A Truth (Finally) Spoken

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by SuperiorJello

Summary

Shane yells at the team after he's outed via one of Hayden's fanvids. It's actually rather cathartic for him.
And for the first time, the team gets to see what Shane is like when he's not keeping himself held under so much pressure, and maybe they see why he gets along with Ilya Rozanov so well.

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When Shane walked into the locker room the day after he was outed, the room was already pretty quiet, but somehow his entrance signalled the team to become even quieter; to freeze in place, perhaps even attempt to hold their breath.

The door behind him thumped into the frame as an icy silence crept across the room.

He doesn't know what to say, how to start. He and Ilya had made plans, of course. He had statements prepared that they had thrown together last minute based on multiple scenarios, his mom and Ilya's agent had worked through them with them last night. But now that he was faced with a room full of men he had worked with for years, he knew that he couldn't use them here. They were impersonal, dry things meant for corporate PR and social media posts, not the sort of thing you said to your team face to face, and something about the empty silence stretching ahead told him that this wasn't going to be a Scott Hunter coming out story unless he dragged them there kicking and screaming.

The scent of old socks and sweat-soaked pads turned even more sour in his lungs.

Shane quickly made eye contact with Hayden, who he had talked with on the phone last night- apologizing for his fanvid being the leak. Shane forgave him, it wasn't his fault. He and Ilya should have been more careful.

His friend gave him a nod, and a pained smile. He knew how badly Shane had been spiralling about all of this.

Shane looked over at JJ, who he hadn't talked to. He wasn't making eye contact now, either.

He sucked in a breath, and spoke.

"I know you're all thinking it. And I'm releasing a proper statement on social media… right about now. Yes, I'm gay."

You could've heard a pin drop in that locker room. You could, actually, hear one of the showers dripping, and someone's phone vibrate with an incoming message. And Shane definitely heard Drapeau scoff before crossing his arms and glaring at Shane with a mixture of disgust and disdain.

"You people are always being all flashy and rubbing our faces in your depravity, why can't you just shut up and let hockey be hockey, eh?"

No one else said anything, though from the ashamed glances to the side from some and conspiratorial looks between some others, Drapeau was not the only one thinking it. Hayden looked ready to step in- if unsure what to say when doing so- but Shane shook his head. He didn't need him to speak for him just yet.

Because Shane felt shockingly clear-headed in that moment. He'd been spiralling all night since the news had broken, held together only by first Ilya and then his mom's practicality. Even with that terror settled, he'd been low-key panicking over this reveal for the past decade, constantly worrying about when it would happen and what would do it and how people would react.

And now it had.

And people weren't reacting well.

But that was… that was the worst case scenario. There was nothing bad left to happen. He had already talked to management, already knew he was fine with them (though maybe not *good*) and was definitely finishing out the season. It was done. All that was left to do was ride this out, and fuck if it wasn't a relief that there was nothing terrible left in the roster of panic in his brain.

So Shane was all out of fear, and free to just feel completely, incandescently angry.

He barked out a laugh, and it seemed to startle some of his teammates.

“I was literally fucking doing that, asshole. I had zero plans to have some big flashy coming out moment like Scott Hunter. I just wanted to live my life and play hockey, and if no one had cared about some background detail in a video about something completely unrelated and had just moved the fuck on then we wouldn't have to be having this conversation at all. But everyone else seems to care that the person I'm in love with has a dick, so this is the conversation we're having. Yes, I'm gay. Yes, I have a boyfriend who loves me, and yes, I love him. No, we're not planning on fucking out on the ice in the middle of a game. So, is that enough for you to chill out and trust that I'm still the same fucking person who won this team the cup back to back?”

He scanned over the room, and while a few people did seem to be settling, the majority weren't. And one of those was JJ.

That was one regret Shane had in this. JJ was his friend, he should have told him a while ago; especially after Hayden had figured it out and the world didn't end, but Shane had always thought there would be more time.

JJ’s eyes held that pain of betrayal when he spoke to Shane. “Your boyfriend is Ilya fucking Rozanov. You don't think that'll cause problems when we play the Centaurs?”

But that was a question Shane had an easy answer for.

“It never has before,” he replied evenly. Then Comeau jumped in.

“How are we supposed to believe that? They won our last game-”

“That's because they're a good team,” Hayden interjected, trying to relieve some of the pressure on Shane. It didn't really work, though from the side eye he received, the other players had a pretty good idea where he stood in the overall argument now.

“They haven't won a cup in decades!” JJ protested, but Shane just laughed. Maybe they hadn't been a threat before, but that was before they got Ilya.

“And now they have the best player in the league in their lineup. Things were bound to change,” he explained, like he was speaking to a room of children. Because he basically was.

“You sure you didn't let them win, a little treat for your boyfriend's ego?”

“I thought you hated him!”

Comeau and JJ spoke over each other.

Shane couldn't help but let out a disbelieving laugh, because that was just… the dumbest thing he had ever heard. And that ability to laugh just made him want to laugh more, because he was so light inside- he didn't have to hide anything. All that mattered was the truth and the truth was that he was fucking *vindicated.*

“Are you stupid? I didn't think I was building a stupid team, but apparently I have been. Do you pay no attention out on the ice? Have you seen what it's like when Rozanov and I play? Yeah, there's a reason everyone thought we hated each other, but we have never once dropped gloves out there so maybe fucking think for a second. Playing against someone as good as him? It's electrifying, it's like flying, it's what I live for. Even if we weren't together, I could never hate him for that alone. And I could never *let* him win.”

There were murmurs, but no one spoke out. JJ, at least, seemed to be thinking over what he was saying.

“Well, how long has this been going on? If there's a provable before and after, you can point out if anything-”

“There is no before and after! Not in the MLH! None of you have known a Shane Hollander that wasn't- wasn't head over heels in love with Ilya Rozanov.”

Silence.

“What the fuck? That long?” Someone hissed out. He wasn't sure who said it, but there were similar murmurs of surprise from around the room. Shane just felt tired. Of *course* it was that long. It was *Ilya.* It never could have been anyone else for him.

“Well, he has always been weird about Rozanov,” someone else muttered, and he felt his lips tick up one one side, a tiny smirk. They weren't wrong.

“Yeah. So maybe get your heads out of your asses and think about how many times I’ve beaten him over the years, because there is nothing I love more than giving it my all against the best player in the league and winning. You thinking he needs the help is an insult to both of us.”

Over where he sat next to Hayden, JJ put his face into his hands, rubbing his temples as if that would clear away his current headache.

“Fuck, I feel like I don't even know you, Hollander. Why didn't you tell us?” he asked, and Shane flinched. That one hurt. Didn't know him? He had been here for nearly a decade! Just because they knew he liked men, liked Ilya, didn't mean he was a completely different person. Everything that had been there before still existed, there was just a little more detail now.

“You want me to tell you?” he snapped, done with it all. “You think you've been missing out on all that juicy locker room talk? Want to hear about how well he fucks me? How every time we're pitted against each other it's just foreplay, just me and him and the ice as we fight to see who’ll win this time, and every night after a game we fall into each other's arms and- and chirp hockey stats at each other to get off?”

JJ looked at him wide eyed.

“No, no, I just meant-”

“Oh, would you rather I explain to you that if his Canadian citizenship wasn't in the last stage of being processed, that my main worry right now would be Russia dragging him back there to face prison or worse, just for loving me? That he could be taken away by the secret police and never seen again and then you'd get to watch me slowly fucking die in front of you because I wouldn't have him to hold me together anymore. You think I could bear it if he disappeared? Like people *do,* in Russia, just for being queer, or just for saying nice things about gay people. But no, your comfort is more important than me protecting the man I love until it's safe for him to love me openly, or until I'm ready to tell you about myself. Of fucking course I didn't want to tell anyone! I've been fucking terrified! For years! And I was *right.* They're already calling me slurs on the internet and in the press. You gonna do that in here too?”

A ringing silence met him, but it was… well, hard to say, but it felt less hostile than when he walked in. Shane nodded once, then turned to leave.

“Hayden’s running practice today. I'm giving you all a day to make your peace with everything. See you tomorrow.”

“Hey wait, cap-” that was JJ. Shane turned back to look at him.

He looked apologetic. And incredibly confused.

“I just don't understand- if you've been- for *years*- What happened with Rose Landry?”

Shane snorted. While it had been, well, a lot back then, Ilya had since helped him find the humor in it. Maybe JJ would see it too.

“I was having a bit of a personal crisis about being gay. It definitely answered the question.”

“Your big gay crisis was dating a movie star?” JJ gaped at him.

Shane shrugged. “If you're going to do something, go big or go home.”

“Well shit. He really is dating Rozanov,” someone muttered. Shane smirked, and left the building.

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