

Shane Hollander Starts a Bar Fight

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Shane Hollander Starts a Bar Fight

by [spaceyloser](#)

Summary

Tensions are high between the Montreal Metros and the Ottawa Centaurs during Shane's first season in Ottawa. After bringing a devastating loss against the Metros, the teams encounter each other in a bar in downtown Ottawa. The Metros are looking for a fight, and Shane is fucking tired of being good.

"That was an exciting win against New York tonight."

"Thank you," Drapeau, the starting goalie for the Montreal Metros said, sweat dripping off the stringy strands of dark hair that fell over his forehead. "We did exactly what we had to do, played some good hockey."

"You got a shut out, congratulations."

Drapeau laughed, his eyes very obviously sliding down the female reporter's body. He smirked. "Thank you, it wasn't hard."

"So confident, that's what we like to hear," she said. "The Admirals did try hard, do you have any idea how many goals of Scott Hunter's you stopped tonight."

Drapeau raised his eyebrows and all but rolled his eyes, he glanced up and around before answering.

"I don't count, not a lot of his, I don't think, he didn't get many opportunities."

She laughed, "You are all very confident in this season, even though it is so early. Does that confidence come from new leadership on the Metros line?"

"Our captain? Yeah, Olsson is great. He really earned it, unlike...well."

The reporter jumped on the opportunity to mention him, now that the door was cracked open slightly.

"Your former captain is now playing for the Ottawa Centaurs. How do you feel about the Metros' chances against them this season?"

Drapeau laughed, he sounded tired. His smile fell, then reformed, gleefully twisted.

"I'm not worried. Hollander was slowing us down. Now we know why. The Centaurs have never been a winning team, everyone knows that. I think they will be too...distracted," he laughed at the word 'distracted', ensuring everyone knows exactly what he means, "to play well. At least for as long as Hollander and Rozanov are on the line."

The reporter looked momentarily flabbergasted at how explicit Drapeau was being in his contempt. She stuttered, and he took the opportunity to thank her and duck out of there.

Shane was riding an exercise bike to death. Not to *his* death, to *its* death. He stared at his legs in the mirror, a blur of movement and muscle. He was overdoing it on the bike, Luca Haas panting and sweating through his shirt on the bike beside him, trying to keep up, when Shane decided he wasn't going to play fair anymore.

Everyone else in the league played dirty. Everyone was happy slinging mud. His former team was working to slander his name at every opportunity.

Shane's been trying to rise above.

On the internet, some people believed what the Metros said; that he was weak and holding them back. They pulled up his stats for hitting and taking hits on the ice and called him a scared pansy. Pansy was the nicest slur people used. Shane went harder on the bike, until he couldn't watch himself in the mirror anymore, he had to squeeze his eyes shut and *push*.

Some actually do believe he and Ilya cheated throughout their time in the league. The major news outlets weren't reporting that way, at least, not anymore. Not after a beautiful cease and desist from Farah's team. But they thought it, they all thought it.

Shane did not say a single thing against his former team or his former teammates. He was polite when reporters asked searching, or abrasive, questions. He just sighed and locked his phone when he saw photographs of he and Ilya holding hands on the internet, taken by some random person they hadn't noticed.

He was taking all the attention in goddamn *stride*.

Until his breaking point. Drapeau's interview at the Metros second game of the season irked Shane. Irked was a nice way of saying, it drove Shane up the fucking wall.

It did Ilya too, Ilya got angry, Shane did too. The difference was, Shane's anger was internal. Ilya swore and threw a water bottle.

"Distracted? We see how distracted he is as goalie with an eye swollen shut." Shane loved his husband, and he wished he shared his ability to verbalize his emotions.

Shane let Ilya kiss him senseless, putting it out of his mind for the time being, but that interview was the match struck.

The tweet from Comeau was holding the match to the fuse.

It was only about three days after the Drapeau interview. It went out in the middle of the night. Shane didn't see it until 7:30 that morning. He was in from his morning run, making a smoothie. Ilya was still in bed. They had a long night, but Shane could never sleep in. It was a curse, one he wished his husband shared.

@GGComeau20: hollander wsa a fuckin fag + were all glad he went back to wehere he came from

The rampant spelling errors likely meant that Comeau was drunk, which made sense for him. He was a notorious partier, his reputation was even more prolific than Ilya's. As his captain, he had been worried about him, but Comeau was never receptive to being handled, so there wasn't much Shane could do about it.

Shane felt a familiar burn of anger and regret grow in him. It rose in him like heartburn, and lingered the same.

He tried to breathe, and managed it. Comeau could call him a fag all he wanted, Shane heard it all the time. He's heard it all his life. Now, it's directed at him rather than around him, and

he's mostly made peace with it.

Then, he read Comeau's second tweet. The first one went out at 1:22am. The second one was marked 1:45am.

@GGComeau20: and he takes it up the ass too fucking pussy

Shane locked his phone and slammed it on the table. He wished, a little hysterically, that Ilya were awake, because he was feeling extremely alone in their kitchen. That was ridiculous, Ilya was just down the hall.

He blended his smoothie, then poured the extra in another cup for Ilya. He would wake him up. He's gotten a lot better at reaching out for help when he felt like he needed it. There's been a lot of adapting for Shane and Ilya this last year, they've both been working towards being more open.

Shane woke up Ilya gently, with a hand rubbing circles on his back. Shane admired his pretty golden curls shining against the silk black pillow case. Shane had thought they were a little tacky. Silk sheets? Really? And in jet black? But Shane liked them, because Ilya did.

He didn't shove the tweets in his face. Instead, they laid together for a while, Shane still sweaty from his run, Ilya not minding, because Shane being already in need of a shower, and actively ruining the bedding, meant one thing.

After ten that morning, he showed Ilya, who was outraged enough to call Farah, and then go to the punching bag in their home gym.

Shane figured Comeau was sleeping off the mother of all hangovers. Shane had been obsessively checking twitter.

"I will lock your phone in a box, stop looking." Ilya warned.

The Montreal Metros twitter was silent, but people were tweeting at Comeau with anger. There were only a few people, fans only, no hockey players, agreeing with him wholeheartedly.

One of his own fans tweeted something that made him stop and stare.

@hollzynomistletoe: comeau should die probably soon

@hollzynomistletoe: Shaney is so sweet and delicate he doesn't deserve this xoxo

Delicate? DELICATE?

Wasn't that just a nicer way of saying what Comeau had said? He wasn't fucking delicate. He was two hundred pounds of pure muscle. He wasn't the tallest guy on the team, but that didn't matter when he had biceps that could kill a man. His body was a lethal fucking weapon. Being gay would never change that fact.

Comeau's third tweet was the nail in the coffin, as far as Shane was concerned. It came a little after noon.

@GGComeau20: i stand by my drunk tweets. #isaidwhatisaid

Shane didn't see red, no, he saw a path forward. He saw it all laid out in front of him perfectly.

The complete and utter destruction of the Montreal Metros.

"I want them on a losing streak so bad, they don't win a cup for over a hundred years. I want everyone to be embarrassed to be fans of them."

Ilya looked concerned-and a little scared-of Shane. Shane was saying this calmly over their dinner that same night. Ilya saw Comeau's follow up tweet and called Farah again. The Montreal Metros released a statement a few hours later that they don't tolerate discrimination (ha) and Comeau's tweets were deleted. It was too late. Millions of people saw them, news outlets were reporting on them.

Hayden had texted him, saying he got into an argument with Comeau about it, that he fucking hates him and supports Shane. Shane is still his best friend. Nice stuff. Shane feels the same way. Hayden Pike will always be his best friend. But it didn't matter, as long as he was on the Metros, he would never win a cup again.

"Shane, you're being very scary right now," Ilya said. "And sexy. Tell me more about how we destroy them."

Shane trained extra hard every day. He was in the gym constantly, and Ilya followed him, dragging most of the guys along. They were happy to be dragged.

"We are winning the cup this season," Ilya said simply, not bringing their vendetta against the Metros into it. They felt the pressure too, Shane was sure. The team had taken to Shane, Shane was already more comfortable around them than he had ever been with his own team. It was nice, it felt like family, like community.

"Probably next season too. And one after that."

"What about after that?" Bood asked, he was being sarcastic but he was very obviously feeding off Ilya's confidence. The season had only just started and they had won both of their games. Ilya whipped that team into shape the previous year, and no one could match Shane and Ilya's chemistry on the ice. They were virtually unstoppable.

"Yes, probably always. Until I retire and become a WAG for Hollander," Ilya said, which made Shane roll his eyes. The guys laughed.

Shane stayed late at the rink, practicing drills until he should've been bleeding into his skates. There was nothing but the goal, the cones on the ice; nothing but Ilya, gliding beside him, practicing drills that would make their opponents cry. Together, they worked out a new flashy, quick passing move that they would have to name. The sharp slap of the puck on his

stick as he smacks it at Ilya was music to his ears. They practiced the move until Shane dreamt about it. Until Ilya dreamt of it.

"Do you think this is healthy?" His mother asked. They had played Buffalo the day before and dominated, unsurprisingly. Ilya and Shane did their new move, which the team started calling the Hollonov. Someone on the team leaked the name to the press, and it became all the sports news outlets were talking about, Shane and Ilya's competency on the ice. They were powerful, marvels to watch. The best players in the league, destined to go down in history. "This obsession with beating the Metros?"

Ilya eyed Shane, then answered for him. He was able to read Shane's hesitancy. Ilya was the only one who really knew and understood the rage simmering in his gut. He didn't just want the Metros to go home crying, he wanted them to *bleed*.

Shane tuned in to part of their game against Boston, and it filled him with a sick joy as he watched Olsson get knocked off his skates by Cliff Marleau. Cliff had texted Ilya when they were outed and offered him his support. What he said exactly was: You're on another team now, but we're still brothers, Rozanov. I'm here for you.

And, really, how hard was that?

"It is not obsession." Ilya said simply. Which, was kind of wrong, but Shane didn't correct him. "It is determination. And the Metros acted very poorly."

His mother agreed with that, at least. She was no longer, and never would be again, the world's biggest Metros fan. He was pretty sure she was actively praying every night for them to all to fall through ice.

(Except for Hayden. And JJ).

When it came time for the Metros game, Shane was ready. The team was on a hell of a winning streak. They lost one game all season. Montreal lost three of five. Wasn't that beautiful?

Guess the team wasn't doing so well under Olsson after all.

Shane's vision narrowed, all he knew was puck and goal. He was aware of his teammates taking out Metros along the way. Comeau got the penalty box pretty early for fighting Troy Barrett. Bood slammed Taylor so hard into the boards once, Shane thought he could hear the concussion Taylor got. Even Luca Haas, the young guy just out of his rookie season, got thrown in the penalty box for something Comeau (once again) instigated.

Shane didn't do any fighting on the ice. He didn't have to.

It was a fucking shut out against Montreal. Hazy was on fire in the goal. Shane heard him a couple of times yelling out insults at the Metros. Shane felt camaraderie like never before, god, he was in love with his team.

It was 5-0, Centaurs favor. Shane got three goals, Ilya one, Haas one.

The Metros were snarling when they lined up for handshakes. Shane didn't say anything and he didn't offer his hand, something he knew the cameras were picking up on but he didn't care.

They kept their traps shut. Then, at the end of the line was JJ and Hayden.

"Good fucking game, Hollander," JJ said, then pulled Shane in for a hug with a wide smile.

Shane felt tears well in his eyes. Emotions were so complicated, he could hardly stand it. His anger was immediately quelled and replaced with relief. Shane hugged JJ back tightly. Then Hayden.

"You dominated, Shane," Hayden said. "Fuck, losing sucks. But I guess it sucks less when it's against you."

"You should ask for trade," Ilya said. The four of them were standing on the ice now, the lines broken up. "Because you're going to keep losing, long as you play for Montreal."

"Nah, we got the cup this year," JJ said, but Shane could tell he didn't mean it. JJ snickered a second later. "Shit, you're probably right, Rozanov."

Ilya shrugged. "I know I am right." His eyes slid to Shane, and Shane felt it. That post-winning glow, adrenaline, lust-

Shane wanted to take his husband home and fuck until they couldn't move anymore.

But, the guys wanted to go out. And after such an incredible win, Shane couldn't say no. He wanted to celebrate too. He wanted to hear his team breakdown their goals and the Metros' faults. He wanted to hear them smear their names in the way athletes always did but didn't mean completely. He wanted to bathe in this win.

The bar the Centaurs frequented was a dive called the Knight's Tavern. It was Hazy's favorite, he was the one who got the team to embrace it. It was crummy, on the other side of the city from where most of them lived. It didn't have a velvet rope, just a few regular drunks, the owner as the bartender, a pool table missing most of its balls, and busted security cameras. Their love for this bar was a well-kept secret.

A little over half the team came out, including Ilya and Shane. They took a car service, Shane wanted to have a few celebratory drinks. He's earned it, after that win.

Ilya ordered them both whatever was on tap, which tasted fucking horrible. Shane drank it anyway, enjoying it. Was he breaking his diet? Yes. But, today was a day of subverting the rules. Drinking alcohol during the season, playing against the Montreal Metros.

"I thought Drapeau was going to cry after Haas got his goal. That really added insult to injury, didn't it?" Troy Barrett laughed.

"He is crying now, on airplane on the way back to Montreal," Ilya said. "And he will stay crying all season, and for the rest of his career."

Hayes laughed, "Jesus, Ilya, that's a little scary."

"I am not the scary one," Ilya said, nudging Shane gently. "Montreal will never win again."

"Are you going to put a hex on them?" Bood asked. Haas gasped.

"You shouldn't joke about that kind of stuff."

"Yeah," Hayes laughed, clapping the kid on the back. Haas had been sincere, Hazy was not "Don't you know it will come back around tenfold?"

Ilya raised his eyebrows at 'tenfold.'

"It won't. Because Montreal deserves it."

"Here here," Bood said, raising his drink.

Three beers was Shane's official cut off. He could break a few rules, but he couldn't go crazy. He wasn't drunk, but he was feeling good, and about ready to go home so he could get to the ravaging he deserved after a game like that. Ilya looked a bit ready to go too. He kept looking at Shane with a palpable hunger that made a few of the guys tease him.

Shane glanced around the bar. Most of their teammates that followed Hazy to that dump of a bar had left. There were two random men at the bar, everyone else was a Centaur.

A couple of their guys were playing pool. Shane, Ilya, Barrett, and Bood were sitting on the other side of the bar. Haas was in the bathroom and had been for long enough that Shane thought maybe someone should check on him.

Shane got off the stool and started walking towards the bathrooms. They were to the far left of the front doors in a dark corner. There were multiple lights in need of replacement in Hazy's favorite bar. Shane was thinking he would need to put his foot down about their next hangout spot when the doors opened.

Shane's blood ran cold.

He didn't react. All he could do was freeze, and wait.

First, he saw Comeau, then Drapeau. Then Wilson, Olsson, Laine, Taylor-

Comeau saw him standing there. His eyes went wide. The natural frown he was always sporting deepened as he nudged Drapeau.

His other former teammates went around Comeau and straight to the bar, annoyed that Comeau stopped right in front of the door. Drapeau was on his left, a similar look on his stupid face.

"Hollander in a bar? What are the odds." His tone was flat. Both men were staring at Shane with open disdain.

"You should leave," Shane said simply, because it was simple to him. There were Centaurs jerseys all over the walls. All from the 80s, but still. This was an Ottawa bar.

Shane was surprised they were even still in Ottawa. They should have flown out right after the game. What reason was there to linger?

They ignored his request to leave, still stuck on seeing Shane in a social setting.

"We're out for a drink, what are you doing here?" Comeau asked.

"I could count on one hand the amount of times you came out with us while you were on our team." Drapeau held up his hand, splaying his five fingers. Shane was surprised the Metros idiot goalie could even count that high.

Shane glanced behind them. No Hayden, no JJ. Great. Shane looked over his own shoulder. Ilya was watching, hackles raised. Bood too.

"Oh, I see." Drapeau said, casually chuckling, "date night."

Ilya was by Shane's side in a second. On his right.

"No losers allowed, sorry." Ilya mocked, waving his hand like he was shooing away a stray cat.

Ilya had enough to drink for him to be vibrating with energy. Energy that Shane had intended to put to good use later. He smirked at the twinkle in his husband's eye. He secretly loved it when Ilya got bitchy.

"Hey! Alan, don't serve these guys, they're pricks." Barrett yelled to Alan, the bartender/owner.

"No pricks allowed in my bar," Alan said. "Get going."

Alan was an older man, late fifties, probably, with a beer gut, an unkept beard, and long white hair he hid under a ratty Ottawa Centaurs baseball cap he bought in 1989. He was not an intimidating man. So, when Taylor tried to reach over the bar and grab a glass, Barrett stood up so fast the barstool went flying behind him, clattering over loudly. He stood on Taylor's left, arms crossed, menacing despite his stature. Things got quiet in the bar fast. For a second, you could hear a pin drop.

"Fuck this, we don't need to drink at a fag bar, anyway," Comeau snarled, he glared over Shane's shoulder at Barrett. His eyes slowly slid to Ilya, then to Shane.

He threw his head back and laughed. He clapped Drapeau on the shoulder. "Bro, I just thought of this. How do you think Rozanov inspires loyalty in a team like this?"

Drapeau looked at him, waiting.

And Shane, Shane was-

Shane was, for a second. sixteen and still in school, hearing his classmate call one of Shane's friends a queer. Shane body-checked him so hard on the ice, his coach benched Shane for two games.

He was eighteen, biting his tongue while pussy, and pansy, and queer, and faggot, were thrown around the locker room.

He was twenty-one, hearing JJ jokingly say to him if he doesn't come out and score sometime, the team was going to think he was gay.

All of it piled up inside him. He hadn't thrown a punch on the ice in years. He just wasn't that kind of player. He was in control of his emotions. Calculating, cold. A hockey genius, but not a fighter. Delicate, too good for this world, would never hurt a fly.

"On his knees? Or maybe letting the team run a train on Hollander-"

Looking back, it was surprising Ilya didn't react first. Looking back, these guys had obviously been to another bar before this one. They were drunk, they smelled like whiskey.

I stand by my drunk tweets.

Comeau (mostly) finished his sentence, and a second later, he was laid out on the floor, the back of his head narrowly missing the front door.

He was a big man. Taller than Shane, but Shane had managed to connect his fist with Comeau's jaw, and Comeau hadn't been expecting it from Shane, of all people, who was once described by a reporter as having no bark and no bite.

"Get up," Shane said to him. "Come on, I want to hit you again."

He thought he may have heard Ilya laugh beside him. He felt a hand gripping his shoulder that no doubt meant him harm. Drapeau.

His fist pulled back, but Ilya was there for Shane. Ilya was, of course, all bark and all bite.

His former goalie's hand released Shane, and then Drapeau was on the ground beside his teammate. Ilya put him there with an impolite punch to the nose.

"Oops," Ilya said. Comeau was already getting up.

The Metros who had been at the bar were coming over, one was going to help up Drapeau, the others were coming straight for Ilya.

That's when the rest of the Centaurs jumped in. Barrett was on someone in a second, Shane saw him punch someone-Taylor-in the stomach, before Comeau was a tower over Shane again.

Yeah. Shane thought. *Lets fucking go.*

Comeau hit him hard, gloves off. Shane reeled back, but didn't fall. He took a step back, and ran full speed at the man.

He had Comeau against the wall. One arm around him, holding him as he tried to kick free, the other landing greedy punches on his torso. He didn't know what was happening around him until a cue ball whizzed by his head.

He glanced up. Hazy was squatting on top of the pool table, a bunch of cue balls in the cradle of his left arm. Shane watched one connect with the side of Laine's head, who was on the floor wrestling Bood. Hazy threw another one towards Drapeau, it hit him in the arm.

The distraction is what let Comeau get a good kick on Shane's leg, Shane fell, then fell some more as he failed to gain purchase on flimsy tall tables. He landed hard on his back.

From the floor, he had a great angle to see Ilya punch Drapeau so hard, a tooth flew out. Ilya looked to him, he looked fearful. Shane tried to get up.

Comeau was standing over him.

"I am going to beat the shit out of you Hollander, for what you did to our fucking team, you fucking-"

Haas had chosen a hell of a moment to come out of the bathroom.

Comeau went down hard.

He had pulled a wood panel off the wall. On it, the words *it's five o'clock somewhere* were painted in red and teal. It broke clean in half when it made contact with Comeau's head.

Comeau knocked out, Drapeau was an animal, and it didn't help that fucking Wilson was teaming up with him against Ilya. Troy Barrett was leaning against the bar, looking dazed, blood running down his nose. Ilya was bleeding out of a cut on his forehead.

Shane didn't think, he just aimed his fancy black boots for Drapeau's knees. On the table, Hazy was out of cue balls. He had a stick instead, and he was swiping at Taylor with it. Haas was leaning against the wall, panicking, his head in his hands. Things were devolving fast.

He didn't see the lights outside the bar. He didn't see the doors opening. Ilya pulled him back as they did, but it was too late.

It took over ten cruisers to take them all to the local precinct. Everyone was arrested except Haas, who hid in the bathroom some more while they were all rounded up. Shane couldn't blame the kid.

Comeau was conscious by the time the cops got there, so he went with them rather than a hospital.

It was obvious all the cops knew exactly who they *all* were. There were two holding cells in the precinct. Metros in one, Centaurs in another. They were across a wide hallway from each other, so the Centaurs were saved from hearing whatever bullshit the Metros were saying.

Shane couldn't see them clearly, anyway. One of his contacts fell out during the fight. He took out the other one, as the difference between his eyes was making him feel drunk and dizzy.

Shane couldn't even bring himself to panic.

He was in a *jail cell*, for godsake. What the hell happened to him? If Shane of ten years ago could see him now, he would have an aneurysm.

Shane could only sigh and shake his head, leaning his back against the cold bars of the holding cell, facing the main hub. Ilya mirrored his position, his body heat warming Shane.

It was mostly Centaurs in the cell with them, plus a few randoms who had too much to drink that night. They were right in the main work area of the police station. The fluorescent lights and the bustle of people were sobering. The Metros weren't even looking their way, Shane was pretty sure. Comeau had an ice pack on his head, and Shane could only feel smug.

"Proud of yourself?" Ilya asked him, not unkindly.

"Yes." Shane replied, just to be bitchy. Obviously, Shane was not proud to be arrested. He was a little proud to be the reason for Comeau's black and blue jaw.

"You might have fucked up his knee for good." Ilya said with a small smile. Shane grinned back.

Barrett had been bleeding profusely from his nose. His white t-shirt was soaked in it, he looked like a horror movie victim. Bood may have had a broken pinkie, and Hazy, well. Hazy was fine. He had a hell of a defensive position.

The Centaurs were okay, was what was important.

Physically.

Legally, Shane wasn't sure. They were being detained, held, whatever. He wasn't sure about the formal charges.

There was a pit in his stomach. Comeau could easily call it assault. Shane hit him first.

"No, you did not," Ilya lied easily. "Comeau hit you first. Isn't that right?" Ilya asked, looking at his teammates.

"Yeah, totally," Hazy said without missing a beat. "I saw the whole thing."

"For sure," Bood agreed.

Shane loved them, but he couldn't ask them to lie for him. Shane was trying to reckon with the possibility of jail time, and worst of all, his NHL career being cut short, when the cell doors opened.

The cop who opened them just looked tired.

"You're free to go," she said.

The woman who had been laying on the bench quietly weeping perked up.

"Me?" She asked.

"No. Centaurs are free to go."

The six Centaurs that were in holding were finally let out. Barrett gave everyone uneasy stares. Shane was feeling similarly. They could just go? How could that be? No one had called anyone, no one had even been around to talk to them.

Shane's eyes swept the rows of desks, people sitting at them, some busy, some watching them with carefully guarded expressions. Except one, who just looked excited. Shane was worried he was going to ask for an autograph.

Ilya steered Shane towards the automatic doors. Shane felt disgusting, like he spent the night in a holding cell that smelled like puke, piss, and burnt coffee. His knuckles were split and red. He cheek was tender where a fist landed. The bar fight, after all the adrenaline wore off, was a bit of a blur.

The sun was blinding as they exited. They had been in there all night. Shane had steadily watched the clock tick away. They were released just after six that morning.

Wiebe was standing in the courtyard, hands on his hips, looking very much like an angry father.

Harris was on his left, and Haas was on his right, looking just as petrified as he had when he knocked Comeau out that evening. Shane was beyond grateful the kid wasn't arrested with him. It had been hard enough to deal with his own anxiety about the situation.

"Coach," Ilya started. Wiebe silenced him immediately.

"Not here."

Coach had the team bus parked around the corner. They all stumbled towards it, injured, hungover, and exhausted. Shane, aware of where he was but totally uncaring, took Ilya's hand. He needed the stability. He may not be behind bars at the moment, but that didn't mean he wouldn't be eventually.

Wiebe stood outside the doors as the team filed on. Everyone took towards the middle of the bus. Shane and Ilya took one row, Bood and Hayes took the seats across the aisle. Troy and Harris were in front of them. Shane could hear Harris both scolding Troy and fussing over him. If his nose wasn't broken, it had been a close thing.

"Good, got everyone. Now, who's ready for a lecture?"

Shane's head was pounding.

"Can we do lecture tomorrow, coach?" Ilya asked, his hand firmly on the back of Shane's neck. "Maybe you won't lecture if we told you our side."

"Save it, Rozanov." Ilya shut up. Shane put his hand down on his knee and squeezed. Ilya's hands were threading through the back of Shane's hair. Miraculously, this motion was relieving some of his headache.

"I've been on the phone all night. Haas called Harris, Harris called me. Not me, nor my wife, appreciates being woken up at two a.m. because my best players couldn't keep cool heads."

"Sorry, coach," the choir of miserable NHL legends sang in unison.

"The long and short of it is, I spoke with Theriault, *after* speaking with the owner of the Knight's Tavern. There is no video footage, the owner said the cameras have been down since '09. So, the Metros aren't pressing charges, and neither are we, and that's it."

Shane lifted his head as hope surged through him. He suddenly felt wide awake.

Wiebe was looking right at him. He wasn't sure how he knew the fight was Shane's fault, but Shane could feel he knew. Shane, for once, did not duck his head in shame.

"So...no jail time?" Hayes asked, sounding just as thrilled as Shane felt.

Wiebe looked at him.

"I don't know if using billiards equipment counts as assault with a deadly weapon, Hazy."

The guys laughed.

"But, no. You're all very lucky there was no security footage, because if there were..."

Right. Shane felt lucky. Shane felt on top of the world.

"This matter is going to be taken care of internally. Meaning, Theriault is going to take care of his guys, and I will take care of mine. We will not speak of this to the press under any circumstances, understood?" Shane nodded along with everyone else.

Shane knew that if it had been captured on camera, his former team would have taken it to the league. Shane getting kicked out of the NHL would have been the tip of the iceberg.

It was more than luck that the fight happened in a bar with no cameras in this day and age; it had to be divine intervention, or something, maybe a sign that Shane was doing the right thing, trying to best the Metros.

"Okay, this bus is going back to the rink. You can all find your own ways home from there."

Shane melted into his seat.

Ilya shrunk down too, his fingers found Shane's chin. He directed Shane in for a kiss. They both smelled like blood and sweat. Shane kissed him.

"Are you satisfied?" Ilya asked.

"Almost," Shane smiled. The fight, and subsequently, getting away with it, was sweet like candy he hadn't tasted since childhood.

"Do not worry," Ilya said, petting Shane's hair. "We will still destroy them on the ice, moya lyubov."

Shane was so in love with him.

He looked at his damaged fists. Ilya's were the same. He should regret it, he knew. He used to love those men. He wasn't a fighter, naturally. He could fight, but it usually seemed so pointless.

Shane didn't feel regret, though. Not a lick. He felt the sick thrill of satisfaction, as well as determination.

The demise of the Metros was only beginning.

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