kindness is love with its work boots on

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at https://archiveofourown.org/works/76098286.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Categories:	F/M, Gen, M/M
Fandoms:	Heated Rivalry (TV), Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid
Relationships:	Shane Hollander & Hayden Pike, Hayden Pike/Jackie Pike, Shane Hollander & Jackie Pike, Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov, Jackie Pike & Ilya Rozanov, Hayden Pike & Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander, Hayden Pike, Jackie Pike, Ilya Rozanov
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence, Episode: s01e05 I'll Believe in Anything (Heated Rivalry), Canon-Typical Violence, Good Friend Hayden Pike, Jackie Pike is a Queen, Ilya Rozanov Loves Shane Hollander, Shane Hollander Loves Ilya Rozanov, Hayden is just realizing this, Hurt/Comfort, Angst, when you love the same person so now you have to care about your rival, Ilya & Jackie Friendship, Shane & Hayden Friendship, Developing Relationship, Idiots in Love, hayden and jackie are absolutely clocking this shit, POV Outsider
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of found family *hockey edition
Collections:	Works to reread, The best pairings to bask in, No thoughts just gay hockey
Stats:	Published: 2025-12-22 Completed: 2025-12-25 Words: 14,687 Chapters: 2/2

kindness is love with its work boots on

by Sapphic_terror

Summary

There's Lily, Shane's Boston girl, but Hayden has no idea her number, where she lives, or what she looks like. She'll have no way of finding Shane, of being there when he wakes up high and afraid, because he never did well with being out of control. Lily won't be there. His parents won't be there.

It's the easiest decision he's ever made.

Hayden skates off the rink, barely pausing as he starts stripping off his gear. Coach surges forward, lips curled up with some order to get back out there, no doubt. He doesn't give him the chance, "I'm not leaving him. I go where he goes."

And that's that.

-

Or, Shane doesn't wake up so easily and Hayden Pike somehow ends up taking care of Ilya Rozanov. (Jackie does the heavy lifting; he's just there for the ride and realizations.)

Chapter 1: jackie & ilya

Chapter Notes

> i watched this show and immediately lost my mind. the yearning, the longing, the years long situationship???? this fic was somehow born because I needed someone to acknowledge their relationships and how dear they are to each other and also give Ilya a hug.
>
> i give you - what if Shane was more hurt, his parents were further away, and Hayden + Jackie had to wait at the hospital for news only for Ilya to rush in because he saw Shane go down bad, and everyone else keeps whispering that he could be permanently injured ✨
>
> enjoy Hayden having several breakdowns, Jackie being amazing and also deciding to avoid her feelings but helping other people, Ilya freaking the fuck out, Jackie reading his shit but also giving him a hug bc he definitely needs one <3
>
> title from a random tumblr post by girlmostlikely on Dec 29th, 2023 that i found on Pinterest

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He gets a few blows in and busts open Marlow’s lip before the refs separate them. The crack of cartilage and bone beneath his hand does nothing to settle the growing pit in his stomach. Hayden isn’t eighteen and stupid anymore; he can name the exact heart-stopping feeling that surged in his throat when Shane went down and stayed down - *terror.*

Shane is Shane, he’s his best friend, and right now he’s crumpled on the ice, not moving, not even a twitch. Fuck.

He skates over, hovering a few feet back as the medics begin the process of putting him on a spinal board. Shane’s eyes are closed, not even the whites visible, bruising already growing in the form of red, pooling blood beneath his eyes and around his nose. It’s not good, none of this is good, but he’s breathing, his eyes are fluttering slightly. It’s not good, but it’s something. Hayden can work with that.

He keeps hovering, a ref shouting somewhere on the ice as his knuckles burn and the medics pull out a neck brace. His heart drops even further, most times players can at least skate off the ice, clinging to their teammates if they need to. A neck brace is the definition of an *oh shit* moment. It's a precaution, sure, but it means the injury could be severe, could be career-ending levels of severe.

If he could never play hockey again for whatever reason, Hayden would survive. It would sting, it would crack something open in him that would never fully heal, but he'd survive. He would have his wife and his kids and another on the way; Hayden would survive.

Shane is not Hayden. Shane is the best player of his time, better than even Rozanov for all the shit he likes to talk. Shane loves hockey like it's the reason the world turns, and he plays like it's as easy as breathing. It's not. His entire life revolves around hockey and the routines that keep him playing and sane at the same time.

Losing hockey, especially like this, would break him. It may scar Hayden, but it would be a lethal blow to Shane. It would upend his world, it would send him spiraling into a constant loop of *myfaultmyfaultmyfault* so deep that Hayden wouldn't be able to pull him out. It might actually kill him.

So this can't be a career-ending injury, and the neck brace is just a precaution because Hayden is not losing his best friend, not like this.

The medics lift Shane up, and Hayden looks around the rink. The team is hovering, glares being thrown at Marlow, who is surrounded by his teammates, a hand pressed to his cheek. Good. He should have done worse, shouldn't have stopped until the ice was red. He scans the rest of the team, searching for a familiar asshole and -

The medics are lifting Shane up and Rozanov is not with his team. He's hovering on the other side of them, across from Hayden, staring at the spinal board like it's holding his heart. His face is, there is no smirk, no telltale grin, or even a blankness that should be there because Rozanov wasn't horrible enough to take pleasure in Shane's misery. There's just raw worry.

Something twists uncomfortably in his stomach, pieces of information distantly shifting and Hayden has a feeling he's missing something -

There’s something inevitable, important just out of reach and he should grasp it, except Shane groans. Shane finally twitches a little as the medics carry him off the rink and he knows that Yuna and David are in California, meeting with old friends for the first time in years. Shane has no one; he’ll wake up alone because it’ll take at least half a day for his parents to get there.

There’s Lily, Shane’s Boston girl, but Hayden has no idea her number, where she lives, or what she looks like. She’ll have no way of finding Shane, of being there when he wakes up high and afraid, because he never did well with being out of control. Lily won’t be there. His parents won’t be there.

It’s the easiest decision he’s ever made.

Hayden skates off the rink, barely pausing as he starts stripping off his gear. Coach surges forward, lips curled up with some order to get back out there, no doubt. He doesn’t give him the chance, “I’m not leaving him. I go where he goes.”

And that’s that.

The hospital is just as unwelcoming as it was every other time he's been here. The lights are too bright; the doctors can't tell him anything - not that he isn't one of Shane's emergency contacts and has access to his records, because of course Shane thought of that - but because they don't know anything. Shane is still in surgery because his collarbone is severely fucked up, and there won't be any updates for at least an hour.

All he can do is sit in the shitty plastic waiting room seats and wait, and wait, and wait, and wait.

Yuna and David are still eight hours away because this was the one game they chose to miss for a meeting with old friends. They’ll be here by next morning if they can catch a flight, and until then - Until they get here it’s up to Hayden to stand guard, to sit in the shitty plastic

hospital seats, waiting to see if he’s going to have to tell them their son has brain damage or paralysis or any number of the life changing injuries you can get from playing Hockey.

It takes about thirty minutes for him to start spiraling, fingers digging into the meat of his thighs because with every tick of the surprisingly loud clock, he hears the crack of Shane's helmet hitting the ice. Tick-crack, tick-crack, tick-crack, tick-

"Hayden!" His head snaps towards the doors, Jackie, clad in one of his jerseys with a matching look of fear on her face. Thank God. He's not sure when he moves, only that he's sitting down one second and holding his wife in the next. Hayden buries his face in her hair, breathing in the smell of the same shampoo she's used since they were eighteen in a crappy club with Shane hiding in a corner nearby. God, he loves her, he'll love her until the world ends.

She pulls back first, hands framing his face as she scans his eyes. She doesn't like whatever she finds because her face falls, "No news?"

He shakes his head, "His collarbone is in pieces, he's in surgery to get it fixed, but - No news."

Jackie's shaking a little in his arms, or maybe he's shaking, maybe they're both just trembling in the face of their worst nightmare - sitting in the goddamn waiting room with no news. He leads her back to the chairs, cushioning it with his jacket because she's five months pregnant and Shane is going to be Four’s godfather, he will be. "Yuna and David are with old friends, right? Somewhere down by the coast?"

"California, it's David's college friends, Sanders maybe? I don't know. Yuna's already called me twice; they're trying to find a flight but she's not sure they'll manage one tonight." Jackie's lips are pursed, fingers tracing their way from his pulse to his black wedding band, up and down, up and down.

He loves her for that, he loves her for everything, he loves her because she's here and Shane might be broken so he has to focus on something else. "She'll be a mess by the time she gets here. She never likes not being there when Shane's hurt, especially not when it's this bad. If we don't have an update for her, she'll lose her mind."

"If we have an update! The doctors won't give me anything and I have no goddamn idea how long collarbone fixing surgery takes!" Hayden should know. He should know everything down to the details of what it takes to set someone's collarbone back into place, because Shane is hurting, and he's supposed to be the one who has it together. Hayden is supposed to be the one who isn't afraid, isn't nervous, isn't falling to pieces. But right now, he's just useless, utterly useless.

"Hayd - this isn't on you." Jackie tilts his head towards her, "It was a clean hit, just a shitty, painful one. Shane got hurt, but he'll be okay, he will be." There's a similar desperation in her voice, like she could make it true just by saying it. Her stubbornness has always been one of the reasons he loves her, and right now he clings to it because if anyone could make something true just by willing it, it would be his wife.

“We don’t know that, we don’t know anything.” Shane had been utterly limp on the ice, like one of Ruby’s dolls discarded on the floor because Jade’s was somehow better. “Jackie,” his voice breaks, and Hayden doesn’t even know what he’s trying to say.

She does though, because her face scrunches up with love-fear-worry. Jackie wraps her arms around him, pressing his face into her shoulder. She strokes his hair, a soothing back and forth motion that’s enough to break him. Shane is in surgery, Shane is gone, and Hayden can’t do anything but wait.

He’s not sure when the tears come, only that they do, only that he’s ruining Jackie’s favorite jersey with his snot and tears. Half his teammates would call him a pussy, and Hayden would break their noses because Shane is worth his tears, Shane is worth so much more. “Jackie, Jackie, Jackie,” He’s mumbling her name like a desperate, last resort Hail Mary, and she’s just holding him together.

Shane is their family, Shane is theirs, and they’ll wait until they know he’s okay.

“Hayden, I don’t need another pack of trail mix. I’m eating for two, not twenty.” He stares down at his feet and not the four trail mix packs in Jackie’s purse. He couldn’t fix Shane, but he could get his pregnant wife food; it’s all he could do.

Jackie sighs, tangling their hands together for the thousandth time, “Hey, I get it. It’s been an hour, an hour and a half since he’s been in surgery. They’ll be out soon enough, and Shane will be higher than a fucking kite. Breathe.”

“I hate you.”

She doesn’t even bother to look over at him, too busy reading another article about broken collar bones, or maybe this one is about spinal breaks. “No, you don’t.”

“No, I don’t.” He stopped crying about forty-five minutes ago, but Hayden can feel the ache in his throat. It’s barely even fear anymore, almost something like grief, except that’s not right - Shane isn’t dead, Shane isn’t close to dead. He’s just hurt, and Hayden needs to get his shit together. “They should have news, right? I mean, there’s already at least fifteen articles about his injuries, including details, so really, the doctors should have fucking something.”

“Breathe,” Jackie finally pockets her phone, her fingers twitching a little as she tosses it into her purse. A visible sign of how close she is to losing. “The doctors will come out once they’re done and not a moment before.”

“You’re right,” Jackie usually is. Shane thinks he’s steady, that he’s got his life together and he’s certain of the path before him - but he has nothing on Jackie. Jackie, who had her life planned out by eighteen. Jackie, who took every change with only a slight breath of hesitation before running with it. Jackie, Jackie, Jackie. His lovely wife.

Hayden looks over to tell her that he loves her, that he would have been an utter mess without her, that he would be so *unsure* without her, when his eyes find another tense, shaking figure. For a moment, the world stutters, it freezes and buffers like a scratched record, because he knows the person standing by the waiting room door. He knows the set of blonde curls, and the stormy blue eyes, even the purse of his lips.

Ilya fucking Rozanov.

Hayden can't breathe, can't even think, because there is no world where he witnesses Rozanov storm a hospital looking like a mess. It doesn't make sense, but then that stops mattering because it was Rozanov's teammate who put Shane in the surgical room, because it was someone who wore his colors that could have *killed* his best friend.

Fucking Rozanov. How dare he?! What goddamn right did he have to show up, to brag, to gloat, to spit in the face of his rival? Fuck Rozanov and fuck the raiders and fuck this hospital. Fuck everything. Fuck this. "Goddamn Russian."

Jackie's head shoots up at his near growl, "Hayden?" Her eyes follow his gaze to the door - to Rozanov who is - is - is currently arguing with the receptionist, whose shoulders are hunched, whose hair is the same tangled mess as his, like he came straight from the ice.

Something's not right about that, about any of this, but Shane is his best friend and right now he's vulnerable - that's reason enough to throw a punch without a second thought.

Hayden shoots up from his seat, hands curling into fists as Rozanov's head snaps to the sound and he freezes. He almost seems lost, like he's somehow both drifting in an ocean of fear and rooted to the spot at the look on Hayden's face.

This isn't right, whispers a voice in his head that sounds surprisingly like Shane's.

Hayden ignores it.

He takes a half-step forward - to punch Rozanov, to shove him against the wall and ask what the fuck Marlow was thinking, to hit him over and over again until even his anger rang hollow because his best friend is in a hospital bed and the world is wrong. Hayden has barely made it another step before Jackie grabs his wrist. It's enough to make him freeze in place.

He could break her grip with ease, it's nothing really, little compared to shoving off an enforcer on sheets of ice. Her grip isn't even tight, just there, Hayden could pull away and be on Rozanov in seconds. But it's Jackie, it's his wife, it's the air in his lungs and the beating of his heart, the day he isn't gentle with her is the day he swallows a bullet.

“Jackie?”

She’s staring at Rozanov too, eyes sharp and questioning, “Just wait. I think - wait. Sit down and wait.” Then she’s using her grip on his wrist to pull herself up. Before he can even really process her words, she’s already walking towards Rozanov, and - Hayden sits down and waits.

His mind is going a mile a minute, Ilya Rozanov is a fucking mess in the waiting room, and Shane is still in surgery; if his wife tells him to sit and wait, that’s what he’s going to do. He grips the armrests, the plastic creaking just a little bit beneath his hands, and watches as his wife collects Rozanov - because that’s exactly what she’s doing. Jackie barely pauses in front of Rozanov before she places a hand on his arm and gently pulls him towards Hayden’s seat.

Rozanov, despite being able to throw Marlow across the ice during any scrimmage of the week, goes easily. Good, because if he had to fight Rozanov for Shane *and* Jackie’s sake, he’d end up in a hospital bed. They both would.

He follows Jackie like a lost puppy, and he looks like one as he hovers a foot behind her when they end up at the seats. The urge to punch him goes out an instant once he sees his face up close.

He’s not mocking, or smirking, he looks fucking devastated. Maybe if they were eighteen or twenty again, Hayden would think he was bored, would say that his perfectly blank face is a sign of disinterest, but now, after nearly a decade of playing against him, he can read the panic on his face.

Because it is panic, pure, unadulterated, fucking panic. Hayden has no idea what’s happening. He’s not sure he wants to, even though there’s the beginning of an idea forming, and its implications are terrifying. Instead, he manages to spit out, “Rozanov.”

He doesn’t even dignify that with a response, instead focusing his terrified, wide eyes at Jackie, “Is there any news? The websites are saying he’s - it’s bad, is it?”

Jesus, his accent is nearly drenching his words, his voice is actually trembling. What the fuck Shane? What the fuck Shane! What the fuck Shane?!

Jackie must hear it too because she winces, leaning just a little bit on Rozanov as she places a hand on her stomach. Stress and pregnancy are a bad mix on Jackie, which would be worse if it didn't take a tragedy or a crime to unsettle her. He shoots up from his seat to steady her, except it's not needed because Rozanov takes some of her weight without a second thought, holding her upright with the same look of panic on his face.

What the fuck is happening?

Out of the three of them, Jackie is the only one who isn't unhinged or unsettled because she just waves them both off. "People are staring." There are a few other family members in the waiting room, a limited number because this is a more private room for surgical procedures, but still, Hayden can already see one phone casually pointed at them.

People don't really care about him unless they're Voyager fans, but, just like Shane, Ilya Rozanov is in his own league.

Hayden still doesn't know what's happening, but he's not that much of an idiot to not grasp the severity of the situation. This, the panic on Rozanov's face as he waits for an update on Hollander, his rival, *him,* is not for the public. It feels - it feels almost like a violation.

He doesn't want to punch Rozanov anymore, but the urge to punch something is still there because if Hayden is right - fucking Lily, Shane's Boston girl, fucking Lily.

"Okay, here's what we're going to do. Rozanov and I are going to get water in the nice, private water fountain area that no one ever goes to. I'm pregnant, he's an asshole on the ice, but no one just lets the pregnant lady struggle. It's not important enough for anyone to care, let alone look." Jackie has played the pregnant lady card more times than he can count. It's hilarious every time, but right now, he almost wants to fall to his knees and kiss the ground at her feet. He's still struggling to think, and she's taking charge, protecting Shane and Ilya Rozanov in the same breath.

God, he loves her, he loves her with everything he has.

“Hayd, Hayden, you’re going to stay here and wait for an update. The nurse I talked to the last time you went to get more trail mix said the surgery should only take around an hour or so. Which means there’s been enough time for him to be prepped, the surgery to be done, and for him to be released to a room. Wait and find out what room, and if we can see him. Okay?” Hayden is going to marry Jackie again.

He nods, “Okay. I’ll text you if I hear anything.”

Jackie smiles at him, although her face is still drenched with worry, so it’s mostly a grimace. “Good. Come on, Rozanov.” And -

Ilya Rozanov follows his wife to the water fountains, a hand instinctively hovering over her back like she’ll stumble again. What the fuck, what the fuck, what the fuck.

Jackie has known Shane for the better part of a decade.

He was at their wedding, Hayden’s best man, because it only took a year and half for those two to be bonded for life. He was there when she gave birth to the twins and nearly died in the process. He was the third person to ever hold Jade, the fourth to hold Ruby. He was her first call when she was overwhelmed out of her mind, and she needed to speak to another person who wasn’t an infant or her husband.

He was the closest thing she had to a brother. He was - he was Shane Hollander, another member of their tiny and increasingly growing family. Right now, he’s probably just out of surgery, condition unknown, alive but maybe broken. Right now, Ilya Rozanov, who maybe, just maybe is Shane’s Lily, is hovering at her back and on the brink of a panic attack.

She has no idea how this became her life, but Jackie is nothing if not good at adapting and moving forward. “Can you get me a cup of water?”

He nods, his movements stiff and almost robotic as he begins to fill a tiny paper cup with water. The area, filled with a few water fountains, cups, cushioned chairs and softer lighting, probably has some proper name like the *Refresher Room.* Jackie doesn’t really give a shit about the name, she does care that it has a door she can shut and is completely vacant. She’ll need privacy to deal with - with whatever this is.

“Here.” Ilya hands her the cup, and Jackie smiles at him before handing it right back. He blinks, staring down at the water like he’s never seen it before. His hands are trembling, his entire body is trembling, a fine shake that makes him look like an injured, feral stray. She wonders if he’s even aware of where he currently is.

Okay, scratch that, she’s alone with Ilya Rozanov, who is in the middle of a silent panic attack.

“Ilya, you’re barely breathing, drink the water and I’ll tell you everything I know.” He keeps staring and staring and - then the words hit him, information about Shane.

Ilya practically throws back the water, and by the time the paper cup is crumpled in his grasp, his hands are no longer shaking. Boom, she’s getting good at this after all her practice with Shane’s anxiety attacks.

“What do you know?” His voice is rough, Russian clinging to each syllable as he stares at her like she’s holding his heart in his hands, like she could break him in an instant.

Fuck. Jackie is actually not prepared for this; she has no idea what to do next.

Ilya Rozanov, Shane’s rival of a decade, an unfeeling asshole according to her husband, looks incredibly small in a way that makes her heart ache. His shoulders are hunched over, a hand fidgeting with the cross around his neck while the other clenches and unclenches, crushing the already ruined paper cup. His knuckles are bloody.

Despite the impossibility of it, Jackie recognizes the look in his eyes. It matches hers from the time Connell sent Hayden flying, and he went limp on the ice. It had only taken about fifteen seconds for her husband to move again. He had eventually made it off the ice with Shane's arm wrapped around him, but it was the longest fifteen seconds of her life.

Ilya Rozanov looks like a wounded wife.

Some small part of her wants to laugh at the oddness of, well, everything. Mostly, she just wants to hug him because it's incredibly clear now that he loves Shane. He loves Shane, her Shane, their Shane. He loves Shane and Shane has been seeing *Lily* for years, Shane hasn't been himself unless he's had Lily on the other end of the phone. Shane loves him back, and right now they're both hurting.

Jackie can't fix Shane, can't do anything but wait to see if a broken collarbone is the worst of his injuries. She can't fix Shane, but she can help Ilya, somehow, so that's what she'll do. It's not even a choice, really. She'll help Ilya, she'll hold him together until they find out Shane's alright - because he will be alright - and then they can hold each other together in the privacy of a hospital room.

Shane's her family, and Ilya is his. It's simple.

Well, she always did want a big family.

"He fractured his collarbone, that's why he's in surgery. They rushed him in, but Hayden managed to get that out of them. Shane did something, years ago, probably, and he's now his medical proxy until Yuna and David get here. They're hours out, they happened to be down in the states during this game, they'll be here by tomorrow morning at the latest." Jackie is the calmest she's been since she made it to the hospital and was met with Hayden's tears. It's a fair trade, a common one in their family. She held Hayden while he fell apart; he held her, and now it's her turn again to be the calm one to Ilya's fear.

"Surgery? Is - Will he be okay?" His hands have started trembling again, and once again, it's easy, what she does next. Jackie reaches out and takes the hand that's tearing the paper cup to shreds, tossing away the paper and simply holding it within her own.

Hayden liked pressure; when he had panic attacks for weeks after Amber the quickest way to calm him down was to bodily throw herself at him. He always caught her, only relaxing when she was stretched out over him, arm to arm, leg to leg, fully holding him down. They fell asleep like that most nights, clinging to each other's warmth.

Shane wasn't like that. He was like a stray cat, wary and quick to startle. Jackie had to be gentle and cautious and exact with her touch. A hand against his arm, her head against his shoulder, her feet braced in his lap. It was the simplest touches that could ground him, remind him that he wasn't alone, that he never would be, that she was rooting for him too.

She doesn't know Ilya Rozanov much, nothing beyond Hayden's rants and the surprising lack of them from Shane, but she imagines he's a lot like him in that aspect. Quick to startle, unsure, his arrogance and cockiness only true when it comes to the ice - but off of it, he's shakeable, uncertain, and so very afraid. So, Jackie will be gentle and cautious and aware of the flicker of emotions on his face, but she will not let him drift in a void of fear and panic that Shane so easily falls into.

That's not happening. She won't let that happen. Fuck the world, Jackie will fix this and they'll all be happy and safe and *okay* in the aftermath. She'll make sure of that, let them, she doesn't even know who, let anyone try to stop her. This is a fight she'll win.

"They checked him for brain damage, or bleeding. If that was an option, they would have focused on that before fixing his collarbone. He was talking in the ambulance, mumbling and slurring his words but he wasn't completely out of it. The doctors haven't sought Hayden out in the hour and a half Shane was in surgery," His face flashes with panic, hand tightening around her own, but Jackie is quick to cut off the fear in his eyes, "Which is a good thing. It means nothing went wrong in the surgery; it means they don't need us to make any life-or-death decisions. It's a good thing."

Her own panic threatens to creep in, but Jackie just swallows it down. She places her free hand on her stomach, holding Ilya with the other, grounding the both of them. Jackie breathes, in and out, in and out, "It's bad - he's hurt, but it's not as bad as it could have been. Right now, all we can do is wait. Me and you are going to do that here until Hayden texts me because there are too many people and cameras out there, okay?"

Ilya's face shudders with emotions, fear, panic, apprehension, and a sort of devastated love. He pulls his hand back, and Jackie almost chases after it if it weren't for the way he grasps at his cross. It's nothing but desperation, his knuckles almost white from how hard he's gripping it.

It's okay, she thinks, I don't care that you love him, I don't care that he loves you. He's family, she thinks, you are too, so breathe and know you'll never be hurt here.

She thinks and doesn't say any of that because Jackie is not stupid. She knows the Hockey world and what it's like; she's had a foot in the door for a decade, even before she met Hayden in a shitty bar. She knows exactly what they think of gay people, heard the vile things thrown about as insults and vitriol disguised as chirps.

Cocksucker, queer, fairy, fa-

Jackie wants to kill someone. Jackie wants to remake the world for the people she holds dear. Jackie wants to hug Shane and then beg for his forgiveness for being the sort of person he couldn't tell about this. Jackie wants to hug Ilya and thank him for loving Shane, for knowing him in ways that Jackie had failed to even consider.

Jackie breathes in and out, and casually slides a chair so it's half in front of the door. There's nothing odd about that, just pregnancy brain making her forget not place furniture in front of doors because it'll block them and make an awful screeching noise if someone were to try to get through it.

Ilya still isn't looking at her, he's pacing, eyes darting across the lines of the tile on the floor. In fact, he's looking at anywhere that isn't her. Shit. She has to fix this, has to calm him down, has to bring him back to the ground because Shane, high and hurting, is already going to freak out - she can't deal with two of them.

So, Jackie opens her mouth and tells him without telling him that she knows and *it's okay*, "You know Shane's had this girl - Lily - who he's been seeing for years. Hayden's whined to me about how Shane never goes out after a game whenever they play against Boston, but it's bullshit, really. He's happy for Shane, we both are."

Ilya stops in place, his back to her, his shoulders hiked up so high they hit his ears. Something cracks just a little inside of her at the sight, at his *shame.* Jackie knows then and there that her girls will grow up knowing that there could never be anything wrong with something as pure as love. Ruby, Jade, Amber and Four will never even think they could be wrong in any sense for loving someone like them. Never.

"Shane, he's - he has more anxiety and nerves than any other person I know. He clings to structure and routine because it keeps him sane, he freaks out over any deviation or if something goes even the slightest bit wrong. But with Lily, it's like he comes undone, like he finally lets out a breath he's been holding since the last time they met. Ilya," At the sound of his name, he finally turns and - Jackie's never quite seen heartbreak like that before.

Fighting the urge to lunge at him and hug him until the world is right again is the hardest thing she's ever done. Instead, she pours her love and acceptance and *it'll be okay, we'll be okay,* into her words. She needs Ilya to understand, "He's always so much - *lighter* after he meets Lily. It's like he's eighteen again, like the world isn't on his shoulders because he's always carrying it, even when he doesn't have to. I don't think I've ever seen him at peace until he met Lily."

Ilya stumbles back just a little bit, barely an inch or two, but from his expression, you would have thought she sucker punched him. Maybe she did, maybe this is the first time another person has ever talked about *them,* maybe she's the first person to look at Shane and Ilya and say *this is okay* - No, *this is good.*

Jackie braces her hand on the swell of her stomach, the weight of Four against her spine somehow reassuring in this moment. "I've known him since he was that young," Then, very carefully, "So have you, since you were rookies, since the beginning?"

Ilya nods, a sharp thing, "Yes. He was - Yes."

There's a surprising amount of weight in a single word, and Jackie wonders if Ilya was going to say *He was everything then and now,* or maybe she's just projecting because it's like that with Hayden. He was everything from the day they met, and he will be everything to her until the day she dies. Loving him like that, with all that she is, is terrifying, and it's the easiest thing in the world.

She wonders if it's like that for them, for Ilya and Shane. Then, she takes another look at his eyes and the heartbreak that is practically engraved into every inch of his body, and she knows that it is.

Jackie swallows down another wave of guilt, of fear. She'll see this through, for Shane's sake if nothing else, "I know what Shane looks like when he's happy, when he's frustrated, and when he's on the brink of an anxiety attack and I have to talk him off the ledge in my mother-in-law's bathroom. But I've never seen him in love, not until he started seeing Lily. Not with Rose, or any other girl he's been around for longer than a day."

This time, Ilya makes a sound that's almost like keening. A wounded, strangled noise that rises from deep in his throat before he chokes on it. Because even now he's trying to hide his fear, his love. Because even after Jackie made it abundantly clear that she *knows,* he's still so fucking afraid.

Yeah, she's going to have to fight the world for Ilya Rozanov too. But first, first he needs to understand, to really understand that he's everything to Shane too - that this aching love goes both ways. "Shane - He's my brother, has been for years. He's family, and I want the world for him. I want him happy and at peace and safe. I want it all, I can't help it, I don't want to change that. Shane deserves good things, and Lily is one of them. Do you understand that Ilya?"

I know and I love Shane. I know and by extension I love you. Trust me, please, trust me, trust me, trust me. Let me help you bear this even if the world would turn away from you and your love. Let me help.

Ilya - Ilya looks like she's just torn out his heart and crushed it before his eyes. Ilya Rozanov, one of the best players of his time, the Captain of the Boston Raiders, looks like he's on the verge of passing out at her words. Ilya looks terrified and so incredibly fragile, and Jackie knows instantly that no one else knows about them, that no one else has ever acknowledged the love they share, the salvation they are to each other.

Fuck that. She's hugging him.

She does just that, taking a careful step forward, then another, then another until she's as close as she can get without her belly brushing against him. Jackie reaches up, one hand on

his shoulder, tugging him closer, the other framing his face. It's incredibly intimate for their first conversation, but Ilya nearly collapses into her arms. He leans into her hand, trembling again, as he stares at her with wide eyes, all the blood gone from his face.

"Do you understand that, Ilya. Lily -" Ilya is trembling in her grasp, swaying just a little bit, and two hours ago, he had watched Shane collapse on the ice and not get back up. Fuck pretenses, fuck the world, it's just them and nothing can hurt them here. "You, you are one of the good things he deserves, one of the best things he has. He's loved you for years, and I think he'll keep loving you for as long as he can."

His eyes slip shut, and the way he leans into her hand is almost childlike. It's almost like a child, desperately seeking comfort from their mother, desperate to be told that all is right in the world, that they are safe, that they are loved, that their story has a happy ending, that the struggle is over.

Nine years of hiding, nine years of texts and covert meetings and horrific locker room talk. Nine years of panic, of seeing the other take a hit and not being able to rush to their side. The fear he must have felt to be here now, to show up like that, to still be here, breaking in her arms. Jackie thinks it would have killed anyone else, and she's so thankful that it didn't kill them.

"Do you understand that, Ilya?" Because he has too, because he risked the world finding out, Russia finding out, just to be here, to maybe get an update on Shane, to know if he was still breathing. He has to know that the desperation, the love goes both ways. She's been trying to meet Lily for years, if only to tell her that she brings out a side to Shane that Jackie's never seen before, that she's so incredibly grateful to the woman whose love brought him to life.

Now that she's meeting him, he has to know, he has to.

Ilya nods, just a little bit, although it's honestly more of a tremble. He's been shaking since she first grabbed him by the receptionist's desk, and he hasn't stopped since then. She wonders how many articles are whispering about paralysis, about brain damage. She wonders how many people he's heard debating on if the love of his life is ever going to play again.

He has to know, if only so she can get his shaking to die down to a barely noticeable tremor. He has to know because Jackie is a hundred percent certain that Shane doesn't, or at least that

he won't be able to articulate that without a panic attack or two. Ilya has to know because it'll be rough from here on out, no matter how this goes, even if nothing's leaked and no one finds out.

It'll be rough for them. They both know that in ways she'll never understand. Jackie can't help them there, but she can make sure they understand. Love won't save their careers and their reputations, but it will save them, she's sure of that.

"Do you really?" It's the same tone she's used on the twins a thousand times before - This is a fact of the universe, concrete and permanent, do you understand what that means?

This time, Ilya opens his eyes, staring at her like she's the only thing keeping him standing, like, impossibly, he's seeing Shane and all of the tiny intricacies that make up the person they love. "Da, I understand."

Then, somehow, he manages a rough laugh, "Shane is right. You do not pull your punches."

"Nope." Jackie pulls back the hand cupping his face to wipe away a few stray tears. She pretends not to see the way Ilya chases it for a split second before he seemingly remembers who he is and where they are. He takes a step back, out of her embrace, straightening his shoulders and blinking away the raw devastation in his face.

She almost misses the loss, but Ilya did have the right idea. They were in a public hospital, even if they were alone, and they'd have news about Shane soon enough. He'd probably try to crawl out of the bed if they both came in looking hysterical and weepy.

She takes a few deep breaths, placing a hand on her lower back and groaning at the ache. Before she can even really blink Ilya has pulled over a chair for her, eyes darting between her face and her belly. He looks almost - panicked. Not pure panic like he had when he thought Shane was gone, just plain, normal, men-don't-understand-but-fear-pregnancy panic.

It's a look she's seen Shane wear more times than she can count. It's so mundane that Jackie is hit with a wave of pure relief. Shane is hurt but he will be okay, and despite Hayden's dismay, Ilya is a good man, Ilya is exactly the person he's been waiting to love.

She sits down, shifting until she's comfortable and then stares pointedly at the chair nearest to her until Ilya sits down as well. He's fidgeting now, looking incredibly out of place and awkward, as if they didn't just have a gut-wrenching heart-to-heart. Men.

"Shane is going to freak out when he wakes up. But it won't last, and once it's done and this has passed, you're coming over for dinner." Ilya is Shane's, that much is clear. If he was willing to risk everything just to love Ilya Rozanov, if Ilya Rozanov was willing to risk his home, potentially his life for Shane - Ilya is Shane's and Shane is Ilya's, Jackie is smart enough to understand that even if they don't yet, at least not fully.

Ilya is Shane's, which means by extension he's hers as well. Jackie may not be able to understand them, or their fear, or the bravery it took to do an act as simple as loving someone, but she understands family. You fight for each other, you stand by each other's sides, and no one is ever left out in the cold. It's simple, the best things usually are.

Ilya, on the other hand, does not seem to understand that because he's staring at her like she's lost her mind. "Sorry?"

"Dinner. If you're Shane's," She pauses, waiting to see if he'll fill it in - boyfriend, partner, lover - but Ilya just keeps staring. Okay then. "If you're Shane's, that means you're family now, and we have family dinners whenever we can manage them. The girls love their Uncle Shane, but they can be a bit much so if you want we can just have dinner, the four of us."

"Pike hates me." It's automatic, then Ilya seems to realize he's sitting next to Pike's wife because he straightens just a little bit. The worried look on his face shouldn't be as funny as it is. "He is good player, but he does not like me much. It would not be a good dinner."

Jackie laughs at that, "Ilya, there's no way Hayden can hate you after this." She gentles her voice just a little bit, because it's simple to her, but she understands that in some families it's - it's not so easy. "Shane loves you, and you love him. You came here, despite *everything,* because you had to know if he was okay. Hayden cannot hate you after this, not when he loves Shane just as much."

"That's," Ilya blinks, stunned, "That's not how it works."

There’s a lot to read between the lines, and maybe Jackie wouldn’t be able to if she didn’t know how quick the world was to hate queer people. Or if she didn’t have enough common knowledge to realize that thirty years ago “gross indecency" in public between two men was an arrestable offence. Thirty years ago, Ilya could have been jailed for holding Shane’s hand at the rink. He could be jailed now for that if he was home, in Russia.

Ilya loves Shane, that’s a given, it’s a fact, and maybe he’s starting to accept that Shane loves him back but - It doesn’t make sense that anyone would accept it so readily, let alone someone who supposedly hates his guts. It doesn’t make sense that Jackie would sit here and not only accept his love, but welcome it into her home. It doesn’t make sense that Hayden would back him in an instant for Shane’s sake.

It doesn’t make sense to Ilya, and maybe it doesn’t to Shane either. Maybe that’s why he never told either of them, or maybe, he’s just been afraid for as long as he’s ever wanted someone else, wanted Ilya.

Jackie wants to fight the world, she wants to change it for their sake and her children and everyone like them. But she can’t do that, at least not right now, so instead she’ll drag Ilya into their family. For every hateful word dripping with venom that the world spits at them, she’ll give them twice the amount of love in return.

“Yes, it is. Maybe it doesn’t always end up that way, but it should. You’re Shane’s, you’re family, so dinner?”

Ilya stares, eyebrows raised and eyes wide, and then he - then he throws back his head and laughs. It’s the sort of laughter that’s drenched in relief, that’s half a sob and an exhale because *oh, this isn’t going to hurt.* Ilya laughs and Jackie smiles at the sound, they will be okay, she’s certain of that.

There isn’t another option.

Chapter End Notes

I merged book and show canon and picked which facts i liked best. slight differences from the show:

- I basically moved up and slightly changed The Pike timeline by two years (get married in 2010, have the twins in 2011, have amber in 2013, and have baby number 4 in 2018. This is surprisingly plot relevant)

- The Pike children are Jade, Ruby, Amber, and a fourth on the way (a girl bc hayden pike radiates girl-dad energy)

- Hayden and Shane are besties and have known each other since they were 18/rookies

- Jackie and Shane are also besties because that is her brother??? He's been at the birth of her children and is their uncle/Amber's godfather

- also no clue if the timeline matches up, but i've decided that Jackie is five months pregnant when Shane gets injured (i've got another fic in the same universe with more Jackie Ilya friendship supremacy coming up just wait and see :)

fyi chapter 2 is just Hayden having all the realizations and coming to the conclusion that he now has to be a ride or die for Ilya Rozanov (he is not happy about that) (but he'll do it for Shane's sake) (wdym you love him in the same way i love my wife???)

Chapter 2: hayden & shane

Chapter Notes

> Hayden did in fact accept Ilya because he can respect a man who is horrendously down bad for his partner. He is also slightly in love with Shane too, and he has a hate boner for Ilya. He also has hospital trauma so he is trying his best, guys ✨✨
>
> TW - beyond canon typical issues, Jackie's past near-death experience with childbirth is explicitly discussed via Hayden's panic/thoughts.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Rozanov follows Jackie, trailing behind her as she easily finds her way to the one isolated place in this wing. Any camera that was out is swiftly put away, and the waiting room returns to a placid quietness. It's not comforting in the least. The two disappear from view, and he keeps staring at the same red *staff only* line like it's the only thing keeping him from Shane, because it is.

Shane is somewhere beyond that line, just getting out of surgery with his collarbone fitted neatly back into place, if Jackie is right. She usually is, which means he should have about thirty minutes until someone has to find him to give him an update on Shane. He grips the armrests hard enough that his knuckles split open again, and welcomes the sting.

Shane is alive.

Shane will be completely fine.

Jackie is fine, Four is still curled up inside of her, they're both okay.

The girls are with their grandparents, blissfully unaware that Uncle Shane is in the hospital.

His world continues to turn. The heaviness crushing his chest, a painful, unyielding weight that had slammed into him the second Shane hit the ice, eases up ever so slightly. Hayden was raised under *family first, family above all else.* It's what his father believed, it's what his mother pressed into his still tiny, fragile hands with a smile. It's what made him, what laid beneath muscle, bone and skin. Family was ingrained into the very marrow of him.

Family is everything, and right now all of *his* are safe, they're breathing. It's enough.

Hayden can finally feel himself pulling away from a panic attack, from doing something incredibly stupid or clawing apart his chest because his lungs clearly aren't working right. He can finally breathe again without hearing Shane hit the ice, without imagining him limp and utterly still on an operating table. He can finally think, which means -

Shane met Rozanov even before he met Hayden, at the Prospect Cup in - Jesus, 2008. They met in 2008, nearly a decade ago, and they've been rivals for as long. Except that Rozanov was nearly falling apart two minutes ago. Rozanov is at the hospital, apparently desperately waiting for an update just like Hayden. It's common practice for Captains to visit injured team players, but not two hours after the hit, not before the other player is even out of surgery, not like this. Not like *this.*

Fuck. Fucking hell, Ilya Rozanov is on the verge of a panic attack or some other hysterical breakdown in another room with his wife because Shane Hollander had to get hit in the worst way possible. Hayden groans, leaning forward and placing his head in his hands because, genuinely, what the fuck?

They hated each other. How many times had Shane talked about how Rozanov was an asshole? How many times had Rozanov chirped in their faces with a delighted, particularly dickish smile? How many times had the two gone toe to toe and -

Toe to toe with matching, adrenaline-drenched smiles. Toe to toe because there was no one else in the league who could match their speed, their game. Toe to toe because everyone knew when they stepped out onto the ice, it was Hollander and Rozanov's game. Their game because even if the entire team was on the ice, not a single one of them could compare to Hollander-and-Rozanov's competitiveness when they face off.

Holy shit. Was that foreplay??

Hayden goes over every memory, every game against Boston, every time Shane seemed to play like a bat out of hell, every time Shane refused to go out with them afterwards. Holy shit, it definitely was foreplay. The two definitely treated some of the best games of the decade as foreplay to fucking in hotels and apartments afterwards.

God, he's never going to get that image out of his head - Shane never went out with them after a Boston game, and in the past few years Hayden had been fine to associate that with seeing Lily but now - even if he didn't win, Rozanov was winning. Fuck, fuck, fuck.

He does not want to be thinking about Rozanov naked, he definitely does not want to be thinking about Shane naked when he's probably still under from surgery. Hayden needs to redirect his mind to something more plausible, something he can think about without panicking or potentially getting, *distracted*.

Jackie's going to have a field day when he tells her his panicked train of thoughts; he can already hear her laughter now. It's more of a cackle, really. Hayden will never tell his wife, he'll take this to his grave, but her laugh is the furthest thing from dainty or ladylike. It's loud and sharp and there's no way to quiet it, to smother it, and it's still the best thing he's ever heard.

For a brief moment, for no reason beyond her general existence, Hayden loves Jackie so intensely it physically hurts, a sharp pain pressing against his ribs, threatening to collapse them. She's everything, always has been, since the day they met in a crappy bar with floors so sticky you'd find at least one lost heel by the end of the night. She's everything, she's the sun, moon, and stars. She's the reason he continues to breathe and -

It's the fluorescent lights that make him think about the worst hour of his life, the sharp, paralyzing hospital lights. The same sort had been in the halls of the maternity wing, the same had hung over Jackie's bed as she nearly broke his hand during a bad contraction. The twins had thankfully come during the off-season. He had been out with Shane on a run when Jackie called him and told him to get his ass to the hospital.

Which meant, while Jackie nearly broke his hand, Shane must have sat in a similar seat waiting for news. He could have left, Hayden told him it was fine, that Jackie's parents would be here soon enough, and they would drive him home. He had been so panicked, so in a rush

that he never looked back to see if Shane had left, because it hadn't really occurred to him then that of course, Shane would stay. He hadn't realized how much he loved Shane then, how much Shane loved him, how they were the sort of friends that lasted lifetimes.

He hadn't realized it the first hour, but by hour three he knew.

The twins were taking their sweet time until they were just there. A tiny, bloody, squirming thing in the nurse's arm as he held his wife close, then the other. Hayden hadn't realized how little his heart had been before, how much more love he had to give, until the twins were there and Jackie was clinging to him. Her nails dug into his forearm and shoulders as she shook with pain and a tiredness he knew he'd never understand, even after hours of practice. She was clinging to him, pressing curses and kisses into his skin as he stared at their *daughters*, until all of a sudden, she wasn't.

He still has nightmares about it - Jackie's tired smile, the bite of her nails against his shoulder, the split second where she blinked at him, eyes fluttering before simply rolling back in her head. Her grasp had been gone before he could even register the loss, hands falling down as she slumped back against the pillows. He hadn't even had time to call out to the nurse before he heard her blood dripping onto the floor.

It's funny, really. It's almost comical when you realize just how much blood a person has in their body, when you see it soaking the bed and smearing beneath the nurse's sneakers.

On average, there are about five liters of blood in a human being. It varies from men to women, height, weight, and age. Hayden had learned that day that pregnant women can have almost fifty percent more blood volume, and in the seconds before he was pushed out of the room, it looked like Jackie had lost all of it.

The bed was red, her thighs were red, a stark contrast from the lack of color in her face - her lips were nearly blue, her cheeks so pale he thought she had died then and there, simply slipped from his arms and life in the same breath. She hadn't, she wasn't dead, but she was limp on the hospital bed while alarms blared, someone shouted, and a set of nurses held his daughter who hadn't cried out once.

The silence, Jackie's silence, his daughter's silence, took over the shrill alarms and unintelligible orders from the flutter of doctors and nurses around his wife's body. He had

done nothing but stare then, there wasn't anything else he could do. Hayden was frozen, standing by the window to the birthing room Jackie had picked out because she liked the blue birds painted on the wall.

Jackie was bleeding, her blood forming a red pool on the ground that was being smeared around. In the corner of the same room a set of nurses were hunched over two tiny figures he couldn't see. Jackie was bleeding, the twins were quiet, and Hayden couldn't comprehend anything.

He stood there for an eternity, swaying, staring, unbreathing until there was a hand on his arm. Now, years later, he'll recall it like slow motion, like a dramatic movie scene, turning to see Shane at his side, eyes wide with fear as he held Hayden still. Then, he hadn't been able to comprehend anything but the horrific sight in front of him. He couldn't have said anything even if he tried. He was beyond words, beyond logic, beyond anything but *Dear God, please no, please.*

But Shane hadn't needed words. He seemed to know what to do instinctively, as if he had been waiting for years to love Hayden enough to save him, as if he had years to prepare to be the steady one when everything went wrong. He didn't drag Hayden away, he didn't try to reassure him, instead, he placed an arm around Hayden, gently moving them out of the middle of the hall. They were closer to the window, close enough that he could make out the warbled, panicked voices. His knees had buckled, but the arm around him had stayed.

His world was ending then, at twenty-one, and Shane held him up without a word.

It had seemed like an eternity, like decades of his personal hell on repeat, but in actuality, it had only been around ten minutes. Ten minutes for Jackie to nearly bleed out from postpartum hemorrhaging, ten minutes for the doctors to fully stop the bleeding. Ten minutes for the twins to finally scream, to not just breathe but howl with the force of it.

Ten minutes, and for eight of those Hayden had lived with the ugly fact that his wife was bleeding out. Somehow, Shane's constant grip had reminded him that he did, in fact, have to keep breathing after her. The world was ending, but it wasn't. Jackie was bleeding and bleeding and - He had made funeral preparations, figured out arrangements for the twins (because he could not comprehend losing all three of them, because Shane's grip or not Hayden would have driven off a bridge by the next evening) while he told Jackie's parents their daughter was dead, and started on her eulogy.

That’s what happened at funerals, right? Eulogies told by elderly children and old friends, childhood stories and reminiscing filled the five minutes it apparently took to describe a life. Hayden didn’t know how he’d manage five minutes, didn't know how you started eulogies, didn’t know what life he was supposed to talk about because Jackie hadn’t even graduated yet - she still had the fall semester left. He’d only been to one funeral in his life and he wasn’t even twenty-two; he couldn’t be a widower, he couldn’t lose her, he couldn’t, it wasn’t right, none of this was.

He had only made it to *My life started the day I met Jackie* before he short-circuited.

Hayden spent the rest of that tiny eternity swaying in Shane’s grasp, utterly unaware of the other man while the nurses kept smearing Jackie’s blood on the ground. For a moment, there was nothing; he was nothing but preemptive grief and pure fucking agony, then the doctors were able to stop the bleeding. Jackie twitched, fingers grasping at the bed like she was searching for something, for someone. Ruby screamed with the force of three centimeter lungs, Jade echoing her seconds after, and his world miraculously kept turning.

His knees did give out then, and they both ended up on the floor outside of the hospital room. Hayden was having a panic attack, the first of many, and Shane placed a hand on the back of his neck, holding him down, grounding him while his heart kept stopping abruptly then starting again when one of the twins cried, and the other, not wanting to be outdone, howled in response.

Jackie was alive. The twins were alive. His family was alive.

Hayden nearly suffocated under his panic, would have if it weren’t for Shane calmly and firmly dragging him back from the edge. He would have died, curled up on the hospital floor, choking on the overwhelming waves of fear crashing against equally strong waves of relief. Hayden Pike, battered and broken until Shane pulled him from the water.

It wasn’t the end. Jackie needed more tests and blood, the twins also needed tests because they were a few weeks early and there was fluid in their lungs. He needed to sign here, and sign here, and okay this, and was more family coming? It’s going to be a rough recovery, no you cannot hold them yet, after the tests, no you cannot hold her yet, after the tests and she’s fully stabilized. It wasn’t even close to the end.

Shane never left his side.

He was there the next morning, a crook in his neck as he let Hayden curl up beside him, his head in his lap. He was there when Jackie's parents arrived. He had even gone to get food with them when Jackie woke up. A surprisingly purposeful move so no one saw the way he had sobbed in her arms, the way she had cried in his, the way their hands ached because neither of them had held their daughters yet. Shane didn't leave the hospital until Hayden threatened to call Yuna to pick him up.

He wasn't even gone a full twelve hours before he came back with a gift basket the size of his head for Jackie, filled with Yuna's handwriting and detailed notes.

After that, it was simpler, the two of them.

Before they were friends, good friends, but after - it was impossible to go back and neither of them had any particular interest in doing so. They were best friends, Shane was one of the few people who came to visit them, the only teammate to do so. He awkwardly held Ruby and Jade, and less awkwardly held Jackie when Hayden came back from another feeding break to see them asleep on the couch.

Shane was just *there* now, a part of his life in a way he wasn't before. Hayden barely noticed the change in the haze of world-ending fear, being a caregiver to his wife, and the father of two infants. It didn't help that it seemed almost natural, for Shane to be there, to keep being there, for Hayden to look for him first in a room, for him to hand off one daughter or the other without a second thought. It seemed like, for no apparent reason, Shane Hollander was just meant to be his best friend, to be a pivotal piece of his life.

Months later, when he finally was able to put a finger on the change, Hayden didn't really care. Maybe it was weird, or some lingering trauma bond, or some other bullshit explanation. It didn't matter, Shane was here and if Hayden got his way, if his wife did, then he was never leaving their tiny little family.

It was simple.

So is the thought that *the world would end, just a little bit, if Shane got hit and stayed down, if he never got back up.* It would short-circuit, jolt out of place, the rhythm would be permanently changed if Shane Hollander died. It would continue on, it always does, and he'd walk away, he would, but God, it would hurt. Hayden knows, in the same way he knows he'll love Jackie till he's nothing but dust, that losing Shane would scar him, break him in a way you don't exactly recover from.

Shane is meant to be a part of his life. Shane is a permanent fixture in Hayden's existence; the empty space he'd leave behind would haunt him for the rest of his days.

It's the same realization as Jackie's - Hayden does not want to live in a world without Shane. And apparently, neither does Ilya Rozanov.

Hayden can picture him perfectly even though he doesn't want to, it's all he can see. (Anything is better than Jackie bleeding and bleeding and bleeding.) Rozanov had frozen by the receptionist desk when Hayden stood up. He had taken one look at whatever expression had been on his face and just shut down. Earlier, he hadn't even been able to comprehend the hurricane of emotions on his face but now -

He had been so afraid he couldn't do anything but stand there, but stand and stare, already picturing a world without the other half of your fucking soul. He had been so terrified of losing Shane that he had risked a decade-long secret because nothing matters when the love of your life is dead-dying-gone. He had loved someone so intensely, with everything that he was, that the thought of existing in a world without them seemed inherently wrong.

Hayden's willing to bet that the look on Rozanov's face had been a spitting image of his half a decade ago as he waited for the world to either end or continue on.

Oh, *oh.* His hands loosen from their death grip on the chair's armrests. The clock keeps ticking, and his view on the world has utterly changed. They're not just fucking, they're in love. Shane and Rozanov, Shane and Ilya.

Hayden breathes in and out, his heart rate surprisingly low for the shock of his fucking life. Shane, his best friend, the only person he'd trust with Jackie and the girls, is in love with Ilya

Rozanov, his rival of a decade. Because it is love, because if he was going to risk something this big, being gay and gay with another player, he'd be damn sure about it. It's love because Lily makes Shane smile with ease, because Lily is the only reason Shane hasn't had a breakdown or existential crisis, because he had been murmuring something in the ambulance and Hayden couldn't make it out until now.

Ilya…he's going to worry…'m okay, tell him…Hayd I need…okay, 'll him, plea…

Then, with his skates somehow still on, Hayden had thought Shane was talking about his dad. Yuna lived and breathed hockey, she's seen hits like this, she's at least semi-prepared for this eventuality, but David was always softer. He was gentle with everyone, his wife, his son, with his half-grandkids. Ruby scammed him for every penny's worth, and David just took it with an easy, forgiving smile as he bought her candy she did not need.

But no, he wasn't asking about his dad, he had been asking about *Ilya.* Hell, Shane had nearly been begging Hayden, concussed, in pain, and out of it, to just tell Ilya that he was okay because he knew he'd worry, knew he'd do something stupid. Fuck.

He's not getting rid of Ilya Rozanov for a very, very long time. He's not only going to have to deal with him, in a polite and kind manner, but he's also going to fight half the league for him. He's on Shane's side for anything and everything, he'll die there, which means if they ever come out - if they want to love each other in the way he loves Jackie, openly, freely - he's going to have to throw down for both of them.

Hayden's not enough of an asshole to be homophobic about Rozanov either way, but fuck, he's going to have to defend him from the world. Not that he'd ask, not that he wants it because he's certain Rozanov would gag at the thought, or break down in laughter. No, he's doing this because family is ingrained in the very marrow of him and if Rozanov is Shane's then -

Fuck, when did this become his life, and more importantly, why is this his life?

Really Shane, you just had to be dramatic and pick Rozanov. It's not like there aren't nice men in Montreal or even in the league. At least Scott Hunter wasn't a mouthy, annoying, arrogant bastard. Shit, he's not going to be able to insult him anymore, is he?

What the fuck Shane what the fuck Shane what the fuck Shane what the fuck -

"- Shane Hollander?" He blinks out of his stupor to see a nurse, an older woman in teal scrubs that look nothing like the sharp blue of the nurses smearing around Jackie's blood. She's standing in front of him, a clipboard in hand as she tilts her head, "Are you here for Mr. Hollander?"

His heart stops. Then it restarts.

Hayden shoots up from his chair, the clatter enough to get a few heads pointed in his direction as he hovers in front of the nurse. "Yes, Hayden Pike here for Shane Hollander. I should be listed as his medical proxy? I'm not sure, he did the paperwork and another nurse said it let me know updates about him. Is he,"

His sentence trails off as Hayden fought the urge to fidget or throw up. Shane would be fine, he had to be. *Please,* he thought, just like he had years ago, *please let this be simple, please, please, please.*

The nurse nodded, "He's alright, he got out of surgery a few minutes ago. It went as planned; however, that collarbone will need lots of rest and attentive care in the following weeks." *He's alright* nearly sent him to his knees, the relief so strong it hurt. Hayden might actually die if he had to listen to a plan of care. He needed to see Shane, he needed to see him drugged up and breathing to fully understand that his best friend isn't dying on him today.

Shane's never gone down like this. It's horrifying to be reminded of someone's morality, to be reminded that even Hollander could get hurt. It's so goddamn terrifying.

Maybe the nurse can see it written across his face or maybe she's been in this situation enough times because she gives him a friendly pat on the shoulder. "You can see him now, I'll take you there. I will be discussing the plan eventually, no one wants Mr. Hollander back in here for a preventable injury, but that can happen later. Follow me."

He nearly stumbles over himself as he follows her past that damn red line. They wind down a long hall until she stops and - This isn't years ago, Jackie isn't bleeding out in a hospital bed, neither is Shane. His eyes are closed, his head leaning back on the pillow with a sling and bandages peeking out from beneath his hospital dress. He's breathing, he's alive, Jesus fucking Christ, Hayden is going to kill him if he ever pulls this shit again.

"You can go on in, just be careful not to startle or jolt him." He's halfway through the door before the nurse is even finished. He'll have to get her name later, but right now he needs to smother his best friend for scaring the shit out of everyone.

At the sound of his footsteps, Shane groggily lifts his head, his eyes fluttering before slowly settling on Hayden. The door has barely shut behind him before, "Haydddddennnn."

Scratch his earlier assumption, Shane doesn't freak out when he's high, he just loses his mind. Hayden nearly runs to his bedside when Shane seems to try to get out, hand flapping against his bed as he frowns. "Hayds, Hayds! You came!"

He laughs, definitely not clinging to Shane's hand, totally just trying to keep him still. "You're never allowed to get hit that hard again. I will personally steal your skates if you even look in Marlow's direction."

Shane frowns, squinting up at Hayden like he's not entirely sure what's happening, "No – you're not, not allowed to do that."

Hayden manages to pull over a chair, hooking his ankle over a leg and dragging it to the bedside because Shane refuses to let go of his hand. He sits down with a heavy sigh, his own hands now trembling as the adrenaline slowly leaves him at the sight of Shane's smile. "You just have to be the center of attention, don't you? Rozanov, really?"

Wait, maybe he shouldn't have brought that up. If Shane starts crying or freaking out, Jackie will actually kill him. "Ignore that, I don't know what I'm talking about. How have -"

"Ilya?" Shane tries to get up but fails halfway through so it's more like he flops around with a ridiculous smile on his face. His eyes scan the room, darting around with more focus than he had earlier when Hayden entered. Ouch. "Ilya's here? Where is he? Can I see him, Haydddd!"

Yep, definitely in love, helplessly in love. God, what the fuck was his life?

"Easy, easy there," Shane stares down at the hand on his chest with wide, confused eyes. It's like he cannot even fathom that he needs to rest, like nothing else matters because Ilya may be here so of course, he has to find him. "Ilya will be here soon."

Shit. He pulls out his phone, sending Jackie a quick text. "He'll be here soon, Jackie too. Your parents will be here tomorrow morning, first thing. Everyone was worried, Shane."

Shane's eyes water just a little, his lips pulling down in an almost pout. Before Hayden can freak out even more, he squeezes his hand tighter, "You came, all of you came." Wait, is he crying? Oh no, no, no, no, no.

The words stick in his throat, and it's almost painful to get out but – Shane could have died, Hayden can suffer a little and talk about his feelings. "Hey, of course we care, we love you. You're my best friend; hell, Jackie practically adopted you the day we met. You're family, Hollander, you're stuck with us."

He smiles before turning those puppy dog eyes at full force on Hayden, "Ilya calls me Hollander. I like Shane better, but I freaked out before. I hope he keeps calling me Shane." His eyes go distant; lost in the love he has for Ilya Rozanov. Then he stills so sharply that Hayden almost reaches for the call button, but the sudden lack of a hand in his own stops him. "You're not supposed to know that."

Oh, okay they're having this conversation now. Hayden shifts uncomfortably, his mind is a mess, he's definitely going to say the wrong thing but – Shane looks like someone just killed his dog in front of him, Shane looks heartbroken, he looks *afraid.* Shane looks like Hayden is about to shove him further away, call him a freak and then out him to the League. That look cannot stay.

"I don't think I am, but then Rozanov almost had a panic attack in the waiting room, so I kinda figured out a few things." Shane isn't looking at him; he's staring down at his hands which are trembling. That won't do either. Hayden carefully reaches out and grabs his hand,

loose enough that Shane could pull away if he needed to. “Hey, it’s okay. I mean I wasn’t expecting Lily to be, you know, a man or Ilya Rozanov but – you love him don’t you?”

Because out of everything he had figured out in the last few hours that much is clear. The sky is blue, Shane is one of the best hockey players of his time, his children live to constantly set him on edge, and Shane Hollander is in love with Ilya Rozanov. Undeniable facts of the universe.

Hayden does not whine *did it have to be him* because he’s a mature adult man and he’s being open and welcoming to his best friend. He does think it, though.

“Hayden,” It’s a quiet whisper, his voice shaking just like his hands. It’s the most unsure Hayden’s ever seen him, and it feels horrifically wrong. Shane can second-guess his plays and the media’s opinions, even his teammates, but Hayden is supposed to be one of the few constants in his life. Hayden is supposed to be steady, unfailing; he’s supposed to be a good enough friend that Shane isn’t afraid he’s going to hate him for *loving* someone.

God, how did he manage to mess this up so badly? When did he do it? When he didn’t correct another player in the locker room after a snide comment, when he just rolled his eyes when Conner or Felts threw cocksucker around on the ice, when he called Rozanov a filthy bastard? When exactly did Hayden cross the line far enough that Shane became afraid of his reaction?

He didn’t know, and he couldn’t go back. All he could do was try his best to make up for it now. “Shane, Shane look at me.” It takes a moment, but he raises his head and even in the drugged haze Hayden can make out his *fear* perfectly. “I don’t care that it’s Rozanov, or a man. I care about you. I want you happy, I want you safe, and I want you to find the same peace that I did. I want that for you, I want you to have that, even if it’s with Rozanov.”

He’s still shaking, still trembling, but the fear in his eyes has lessened, and he no longer looks like he’s expecting Hayden to hit him. “Come on, Shane. I love you, man. I don’t care if Lily is Rozanov and our number one rival – even if I think you could do better than him.”

He can’t help but slip a semi-insult in, and before he can regret it Shane laughs. It’s more of a huff than anything, and it clearly hurts from the way he braces his hand against his chest, but

it's better than the trembling fear of before. "What, you, what?" Shane shakes his head, the loopy smile coming back, "There's no one better than Ilya."

Sappy motherfucker. "Yeah? When exactly did the two of you start, you know?" Is he somewhat taking advantage of his best friend while he's high out of his mind to get details on his extremely secret relationship? Yes, yes, he is.

Hayden doesn't feel that bad because Shane would probably do the same thing, he knows Rozanov would do the same thing in a heartbeat. Best friend privilege really.

Shane smiles so hard he has to close his eyes, head slumping back against the pillow as he practically embodies happiness. "2009, years and years and years. He was so prettttty then, he's still pretty now, isn't he?" He opens his eyes, giving Hayden a look like his answer has to be yes, like there is no other possible answer. Hayden cannot actually think about if Ilya Rozanov is pretty without losing his mind so he just gives a shake of his head that could be a nod. It's enough to satisfy Shane because he lets his eyes slip shut again, a blush forming on his cheeks, "I'm gonna invite him to the Cottage, you think he'll say yes?"

The cottage, Shane's secret cottage that Hayden's only been to a handful of times, the cozy, isolated cabin that Shane covets with barred teeth and claws because there are few things in this life that are entirely *his*. Shane's going to invite Ilya Rozanov to his cottage – Yep, definitely in love and also, they're fucking everywhere. He's not going back there without a bottle of bleach or Jackie to calm him down.

Hayden shoves away that thought and focuses on the fact that Shane is in love, that he's nearly giddy with it, that he's got a *boyfriend.* He's the lightest he's been since the day they met, the most relaxed, the most at ease, the most - him. It's a good sight to see, even if he'd prefer to have seen it without Shane nearly dying in the process. "Yeah, I don't think he's going to let you out of his sight for a long time. I have a feeling you may be stuck with him, Shane."

"Good, good." Shane leans towards him, squeezing his hand with a slight furrow in his brows, "That is a good thing, right?"

Hayden smiles, remembering every insult he's thrown at Rozanov over the years, every time he's cursed him out and clashed sticks with him on the ice. Then he remembers the fear in his

eyes earlier, the way he had seemed even smaller than Jackie as he trailed behind her, the way his voice had shaken. “Yeah, it’s a good thing, Shane.”

Rozanov, really, did it have to be Rozanov, though?

Shane smiles again, small and crooked and perfect. He goes to say something else then – the door opens and Shane immediately forgets he’s in the room. “Ilya, Ilyaaaa.” He drops Hayden’s hand to make grabby hands towards the door where Rozanov is standing, breathing unsteadily, frozen, and completely blocking Jackie. It’s like nothing else exists but the two of them.

Shane could at least pretend to remember his general existence. Really, a decade of being his best friend and he’s replaced by a dickhead Russian. “Ilya, you’re here!”

“Shane,” Rozanov breathes out his name like it’s the only thing keeping him standing. He’s still in the doorframe, still drinking in Shane’s lazy smile, fuzzy eyes and the bandages wrapped around his chest. Someone is going to notice soon enough, especially if Shane keeps getting louder.

Hayden slaps a hand over Shane’s mouth before standing up. “Okay, we’re going to go stand in the hall and make sure no one interrupts. You two have fun.” Then he frowns, “Not too much fun, though.”

Rozanov still hasn’t even looked at him, which okay, whatever, but Jackie finally shoulders her way into the room. Her face becomes drenched in relief at the sight of Shane completely ignoring her in favor of his boyfriend, awake and breathing. She shuts the blinds before nodding towards him, “Not sure how long it’ll be until the nurses have to come check on him, but we’ll give you as long as possible.”

She squeezes Rozanov’s arm, gently nudging him forward and out of his frozen stupor. He surges forward, stumbling in a way that Hayden’s never seen. If only he could do that on the ice instead of when Shane smiles at him. He moves his hand off Shane’s mouth, who seems content to wait now that Rozanov is closer, and heads towards the door. They pass by each other and Hayden could just brush past him but –

He claps him on the shoulder, muttering, “Good man,” before promptly walking out without looking back because that hurt, just a little bit. Jackie follows him, shutting the door gently while both of them pretend not to hear Shane’s joy-filled voice compared to Rozanov’s low, heartbreaking stutter.

He leans against the doorframe, half in front of the door so nobody, *nobody* is getting in without getting through him. Without a word, Jackie leans back against him, sighing in relief when he slips a hand under the weight of her stomach and lifts, the other wrapping around her shoulders and pulling her close to him. She grabs onto him, nails digging in as the only visible sign of how shaken she is. “Jesus.”

Hayden presses his lips to her head, smiling against her hair at the smell of her shampoo, “Yep, this is not how I’d thought this would go.”

Jackie hums, “Ilya Rozanov, it’s going to be a shit show whenever they,”

She doesn’t have to continue with saying the obvious – It, Hollander and Rozanov being Hollander-and-Rozanov is going to be a chaotic mess when they come out. It’ll be rough even if they don’t. The public will find out inevitably, especially if the two are in love and not just fucking. You can hide a fuck buddy, but after a point, you can’t hide the love of your life. Even if they make it to retirement, if they want to make it there unknown, there will still be hell to pay in the aftermath.

The backlash from the public is one thing, but the reaction of the League is another. He might actually have to punch the NHL Commissioner in the face. Thank fuck he’s already got trust funds for all four of his kids.

Jackie seems to be following his train of thought because she says, “Don’t fight anyone just yet. I need another good year out of you to get Four through college.”

Hayden kisses her head again, because damn, she can actually read his mind. “I love you so much. Do you know that?”

“Damn right you do, I’m amazing, a godsend, really,” She’s smiling and -

There's muffled sobs coming from the door behind them. Jackie stills in his arms and then they're both turning, crowding in on the door that he cracks open ever so slightly. His heart leaps in his throat, not sure what he'll see – Shane injured, Shane bleeding, or worse, Shane crying.

He doesn't see any of that. It's worse, he can just make out Rozanov's broad shoulders, hunched over as he presses his lips to Shane's hand and *cries.* He's crying. Ilya Rozanov is crying, small, muffled sobs as he clings to Shane's arm, as he presses his lips to his knuckles, an act that's almost worshipping. Shit.

There's something deeply intimate about it. It's not just because Rozanov is crying, although that too seems inherently wrong, but rather the small, broken sounds that crawl out of his throat. They're wounded, ugly, wrong, they're the sort of sobs that belong to the rawest forms of grief. It's something Hayden has no right to bear witness to.

They need to stop looking, but Hayden can't manage to tear his eyes away from the scene. Rozanov is crying and Shane has his other hand buried in his hair, pulling him closer as he does his best to lean over and press their heads together, to press his lips against Ilya's and bring him back. It's so incredibly similar to the hold he had on Jackie moments prior, it's so familiar he doesn't know what to do with it.

He needs to stop intruding; he can't look away because – oh, *oh.* You've been loving each other for a long, long time. How have we been so blind?

It's Jackie who moves, gently shutting the door and nudging him to the side. She settles her back against the door, and he tosses his arm over her shoulder, solely because his hands ache to hold her after what he just saw. It's another world-changing and surprisingly simple realization.

Hayden had been wrong earlier. Shane could survive losing hockey. He could not survive losing Ilya Rozanov.

Shit, he's stuck with Rozanov for the indefinite future.

He swallows, staring at Jackie's worn blue Converse over the horrific hospital lights, "We have to like him, don't we?"

She lets out a tired laugh, resting her head on his shoulder, the exhaustion of the past few hours finally catching up to her. He doesn't have to look to know Jackie's wearing a small, fond smile, "Hayden, we had to love him."

Fuck, his wife talks with Rozanov for fifteen minutes and now they're family. Why couldn't he just hate the guy in peace? Jackie reads his mind again before elbowing him, hitting a faint bruise from God knows when. That's the only reason he winces, really, "I know, I know. He's family now and I have to be nice and polite, but honestly, weren't there any nice men in Montreal?"

He's whining, he knows he's whining, but it's *Rozanov* – Ilya, he guesses now. Shane's alive, no one has been outed, they'll all live to see another day, he can be a brat in the privacy of his wife's arms.

Jackie snorts, "What like you?"

He startles so much he hits his elbow on the doorframe, cursing when the force vibrates through his arm. Jackie, the love of his life, his wife of almost a decade, laughs at his misery. She's nearly bent in half, cackling enough that they definitely just interrupted Shane and Ilya's private, somber moment. His cheeks are flaming red because now he's thinking about other private moments and – he is a nice man in Montreal.

Jackie claps a hand over her mouth, her laughter only partially stressed induced hysterics. "Shit, I'm gonna piss myself. You're face, though; you're face!"'

He makes sure his voice is a hushed whisper because if they could hear Shane and Ilya then the reverse is probably true as well. "I do not have a *crush* on Shane." Shane is his best friend, Shane has been one of his few constants for the past decade, Shane is – Shane. Hayden does not have a crush on him, he doesn't.

Jackie finally manages to calm herself, wiping away a few stray tears and shifting on her feet. Luckily, she didn't actually piss herself, although from the way she braces a hand on her stomach, Four might have migrated to press against her kidneys. "This is going to be a complete mess, and so much fun."

He rolls his eyes, forcing his cheeks to go back to their normal color. He really does not have a crush on Shane, he just appreciates he best friend…and maybe Rozanov too, just a little bit, in a normal way. "By the way, we're having family dinner when Shane gets out of the hospital, and you are going to be so normal. Oh, also, I invited Ilya to the dinner. Okay, pretty boy?"

Shane and Ilya Rozanov in his house for dinner and wine. Fuck.

"Jackie?!"

Chapter End Notes

more changes to canon i've made bc i felt like it

- Jackie got postpartum hemorrhaging after the twins, Hayden got a best friend & trauma + panic attacks out of it
- She had a c-section with Amber and that's the plan for number 4 ;) ;)
- Shane actually helped Hayden out of a panic attack when they found out Jackie was pregnant again
- (this will be explored later) Jackie has her own issues with pregnancy/her family and the angst is going to be tea (i am exploring my feelings about pregnancy through all these bitches and they do not get a say in the matter)
- they both got ✨ hospital trauma but they'll stick it out for Shane's sake

---

also yes, i have no clue if i'll ever write but eventually Hayden has a threesome with Shane and Ilya. Jackie and Ilya also have sex and Hayden does have a cuckolding kink, no i will not take any questions. They are borderline swingers and they deserve a lifetime of happiness. thank you for coming to my ted talk.

HAPPY COTTAGE EVE!!!!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!