how it goes

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how it goes

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Summary

[excerpt]
“Shane?”

He swiveled his head toward the voice, unsure of what they wanted—what they expected of him. “Huh?”

“Are you in a relationship with Ilya Rozanov?”

Shane wasn’t sure how to answer or react. There wasn’t a single coherent thought in his head at the moment. He couldn’t breathe or even swallow.

All he could do was stand there.

Notes

in this fic, you will find an overabundance of commas, em-dashes, and italicized words. just go with it. seriously, i write based on vibes 😁

See the end of the work for more notes

"Shane! Shane!"

He groaned as reporters yelled his name, vying for his attention. Normally, he didn't mind post-game interviews, but all he wanted to do right now was get home. To Ilya. It wasn't often they had a whole night together, but whenever their teams played against each other, they tried to make the time unless one or both had to fly out soon for a game. And even then, they'd often push time constraints to spend as much time together as possible.

Shane wiped the sweat from his forehead and plastered a smile on his face, ready for the barrage of questions they always asked—especially when Montreal played against Ottawa now. Despite it being years since Ilya left Boston, despite the fact that they'd changed the narrative from rivals to friends, everyone was still desperate for that soundbite. They all wanted him to say something about Ilya Rozanov, or to get his reaction about whatever Ilya said about him.

When he stopped to talk to the reporters, he was taken aback to notice all their attention seemed focused on him. There were only a few of them, but usually they spread out, talking to his teammates, asking about key plays or team dynamics. But at the moment, every eye seemed to be on him. Even some of his teammates were standing there. Staring at him.

Unease crawled along Shane's skin, goosebumps prickling up his arms and along the back of his neck. The air was thick, stifling, with an unspoken secret Shane didn't seem privy to.

"Uh…hi?" he asked, giving a little wave as his stomach swooped, and not in a good way.

"Shane," the closest reporter asked—Dan, if memory served him right. "In the second period, Ilya Rozanov managed a poke check that led to a breakaway goal, giving the Centaurs the first lead they've had all season."

On a normal day, Shane might chuckle at that. It was a flub, for sure, and it shouldn't surprise him that someone would bring it up. Ilya certainly would later. But there was something in his tone that made Shane wary, like this was about more than stupid mistake on the ice.

"Was there a question?" he asked, fighting the urge to cross his arms. After all, there was no reason for him to get defensive. Right?

But still, he couldn't seem to shake the feeling that something was off right now. Wrong.

His suspicions were correct when another reporter asked, "Did you let him?"

Shane's brows shot up. "Excuse me, what?"

Let him? Did they seriously just ask that?

Let him?

"What's your relationship with Ilya Rozanov?" another chimed in. Followed by, "Does it affect how you play against him?"

More questions came, faster than Shane could process each one getting more and more personal.

"Do your teams know?"

"How do the coaches feel about it?"

"How long has this been going on?"

"Did your relationship begin before or after you started the Irina Foundation?"

White noise filled his head, clogging his ears. What was going on? Did they *know?* And if so, how did they find out?

He must have said the last part out loud because a phone was thrust into view. The screen showed a video of his teammate (and best friend) Hayden in his office, or throne room as he liked to call it, his back to the wall. He was giving a birthday greeting or something. This must have been the Fanmail video he'd had to step away to film earlier while Shane and Ilya were over for lunch because Hayden was wearing the same shirt he'd had on that afternoon.

At first, Shane didn't understand what he was looking at. He didn't understand what this video had to do with the line of questioning from the reporters or why it seemed like everyone suddenly knew about them. But then—

There, in the background, in the mirror just behind Hayden's face, was a reflection of the window just outside the room. Which normally wouldn't be a big deal, except—

Except, while Hayden had gone to film the video, Shane and Ilya had gotten lost in their own little world. They had been alone for a moment—yes, outside, but hidden by the house and cars—and Ilya had kissed him. It hadn't been chaste either, because honestly, they could never get enough of each other, even after all these years. So there was absolutely no mistaking what they were doing in the video.

Oh shit.

Oh fuck.

Fuck!

Shane's stomach roiled, but he was frozen, rooted in place as his world crashed and burned. This was a nightmare. All he'd ever wanted was to come out on his own terms. He and Ilya had a plan, but after eleven years—*eleven fucking years!*—of keeping this secret, *this* was how they were exposed? Because of a fucking Fanmail video.

Fucking Hayden. Not that Shane could really be upset with him at all. At the situation, yeah, but not at Hayden. Especially when he caught his gaze across the room and could see the apology and concern written on his face.

'*I'm sorry*,' Hayden mouthed.

"Shane?"

He swiveled his head toward the voice, unsure of what they wanted—what they expected of him. "Huh?"

"Are you in a relationship with Ilya Rozanov?"

Shane wasn't sure how to answer or react. There wasn't a single coherent thought in his head at the moment. He couldn't breathe or even swallow.

All he could do was stand there.

Even though they lost, Ilya couldn't help the smile on his face. He was grateful that a few of his other teammates had been pulled aside for the post-game interviews because all he wanted was to shower and change so he could get home. To Shane.

They only had the night together before Shane had to leave. The Voyageurs had an away game coming up, so the team would be flying down tomorrow afternoon, which meant Shane would be leaving in the morning and Ilya would return to Ottawa.

"Uh, hey, Roz?"

Ilya turned toward his teammate, Troy Barrett. Harris, the team's social media manager and Troy's boyfriend, stood just behind him, a serious expression on both their faces.

His smile fell and he instantly went on guard. "Yes, what is it?"

It couldn't be anything good by the look they exchanged, full of apprehension and unease. A sense of dread sank into the pit of his stomach like a lead weight the longer they stared at him, like they had something to tell him but weren't sure how to.

He tried to think of what could be wrong, and his mind immediately went to Shane, but Shane was fine when he left the ice. And no one knew about him—*them*—yet, so that couldn't be it.

The last time something like this happened, he'd learned his father had died. The only family he had left was his brother, but Ilya hadn't spoken to him in years and doubted anyone would get in contact with the team to inform Ilya if something had happened to him. And even then, he doubted the team would send Harris to deliver the news.

"What is it?" Ilya repeated, hand going to the chain hanging from his neck—feeling for the ring Shane had given to him.

"I'm so sorry," Harris said, holding his phone out, though he seemed hesitant to show Ilya whatever was on it.

Troy took Harris's phone from him, handing it to Ilya. "Here. You need to watch this."

Ilya cocked his head as he watched Hayden Pike, Shane's best friend and teammate, say Happy Birthday to someone named Brad.

"Is this supposed to—"

"Look at the background. The mirror," Troy pointed out.

He still wasn't sure what he was supposed to be looking at, but then he saw it. Or saw himself, rather—he and Shane, kissing, in the reflection behind Hayden's head.

"Where did you find this?" he demanded, head snapping up. His eyes bounced frantically between Harris and Troy, but he could feel the eyes of everyone in the room on him.

Had they all seen this? Did they all know?

"It's all over social media," Harris said with a wince. "Twitter, Instagram…someone even sent it to the team's Facebook account."

"*No*." Ilya's heart plummeted.

This wasn't what was supposed to happen. They had a plan in place. Something they'd followed meticulously so that they could come out on their own terms to mitigate any resistance from the league, their teams—and potentially their fans. Though, after the roaring acceptance of Troy when he came out, Ilya wasn't so worried about any fans or *his* team.

But the league?

The Voyageurs?

"Shane," Ilya started, because if this was out there…if people—the reporters—saw this already, he had to tell Shane before they asked him about it.

But then another phone was thrust in his face and all he could see was Shane, standing there with a microphone shoved in his face. His hair was sweaty, cheeks flushed. There was something off about him, about the stiffness in his shoulders and the tense line of his jaw.

And then he heard it. A tinny voice coming through the phone's speaker.

"Are you in a relationship with Ilya Rozanov?"

"*Blyat!*" Ilya exclaimed. *Fuck!*

He knew that Shane hated being put on the spot. He preferred having time to think of what to say, which usually wasn't an issue with post-game interviews since they all asked some variation of the same questions every game. But there was no way to prepare for this.

Ilya's heart broke at the lost, deer in the headlights expression on Shane's face. All he wanted to do was go to him, but that wasn't an option—especially at this moment. That would only be fuel to the fire or whatever the saying was, and wouldn't fix anything.

"Your coach said this was a prank," another reporter voiced. "Is that true?"

As Shane's jaw clenched, as his eyes hardened, Ilya braced himself to listen to the love of his life go along with it. To salvage the mess Hayden's video had created. His heart pounded in his chest and he closed his eyes, letting out a slow breath as Shane said—

"No. That's not true. It wasn't a prank."

Ilya's eyes shot open and he leaned closer to the phone—unable to believe what he heard.

"What you see in the background," Shane continued, "was filmed without my knowledge or consent, and it wasn't a prank. That was an intimate moment between me and my boyfriend, who—*yes*—is Ilya Rozanov."

And oh, how Ilya's heart soared! He barked out a laugh and his face hurt as his smile stretched wide. Shane just admitted—on national television—that they were in a relationship! As much as it would have hurt to have Shane deny them, Ilya would have understood. Hockey was important to him, and Ilya would never have asked him to do anything that would jeopardize his career.

Harris cleared his throat, a soft smile on his face. "I was going to ask if it was true, but I don't think I need to."

Ilya shook his head as he handed back Harris's phone, already sprinting away. He needed to see Shane. Now!

The door slammed shut behind Shane as he raced toward the visitor's locker room, his flip flops slapping against the concrete floor and echoing through the hall. He had to get to Ilya before anyone showed him the video or the interview.

Fuck!

He wished he could have talked to Ilya, so they could have figured out how to address this together, but when the reporter asked him point blank about their relationship, if it was a fucking *prank*, Shane couldn't deny it. He couldn't deny *them*. Even the thought made him sick to his stomach. He was still queasy because he'd just outed Ilya without his consent. Sure, the video was pretty damning evidence, but it wasn't his secret to tell, even if he was party to it.

Suddenly the door to the visitor's locker room burst open, and Ilya was there.

"Shane!"

A sense of calm washed over him as he slammed into Ilya's chest, arms going around him and holding him tightly.

Ilya pulled back a little, gently cradling his face, the pads of his thumbs brushing across Shane's freckles—something he always did. "Lyubov' moya. Are you okay?"

Shit.

He *knew*. Shane could tell by the concern on his face and laced in his voice.

"I'm sorry," he blurted, gripping Ilya's waist. "I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to out you, but they asked me if it was true and I couldn't say no. I-I—"

Ilya shut him up with a kiss so soft Shane's knees went weak.

"It's okay," Ilya muttered against his lips. "It's okay, lyubimyy."

"But—"

Another kiss, and then Ilya pulled back. There was a wide smile on his face, making his dimples pop, and his eyes were bright, crinkling in the corners. "You told everyone we are together. How could I be upset?"

"When they asked, I couldn't—" Shane shook his head, swallowing thickly. "I couldn't lie. I couldn't— It made me sick to even think about denying this. Us. *You*. I love you, Ilya. I love you so much, and I couldn't do it."

"I know. I saw." Ilya trailed his fingertips down the side of Shane's face, and Shane closed his eyes, leaning into the touch. "And I would not want you to, lyubov' moya."

"How did you find out?" Shane asked, hoping it wasn't with a mic and camera shoved in his face.

"Harris. And Troy Barrett. They showed me first, Hayden's video, and then your interview."

Shane laid his head on Ilya's shoulder, blowing out a relieved breath. Good. That was good. Harris and Troy wouldn't have been cruel about it. Not that he thought Ilya couldn't handle himself if confronted like that, but Ilya had been through enough, and Shane hated the idea of him having to figure out what to say. Especially knowing Ilya would have likely tried to keep this secret. For *him*.

Because everything he did was for Shane. Always. And Shane was tired of hiding this part of himself. Of hiding how important Ilya was to him. Because Ilya was—

Ilya was everything. He was Shane's whole world, and it was time everyone knew it—even though, by the looks on some of his teammates' faces (on his coach's face), they didn't necessarily like it. Whether it was because he was gay or because he was dating Ilya, Shane didn't know. Which made him wonder—

"And they…were they okay with…it? This?" he asked. "Us?"

Ilya rubbed circles on the small of Shane's back. "They are. Of course they are."

"Not just Harris and Troy, but your team?"

"I am their captain and they love me. They will be okay with it."

"They wouldn't care that it's me?"

Ilya pulled back, a frown marring his beautiful face. "Why? Does your team care? Did someone say something?"

"No, but…" Shane shrugged, "some of them didn't look too happy."

"They will get over it."

Shane huffed a breath, his lips quirking into a small smile. "You're awfully optimistic."

"You just told everyone that we are together. I am very happy right now." Ilya brushed a kiss to his temple. "Whatever happens now, it does not matter. We were already planning on coming out, on announcing our relationship, yes?"

Shane nodded.

"Then we will deal with whatever happens. Together. Just like we planned."

Shane nodded again. He just hated change, and he hated the uncertainty of what would happen now. But Ilya was right; of course, he was. Whatever happened, they would deal with it.

Together.

End Notes

thanks for reading! comments and kudos give me life 💗💗💗

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