

Start from the Top

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Start from the Top

by [Allhallowstheark](#)

Summary

Shane was always trying to plan ahead. Make sure that he knew what he'd do in as many situations as possible. Keep a plan, keep himself happy. But when a diagnosis changes it all, he's put into a tailspin that ends with Ilya Rozanov entering his life.

An obligatory post-episode 6 autism fic because Shane 100% was shutting down when he put his head down on that table.

Notes

Hi welcome to Autism town where I yap about Shane being autistic because I can't help myself!!

Also i haven't written fanfiction in like a year and a half so if this sucks I'm really sorry :) I have plans for another heated rivalry fic if this one does well because then i'll have the confidence to post it lol.

Enjoy!

Compared to other kids, Shane had always been pretty high-strung. Always trying to plan ahead, making sure he had alternative options in case one little thing went wrong, and if those plans didn't encapsulate every possible experience, he'd shut down.

It wasn't an issue, normally. But when Hockey went from an escape from the everyday chaos he experienced at school, to the new chaos that consumed his life...those shutdowns became more obvious. Problematic, even.

"He's just...He's such a sweet kid." He mom spoke to the family doctor, he had been silent since they got to the appointment. All he wanted to do was leave, but instead, he fidgeted with the drawstring on his joggers. "And amazing at hockey, so focused on the ice... I mean he knows everything about the sport. It used to be the only thing we could do to get him to relax, but now..."

"Now the pressure is weighing, huh, Shane?" The doctor smiled at him, but all he could do was avert his eyes and stare at one of the posters on the wall. "Shane." He reached out to touch his knee, and he instinctively jerked away from the attempt. "Ms. Hollander, I have...some tests. I think I'd like Shane to do."

"Okay." She looked at him, and he couldn't help but shift his eyes to look at her. "You can take some needles today, right? Or do some things, for the doctor?"

He was about to nod, when the man himself spoke up. "Actually...they're written tests." Both him and his mom turned their heads to listen to him. "With...your consent, I'd like to do some preliminary tests for...anxiety conditions, and some other conditions that may cause...all this upset you reported in your form."

Before he knew it, he was sat in a room filling out questionnaires, talking to the doctor, or random psychologists for hours, answering questions about his day-to-day life. The relationships he had with others. How he experienced the world around him. It was overwhelming, and without answers, it was confusing. But three months later, he was back in that same room, except this time there was a psychologist with his doctor, and both his parents were present.

"After both initial and further testing...we've concluded that Shane likely has Autism Spectrum Disorder." The psychologist spoke, clearly reading off her clipboard. He heard his mom sharply inhale, he stayed silent. "Autism is a neurodevelopmental condition that can vary in severity between people, as well as over the course of a persons life. The impacts from the condition be recognized from early childhood. Autism is characterized by difficulties with social interaction and communication and by restricted or repetitive patterns of thought and behavior." She looked up.

"So..." His dad spoke up. "So Shane, has this condition. What can we do to help?"

The psychologist spent a long time explaining how they could begin to accommodate Shane. To change things so that Shane wasn't so overwhelmed by the things around him. To 'treat' his condition.

“And we recommend talk therapy, to help him work through his anxiety.”

“No.” He spoke up, which seemed to shock everybody in the room. He looked at all of them with fear in his eyes. “Please, I can get over it on my own.”

“Shane, this isn’t something that you get over, or that’s fixed. It’s something you learn to live with, something you adapt with and grow with.”

“I don’t want to talk to someone about all my problems.” He looked at his parents with pleading eyes. “*Please*, don’t make me.”

“We’ll talk about it later.” His mom rubbed his cheek with her thumb, and then he tuned the world out again.

In an oddly simultaneous way, everything changed while also staying the exact same. His parents bought him tools so he could self-regulate. Things like ear defenders, squishy toys. He loved them, but he only used them in private. There were too many eyes on him at all times, scouts watching him play hockey and expecting perfection.

He spent his life living something that wasn’t quite a lie, but something that also wasn’t the truth. He didn’t tell anyone else what was wrong with him, and despite media speculation, nobody had ever said anything to his face about any of his unique behaviors.

In the end, his hockey IQ was high, and he was a great player, so that was all that mattered. On the surface, he was a prodigy. A player who would rock the NHL and change hockey for good, one that would play for years and years. Inside, he could be someone who yearned to curl up in a dark, silent room. Someone searched up his own condition online to see the ways in which others were allowed to have community, or how people perceived autistic people in comparison to others. He could keep this secret inside him for life, because it was just one secret.

“Is it everything you dreamed of?” Ilya Rozanov was not a part of his plan. He wasn’t even on his radar. He and his mom had it all planned out, a roadmap for his life. They had alternate plans, different routes to a common goal of playing hockey until he couldn’t anymore. It soothed him, to have it all laid out for him. And then talks of a Russian teenager who was coming up on the scene, looking towards the NHL draft. He was a strong player, a great skater, and someone who acted on instinct. They spoke for the first time in 2008, right before the World Junior Hockey Championships, and he didn’t...hate it. The handshakes didn’t make his skin crawl, and the conversation didn’t make him feel nervous. It was just...normal.

Losing wasn’t in his plan, and getting drafted second to him also wasn’t in his plan.

“Shane, could you move a little closer to Ilya, please?” The photographer made a vague gesture, and he shifted closer to him, ever so slightly. Their arms touched, and he didn’t freak out. He exhaled through his nose and breathed deeply back in. The flash from the cameras started to bother him, making him anxious. He was still thinking about it as he sat on the gym floor across from Rozanov, after their...friendly competition on the stationary bikes.

“Almost.” He answered, his eyes meeting Rozanov’s in a way that felt so unnatural that he couldn’t help but immediately avert his eyes to the mirror beside him.

“Sorry I ruined your big day.” Rozanov was smirking at him, like the disruption from routine was a joke.

“Fuck off.”

There was an awkward silence that felt heavy between them until Rozanov spoke again.

“Montreal is nice?” He nodded at him, and Rozanov nodded back. “Is Boston nice?”

“It’s a good town. I don’t go there often.”

There was silence again, and he spent the whole lapse in conversation watching Ilya. Watching him drink water and breathe...the way his chest raised and lowered rapidly due to the energy they’d spent exercising.

That was the beginning of the end for him, the spiral down into a world...a life that was so deeply intertwined with Rozanov’s that he couldn’t escape it even if he tried.

They spent *years* planning hook-ups in hotel rooms and their homes. Texting back and forth, becoming something more than a quick lay, or a friend with benefits. Even when they grew apart, they always ended up back together.

When Scott Hunter kissed his boyfriend after winning the cup, Shane stared hard at the screen, his brain and body filled with so many emotions that he felt overwhelmed. Scared. His phone rang, and he couldn’t answer it until his mom told him to.

“I’m coming to the cottage.” Five little words, and everything had changed for them.

He tapped his fingers against the steering wheel rhythmically, a great, casual stim that he could do around anybody. Almost everyone got bored driving and had to keep themselves conscious and alert. But for him it was something special, something that kept him on earth.

“You like to...move a lot.” Ilya looked at him, his eyes full of something he couldn’t quite place. It wasn’t the first time someone had said it, but it was mostly said by the media who were trying to pin down why he is the way he is.

“I’m just excited.” He looked over for a second, making the smallest amount of eye contact he could before he turned his attention back to the road.

The pieces slowly started to fall into place over the first few days Ilya was there. He couldn’t hide the way that he flapped his hands when he picked Ilya’s shirt up off the ground

and noticed that it was a horrible material. He couldn't hide how he flinched and shook when a house across the lake started to let off fireworks.

It all came to a head when his parents found out, and even though it all went well, he still started to shut down while they ate lunch. The combination of an unplanned meal, plus the sudden need to come out to his parents...being caught. The way everything went down. He wanted to cry, and scream. Everything was too loud, and he could hear the dull buzzing of the light fixture above the table. The soft tapping of Ilya's foot against the floor. The scraping of forks against ceramic dishes. It made him *nauseous*. He put his head down on the table, taking pleasure in the pain that came from hitting his head.

"Shane?" Ilya spoke up, placing a gentle hand on his arm that felt like it was burning him. He flinched and felt his hand go away just as fast as it came on. "Shane, are you okay?" He whispered, and despite the soft, caring tone, it felt like he was being stabbed. "Your family is here...your boyfriend is here..." his breath came out more and more strangled. Boyfriend?

"He needs quiet." His mom whispered, and after that, everything was silent. After a little, he felt the comforting burden of a weighted blanket on his shoulders and the familiar pressure of ear defenders on his head.

After enough time, he was able to come out of his cocoon. He sat up and followed the voices of his parents and his...boyfriend.

"Did you tell him?" He looked at his mom, who nodded a bit,

"Just the basics...He needs to know." She spoke softly.

"Is okay." Ilya looked at him. "I don't mind this...this stuff. Is like the stuff with my mother."

He paused. "I...yeah."

"I still love you. You're still boring Shane." He took on his usual, jokey, mocking tone as he stood up to get closer to him. Ilya held out his arms for a hug. If he wanted to, he could say no. He could refuse the touch and escape and keep taking a break.

But instead, he stepped forward into his arms, and reveled in the pressure and the love of his boyfriend's hug.

With everything off his chest, it felt like he was lighter, like the world would keep spinning. Like he could be himself for the first time since he was a teenager, being told that his world was different.

This was his life now, and he couldn't be happier.

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