

I Heard a Rumor That You Loved Me

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I Heard a Rumor That You Loved Me

by [onyxpected](#)

Summary

Shane Hollander being gay was the biggest rumor in the NHL since he showed up to the All-Stars game without Rose Landry. It gets confirmed in Boston.

Notes

An unnamed guy on the Bears says a slur twice, but there are other homophobic comments made as well. This takes place nebulously after the All-Star Game, so there's feelings kinda acknowledged but they're also still scared to spook each other. don't yell at me these two have a fuckass timeline. Inspired by the fact that I refuse to believe only Hayden noticed that Shane was weird as fuck about his love life, I think that would get around.

Shane Hollander being gay was the biggest rumor in the NHL since he showed up to the All-Stars game without Rose Landry. When he would rush out of the guest locker room of an arena, the other players on the Voyagers would turn to each other with knowing glances and cruel smirks. Hayden Pike leveled his meanest glares at them, but he was considered as much of a pretty boy as Shane, and none of his teammates were scared of him off the ice.

The word spread from the Voyagers' half-serious jokes about Shane never having a girlfriend, to half-serious speculation for why, to what every player in the NHL considered an open secret. The Voyagers learned quickly who they could jeer and snicker with and who they couldn't, so Hayden knew why they waited for him to leave the locker room or the table at the bar to huddle together, laughing. The latest team in the league to hear this particular gossip, apparently, was the Boston Bears. One of the rookies stomped into the locker room after the game, grinning maniacally.

"Guys, my friend on the Voyagers -" he was interrupted by groans "- no, guys, we were drafted together, anyway, my friend on the Voyagers just told me the craziest thing." They all looked at him expectantly. He looked around to make sure the captain, Ilya Rozanov, could only hear muffled conversation from the showers. "He said Shane Hollander's a fag," the rookie stage-whispered, and the Bears locker room erupted in laughter.

"We've known that, kid," one of the older members crowed. The rookie grinned devilishly.

"No, you've *thought* it," he insisted. "I've got the confirmation." The locker room fell deadly silent and the shower stopped running, but the rookie barreled on. "My friend saw it! He got a dick pic from some guy on his phone on the bus before the game. Look, he got it on video." He turned his phone to the closest players to him, and tapped his phone screen. You could hear cheering and the general ruckus of a team hanging out in the locker room with their last-minute game rituals. The guys who could see the phone screen raised their eyebrows up to their hairlines.

If anyone turned around in the room, they would see Ilya glaring towards the kid with the heat he fought with on the ice.

"Bullshit!" Cliff Marlow yelled. "He dated Rose Landry!"

"Yeah, for like a week and a half," someone else chimed in. "Remember when they were at that club? He looked so uncomfortable dancing with her."

"He looks uncomfortable all the time."

"Y'all, pass me that video!"

"Guys! Focus, the captain of our biggest opp is a queer!"

"Can you imagine being those guys? Having to share a team and a room with him?"

"Jeez, I wonder if it's Hayden Pike he's fucking-" the speculation was interrupted by Ilya smashing a fist into the row of lockers, startling the entire hockey team. He was dripping wet,

hair wet and unkempt in a way that made him look a little murderous with his glare.

“We are schoolgirls now?” He asked, looking at his team. “We sit around and braid hair while discussing boys?” His eyes burned into the entire group, daring them to speak. No one did. “Good. Shut the fuck up, get out of here. Maybe spend more time on hockey and we win next game.”

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“Shane!” Hayden Pike called to his friend, who was fleeing the stadium like he had somewhere more important to be. “Shane, wait up!” Shane finally turned back to look at him, eyebrow scrunched. Hayden skidded to a stop, winded from the game and chasing after his friend like he owed him money.

“What’s up?” Shane asked. Hayden took a deep breath. He was about to give his friend the worst news of his life, and it tore him in half to have to be the one to hurt him.

“Shane, there’s... there’s a video out. On Instagram.” Shane immediately turned pale, a panicked look overtaking his features, and Hayden’s heart fell into his stomach. He was sympathetic to his friend, and also a little hurt that it was true and he hadn’t trusted him with it. He was confirming his closest friend’s worst nightmare.

“Hayden... is it...” Shane’s voice was choked.

“Yeah, it’s... Shane, it was your phone. Someone took a video with your phone screen in the background.” Shane’s head dropped immediately, like he expected it and knew exactly what was on that video. The tension left his body but not like the cool, confident stature he had on his skates and nowhere else. This was like his entire body was giving up, collapsing in on itself. Shane swayed a bit to the side and Hayden caught him before he could fall. Shane shook, but he wasn’t sobbing. It was more like a shiver, and he clutched his arms around himself.

“Hay...”

“Buddy, I know, but there’s still reporters out here,” Hayden said, gentle and low. That seemed to make something in Shane click and he looked at Hayden, straightening.

“I need you to get me somewhere,” Shane said. “I can’t take my car.” His gaze was steely but fragile and Hayden knew he was barely holding it together. He nodded solemnly.

“Of course, easy. Anywhere.” Shane’s response was a crazed half-grin that looked almost like Ilya Rozanov’s before he strode briskly to the car park where Hayden’s Lexus SUV was waiting. It sent a shiver down Hayden’s spine.

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Ilya called a fifth time, only to immediately be sent to voicemail again. “Come on, Hollander,” he muttered in Russian at the device. He shook it, as if that could cause Shane to fall out of the black square and onto Ilya’s living room floor. His thoughts were racing with

what if he gets blacklisted and what will his team say to him and God, I hope he's alright, hockey is his world. Best case scenario, he hadn't seen it yet and was getting on the plane, giving him a blissful ninety minutes of ignorance. Ilya was going to beat the shit out of the Voyagers at their next game, if they were lucky. Maybe he'd just pay them all a special visit, instead.

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Hayden was not any less confused when they pulled up in front of a luxury apartment building he had never seen before in the heart of Boston. He parked and followed Shane to the service entry despite the latter's protests.

"You aren't doing whatever this is alone," Hayden assured, but Shane only muttered something that sounded like *I'm not*, before he gave up fighting Hayden about it and punched in a code to the building's keypad. A heavy lock disengaged and Shane pulled his hat lower over his head. He reached up and grabbed the hood of Hayden's jacket and pulled that above his head, too. His fingers twitched at his side as they marched to the elevator and Shane punched the button for the 18th floor, and another security code. Hayden had a very bad feeling he knew exactly whose apartment he was about to walk into, but he didn't voice his suspicions for the sake of Shane's barely-existent composure. Shane walked right up to the only door on the floor, and knocked twice, hard and quick. It was a practiced motion with no hesitation. The door opened immediately and Hayden only restrained himself from a surprised yell by letting his jaw hang completely loose for any and all flies to make residence inside.

Ilya Rozanov wrapped an arm around Shane and immediately pulled him into the apartment, only pausing to look at Hayden once Shane was fully out of sight. "You stand there or you come?" He asked, and Hayden glared.

"Not leaving you alone with him," he huffed, following before Ilya shut the door on him. Shane was on the sofa with his head in his hands, and Ilya immediately knelt in front of him.

"Hollander," he said, his voice soft in the way it only ever was with Shane. Shane shook his head, refusing to look at him. Ilya gently settled his hands over Shane's wrists. "Hollander, *Shane*, look at me." He said something in Russian after that Shane didn't understand, but he slowly lowered his hands. Ilya let go of one of his wrists to slowly bring his hand up into Shane's hair, telegraphing his movements deliberately so Shane could cut him off if he wanted. Hayden was struck completely speechless at the casual intimacy between them.

"Il- Rozanov..." Shane whispered. "I fucked up."

"You did not," he assured. "My fault. Should not have been so..." he waved his hand like he was looking for the English word.

"Reckless?" Hayden supplied completely unintentionally. Ilya turned to him with a glare, but it had no real heat. It really just betrayed how tired and sad he was pretending not to be.

"Pike, be useful for once. Get ginger ale. Fridge is on the left." It took until the cold can was pressing into his palm for it to occur to him that Ilya kept ginger ale in his fridge. One of the

few things Shane drank. Probably for Shane. How could he not have noticed? He called himself Shane's best friend, but it felt like there was a canyon between them now. He realized he didn't know one of the biggest pieces of Shane's life. He'd told himself with every rumor spreading that Shane would have told him if he was gay, that Shane knew he was safe with Hayden. Now he wondered if Shane really did know that, if he'd not done enough as a friend.

Ilya was holding Shane's hands in both of his by the time Hayden returned with the soda can, and Shane's eyes looked a little more focused and present. Ilya was speaking softly in Russian that Shane didn't understand but clinged on, grounding himself. Ilya took the soda from Hayden without looking away from Shane, popping it open for him and holding it in front of him. "You want?" Ilya offered. Shane closed his hand around the can, lingering where his fingers touched Ilya's. He was still in his dress shirt, unlike Hayden who had brought clean sweats for after the game, and he pulled at the buttons on his collar. Ilya undid the first few buttons and Hayden politely pointed his gaze to the ceiling.

"Uncomfortable, thanks." Shane said, scratching where his collar was now open. His voice sounded steadier and less robotic than it had in the last thirty minutes.

"Pike," Ilya called for his attention. Hayden snapped his gaze to Ilya's stressed, heartbroken face. Ilya had turned away from Shane, probably to give himself a minute to school his expression again. "Sit with him. I will get comfortable clothes." Ilya pointed at the spot next to Shane, and Hayden lowered himself onto the stupidly expensive, oversized sofa.

"How're you feeling?" Hayden asked, shoving the Rozanov-shaped elephant out of the room for now. Shane rubbed his face and took another sip of soda.

"Honestly? Not amazing," Shane admitted. He turned to Hayden and offered a facsimile of a smile. "Thank you for being here with me. And for not freaking out."

"Oh, I'm definitely freaking out," Hayden said with a shrug. "You need me to keep it together, though." He reached out and put a hand on Shane's shoulder. Shane relaxed and leaned a little closer into it.

"Hollander," Ilya announced his re-entry to the living room. "I set out comfortable clothes in my room. Go change." He smiled a little at Shane, and Shane got up and walked back to Ilya's bedroom like he knew where it was. Ilya looked at Hayden, and Hayden looked right back.

"How long?" Hayden asked.

"For what?" Ilya responded, purposefully obtuse.

"How long have you been together?" Hayden asked, quiet but more forceful.

"We are not together," Ilya responded, hurt lacing his voice no matter how hard he tried to hold it back. It sounded more like *I wish we were together*. Hayden looked at him analytically and changed tactics.

“How long have you been in love with him?” Hayden asked, and Ilya’s eyes grew wide and scared. Hayden suddenly felt like he’d stepped over an invisible boundary. Ilya shook his head and did not clarify whether it was because he was denying he was in love with Shane or to clear his thoughts. He exhaled and said a rapid string of words in Russian. “I didn’t get any of that,” Hayden grumbled.

“Was the point,” Ilya turned to Hayden with a hardened expression. “You cannot tell anyone,” he began in a hushed tone. Hayden tried to interrupt, but Ilya barrelled on. “I will not expose Shane to more of this than has to be done. I am not... generous man. I will send you home to your wife and many, many children with black eyes and broken teeth. Understand?” Hayden didn’t have time to be offended that Ilya thought he would out them like that, clock that Ilya had called him Shane again instead of Hollander, or to be genuinely unnerved by a threat he knew he could make good on because Shane stepped softly into the room. He looked like he’d been crying.

“Are you both alive and uninjured?” He asked, trying for a joke. Hayden gave him a halfhearted smile, and Ilya simply reached out to take his hand. He pulled Shane down on the couch next to him and maneuvered him so his head was laying on Ilya’s lap, and Ilya’s fingers were running through his hair. Shane looked startled by the action at first before he settled into the touch. He did lean over a little to address Hayden.

“You should get back, it’s almost curfew,” Shane’s hoarse voice said. Hayden gestured silently between Shane and Ilya, and Shane gave a little thumbs up.

“Okay, um, Shane. I put your phone on the kitchen island and your bag is still in my car, will you need anything from it?”

“I’m good, I’ll get it from you later,” Shane’s eyes were closing, and Hayden figured he could use the rest. Him and Ilya shared one last glance, both trying to communicate a million things and not knowing each other enough to understand any of them.

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Ilya kept running his fingers through Shane’s hair as he slept on his lap, soaking up the feeling even as he hated the circumstance. He couldn’t stop thinking of what Hayden asked him. *How long have you been in love with him?* It was that obvious from five minutes of trying to keep Shane from falling apart? Did Shane already guess? What would he say? Suddenly, Ilya felt self conscious about the soft hair between his fingers. He was familiar with the silky feeling of Shane’s hair and the smell of his ocean-esque shampoo but never in this context. Never just because he could, for comfort and connection. His hand stilled and he had to force himself to stop touching Shane, putting his hands almost behind his back. He couldn’t move Shane off of his lap without waking him up, but he could put this metaphorical distance between them.

He carefully reached for his phone and made the mistake of opening it. The Bears groupchat was alight with people sharing articles about who sent Shane Hollander a dick pic, speculations on his sexuality, multiple people saying *I told you so*, whether it was “safe” to have him in the locker rooms, did he have a roster of guys to fuck in every city. That one is what made Ilya growl obscenities under his breath.

“Rozanov?” Shane’s sleepy voice murmured. Ilya put a hand on his shoulder.

“Shhhh, *solnishko*. Go back to sleep. I’ll get pillow.”

“I like when you speak Russian,” Shane replied, eyes still closed but with a faint smile on his face. When Ilya moved to stand, Shane wrapped his arms around his waist to keep him there, looking up at him with an expression that Ilya couldn’t stand to look at. He felt like his heart was going to burst at the seams.

“Shane...” Ilya began, but lost the words he wanted to say.

“I like when you call me Shane, too.” His eyes were still closed but his voice sounded more awake. “You’re being nice to me.”

“You want me to be asshole?” Ilya asked, incredulous.

“You don’t have to be part of this,” Shane clarified. “No one knows that it was you.” He opened his eyes again, fully awake, face carefully neutral as he leaned his head into Ilya’s stomach. Ilya’s face twisted into an expression Shane couldn’t decipher. His mouth opened and closed a couple of times.

“Is also my fault,” Ilya decided on eventually. “I will be here, if you want. On your side. You will not lose hockey.” Shane considered this for a few moments.

“I might lose hockey,” Shane says, his instinct to be pragmatic. “And I’ll definitely lose you.”

“Who told you this? Was not me,” Ilya said indignantly, raising his eyebrow. He put his hand on Shane and began moving it along his side in a soothing gesture. Shane sighed with the weight of the world.

“It’s too risky now for you to be near me. If we were caught together before, maybe we could have had plausible deniability,” Shane said. Ilya’s face made the expression Shane knew meant he’d used an English phrase he didn’t fully understand. “We could have denied it,” Shane clarified, choosing to ignore how terrified he was about how well he could read Ilya and how much every part of him was screaming to *agree, yes, please be here. Be here forever, if you ask*. One crisis at a time, he decided.

“You say there is no denial now?” Ilya asked, and Shane nodded. “That is stupid. You can be around men without immediately having sex.” Ilya’s expression turned to consideration. “Maybe not me, because I am sexy and amazing in bed, but other men. Those men you resist. We can pretend.” He waited for Shane to slowly sit up and start laughing before he let his face break into a shit-eating grin. Ilya put a hand on Shane’s shoulder and placed a quick peck on his lips, his efforts undermined by the fact that neither of them really stopped smiling.

“I should call my parents,” Shane said, slowly standing. His knees cracked from sitting for so long. “I’ll... I can leave soon, Rozanov. I’ll have Hayden come get me.” Ilya followed him to the kitchen and scowled.

“Ilya,” he corrected. Shane looked up at him like a startled deer. “You like when I call you Shane?” Shane nodded, tension slowly deflating. “Call me Ilya. You will pronounce wrong because of ridiculous Canadian accent, but might still be nice to hear.” The pair smiled at each other again. “Also, you are being very stupid again.”

Shane looked up from his lock screen, scared to open it with all the missed calls and notifications. Ilya stepped in front of him and tilted his head up with two gentle fingers under his chin. “What?”

“You hear me say all that and you think I want you... ‘out of my hair’?” Ilya made a *tsk* noise. “They call you smartest in league. I think you only have hockey up there.” He moved his fingers from Shane’s jaw and tapped his temple lightly.

“You want me to...?”

“*Ostavat'sya*,” Ilya finished for him. It was a new word from Ilya, but Shane didn’t need a translation.

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