

Ilya Rozanov's Guide to Reinforcing the Closet

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Ilya Rozanov's Guide to Reinforcing the Closet

by [pink_starfish](#)

Summary

“Are you... are you saying that you want to be in a relationship with Shane Hollander?” The room held a sort of tension, like everyone in it was holding their breath, waiting for Ilya to vehemently deny it.

The reporter had taken his words in the complete opposite way than Ilya had meant them, but he supposed he was too committed to stop now. “Of course not.”

“Of course.” The reporter parroted, laughing nervously.

“Obviously, we are already in a relationship.”

—

In Ilya’s rookie season, he impulsively jokes about dating Shane to an invasive reporter. Then, he just... keeps doing it, since publicly announcing it enough times that everyone writes it off as a joke is a great way to hide a clandestine relationship.

Notes

thank you very much to everyone who left kudos and such kind comments on my last fic! this is very silly, I hope you enjoy!

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

- Inspired by [Ilya Rozanov is the World's Biggest Troll](#) by [frizzyanya](#)

The first time it happened was decidedly not on purpose. The Bears had just lost to the Admirals in overtime, and Ilya's head was pounding from a combination of exhaustion from twenty minutes on the ice, the godawful rap music blaring from someone's speaker in the locker room still ringing in his ears, and the overly bright flashes from the cameras filling the media room in his eyes.

Ilya had to have been in there for at least ten minutes already, but the dozen reporters showed no signs of slowing down with their needlessly complex questions that Ilya didn't have the brainpower to properly decipher. Sometimes he wished that he was a little less good at hockey, so the captain and assistant captains of his team would get called into media instead. His English really wasn't good enough to formulate eloquent answers to so many run-on questions. Ilya could feel his eyes glazing over, and hoped that it wasn't visible on the broadcast.

When he heard the word 'Hollander' from one of the reporters holding a notepad in front of him, Ilya perked up a little, some of the fog in his brain clearing. Answering questions about Hollander was one of his favourite things to do. He liked to toe the line of saying the most outrageous things he could that weren't outright insulting and were therefore acceptable comments. Imagining how Hollander would react helped get him through media. He got a bit of a rush every time the other man got angry enough to say retaliatory things to the media when they quoted Ilya to him in his own interviews, instead of his usual 'no comment' or media-trained, diplomatic lines.

Noticing Ilya's attention, the reporter repeated his question a little louder. "Ilya, it's fairly common for players to be friends with others drafted their year. Would you say that your rivalry with Shane Hollander is keeping you from building these kinds of positive relationships with your fellow players?"

Ilya scrutinized the reporter for a moment. The man's shiny bald head reflected the flashes from the cameras in a way that was very distracting and infinitely easier to focus on than the man's face or the camera beside him.

Now, Ilya had two options. He could say the right thing, the thing that he knew he was supposed to, which was that he had no problem building relationships with other players, like the younger guys on his team. Or, he could voice the outlandish, intrusive thought that the question had inspired, which would definitely get him in trouble with PR and pulled from the media scrum.

In the end, it wasn't even a choice. He would do anything to get out of this hellhole.

"I am great at building relationships. I keep trying to build relationship with Hollander, but he is a challenge."

"Do you mean friendship?" The reporter asked, looking pleased with the soundbite he had gotten.

Ilya ignored the pointed look that Kate, the Bears' PR manager, was giving him, and kept talking. "No, is not what I said."

"Are you... are you saying that you want to be in a relationship with Shane Hollander?" The room held a sort of tension, like everyone in it was holding their breath, waiting for Ilya to vehemently deny it.

The reporter had taken his words in the complete opposite way than Ilya had meant them, but he supposed he was too committed to stop now. "Of course not."

The sigh of relief that Kate let out was audible from where Ilya was standing, all the way across the room. He felt a little bad for what he was about to say, but she shouldn't have approved him for media availability three games in a row if she wanted him to make her job easy.

"Of course." The reporter parroted, laughing nervously.

"Obviously, we are already in a relationship." When Ilya looked back to the far wall, Kate had her head in her hands and Sophia, the social media intern, had a look on her face reminiscent of someone watching an imminent train crash.

"Obviously." The reporter repeated over the sudden cacophony and overlapping voices filling the room.

"What, you do not believe that I am in love with Shane Hollander?" Ilya asked, trying to suppress his laughter at the sudden hush that fell over the room, everyone in it hanging onto his every word. This might be the pinnacle of his work. He might never get another opportunity to say things like this in front of the cameras again. Hollander might even finally text him back when he saw the video.

"Alright, that'll be all for today!" Kate had finally come to her senses and made to extract him from the fray. Her hand closed around his arm and she pulled him towards the door with surprising strength for someone who barely reached 5'0 in heels. "Thank you all for coming out!"

Ilya felt a little bit like a scorned child as she led him to an empty briefing room, Sophia following close on their heels.

"You," Kate said, emphasizing her words by pointing a finger at his chest, "need to release a statement right now saying you were joking and apologizing to Shane Hollander."

Ilya tried his best to look innocent, but he didn't think Kate would fall for it. "English words are hard sometimes."

"You know what, that might actually work." Kate said thoughtfully. "Sophia, help him draft a statement. I want it posted before the post-game footage is released."

"Yes, ma'am." Ilya said. Kate could be a little scary when she got mad. It was probably why she was so good at wrangling 6'0 hockey players with the bad judgement that came from

multiple concussions in formative years into behaving for the cameras.

“Get to it,” she prompted. “I want to see a draft before we leave this room.”

Ilya pulled his phone out with a sigh.

...

rozanov's wife @emilybear · February 21, 2011

so... thoughts on the video?

willow @shaydentruher · February 21, 2011

Replying to @emilybear

what video

rozanov's wife @emilybear · February 21, 2011

Replying to @shaydentruher

are all shaydens living under a rock or is it just you

maddie @voyageursgirl · February 21, 2011

Replying to @emilybear

it's been up for like 10 minutes there's no need to be rude

maddie @voyageursgirl · February 21, 2011

Replying to @shaydentruher

here: [https://post/twitter.com](https://post.twitter.com)

hollanov @hollanovtruher · February 21, 2011

THIS IS THE BEST DAY OF MY LIFE

willow @shaydentruher · February 21, 2011

Replying to @hollanovtruher

delusional much? rozanov is obviously trolling 😏. look at his face, he's barely keeping it together to answer their questions

hollanov @hollanovtruher · February 21, 2011

Replying to @shaydentruher

I'M delusional? this coming from a shayden

willow @shaydentruher

Replying to @hollanovtruher

at least my ship don't publicly hate each other

Ilya Rozanov ✓ @ilyarozanov81 · February 21, 2011

I would like to address some statements that I made in a post-game presser tonight after our game with the Admirals. While English is not my first language and I sometimes struggle during interviews, I acknowledge that my comments regarding my relationship with Shane Hollander were not only untrue, but also highly inappropriate. I have nothing but the utmost respect for the LGBTQ+ community and would like to invite you all to join me in donating to this organization providing shelter and resources to LGBTQ+ youth in need: <https://charity-website.com>.

Ilya Rozanov ✓ @ilyarozanov81 · February 21, 2011

Replying to @ilyarozanov81

also I would never date Shane Hollander, he is too boring and Canadian

Kate @KatePR · February 21, 2011

Replying to @ilyarozanov81

Ilya, you were so close.

...

Ilya tried to suppress a smile when 2 messages from 'Jane' joined the dozens of notifications flashing across his screen after posting his Kate-approved statement on Twitter.

Jane: Are you fucking crazy? Why would you say any of that?

Jane: 'English isn't my first language' I can't believe you.

Ilya: is just joke

Ilya: reporter asks stupid question, they get stupid answer

Jane: Is everything a joke to you?

Jane: I don't know why I'm talking to you, you're such an asshole.

Ilya: don't pretend you don't like it 😊

Jane: Shut up.

Ilya: is not what you were saying last time your dick was in my mouth

Hollander started typing again, but the little bubble went away after a few seconds. Ilya could almost picture the look on his face, incensed beyond belief but not intimidating in the least. It sort of reminded him of the pictures he would see on social media sometimes of angry kittens.

If anything, Hollander should be thanking Ilya. This would give him nothing but positive publicity, all sympathy for having to deal with Ilya acting out. Also, Ilya realized, publicly

joking about them dating would make it much harder for people to believe rumours about them having sex. And, well. Wasn't that a thought?

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While the first incident was mostly accidental, all of the ones that followed were much less so.

For the next year, Ilya kept his mouth shut in front of the media, for the most part. However, his patience for answering aggravating questions from invasive reporters had a threshold, and it was met more often than not in the months leading up to what would be the Bears' first playoff run in half a decade.

Ilya's next opportunity came on a random Tuesday in March, when a reporter working for some gossip rag tried to dig into his personal life. Most days, Ilya didn't mind doing media. He liked to put on a persona for the camera, to wink at the reporters and listen to them laugh at his jokes, even though he only told so many because his English still wasn't quite good enough for him to catch enough of their questions to answer them seriously.

But something about this reporter really irked him. Maybe it was the way she ignored his attempts at deflection, or the annoyingly high-pitched sound of her voice. He wondered how she had even passed Kate's screening to get the credentials to enter the media room, since the people who liked to ask him about who he spent his summers with after a game were usually sniffed out before they got the chance.

"So, Ilya, is there a special girl in your life right now?" She was asking.

The question was almost laughable, with the way pictures of him in various nightclubs with a rotation of beautiful women on his arm were plastered across tabloids at least once a week. This reporter had probably written at least one of the articles herself.

"No, no special girl." Ilya replied.

"Really? There's no one that's caught your eye?"

The urge to say something that would probably get him in a lot of trouble came over him. It must have shown on his face, because Kate started shaking her head at him from her vantage point on the far wall, near the door.

"Only my boyfriend Shane Hollander." Ilya said, watching Kate go through the five stages of grief while all the cameras flashed with renewed vigour and the reporters started talking over each other.

"Your... boyfriend," the reporter who'd asked the question repeated slowly, like she thought she had misheard him. "Shane Hollander."

"Yes," Ilya confirmed. "Do you all not remember? I told you last year how we are in love."

"Right." She said with a nervous laugh.

Ilya snuck a glance towards Kate to make sure she wasn't coming to stop him before he kept talking. She looked a little busy standing with her head in her hands, so he was good for now.

"Ask Hollander, he will tell you all about me." Ilya prompted, hoping he would find news clips of an extremely pissed-off Hollander answering questions about his relationship with Ilya in a few days.

Inviting the press to harass Hollander was enough to shock Kate out of her stupor, so Ilya's fun was over for the day.

"See you all next time!" She called over her shoulder as she practically dragged Ilya from the room, which was very reminiscent of their departure from the media room last time he pulled something like this.

Ilya was sure he was in for another lecture, and maybe even more mandatory media training and modules on sensitivity surrounding the LGBTQ+ community, but it was worth it to imagine how Hollander would react when he saw the footage of Ilya's interview.

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After seeing how well claiming to be in a relationship with his rival worked to derail conversations with the press, Ilya started doing it to other people in his life as well as the reporters. Hollander fucking hated it, and didn't hesitate to let Ilya know every time he saw clips of Ilya saying they were dating or a reporter asked him about it. The satisfaction Ilya got whenever he saw new messages from 'Jane' was probably the main reason why he hadn't given up the bit, but Ilya tried not to think too hard about why, beyond the fact that he liked making Hollander lose his composure.

Nobody believed him whatsoever, least of all his teammates, who saw him take different girls home from the club multiple times a week on top of wholeheartedly believing that he and Shane Hollander hated each other. That didn't stop Ilya from bringing it up whenever they asked questions he didn't want to answer in the locker room.

It started the first time Marly asked him where he went after their games in Montreal. Ilya was a little surprised he had noticed the pattern of Ilya disappearing in a specific city, what with the number of concussions he had suffered over the years.

"I do not go anywhere," Ilya said at first, trying to play it off.

"No, you never go out with us after our games in Montreal." Marly pressed. "Do you have a Montreal girl?" He sounded a little too excited by the prospect for Ilya's taste.

"No, of course not," Ilya denied, then realized what he could say to really stop him from asking. "Only my boyfriend, Shane Hollander."

That startled a laugh out of Marly, as well as several of his teammates who were close enough to hear.

"You're a fucking legend, Roz." Carmichael commented with a shake of his head.

“Is only truth.” Ilya insisted.

This got another round of laughs. Maybe Ilya should be insulted that none of them thought Hollander would date him. At least it stopped them from asking questions he didn’t want to answer.

“And what does Hollander think of being your ‘boyfriend’?” Hammersmith asked from Ilya’s other side. There were audible air quotes around the word.

“Only good things,” Ilya said primly. “He is in love with me.”

“Sure, Rozy.”

That interaction opened the floodgates, and from then on Ilya talked about Hollander in the locker room at least once a week and none of his teammates batted an eye.

When they asked where he was going after a home game against Montreal: “My boyfriend is here to visit. His name is Shane Hollander, do you know him?”

When Marly asked if there was anyone he wanted to add to the WAG chat after seeing him texting ‘Jane’ for the umpteenth time: “No, I would never cheat on my boyfriend. And he is shy, he does not want to be in the chat.”

When they brought up Hollander winning Cosmopolitan’s Hottest Man in the NHL: “Of course he did. Do you think I would settle for the second hottest man?”

When someone inevitably asked who Montreal Jane was and if they could meet her: “There is no Montreal Jane, only my boyfriend Shane Hollander. He is famous, have you heard of him?”

It was a great strategy to keep any of them from looking too closely at his personal life. Ilya didn’t particularly like what he found when he examined it too closely, so he didn’t want to know what other people would see if they were given the chance.

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Four years after Ilya said that they were in love on national television for the first time, Hollander publicly responded for the first time, but only because Ilya goaded him into it.

Ilya: last time we play each other this season

Ilya: want to make a bet?

Jane: What kind of bet?

Ilya smiled to himself. Hollander could never resist competition of any kind, especially against Ilya. He was the same way, there was a reason they matched each other so well.

Ilya: if I win, you tell reporters you’re in love with me

Jane: Fuck off, I'm not doing that. It's bad enough that you go around telling everyone we're in a relationship. a

Jane: My mom would fucking kill me.

Ilya: 🙄

Ilya: you are a grown man

Jane: Fuck you.

Ilya: maybe if you win

Jane: Fucking fine.

Ilya: 🤔🤔

In the end, the Voyageurs lost when the Bears squeaked out an overtime goal, and Ilya was practically humming and kicking his feet watching Hollander do post-game press on the TV in the locker room. As team captain, he was assigned media duty most days, but he had made sure to specifically request tonight off months in advance.

"What's got you all happy tonight?" Connors asked, walking by and doing a double-take when he noticed how giddy Ilya looked.

"Watching my boyfriend talk to reporters." Ilya replied, nodding to the TV in front of him.

"You're still going on about-" Connors started, only to be cut off when Ilya shushed him.

"He's talking," Ilya explained.

Talking to Connors had distracted Ilya from hearing the question the reporter had asked, but Hollander was still answering. "Well, the Bears are always a challenge, but I enjoy playing them."

"Any particular reason why?" The reporter prompted.

"It's fun to play against Rozanov, I guess." Hollander elaborated, looking like he was saying the words through gritted teeth. Even though he looked uncomfortable, Ilya knew he would follow through with his promise. Hollander was never one to back down from a challenge.

"Right, the famous rivalry."

"That, and also because he's my boyfriend." Hollander said, looking like he regretted it the moment the words left his mouth.

Silence fell over both the broadcast and the visitors' locker room as everyone processed Hollander's words. The camera angle didn't show anyone in the room besides Hollander, but he would bet that all of their mouths were open, much like Connors' and his other teammates' that were close enough to the TV to hear.

“Your boyfriend, Ilya Rozanov?” The reporter asked, like he could have been talking about another Rozanov.

“Yes,” Shane confirmed. “We’re in love, he’s said it so many times in his interviews.”

Probably thrown off by Shane’s straight face, the reporter desperately changed the topic over the sounds of clamoring coming from the other people in the room. “So, back to the Voyageurs’ powerplay in the third period-”

Ilya never heard what she was going to ask, because the screen went black when Marly turned off the TV.

“Hey, I was watching that,” Ilya protested.

“What the fuck, Roz? How did you convince fucking Shane Hollander to go along with your bullshit?” Marly asked incredulously.

“Is not bullshit, and I did no convincing,” Ilya refuted. “Is only the truth, we are boyfriends.”

“Fucking hell, man,” Marly said, and Ilya was too pleased with himself to keep insisting that he wasn’t lying.

...

Kathy @shanehollandersgirlfriend

is this real

George @OldSchoolHockeyFan · April 1, 2015

I thought Hollander could be trusted to keep this shit out of hockey.

willow @shaydentruther · April 1, 2015

This is obviously fake, he’s trying to throw us off so we don’t find out he’s with Hayden.

hollanov @hollanovtruther · April 1, 2015

Replying to @shaydentruther

nurse she’s out again.

Charlie @stickhandler · April 1, 2015

What kind of sick foreplay is this

maddie @voyageursgirl · April 1, 2015

RISE UP SHANE HOLLANDER! You have been oppressed by Rozanov for too long

Shane Hollander Updates @OfficialHollanderUpdates · April 1, 2015



SHANE HOLLANDER ADMITS TO BEING IN RELATIONSHIP WITH ILYA ROZANOV IN POST-GAME INTERVIEW

Josh @hollanderfan24 · April 1, 2015

Replying to @OfficialHollanderUpdates

Does no one on this hellsite check the date?

...

After Hollander publicly played along, the press started to acknowledge their running joke and made it a point to ask them about each other every so often. Ilya went with it more often than Hollander did. Kate and the other PR people had long since given up on reigning Ilya in for the cameras, so he frequently got to run his mouth. Ilya kind of liked finally being able to talk about Hollander in public, even if he looked like a total dickhead doing it. Aside from a very small subset of their fans on Twitter, nobody took any of it seriously.

Well, almost nobody.

Sveta was his best friend, and she still came over to visit every couple of weeks and spent the night, even though they didn't fuck anymore. She claimed that she could tell Ilya was 'distracted' by someone and, like everyone else in his life, was nosy enough to look at his phone to see him texting 'Jane'.

Recently, she had dropped the pretense of using female pronouns when telling him it was embarrassing how obsessed with 'Jane' he was, and had started asking him pointed questions, like "what does Jane think about you dating Shane Hollander?". Ilya tried his best to redirect her attention and not give himself away, but he knew she was onto him, at least a little. She'd known him since he was in diapers, and was very familiar with his tells when he was lying.

On that particular night, she had surprised him at his house when he got home from practice. It was times like these when he sort of regretted giving her his spare key, but he forgave her very fast once he saw her offerings of takeout from his favourite Italian place and the upcoming MTL/TOR game set up on his TV.

Being able to speak Russian with someone after a long day (or week, or month, or year) of only being able to express himself in his second language and not knowing how much of what he meant actually got across felt a little like having a weight lifted off his chest that he had forgotten was pressing down on him.

"Look at that man," Sveta said, watching the replay of little Hollander dodging around defenders like they were unmoving traffic cones, burying the puck top-corner before the goalie got the chance to lift his glove. It was an unwelcome break in her rapid-fire commentary on the game that was infinitely more insightful than anything the paid commentators had to say.

Ilya was sure this was a test, so he hummed non-committally in response.

“Ilyusha, you make this too easy,” she laughed. “You can say he’s hot. You’ve said much worse about him on live television.”

Ilya supposed she had a point. “Fine, yes, I think he’s hot.” He shot her a sideways glare. As if she didn’t know that already. Like she just pointed out, she’d seen him say as much to reporters on multiple occasions. She just liked to watch him squirm.

Sveta let him be when he wasn’t more forthcoming, returning to her opinions on the trade rumours surrounding the Toronto Guardians’ rookies, and Ilya breathed a small sigh of relief.

After the third period ended with a 4-2 win for the Voyageurs, they watched reporters stick their microphones in Hollander’s face for post-game interviews. On-screen, Hollander’s face twitched when the third question he got had nothing to do with hockey or the game he had just played.

“Shane, what do you have to say about Rozanov’s recent comments about you in his own post-game interview?”

Hollander looked like he wanted to die. “What were his comments?”

The reporter looked all too happy to be asked, looking at his notepad. “Rozanov stated that you have a weak backhand and that you don’t love him enough.”

Hollander’s eyes closed for a few seconds longer than blinking warranted. “Well, maybe I would love him more if he was placed higher than me on the points leaderboard this season.”

Ilya slammed his hands down on the couch cushion, on either side of his thighs.

“Motherfucker!” Hollander obviously knew that his two goals tonight had put him one point ahead of Ilya on the scoreboard, pushing him from number one to number two.

“Ilyusha,” Sveta said, her eyebrows all the way up to her hairline, “what kind of foreplay is this?”

“Shut up!” Ilya reached for a throw pillow, making a valiant effort to smother her as they both laughed themselves sick.

...

Starting in November of 2016 and lasting through January of 2017, there was a noticeable tone change in Ilya’s interviews and in his private conversations, where he made zero jokes about himself and Shane Hollander and was in a piss-poor mood every day.

His team figured out not to bring up Jane of Shane Hollander quickly, after Connors made the mistake of mentioning how coincidental it was that he had stopped texting his Montreal Jane when Hollander started dating Rose Landry. “You’re really committed to the bit, huh?” He laughed.

Only, Ilya had not joined in. The reminder of the helplessness he had felt watching Shane practically flee from his house spouting obviously fake excuses after seeing the slightest bit of vulnerability made him want to cry, something he could under no circumstances do in the

locker room surrounded by his teammates. Instead, he told Connors to shut the fuck up and retaliated by making them do so many bag skates a few of them might have thrown up in the bathrooms afterwards.

It felt like they were walking on eggshells around him. They knew something had happened with Jane, but knew better than to push. They pretended everything was normal, so Ilya pretended not to notice the separate group chat at least half the team was in, where he was pretty sure they considered putting him on suicide watch on multiple occasions in between complaints about his awful mood.

In January, his first practice back from the All-Star weekend in Tampa, when he practically skipped into the locker room, feeling more well-rested than he had in months and unable to suppress his smile, he saw the double-takes they all gave him and heard quite a few muttered prayers of thanks.

Ilya knew they were all extremely curious about his complete 180, but when he tried to tell them the truth, they didn't believe him.

Marly was the first person brave enough to approach him in his unexpected good mood. "So, what's got you smiling today?"

Ilya shrugged and said, "Shane Hollander broke up with Rose Landry, have you heard? We made up this weekend."

"Sure, Roz." Marly replied with a roll of his eyes, but Ilya could feel the atmosphere in the locker room thawing with the return of a little normalcy.

19-year-old Ilya had such great ideas. Ilya could tell these people anything he wanted about him and Shane and they would just laugh it off.

...

That summer, after Ilya agreed to go to the cottage, they couldn't get enough of each other in the weeks leading up. Shane was still recovering from his concussion and couldn't look at screens for too long, but he was allowed to call so they spoke almost every day and Shane frequently used his 20 minutes of daily allotted screentime to text Ilya anyways.

"You know, you ruined my life," Shane said one day while they were on the phone.

There were several ways Ilya could have responded to this, including 'excuse me?' and 'who, me?'. "That's not the only thing of yours I can ruin," was what he went with, since he was 95% sure Shane was joking.

"Shut up." Shane had never been good at dealing with Ilya flirting with him, even now that they were... whatever they were.

"Do you not want me to ruin you?" Ilya said with a fake pout that he hoped came through over the phone as he kicked his feet up on his sectional.

“That’s not what I said,” Shane fired back immediately, before backtracking. “No! This is about how you ruined my life and my reputation.”

“That sounds pretty serious.” Ilya said. “Are you sure I did all that?”

“Yes, asshole,” Shane huffed out a laugh. “Do you remember back when I was an uncontroversial role model and all my teammates thought I was boring and had no personality?”

“Okay, first,” Ilya started, “you are extremely boring. And you are not still a role model? Good example for short Canadian hockey players with freckles?”

“I’m not boring,” Shane protested. “I have hobbies!”

“Like playing hockey, watching hockey, and reading books about hockey?”

Shane’s silence on the other end was very telling.

“Whatever,” he said after a while. “But no, apparently I’m not a good role model anymore! Have you seen what people on the internet are saying about us?”

“Have you seen what people on internet are saying about us?” Even when he wasn’t concussed, Shane was famously never on social media.

“Well, no, but my mom has, and she is not happy with me.”

“What is she so upset about?” The two of them were public figures, and there was always some (usually fake) scandal people online were freaking out about.

“Ilya, people think we’re homophobic!”

That startled a laugh out of Ilya. He actually hadn’t seen those allegations on Twitter yet. “Really? Do they not know how super gay you are?”

“Ilya, it’s not funny! They don’t know I’m gay, and they think we’ve been making jokes about dating each other for seven years because we knew Scott Hunter’s gay and are super homophobic!”

That only made Ilya laugh harder. “Is it because I called him a dinosaur?”

“Probably!” Shane actually sounded upset over this, which made him feel bad for laughing.

“Is not a big deal, Shane.” Ilya tried to reassure him. “This will go away soon. You are not actually homophobic, Hunter knows this. Your mom could also know, if you want to tell her.”

“Maybe.” Shane was quiet. Ilya was jealous of him for having two loving parents, but he didn’t envy him for having to deal with their expectations as well. From what Ilya knew, Shane’s parents would be supportive, but he was still worried about what they would think of him if they knew he was gay.

“You don’t have to tell her, but it would solve your problem very fast.” Ilya added.

“Yeah,” Shane agreed softly. “I’ll think about it.”

Just then, Ilya’s doorbell rang. “Fuck, I need to get that,” he told Shane. “Is probably Marly, he has been threatening to come get me. Call you tomorrow?”

“It’s not like I’m going anywhere,” Shane said wryly. “But yes, I’ll call.”

This was the right space for an ‘I love you’, but Ilya wasn’t ready to say the words in English yet. Not when Shane could hear him, at least.

“Goodnight.” He said instead.

“Goodnight, Ilya.” Shane said, the quiet beep following his words signifying that the line has closed.

Ilya stretched with a sigh, before getting up to answer his door, pulling out his phone on the way to see what Shane was talking about.

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Amy @admiralsssss · June 23, 2017

Does anybody else get a bad feeling about Rozanov now that Scott is out? Like, Rozanov has been harassing him for years, maybe there’s a reason he hates him so much.

rozanov’s wife @emilybear · June 23, 2017

Replying to @admiralsssss

Idk... he’s like that with everyone, Hunter isn’t special. He calls other players much worse things than old.

Stella @scottiesbae · June 23, 2017

Replying to @admiralsssss

girl yes i’ve been waiting for someone to bring this up. His whole ‘joke’ with Hollander is so homophobic, it’s awful that Scott has had to deal with them for so long.

ADMIRALS STANLEY CUP 2k17 @butterflyenthusiast · June 23, 2017

Reasons why Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov are homophobic: a thread
1/?

shane hollander give me one chance @hollandershole · June 23, 2017

To everyone saying Shane Hollander is homophobic: are we all looking at the same Shane Hollander? That man has the biggest bottom eyes I’ve seen in my life, he practically has ‘submissive and breedable’ written on his forehead.

Ilya Rozanov ✓ @ilyarozanov81 · June 23, 2017

Replying to @hollandershole

agreed

Kate @KatePR · June 23, 2017

Replying to @ilyarozanov81

Ilya for fuck's sake.

...

Sometimes, Ilya forgot that there was (supposedly) strategic reasoning behind all of the shit he'd said about Shane over the years. Talking to Yuna and David Hollander after Shane's father walked in on Ilya groping his son's barely clothed ass reminded him.

"You know, it all makes so much sense now," Yuna was saying, while Ilya stuffed his face with chicken parm and Shane tried to get him to slow down. She still looked a little bit shell-shocked. "You weren't joking that time you said you knew my son biblically, were you?"

"Nope," Ilya said, causing Shane to make a sound concerningly close in pitch to a tea kettle.

"Stop it!" His boyfriend (and wasn't that a thrill, finally having a label to put on the thing between them, to be able call Shane something other than just his) hissed, whacking his arm.

"What?" Ilya asked. "Is true, lyubimyy, many things I have said about you were not jokes."

Across the table from them, David looked amused, while Yuna looked to be thinking hard about something. "Ilya, that was a brilliant PR strategy," is what she eventually said.

"Mom, what are you talking about?" Shane sounded completely bewildered.

"Well, think about it, honey," Yuna said. "Neither of you are ready to come out yet, and no one actually thinks the two of you could be in a relationship since the two of you have been making jokes about it for your entire careers."

"Please don't encourage him," Shane begged. "He's bad enough already."

"Too late," Ilya practically sang, beaming. "I am encouraged. Shane, your mama thinks I am a genius."

"I wouldn't go that far," Shane grumbled.

"This is good!" Yuna insisted. "You don't have to watch how you act around each other in public, or what you say about each other, since everyone assumes it's all part of some elaborate prank."

"Does this mean I can start saying whatever I want?" Ilya asked, practically vibrating with glee at the prospect.

“Like you haven’t been doing that for the last decade,” Shane scoffed.

“Pretty much,” Yuna agreed, ignoring her son.

“Oh, god,” Shane said, putting his head in his hands.

“So you don’t want me to tell anyone how much I love you?” Ilya asked, leaning over and lowering his voice so only Shane could hear.

“Well,” his boyfriend replied, the tips of his ears going pink.

“That’s what I thought,” Ilya said smugly.

“Fine!” Shane said louder. “Do your worst.”

And Ilya had never been one to back down from a challenge.

...

Ilya and Shane had negotiated acceptable and unacceptable things to say about each other publicly during the rest of their time together at the cottage, so Ilya had a massive repertoire of unhinged comments ready for someone (be it a reporter or his teammates) to prompt one at the start of the season.

At their first optional skate after the summer, all of the Bears looked mistrustful of Ilya’s excellent mood. In their defense, most times he was that happy because he had just finished or was about to start doing something horrible, so it was a learned response.

An occasion that came to mind was the time Ilya had decided to prepare them for unpredictable opponents and had spent their hour-long scrimmage behaving as erratically as possible: getting in way too close and licking them, singing Katy Perry at them while battling for the puck, pinching their cheeks like they were cute little babies, and taking their sticks and throwing them away mid-play. Ilya had thought this was completely justifiable training, since these were all things he was known to do to his opponents during games (mostly out of sight of the refs).

But this time, Ilya had no nefarious plans, he was just glowing after spending an extended amount of time with his boyfriend. He didn’t hesitate to tell them as much when they asked about his summer suspiciously.

“No, but were you visiting Jane?” Asked Connors, because he was an idiot who hadn’t learned not to question Ilya’s stories about Shane.

“There is no Jane,” Ilya said flatly. “I was at my boyfriend Shane Hollander’s cottage.”

As per usual, that garnered him a handful of questioning looks from the people around him, but they let it go.

A week later, Ilya begged off going out for drinks with the team, since he had plans to FaceTime with Shane as soon as he got home.

“What is up with you this season?” Marly asked. “You never stay home when you could be at the club.”

“I am a kept man.” Ilya replied.

“By Jane?” Carmichael, who was listening in nearby, piped up hopefully.

“No,” Ilya said like he was stupid. “By my boyfriend, Shane Hollander.”

‘My boyfriend Shane Hollander’ was something Ilya said at least once a day. He got an even bigger thrill than he used to calling Shane his now that it was actually true. If anyone noticed that he talked about Shane a lot more than before, they didn’t mention it.

Neither did the press, even as the things Ilya told them got more and more unhinged. During his post-game interview after their first game with the Voyageurs, Ilya managed to fit multiple compliments for Shane’s ass into his response to a question about his ten penalty minutes that game.

“Jesus Christ, man,” Marly told him after he returned to the locker room to finish changing. “His parents are probably going to see that.”

“Yuna and David love me,” Ilya retorted, leaving Marly gaping like a fish.

Things only got worse approaching the end of the season, when Ilya’s blindsiding trade to Ottawa was announced. Ilya had told his team about it well ahead of time, brushing off most of their questions with comments about liking a challenge or Shane, but the press and the internet lost its goddamn mind.

“Ilya,” one brave reporter asked, “can you comment on the reasoning behind your upcoming trade to Ottawa?”

Beside him, Marly sighed when he saw the look in Ilya’s eyes. As alternate captain, he often got called into media alongside him, and he was probably sick of hearing Ilya talk about Shane.

“Well,” Ilya said, “I have a special someone up in Canada.”

“Really?” The reporter didn’t even sound skeptical. He must have been new.

“Really,” Ilya confirmed. “You might have heard of him? His name is Shane Hollander.”

“You’re moving to Ottawa to be closer to Shane Hollander?” The reporter clarified.

“Yes, is very hard to have a long-distance boyfriend.” Ilya told him.

“Any other reasons?” A different reporter chimed in.

Ilya resigned himself to spouting off some bullshit about career opportunities and a change of pace.

...

Being on the Ottawa Centaurs was a bit of an adjustment after spending eight seasons with the Bears. The city of Ottawa was much quieter than Boston, and its hockey team and team gatherings mirrored that. Where the Bears were boisterous, loud, and a little rude, most of the Centaurs were more quietly funny and polite to a fault. In Boston, half of their team outings had been to a bar or club of some kind, but the Centaurs preferred to go out for dinner at some trashy restaurant or have a team barbecue in someone's backyard.

Ilya loved it, aside from the fact that they were losing every game, but that was something that could be easily fixed if the GM took Ilya's advice. They needed a new goalie - Ilya had pointed to Toronto's backup, Wyatt Hayes, who was criminally underplayed - as well as more offensive power, and maybe a new head coach (their current one was extremely old and barely remembered how to skate, let alone the rules of the game).

They were all very welcoming and very excited to have Ilya on their team. After they got over their initial surprise at Ilya not being a complete manwhore and an asshole, they slotted him right into the group.

Ilya gave them a few months, as an adjustment period, before he got back on his bullshit. This was a completely new locker room for him to train into being unbothered by the implication that he was in a romantic relationship with his rival.

He started when his new teammates first started to pick up on the fact that he was always texting someone named Jane.

"Hey, Roz, who's Jane?" Dykstra asked one day, while Ilya was texting Shane to ask about groceries after practice.

"I can't hear you over the sound of this awful music!" Ilya yelled back, even though the other man was only two stalls over from him. The country music really was awful, and Ilya had started rigging the so-called 'randomized' aux schedule months ago so he would have to hear it as little as possible.

"Ass," Dykstra fired back. "Is she your girlfriend?"

"No, of course not!" Ilya said, as though the answer should've been obvious. "I have had a boyfriend for a long time now."

"Really?"

"Yes, his name is Shane Hollander. Do you know him?" Ilya reveled in the incredulous looks he was getting from everyone in the room.

"What the fuck, man?"

"It's always 'what the fuck' and never 'how was the fuck'." Ilya lamented, earning a dirty sock to the face and a half-empty gatorade bottle thrown his way that thankfully missed his head and went whizzing past him to the showers.

Once they realized he wasn't actually homophobic, he just had a strange sense of humour and was overly committed to the bit (this took many, many reassurances, sensitivity training Harris forced him to sign up for, as well as a conversation on speakerphone with Scott Hunter that was awkward for all involved parties ("Hunter, do you feel personally victimized by me?")), they were a lot more receptive to his comments about Shane. Ilya had been a little tempted to just tell them he was bisexual, but he'd had a feeling that wouldn't have gone over well.

Ilya liked to talk about going to dinner with Shane's parents, and thoroughly enjoyed watching his teammates' collective crashout when David and Yuna came to one of his games.

"I told you I was the favourite son," Ilya gloated when their picture was shown on the jumbotron. Yuna still refused to wear his jersey on principle and had also stopped David from doing so, but Ilya was sure he would convince her any day now.

"Oh my god," Bood said quietly.

"No, this is normal," Hayes, who had been traded to Ottawa back in December, argued from his net. "They live here, remember?"

"Oh, right!"

The visible relief at least half of his team felt hearing rationalization other than Ilya's didn't phase him. "No, is because they love me, but believe what you want."

"Whatever you say, Roz," Bood said with a shake of his head.

...

The first time Ilya really started to consider the potential consequences of his actions was when he and Shane were laying in bed one night. Ilya had been trying to fall asleep, but it was difficult when his boyfriend was tossing and turning, his ice-cold feet brushing against Ilya every so often.

Finally, Ilya sat up. "Solnyshko, what is bothering you?"

"Nothing!" Shane said, before elaborating when Ilya levelled him with an unimpressed look.

"Well. Do you remember how I came out to my team last year?"

"Yes, you only practised on me fifty times before you actually did it." Ilya poked his boyfriend in the cheek, slapping Shane's hand away when he tried to do the same thing back.

"They have been good about it, yes?"

His boyfriend hadn't once talked about any backlash when Ilya asked, so he had assumed everything was fine. Besides, Ilya knew he had come out to Pike and Boiziau beforehand and they had been nothing but supportive.

"I mean, I thought so," Shane said, his brows furrowing in thought. "It was a little weird how they never brought it up again, but they treated me the same as before so I thought they were just super chill."

“So what is the problem?” Ilya prompted.

“They thought it was a joke!” Shane said after a beat, like the words were being ripped out of him.

Ilya would have laughed if his boyfriend didn’t look so serious. “And you just learned this now?”

“Ilya, I told them I was gay and they didn’t believe me!” Shane buried his face in his hands, his next words coming out slightly muffled. “It’s because they’ve heard you say so many things about us, they can’t take it seriously!”

“Shane, kotyonok, you have also participated in this.” Ilya reminded him, rubbing circles into his back.

“I know, it’s awful,” Shane groaned.

“If you ever want to let them know you are telling the truth, I am always willing to fuck you at center ice,” Ilya offered graciously.

His boyfriend lowered his hands and almost looked like he was considering it for a moment, before he shook his head. “Fuck no, that is so unsanitary.”

“That is your only complaint?”

“Ilya, do you know how much disgusting shit is on that ice?” Shane said, exasperated.

“Can be no worse than when I used your toothbrush,” Ilya insisted, delighting in the way Shane’s face shuttered.

“Are you fucking joking? Ilya, that is disgusting, please tell me you’re joking,” Shane begged.

Ilya tried to keep a straight face, but gave himself away by laughing watching his boyfriend get more and more worked up.

“You fucking asshole!” Shane cried, while Ilya wheezed for breath.

“Is too easy to make you mad,” Ilya said, and wasn’t surprised at all when Shane pushed him off the bed. He took the blankets with him, so his boyfriend would have to get up as well. Ilya found it soothing to help Shane make the bed, since he was so methodical about it, and always ordered Ilya around like a drill sergeant before eventually giving up ‘fixing’ everything Ilya had done himself.

Before they went back to bed for real, Ilya made sure to kiss Shane on the forehead a few extra times, and Shane kissed him back, so Ilya knew he wasn’t really mad.

...

After that conversation, the issues they might encounter when they were finally ready to come out fell to the back of Ilya's mind, until Shane proposed to him the following year and he realized that they were both ready to admit to the world that there was something real between them, after all.

Ilya got an idea one day while scrolling through TikTok, landing on a video compilation of people announcing their engagements on social media.

"Shane, look," he called, restarting the video when his fiancé hooked his chin over his shoulder.

"Ilya, that is such a bad idea," Shane protested. "They're going to take that the wrong way."

"No, it is a great idea." Ilya refuted. "What, they are going to hear we are getting married and think 'what a funny joke, no homo'?"

"Yes!"

"You have so little faith in the people," Ilya chided. "I'm gonna do it."

"Remember I told you so when it doesn't work," Shane said.

"It will work." Ilya insisted.

"If you say so," Shane said doubtfully.

As it turned out, Ilya had a little too much faith in the people.

After Ottawa's next game, in which they beat Florida for the first time that season, Ilya managed to bring Shane up when a reporter asked him about his pre-game routines for the hundredth time in his career. Actually, it was more like he used the question as a segue to go completely off topic.

"I have an announcement," Ilya proclaimed, after saying some bullshit about eating vegetables, which he had been trying to get better about since the last time Shane had visited his house and had lectured him for hours after seeing the contents of his fridge, not even in a sexy way.

Ilya loved being the center of attention, and reveled in having a captive audience hanging on to his every word, so he paused for a little longer than he needed to before sharing. "Shane Hollander and I are no longer dating."

In the back of the room, Harris' hand hit his forehead with an audible smack. While he was more tolerable of Ilya's whimsy than Kate had been back in Boston, Harris had also tried several times to media train Ilya, with middling success that never lasted for longer than a day. Harris shook his head at Ilya, mouthing 'no' over and over, but Ilya had been feeling too fed up with watching him and Troy make eyes at each other without doing anything about it lately to be merciful.

A brave soul in the middle of the scrum broke the hush that had fallen over the room. “You ended your relationship with Shane Hollander?”

Ilya thought it was nice of her to treat it like all the things he liked to say about him and Shane to the cameras were true, unlike most of her colleagues who only humored him.

“No, of course not,” Ilya said, like they were all stupid. “We are engaged, the wedding will be this summer.”

Ilya pulled his necklace out of his shirt, showing off the ring that sat beside his mother’s cross. Judging by the sudden shocked silence that had befallen everyone in the room, including poor Harris, Ilya thought that his announcement had been a success.

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Chad @BostonBearsFan · January 17, 2021

What a legend 😂

Jennifer @HockeyMom · January 17, 2021

I can’t believe what they let public figures get away with saying these days. Someone needs to set an example for our children!

Izzy @Hollagirl · January 17, 2021

I would pay to watch hockey playoffs but instead of the Stanley Cup its which of them can form the most convincing fake relationship with a player from a different team

hollanov @hollanovtruther · January 17, 2021

I NEVER LOSE

anna 🌸 @hollanov2481 · January 17, 2021

I did not have hollanov marriage on my 2021 bingo card

nora @haydenpikes24thkid · January 17, 2021

How Rozanov’s announcement proves that Shayden is real: a thread
1/23

Will @TheresAWillTheresAWay · January 17, 2021

Shayden is over.

Jade @shaydenmarried · January 17, 2021
Replying to @TheresAWillTheresAWay

FUCK

willow @shaydentruther · January 17, 2021

Replying to @TheresAWillTheresAWay

If anyone actually believes Rozanov then they're delusional. Shane's just trying to keep attention off him and Hayden so no one finds out about their marriage!

Lia @hockey_enjoyer · January 17, 2021

10 minute compilation of Ilya Rozanov lying about being in a relationship with Shane Hollander to the press: www.fakeoutubelink.com

Ella @ellasvlog · January 17, 2021

There are hockey players getting married to each other???

maddie @voyageursgirl · January 17, 2021

Replying to @ellasvlog

You must be new here, it's a running joke they have. Don't take any of it seriously.

Charlie @stickhandler · January 17, 2021

I feel like we as a society don't appreciate how funny Rozanov is. like he's been doing this for years.

Chris @ilyasbiceps · January 17, 2021

Rozanov and Hollander have to give it up at some point, right? This is going too far.

Olivia @ogcensfan · January 17, 2021

Somebody needs to give poor Harris a raise.

Jason @Boodsteponme · January 17, 2021

Replying to @ogcensfan

prayer circle for Harris 🙏🙏🙏

Harris Drover @CensPR · January 17, 2021

Replying to @ogcensfan



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Shane was unbearably smug after being right about Ilya's idea making things worse. His suggestion was to send out wedding invites and let people decide whether they believed them or not.

Ilya had wanted to just text the date to everyone, but Yuna had insisted they get actual paper invites. Over the next few weeks, Ilya was made aware whenever someone found it in their mail, with mixed reactions.

Sveta texted ‘so happy for you two!’ and arranged to call him later that day, at which time she chewed him out for not asking her to be his best woman until he admitted to her that he’d forgotten that was a thing.

He got congratulatory messages and RSVPs from Rose Landry (who he got along with extremely well when he forgot she had seen Shane naked), Wyatt (who always noticed more than Ilya gave him credit for), and Coach Wiebe (who was probably just hoping for the best from Ilya).

Everyone else who responded to his invitation directly was more confused. Marly and his other old teammates asked him if it was real, which he confirmed, but Ilya wasn’t sure they believed him. Scott Hunter texted him a series of question marks, but his (much younger) husband texted Ilya and Shane his congratulations separately.

Besides Hazy, Ilya got radio silence from the Centaurs, which he should have taken for the red flag it was. At practice, he didn’t notice how they were whispering on the ice and in the locker room, or how they were all on their phones texting a group chat he wasn’t in, until it was too late.

When Ilya got back to his house, Shane’s car was in the driveway. He expected to see Shane in the living room when he walked through his front door, watching a game on the TV or reading one of his boring hockey biographies, but instead he heard the sound of the shower starting upstairs. Shane must have forgone stopping at his apartment to have a proper shower after practice and come straight to Ottawa instead. While he waited, Ilya lounged on his couch, turning on an episode of Love Island. He didn’t see the cars pulling up to the curb outside his house, one by one.

Five minutes in, Ilya was forced to pause his show when the doorbell rings. On the other side, Haasy was standing at the front of a crowd of nine hockey players and Harris, like a sacrificial lamb meant to bear the brunt of Ilya’s anger.

“Did you all follow me home from the rink?” Ilya asked incredulously. “You have nothing better to do?”

Bood stepped forward, squaring his shoulders. “Rozy, can we come in?”

Ilya was too baffled by the appearance of ten grown men quite literally on his doorstep to stop them from pushing past him into his house. They settled on the couches in his living room, somehow squeezing all of them except for Troy and Harris onto his sectional. The two of them were forced to sit on the loveseat, which Ilya approved of.

He did not approve of Evan lacing his fingers together like this was a business meeting and saying, “Roz, this is an intervention.”

“I do not know this word,” Ilya replied, playing up his accent. None of them looked impressed.

“Look, we know you have this... thing with Hollander,” Bood cut in, “but sending out fake wedding invitations is taking it too far.”

“The invitations are not fake,” Ilya protested. Upstairs, the shower turned off.

“Roz, constantly joking about being in a relationship with another man isn’t a good look.” Bood continued.

“What, you are homophobic?” Ilya asked.

“No, Roz, you’re being homophobic.” Most of the guys in the room hummed agreeably. Notably, the gay people in the room were silent. Troy mouthed ‘sorry’ when Ilya caught his eye.

Ilya had thought the team had gotten over this years ago. “Bood, I am not a homophobe.”

“You keep saying that, but you-”

“Ilya, have you seen my moisturizer?” Shane asked as he walked in wearing nothing but a towel, then froze when he took in their crowded living room. Bood’s mouth shut with an audible clack.

“Dorogoy, it is in the same cupboard as always.” Ilya said while his teammates watched the unfolding scene with wide eyes, standing up to kiss his fiancé on the forehead. Shane pulled him back in for a proper kiss, humming into his mouth. He didn’t seem to care about their audience. People always liked to tell Ilya he was shameless, but Shane could be just as bad when he got the chance.

“Hi, guys, it’s nice to meet you. Ilya has such good things to say about you all.” Shane said once he pulled back, after kissing Ilya for longer and with a lot more tongue than was generally acceptable with polite company.

Wyatt was the only one to respond. “Hi, Hollander.”

“Shane Hollander is in your house,” Haasy told Ilya, looking starstruck.

“I know, he lives here sometimes.” Ilya informed him.

“Holy fuck,” someone breathed.

“Shane, all these people came here to accuse me of being homophobic,” Ilya complained.

“Again?”

“Yes. Lyubimyy, tell them that we are not homophobic,”

“I think they got that, Ilya,” Shane said with a huff of laughter. “I’m going to go put clothes on now.”

“You don’t need to do that, they will be coming off soon anyways,” Ilya delighted in the way Shane’s whole face flushed red when Ilya reached around to pinch his fiancé’s ass.

“Ilya!” He hissed, swatting at Ilya’s hand before turning on his heel and heading back upstairs.

Bood found his voice again once Shane was gone. “Are you fucking kidding me?”

“No, I have been trying to tell you this, it is not a joke.” Ilya said flatly.

“It was all true, this whole time?” Bood demanded.

“Yes.” Ilya confirmed, fighting to hold a straight face when faced with the shellshocked faces of all his teammates except for Wyatt and Troy.

“You let us accuse you of being homophobic!”

“I told you I was not.”

“We signed you up for sensitivity training and sent you to the community centre to take classes about LGBTQ+ rights!”

“Yes, that was the third time I have been sent.”

Bood let out a sigh. “You know what, I’m happy for you, even though you were such a little shit about it. And I’m really glad you didn’t send out fake wedding invitations.”

“Thank you,” Ilya said.

A bit of an awkward silence filled the room until Harris stood up, clapping his hands to get everyone’s attention. “Well! This was a great talk, but I think it’s time for us to get out of Ilya’s house now.”

As they filed out, the Centaurs apologized for not believing him about Shane and for barging into his house. Most of them confirmed that they could make it to his wedding, after all.

“Goodbye!” Ilya called out the door as they made their way to their cars. “See you all at practice extra early tomorrow morning! I have so many great ideas for conditioning we can do, since you have this much free time to be plotting against me!”

Their resounding groans were music to his ears.

...

Ilya and Shane were starting to get annoyed with the general public and all the people they knew personally who were still treating their relationship as a joke, even after seeing Ilya’s ring and receiving wedding invitations. Ilya almost wanted to just start holding hands with

Shane in public and see what happened, but he had a feeling that would only make things worse. At this point, the only option left was an extremely public display that left no doubt as to the nature of their relationship.

With nothing more than a token protest, Shane agreed to Ilya's objectively insane idea. Ilya knew that his fiancé was sick of his (maybe a bit homophobic) teammates telling him how funny he was for playing along with Ilya's antics.

In early April, at the last OTT/MTL game of the season, the two of them were ready to put Ilya's plan into action. Shane had made sure they had Yuna-approved statements to post on social media, in case they needed them.

"What are you planning?" Harris asked him from his spot behind the bench during warm ups when Ilya pulled up to the boards to get a drink.

"Nothing."

"You only act like that when you're about to do something that's going to give me an aneurysm." Harris told him. His eyes looked far away, like he was trying to dissociate from the situation hard enough that it wouldn't be his problem anymore.

"I am only acting in a normal way," Ilya insisted, which wasn't true in the least. He had spent the majority of warmups distracted, either trading glances with Shane from across the ice or gliding around the rink examining the jumbotron from every angle. He hadn't even stopped by the red line to talk to Shane yet, which was very unusual, and he could admit that the way he had been talking to his teammates at an increased volume the whole time they'd been in the arena was drawing their attention more than it was distracting them from how nervous he was.

"Ilya, whatever it is, it's probably not worth it," Harris basically begged.

"That is what you think," Ilya muttered, but judging by the way Harris' eye twitched he'd heard.

"Think of your media training," Harris pleaded, waving his hands in front of Ilya like he could will him into keeping his mouth shut.

"What media training?" Ilya asked, skating backwards towards the rest of the Centaurs while holding eye contact.

He felt a bit bad for stressing Harris out, since he did look like he was having some sort of crisis, but Ilya was pretty sure the other man would approve of his message, if not his method.

If the rest of the team noticed Ilya was being weird, they didn't comment on it. They probably chalked it up to his fiancé being there, since they knew Ilya lost the limited amount of chill he had whenever Shane was nearby.

The game itself was nothing special, sitting at 2-1 for Montreal during the last commercial break in the third period when “Kiss Me” by Sixpence None The Richer started playing from the sound system and couples sitting in the crowd started panning across the jumbotron. Players were still meandering towards their respective benches, so it was totally reasonable for Ilya and Shane to be lingering by the Voyageurs’ blue line together.

Thirty seconds in, the crowd suddenly increased in volume, and Ilya looked up to see him and Shane blown up on the screen, a garish heart graphic surrounding them. Even though they had been counting on this (which had happened before, when the camera operators were feeling particularly daring, but they had always laughed it off or Ilya had smacked an over-the-top kiss to Shane’s helmet), Ilya still hesitated when he looked back at his fiancé, until Shane nodded nearly imperceptibly.

Then Ilya tore off Shane’s helmet, followed by his own, and crashed their lips together, burying his hands in Shane’s hair while his fiancé wrapped his arms around Ilya’s neck. The kiss immediately turned filthy, much more so than Shane usually allowed in public, but Ilya wanted to make sure that his point got across. When Ilya reached around to give Shane’s ass a squeeze through his pads his fiancé finally pulled away, and Ilya kissed him on the tip of his nose with a smile that Shane returned sweetly, his freckles bunching together on his cheeks.

Around them, the cheers from the crowd were deafening, and there were more than a few wolf-whistles thrown into the mix, including those coming from the Centaurs’ bench. Ilya was pretty sure someone on Shane’s bench was choking.

He was sure there would be hell to pay when it came time for post-game interviews, but he didn’t mind when Shane was still smiling at him, and he was sure that they had finally put the decade-long mystery of what exactly they were to each other to rest.

...

Izzy @Hollagirl · April 6, 2021

hOLY FUCK

ivy @figureeights · April 6, 2021

Did we just get hollanov kissing in 4k???

Nora @haydenpikes24thkid · April 6, 2021

Yeah I can’t defend Shayden from this one

addy 🗽 @addysinNY · April 6, 2021

Do you guys think this is Rozanov’s way of trying to upstage Scott Hunter?

Charlie @stickhandler · April 6, 2021

Replying to @addysinNY

NOT NOW ADDY

anna🌸 @hollanov2481 · April 6, 2021

Love IS real, the way they smiled at each other I'm unwell 🙄🙄🙄

shane hollander give me one chance @hollandershole · April 6, 2021

I want to be the filling in that sandwich

Chris @ilyasbiceps · April 6, 2021

Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov are greedy, greedy people. Like damn, save some pretty for the rest of us.

maddie @voyageursgirl · April 6, 2021

Does this mean that we spent years cancelling two men in a loving relationship with each other for being homophobic?

Lia @hockey_enjoyer · April 6, 2021

Replying to @voyageursgirl

They told us they were dating and we cancelled them 🦴

rozanov's wife @emilybear · April 6, 2021

Shane Hollander I was unaware of your game

Ottawa Centaurs ✓ @CensOfficial · April 6, 2021

We are very proud of @ShaneHollanderHockeyPlayer and his fiancé and wish them all the best in the next chapter of their lives!

Ilya Rozanov ✓ @ilyarozanov81 · April 6, 2021

Replying to @CensOfficial

Harris why do you hate me

Ottawa Centaurs ✓ @CensOfficial · April 6, 2021

Replying to @ilyarozanov81

You know what you did.

Scott Hunter ✓ @ScottHunterAdmirals · April 6, 2021

Congratulations to @ilyarozanov81 and @ShaneHollanderHockeyPlayer on their engagement! On a more serious note, Shane, if you're looking for a less annoying fiancé, Kip has lots of friends who would love to meet you.

Ilya Rozanov ✓ @ilyarozanov81 · April 6, 2021

Replying to @ScottHunterAdmirals

Careful, or your cradle-robbled husband will stop visiting you in the nursing home.

Scott Hunter ✓ @ScottHunterAdmirals · April 6, 2021

Replying to @ilyarozanov81

Big words for someone who's turning 30 this year.

Ilya Rozanov ✓ @ilyarozanov81 · April 6, 2021

Replying to @ScottHunterAdmirals

What were the dinosaurs like?

Olivia @ogcensfan · April 6, 2021

Someone needs to take this man's phone away

Harris Drover @CensPR · April 6, 2021

Replying to @ogcensfan

I've been trying for years.

End Notes

please ignore any creative liberties I took with the timeline in this

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