

and i found love where it wasn't supposed to be

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and i found love where it wasn't supposed to be

by [foxriverblues](#)

Summary

A life threatening injury on the ice forces Ilya Rozanov to confront some things that he wasn't quite ready to say out loud.

Notes

This story follows show canon mostly, diverging at Shane's injury.

This is my first Hollanov fic, and I am still getting a hang of the characterizations of these two, but I didn't want to let this fic sit for too long in my drafts.

Work is unbeta'ed and I haven't written a fic in ages, so we're brushing off the rust here.

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

Ilya has never seen so much blood. Not all at once, at least.

When his mother died, it had been quiet. She had been in her bed, her body beneath the covers, when he had found her. The room had been dimly lit, with the only light seeping in from the cracks around the curtains when they occasionally drifted away from the windows in the breeze from the oscillating fan on the other side of the room. She had been resting her eyes from a headache, according to the way his father would tell it, but Ilya is old enough now to know better. He had been blind to her depression as a child, had overlooked it in that naive way a child would, unable to see the sadness behind her smile. But as an adult, he is more than capable of looking back at his memories of her and recognizing the signs that he hadn't been able to understand before.

He can close his eyes and easily remember the curve of her hand where it had dangled off the bed, the gentle curl of her fingers as they had pointed down towards the floor. He would play with them as a child when she had held him tight in her lap, tangling his own much smaller fingers in between hers. He would fiddle with the rings she wore, twirling them round and round her fingers. Her nails had always been styled, slender fingers tapering in polished points of red that shone where they caught the sunlight.

Her skin had been smooth as porcelain when she died; she had been too young for wrinkles to settle their way into her skin. He hadn't been able to look at her face at the funeral, instead choosing to stare at where her hands had been clasped on her chest, a delicate metal rosary threaded between her fingers.

Sometimes, even all these years later, he'll wake in the early morning from fleeting dreams of her that he can barely remember, with the softness of the skin on the back of her hand the only echoes left in his mind. Throughout the day after, he'll find himself absentmindedly stroking the pad of his thumb over the back of his own, much rougher hand, as though it could do more than act as a poor substitute for the real thing. He's forgotten the sound of her voice, of her laugh... but he can remember the way it felt to hold her hand.

Now, standing at center ice, everything is much, much too loud.

The world around him is like an old-time projector, a series of freeze-frames punctuated with noise. He can hear the ticking of the projector as it flips through the scenes, static crackling on the speakers of a Gramophone pumping in sounds to set the scene.

The Montreal crowd is cheering, standing in their seats as Shane Hollander speeds towards the goal, stick winding back to take a shot that would put the Metros in the lead. He doesn't see the Boston defenseman come up from behind, isn't prepared for the hard hit that knocks him down to sprawl out flat on his back onto the ice, helmet bouncing off the cold surface. The Metros' enforcer flies across the rink with his fists out to defend his captain, and as some Raiders players join the fray, in the midst of the brawl, someone's leg lifts up just a little too high, the blade of his skate just a little too close to where Shane lays flat on his back on the ice, still stunned from the hit.

The film advances, moving forward in flickers as Ilya watches sharp metal slice through oh-so-fragile skin, and blood from Shane's neck sluices forth over his jersey and out over the ice around him. It pools around him in a color of red that in any other circumstances might be beautiful, but now makes Ilya's breath catch in his own throat, spikes of fear stabbing their way into his heart.

Ilya's gaze flicks up quickly, assessing. In this surreal, slowed-down version of the universe that only he seems to exist in, the Metros' medical team is only just beginning to vault over the boards, bags in hand, eyes panicked. The players on the bench separate to let them through, but the fights on the ice continue. The players are too focused on pummeling each other, on extracting their revenge for the violence done to their captain, that they don't realize that something far worse is playing out just a few feet away from them.

Even the Boston medics are scrambling to reach Shane, but Ilya knows they won't be there in time either. They're too far away, and neither medical team will be able to easily push through all of the tightly bunched angry players.

Ilya turns to look at Shane, who has pushed himself up to a half-sitting position, shellshocked as he braces himself on one elbow. He lifts one hand up to touch his neck, his fingers coming away covered in red. He stares down at his hand, confused, as though he can't figure out that he's the source of all of the blood. His lips part, mouthing something that could be *help me* or *oh my god* or *Ilya, please*.

And so Ilya does the only logical thing he can think to do — he's closest on the ice to Shane, after all. He throws down his stick, whips off his gloves, drops to his knees amidst all of the blood, and wraps his hand tightly around Shane's throat, fingers pressed firmly to the wound. He can feel the warm pulse of blood against his fingers, but at least it's no longer gushing from Shane's neck like it had been a few moments ago.

Shane locks panicked eyes with Ilya's. "Am I gonna die?" His face is pale, and as he lifts a bare hand to wrap around Ilya's wrist, Ilya can feel the way Shane's entire body is shaking. Adrenaline, maybe, or shock, he's not sure of the clinical term for what this is. But it doesn't matter — right now, the only thing that does matter is making sure that Shane *doesn't* die.

"No, Shane, you are not." It's said clinically, through lips tight with concentration. There are other players nearby, and Ilya *should* have called him Hollander... but if he has just lied to Shane, and he is, in fact, dying, Ilya does not want the last thing he calls his... boyfriend? Partner? Lover? to be his last name. In that moment, all of the hiding and sneaking around and playing up their rivalry fades away, and he finds himself not caring if this is the moment when the world finds out about them. If it means saving Shane's life, he'd climb to the top of the tallest building in all of the world and would scream at the top of his lungs that he loves Shane Hollander.

Ilya knows a hockey injury similar to this has happened twice before, both times in Buffalo, of all places. The first had happened before he'd been born; the home team's goalie had had his jugular sliced open violently on the ice. He's seen the videos of it, had watched the spray of blood from the goalie's neck reach nearly to center ice — there had been much more blood then than there is now beneath their knees. He also knows that that goalie had been able to

skate off the rink under his own power, and while not without some pretty severe trauma from the accident, had survived.

The second neck injury had happened to a visiting player, whose teammate had inadvertently sliced his carotid artery with the blade of his skate. There had been less blood that time, but the injury had been no less dangerous. That player had survived his injury as well.

Ilya isn't a medic, obviously, and he has no idea what side of the neck either of those major blood vessels are on, but he does know that when you have a severe open wound, you apply pressure. He also knows that in both of those injuries, the players' lives had been saved from medical staff pressing down hard on the severed blood vessels in order to give the players time to get off the ice and to a hospital. And from the way that Shane's hands are quivering, one pressed tightly against Ilya in between their bodies, where nobody else can see, Ilya knows Shane is in no place to do it himself.

The crowd has quieted now, the shift from cheers to gasps and panic such a gradual transition that Ilya hadn't noticed it even happen. If he could focus on anything other than the place where his hand is holding the wound on Shane's neck closed, he might hear the sounds of spectators in the crowd crying, of the medics shouting for what additional aid they might need, of Boston and Montreal teammates linking arms and bowing heads, forming a loose protective circle around the two, of murmured prayers and barely audible sniffles. But as it is, his world has narrowed down to the exact point where his palm connects with Shane's skin.

A hand on Ilya's shoulder startles him from his laser focus. "Keep your hand right there, Rozanov," the medic says as he bends down on one knee next to him. "No matter what you do, don't move it."

Ilya nods, lips pressed tightly together. He can feel the presence of a group of people around him now, the medical staff having finally reached Shane's side.

"Am I gonna die?" Shane asks it again, voice wavering as he directs the question to the medic this time instead of Ilya. Ilya lifts his gaze from his own blood covered fingers to Shane once more, eyes taking in every inch of his face. He traces the curve of Shane's lips, the softness of his jaw, the constellations of freckles across his cheeks.

"No," the medic responds. "We're not going to let you die here, Hollander, not if I have anything to say about it." He leans over to take Shane's pulse on the other, uninjured side of his neck, eyes lowered as he assesses. "You think you can get out of here on your own? Or you want the cart?"

Shane screws his eyes shut; when he opens them again, they're watery, rimmed in red. It stands out in sharp contrast against how pale he looks from the blood loss. "I can do it—I need to—"

"What you *need* to do is focus on staying awake. Keep focused on your breathing, keep your heartbeat steady and low. Don't think about what's happening, just picture yourself at that fancy cottage of yours or something. You're on the lake, laying in the bottom of a canoe, just drifting..."

“Okay.” Shane’s voice quivers, but he presses his lips together with determination. Ilya watches as Shane’s eyes unfocus, and he hopes that Shane is imagining himself somewhere far, far away. He’s never seen Shane’s cottage other than what was shown in those stupid television advertisements, but he hopes for Shane’s sake that it’s beautiful there. Or at least, beautiful enough to take his mind off what’s happening in front of him.

“Okay, Rozanov, we’re gonna get him up. Keep your hand exactly where it is, just stand up slowly with us.” The medic is brisk, instructional. He hooks his arms beneath one of Shane’s, waiting for Ilya to acknowledge him before doing anything.

Ilya nods, shaking his other glove off. He focuses on keeping his palm tight to Shane’s neck, his other gripping Shane’s arm as a second medic helps the first to lift Shane up to a standing position. He can feel sweat beading on his brow, a combination of nerves and fear. He *can’t* let go.

“Is good, yes? That he’s up on his own?” He hates how small the words sound, how small he feels in the midst of this enormous situation.

“Yeah.” The medic isn’t concerned much with what he has to say, but Ilya finds he doesn’t care about that as long as the guy is still working to save Shane’s life. “Okay, we’re going to skate with him back towards the locker room. Keep that hand on there tight.”

“Okay.”

The crowd noise fades away the further towards the locker room the group of them get. Instead of veering left towards the locker room they turn right, where an ambulance is backed into a long hallway, the back door already open. Three paramedics are there, a stretcher ready and waiting.

“I’m gonna swap my hand out for yours,” one of them says, coming up next to Ilya. “You wanna move slowly and carefully. If the blood has already started to clot and is now dried to his skin it could pull that clot and start a fresh bleed, and we don’t want that.”

Shane’s eyes snap open, panic clear in them. “But—”

“I’ve got 10 years of being an EMT and an ambulance full of O neg, Hollander,” the paramedic says good-naturedly. “You’re in good hands, I promise.” He seems far too chipper for Ilya’s standards, but whatever.

Ilya looks skyward and says a prayer to whatever deity might be listening... and then slowly pulls his hand away from Shane’s neck. His fingers stick a little to Shane’s skin, but thankfully it’s not enough to tug on the wound. Blood is still oozing slowly from the cut in Shane’s throat, but it’s no longer gushing.

“Doesn’t look like it hit any of the major vessels,” the paramedic says as he covers Shane’s neck with a large pad of gauze and his own rubber-gloved hand. He’s talking to his colleague, not to Ilya, as they guide Shane down to sit on the stretcher. It’s easy enough for them to load him into the ambulance, and for a wild moment Ilya considers asking if they’ll let him come

with. He wants to sit next to Shane and hold his hand, to give him something constant to hang on to, to help him fight through any fear.

But then he remembers. He is Ilya Rozanov, and Shane is Shane Hollander. They are not supposed to like each other, and they most definitely are not supposed to feel anything more for each other than a healthy, competitive, heated rivalry. Ilya is not supposed to be in love with his rival. And yet.

The ambulance doors shut, and Ilya is left standing in the hallway, his hands and half of his jersey caked in Shane's drying and flaking blood, watching as the ambulance pulls away and makes for the closest hospital. He can tell once it's cleared the arena when the sirens turn on in the distance.

His mind is blank, numbing him from the inside out as though someone has submerged him in a frozen pond and sealed the hole above the surface. But Ilya doesn't want to come up for air, because his air has just left in the ambulance headed for the hospital, leaving him with nothing. He feels twelve again, tied to the tracks and helpless to stop the train barreling towards him at full speed. He lost his mother; he can't lose Shane too.

The sirens fade, and suddenly he is alone, bloodied hands dangling limply at his sides as he stares down the tunnel. He can't hear the crowd from here, can't hear any announcements made over the arena speakers, and so he stands there staring until a hand on his shoulder makes him jump.

"You look like shit, man—" and of *course* it's Hayden Pike.

"Yes." It's the only answer Ilya can muster up. He feels like he wants to vomit, and for once it's not caused by Pike's presence.

"How was he? When he left? Coach told us a little, but... you were there, obviously." Ilya can appreciate the concern in Pike's voice, at least.

Ilya hadn't even noticed that the Metros coach had been there with them in the little crowd that had escorted Shane to the ambulance. "Fine. Alive. They said... better than expected. Maybe... maybe not so bad of an injury."

"Yeah, well there was sure as hell a lot of blood." Pike lifts a hand in Ilya's peripheral vision and runs a hand through his hair, shaking his head.

Ilya doesn't respond. If he shuts his eyes, he can still see it. If he looks down at himself, he can still see it. He doesn't need reminding.

"They cancelled the rest of the game," Pike says next. "They didn't expect you to come back, not after that, and it wouldn't be fair to make anyone play after seeing what happened to Shane."

Ilya wants to tell Pike that only *he* is allowed to say Shane's name, that it sounds foreign and jumbled coming from Pike's mouth... but he knows he has no right to that. Pike is Shane's best friend, after all.

Pike continues. “I don’t know what they’ll do, if they’ll just call the score as is or if they’ll make us do the game over again, but... they’re clearing out the arena now.”

“Good.”

A pause, as Ilya can feel Pike’s eyes on the side of his face, evaluating. “You should go get cleaned up.” For the first time, there’s a note of genuine concern in his voice for Ilya. “And... maybe talk to your therapist. If you’ve got one.”

With a final clap to Ilya’s shoulder (though more gentle and concerned than it normally would be) Hayden disappears down the tunnel towards the locker rooms.

Ilya sighs, and looks down at himself, wincing. Yes, a shower is in order.

—

The rest of the team flies out that night, headed back to Boston, but Ilya stays. He claims goodwill, that as the captain of the opposing team it’s his responsibility to check on Shane and make sure that he’s alright. He forces himself to hold his head up through the meeting with his coach; only once it’s done does he allow himself to stumble into the bathroom, bend over the toilet, and retch until there’s nothing left in his stomach.

He hasn’t heard a thing from Shane, or Montreal — but really, why would he? He’s opposition, competition, not Shane’s friend. Not his partner, his boyfriend, his lover. They’ve done such a good job at keeping their secret that now Ilya finds himself in the dark, and he fucking hates it.

Sleeping is near impossible. Every time he shuts his eyes, he alternates between images of Shane’s corpse sprawled out on a gurney, Shane bleeding out on the ice, and flashes of his mother’s hand. Eventually he gives up on sleep, and spends the night watching ESPN in the hopes that there will be some sort of update on Shane. Of course there is none.

His coach had given him the information about what hospital Shane is at, but no other information. The entire drive over to the hospital the next morning, he sits in the back seat of the Uber, hands fidgeting with the zipper on his coat so they won’t start shaking.

It’s almost as though they’re expecting him when he arrives — the woman working the front desk is cheery and friendly as she writes him out a visitors pass, drawing a smiley face next to his name before handing it to him and instructing him to stick it to the front of his shirt. “He’s out of the ICU and into a room on the ninth floor. Follow signs for Intermediate Care, he’s in room 924. You can’t miss it.”

Ilya is thankful no one joins him in the elevator as he rides it up to the ninth floor, palms sweaty where he grips the metal railing around the elevator. Alive. Shane is alive, he’s alive, he’s *alive*.

He finds Shane’s room easily; the door is cracked open, and it’s silent inside, so Ilya tentatively pushes the door open. Shane lays in bed, eyes closed, breathing deeply. There’s a

thick piece of gauze on his neck, but Ilya can see the shadow of the dark stitches holding his skin closed. His palm aches and he remembers how it had felt to keep Shane alive.

He sinks down into the chair next to the bed, and after a furtive glance at the door, reaches out to tangle his fingers through Shane's. His hand is still damp, cold and clammy, in contrast to Shane's warm and dry hand. He watches as Shane's fingers close around his in his sleep, his eyes flicking up to Shane's face in time to watch a sweet, shy smile flit across his lips. It nearly breaks Ilya's heart.

Ilya doesn't know how long he sits there, watching Shane sleep — it's long enough that his eyes go unfocused, having gone from counting every single freckle on the bridge of Shane's face to memorizing the lines on the back of Shane's hand. His thumb traces idle patterns into the soft skin there, patterns that soon form themselves into Russian words.

When Ilya's father had died, Shane had asked him to talk to him in Russian, to help him get everything out that he needed to. This feels almost like that, except even more private. The words that Ilya scribes into Shane's hand slowly and gently aren't ones of pain, of confusion and of fear. This time, Ilya traces words of love, of hope, of things he only can ever hope to long for in a distant future.

"Ilya—"

If Shane hadn't been almost whispering, voice rough and ragged, it would have startled Ilya violently out of the reverie he'd fallen into. But as it is, Ilya looks up from where their hands are joined to find Shane looking at him with a look of such open adoration that it nearly breaks Ilya's heart.

"Hi," Ilya says, fingers tightening on Shane's. "You're awake."

"Mmm." Shane shuts his eyes, shifting in the bed with a slight grimace.

"Are you in much pain?"

"Nnnnno, not really." His voice is slower than usual, and slightly slurred, no doubt from the painkillers pumping their way through his system. "Just feels... tight. Here." He lifts his free hand to gesture vaguely towards his neck.

"Good." Ilya allows his lips to curl up in a smile, but it's tight. "You scared me."

"M'sorry. Didn't mean to." Shane squeezes Ilya's hand. "Don't really remember what happened." He looks up at Ilya, curiosity fighting its way past the drugs, though it doesn't fully win out.

"Later. We can talk about that later, when you're home."

"Mmm, home." Shane's eyes slip closed, a dopey grin on his face.

It's interesting, seeing Shane like this, his inhibitions lowered and his emotions looser. Ilya is so used to Shane's straightforward nature, his rigidity and focus and drive bleeding into every facet of his personality. But watching him now as he opens his eyes wide and looks up at Ilya

with what can only be described as complete and total adoration... it makes Ilya's heart flutter against his ribcage like a trapped bird. Not for the first time, he's struck with the thought that he loves this man so, so fucking much. And at the same time, he's so fucking scared to lose him.

"Come home with me, Ilya."

It takes Ilya a moment to process what Shane said— he's too focused on keeping his features calm, schooled into what he hopes is neutral and not one that lays his heart raw and bare in front of him. But when the words reach his brain, his eyes widen slightly and his lips part, speaking before he can even think of how to respond.

"Shane... we can't..."

"Not now. Summer. After the season is done. Come to the cottage. Stay for a few weeks. Don't go back to Russia. Stay with me." Shane's hand is warm in Ilya's, his grip tight and steady despite the meds coursing through his system.

"I—" Ilya wants to tell him yes. He *wants* to go to the cottage, wants to spend the summer with Shane swimming in the lake, reading in hammocks, doing fucking yoga on the back lawn... so why can't he say it? What is it that's stopping him?

"Please?" Shane's voice comes quieter, softer. When Ilya dares a glance at him, his brow is furrowed as he stares at Ilya, studying his face like he's trying to memorize it. "I think you'll like it there. I wanna show it to you."

Ilya's breath catches in his throat. "Shane—"

"S'okay. You don't have to tell me now. Think about it, 'kay?"

Ilya nods, feeling something bubbling up in his chest that he can't put the words to. He feels it rising further and further into his throat, and before he bursts into hysterical laughter or tears (he's not sure which) he lowers his head and buries it in the bedsheets, his forehead against the back of Shane's hand.

"...Ilya?"

"I thought you were going to die," Ilya says, voice shaking. "I thought you were going to die in my arms, and if you died then I'd—"

He feels a clumsy hand thread through his hair, Shane's fingers tangling in his messy curls.

"You looked at me and asked me if you were going to die and I told you no. But was a lie, I couldn't tell you what I didn't know for sure..." He's rambling now, the feelings he's suppressed since yesterday spilling from his mouth. He's drowning in them. "I thought you going into that ambulance was the last that I'd ever see you. I thought..."

He considers for a moment telling Shane about his mother. He hasn't spoken much about her aloud to anyone since she died – his father, when the Alzheimers truly took hold of his mind, would bring her up quite a lot and Ilya would always deflect the conversation, or gently

remind his father that his mother was gone. His brother would throw her death in Ilya's face, would use her passing as a weapon to manipulate Ilya into giving him money, but Ilya would never rise to the obvious bait his brother had laid his trap with.

He longs to sit with someone and share all of his memories of her with them. He wants to tell someone, *Shane*, about how kind and loving she was, about how much she had cared for him and kept him safe, about how her memories are the only thing that keeps him going some days.. but he knows that here in this hospital room is not the place for that. His memories of his mother are sacred in his head, and in his heart, and when he gives voice to them he wants that moment to be just as sacred.

"M'not dead, Ilya," Shane mumbles, fingertips massaging his scalp. "M'right here. Not goin' anywhere."

Ilya laughs wetly, sniffing. "You'd better not," he says, lifting his head so that he can press his lips to Shane's hand, safely out of sight. "You are stuck with me, and so wherever you go I go." It's as close of a declaration of love that he can get without actually saying it.

"Mmmm, so then I'm going to the cottage." There's a sly note in Shane's voice, like he found his way through a complicated problem to find a simple solution. "If you go where I go, and I'm goin' to the cottage..."

Ilya freezes, because god *damnit* Shane got him. He lifts his head up, lips parted as his mind works frantically to find a response, an excuse... but nothing he can come up with works without walking back what he'd just said, without contradicting himself.

Because it's true. His heart is in it and so *he* is in it; he's in love with Shane. It isn't a feeling that is fleeting, something that will just go away. He's tried to fight it before, tried to push it down and pretend like it doesn't exist... but he's come to realize that it's impossible to do.

So with a sigh, Ilya relents. "...okay. When the season is over... I'll come to the cottage."

Maybe at the cottage they'll be able to relax and unwind. Maybe they'll be able to pretend that they're just another couple, not Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov. Maybe they'll be able to let down their guard, exchange casual looks and touches and kisses, spend their nights wrapped in each other's arms.

And maybe at the cottage... Ilya will tell Shane that he loves him.

End Notes

Title from 'I Found' by Amber Run.

Breaking from GC universe canon to say: Go Sabres.

can be found occasionally at @foxriverblues on twitter!

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