

a long way to go

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Summary

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A few of the guys scoffed. Drapeau crossed his arms, as if to say 'so what?'.

"Oh, fuck this! It wasn't only my secret! It was his too. What was I supposed to do, tell you anyway?"

"No. It's clear you'd choose him over us." J.J said, his lips pressed into a thin line.

Shane scoffed incredulously. "Of course I would! Wouldn't you all choose your wives over the team? Your families? Fuck."

No one said anything. Glancing around the room, they all seemed in shock. Maybe it was that he'd openly admitted to choosing Ilya over the team. Or maybe it was that he'd referred to Ilya as his family.

(post-hayden/video-gate the montreal voyagers reacted badly. shane gives them a little more of his mind this time)

Notes

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

Since his biggest secret had been revealed to the entire world in a single moment, the thing that Shane had been most afraid of was this. Stepping into the Montreal Voyageurs locker room when they all knew. They'd all seen the video, obviously. It was all over the news, all over social media. And it was undeniable. Not that Shane truly wanted to deny it any longer, but he was still afraid. Afraid that the teammates he'd loved like brothers for years would turn their backs on him. That they would do nothing but confirm his worst fears; confirm all the horrible scenarios his brain had tortured himself with over the years when he'd imagined their reactions to his secret.

None of them had reached out to him, and so he knew that this would be bad. His heart was pounding as he readied himself to just take one step into the locker room. His throat felt tight, like he could barely swallow, and his stomach churned with anxiety. For a brief moment, he feared he'd worked himself up so much that he was going to vomit. He certainly felt nauseous enough.

He pushed open the door and stepped inside. Any conversation that had been going was immediately cut off as the guys turned to look at him. He glanced around, frozen in the doorway as he took in the expressions of disgust on his teammates faces. He'd never seen expressions like these directed at him. He was used to being their leader, the man they trusted without question. For years, they'd played alongside him, joked with him, followed him, but with just one look around the room, Shane knew things would never be the same again.

"Um-" Shane cleared his throat. "Hi."

No one responded. The only person who didn't have an expression of open dislike was Hayden, but he didn't say anything either.

Shane prayed to a God he didn't even believe in for someone to say something, *anything*.

He couldn't bear the silence.

J.J scoffed and turned his back to Shane.

Shane felt his heart drop to his stomach.

Taking a deep breath, he put his head down and made his way to his stall. He shook off his jacket, intent on getting changed as quickly and quietly as possible. If he just pretended to be normal, to act like nothing had changed, maybe they would too. It wasn't what he wanted, not after hiding for so long, but he'd take them ignoring the video's existence over ignoring him completely.

The door banged open.

"Hollander. Come with me." Coach Theriault's voice was flat.

Shane's sinking feeling got worse as he followed his coach to his office.

Shane took a seat in Coach's office. He couldn't bear to see the expression of disappointment that he knew was on Theriault's face, so instead he watched his own thumb pick at his fingernail. The skin around the nail was becoming red and sore, and he knew if he continued he was going to draw blood, but he couldn't stop. It made him feel better.

Then, his coach finally spoke. "Was it a joke?"

Shane considered lying, but in the face of such irrefutable evidence, he found he didn't even want to bother. Everyone knew it was true. It was ridiculous for his coach to even ask if it was a joke, when they all knew it wasn't. But Shane knew why; his coach wanted to hear him deny it. To stuff himself back into that secret life full of lies. Ignorance is bliss, as they say.

"No."

Theriault's face twisted into something sour, as if he'd sucked on a lemon. "How long?"

Shane blew out a breath. "Years."

Anger flashed over Theriault's face.

"Go home. I will talk to management and we'll decide what to do with you."

We'll decide what to do with you.

Was this the end of his career?

"Am I...benched?"

"Yes, you're fucking benched, Hollander! What did you think would happen?"

The sudden loud shouting made him flinch, which he immediately regretted.

He doesn't know what he thought would happen. He knew people would be pissed at him, that was a given. But *benched*?

Shane felt like his career was crumbling before his very eyes. He loved hockey, so much. More than anyone else here, he was certain of that. He had a fucking rink at his summer cottage, for fuck's sake. He was on a macrobiotic diet, and had been for years. For a decade he'd drilled harder than anyone, worked out longer, studied tactics and opponents, and now it was all on the line. He was going to lose it all. No more hockey.

Who even was he without hockey?

He felt the alarming prick of tears in his eyes, and he quickly looked down, blinking frantically. His fingernails dug into his palms so fiercely he was sure his hands would be littered with red-raw crescent moon marks, but the pain made the tears subside.

"This order comes directly from Crowell. You and Rozanov. Until this gets dealt with, you're both sitting."

There it was again. *We'll decide what to do with you. Dealt with.*

Shane took a deep breath. "Dealt with?"

His question was ignored.

"And don't even think about posting anything online about this. No statements. You're in enough trouble already."

"But-"

"Go home."

Shane opened his mouth, and then closed it. He knew his voice would come out cracked and trembling if he attempted to get the words out, so he said nothing and left.

He hurried back into the locker room, ready to snatch up his jacket and car keys and get the hell out of there before he broke down fully. He wouldn't give anyone the satisfaction. He already knew how they saw him now; lesser than - not a real man. Crying would only reinforce that belief.

But when he went to leave, he suddenly felt a deep, *bitter* anger that he hadn't felt since this had all began. He wanted to at least say *something* before he left. To at least try to make them understand.

"Okay. Now you know." Shane started suddenly. He had to get this out quickly before he chickened out. A few heads turned towards him, but many of the guys simply ignored him. "It's been going on for years and it's never stopped me from contributing to this team. We won the fucking cup last year!"

For a brief moment, he thought that maybe no one would say anything and he'd have to leave without even getting to defend himself.

"It's fucked up."

Bizarrely, Shane almost felt relieved when Corneau spoke. "You think I don't know that? That's why I've been hiding it for so long."

"Not from everyone." J.J. scoffed.

Shane bit his lip. He knew J.J. was taking this the hardest of them all; he'd been the teammate Shane had been closest to after Hayden.

"J.J, I-"

"Don't want to hear it. Is Coach sending you home?"

"Yeah, but-"

"Then fuck off and go home."

Fuck. He struggled for a moment to catch his breath, feeling like he'd been checked into the boards; bruised and winded.

His cheeks felt hot, his throat tight.

God, he wished he was at home with Ilya.

Humiliation ran through him. They didn't want him here, and here he was trying desperately to think of what to say to salvage this. To save the friendships he'd had for over a decade. His career.

He felt beyond disappointed, which he knew was ridiculous. He'd known this entire time how they'd react. But a secret part of him - a delusional part, admittedly - had sometimes pictured their relationship coming out and being no big deal. It had been a fantasy, nothing more. But now, faced with the bitter reality, he just wished that fantasy could have come true. That he could have felt the joy of being surprised by them, instead of resigned to the fact that it played out exactly as he had feared.

He wished more than ever that people could just let him love Ilya in peace.

And he felt so exhausted, because worst of all, a part of him understood. This was not normal news. It was betrayal at worst, plain bizarre at best. They were right, he was a liar. He got why they didn't understand; they hadn't seen the Ilya that he knows. They'd only seen a fraction of the real story.

He wondered how he would have reacted if it had been another guy on his team. If he was straight, and another teammate had been the one to have a decade-long secret relationship with the Captain of their rival team. Maybe he would have reacted just as badly as they were now. Who knew. He hoped not, but it was almost impossible to imagine who he would have turned out to be if he hadn't met and loved Ilya Rozanov.

Hayden came to his rescue. "Hey. I know that everyone is fucking weirded out right now, but try to remember who the fuck this is. Shane is our fucking captain. Our leader."

"He's a fucking liar-" J.J. shouted.

The anger in his voice finally did it for Shane. The emotions bubbled over.

"I get it, okay? Yes, I lied! *Fuck.* I get I fucked up, but it wasn't just my secret to keep. Don't you get that?"

A few of the guys scoffed. Drapeau crossed his arms, as if to say '*so what?*'.

"Aren't you listening to me? It wasn't only my secret! It was his too. What was I supposed to do, tell you anyway?"

"No. It's clear you'd choose him over us." J.J. said, his lips pressed into a thin line.

Shane scoffed incredulously. "Of course I would! Wouldn't you all choose your wives over the team? Your families? *Fuck*."

No one said anything. Glancing around the room, they all seemed in shock. Maybe it was that he'd openly admitted to choosing Ilya over the team. Or maybe it was that he'd referred to Ilya as his *family*. He suddenly realised that they knew nothing about their relationship other than that they'd kissed, and that Hayden knew. He desperately wanted to explain; to make them understand his love for Ilya.

"I'm sorry, okay? But how could I have been sure you'd all keep this a secret? It would have ended our careers. No one could know. And Hayden found out by chance."

"We had a right to know." Taylor sneered.

"We wouldn't have told." J.J. said.

Shane almost laughed. "That's easy for you to say."

Cormeau rolled his eyes.

Someone else muttered under their breath. "Fucking pussy."

Shane's head shot up. "How fucking dare you? It's so easy for you all to sit here and judge me, but you don't understand. And you never fucking will. What it's like to know that loving the person you love could end your career if you trusted the wrong person. His career, too. And more - Russia, it's - Russia isn't safe for people like us. Ilya is still a Russian citizen. If he lost his career, got deported - it's not fucking safe there! People get jumped for being like us there! Killed. Fine, it's not technically fucking illegal, but he'd never be safe again. And I wasn't going to risk that just so I could be honest with you all. And if you hate me for that, fine. I don't care anymore. I'd do it a thousand times over."

Finally, he fell silent, his chest heaving. The locker room was so quiet, you could hear a pin drop.

"Fine. It still doesn't make it okay that you're fucking a player from our fucking rival team." Taylor said.

"Exactly!" Drapeau agreed quickly. "How could we trust you to play properly against him?"

J.J. nodded too. "Look, Shane, I swear I don't care that your gay. But *Rozanov*? You have to understand why the team is concerned about this."

Shane laughed, even though it wasn't funny. Not even a little bit.

"Fucking hell." He felt a little lightheaded. "If you think that, you don't know me at all."

"Clearly we don't." Cormeau sneered. "Not as well as Rozanov knows you, anyway."

A few snorts could be heard throughout the locker room.

Fuck this.

"Didn't you hear me when I said this has been going on for years? *Years*. We've won three fucking Stanley Cups since Ilya and I have been together. We've beaten Boston *countless* times. I never, ever even considered letting him win. Never. So don't you fucking dare suggest otherwise."

J.J was staring at him with wide eyes. "Three?"

Shane blew out a breath and nodded.

Drapeau studied Shane. "How long has this been going on?"

Shane debated telling the truth or not. Fuck it. "Since rookie year."

Multiple guys gasped.

"Exactly." Shane said tiredly. "So that bullshit about me letting anyone win... if that was true we'd never have won any Cups. And you know that. Because it was me who got us those Cups, and you all fucking know it."

He was so tired of having to defend himself.

He grabbed his jacket and tugged it on, palming his car keys. He was done; he'd explained as much as he could. They could do with it what they wanted. He was done.

"I'm leaving. If anyone wants to talk to me, you have my number. You know where I live."

Shane left.

End Notes

thank you for reading <3

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