

tell me about despair, yours

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by [bespectacledheart](#)

Summary

Fall 2021 is the first season Shane plays Montreal as an Ottawa Centaur. It doesn't go well.

Notes

CW: Homophobic slur used toward Shane. If that makes you uncomfortable please click off this work.

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

Fall 2021 was the first season Shane played Montreal as an Ottawa Centaur.

Shane always had a hard time articulating his thoughts. They would circle and circle and circle in his head on repeat - no end in sight. He kept himself short and direct as to not be misunderstood. Worse than expressing his thoughts was his feelings. But when he lost a game they were impossible to conceal. Losing was easy to feel and in his years as a Voyageur it didn't come very often. Unfortunately for him his whole body gave it away. Losing to Montreal wasn't even an option. But here he was sitting in his new team's dressing room, jersey gripped loosely in his right hand, head between his knees. The sweat on his skin felt suffocating accumulating at his legs where they met the bench. His hands were clammy and getting cold. Being on the Centaurs now and no longer captain meant he didn't feel obligated to give post-game words of encouragement. That was probably his least favorite part of being captain. He was always shit at doing it, so unsure if he was saying the right thing. Here it was Ilya's job. Shane couldn't meet his eyes, feeling so frustrated by his own performance tonight. *Why did I freeze? Why did I freeze? Why did I freeze? If I didn't freeze they wouldn't have scored.* After he left the Voyageurs on bad terms at the end of last season he wasn't looking forward to this game. Losing in his home town against his original team, one he once called home, stung. No other way to put it. This was the Centaurs first game against the Voyageurs this season. The first game Shane and Ilya played together versus his former teammates who accused him of losing on purpose the last time Ottawa and Montreal played. It had been months since that game but it haunted Shane in his nightmares more than he cared to admit.

"Well that was rough honestly. But I know we will be better next time. Yes?" Ilya said looking around the dejected faces across the locker room. It was silent enough to hear a pin drop. No one was moving, not until Barrett stood to meet Ilya in the center of the room.

"Let's kick their asses at home in a couple weeks!" Troy stood clapping Ilya on the back. This seemed to settle the team's post-game frustration and brought small smiles to Haas and Bood's faces. Everyone except Shane finally moved to take off their gear and go hit the shower. His jersey was now on the ground and his palms were rubbing his ears back and forth. He heard both Ilya and Troy's post-game words of encouragement but he didn't know when he curled in on himself. He couldn't stop thinking about his bad read on Montreal's defense and the comment echoing in his head. Since being forced out of the closet Shane braced himself for the homophobic comments on the ice. It wasn't unusual for guys to make homophobic comments over the years. But this was the first time he was called a slur so pointedly. Najjar was a new forward for Montreal and he was massive, 6'5 and clearly an asshole. During the second period he checked Shane hard into the boards on a Montreal power play. The two were fighting for the puck and he was pinning Shane against the glass when he said "You like to be railed from behind, faggot?" Eventually he worked the puck free and assisted a goal to put Montreal up 3-2. From that point on Shane couldn't really remember the rest of the game. He knows Ilya scored another goal to tie soon after but the result was still a loss. He sat at his locker rubbing his ears back and forth hoping to forget what Najjar said to him. The words reverberated in his mind. *Why couldn't I be normal? Why*

did I have to be like this? Couldn't we have kept this a secret until after we retired? More than anything Shane was frustrated at the loss. They prepared for this game knowing how much it meant to him. Shane hated himself for who he became during the past couple weeks leading up to tonight. He felt like how he was a year ago. A live wire ready to snap and strict in his routines. It meant he was short even with Ilya and his parents.

“Shane,” Ilya said squatting in front of him. He had his palms on his knees attempting to ground him out of an obvious near meltdown. Shane’s eyes were still closed but he figured by now no one else was in the locker room if Ilya was addressing him like this. His hands slowed and eventually rested on top of his ears. Ilya lightly squeezed Shane’s knees. He opened his eyes on cue to meet Ilya’s. A small smile on his lips as he fondly looked at his husband.

“Солнышко” Shane melted at the familiar affectionate name.

“I’m going to take off your gear and get us home.” Shane nodded slightly closing his eyes for a moment. Ilya started removing the tape around his legs. Then moving to unlace his skates being sure to leave them in Shane’s locker how he liked, with the laces pre-stretched out to make the process putting them on easier at the next practice. He moved to a standing position and reached out to take Shane’s hand and help him stand to remove the rest of his uniform. Down went his hockey pants, shin pads, socks, and shoulder pads. Leaving Shane only in his base layers, a CCM pride long sleeve and his jock. Ilya passed him his clothes and an extra hoodie Ilya kept in his locker. He grabbed their bags while Shane finished dressing.

“Home?” Shane nodded and followed him out to their SUV. Ilya put their bags in the back and sat in the drivers seat as his husband was in no position to be behind the wheel. The drive from the rink to their home was quiet, the soft hum of their local radio station playing to keep the car from being totally silent. The overstimulation of the game left his body vibrating. Unable to settle despite the safety of being alone with Ilya now. Shane stared out the window eyes unfocused willing time to move faster. *Why did I freeze? Why couldn't I just be normal? Like being railed from behind faggot? Why am I like this? Why am I letting him affect me so bad?*

Suddenly Shane’s car door opened. He moved on memory to the front door following Ilya inside. Once he toed off his sneakers he walked upstairs to their ensuite bathroom to start his shower. Shane waited for the water to come to the right temperature before he undressed carefully folding his clothes and placing them in a pile on top of the toilet. His terry cloth baby blue post-shower robe hung on the hook adjacent to the shower.

Under the warm water of the shower Shane finally let his tears fall. He was surprised he had any energy at this point to even cry but the comment from Najjar wouldn’t leave his head. Shane wasn’t ashamed of being gay. But he still felt sensitive about being public about something so personal. For years he worked so diligently to keep this part of his life secret. Only for it to be exposed without his consent and to ruin everything. The tears spilled from the corners of his eyes indistinguishable from the water soothing his tired muscles. He washed his hair, his face, and his body before turning off the water. Like usual he toweled off and wrapped himself in his bathrobe before depositing his folded pile of clothes to the hamper in their walk in closet. Shane wondered what Ilya was doing since he wasn’t in their

bedroom yet. He finished dressing in his familiar sleep attire, especially after a bad day, one of Ilya's old t-shirts and a pair of briefs. Shane could hear Ilya climbing the stairs as he unmade his side of the bed ready to climb in and finally sleep.

"Shower make you feel better, right?" He asked approaching Shane's side of the bed.

"Yes. Thank you for getting us home." Shane noticed Ilya was still in his clothes from the rink. Ilya moved to caress his cheek, thumb tracing his freckles. He leaned into the touch as his shoulders relaxed along with his whole body. Suddenly his chest constricted and tears threatened to burst from the corners of his eyes. Ilya changed and climbed into bed next to Shane waiting for a moment before he asked, "What happened during the game? You looked off after the second period."

Shane and Ilya had been together for well over a decade and married twice it was hard to miss when the other was struggling. Shane exhaled loudly causing Ilya to shift his body to face him. A single tear tracked down his face.

"Can I hold you?" Shane nodded meekly. Ilya moved to wrap his arms around his waist, pulling Shane to his chest. Ilya rubbed his back attempting to soothe Shane hoping he would share what was on his mind.

"I ... I just wanted to beat them."

"Me too."

"That new guy on the Voyageurs. Najjar or whatever his name is. He said something to me during the second period."

Ilya's hand on Shane's back stilled momentarily before he hummed hoping Shane would continue.

"He called me a fag. And asked if I liked getting railed from behind. I froze. So it's my fault we lost. If I wasn't so sensitive he wouldn't have gotten the puck and scored."

"Shane-"

"I still can't believe it even happened. I mean it isn't the first time someone has been homophobic on the ice but directly to my face. Like while we were fighting for the puck against the boards. Just if I kept it together he wouldn't have scored and we would hav-"

"Shane it isn't your fault."

"It feels like it."

"Well it isn't. I want to hurt this guy, Najjar? Fuck."

"Ilya."

"We should tell Coach Weibe. This can't happen, understand?"

Shane sat upright pulling away from Ilya, eyes frantic. “No, no, no no no no we can’t do that!” Ilya grabbed his face, thumbs caressing the apples of his cheeks.

“Hollander deep breath. Please. I won’t do anything you don’t want to. But we can’t let him do this more.”

“Ilya please. I don’t want to cause any problems.” Shane’s eyes pleaded with Ilya, more tears welling up.

“You aren’t. You won’t Солнышко.” Ilya pressed a kiss to his forehead then pressed his lips to Shane’s.

“I just don’t want to ruin anything for the team.”

“Who gives a fuck? This is first time we play Montreal. If we say nothing now, what happens next time?”

Shane pressed his forehead to Ilya’s chest. Ilya felt how furrowed his brows were, face scrunched up in worry. “I can’t get it out of my head.” Ilya held Shane close, rubbing his back until he fell asleep, murmuring endearments in Russian. Moments like these Ilya felt useless. He desperately wanted to hurt this stupid Montreal player for hurting his Shane. But he didn’t want to overstep and make Shane more upset. It took a long time before he too fell asleep. Instead his mind raced trying to find a solution to this problem.

Ilya woke up to Shane still sleeping. He looked to the clock and noticed it was already almost ten in the morning. Yesterday must have tired him out more than he realized. Usually Shane was eating breakfast, freshly showered after an early run and yoga session, by now. Ilya turned to admire his husband’s sleeping face. Unable to help himself, he traced the freckles that covered his nose and cheeks. Eventually Shane woke up bleary eyed and yawning.

“Morning sweetheart.”

“Hi.”

“Sleeping beauty, it is late.” Panic flashed across Shane’s face before he realized it was their day off.

“Fuck off Rozanov. It’s our day off,” Shane said chuckling as he rubbed the sleep out of his eyes. At least Shane wasn’t still in the throes of his meltdown from last night. Joking this early in the morning was a good sign.

The scratch of Anya’s paws against their door was their cue to get dressed and go downstairs. Their morning routine had Ilya out the door for a walk with Anya first thing while Shane made them breakfast. During the off season he started seeing a therapist who was helping him with his eating habits. While he was working on letting go of his rigid ideas about

dieting, carbs, and healthy eating - having some control over the process was necessary. In the quiet of their home he prepared a Shane Hollander classic, spinach and cheese omelets with chicken sausage. This was a frequent morning meal for the pair and it allowed Shane to go on autopilot which was much needed after yesterday's game.

Ilya's arms came around his waist and his chin rested on top of his head.

"Love you."

"Have a good walk?"

"Yes, Anya very happy."

"Good."

"Yes, good. Food almost done?"

"Yes. Could you get two plates please?"

"Of course." They sat together at the dining room table, eating quietly. Anya sat by their feet ready to catch any scraps that came her way. Ilya finished quickly eager to share with Shane some ideas about how to deal with the comments made during last night's game.

"I thought about last night."

"Yes?"

"I think we should tell Hayden at least about what happened. If you don't want to make trouble this is still option."

"I don't know Ilya."

"Shane please. I don't want this to happen again. Maybe Hayden can be useful for once?"

"Ilya."

"I'm serious. Deal with this guy. So you don't have to um what is the word escl-"

"Escalate?"

"Ah yes escalate. What do you think?"

"I guess we could do that for now."

"Now then? Call Hayden?"

"He might still be on his flight back to Montreal."

Ilya calls Hayden who picks up after a few rings. "Rozanov is everything okay? Is Shane okay?"

Ilya chuckles, "You are out loud on my phone Pike. Shane is fine."

“Hi Hayden”

“Hello, why are you calling me?”

“Happy to hear from you too Hayd.”

“We have something serious to talk about. Are you free?”

“Um... yeah. I just got home a couple hours ago from Ottawa. What’s up?”

Ilya adjusts his legs, “Well we wanted to talk about the game yesterday. And something that happened with Shane.”

“Okay.”

“This is hard to repeat Hayden but I don’t want this to become a big deal. It was really nothing.”

“This is a big deal Pike but Shane doesn’t want to make big show. The new player on your team he said some stuff to Shane during the game.”

“Is that why you were off in the second half? Playing with you for so long I notice when you aren’t on it. I just figured it was nerves given it was us.”

“Yeah that’s why.”

“What did he say?”

“He said- God can you tell him Ilya?”

“Of course. He called Shane a fag and asked if he liked getting railed from behind during the power play in the second period.”

“Jesus Christ Shane. That’s fucked.”

“We were hoping that you could say something to him or you and JJ could say something in the locker room and make it clear that it isn’t okay?”

“I mean I can try but I am not sure how much of a difference it would make. Most of the guys like to pretend that Shane being gay didn’t happen. The more difficult part is feeling like he lost us the Cup on purpose for you Ilya.”

“Well that is reassuring Hayd.”

“Do either of you have any ideas how to deal with this? I’ve got nothing.”

“We should report him to Weibe. But I don’t want to make Shane not comfortable. Maybe tell Farah?”

“Farah is your agent, right?”

“Yes.”

“Then that is a good first step.”

“We will talk to Farah in the morning. Thank you Hayden for listening. And congrats on the win,” Shane said.

“Good night Shane. Night Rozanov.”

The next time the Centaurs played Montreal it wasn't in front of a home crowd. But back where Shane spent the first ten years of his career. Being in the visiting team's locker room was weird. Shane's skin was crawling with discomfort, he shouldn't be here, he didn't want to be here. When they took the ice the crowd booed the Centaurs. He knew they were mostly booing him but he warmed up like normal trying to ignore the voice in his head. Mostly he was worried for the Voyageurs because he knew Ilya was out for vengeance, not toward Hayden or JJ, but the rest of them should be worried. After the last time they played Shane was not looking forward to their next meeting. Last time he wanted to prove Montreal wrong, prove Theriault wrong, his teammates, the fans, everyone who doubted his decision to come to Ottawa. The game was out of his control and this was his chance to show them.

Bell Center was a notoriously loud arena to play in and Voyageurs fans were ruthless even more-so since their captain and star player left for the team for Rozanov. But that night they were silenced. Ilya's Gordie Howe had a lot to do with it and Shane's goal and two assists didn't hurt either. The Centaurs won in a resounding 3-0 shutout in Montreal. Stepping off the ice and into the locker room, the air was electric. Shane took off his helmet and gloves sitting down to marvel at his teammates joy. Ilya and Wyatt finally trailed in, smiles wide on their faces, joining the rest of the team in celebration. His husband walked over to him sitting next to Shane as he worked to remove his gear.

“We did it!” Ilya said as he unlaced his skates.

“Yes *we* did.”

Both their heads raised simultaneously as they were called to do post-game press.

“Go get ‘em Hollzy!” Bood said while clapping him on the back before they walked to the conference room. Shane walked behind Ilya trying to prepare himself for the questions that would certainly come about what it is like playing his old team, if he resents his decision to leave, and the inevitable ones about his relationship with Ilya. Before he could realize it Ilya was holding the door open for him to enter the press room. He offered him a reserved smile before taking a seat in front of the press. Shane always hated doing interviews and media for his teams. He was hyperaware of the expectations on his as an individual player, representing his team, and what he meant for kids that looked like him. Nowadays he felt more pressure because of the newly public nature of his sexuality and relationship. Playing with Ilya was

the best thing to happen in his life and also the worst. He couldn't avoid talking about his private life given their overlap. Ilya must've noticed his nerves because he placed his hand on Shane's knee as an offering of support that the rest of the room couldn't see. Shane felt marginally better knowing that he was there with him through it all. Always.

"Shane, how does it feel to play against Montreal and win this time? You are now 1 and 1 in win loss against your former team this season."

"Well it feels good to win regardless of the opponent. That is what this team is striving for every night on the ice."

"Rozanov, this is just one of many Gordie Howe's in your career. How does it feel to shutout Montreal on their home ice?"

"Feels good yes. Like Hollander said we want to win every time. Does not matter where."

"This one is for Hollander, last time you played Montreal in October you had a poor showing individually. Can you talk about what changed for you from that game to tonight's game where you scored a goal and had two assists?"

"Last time was challenging for a lot of reasons. It was the first time playing Montreal having been under that organization for the entirety of my career up until that point. I thought I would retire a Voyageur so this season was always going to be a learning curve. Playing with new teammates, new staff, new coach, new routines - there was always going to be an adjustment period. Of course I want to win, the whole team does. And our first game against Montreal was a loss and I largely fault myself for that. But hopefully I showed tonight that I am a valuable member of the team and that together we can play hard and win."

"I would like to add that regardless of stats Shane is one of the most hardworking people on this team. In the whole league. I get to watch how determined he is which is nice," Ilya said before another reporter could ask a question.

"Thanks both of you. Shane could you elaborate on the challenges you faced last time playing Montreal? The second half performance was some of the worst hockey played in your career. Did your relationship to Rozanov impact your mindset during the game? Was it difficult to play against your former teammates?"

"Um... I'm not sure what to say. I try to forget the bad games especially that one since you kindly pointed out it was some of the worst hockey of my career. I don't think Ilya is to blame for my personal performance that game."

Ilya squeezed his knee knowing that this line of questioning was clearly bothering Shane. "Any other questions about tonight's game?" Ilya offered to the room full of press.

"Hollander, what has it been like playing with Rozanov this season? Do you feel like your off ice chemistry distracts or enhances your play?"

"Playing with Ilya isn't a distraction. Having someone on the ice who knows what I am going to do and can match me is special."

“Hollander is great. Finally he plays with teammates who match him,” Ilya said with a grin.

“Did Montreal not match your level of play Shane?”

“I wouldn’t say that, no. But this group of guys is special. We are like minded and we all work together well. Ottawa and Montreal are just different in terms of culture. That’s all.”

Ottawa Herald

Najjar suspended one game over game misconduct - January 8, 2022

The Montreal Voyageurs have released a statement announcing that New Jersey native Michael Najjar has been suspended for one game due to misconduct on the ice during a game in October versus the Ottawa Centaurs. Najjar is a new addition for the Voyageurs this season filling out their forwards after Shane Hollander’s trade at the end of last season. In his first few months of gameplay this season he has averaged similar stats to Hollander in previous seasons with 1.4 points per game and 56 points recorded this season so far. We reached out to both the NHL and Ottawa Centaurs for an official comment but they declined to comment.

Sunday night’s were for family dinner. Outside Shane and Ilya’s home snow was softly falling. A gentle flurry coating the trees in their backyard. Anya would need her booties and coat for her evening walk after they finished eating. Their Christmas tree was in the corner of the living room. They would need to pack it away soon as it had already been a couple weeks since Christmas by now. The warm glow of the lights illuminated Yuna and Shane’s faces. They were watching some hockey game on the TV in the living room while Ilya and David got the table ready for dinner. After the announcement of Najjar’s suspension to the public Shane felt his anxiety rise exponentially. He wanted to cancel their usual Sunday dinner and lay in bed all day but Ilya insisted that his parents would help Shane feel at least a sense of normalcy. Shane sat in the corner of the couch buried in one of Ilya’s hoodies with his weighted blanket on top of him. His mom’s commentary on the game was a familiar and comforting constant in his life. She was cursing the referees for a tripping call against Scott Hunter when Ilya called them to eat.

Shane ate quietly letting his parents talk to Ilya about their upcoming schedule. They were going on a roadtrip out to San Francisco and Vancouver next week. He couldn’t tell who was more excited his dad or Anya to spend time together while they were away. Usually Anya went to a kennel during their roadtrips but his parents were excited to care for their furbaby, as his dad called her. Ilya and Shane didn’t have any children yet and Anya would have to do on the grandkid front for now.

“Shane, how are you doing son?” His dad asked, pulling him out of his own head.

“I’m doing okay. Looking forward to our game against Minnesota tomorrow.”

“Do you feel better now that the suspension is announced?”

Shane rested his fork on his plate contemplating the question before responding to his mom’s question.

“Yes and no. I am worried the press will ask about it during post-game. But I guess I am glad it is over.” Ilya’s hand was a welcome grounding point on his thigh.

“I mean what is there to even ask? I mean, come on, the official statement is out and it doesn’t specify anything about you or someone on the team,” his mom said exasperated.

“Yeah I mean I don’t think they would ask me about it specifically just general worry I guess.”

“Don’t worry. Harris is probably handling it. You might not even have to do press tomorrow anyway,” Ilya offered him with a smile and a kiss to his temple.

They moved on finishing their dinner. Shane and David worked to load the dishwasher before his parents left for the evening. Shane returned to his spot on the couch lying down to read his book while Ilya took Anya for their evening walk. Ilya had been right of course. Having the comfort of Sunday dinner soothed Shane’s nerves about their game tomorrow and the potential questioning from the media. The voice in his head was quiet and he was able to make decent progress in his book lost in the story before Ilya’s cold hands pressed against his ears. Shane jolted at the sudden cold tilting his head back to see the mischievous grin of his husband.

“Солнышко” Shane bookmarked his page before reaching back to pull Ilya down to his shoulder.

“Bedtime?”

“Da.”

Shane held him close before he left him go and took the weighted blanket off his lap. The two went upstairs falling into step side by side. “Good day?”

“Yes. Better than the morning,” Shane said moving to their bathroom to brush his teeth. Ilya’s arms wound around his waist hands clasped by his belly button. His lips pressed soft kisses below Shane’s ear, on his neck, and his shoulder.

Ottawa Centaurs President of Hockey Operations and General Manager George Williamson support the diversity across our organization from players, staff, and fans. We respect all members of our organization both on and off the ice and stand against hate. Happy new year and we look forward to another year of excellence for the city of Ottawa. Go Cens!

The Centaurs beat Minnesota 2-1. Luca and Troy were pulled to do press post-game. Prior to the game Ottawa released a short statement indirectly addressing the suspension. That didn't stop Haas and Barrett being asked about the statement and the days old suspension announcement from the NHL.

“Barrett, what do you make of the statement put out today from GM Williamson?”

“Well I appreciate the support from top down. It is public that our team is diverse across sexuality and race. So I feel like the vibe here is different from other locker rooms in the NHL. We have a zero tolerance policy for homophobia, racism, sexism, etc.”

“Could you give any insight into why this statement was made? Did it have anything to do with suspension of Najjar in Montreal?”

“I am sure you all saw the statements from Montreal and the NHL but yeah it was from our game against them in October. I can't say much more but I am proud that the league did something about it given the track record of the league dealing with sexual assault, homophobia, and racism.”

“Do either you or Haas have any words for the Montreal team?”

Troy leaned forward into the microphone, “Thank you for fumbling Hollander. Good luck this season you need it.”

Luca and Troy stood to return to the locker room before they could be asked any more questions. Hopefully this would be the end of the issues between Montreal and Ottawa. But that was wishful thinking on the part of Troy. He, knowingly or not, just set off a spark for a heated rivalry between the two Canadian cities. Fortunately for Troy he was on the better team and would not back down from a challenge.

End Notes

fic title from mary oliver's poem 'wild geese'.

hello i hope even just one person reads this and resonates with shane's experience. reading heated rivalry and the long game and seeing myself in shane was hard but that was only made worse (and better) seeing hudson bring him to life through the show. this is drawing on my personal experience as an autistic person who relates to shane hollander a little too much. sending you dear reader(s) all the light and love in this world.

any kudos and comments are greatly appreciated :))

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