

you his boyfriend or something?

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by [ingberry](#)

Summary

Shane is at a sports bar in Tampa when people at his table start talking shit about Ilya. It becomes impossible to keep his mouth shut.

Or, an alternative retelling of how Hayden finds out.

Shane never really got the point of going out after a game, and he certainly didn't understand going out with players from the opposing team. Still, he somehow found himself at some sports bar in Tampa, seated around a table with Hayden, J.J., and what felt like half of Tampa Thunder. It was actually just three of them, one of whom J.J. knew from junior hockey. Or something.

“—and I swear we just got her to sleep through the night.” Brandon Wheeler, one of the Tampa players, rubbed a hand over his face. “And then suddenly she just started waking up again at 5 A.M.”

Hayden winced. “That time’s really rough. Have you tried a white noise machine?”

“Darla’s sister keeps suggesting it, so I guess we should.”

Shane tried hard to keep a polite expression on his face. Sitting in a sports bar in Tampa talking about babies wasn't really his idea of a good time. His idea of a good time was to go to the hotel and nap. Or FaceTime Ilya, but Ilya was occupied at the moment. Shane's eyes flicked unbidden to the game on the TV. The Centaurs were playing at home against the Admirals and, by some miracle, they had yet to concede a goal. They hadn't scored one either, but they weren't losing.

Ilya popped up in frame, mouthing off to Scott Hunter who rolled his eyes at him, and by now Shane was familiar enough with this dynamic to bite back a laugh. He watched his boyfriend on the screen, surrounded by people who had no idea. He wasn't the only one watching the game, though, and one of the other Tampa players scoffed loudly. Andy Something-or-other.

“Rozanov is such a fucking scumbag,” he spat, turning away from the game again. “I hate playing against that guy, he pisses me off.”

J.J. snorted into his beer. “Is there anyone Rozanov doesn't piss off?”

Feeling his shoulders tense, Shane forced himself to reach out for his ginger ale and take a slow sip. It wasn't the first time he'd found himself roped into similar conversations, but it was his absolute least favorite situation to be in. He hated hearing people who knew nothing about Ilya tear him to pieces. It was one thing when people said bad things about Shane, but there was something so fucked up about listening to people dig into the person he loved most in the world.

“Oh, yeah, I guess you'd know better than anyone,” Brandon said, gesturing at Shane with a laugh. “That guy's been in your face being annoying for years. Don't know how you haven't punched the daylights out of him.”

Shane just shrugged, not finding it in him to agree with it. A few years ago, he'd have played along a little, just half-hearted insults and laughs, but he was fed up with all of it.

“Shane’s a saint,” Hayden said, clapping him on the shoulder. “He wouldn’t punch the worst person you could think of, probably.”

Shane rather wanted to punch Andy, actually. There was something about his face.

Of course, Ilya Rozanov had impeccable timing and chose that moment to score. Shane sucked in a breath because it was a fucking cool one too, and he watched as Ilya pumped his arms over his head, skated over and crowed in Scott’s face before being engulfed by his team. They zoomed in his beaming face and Shane had to press his lips together to not smile along with him.

Everyone else around the table groaned and the goal with the ensuing celebration added fuel to the fire.

“I hear he’s honestly fucking disgusting,” Andy said. “Has like three women going and none of them know they’re the sidepiece.”

Shane should honestly just laugh. Because it was so obviously stupid and made up shit. But he didn’t want to laugh. He actually kind of wanted to cry because it was so unfair. If they were out, they wouldn’t be saying this. If they were out, he could defend Ilya freely. In the back of his head, he knew they would just say something else. Would say he was cheating on Shane, probably. And still, the anger was building inside him.

Brandon nodded at his teammate. “It’s people like him that give the rest of us a bad reputation. Everyone assuming we all cheat on our wives, like we’re all complete animals.”

“Yeah, fuck, it’s so annoying,” Hayden said. “I get that shit all the time.”

The third Tampa player finally chimed in as Shane was quietly planning his escape. “Probably has a bunch of kids everywhere. They’ll be their own hockey team in like 20 years.”

Everyone else laughed at that. Obnoxiously loudly, like it was the funniest thing any of them had ever heard. Something snapped in him, something he’d been holding together with the force of his will and the clench of his teeth. Maybe it was the implication that Ilya would be a shitty dad that finally broke every single resolve.

“He’s actually a good guy,” Shane said quietly, but the whole table fell silent for a moment.

J.J. looked at him with his eyebrows raised, and the Tampa players still had signs of laughter in their expressions.

“You’ve been enemies for like a decade,” Brandon said. “What do you mean, good guy?”

“Rivals,” Shane corrected, his hands twisting in his lap. “And yeah, almost a decade. So I know him better than you, then, don’t I? And Rozanov isn’t just whatever you see on the ice or hear from the rumour mill.”

“Alright, relax?” Brandon laughed, dismissive.

Andy snorted and gave Shane a look. “You his boyfriend or something?”

The Tampa players all laughed again, leaning into each other.

Shane didn’t say anything. He should have said no, or laughed along, or made some crude joke back, but he was fucking tired. He didn’t want to force himself to say he wasn’t Ilya’s boyfriend, like he wasn’t the love of Shane Hollander’s entire life. Ilya who was so *good*, who loved with such a steadiness and such a softness at the same time, who was so good with kids and would love his own more than anything.

J.J. managed to maneuver the topic to something stupid that happened during the game, perhaps sensing something off. Shane felt Hayden’s eyes on him like lead weights and they sat in silence as the others talked about some incident with the ref. Shane took another sip of his ginger ale and looked back up at the game, seeing that the Admirals had evened the score. He grimaced.

He managed to stick it out for another half hour before he bid the group goodbye, relief washing over him the more distance he put between himself and the bar. Hayden had stayed behind, so he had the room to himself when he got back to the hotel and he slung himself onto the bed, revelling in the silence. He hated going out at the best of times, and this had certainly not been the best of times.

Shane was watching the end of the game when Hayden came back. The Centaurs were losing and Shane dreaded the conversation he was about to have. He sat propped up against the headboard, legs crossed at the ankles. Hayden turned to face the TV as he toed off his shoes.

“Centaurs losing?” Hayden said, taking his wristwatch off and placing it on the nightstand.

“Yep.”

Hayden sat down on his own bed, crossing his arms over his chest.

“You never denied it when Andy asked if Rozanov was your boyfriend and your face went all weird.” It wasn’t a question. It was at best an observation, and at worst an accusation.

Shane had yet another chance to deny it. An easy explanation would be that he just didn’t want to get into it. Andy had clearly not expected an answer anyway. But Shane watched Ilya pat a disappointed Luca Haas on the back and all he could think about was how Ilya was captaining the worst team in the league so they could be together.

“Do you know what it’s like to listen to people say the worst kind of things about the person you love?” Shane asked and he heard Hayden let out a long breath.

“Well, if it wasn’t *Ilya Roz*—”

“Hayden, fucking please, I can’t do any more of this tonight.”

“I’m sorry!” Hayden held up his hands. “I’m trying to wrap my head around this, Shane, but we’ve spent like 7 years hating the guy.”

“You’ve spent 7 years hating him,” Shane said. “I haven’t hated him for a long time, if I ever did.”

Hayden looked at him like he was a stranger. And maybe he was, in some ways. There was a whole part of him that so few were allowed to know.

“Shit, this is why he signed to Ottawa isn’t it?”

“Yes.”

“Wait, has he, like, met your parents?”

Shane laughed, then, and it eased something in his chest. “He’s over there more than me now and he’s definitely mom’s favorite. She doesn’t even hide it.”

On the TV, Ilya was being interviewed and Hayden wrinkled his nose. “I don’t have to like the guy, do I?”

“Eventually, you’ll have to try. After I’ve given you a bit of time to process.”

Turning to the side, Hayden buried his face into his pillow and screamed. It made another smile tug at Shane’s lips. So fucking dramatic.

“I hope you know that when the priest asks if anyone objects, I’ll be the first one to stand up.”

“Oh, no one’s asking *that* question at our wedding. I don’t want the whole room to descend into chaos.”

Hayden ran a hand through his hair, tugging at it. “Please tell me you’re not engaged.”

“I’m not engaged,” Shane said. “But I will marry him one day.”

“Thank god I’m already lying down.”

Shane turned to the TV where they were showing the game highlights. Ilya’s goal was playing in slow motion, then his beaming face in celebration.

“I know it’s hard to understand.” He hugged his arms closer to his chest. “We’ve been hiding all of it, so it’s not like you’ve been given a chance to understand it. But if I’m honest, I don’t care if anyone else gets it. He’s it for me, and that’s all there is to it, really.”

Hayden was quiet for a moment. When he started speaking, his tone had changed to something more serious.

“I won’t say I understand, because I don’t. But you’re my best friend and I have your back, always.” He paused. “I’m sorry you had to sit through that back there.”

“Thank you.”

Half an hour later, Shane answered Ilya's FaceTime call even if he wasn't alone in the room. He'd had a hard day, so sue him.

"Hey," he said, smiling at Ilya who looked freshly showered. "Uh, Hayden knows."

Ilya stilled, his eyebrows climbing up his forehead.

"Hayden Pike."

"Yes."

"What does he know? Capitals of Europe? Very impressive, if so."

"There's no fucking way I have to listen to Rozanov before going to bed," Hayden said, digging the heels of his hand into his eyes. "Fuck my life."

"You are not panicking," Ilya said, eyes looking intently at Shane through the screen.

"Oh, I'm panicking. On so many levels."

"Well, you are breathing normally and not doing your stress push ups, so we will take it."

"I kind of messed up," Shane admitted, giving a sheepish smile. "J.J. and Hayden brought me to this sports bar with some Tampa players. Brandon Wheeler and some Andy guy."

Ilya laughed. "That guy *hates* me. Calls me names like I personally fucked his mom."

"Maybe you did," Hayden piped up.

"Maybe. Who knows?" Ilya said and shrugged, and Hayden's mouth fell open.

"You're not helping, Ilya."

"Helping what?"

"They went off about you. Saying a bunch of stuff. And I just got so tired of it, all of a sudden, you know?" He watched Ilya's eyes soften and Shane gave a small smile. "I didn't even say anything that weird, I just said you're a good guy. Andy made a whole joke about me being your boyfriend and I didn't say no and now Hayden knows."

"So you think I am a good guy." He waggled his eyebrows.

"I hope that's not a surprise to you at this point."

"Can you please not flirt in front of me?" Hayden complained. "I'm not emotionally ready for this."

Shane rolled his eyes. "I'll talk to you tomorrow. Sorry you lost."

"Is okay, we will win the next one." Ilya touched two fingertips to his lips and pressed them to the screen and Shane's heart flipped. "Ya lyublyu tebya."

“Love you too.”

After he ended the call, the room descended into silence as Shane got up to get ready for bed. It lasted until they were both tucked in and the room was completely dark.

“Ilya *fucking* Rozanov.”

“Please shut up and go to sleep.”

“I can’t. He’s my sleep paralysis demon.”

“*Good night*, Hayden.”

“Maybe for you.”

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