

the first cut was the deepest (and the next one was a soft touch)

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by [only_the_golden](#)

Summary

A flickering light in the locker room sends Shane into a meltdown after his first game against Montreal since joining Ottawa.

Title from "Work Out" by Rainbow Kitten Surprise

Notes

back with another vent fic. had a meltdown earlier today and who would i be if i didn't project that onto my close personal friend shane hollander. hope you enjoy :)

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

If someone didn't fix that fucking light right *now*, Shane Hollander was going to lose it. Since the first day he stepped foot in the Ottawa Centaur's locker room, bright eyed and excited at the idea of playing on a team that truly accepted him and his relationship, that damned light had been the bane of his existence.

How it didn't drive the other players absolutely insane, Shane had no idea. The bulb was right above Shane's locker, and it flickered *constantly*. The irregularity of it made Shane's eyes twitch. It was all he could focus on. Before practice, before games, it didn't matter. The bulb was always there, doing its best to ruin Shane's day every time.

He wasn't going to let it happen today. Today, Ottawa played Montreal. It would be the first time Shane faces off against his old team, the first time he's seen most of those guys in person in months. He tells himself that he's ready for it—excited for it, even. He ignores the sideways glances Ilya casts his way as they head to the rink. He is *fine*.

In the locker room, Shane does his best to ignore the bothersome light, instead focusing on the energy of his new teammates around him. They all understand that this isn't just a regular game for Shane. He always wants to win, but a win today would mean a whole lot more, and the team is prepared to do whatever they need to to make sure that happens.

Around him, the guys laugh and chat, chirping each other lightheartedly as they tape their sticks and tie up their skates. Everyone is buzzing with excitement. Shane tries his best to keep up with the conversations flying around him, not that anyone really expects him to. Everyone on the team knows that Shane isn't exactly the most social, doesn't always know when it's his turn to speak in conversation, not always picking up on their jokes until Ilya whispers a soft explanation in his ear. Nobody minds. They're all happy to have Shane on the team, love the deep analytical energy he brings, love the jokes he cracks when the rest of them expect it least. He fits right in with the team. He quickly carved a space for himself in their dynamic as more than what they saw him as in Montreal, as Shane Hollander™, or later as the guy sucking Ilya Rosanov's dick.

Despite his efforts, he just can't keep up with the words whipping rapidfire past him, back and forth across the locker room. Each time he managed to catch onto the tails of a conversation, that stupid light would flicker in the corner of his eye, drawing his shoulders up just a little bit higher.

How no one else was bothered by it, Shane didn't know. Maybe that's why no one has come to fix it yet. It wasn't bothering anyone else, so why take time and resources to fix it. Shane is a grown man anyways, he shouldn't be so bothered by a flickering lightbulb. What a silly thing to be upset over. He knew it was irrational, had tried to reason with himself to just *grow up* and get over it, but he couldn't help the tears that would tickle at the corners of his eyes as he tried to force his attention to go anywhere but there.

Ilya had tried, on more than one occasion, to ask Shane what was wrong. He could tell something was up, of course he could. He knew Shane better than Shane knew himself most of the time. But everytime Ilya brought up that there was clearly something bothering Shane, Shane would shut down. At first, Ilya suspected he was nervous about being on a new team. Worried that they would be like Montreal, unaccepting of his sexuality and his relationship, or that maybe they would find his repetitive behaviours and quiet demeanor strange. But that wasn't it, Ilya knew. The team loved Shane, and Shane *loved* the team. He felt comfortable with them in a way he had never felt with his teammates back in Montreal, besides Hayden and J.J..

Then he thought the problem was Shane's gear, knowing his husband well enough to know he was particular with clothes and their texture, saying the way they feel on his body was much more important than how they looked. But he checked, and everything was the exact same as his gear from Montreal, just in different colours. All the tags were even cut out, just the way Shane likes it.

So Ilya let it go, eventually. Begrudgingly. He wasn't happy to do so, but he could sense Shane's irritation every time he tried to bring it up, and decided he would trust his husband to come to him if there was a problem. He didn't want to upset him more by asking.

He should've kept asking.

— — —

The game was good. Great, even. Ottawa crushed Montreal 6-1, with Shane completing a hattrick right before the buzzer, just to finish it off. Montreal had been out for blood all game, doing everything to keep the puck away from Shane and to keep Shane shoved up against the boards. But there's only so much one can do to stop Shane Hollander, especially a Shane Hollander with a deep, needy ache to win.

Even the quiet slurs muttered under the breath of the new Montreal forward at every faceoff couldn't shake Shane's determination. He played like it was game seven of the Stanley Cup finals, not a preseason game. It was less that he wanted Montreal to regret losing him, and more that he wanted to show that he was just as good of a player now as he was when he was deep in the closet, relying on stolen moments in hotel rooms with someone he was scared to love. He wanted to show that he could be gay and proud of it, that he could be happily in love and the whole world could know, and he could still be the best damn player the league had ever seen.

The whole team rides the high of the game back to the locker room. Shane collapses in his locker, exhausting hitting him much sooner than it normally would after a game. He feels drained, right down to his bones. The light flickers incessantly above him. It feels brighter, sharper, faster than usual. Shane needs it to stop. *Now*.

His hands find their way into his hair before he even really knows what's happening. The light feels like daggers to his skin, his eyes, everywhere. He can't do this. His fingers wrap tight around the ebony strands, pulling hard, as if pulling hard enough will turn his brain off and make the flickering stop. Shane is painfully aware now of the humming noise the lights make, like a mosquito with a microphone right next to his ear.

He can't breathe. His fingers tug harder at his hair, his body rocking back and forth. Distantly, he hears a voice that sounds suspiciously like his own begging for it to all stop. One hand disentangles from his hair, the heel of his hand smacking into his forehead.

It's not enough.

"Turn it OFF," his voice rings out throughout the room, louder than any of his teammates have ever heard him be.

Shane rocks back and forth harder now. As he slides his hand back into his hair, he begins tipping his head back with his body until it slams against his locker. *Hard*. The pain reverbs through his skull, shaking his teeth. He does it again. And again. And again. Over and over again.

He's not sure what's going on around him, and frankly he can't really care. Maybe his teammates think he's fucking crazy now, that he has no business being a professional hockey player if he's acting like this over nothing. He feels his lips moving, apologizing, begging for someone to make it stop, he doesn't know.

His head slams hard against the wall again. With his eyes closed tight he can feel them swimming, dizzy. His scalp aches from where he continues to dig his fingers in deeper. One of his feet kicks out in front of him, smacking the ground with a thud that shoots its way up his leg. He's rocking harder now, his head hitting the wall harder and harder each time. It's not enough. The buzzing of the lights is all he can feel now, going from his ears and into every crack and crevice in his body and he wants it *gone*.

Suddenly, a strong hand cradles the back of his head, stopping its assault against the wall. Another hand gently pries his fingers from his hair, holding both his hands together to keep them still. He tries to pick at his fingernails instead, body desperate for some sort of relief as the soft hands on him help to slow his rocking down to a consistent, safe pace. The hand on his grips tighter, not giving him an inch to move his tingling fingers. The hand on the back of his head lets go, instead wrapping him up in strong arms, body pulled against a familiar torso as they move back and forth.

Shane's head aches, the pain a dull thud behind his eyes and in his scalp. "Is okay," Ilya's voice whispers in his ear, cutting through the horrible hum of the lights that seems to have disappeared. "I'm here. I got you."

They sit like that awhile, slowly rocking as Shane's breathing returns to normal. His eyes are still clenched tightly together, unable to handle any more of the flickering tonight. Ilya smooths a hand over Shane's hair, taming the strands and soothing his aching scalp.

"You will be okay," Ilya says carefully. Not *are you okay*? Not *you are okay*. You *will* be okay. No loaded questions that are too much to answer in this state, no expectations of normalcy. Just a promise, a declaration, a vow. Maybe he's not okay right now, but he will be again.

Fingertips trace along his freckles, Ilya's touch lighter than a feather. Not like he's scared of breaking Shane, but because he *knows* him. Knows he needs strength and pressure right now, but also that he needs that soft touch to remind him that he is alive and loved. "Open your eyes, love. Is okay. I'm right here."

Shane quickly shakes his head, clenching his eyes tighter.

“Shane,” Ilya pleads. “Look at me. I’m here. Just me. I have you.”

Fine. He will. Just enough to say he opened them, while still being able to block out the horrible flickering. Slowly, he cracks his eyes open.

The lights are off.

His eyes open the rest of the way, sparing a glance up to where the offending light sits powerless, before his eyes find his way to Ilya’s.

Shane has never been one for eye contact, hating the way it makes his skin crawl. He can only ever tolerate it at certain times, with certain people.

Of course, Ilya is one of those people.

Their eyes meet, and Shane can feel new tears gathering on his waterline, threatening to spill down and join the ones drying on his cheeks that he hadn’t noticed until now.

“Is the lights, yes? What has been bothering you?”

A slow nod, careful and calculated. Words of defence spring to his tongue, to say that he’s an adult and can handle it, but his body is tired and his mouth won’t move.

“I asked, but you would not tell me. Hoped you would come to me if it got worse.”

“I’m sorry,” Shane manages to squeeze out, the words like sandpaper in his throat.

“No. No apologies. Never.” Ilya smiles, his eyes sad but bursting with love. “I understand. But you are allowed to be upset by things others don’t understand. Is okay.”

“I want you to feel happy every time you walk in here, not have your shoulders up so high that Bood asks me if you’ve got a stick up your ass.”

Shane chuckles, heat flooding his face.

“Don’t worry, I told him that is for home, not the rink.”

That earns him a shove, rightfully so, before Shane snuggles in close, pressing his nose to his husband’s neck and breathing him in.

“You can tell me when something is bothering you. I want to help, always. No matter how small your brain tells you it is. You don’t get upset with me when my depression gets back, huh?”

“I would never,” Shane insists. “You can’t control that.”

“And you can’t control this. Shane, baby. You can talk to me. I can help. You don’t need to keep it in until you are hurting yourself like this.”

Shane sighs, breath hot against Ilya’s neck. He knows Ilya is right, knows he can’t bottle things up like this until he explodes, especially not in front of the team—

“Oh my god, they all saw that.” Shane’s breath picks up as he pushes away from his husband, a hand trying to sneak its way back into his hair before it’s wrapped up by Ilya’s.

“They don’t think any less of you. They just want you to be safe and okay. You can talk to them later, or not. Is up to you. You don’t have to tell them anything you don’t want to, okay?”

Shane doesn’t know if he believes it, but he nods none the less. He doesn’t know what he would even say to them. *How does one possibly explain what just happened?*

“I think—” Ilya starts, clearly hesitant. “I think maybe you should speak to someone. It might help, like it helps me.”

It’s not the first time Ilya has suggested Shane try therapy. The first time was when Ilya cooked them dinner, something far from Shane’s meticulous diet. Shane choked down half his meal out of politeness, then spent the rest of the evening sobbing in the bathroom as he heaved over the toilet. He didn’t want to hear what Ilya had to say, didn’t want to admit that he had a problem. They hadn’t had another situation like that since, but every once in a while Ilya would gently nudge Shane to try therapy. He was ignored every time.

“I think you’re right,” Shane admits. “I know I shut it down every time you say it, but I think you might be right. No, I *know* that you're right.

“I’m just scared.”

“Is okay to be scared. I was too.” Ilya’s hands find their way to either side of Shane’s face, engulfing him. “But you are brave. So brave. If anyone can do it, you can. Okay?”

“Okay.”

Things weren’t fixed. Shane knew he had a lot to work on, knew he had to apologize to the team for what they witnessed. Ilya pulls Shane in tight, pulses pounding against their chests as if their own hearts were reaching out for one another. Here, in each other's arms, things were okay. They were safe. They were loved.

End Notes

comments and kudos greatly appreciated!!! i'm thinking of possibly writing a longer, multi chapter autistic shane fic at some point that's actually properly edited and polished so lmk if that's something anyone would be interested!!

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