Shane's scowl. Ilya winks at him, shrugging a shoulder before gracefully hopping the boards and falling heavily onto the bench beside him.

Neither of them are mic'd up. No one can pick up what they're saying, but it's plain to anyone within range of seeing or hearing that Shane is admonishing Ilya, and Ilya—he just smiles, his expression indulgent, his eyes glittering with mirth as sweat drips from his nose.

After the game, the press is eager to ask about the trip and answering hit on the ice. Ilya, shaking his damp curls out as he takes off his helmet, matter-of-factly informs them that he was simply doing his job and ends with a curt, “*next question*” which is undercut by the way the corners of his mouth try to twitch up into a smile.

The second incident occurs a month later. They're playing Boston, which Ilya normally enjoys. He likes seeing Cliff and a few other familiar faces from what will become an unrecognizable roster down the line, and likes irritating Boston fans who used to wear his jersey even more.

But one of their centers checks Shane against the boards. It's *technically* a clean hit. Technically. Shane kept his head up, which is all Ilya can hope for when these things happen, and he only looks a little winded when he skates back to the bench.

But Shane's on his team now. Shane is his *teammate*, and also his husband, and Ilya decides that he's just going to have to respond for the both of them. Since Shane deliberately and pointedly *won't*.

Again, Ilya makes sure it's legal. He *did* promise try and take less unnecessary penalties this year, and so far he's doing well. He's only lost his cool *once* and ended up in the box when he should have been on the ice—*very* good behavior for him, compared to how he used to be in Boston.

It feels *good*, driving that center into the boards. It feels *good*, hearing the satisfying clatter of equipment hitting the wall. It feels *good*, and *right*, and a little too much fun when two pairs of hands appear on his shoulders—belonging to Boston players, no less—to drag him away from their teammate.

They throw around the words *retaliation* and *targeted* but Ilya waves them away. “He had puck,” he explains to the referee, shrugging his shoulders as the Boston fans boo him into oblivion from the stands. “I make sure he is not hurt.” He turns his head to look at the center, who's glaring at him and looking like he'd like to skate a little closer and shove Ilya back for the hit. “See? Is no problem.”

Ilya turns away and lets the crowd see his wide, triumphant grin. Boston fans boo while Ottawa fans screech. For Shane, he refrains from giving a little wave or blowing a kiss—he did promise to *try* and behave, after all.

Shane isn't the least bit impressed when Ilya comes back to the bench.

“What?” Ilya asks, feigning innocence. “Am not allowed to be physical anymore?” He waggles his eyebrows just to make Shane blush a little beneath his visor as he roll his eyes and says, loudly, “shut up, Rozanov.”

“That's, ah, *captain* to you,” Ilya retorts.

The bench erupts in a combination of jeers, groans, and laughter.

Shane flushes a little more, but he's smiling a little now.

He wouldn't have, a year ago. Not even six months ago. But things have changed—and Ilya really, *really* likes how things have changed.

The third time it happens, it's a *little bit* Ilya's fault. He couldn't help himself; how could he *not* chirp Dallas's freshly traded goalie—the same one who turned his back on Shane when they were both in Montreal together?

So Ilya *might* have mentioned how he would feel right at home, seeing as how Dallas was just as boring as Montreal, and he wouldn't win a Cup here, either. So Ilya *might* have skated a little *too* close for the others' comfort and found himself being shoved away, *hard*, by a sea of ugly green jerseys.

So what? He does it all the time.

Except one of Dallas's centers decides Ilya needs to be knocked down a peg and slashes him while they're battling for the puck.

And the referees don't see. They don't fucking *see* even though Ilya's practically in front of them.

That's fine. Skin smarting as players converge around him, Ilya waves off his teammates because it's *fine* and he'll get him back later—

Except *Shane Hollander* is skating directly into the growing crowd, head up, chin forward, eyes focused and determined as he goes right up to the Dallas center.

No one knows what Shane says. Just that he gets a shove for his chirp and shoves back.

Naturally, everyone gets involved after that. But Ilya has forgotten all about the slash and can only grin as he slowly skates backward towards the bench, keeping his eyes on Shane as he allows himself to remain in the scrum.

The referees sort it out. Ilya doesn't bother getting the Dallas center back for the slash. All he can think about is Shane skating into a scrum looking like he didn't belong anywhere else, and for *Ilya* at that.

But, if Ilya throws a saucy wink at the goalie after Shane scores the game-winner as the game draws to a close and nearly gets checked into the net for his trouble, everyone considers it *regular Rozanov behavior*.

Except his husband, of course, who shakes his head with a smile on his face as Ilya surges towards him to celebrate the goal.

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