

Simpler, Easier

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/77650096) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/77650096>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Heated Rivalry (TV) , Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov
Additional Tags:	Autistic Shane Hollander , Glasses , Character Study , Shane Hollander learns to unmask , Stimming , A little bit of Ilya's glasses kink (but not really) , No beta we die like Shane's social battery
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2026-01-14 Words: 1,080 Chapters: 1/1

Simpler, Easier

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Summary

Shane Hollander's vision had worsened significantly, and rapidly, in the months since turning thirty. This event, although initially distressing (Could it be CTE? Brain cancer? Was he having a stroke?), eventually unfurled itself into something like relief.

Or

It's easier to unmask when the world is a little blurry.

Notes

In the spirit of this story, I wrote and edited with perilously dried out contacts. Therefore, any mistakes you find are none of my concern, as I physically could not see them.

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He saw half a dozen doctors to check. *No, Mr. Hollander, the scans look fine. No tumors, no clots, nothing so much as glaucoma.* Then, he saw another half dozen to be certain. *Nothing to be concerned about, we assure you. No, Shane. You are just getting old.* Finally, his vision leveled out, he nearly believed he wasn't dying, and he left the optometrists office with a prescription that suited him and a receipt for his order of thinned, anti-glare glasses, and a years worth of contacts.

The contacts he wasn't particularly fond of. He could stomach them, if he had to—for games and such, but ultimately found them to be annoying. They dried out too fast, and got things caught in them, and he was plagued by thoughts of the nasty eye infections he could get if he didn't wash his hands thoroughly enough when putting them in, or when taking them out. They were more trouble than they were worth, he thought.

The glasses, however, he *loved*. Obviously, there was the way his husband looked at him when he wore them. Despite becoming a part of his everyday ensemble, the novelty didn't seem to wane for Ilya. Sometimes the glasses were sexy, sometimes they added a pleasant domestic touch, but either way were always properly appreciated.

More than once, Shane had found his husband lounging on their couch, laptop perched in his lap as he scrolled through pages and pages of new frames he could buy for Shane.

"These are nice, yes?" he'd ask, flipping the laptop around to show Shane. "Like sexy professor?"

And Shane would say that yes, they are nice, but did he really need another pair? To that, Ilya would assure him that "Yes. Is necessity. Other ones might break."

"Ilya, I have three pairs now."

"Doesn't matter," his husband would grin. "Can never be too careful."

So Shane would let him order the glasses. Then, a week later, when they came in the mail, he'd let Ilya slide them onto his face. Then, he'd let him fuck him in them.

As nice as *that* was, what Shane appreciated most about the glasses was how they gave him a choice. He got to choose when to see. He got to choose when life needed to be complicated, and when he got to make it simple.

In a second, his world could transform from harsh lines, and dramatic shadows, and a thousand fucking details into something soft, and gauzy, and easy. Like watercolor. He could look out the cottage window, and take off his glasses, and instantly, millions of blades of grass—each with their own form, their own movement—became a singular stagnant entity. It

became easy to process. There was a lightness that came with stripping away the details that didn't matter.

Better yet, he could do this with people. His vision was poor enough that, without the glasses, faces were practically erased. There was a color for the skin, another for the hair, and then a bit of shadow for the eyes and mouth and nostrils, but nothing sharp or nuanced. When he was at dinner with his teammates, he could make one off-handed comment about how his glasses were hurting his ears, and he'd be off the hook for the entire night. He'd push the frames up on top of his head, and relax as shapes bobbed and shifted around him without sending any meaningful messages.

Contrary to popular belief, Shane actually could read people—meaning that he took notice. He knew that signals were being sent, and approximately what they amounted to—that a tight smile meant upset, and a lean forward meant excitement, but he just didn't know what to do with them. Should he change the subject? Ask a question? Smile and nod? If he couldn't figure it out, then what good did noticing do? He'd rather not notice at all.

With the glasses he got that choice. Remove them, and there were no facial expressions, no signals, no responsibility. He had the perfect excuse. Any mistake, any faux pas, could be attributed to his lack of sight. He wasn't expected to know if he couldn't see. He couldn't be blamed for messing up. It was only natural that he would, under the circumstances. So he started letting himself press forward in the conversation with less shame, to linger on the same topic for longer, to let the wide, frozen smile he usually put on settle into something smaller and more natural.

He could forget his body too, which was a novel experience. He was used to control and precision, both on the ice and off of it, but when the world around him was like this—all shapes and movement, he could allow himself to be shapes and movement too. He didn't feel as shameful as he usually did wringing his hands and dragging his palms against his jeans over and over, just to feel the grain. He could rock in place a little and convince himself—with the slight way that the people around him seemed to ripple and shimmer, that he wasn't so out of place.

"You are good recently," Ilya told him one night as they lay in bed, Ilya's cheek pressed to Shane's chest. "Calm."

"Yeah?" Shane replied, tapping a steady beat on his husband's back.

Ilya nodded, his curls brushing against Shane's chin. They caught the lamplight, and, to Shane, appeared as a glorious golden Halo. "Yeah," Ilya said. "There are many of you, usually. A Shane for here, a Shane for practice, a Shane for your parent's house..."

Shane snorted.

"I'm just saying! Is true!"

"I suppose it is, yeah."

“There’s less of you, recently, though,” Ilya said. “It’s like everywhere you go, you are home Shane. *My* Shane.”

Shane smiled softly, reaching up to tug on the curls at the base of Ilya’s neck. “And that’s a good thing?”

Ilya sighed. “I think so. Probably. Yes. I am very jealous, of course. I have beautiful husband and do not like sharing. But I think... is easier for you. So it is good.”

Shane tightened his arms around his husband, humming contentedly as he was squeezed back. “Yes,” he replied. “It is good.”

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