When the Levee Breaks

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at https://archiveofourown.org/works/77233816.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander, Ilya Rozanov
Additional Tags:	Post-Book 6: The Long Game (Game Changers), Spoilers for Book 6: The Long Game (Game Changers), Protective Ilya Rozanov, Ilya Rozanov Loves Shane Hollander, Shane Hollander Loves Ilya Rozanov, Very light hurt/comfort
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2026-01-07 Words: 3,028 Chapters: 1/1

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by SandgrassBagel

Summary

Schneider cuts in, plowing into Shane, and he drops to the ground. It feels like the world grinds to a momentary halt, Ilya’s awareness narrowing down to the sole point of Shane’s body. Suddenly, Shane isn’t wearing an Ottawa jersey; he’s dressed in Montreal’s blue and is unresponsive in one of the worst moments of Ilya’s life.

Or: during Ottawa's first game against Montreal since Shane's transfer, he goes down. And Ilya snaps.

Notes

first HR fic WOOOOO. hopefully this wont be the last :] (thank you rachel for checking my ilya characterization <3)

It's been a not-so-secret pleasure of Ilya's to watch the Voyageurs struggle this season. They aren't *complete* shit, unfortunately, but it takes only a glance at their stats to understand the *obvious* truth that Ilya had known all along: the Montreal Voyageurs were champions because of *Shane.* And since turning their backs on him, they *suck.* If Ilya had his way, then they'd be the worst team in the league until the end of time, but there's nothing he can do about that except vow to kick their asses each and every time the Centaurs meet them on the ice.

And tonight is the first of those meetings. Centaurs versus Voyageurs in an away game.

Shane drives them to the arena, body tensed and still, his hand covered by Ilya's. Ilya hadn't argued about letting his husband drive. He knows Shane is using it as a way to try and get a handle on some of his trepidation. They'd talked about the game earlier in the day, after an afternoon practice. Shane still looks composed, mostly, but there's anxiety in his eyes. In the slight furrowing of his brow. Ilya wants to thumb it away, to cradle his husband's face in his hands and remind him that it's just another game, that it will be okay. But Shane already knows that, and knowing it doesn't stop or change what he's feeling. So Ilya just traces circles over Shane's knuckles with his thumb.

Their hands remain tangled together as they make their way to the changing room, before separating to put on their gear. Harris enters not long after, gaze locking with Troy's for a moment before settling on Shane.

"Shane, press wants you out front to answer a few questions." Ilya glances at his husband, but his back is to Ilya. Shane nods, and Harris leaves. Then, after a few moments, Shane follows.

Shane was already expecting to be interviewed before the game. After all, *'Shane Hollander plays against former team'* is a bit of a significant headline. Even with his attempts to stay relatively off social media, he's managed to stumble across discussions about how the first game will play out.

Some Voyageurs fans are glad that he's gone. Many were outraged that he'd drop his team just to play with his husband. Some noticed the cold shoulders Shane received on the ice and wondered if more had happened behind the scenes. And as he approaches a waiting reporter and cameraman, Shane knows he's about to confront several of those speculations. He doesn't want to, and has, in fact, tried *not* to think about his old team. For the most part, he's been successful. The Centaurs are wonderful, and he enjoys playing for them.

But the game hasn't even started, and old wounds are reopening. Shane can't escape the memories of shuttered profiles and eyes that refused to meet him. He can't forget the anger and hurt at being accused of tripping and *letting* the Centaurs beat them. But the media doesn't get to hear about that, as much as they would devour the gossip.

"Montreal has my respect, and I'm hoping for a good game… No, there won't be any going easy on them. That's not how the game is… There were no hard feelings when I left Montreal… Yes, it's been great playing with Ilya. He's a great captain."

Eventually, the questions end, and Shane is allowed to retreat to the locker room.

“We all know this is big night,” Ilya begins. He looks over his team, his features set in determination.

This season is the first that Shane has been privy to Ilya’s captain speeches, and he has to admit, Ilya is *good* at them. Hyping up the team was one of the aspects of being captain where Shane always fell short, but Ilya handles and encourages his team expertly.

“We all know what Voyageurs did. Now, is time for payback. I want to see them *crying.* They don’t realize what they lost, and we gained, but they *will.* Our fans know, but soon the Voyageurs and *their* fans will know when we beat them in *their* rink.” His voice rises as he speaks, hazel eyes blazing. “We do it like we practiced, we make them *pay*.”

The room erupts into determined shouts as the Centaurs get to their feet. Dykstra and Chouinard clap each other on the shoulders, faces split in grins. Luca gives Shane a determined nod. Holmber says something that has Boodram failing to stifle a snort.

Shane grabs his helmet and straps it on, taking a breath. It would be easy to say that he’s going into this match angry. Too easy, and… not fully accurate. Shane *is* angry. The memory of the disgust and disdain on his former teammates' faces when they’d found out the truth about him and Ilya has managed to fester in a buried corner of his chest until now. But it feels like a wound being picked open, and the anger is back in full force.

“You okay?” Ilya asks, voice lowered and one hand already reaching for Shane’s shoulder.

Shane nods. “Yeah. And I’ll be more than fine after this.”

Ilya’s expression splits into a vicious grin. His hand slides up to cup Shane’s face before he kisses him. “Fucking idiots to let you go,” he murmurs against Shane’s lips.

He kisses Shane again, just once, and Shane can’t help but smile. “Biggest mistake in the team’s history.”

Ilya’s eyes dance with delight. “Yes. Worse than Pike playing center.”

Shane rolls his eyes and pushes him away, following his teammates as they file out of the locker room.

Shane takes his place at center ice for the first face-off. Hayden meets him there. He offers his friend a brief look. Hayden has moved to center since Shane’s departure. There’s another guy, Garry Tucker, who he switches with. Shane’s not surprised that he faces Hayden first, though.

“Hope you didn’t lose your edge playing with Ottawa,” Hayden says quietly.

Shane’s lips quirk ever so slightly. “I’d be worried about yourself. You look stretched thin, Hayd.”

The puck drops.

Shane wins the face-off.

By the end of the second period, Ottawa leads 3-0. Shane scored the first two points, the second being an assist from Ilya. It took most of Ilya's willpower not to skate up to his husband and kiss him after that beautiful shot. The third came from Luca, and Ilya grinned and clapped him on the shoulder for it.

With each point, Montreal grows more restless. Dark looks shot toward Ottawa's bench, more aggression seeping into their maneuvers. Ilya watches Comeau check Shane into the boards. He gives Comeau just a *small* bump in return for it soon after. He hears the slur that slips out under another Voyageur's breath. The curl of the player's lip in a sneer at his retort doesn't feel anywhere near satisfying enough.

Ilya keeps an eye on Garry Tucker the whole game. Boiziau called Shane hours before with the friendly warning to keep an eye on Tucker. Most of the way through the game and with a lead, Ilya sees why. Tucker isn't afraid to play aggressively in a way that edges uncharacteristic for a Voyageurs player. But more importantly, Ilya sees the look of disgust and loathing that crosses Tucker's face at the first intermission when he glances across the ice at them.

The tension builds to something almost tangible. Ilya can feel his skin prickling. It's ready to snap with one wrong move, one more point scored, one more provocation. And in the end, it's not even Tucker that does it.

Ilya sends the puck Shane's way, gaze locked on its path as he moves down the ice. Schneider cuts in, plowing into Shane, and he drops to the ground. It feels like the world grinds to a momentary halt, Ilya's awareness narrowing down to the sole point of Shane's body. Suddenly, Shane isn't wearing an Ottawa jersey; he's dressed in Montreal's blue and is unresponsive in one of the worst moments of Ilya's life. Ilya's breath halts in his lungs, terror rocketing down his spine.

But then the world keeps moving, and Shane isn't unconscious this time. He starts to move, and with that confirmation, Ilya comes back online. He whirls toward Schneider, cold fear washed out by burning rage, but LaPointe's gloves hit the ice, and his fist is curling into the shoulder of Schneider's jersey. It takes a half-second for the sight to click into place in Ilya's mind. Someone is already taking care of it. *Good.*

Ilya swallows the rage and races over to Shane's side. "Shane, hey," he begins, and Shane blinks hard. He looks dazed, and immediately, Ilya locks onto the blood spilling down his lip.

"Fuck," Shane mutters at the same time Ilya says, "You're bleeding."

Shane lifts his hand to his face, looking down at the blood on the back of his glove before pressing it to his nose again. "It's not even broken. It's fine," he says, meeting Ilya's gaze evenly. *I'm fine. It's not like the last time.*

There's only a drop of it on the ice from when Shane fell, but it might as well be an ocean. Shane is *hurt*. It's a bloody nose, but for a terrifying moment it seemed like so much more. Ilya breathes in through a tightness in his throat, out through his nose, and the desire to send Schneider sprawling like what he'd just done to Shane. But making sure that Shane is okay is more important. Ilya accompanies him to the bench as the fight ends, and LaPointe is guided toward the Ottawa penalty box.

Ilya watches for a moment as Shane is checked out before looking toward LaPointe. He gives his teammate a grateful nod, and LaPointe dips his head, satisfaction in his eyes. His helmet is crooked now, and Ilya hopes that Schneider is left with at the bare *minimum* a nasty bruise.

He turns back to the game, the anger simmering under his skin. He can't swallow it all down, and fuck it, he doesn't *want* to. He just holds it. With Shane out for the time being, Ilya takes his position as center, and Luca takes the right wing.

Pike readies himself in front of him. Ilya doesn't look at him. Ordinarily, he might try to get a rise out of the Montreal captain, but he doesn't care about that right now. The puck drops, and Ilya wins it. He races toward the Montreal goal, flicking the puck to Haas. It's intercepted by Berkes, and Ilya takes off after him. Troy comes around Berkes' other side and steals it, slipping past Boiziau and Pike and sending it to Ilya. Ilya takes it and shoots down the ice.

Tucker comes from the side and slams him into the boards, taking the opportunity to say, loud enough for Ilya to hear, "Losing to fucking pansies that can't take a damn hit."

And just like that, Ilya doesn't care about the goddamn puck. He spins around, already yanking off one glove. "Mother*fucker–"*

Tucker's eyes flash, and his lip curls. He drops both of his own, and Ilya punches him in the jaw. He lets out a stream of curses in Russian as he swings again, the lid on his anger left abandoned on the ice with his gloves.

"You fucking *bitch*–" the Voyageur shouts, retaliating with a hit of his own.

Then he grapples Ilya by the shoulders, attempting to throw him down onto the ice. Ilya shouts curses in his ear– about him, his team, the pathetic man that he is– and stubbornly remains on his feet. He drags Tucker down and elbows him in the head, hard.

People are shouting, some of it undoubtedly from the referees. Fans in the audience are screaming, and the roar of it, in combination with everything else, is deafening. Tucker hits him in the chest, trying to free himself of the grapple or push Ilya back.

Tucker hits Ilya in the chest, trying to free himself of the grapple or push him back.

Fuck you, Ilya thinks, maybe yells. *Fuck you and people like you– assholes who think they're better than us, who think they have more right to exist because they do not know what it is like to have to hide. You are nothing.*

Tucker strikes him hard in the ribs, and Ilya wheezes, his hold loosening just enough for Tucker to slug him in the jaw.

Ilya grabs him around the middle and puts all of his weight into throwing Tucker to the side, sending the Voyageur crashing down onto the ice.

He stands panting, glowering down at the other man as Tucker blinks up at him, dazed.

"*Svoloch',*" Ilya spits.

A referee grabs him by the shoulder, starting to drag him away. He's saying something, probably about whatever penalty Ilya's going to be getting for this. Ilya doesn't care.

Shane's hands are curled into tight fists on his knees. He breathes unsteadily as he watches Ilya skate to the penalty box, his helmet askew. He's got to be a bit bruised after that. His hazel eyes are dark and angry, but then he looks in Shane's direction. Immediately, some of the anger fades, and suddenly, there's triumph there, too.

Shane gives him a nod, hoping that conveys what he's feeling. *Thank you. That was hot. I love you. You beat his ass. I'll be glad when I have you alone after this.*

Ilya's lips curl into a sly grin, and Shane knows that he understood at least part of it.

Ottawa wins 3-0.

The locker room is *loud,* and Ilya wouldn't want it any other way. The victorious grin splitting Ilya's face doesn't help with the ache in his jaw, but it's worth it. He's smiling and laughing as they change out of their gear, and as he lingers in the locker room, waiting for his teammates to leave.

"Night, captain!" Hayes eventually waves, and lets the door swing shut behind him, leaving Ilya alone at last with Shane.

He turns to his husband, watching as he hauls his bag onto his shoulder and gets to his feet. There's a swell of pride in his chest.

"Good game, captain," Shane says, his smile a bit smaller than the others but no less real.

Ilya closes the distance between them and tips Shane's chin up to kiss him. Shane meets him eagerly, impassioned but still sweet.

He pulls away just enough to rest his forehead against Shane's. "I am proud of you, *moy lyubimyy*," he murmurs.

Shane pulls away slightly, reaching up and brushing his thumb along Ilya's bruising cheek. His eyebrows furrow. "Tucker got a good hit on you."

Ilya shakes his head gently. "Is fine. He got what he deserved." His tone is cold, flat. Shane studies him.

"What did Tucker say?" Shane asks quietly.

“It was not just him. Is what Schneider did, too.” The adrenaline rush of victory is starting to fade. He looks away.

Shane doesn't say anything for a few moments. And then he understands. “It was just a bloody nose. Nothing broken. I’m okay–”

“Yes, I know. Is all fine,” Ilya cuts him off. He doesn’t want to dwell on what it could’ve been. What he was terrified of it becoming.

Shane’s brows furrow. “Ilya–”

“We won, Shane! We destroyed them. That is what matters.” Ilya forces a lightness into his tone that wavers too much to sound genuine.

Let it go, he wants to beg. *Let it go, let us go home.*

Shane continues to frown at him, but mercifully, does. It won’t be for long, but it doesn’t have to be. Ilya has… been working on trying to communicate better with him. Partially at his therapist’s encouragement, and partially out of his own desire to be a better husband. They can and will talk later, but right now, he just wants to enjoy their victory.

The two walk out of the arena towards their car. Shane drives them back. He holds Ilya’s hand the entire way, a quiet but persistent reassurance. Anya rushes them as soon as they open the door, greeting them for a moment before racing off into the house to grab a toy and sprint back with it.

When they turn in for the night, Ilya holds Shane close, pressing gentle kisses to the back of his shoulder. Shane relaxes into the embrace, the sound of his breathing so soft in the quiet darkness of their room.

In the morning, they celebrate their victory with shared, triumphant grins as a sports channel recounts how Montreal was *crushed.* Shane smiles, and Ilya sees just a little bit of the stress lift from his tightly wound shoulders. Ilya insults the Voyageurs, and Shane rolls his eyes and reminds him that they still have dinner with Hayden in a few weeks, and that Ilya needs to behave despite the victory last night. Ilya waves a hand dismissively. *I will behave then. For now, he and his team are losers, and that is what matters, yes?*

Ilya is perhaps a little more affectionate than normal, not that Shane complains. He doesn’t tell Shane what Tucker said, because it doesn’t matter. It won’t be the last time they hear something like that. But later, as Anya runs across the yard to retrieve the ball that Ilya had thrown, he hesitantly tells his husband of how afraid he was when he went down. How all he could think about in that moment was another injury that had left Shane prone. Shane takes his hand and quietly reassures him that he’s okay.

Ilya gives him a small smile and nods. “I know, *moy vozlyublennyy.*”

“I love you,” Shane says seriously, then leans over and kisses him.

Ilya’s chest flares with warmth. And, before the tenderness can evolve into anything more, Anya balances both front paws against Ilya’s knee in an attempt to get his attention. Her tail wags, her ball in her mouth, and Ilya smiles as he pulls away to indulge his dog. Shane huffs softly, lips quirked.

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