Scott(y) does know

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by Dubiousculturalartifact (222Ravens)

Summary

Or: the one where Scott Hunter knew *exactly* what 1221 meant.

Notes

cw for discussions of homophobia, being in the closet, arguably a hint of internalized homophobia, and a very brief reference to dieting.

Tagged as being not book canon compliant because in Game Changer Scott doesn't know about Ilya, but the show implied it just enough for me to run with the idea.

Comments always appreciated!

There are more than 700 roster spots in the League alone. In terms of total players in any given season, considerably more than that, when you count players off for injuries, reserve lists, all of that shit. Easily over a thousand.

Scott Hunter knew the statistics, and he also knew *other* statistics. Even accounting for the notoriously macho culture of hockey as a deterrent, even allowing for the league's entirely deserved reputation for homophobia sending talented male skaters in the direction of other on-ice sports that were at least more willing to turn a blind eye, if still not be actively welcoming… He knew he couldn't be the *only* one.

But there was knowing in an abstract, intellectual sense, and there was watching Ilya *Rozanov,* of all players, arranging for a hook-up with his biggest rival, while still on-ice at the All-Star Game.

It probably wouldn't have been even noticeable to anyone else, Scott tries to reassure himself. Rozanov had been snarking in his usual style only seconds before, and the last part of the exchange had been quiet enough that only Scott had overheard. A straight dude in his seat would have easily chalked it up to cryptic shit-talking. Even another gay man who didn't have a hotel key card that read 1223 in the pocket of his bag, and who hadn't passed Rozanov at his door on the way to breakfast this morning, would probably have done the same.

It still might *not* be that. They could be just friends, or it could have some other meaning, or be meeting up to… do drugs? talk sources for steroids? What else would be worthy enough of a secret?

Scott doesn't really think so. While he's fully aware that some players have a wholly undeserved clean-cut reputation, Hollander has never come across as anything but sincere in that. True, if Scott is right there's clearly at least *some* hidden depths, but the all-too-classic 'sex workers and cocaine' type of hockey scandal doesn't exactly seem like his speed.

Scott hadn't known for sure when he asked Hollander what Rozanov had wanted, but the answer was as close to confirmation as he might ever get. He still couldn't be *absolutely sure*, he might be reading into things, or projecting, but something told him he wasn't.

There was something paradoxically revealing about the carefully neutral look on Hollander's face. Not dismissive, not carrying on the joke and using the conversation as a welcome excuse to shit-talk about Rozanov, the way practically every non-Boston player in the League (and maybe even a couple of them) would fall over themselves to take. Just polite, single sentence answers and an expression that says he'd rather talk about anything else, lest he slip up and say too much.

So he'd let it go at the time, save for an implicit warning about their rooms being close together (some things he did *not want to overhear*, and Rozanov having sex definitely had to be one of them*)* and changed tack to bemoaning performance diets, a subject change Hollander had jumped on with relieved enthusiasm.

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Now, back in his hotel room at the end of the day, Scott can't quite help but keep thinking about it.

He hasn't magically changed his mind on Rozanov, mind. The guy *is* an asshole either way, but there's a certainly level of sympathy that's opened up in his mind. He know it's not easy. Being Russian would certainly complicate matters, to say the least. The fact that it's *Hollander* doesn't just complicate matters, it pretty hopelessly snarls them. He almost hopes it's just hate sex and not anything deeper. That would be less messy, as long as it stays a secret, and a lot more likely to end, before anyone else notices.

He also hopes Scott *stays* the only one who notices. Much as Scott pretty profoundly doesn't want to be the first, he's also aware of how much bigger a shitstorm it would be if *they* were.

Maybe it was dumb of him to pry, to have asked at all about it, but curiosity didn't kill *every* cat, and part of him genuinely wanted to know. Not for prurient reasons, just… To know that he's *not* alone in this. That feels… Well, it's not exactly *good*.

The two boys' situation, if he's right about it being one, would be a mess as a secret, and it would be an even bigger mess if it was out in the open, whether they were outed or were dumb enough to try and go publicly with *whatever-they-were*. Not just for the two of themselves, and the impact on their own personal lives and their careers, but for the entire state of queer players in the League. Rozanov was exactly the ideal poster child to create a

good reputation for queer players, not with his reputation on ice, and certainly not with his reputation off the ice for sleeping around with any woman that moved. And with a rivalry like theirs, and the amount of PR the league had built up around it?

Still. A tiny, selfish part of himself feels lighter, knowing he's not the only one hiding this particular aspect of his personal life. Knowing that it's not just him, and that when people on the internet clamour for a player to finally be the first to come out, *any* player, that entirely un-asked for pressure isn't all weighing down on his shoulders alone. If he's not the only one, there has to be others too, right? Someone else besides himself, Rozanov, and Hollander. Maybe it can be *that* hypothetical guy's problem, someone who doesn't mind being the one thrust into the spotlight for something other than how they played the game, who doesn't care that it's not actually anyone else's business, who doesn't mind being a veritable *mascot,* for something that shouldn't have mattered to begin with.

And even if it *was* one of them… Hollander, he'd grant, would be a nearly ideal choice, if he were to break things off with Rozanov and pick a nice, equally clean-cut boy as a partner. Someone unrelated to hockey entirely would be perfect. A veterinarian or something equally wholesome, a committed relationship without any baggage or complications. The kid was an up and comer in the league, a rising star just established and popular enough it would be noticeable if any attempts were made to force him out, with a long enough tail on his career that he could serve as a genuine ambassador for years to come. Scott knows he's ignoring the fact that all those criteria, minus the veterinarian boyfriend, might have applied to him at one point, too, and in a way, they still do. It's not his job to be the first. Hockey still isn't ready for that, it's not any of anyone's business, it shouldn't be *any of their jobs to*...

Still. Hollander could definitely be a worse choice, if anyone had to be.

But with Rozanov in the picture, if that's really what they were up to… *Jesus Christ.* What does Hollander even see in the guy? Is it just a mutually beneficially arrangement, with both of them equally invested in keeping the secret? Is it more than that? *Was* he wrong, and just totally imagining the vibe he thought he'd picked up on?

His deliberations are interrupted by the quiet noise of a knock. If he hadn't been listening for it, he probably wouldn't have heard, but the door leaks noise from the hallway worse than the walls leak noise from the adjoining rooms, and there's no polite 'room service' announcement following up, just the subtle click of a door opening and closing.

Well, *shit*.

He hopes they know what they're doing.

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