

life is amazing with you on the ride

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by [miss_minelli](#)

Summary

“Okay, if you’re going to be cagey, I’ll just lay out some facts.” Jessie clears her throat and Shane is absolutely fucked. He should know better than to try to hide something from a future lawyer. “Fact number one—”

“Oh for fuck’s sake.”

“Quiet, you,” she says, sounding exactly like Mom. “Fact number one: You’re acting really weird right now. Fact number two: You got super cagey and strange after your photo shoot this summer. What do both of those events have in common? One Ilya Rozanov. Fact number three: You have been low-to-high-key obsessed with Ilya Rozanov for two years now, and even though we’ve never talked about it again, you said you thought about a man during sex last year. When I put all these facts together, I think the answer is pretty obvious.”

Shane doesn’t know whether to laugh or cry. But he needs her to say it. He cannot bring himself to admit what is happening out loud. He just presses his fingers harder against his eyes.

“You’re still not going to tell me? Ugh, Shane! Did you fuck Ilya Rozanov?”

Or: The events of Heated Rivalry if Shane had a nosy, supportive, bisexual twin sister.

Notes

I’m very pleased to present my longest oneshot ever! The idea came to me a few weeks ago I haven’t stopped writing since.

This story is meant to slot in alongside HR book canon, but with the addition of Shane’s twin sister. You can assume, unless there is a replacement scene, that the events of canon all happen off screen. I did explore what could have happened during the year between the NHL draft and Shane’s first NHL season, which likely doesn’t follow canon, and there are a few other small changes that shouldn’t affect the story much.

Please forgive any errors I may have made about the NHL, Canada, or law school.

Title from On the Ride by Aly & AJ

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

December 2008

“Ugh, what took you so long?” Jessie groans. She’s folded up in the backseat of the car, one stylish boot-clad foot up between the front seats. Her black parka is pulled over her cream sweater and boot cut jeans, and her long black hair is covered by a light brown toque.

Shane slams the car door shut, still confused from his interaction with Rozanov—the firm grip of his handshake, the curl of his lips, the round vowels of his insults.

“Sorry, jeez. I was talking to Rozanov.”

Jessie gives him a blank look, but Mom chimes in from the front passenger seat as Dad pulls out of the parking lot and starts the drive back to their hotel.

“What was he like?”

“Kind of a dick, actually,” Shane says, and Jessie sits up, putting her foot back on the floor.

“Oh, the guy you’re like, compared to? In Russia? Is he hot?”

Shane wrinkles his nose. “What? No.”

“Hmm. I’m googling him when I get back to the hotel. What’s his first name?”

“Um, Ilya, I think,” Shane says, even though he’s one hundred percent sure Rozanov’s first name is, indeed, Ilya.

Dad pipes up from the driver’s seat. “Well, you’re going to kick his team’s butt!”

Shane sure hopes so.

The silver medal around Shane’s neck is heavy and upsetting. He takes it off the second he’s off the ice. After changing and saying goodbye to his teammates, Shane makes his way out to see his family. They each hug Shane and he tries to look happy, but the medal in his pocket weighs him down.

“Can I see it?” Jessie asks excitedly.

“It’s just the silver,” Shane grumbles, but he pulls it out and hands it over.

“Okay, grumpy-pants,” she says with an eyeroll. Jessie inspects the medal and rubs over the bumps and grooves with her thumb. “I think it’s cool,” she announces, before passing it to Mom who nods appreciatively, but doesn’t moon over it. Shane knows Mom was also banking on Canada winning.

They’re on the way to the airport two hours later when Jessie nudges Shane. “You going to call Sarah?”

“Oh, right,” Shane says, stupidly. Yes. His girlfriend probably wants to know how this went. It honestly had not occurred to him to call her. He may have been a bit distracted by hockey and Rozanov’s infuriating smirks to think about Sarah.

Jessie raises her eyebrows at him. She’s been weird about Shane dating Sarah. They started going out at the end of November, but Jessie seems judgemental. It’s really only a matter of time until she says what she’s thinking.

Mom and Dad are loudly discussing their flight in the front seat, so Shane asks Jessie quietly, “Is it weird that I kind of forgot about her this week?”

“Hmm,” Jessie considers, although Shane suspects it’s an act. She definitely already has an opinion. “It’s just... I don’t get the feeling you like her very much. Like, even at the beginning. You never talk about her.”

“I’m a private person!” Shane defends, but he knows it’s a weak argument. He may be shy and private with most people, but he and Jessie have always told each other everything. They swore a blood oath when they were eight and promised to always be honest. It was very dramatic and Mom was extremely pissed that they cut their palms with the tip of a kitchen knife, but Shane and Jessie just grinned and wore their bandages with pride.

“Uh-huh,” Jessie placates. “Sure. But like, *do* you like her?”

“Ugh, I don’t know,” Shane groans. “She’s very nice. And pretty,” he adds, as an afterthought. Sarah is gorgeous, of that Shane is sure. He knows when girls are pretty. Sarah has long light brown curls that bounce prettily when she walks and pink lips that feel... alright wrapped around his dick.

Jessie shrugs. “Okay,” she says, letting it go, but probably only because they’re pulling up at the rental car return lot.

Shane thinks about Sarah very purposely for the entire flight and tries to list things he really, truly likes about her in his head. It’s not a very long list.

March 2009

“Are you googling Ilya Rozanov again?” Jessie asks, dropping down onto Shane’s bed beside him. She barged into his room moments ago and Shane didn’t have a chance to close the tab on his browser where he was checking on Rozanov’s stats.

“No!”

He turns the laptop away from Jessie’s prying eyes. She gives him a meaningful look.

“Ugh, I’m just checking on like, league statistics and stuff. I have to keep up to date. We’re competitors.”

Jessie grabs the laptop before Shane can stop her. It's open to a webpage about Rozanov with a bunch of hockey statistics—Shane wasn't lying about that—but it also has a large picture of Rozanov in his helmet and gear.

"Jeez, I forgot how *hot* he is," Jessie says. "Those *lips*, Shane."

"Ew, don't say 'lips' in that tone."

Jessie laughs and hands back the computer. Shane closes the tab, but plans to open it again later. He has it bookmarked. For research purposes.

May 2009

Shane and Jessie are sprawled out on the couch at two AM, surrounded by Solo cups and pizza crusts. Their parents agreed to let them have a proper birthday party, giving them the house to themselves for one night, provided there wasn't any alcohol and that they cleaned up in the morning. Of course, there *was* alcohol, but Shane and Jessie are going to make sure their parents never find out.

"Good party?" Shane asks, tiredly, a smile on his lips.

Jessie's head lolls on the back of the couch to meet his eyes. "Great party," she says, dreamily.

"What's that look?" Shane asks, poking her leg with his toe.

Jessie giggles, still a bit tipsy, it seems. "I kissed Samantha Evans," she whispers.

"You did?" Shane asks, bewildered.

"Yeah! *With tongue*. Oh my god, I feel like I'm fourteen. But she's so cool. And *hot*."

Shane pictures Sam in his head. He doesn't think she's what most guys would describe as hot. She wears baggy cargo pants and political graphic tees. Her hair is cut short and usually stuffed under a beanie and she has an intimidating air about her.

"Isn't she a..." Shane trails off, a bit afraid to say the word 'lesbian.'

Jessie nods. "She's gay, yeah."

"So, are you... gay, too?" Shane asks, tentatively. He doesn't know very many gay people. Sam is the only person who's out at school and he doesn't ever remember her coming out. It was just... something everybody knew.

Jessie tilts her head casually as if this isn't some monumental thing. Maybe it isn't. Shane wouldn't know.

"I don't think so. I still like boys. But... girls are so hot," she says, dissolving into giggles. Shane grins at her. He's so glad she's happy. Eventually, she calms down and stares contemplatively at the ceiling. "I think I'm bisexual."

"Oh, cool," Shane says. Fuck, what are you supposed to say when someone comes out to you? "Um, I accept you."

That makes Jessie bark a laugh. "I fucking hope so! You're stuck with me, loser." Shane laughs as well, suddenly a bit giddy.

"So, are you and Sam dating?"

Jessie sighs. "I don't know," she whines. "I don't think so. I mean, I'm going to McGill in three months and she's planning on going to NYU for artsy stuff. You know she's like a *really* good artist."

"Oh. You could do long distance."

"Yeah. She's just... a free spirit, I guess. We'll see. What about you and Emma?"

Emma, Shane's girlfriend since February. He broke up with Sarah shortly after he got back from World Juniors. One day Emma asked him to get coffee and then suddenly they were dating. She's going to school in Ottawa and Shane has no idea where he's going to end up, so he should probably break up with her. He just hasn't gotten around to it.

"I don't know. I don't know if we're a good match," he admits.

Jessie nods sagely. "Fair. She talks like, a lot."

Shane is aware. The only reason Emma hasn't noticed that Shane isn't that into her is because she's always the one doing the talking.

Jessie yawns. "Okay, should we clean this up?" She gestures at the messy living room.

Shane nods, but his heart aches for his sister's long distance dilemma. He also feels kinda bad that he doesn't feel that way about Emma. She's pretty and very enthusiastic about sucking him off, but he's not sure they have that connection that Jessie might have with Sam.

June 2009

"Montreal! Shane! That's amazing!" Jessie cries, crashing into him at the NHL draft after party. "I was so sure you'd be somewhere far away like Seattle, but this means I'll actually see you more than a few times a year!"

Shane squeezes her tightly, willing away the disappointment that is trying to settle in his bones. Being drafted second is devastating, but living in the same city as his sister makes Montreal truly a perfect match.

Graduating last week was bittersweet. Shane is fucking thrilled to be done with school—deadlines give him anxiety—but now he won't be hanging out with his built-in best friend every day. It sounds a bit pathetic when he puts it like that, but Shane and Jessie truly are best friends and he was dreading the idea of only seeing her through Skype.

Mom and Dad hug him as well and tell him how proud they are. He's sure Mom thinks he should have been drafted first, but Shane knows his parents are glad he's going to be so close by. It will be nice to have them at his games. Jessie too, though she is honest about the fact that she finds hockey to be kind of boring. When they were in middle school, Dad had to ferry Shane around quite a bit and Jessie was often dragged along to practices as well as games. For only a casual fan, she's seen her fair share of hockey, and Shane doesn't hold it against her, especially because she's always there to support him when it counts.

"Also," Jessie says, as they trail behind Mom and Dad, "when you get a fancy penthouse with a giant TV, I am totally coming over to watch *The Real Housewives of Orange County*."

Shane laughs and elbows her. "Well, that won't be until later. First I play for the Laval Lightning, probably for a year."

"Aww, poor fancy boy, forced to play minor-league hockey for a *whole year*," she teases.

"Shut up!" Shane hisses, but he feels lighter after her ribbing. Number two isn't so bad. It's just that he's pissed about who went number one.

The next morning, Shane, Jessie, and their parents go out for a celebratory brunch, but Shane can't stop yawning.

"Did you sleep alright, Shane?" Mom asks. She stares at him with concern, as if she's worried he's an ill child.

"Uh, I couldn't sleep, so I went to the hotel gym," Shane says. Why did he say that? Why not just say he had a big day yesterday?

"Was it a good gym?" Dad asks.

Shane's eyes flick to Jessie who's looking at him curiously.

"No. I mean, there was no one—nothing of interest. Just a gym. I ran a few kilometres and then went to bed. That's it."

Jessie turns her head so only Shane can see her raised eyebrows. Shane rolls his eyes and Jessie narrows hers in response. He knows that look. It means 'we're coming back to this.'

On the plane, Jessie waits until after the safety demonstration before her quiet ambush.

"Spill. Why were you being so weird this morning? I heard you leave and come back last night and you were gone for like, an hour. I know you don't take an hour to run three kilometres."

Shane feels a bit of panic rising in his gut. A part of him wants to be fully honest with Jessie. That's what they do. But he just started having these weird fucking feelings *yesterday*, and he's not ready to share. He settles for most of the truth.

"I ran into Rozanov in the gym and he wanted to talk to me. He asked me if Boston was nice. It was weird. I just didn't want to tell Mom. You know how she gets about hockey stuff."

Jessie accepts this with a slow nod. "Huh. Maybe he's as obsessed with you as you are with him."

"I'm not!" Shane squawks.

"I know you are, but what am I?"

"That doesn't even make sense!"

Jessie just giggles and pops in her earbuds.

October 2009

Jessie: *You picking me up??? Or am I taking the bus like a heathen*

Shane laughs and sets his phone in his stall to start shucking his hockey gear. He's picking up Jessie from her dorm after his practice. They're getting Italian take out and taking it back to his apartment in Laval. She said she needed to 'get the fuck out of the pressure cooker that is McGill' and eat something other than salad at the dining hall, and Shane was happy to oblige. He's been going pretty much non-stop since training camp in September and has only managed to see her a couple of times since he got to Laval, so he's ready for some sibling bonding time.

"You texting a girl, Hollzy?" Hayden asks, slapping Shane's back with an elbow pad.

"Ew, it's my sister."

Hayden grins. "Your hot sister?"

Shane makes a disgusted face at him.

"Hayden? Play that back in your brain and try again."

"Ugh, whatever, man. Your sister is hot, just saying."

"If you touch my sister, you die," Shane says calmly, but he fucking means it. His sister is *not* a puck bunny.

Hayden holds up his hands in surrender. "Woah, sorry dude."

Shane rolls his eyes. "It's fine. Just find someone that's not related to me and I'll be happy."

The drive to Laval is filled with the smell of chicken parmesan, Taylor Swift, and off-key warbling. Shane doesn't really care about music, but my sheer repetition over the past three years, he can sing along to the entirety of 'Picture to Burn' and 'Teardrops on My Guitar.'

After they eat dinner at Shane's kitchen table, Jessie sprawls on his couch.

"Oh, to have an entire couch to myself! There's always at least three other girls trying to lay on the couch at any given time in my dorm."

Shane snorts and sits down in the armchair beside the couch, leaving her to starfish.

"Just lie on top of them," he quips. "Or are you too hung up on a certain Samantha Evans, hmm?"

"It's rude how well you know me," Jessie replies, pouting.

"Anything to share with the class?"

"Ugh!" she groans. "Sam and I had phone sex. Like, a few times."

Shane is usually known as the blusher of the family, but this has Jessie turning as red as a tomato. To be fair, Shane is now blushing a little at the mere mention of sex. God, he really is a prude. But it's sweet to see his usually confident sister flailing about this girl. It'll be fun to tease her about when she's not in the middle of a crisis.

"Okay," Shane says, waiting for more information—though he's hoping that he won't be getting graphic details of his sister's sex life.

"And then yesterday, I said I wanted to like, be together, because I'm a fucking idiot."

Shane sucks in a breath.

"Yeah," Jessie agrees. "She said outright that she's not looking for a relationship. I'm like... so dumb. And I know this is like—sorry, I shouldn't be telling you this much about my sex life, but I haven't made any real friends yet besides my roommate, and she's religious, so I've been terrified to come out and—"

"Jessica!" Shane says, loudly. "C'mon, it's me. You can talk to me. I definitely don't want details," he clarifies, and they both laugh. "But, you can tell me whatever you want to, seriously."

Jessie wipes her eyes and smiles.

"Sorry, fuck, I spiraled a little. Dammit! I like her so much, but I can't handle casual because I'm an emotional landmine."

Shane sometimes thinks maybe he's emotionally—or maybe sexually—stunted because he just isn't interested in any of the girls Hayden points out when they go out after games. In

fact, the only person Shane thinks about when he jerks off is the bulge of Ilya Rozanov's dick in his gym shorts, which is probably something he should devote some serious thought to. But today isn't about Shane.

Unfortunately, as much as he loves his sister, Shane is probably one of the worst people she could come to for advice, since he has none to offer.

Instead, he kicks her leg affectionately from his armchair and suggests, "Mario Kart?"

January 2010

World Juniors is amazing. Shane feels fucking redeemed, having beat Ilya Rozanov. What isn't amazing is the fact that Ilya's smirk has been haunting Shane's dreams for the last few nights. He really hopes that fucker leaves him alone soon. Rozanov is spending the year playing in the KHL, before Boston is sure to call him up for next season. In a way, it's a blessing that Ilya is far away. He can't get under Shane's skin that way. On the other hand, Shane feels compelled to check on Rozanov's stats way more regularly than necessary. *What the fuck?*

When Shane returns from his second World Juniors with a gold medal around his neck, Jessie insists on treating him to an illicit dorm room vodka party—though they both know Shane's not having more than one drink. Plus, her friends have been begging to meet him, apparently.

Shortly after their dinner in October, Jessie came out to her roommate, Chrissy, and it turns out she's a lesbian who was also nervous about coming out. Chrissy introduced Jessie to the other queer girls she knows on campus—one of whom is her girlfriend—and now Jessie has found herself a rag-tag group of friends. Shane's not jealous, exactly. He likes Hayden, but most of the other guys on the Laval Lightning are... not Shane's kind of people. They're a bit aggressive and pretty much all they want to do is pick up women.

Jessie has assured him that none of her friends are into him, they just like hockey and think it's cool that he's going to play in the NHL.

Shane has the weekend off when he returns, so he drives down to McGill and once he's spent about a half hour looking for parking, he texts Jessie that he's outside.

She bounds across the dorm lobby and pushes the door open enthusiastically. It looks like maybe she and the girls got started early, Shane notices with a grin.

"Gold medalist in da house!" Jessie cries, scooping Shane up into a hug from above. To his chagrin, that's something she can do. Somehow, she ended up growing a whole inch taller than Shane last year. With the heeled boots she always wears, in pictures and in real life, Jessie practically towers over him. Shane really tries not to be mad about it.

“Shh, oh my god!” Shane says, shoving her off.

They make their way up to Jessie’s dorm with a bit of swaying on Jessie’s part, and soon enough, Shane is greeted by three smiling women sitting on the fuzzy carpet in the center of the room. They all stand up when he comes in.

Jessie introduces him to everyone and they all shake Shane’s hand enthusiastically and beckon him to join them on the carpet.

There’s Chrissy, Jessie’s roommate, who has light brown skin, dark curls, and a tiny nose. Beside her is Jace, who has light skin, messy, spiky, bleached hair and is wearing Converse that lace up all the way to the knee. Finally, there’s Chrissy’s girlfriend Nayoung, who has long, stick-straight black hair, pale skin, and can’t be more than five feet tall.

Meeting all these people in this small space is overwhelming, but Shane takes a breath, a sip of the vodka Sprite Chrissy hands him, and finds a seat on the carpet.

“So, Shane,” Nayoung claps her hands. “You play hockey?”

Before Shane can respond, Chrissy lightly punches her girlfriend’s arm. “Don’t be weird, babe,” she chides.

Jace laughs and wraps her arms around her bent knees. “Nayoung knows *everything* about hockey,” she says, and Jessie groans.

“Guys, you promised!”

“I was trying to be cool!” Nayoung cries, indignant.

That startles a laugh out of Shane and then everyone is giggling.

“It’s cool, you can ask me about it. I don’t mind,” he says, and as the words come out of his mouth, he finds it’s true. There’s something cozy and welcoming about this circle of women that he doesn’t get from the rough men on the Lightning.

After a few minutes of questions about his admittedly interesting job, Jace produces a pack of cards from one of the many pockets in her cargo shorts. When she sets them in the center of the circle, Shane can see they’re *Uno!* cards.

“Topsy *Uno!*” she announces.

“No!” Chrissy cries. “That always gets so messy. Like, emotionally. If you make Nayoung cry, I will hurt you.”

Jessie giggles and puts her hand on Jace’s knee. She doesn’t move it.

“I’ll keep her in check, Chris.”

Shane can’t help but notice Jace has gone slightly pink and the smile on Jessie’s lips is smug.

For the next hour and a half, Shane plays tipsy Uno! with Jessie and her queer friends, and he has a fucking blast. No one expects him to be perfect here, and it's incredibly relaxing.

True to his word, Shane only has one Solo cup's worth of vodka Sprite, but the girls drink themselves silly. Eventually, Shane starts to feel his social battery draining, so he locks eyes with Jessie and nods toward the door.

She nods and stands up. "Okay, fools. I have like, a hundred assignments this weekend so I should sleep."

"Fuck, don't remind me," moans Nayoung. "I'm taking this class about like, how to use the library. What the fuck is that? I'm at fucking university. Of course I know how to use the fucking library!"

Shane snorts, feeling very grateful at this moment that he chose to avoid university. He probably would have done alright, but meaningless assignments always ticked him off in high school.

"Thank you for coming, Shane," Chrissy says grandly, as if he isn't just getting up off the floor of her dorm room.

"Uh, thanks for having me," he replies. Jessie grins encouragingly. He knows she's been worried about his lack of close friendships, just like he was worried about her in the fall. "I had fun."

Jace grins. "You should definitely come back. Mostly because you can beat Nayoung at *Uno*!"

"Hey!"

"Jace!"

Jessie walks Shane out, and in the lobby, he elbows her.

"Jace, huh?"

"Ugh, stop!" Jessie groans. "I totally have a type in women, don't I? Do you think I should ask her out?"

"When have I ever given you effective dating advice?" Shane quips. "But she was sitting *pretty* close to you," he adds.

"Ahhh! Okay, you need to go. Bye, hockey star." Jessie wraps him in a quick hug. "You'll come hang with us again?"

Shane smiles. "Yeah."

When he gets back to his apartment, Shane realizes triumphantly that he didn't think about Rozanov even once the whole evening.

March 2010

"Jessie. Jessie! You have to breathe!"

Fuck, Shane is failing at this. Jessie called him five minutes ago, crying and barely breathing, saying something about getting a D in one of her classes. He's never heard her like this and he has no idea what to do.

"I can't, I can't, I can't fail this class! I'll never be a lawyer!"

Shane can't remember exactly, but he's sure he's seen someone freak out like this on TV. He thinks the person helping them coached them through a few deep breaths. Jessie surely won't be able to listen to reason until she can breathe.

"Okay, take a deep breath with me. In." He listens to her take a shaky, teary inhale. "Out." She breathes out, a sob escaping. A couple of guided breaths later, Jessie sounds like she's calmed down.

"Okay, okay. I'm okay," Jessie says with a snuffle.

"Fuck," Shane breathes. "What just happened?"

"Panic attack, I think. It's happened before," she admits. "I just get really freaked out sometimes. I really don't want to fail at university. I want to be a lawyer. I want to help people. I'm afraid I won't make it."

"Stop, Jess, you're going to be amazing," Shane assures her. He realizes he's never really had the same fears. Shane has always been the best at hockey—he staunchly ignores the fact that fucking Rozanov was picked first in the draft—so he's never had these worries. When he's on the ice, nothing scares him, and when he's off the ice... Well, he's mostly thinking about hockey.

Sometimes, dealing with people gets his breathing going a little faster though, so he can relate about that.

"Yeah. Okay. I just have to get my grade up. Fuck, sorry. Where even are you?" Jessie asks.

Shane looks around his empty hotel room. Hayden went out with the guys, but Shane really didn't feel like it.

"Grand Rapids."

"Ew. How was the game?"

“We won again,” Shane says, proudly. They played well tonight, especially Hayden and Shane who got a goal each.

“Does this mean you’re going to the playoffs?”

“It’s looking good at the moment. Another week or so and we’ll know.”

“Mmkay. Me and the girls have tickets to see your game on Saturday and we are going out after. I fucking need a break. And we’ll definitely be there if you make it to the playoffs.”

Shane’s heart warms. He knows Jessie has a million things going on and he’s grateful she makes time to come to his games when she can.

“Thanks, Jess. You going to be okay?”

“Yeah, I think so. Thanks. Love you.”

“Love you, too.”

April 2010

They get knocked out of the playoffs in the first round by Rochester, but the loss is softened by the fact that his family and friends are there. Jessie and the girls come out with the team to commiserate the loss. Shane is nervous that some of the guys will be weird around his queer friends, especially because Jace is extremely unapologetic about her style and doesn’t take any shit.

Luckily, Jace sticks by Jessie’s side for most of the evening and they mostly keep each other entertained. Shane grins whenever he sees them flirting. They’re somehow not together yet, even though they’re so obviously into each other.

Nayoung gets into a heated discussion with Palmer, one of the other rookies, about the Guardian’s chances in the playoffs this year, and Chrissy gets absorbed by a group of players’ girlfriends who have endless questions about her curl routine.

Shane is sitting in a booth with Hayden, sipping a beer.

“Can you believe we’re going to be in the NHL next year?” Hayden asks, shaking his head.

Well, yes, Shane can. He’s always known he’d just play one year in the AHL, and Hayden has been one of the best players on their team all season. Management told Hayden last week that he was moving up in the fall, barring any issues at training camp in September, and it was awesome to hear that Shane would get to play his rookie season with Hayden.

“It’s gonna be fucking great, man,” he says.

“Dude,” Hayden says, gesturing with his beer bottle. “That girl is totally checking you out.”

Shane glances up and sees a girl with pretty blonde ringlets and shiny lip gloss. She raises her hand in a little wave. Shane returns it timidly.

“Are you going over there?” Hayden asks. “She’s hot.”

She is hot. And it’s been kind of a while since Shane’s had sex.

“Yeah, I guess.”

Fifteen minutes later, Shane is leaving with the girl, Jenna.

“Give me just one second. I need to tell my sister I’m leaving.”

Jenna nods and waits patiently near the door.

“Hey,” Shane says, finding Jessie and Jace by the bar. “I’m heading out.”

“Oh? Tired?” Jessie asks.

Shane blushes.

“No... With a girl.”

Jace and Jessie both straighten up and look behind Shane, trying to find the girl in question.

“Guys,” Shane begs, “don’t.” But it’s no use.

“Oooh, she’s smokin’” Jace decrees. Jessie agrees enthusiastically and Shane can’t help but laugh.

“Okay, I’m leaving. Text me when you get home safe.”

Sex is definitely supposed to be fun. So why is it so fucking stressful?

Shane and Jenna are naked in her double bed and he just *can’t* get hard. He’s really fucking trying. She has her hand on his dick and it feels nice, but like... not nice enough.

“Fuck, sorry,” Shane apologizes. “I wanted to, um. Sorry.”

Jenna smiles. She’s so fucking patient and definitely doesn’t deserve what’s happening right now.

“It’s alright, Shane. You’ve had a long day. What if I suck you off?”

“Yeah, let’s—uh, sure,” Shane says, eloquently.

She shuffles down the bed and plants herself between Shane's legs. From the angle he's laying, with Jenna's lips wrapped around his cock, he mostly can only see her hazel eyes and blonde curls as her head bobs. Thankfully, he finally gets hard in her mouth.

Usually, when a woman gives him a blow job, the only way Shane is able to come is squeezing his eyes shut and trying to keep his mind blank. This time, he tries to keep his eyes open, taking in the bounce of Jenna's curls, and it works.

"Oh, fuck, I'm gonna—" As Jenna pulls off, Shane takes over and jerks himself. At the last moment, Jenna's face transforms into Rozanov's in Shane's mind, and he comes harder than he ever has with a girl.

Fuck. Shitting *fuck*. That is not normal. He absolutely wants to panic, but he can't let Jenna know he's freaking out. Instead, he kisses her and gently coaxes her down to the mattress.

Shane fingers Jenna while she uses a vibrator on her clit and she comes with a breathy sigh. He books it out of there as fast as possible without being impolite.

On the sidewalk, he texts Jessie:

Shane: SOS

Less than thirty seconds later, as Shane is walking back to his car, his phone rings in his hand.

"What's wrong? Are you alright?" Her voice is serious.

Shane tries to calm her. "Sorry, yeah. I'm okay. I'm, ugh, fuck. Hang on, let me get in the car." He settles into the driver's seat and thunks his head against the steering wheel. "Are you sitting down?"

"What? Shane, what's going on? You're worrying me."

"Fuck! I—I thought about a man while I was with that girl," he admits. "And now I'm freaking the fuck out. Like, I knew I kind of thought guys were hot but... I thought it was like, a regular amount."

"Oh, Shane," Jessie says softly. "It's okay." Then, to Shane's surprise, she asks, "What man?"

He splutters, absolutely not ready to admit the complete truth to his sister.

"Does it matter?"

"Hmm, I guess not. I'm just nosy," she says, giggling.

Shane hesitates. "Are you not... surprised?"

"Would you be mad if I said *no*?"

“Oh, fuck,” he groans.

“Hey, it’s not a big deal. Coming from your bisexual sister,” she says pointedly.

“That’s not what I—” Shane says, then sighs and sits up. “But it’s not okay for me. I’m about to be playing in the NHL. I cannot be into thinking about dudes like that. If anyone found out, they’d probably kick me out.”

Jessie is quiet for a long moment.

“Shit, I kind of forgot about that. I guess I’m kind of in a bubble of queer people at McGill. None of the hockey guys were weird tonight about me and the girls,” she offers.

“It’s different when you’re in their locker room, Jess. They would think I’m checking them out. Fuck. I’m just going to keep it to myself. At least I still like girls,” he says. Shane is pretty sure it’s still true—tonight was particularly rough, but he has fucked girls successfully before and kind of enjoyed it.

“I’ve got your back,” Jessie assures him. “And I know Mom and Dad do too, whatever happens. They’ve been so chill about me.”

Jessie came out to their parents a few months ago and they barely reacted, just hugging her and telling her they love her. Shane is so glad. He doesn’t know what he would do if their parents weren’t supportive of her.

“Thanks. Love you.”

“Love you, too. Take a deep breath, you’re okay.”

That night, Shane can’t sleep, and he can’t get fucking Rozanov out of his head. Shane knows that in less than six months he’s going to be facing him on the ice and he has got to get this under control. Unfortunately, as he feels himself getting hard in his briefs, Shane realizes that tonight isn’t the night he’s going to get Ilya Rozanov out of his head.

July 2010

Shane returns from Toronto in a fucking *state*. He cannot believe he got on his knees and sucked Rozanov off and then let him return the favor. He also has no fucking clue how he’s going to keep it from Jessie. That woman is like a fucking walking lie detector—not that Shane makes a habit of lying to her.

Thankfully, she has an internship in Ottawa this summer, and Shane is sticking around Montreal to train for the upcoming season. He’s going to see her a few times at family dinners, but mostly he’ll be able to avoid her, at least until he calms the fuck down about this. Unluckily, she texts him almost the second he gets off the plane.

Jessie: *how was Rozanov?*

Shane: An asshole

Jessie: did he get hotter?

Shane: Ew. Stop sexualizing my rival

Jessie: :(

Fucking hell. Shane is actually so fucked.

October 2010

Shane sits in an Italian restaurant on a Saturday in October with his parents and Jessie and tries to tamp down his anxiety. Jessie doesn't join them for every pre-home game lunch, but she and his parents know he is extra nervous to be facing Rozanov today. He's glad they're here.

"The league is always looking for a marketing angle, Shane. It's just a game like any other," Dad says.

"I know," Shane says. He's sure his parents would be surprised to learn why he was really freaking out, though he has an inkling Jessie wouldn't be that surprised. Whenever she saw him this summer, she narrowed her eyes at him, examining him as if trying to figure him out. Their parents were around most of the time they spent together, thankfully, so she didn't get time to interrogate him, and now she seems to have moved on.

"Is Drapeau going to be starting tonight?" Mom asked. "He was weak on his left side last game. Is he hurt."

Shane smiled. "He's fine, Mom."

"Yeah, *Mom*. He's fine," Jessie teased. Mom fixes her with a look, but her lips twitch, undermining the sentiment.

Once she's done glaring, Mom turns back to Shane.

"You need a lamp beside your couch in that apartment," she declares.

"What?"

"Your living room. It's too dark. Do you want the one from the den at home? We don't need it."

"That's okay, Mom," Shane says. "You keep that. I'll get one."

"Mom! He does not need your old furniture. He's a millionaire! *I* need your old furniture," Jessie quips.

The imbalance between Jessie and Shane's current salaries could be fucking weird. After all, he is making millions, and she's getting minimum wage at Tim Horton's in the mornings before classes. Maybe some sisters would be jealous that their brother makes that much more than them, but not Jessie. She's in school to do what she loves, and she's assured him on more than one occasion that she's happy and not resentful. However, she does like to make fun of him about it.

"Jessica," Dad warns, sounding nervous.

"Dad, she's kidding," Shane assures him. "Her apartment came furnished, anyway," he teases.

"Ugh," Jessie groans. "Complete with that fucking ugly green couch."

"It's an awful couch. But we're so proud of you, sweetie. Your scholarships are—"

"Mom, I know," Jessie says with a soft smile. "I appreciate it. But today is about Shane! You're coming to my debate tournament next weekend. You can praise me then."

Mom rolls her eyes, but turns her focus back to Shane and proceeds to pump his tires about the game for half an hour. It's a distraction, at least, from Rozanov.

December 2010

It's late on Boxing Day when Jessie knocks quietly on Shane's bedroom door at their parents' house in Ottawa. Christmas has been a welcome respite from the busy season, but Shane's nerves never completely died down since he's facing off against Rozanov again in two days. Hence why he's not asleep.

"Where've you been?" Shane whispers as she tiptoes into his dark room. He sits up and turns on the bedside lamp.

Face in her hands, Jessie sits down on the end of Shane's bed. She says something into her palms, but Shane can't make it out.

"What?"

"Fuck!" she whisper-shouts, tearing her hands away from her face. "I hooked up with Sam."

"Samantha Evans?" Shane gasps. He didn't realize Jessie was still carrying a torch for her high school crush. "What about Jace? I thought you two had finally—"

Jessie shakes her head, cutting him off.

"We did. We were, but last week we decided we're better off as friends. So maybe I'm just... I don't know, lonely? But Sam was at Theo's party tonight and then one thing led to another. God, I make the worst decisions around her!"

“Did you... talk?”

Jessie gives him a look. “No, Shane,” she says sardonically. “We did not. Like I said, I’m the captain of bad choices.”

“Hey, woah. It’s not bad to hook up with people,” Shane says, trying and failing to keep Rozanov from popping into his head.

“No, I know. I just—it brought back the huge crush I had on her in Grade 12. And the way she was looking at me... I don’t know. It seemed like maybe she might’ve felt that way too. But I can’t do long distance. I literally forget to text people I see every day. I would be the worst!” She says with a wet laugh.

Shane chuckles because, yeah, Jessie can sometimes be a bad texter.

“Well, maybe you’ll find your way back to each other someday,” he offers.

Jessie snuffles. “Okay, Mr. Romantic, damn. I should let you sleep.” She heads for the door and leans on the frame. “Thanks for cheering me up,” she says with a smile. Then, her eyes widen. “Oh, also: do *not* wake me up tomorrow when you leave. I know it’s early and I am going to need to be comatose for approximately the next ten hours.”

January 2011

Shane is a ball of anxiety when he returns from Nashville. The All-Star weekend was incredible. He is thrilled to even *be* an All-Star, and to beat Ilya in the skills competition was the icing on the cake. Well... Also the sex. Which is why he’s anxious.

It’s fucking *real* now that they’ve hooked up twice and *have each other’s numbers*. Shane wishes he didn’t want to hook up when Ilya comes to Montreal, but he really, really does. He just doesn’t want Ilya in his space. It would be too personal.

Shane is also anxious to see Jessie. He doesn’t know how she’s not going to figure out something is up with him, and avoiding her for a few months isn’t going to work this time around.

“Okay, what the fuck is up with you, weirdo? You’re sweating.”

“I... worked out.”

“Uh-huh.” Jessie fixes him with a suspicious glance before plopping down on his absurdly expensive armchair. He gingerly sits down on the couch, knowing he’s acting unnaturally, and grabs the remote. They’re supposed to be watching an awful movie, one of their favorite high school pass times, but Shane can’t think of any movies right now. When he turns the TV on, he stares straight ahead at a basketball game that’s playing on ESPN.

Jessie leans forward, grabs the remote, and turns the TV back off.

“Not so fast.” She lifts her right hand and points to the faint, thin scar on her palm—the remnants of their childhood blood pact. It’s a gesture that means, ‘don’t lie to me, asshole.’

Shane makes a pained noise and drops his head into his hands.

“Okay, if you’re going to be cagey, I’ll just lay out some facts.” Jessie clears her throat and Shane is absolutely fucked. He should know better than to try to hide something from a future lawyer. “Fact number one—”

“Oh for fuck’s sake.”

“Quiet, you,” she says, sounding exactly like Mom. “Fact number one: You’re acting really weird right now. Fact number two: You got super cagey and strange after your photo shoot this summer. What do both of those events have in common? One Ilya Rozanov. Fact number three: You have been low-to-high-key obsessed with Ilya Rozanov for two years now, and even though we’ve never talked about it again, you said you thought about a man during sex last year. When I put all these facts together, I think the answer is pretty obvious.”

Shane doesn’t know whether to laugh or cry. But he needs her to say it. He cannot bring himself to admit what is happening out loud. He just presses his fingers harder against his eyes.

“You’re still not going to tell me? Ugh, Shane! Did you fuck Ilya Rozanov?”

He brings his hands down and slowly sits up, blinking away the darkness and meeting her focused gaze.

“Yes.” It comes out as a terrified whisper, and embarrassingly, tears prick in Shane’s eyes.

Jessie immediately softens. “Oh, Shane, it’s okay.” She gets up from the armchair and settles herself beside him on the couch.

“It’s really not,” Shane argues. “I have to put an end to it. We can’t—we’re rivals. It’s actually insane that I—”

“Hey, breathe,” Jessie commands, pressing one of her hands over Shane’s heart. “In and out. C’mon.”

Shane follows her lead and breathes.

After a few moments, he calmly gets out, “You can’t tell anyone. I wasn’t supposed to tell anyone. I made him promise he wouldn’t and now I’ve gone and broken that promise.”

Jessie shrugs. “So tell him I know. What’s he going to do? Not want to sleep with you? I have to say, from the few interviews I’ve seen, he might just be as obsessed with you as you are with him. And *of course* I won’t tell. You can trust me, dummy.”

Shane breathes a sigh of relief. He knew Jessie wouldn't be running off to tell the tabloids—that would be nuts—but hearing her say it helps quell the panic in his chest.

“Do you want to talk about it?” Jessie asks.

“Absolutely not,” Shane says immediately, instinctively. Then, “I don't know. It's just... really fucked up. If people found out, our careers would probably be over. I'm not like—I can't be... queer, like you.”

“I hope that changes someday.”

Shane sighs. “Me too.”

A slow smile grows on Jessie's face. “But is he good?”

“Huh?”

“In bed! Is Rozanov good in bed, Shane!”

“I am not detailing my... escapades for you. Ew.”

“Scuse me! Did I ask for details? I asked a very appropriate, vague question. Also, *escapades*?”

“Ugh, whatever,” Shane groans. “Yes, he's good in bed, okay?”

Jessie's eyes sparkle. “Are you seeing him again?”

“I don't know,” Shane says, although he's not sure how honest he's being. “He wants to meet up in two weeks when Boston plays here, but I don't know.”

Jessie shakes her head. “Live a little, Shane. Have some fun.”

Loathe as he is to admit it, that's probably exactly what he's going to do.

Ilya is in between sets in his workout when his phone buzzes.

Jane: *My sister knows about us. I'm sorry. She guessed and I couldn't deny it.*

Hollander has a sister? Oh, Ilya thinks maybe he does remember seeing a girl with Hollander's family at the draft. A zing of annoyance zips through him as he thinks back to Hollander, six months ago, warning Ilya not to tell anyone. And now here he is, blabbing to his family.

Ilya: *What did she say?*

Jane: *Idk. Nothing really. She's bi, so she wasn't weirded out.*

Well, today really is full of surprises. Hollander has a *bisexual* sister. Fascinating.

Ilya: *She will not say anything?*

Jane: *No! I swear she won't.*

As annoying as it is for Hollander to go back on what he said in July, if Ilya is reading things correctly, Hollander seems fucking stressed out. He decides not to be a huge dick about this.

Ilya: *Then is fine*

Well, maybe he'll be kind of a dick. Hollander is too easy to fuck with.

Ilya: *I should meet her. Maybe I charm 2 Hollanders.*

Jane: *You are NOT meeting my sister. Now delete the message with my name on it.*

Ilya delights in having flustered Hollander and does as he's told. Hollander is right: they shouldn't have each other's names in their phones.

March 2011

"When is he getting here?" Jace asks, bouncing up and down on the couch in the off-campus apartment Jessie shares with Chrissy and Nayoung.

"Henry is *on his way!*" Jessie insists. In truth, Henry has been *on his way* for forty-five minutes. Nayoung has already pregamed and is yelling at a hockey game on the tiny TV in the kitchen.

Earlier, when Shane asked Chrissy if Nayoung was alright, she shrugged and said, "She's been like this lately. Getting really into the like six different teams because she's stressed about school." Shane grinned and made a mental note to get Nayoung and Chrissy tickets to a few more games before the season is over.

"Ugh, I'm so impatient," Jace grumbles. "And for what? A man?" she adds, mostly to herself. Shane snorts and Jessie gives her a fond glare.

The way Jessie and Jace are acting around each other fascinates Shane. The last time Shane saw them together was two weeks before Christmas and Jace was looking at Jessie like she hung the moon. But then they broke up shortly after and apparently went back to being close friends. Shane can't fathom that, since none of the girls he dated in high school wanted anything to do with him after they broke up.

Yet here Jace and Jessie are, acting completely normally, with Jace excited to meet Jessie's new boyfriend. Shane is also quite curious about Henry. Jessie says she met him in her International Relations lecture, that he's very nice, and that he's pansexual, which gave him immediate points with the girls. He's sure they would support Jessie if she wanted to date a straight man, but as someone who spends a lot of time with a lot of straight men, Shane gets why they'd rather she didn't bring one into their fold. And as someone they perceive to be straight, Shane feels very lucky that they have accepted him so easily.

A moment later, the doorbell rings and Jessie pops up from where she's perched on the arm of a chair.

"He's here! Can someone pry Nayoung away from the TV?"

"I got it," Shane volunteers.

When he gets to the kitchen, Nayoung is standing a foot away from the TV, arms crossed and brows furrowed.

"Hey," he says, not too loudly, trying not to scare her.

Nayoung whirls around. "Oh, hi Shane," she says. "Sorry, hah." She gestures behind her.

He smiles. "What do you think I do in my spare time?" he jokes, though he's pretty sure they both know he's not kidding. It's been a year of friendship and sometimes Nayoung still gets nervous around him, but only when discussing hockey. She's perfectly happy to roast him about his haircut or boring dress pants any other time.

She seems to remember that Shane isn't just a random NHL star that walked into her apartment, and is, in fact, her friend.

"I just can't stand Kent, that rookie from Toronto. I don't know how you don't just punch him in the face whenever you're on the ice together!"

Shane thinks back to three weeks ago and hears Kent's homophobic slurs echoing in his head.

"If I was that kind of player, he's the first person I'd punch."

"Even before Rozanov?" Nayoung asks, eyebrows raised.

Shane chokes out a laugh. It's good that his and Rozanov's rivalry is so strong, so no one has noticed the sexual tension. He settles for a truth—something he's *very* sure of.

"At least Rozanov's not a homophobe."

Henry turns out to be, as promised, very nice. He's also... hot. He's about six-foot with warm, dark skin and bleached, straightened hair falling over his forehead. Shane just knows his own hand is clammy when he shakes Henry's.

The group orders Indian take-out and gently interrogates Henry in a way that tells Shane no one really doubts his worth as Jessie's boyfriend. It's sweet. Shane thinks, for a moment, that maybe he should be hounding Henry more, as the protective brother, but he's grateful when he realizes that's definitely misogynistic. Thank fuck, because he's having trouble speaking to the incredibly attractive Henry without stumbling over his words and he'd really rather Jessie doesn't find out that fun fact.

Shane ends up ducking out early, glad to have the excuse of an early practice the next day. As he's getting in bed, Jessie texts him.

Jessie: so??? what did you think of henry?

Shane: He's great. Very good listener.

Jessie: HA! is that your way of saying i talk too much?

Shane: Obviously

Jessie: :(

Shane: Really, he seems nice. I'm glad he could come.

Jessie: now we gotta find you someone!!

Shane: No thanks.

*Jessie: oh *right**

Shane: Goodnight asshole.

June 2011

The Las Vegas air is warm against Ilya's cheeks. He kind of wants to rip off all his clothes and scream. His plane leaves for Russia in three days and just the idea of seeing his father and brother again is enough to keep Ilya up at night.

He's been trying to quit smoking. Really, he has. It's just not going well.

Ilya is pulling a pack of cigarettes and a lighter out of his pocket when he hears the rooftop door open. Whoever it is can go fuck themselves. Ilya wants to be alone. He lights up and takes a long drag. The nicotine filling his lungs distracts him for a moment and he doesn't notice that someone has joined him at the railing overlooking the city. A sideways glance reveals it's a woman.

On another night, Ilya might have tried his luck—after all, he looks fantastic in a tux—but instead he just stares straight ahead and smokes.

"Can I bum one?" the woman asks.

Ilya looks at her properly for the first time. She's gorgeous, with curly black hair and a dress with a deep vee.

"Okay," he says, and retrieves his cigarettes. She takes one and lets him light it in her mouth.

"Thanks, Rozanov," she says flatly. His eyes widen and she smirks. "Are you really surprised that someone here—on tonight of all nights—knows your name?"

Ilya blinks and realizes he had looked at the woman, but not truly *seen* her. Her dark hair isn't curly, but carefully curled, and her skin is a familiar smooth tan. Finally, Ilya understands

who he's talking to when he notices the angle of her dark eyes and the freckles dusting her cheeks.

"Ah, you are the sister."

"Jessie," she says, as an answer. Jessie doesn't extend her hand, so Ilya doesn't either, just thanks his lucky stars he didn't accidentally hit on Hollander's sister.

"You are having good night?" Ilya asks. He has to say something, especially now he knows who he's talking to. "Hollander is happy?"

Jessie fixes him with a look that Ilya can't quite decipher.

"Well, he's drunk, so I guess so. Scott Hunter keeps giving him shots."

Ilya huffs a laugh, but doesn't offer anything else. He would like to see a drunk Hollander, but his body feels too big for his skin right now, so going back to the party isn't an option.

"It's my understanding," Jessie says, "that it's kinda shitty of you to be up here just because Shane beat you at something."

Ilya doesn't say anything. He can't. It feels like someone has wrapped a hand around his throat.

"But I guess you're not a very good sport," Jessie announces, then takes a drag and blows out a cloud of smoke. Ilya is having a hard time reconciling the image of the girl version of Hollander smoking one of Ilya's death sticks.

"Not everything is about Shane Hollander," Ilya bites out, just barely managing not to snap at this woman. How dare she accuse him of skipping a party just because he lost? If it didn't hurt to breathe the stale air inside the hotel, Ilya would be swindling Scott Hunter out of a line of shots right alongside Hollander.

"Hmm," is all Jessie says.

They smoke in silence for a few minutes, Ilya starting on his second. When Jessie snuffs out her cigarette butt on a nearby ashtray, Ilya holds out the pack to offer her another, but she holds up her hand and shakes her head.

"I should get back." Jessie walks back toward the door, then turns back. "Hey, Rozanov." He meets her gaze. "He'll kill you if you jump over this, you know."

That startles a real laugh out of Ilya and he's still laughing, a bit hysterically, even, when the door to the rooftop slams behind Jessie Hollander.

Shane feels a hand on his shoulder. Jessie.

"Where have you been?"

She rolls her eyes. "Met Rozanov."

"What? Where—where is he?" Shane cranes his neck and looks around the room for the fourth or fifth time in an hour.

"Subtle," Jessie comments. Shane wrinkles his nose at her and just barely stops himself from flipping her off. She seems to take pity. "He's on the roof."

"Thanks," Shane mutters, all but running to the elevator.

There's no one on the roof when Shane gets upstairs. He sighs and leans up against the railing. What the fuck is wrong with him? Trailing after Rozanov like some kind of lost puppy. He should be downstairs, celebrating. Instead, he's staring down at the lights of Vegas, alone.

That evening, he gets a text.

Lily: See you next season.

July 2011

That summer, Henry joins Shane and his family at his parents' cottage. They've been coming to the cottage almost since Shane can remember. He adores it; the quiet, the solitude of the wilderness, the peace. Being here this summer, Shane has been thinking that maybe he would like to build his own cottage, maybe on the same lake. A quick Google search revealed there were available plots of land just minutes away from his parents' cottage. He has already offered to build his parents a new cottage, but they're attached to the one they've had for over fifteen years, and Shane understands. The cottage is a second home.

Over the years, he and Jessie have brought a few friends up to the cottage, so it's not weird to have another person in their family space. Henry fits in well with their family dynamic, and Jessie seems so happy.

Also, much to Shane's relief, his initial, uncomfortable attraction to Henry has faded, and he no longer feels like anything that comes out of his mouth will be a jumbled mess.

Today, Henry, Jessie, and Shane dusted off three of the kayaks to take advantage of the hot, sunny day.

It's nice to get out and get some vitamin D. Shane probably spends way too much of his life inside.

As often happens when one hangs out with a couple, Shane finds himself third wheeling as they paddle around the lake. Jessie playfully splashes Henry and he chases after her, giggling.

Shane tries very hard not to be jealous of his sister. He has no right. He has so much in his life. The career of his dreams, a beautiful apartment, a loving family. He even has multiple

good friends in different areas of his life, for fuck's sake. So why does seeing Henry and Jessie acting like a couple make something twang in Shane's chest?

It's not like Shane even wants to be in a relationship right now. He's much too busy. And he has this... *thing* with Rozanov.

Not that he wants to be in a relationship with Rozanov! Or any man really. But maybe it's a little sad to think that if he did want to date a man, it would have to wait until after his hockey career is over. Shane is only twenty now, and twenty years from now feels like an eternity. None have caught his eye recently, but surely a nice woman will come along that makes Shane feel the way Jessie clearly does about Henry.

Right?

November 2011

"Hey, what's up? I have like two minutes," Jessie says quickly. From the noise on the other line, Shane can tell she's walking outside, probably to class.

"Short version: Hayden proposed to Jackie last week."

"Aww, that's sweet!" Jessie coos.

"It is. He took her to the botanical gardens. Anyway, they're thinking February."

"Where? In Florida? Who has a February wedding in Canada?"

Shane laughed.

"Hayden said, and I quote, 'Jackie wants to be a snow princess.'"

"It's criminal that I haven't met Jackie yet. She seems like my kind of girl."

"Well, that's why I'm calling. I can bring a plus one and I figured you'd want to go."

Jessie screeches so loudly Shane has to pull the phone away from his ear.

"I'm taking that as a yes."

"Uh, yes I want to go to a fancy winter wedding!" A pause. Someone yelling something to Jessie. "Coming, sorry! Shane, I gotta go. I'm super late! Love you bye-eeee!"

December 2011

"Heading out, are you?" Shane says, poking his head into the bathroom he and Jessie share at their parents' house. She's inches from the mirror, applying liquid eyeliner.

She finishes a perfect swipe of eyeliner and brings the brush away from her face. "Maybe."

"Seeing Sam?"

Jessie grins. "Maybe."

Jessie and Henry broke up in October—he went to see his family in October for Thanksgiving weekend and his childhood best friend confessed that she'd been in love with him for years. Henry isn't an asshole, so he didn't cheat on Jessie, but he did call her and break up with her for the other girl, which Shane still thinks was kind of shitty. Jessie was broken up about it at first, but she's a hopeless romantic and just wants the best for him. Shane can't say he's surprised Jessie doesn't mind being single for Christmas, based on last year's events.

"You're playing in Boston in a week," Jessie says.

"Mhm," Shane hums, not knowing why that's relevant.

"Seeing Rozanov?"

Shane splutters. "Shut up."

Jessie just winks and turns back to the mirror.

February 2012

As Shane sits at a large round table in an extremely fancy hotel banquet hall, he feels that twang of jealousy again. Hayden is dancing with Jackie, her beautiful white dress almost swallowing his legs, and their matching grins are wonderfully wide.

Luckily, he's not able to wallow for long.

"Damn, your sister can dance, Hollander!" cries J.J., crashing down into the seat beside Shane.

Shane laughs at J.J., who is gasping breaths and has sweat dripping down his temples.

"Based on the state of you, I would guess she's the professional athlete," he chirps.

"Fuck you! Why aren't you dancing?"

"No one wants to see that, trust me."

J.J. laughs. "So, is Jessie single?"

"Nope. Absolutely not. Shut it down."

Hayden finds Shane later when he's hovering near the bar. He punches Shane's arm, grinning, then points to Jackie, who is whirling around on the dance floor with Jessie and her bridesmaids.

"That's my wife, man!"

"Fuck yeah, Hayd," Shane says, clapping Hayden on the back. "I'm so happy for you, dude." It's true. Shane and Hayden don't exactly have a lot of deep talks, but he knows Hayden was eager to settle down with Jackie the moment they met and Shane is glad they've finally tied the knot.

"You're next, buddy!"

Shane's traitorous brain stumbles over an image of Ilya Rozanov in a slim-fitting tuxedo. He shakes his head to get rid of the thought and quickly changes the subject.

July 2013

"What is this?" Jessie asks, holding up a stack of papers. She's seated at one of the bar stools at Shane's kitchen island, wearing pink Barbie themed pajamas. She recently got her hair cut—shoulder-length with an undercut—and it swooshes when she whips her head around to look at Shane.

Shit. He didn't mean to leave that out.

"It's not a big deal," he says, but he can hear the edge in his own voice.

Jessie spins on the stool to keep the papers away from Shane. "This is a deed. To a condo. In Brossard." She narrows her eyes at him. "What the fuck?"

"It's an investment," Shane defends, much too aggressively.

"Uh-uh. Don't buy it."

"What? I can't make investments?"

"You *can*," Jessie clarifies, "but you've been a millionaire for, like, five years, and you've never done anything like this."

"Hmm," is all Shane says.

"I'm going to be a lawyer, shithead. I will keep interrogating you." She points to the faint scar on her palm. *Tell me the truth, asshole*, she's saying.

Shane laughs. Jessie is staying with him this week, and on Sunday, she's moving to Toronto where she's starting at the University of Toronto Law School. Shane is going to miss her a stupid amount.

"Fuck," he groans. "I... Jesus fuck. I'm going to renovate it. And I've got an agent looking for a tenant for the retail space on the ground floor..."

"And?"

"And it's getting really complicated to keep seeing Rozanov in hotel rooms, so I thought we could meet up there." Shane blurts it out in one quick burst.

Jessie's eyes go wide and her mouth drops open. They stare at each other in silence for a long moment before Shane looks away.

"Okay. Wow. Lots to process there. I'd wondered if you were still... Are you together? Wait—why do you need to fuck at a condo in Brossard? Can't he come here?"

As she's speaking, Shane feels a zing of panic shoot up his spine. His face is burning and he wants to die a little bit.

"I—we're not—he's—fuck—" He cuts himself off because he can't breathe and he falls forward, pressing both hands into the edge of the island.

Is he actually fucking insane? What is he doing buying a building to bring Rozanov to? If this is Jessie's reaction, he can't even imagine what Rozanov will say. Nothing good, that's for sure. Maybe he'll get right back in his cab and drive away. Shane is so fucking pathetic. They shouldn't even be doing this anymore and—

"Shane!"

He feels Jessie's hands on his shoulders. She's gripping him tightly, nails digging into his skin.

Shane focuses on the pain and lets Jessie's voice bring him back down.

"You're safe, Shane. You're okay. Breathe with me. In, yes, good. Back out. One more time. There we go."

He follows her directions and collapses forward onto the counter, exhausted.

A few minutes later, Jessie speaks up quietly.

"I'm sorry." She sounds truly remorseful and a bit scared.

Shane finally finds the strength to stand up straight, the panic subsiding for now.

"We're not..." He takes a breath and sits down on a bar stool. "It's not like that. It's just easier than—" God, how does he explain this when he doesn't even know why he even keeps seeing Rozanov. They're not together. It's nothing like that. But it's... something. And he has to protect it—whatever they have.

"The condo will be safer than hotel rooms. And I"—Shane isn't exactly sure what he's going to say until it comes out of his mouth—"need to keep this place for *just me*."

"I get it," Jessie says, leaning on the counter across from Shane. "Sam and I have never hooked up in a bed. Every Christmas it's a couch or—god, once it was a table. If we ended the night lying there next to each other, I don't think I'd ever be able to leave."

Something in Shane's chest slots back into place. He's so fucking glad he has Jessie to talk to about this shit. If he didn't, he'd probably be even more neurotic than he already is. After a moment of silence, Shane's relief morphs into a kind of giddiness and he starts giggling.

"We really are a fucking pair," he manages, as laughs shake his frame.

Jessie shakes her head, but she's laughing too, now.

"How'd we get into these messes, dude? I mean, your shit is fucking complicated. But what's my excuse? Can I not pick literally anyone who lives in the same fucking city, province, fuck, *country* as me?"

Shane just laughs, a bit hysterical, but Jessie must be able to tell he's over the worst of the panic and the anxious spiral because she goes in on him next.

"Maybe I should buy her a building. You think she'd move back to Canada with her fancy art degree if I bought her an unfinished condo?"

"Fuck you!" Shane cries, with absolutely no malice. "Jesus, I'm gonna miss you, even when you're an asshole."

Jessie sobers.

"Gonna miss you, too." She heaves a put-upon sigh. "Get me tickets to your games in Toronto and I *guess* I'll come."

December 2013

The wind is whipping through the trees outside, but the fireplace in Shane's parents' house is warm and casts a yellow glow on the otherwise dark living room. A random Hallmark Christmas movie is playing on the TV, but neither Shane or Jessie are paying much attention. Shane is on the couch, attempting to skim a bit of the hockey history book his parents bought him for Christmas, but he can't really see it by the light of the fire and the television. Maybe he needs glasses.

Jessie, on the opposite end of the couch, looks up from her phone abruptly, then casts her face toward the ceiling, taking a long, deep breath.

"You okay?"

"Mhm."

It's another few seconds before Jessie looks Shane in the eye.

"You know how I've been... like, fucking losing it on the regular?" she asks, then continues without letting him answer. "What am I saying? Jesus, of course you do."

It's true. He definitely does know what Jessie is talking about. Over the last three months, she has called him crying and hyperventilating no less than seven times. He's used to her having what seem to be panic attacks every now and then, but this was on another level.

"Yeah," Shane says, softly. "Are you doing alright?"

Jessie blows out a breath. "I've started seeing a therapist. She diagnosed me with generalized anxiety and panic disorder."

"Oh." Those are some scary terms, and Shane isn't one hundred percent sure he knows what they mean.

"Yeah, it's really helping. Like, now I have these coping skills. I mean it's awful, having to confront all the shit in my brain, but even just the last month of seeing Dr. Green, I've started feeling less... freaked out all the fucking time."

"I'm glad, Jess," he says, giving her an encouraging smile. "I'm proud of you."

She returns the smile, then pokes Shane's thigh with her toe from the other side of the couch.

"D'you wanna know what I found out?"

"Hmm?" Shane says, sleepily. The full day of Yuna Hollander in Christmas mode is catching up with him.

"Sam Evans moved back to Ottawa this fall," Jessie says, dreamily.

Shane snorts.

"Well, she gets points for living in the same country as you now. Are you seeing her tomorrow?"

"I don't know. I probably shouldn't," Jessie sighs. "She texted me today. I just..."

"Isn't it kind of your thing? To see each other on Boxing Day?"

Jessie groans dramatically.

"It *was*. When it was just fun, I mean."

Shane squints at her.

"Huh? What do you mean?"

"Fuuuuck. I don't want to say it out loud. That makes it fucking real."

Shane has no earthly clue what Jessie is going on about, so all he can do is shrug and say, "Sorry. You don't have to."

Jessie sits up straighter and hugs her knees to her chest.

"We were supposed to just be like, hooking up—even though I'm clearly trash at casual. Like mostly just at Christmas. But then we started texting a lot last year and my stupid ass fell all the way in love with her."

"Shit," Shane says. He's not sure what else to say. Jessie would probably be the first to tell him he's not the most emotionally intelligent, but he can't help but ask, "Have you told her?"

Jessie glares at him. "You think I, anxious fucker number one over here, confessed my love to my crush of literally five years? Especially since the last time I told her I was interested in her like that, she turned me down!"

Shane puts up his hands in surrender.

"Okay, okay!"

As he watches Jessie pick at her thumbnail and play with her phone case, Shane's mind drifts to Rozanov. For a while now, whenever Jessie mentions Sam, Shane thinks of Rozanov. It's just weird that he and Jessie both have these hookups they only see a few times a year, so the comparison comes naturally. No other reason.

But, here is where they differ, apparently; Shane isn't in love with Rozanov. God, that would be ridiculous. He almost laughs at the thought.

The day Shane Hollander falls in love with Ilya Rozanov is the day all hell freezes over.

June 2014

Jessie: *hey! your man won!*

Shane: *He's not my man. Jesus.*

Jessie: *are you two gonna celebrate?*

Shane: *No. We're not friends. We don't do that. We can't be seen together.*

Jessie: *right. sorry.*

Jessie: *can't wait to see you in 3 weeks!!!!*

Shane: *Me too. I still don't know what I'm getting them.*

Jessie: *a million dollars?*

Shane: *Ha ha*

Jessie: *hockey tickets for life*

Shane: That might cost more than a million dollars.

Jessie: fair.

Jessie: they're doing this online wedding registry thing where you can buy them gifts, but also you can send them money for their honeymoon. they're going to Korea.

That night, Shane opens the link Jessie shared with him. Across the top of the webpage, it says 'Chrissy and Nayoung.' There's a huge picture of the two of them grinning, arms wrapped around each other.

Signing his name, Shane buys a coffee maker they requested, and anonymously, he donates \$10,000 to their honeymoon fund.

Approximately two minutes later, his phone rings.

"Go fuck yourself," Nayoung says on the other end. "I fucking love you, but actually go fuck yourself." If Shane isn't mistaken, he thinks he can hear her crying.

"Hi Shane," comes Chrissy's voice, much calmer, but still a bit choked up. "We wanted to call and say thank you."

"How did you... I mean what do you mean?" Nice save, idiot.

"Cut the crap," Nayoung says, but there's no threat behind it. "How many people do you think we know who would give us a 10k wedding present?"

Shane cringes. Maybe this is too much. Maybe it's insulting. Ten thousand dollars is a lot of money to most people, but to him, it's barely a drop in the bucket. Hopefully he hasn't fucked everything up with two of the kindest people he's ever met.

"Look," Shane starts, "you two are important... to me." Jesus. What in the emotionally constipated hell? "It's a gift, and also I wanted to thank you for taking care of Jessie these past four years. And for welcoming me into your group, too."

"Girl," Chrissy says, laughing, "I think that girl took care of us."

"That's the fucking truth," agrees Nayoung. She sniffs aggressively. "Listen, I was just giving you a hard time. Thank you, dude. We will send you like, a million postcards."

"Yeah, and also, just because we're about to be old and boring and married, doesn't mean we don't still want our monthly dinners."

Monthly dinners are something Nayoung and Chrissy implemented last summer when Jessie and Jace both moved away. Shane suspects Jessie had something to do with her two best friends effectively adopting Shane in her absence, and he can't deny he's grateful.

"Wouldn't miss it."

Ilya Rozanov does not have news alerts on for Shane Hollander. Except for the fact that he does. He doesn't always click on the alerts when they show up on his phone, but it's good to keep up with his competition.

Today, the headline of the article says, "SHANE HOLLANDER SPOTTED AT GAY WEDDING." There's a picture below it of Hollander in a dark blue suit beside two women in white and another woman who Ilya is pretty sure is Jessie Hollander. He clicks.

"Hockey superstar Shane Hollander was spotted this weekend with his sister, Jessica Hollander, at a lesbian wedding in Montreal. Sources say he was in the wedding party and danced with the brides at the reception."

Ilya spends far too long looking at the candid photo of Hollander and the women. He looks fucking good in blue. Obviously, Ilya knows that. Half the time he's playing against Hollander, he's wearing blue and he looks stellar every time. But there's something about seeing him in formal wear.

He's beautiful. Always. And he looks so happy, grinning at one of the brides.

Ilya feels a surge of longing for that night in Vegas last month. Hollander was so good for him that night. But he can't keep him.

What he can do, however, is click on the link to Jessie's Instagram at the end of the article.

It's a mistake. As he scrolls, there are a number of pictures of Hollander that Ilya has never seen. Hollander and Jessie in kayaks. Hollander with Jessie, the girls from the wedding, and another woman piled onto a couch in pajamas. Hollander and Jessie on a dock at about eight years old. Jessie is holding a recently caught fish, about half her height, and Hollander is wrinkling his nose.

Too much. It's all too much. Ilya closes the app and wipes his eyes, which he refuses to acknowledge are damp.

October 2015

Yesterday, Shane saw Rozanov for the first time this season. It was stressful. It was fun, of course, and he had more than one incredible orgasm, but that night when he left his Brossard condo, Shane felt... off. Maybe that summer he convinced himself the stupid fondness he'd been developing for Rozanov was just an illusion. But when Rozanov showed up on the dark back doorstep of the condo, Shane's heart warmed and he could barely contain a smile at the mere sight of Rozanov.

Shane's traitorous heart was no better the rest of the night. Rozanov left with a deep, parting kiss, and Shane almost asked him to stay. Foolish tears pricked his eyes as he watched Rozanov's cab drive away. He had to sit on the sofa and drink an entire ginger ale before his vision cleared enough to drive.

Today, he's still feeling jittery and strange, but it's his monthly dinner with Chrissy and Nayoung, so he pulls himself together and drives to their place.

"Shane!" Chrissy wraps him in a tight hug the second he's inside the apartment. Shane melts into the hug.

When she lets go, Nayoung bounds up behind her.

"Okay, did winning a cup make you, like, some kind of fucking stick-handling wizard?"

Shane grins and feels himself relaxing a tiny bit.

"We certainly feel more confident as a team," he says.

"Boooo! I don't want your PR answer! Was it playing against Rozanov? You always play so well against Boston, even when you don't win. Seems like you're having a fucking ball."

"Uh... it's, um... It's just—you know. I spent a lot of time at my cottage this summer, practicing," Shane manages. Jesus, he cannot be acting like that when someone asks him about Rozanov!

Chrissy furrows her brow at him, then her face clears and she beckons Shane into the kitchen. Nayoung follows, and Shane catches his friends exchanging a glance that he can't decipher.

They sit down to eat the stir fry Nayoung made and Chrissy tells a story about her first graders. Shane tries to pay attention, but when Nayoung and Chrissy both laugh, he realizes he missed something.

"Fuck, sorry."

Chrissy puts her hand on Shane's arm. "Hey, are you okay?"

"What? Yeah, I'm fine," Shane lies.

Nayoung shoots him a disbelieving look that reminds him so much of Jessie that Shane wants to cry.

"Alright. I'm a little stressed out," he admits. "I guess coming back for another season after winning the cup is getting to my head. Especially since we lost the last few games before yesterday." It's not a lie. He really does think the whole team is in their heads a bit. But, obviously, that's not the whole reason.

Chrissy and Nayoung both nod sympathetically, then Nayoung pats Chrissy enthusiastically on her arm with both hands.

"Tell him about Emily!"

Chrissy's eyes brighten, and for a moment, Shane is afraid they're about to try and set him up.

"Oh! Yeah," Chrissy says, "I've been doing yoga lately at this studio in Mile End. My teacher, Emily, is *so* nice and it's really helped me relax and get in touch with myself, I guess. Maybe you should try it."

Shane's initial reaction is to say that he doesn't need that. That he's doing fine and doesn't need to fucking relax.

But he takes a deep breath and really thinks about it. If there's really some way to work on quieting his mind—healthily, that is—then Shane should probably consider it.

"I'll think about it."

December 2015

When Shane walks through his parents' door on the twenty-third, his eyes widen. His parents are each sitting in an armchair in the living room—normal—but on the couch beside Jessie, there's another woman.

"Sam?" Shane asks, incredulous. Jessie's grin is so wide and Shane just *knows*.

Sam Evans stands up and sticks out her hand. She's wearing a plaid flannel shirt and jeans and her short brown is neatly coiffed.

"Been a while, Shane," she says as they shake hands.

"Sure has," he agrees awkwardly, glancing over at Jessie. He's almost positive Sam's presence in his parents' living room means she and his sister have finally gotten together, but he doesn't want to put his foot in it in case he's wrong.

Jessie nods at Shane's silent question, her cheeks pink. He returns her smile and tries to ignore the stone that has settled in his stomach.

After their parents go to bed, Shane, Jessie, and Sam lounge in the living room.

"So, when did you...?" Shane asks, gesturing between Jessie and Sam, who are sitting nearly shoulder to shoulder on the couch. He doesn't know if Sam knows how much *Shane* knows about their relationship, so he doesn't want to say too much.

"We've been texting and calling a lot more this semester, and when I got home two weeks ago, after finals," Jessie looks at Sam with a smile, "she asked me out on a date."

"I didn't want to waste any more time," Sam says.

Shane nods. It was just that easy, huh? What the fuck is that like?

"Your sister is the most wonderful person I know." Shane wonders if Sam is worried about his approval.

"From the way she talks about you, I think it's the same," Shane says, hoping this reassures Sam.

"Oh, the way she *talks about me*?" Sam teases, bumping her shoulder against Jessie's.

"Thanks, Shane," Jessie groans, mock annoyed.

That night, after an evening of watching Jessie and Sam's soft touches—and before that, his parents' proud smiles—Shane is curled up in bed, squeezing a pillow in his arms. They are so cute together it hurts. What is it like for things to be so easy? He knows it took Jessie and Sam years to get it right, but still.

I didn't want to waste any more time.

Shane hugs the pillow tighter and doesn't think about how he won't see Rozanov until the All-Star game a month from now.

November 2016

Shane freaks the hell out in the hotel bathroom for a few minutes before realizing that he isn't going to be able to calm down without talking to someone about this fucking mess. Quietly, he exits the bathroom. Luckily, Hayden has turned off the lamp and doesn't make another comment when Shane slips out of the room.

He walks out of the hotel and doesn't stop, not even knowing where he's going.

By now, it's after ten PM on a Tuesday, and Shane finds himself in a dark, nearly empty park. He collapses onto a metal bench, despite the chill, and pulls out his phone.

Please pick up. Please pick up, he silently begs as the phone rings.

"Shane?" Jessie sounds tired, and Shane imagines she's probably slumped over the kitchen table at Sam's apartment in Ottawa. She's taking the fall to study for the bar exam and apply to firms in Ottawa and Toronto.

"Hi," he says, voice small and vulnerable.

"What's wrong?" she asks, sounding worried—perhaps snapping out of her haze of studying.

"I'm so fucked," Shane whispers. He doesn't even know what he wants to say, but suddenly, everything is coming out, along with aching, broken sobs. "He made me dinner. He said my name! He said, 'Shane,' and I said, 'Ilya,' and I wanted to stay but I couldn't and I—"

"Shane, wait!" Jessie commands. He shuts up, honestly glad to have been cut off. "I need you to slow down. Tell me again: what happened? Slowly."

Shane breathes in and out, watching the cloud of breath in front of his face.

"I went to Ilya—fuck—Rozanov's penthouse tonight. We—Jesus—we had sex and then he asked me to stay the night, and in that moment, I realized how much I wanted it. I thought maybe I could just have it once. Not let it mean anything. He cooked me a tuna melt. He gave me ginger ale! I've never told him I liked that. We just talked for a while and it felt so... normal. And then—god, fuck, it's so hard to talk about this—then we had sex on his couch and we called each other by our first names."

"You've... you've never done that before?" Jessie either can't conceal the shock in her voice or isn't even trying.

"No, it's—fuck—I don't know. It's a hockey thing. At first, it was because I didn't even like him, and then we just... We're not friends," Shane insists, weakly.

"Okay..." Jessie says slowly. "So is it bad that he called you 'Shane'?"

Shane groans. How can he explain this?

"It's not exactly that. It's how he said it." He sucks in a breath. "He said it like I mattered."

"Oh Shane, you do matter. Clearly, you matter to him. You've been seeing each other for what, six years?"

"But he doesn't mean it. He fucks everything that walks. Tonight, we even talked about all the girls he fucks. He made sure to clarify that he doesn't actually like me as a person. And then there I go, having all these fucking feelings all over his couch. So I ran away."

"Shit," Jessie says. "Either you're being really obtuse, or I am going to kick his ass next time Boston plays in Ottawa. He's not gonna wanna see me coming," she jokes.

Shane snorts, some of the tension leaving his shoulders.

"Listen, I don't know what he's thinking, Shane, but someone who goes out of their way to make time for you like Rozanov does—that's not someone who doesn't care. I know you don't need me to tell you, but I'm a prime example of what can happen if you talk to the person you have feelings for."

"It's not the same!" Shane shouts, then looks around to make sure no one heard. The park is still empty. "Even if he has feelings for me—even if he loves me, for god's sake—we couldn't be together. So it doesn't fucking matter. It can't."

Jessie is quiet for a long moment.

"I'm coming for a visit when you get back," she promises. "Friday, right? I probably need a study break anyway. We're going to drink a lot of tea and watch Love Island. You got it?"

Two weeks later

"So, Shane Hollander," Rose says, swirling her martini around the glass, "I told you about my hockey-playing brother. Your turn. Any Hollander siblings running around Canada?"

Shane smiles, always happy to brag about his sister.

"Yeah, I have a twin sister, Jessie. She's going to be a lawyer." Is a lawyer? Shane isn't sure if graduating law school makes her a lawyer, or if she has to pass the bar exam first.

"You're a twin!" Rose exclaims. People are always way too weirdly excited about that, but Rose looks cute with a delighted smile on her face, so Shane doesn't mind. "Who's older?"

Shane rolls his eyes.

"She is. By two minutes. So it hardly counts," he says, and he knows he sounds unnecessarily defensive. In truth, sometimes Jessie feels like his big sister. Especially last weekend, when she came up from Ottawa to coach Shane through his not-quite-breakup with Ilya. There was much more ice cream than Shane's trainer would have approved of, but for once, he couldn't make himself care. Ever since her visit, he's felt like his head was screwed on a bit better than before. He is under control.

"Well, that's another thing we have in common," Rose says. "We're both younger siblings."

Shane grins. They have so much in common. It's thrilling

The next morning, Shane has just woken up when he gets a text from Jessie

Jessie: *UM WTF IS THIS?*

Jessie: *[shanehollanderroselandry.jpg]*

It's a little embarrassing that there are already paparazzi photos of the two of them. All he did was hug her before she got in her fancy black town car. Shane knows better than to Google his own name, but he can only guess that the press is running with this.

When he doesn't respond, his phone rings. The second he answers, Jessie is shouting down the phone.

"Are you fucking serious right now? Did you go on a date with *Rose Landry*?"

Shane laughs. Her tone is so intense, it's almost furious, though Shane can tell it's laced with jealousy. Jessie is disgustingly in love with Sam, but she's also nothing if not thirsty over hot movie stars.

"Well, I'm not sure I'd call it a date," he says, then pauses for dramatic effect, "but we're getting dinner tomorrow, and that's definitely a date."

Jessie screams so loud Shane has to pull the phone away from his ear.

After a few more minutes of freaking out, Jessie calms down.

"Really, I am happy for you. You sound excited."

"Yeah, I like her. Talking to her is really easy," Shane says honestly.

Jessie hums. "I didn't think you were into girls," she says, casually, as if they're discussing the weather.

"What—I—of course I am. Of course I like girls. Why wouldn't I." He's panicking but he tries to keep it under control.

"Uh, because some people are gay, *Shane*," Jessie sing-songs, clearly trying to make him laugh. It doesn't work.

He splutters, which turns into a cough. "Well, I'm not! I'm not gay!"

Jessie sighs. "Hey, hey, okay. Sorry." Her words are clipped, like she's bothered by his reaction.

"No, I'm sorry. Jesus, I sound insane. I guess I'm tired."

"I'm glad you're happy, Shane," Jessie says. "And if you are still seeing fucking Rose Landry in a few weeks, your bisexual-ass sister would like to meet her."

"Deal," Shane says, laughing. "As long as you don't drool."

December 2016

"So, what did you think?" Shane asks, nervous

"Of Rose Landry?" Jessie asks, like he's stupid for even asking the question.

She came up to Montreal yesterday, the twenty-seventh, since Rose had a rare day off today. Jessie and Shane have just gotten home from brunch and are laying on Shane's sofa.

"Okay, you were respectful all morning. Get your bisexual crisis out of the way," Shane says, mock exasperated.

"How are her lips so pillowy, Shane? Do they feel like pillows?" She doesn't pause for a response. "And her hair, it's so shiny. I just want to grab it. And she's so smart, too! That article she quoted?" Jessie sighs, dreamily.

"Aren't you like, obsessed with your girlfriend?" Shane asks, trying to ignore the way his sister seems way more interested in his girlfriend than he is.

"Duh. And I'll be describing Rose Landry in extreme detail tomorrow night," she says with a wink.

"Gross." Shane wrinkles his nose, not liking that visual.

"She seems to like you a lot," Jessie says. Shane's mind immediately flashes back to last week, when he and Rose had sex. Well, they tried to have sex. Things had gone fine the first few times before, when she blew Shane, but when he tried to fuck her that night, he couldn't stay hard. He eventually got there, but it was no easy task.

"Sure," Shane says.

Jessie gives him a weird look, brow furrowed. "Do you like her?"

"Sure," Shane says, again. God, that wasn't convincing. The thing is, he does like Rose. It's just that he can't figure out how to have good sex with her. He'll get it. He has to. "She's great."

January 2017

The week following Shane's last date with Rose, he does a lot of thinking. He told Rose he wasn't sure he was *like Miles*, but after a long look inward, he thinks that isn't true.

Shane: *Can you FaceTime?*

His phone rings, and a moment later, Jessie's face fills the screen.

"Hi! Sam's here too," she says, grinning.

A bolt of jealousy sparks in Shane's stomach.

"Hi Jess, hi Sam." They're on the couch in their living room.

"We're so excited to see you next week! I've never been to Tampa! And I am so pumped to see the skills competition. Is that weird?" Sam cuts herself off, grinning. This summer, Shane invited them to come to Tampa for the All Star weekend. It ended up being two weeks after Jessie's bar exam, and Sam was able to get time off. Shane is excited to have them there, and that they're letting him pay for the resort they're staying at.

They chat politely for a few minutes about the game and Sam's latest series of paintings before she excuses herself to her studio. Shane suspects Sam noticed the anxiety in his eyes and figured he wanted to speak to Jessie alone.

"Alright, out with it," Jessie says, playfully, though her expression is open and she looks ready to listen.

Shane huffs. "Just like that, huh?"

"Oh, this is serious," Jessie realizes. "Hey, take your time, okay?"

As Shane stares at her patient smile, something dawns on Shane.

"When I—when I tell you," he says, knowing he's already showing his cards, "could you not say 'I told you so'? Or that you knew the whole time?"

A slow understanding slides across Jessie's face and she nods. "I promise."

Shane takes a deep breath, and says, for the first time, "I'm gay."

Jessie grins. "Welcome to the club. There's a membership fee."

Shane knew she'd accept him. *Obviously*. But fuck, her reaction is perfect. God, he wishes he could hug her. He laughs a little hysterically.

"Jesus, why was that so hard?"

"Coming out is endless, but it does get easier when you can just kiss your partner and everyone knows you're queer," Jessie quips.

"Oh," Shane breathes.

Jessie must see the shift in him, the downward turn of his lips.

"Hey, is it—"

"Can Sam hear us?" Shane interrupts. He feels like everything he feels about Ilya is about to come rushing out and he can't have Sam listening.

"Nah," Jessie says with a laugh. "She turns up death metal music while she paints. She can't hear a thing."

Breath leaves Shane in a whoosh. "I'm—I'm freaking out. I have to see Ilya in a week for the All Star game. We're on the same team, so we'll be seeing a stupid amount of each other." Jessie nods. "I don't know how to act around him," Shane admits. "Things were... I don't know... intimate. And then I went and threw everything out the window. God, maybe he won't even want to talk to me."

"Do *you* want to talk to *him*?" Jessie asks, leaning back into the couch cushions.

Shane sighs. "Fuck. Yes, I do."

"So make him listen."

On the Sunday night after the All Star game, Ilya finds himself in the hotel bar-slash-restaurant where most of the guys are drinking. There are pitchers of beer and platters of sliders sitting on tables and hockey players (and their wives) in various states of inebriation. He spots Eric Bennett deep in conversation with a woman in a very loud, plaid blazer.

After ordering a sub-par vodka, Ilya chats with and chirps a few guys who played on the other team, all the while keeping an eye out for Shane. He hasn't seen Shane since they showered and changed at the arena—where they both kept some careful distance—but Ilya

was hoping he would be at the after party. Since they cleared up that Shane isn't with Rose anymore, Ilya has been hoping something would happen tonight. Maybe he's being delusional. Thinking they can go back to what they were before with no consequences.

Ilya is startled out of his thoughts by someone setting a glass on the bar next to him. He looks over and sees dark eyes and freckles. Not Shane, but Jessie Hollander. When Ilya and Shane first arrived in Florida, Shane mentioned Jessie was here with her girlfriend.

"Oh, hello," Ilya says, a little stupidly.

"Buy me a drink, Ilya Rozanov," Jessie demands.

My sister knows about us, Shane said, all those years ago. Ilya doesn't think he's in any place to refuse her.

"And what are you having, Jessie Hollander?"

"Whiskey on the rocks."

"Whiskey, huh?" Ilya notes, waving over the bartender. As he orders, she glares at him. "Did you like the game?" he asks, trying for safe territory.

Jessie indulges him, smirking. "Yes. And Sam and I both really enjoyed watching you lose at stick handling yesterday."

"That is fair. Sam is..." Ilya glances around the bar to show Jessie what he's asking. She points to the woman in the bright blazer who's talking Bennett's ear off. "Ah. Pretty."

That earns him another glare, but this time Ilya laughs and holds up his hands. "I am not coming for your woman."

Jessie raises her eyebrows, but says, "No. I know."

They stand, side by side, in silence for a long few moments, then Jessie speaks.

"If you hurt him, I will have you fucking murdered. I'm a lawyer, so I know how to get away with it," she declares, her voice low and dangerous, almost daring him to ask her for clarification.

Ilya wants to laugh, partly at the balls on this woman to mention Shane and Ilya's *thing* in public, and partly at the intensity of the threat. He doesn't. He also doesn't say what he wants to say, which would be something along the lines of, *I've already hurt him. I don't know how to stop hurting him.*

Instead, Ilya says, "Got it," and Jessie is the one who laughs.

"God, I need to get Sam to stop trying to sell that poor goalie her paintings." She starts across the room without another glance at Ilya, but he stops her.

"Wait."

Jessie turns. "What, Rozanov?"

Sheepishly, Ilya asks, "Where is he?"

Jessie shakes her head, but a smile is playing on her lips. "Try the beach."

One week later

"I'm going to fucking kill him," Jessie says, through the phone. "I warned him not to hurt you, and he still—"

"Wait, you did what?"

"Never mind." She breezes past *that*, and Shane would stop her, but he's overwhelmed. "How could he say he doesn't want to be *something* with you?" she asks, angrily.

Shane shakes his head, then remembers she can't see him. "No, I'm explaining everything wrong. He can't—we can't be more. Not... officially. Not really. And he didn't... say it. Not outright, but I think, if we could, he would want to be with me," he finishes, quietly.

"Shane," Jessie breathes.

"No, don't. I can't take your pity right now. I just—I'm just going to take what I can get. Be there." What he doesn't say, not yet, is that when Ilya asked about going somewhere together, Shane thought of his cottage. What if Ilya came to his cottage? He needs to wait for the right moment to bring it up, knowing Ilya might need some convincing.

"That's all you can do."

"Wait—circling back. Did you threaten Rozanov?"

Jessie moves her mouth away from the phone and calls, "What?" Her voice returns to normal. "Oops, Sam's calling. I have to go!"

"Sam is in Toronto this weekend, you ass—" But she's already hung up.

March 2017

"Have you heard from Rozanov?" Jessie asks, sounding tired. It's past nine PM, but she's probably still at the office. Her new job has her working nearly around the clock, but she insists she loves it. "I don't know what's going on, but I figured you might."

"It's... not my business to share," Shane says, knowing he probably already shares too much of Ilya's business with her. "But I've talked to him. He'll be alright. It feels like... I think we're really friends." He exhales a laugh. "After all these years. And I miss him."

"Is he going to be at that game I'm coming to? The Boston game in Montreal? Mom and Dad are taking me to get chicken parm at that one place on Bernard Street."

Shane huffs. "He says he will be."

"Good, I want to see you kick his ass."

April 2017

Ilya lies awake in his hotel room all night trying to deal with his whirlwind of feelings. Thankfully Marlow had the good sense to make himself scarce, so he can think as loudly as he likes.

Fear, despair, excitement, uneasy anticipation, worry. God, the last twelve hours have been so overwhelming. He glances at the digital alarm clock on the bedside table for the 500th time that night and sees it's finally seven AM. Visiting hours at the hospital start at eight and he's planning on just showing up. Their flight leaves at eleven, so he should be alright.

He's hauling himself into the shower when his phone buzzes.

Unknown Number: *this is jessie*

Unknown Number: *hollander*

Ilya's eyebrows shoot up. He waits to see what else she's going to say. Is she going to follow through on her threat to murder him? It wasn't Ilya's fault Shane went down, but it's his team who hurt her brother.

Unknown Number: *if you come to montreal general hospital at 8:30 I will make sure my parents are out of shane's room.*

Unknown Number: *he is alright by the way.*

Ilya: *I will be there.*

Ilya: *Thank you.*

He cries in the shower. Sobs wrack his body so aggressively, he almost has to sit down. Shane could have died last night and Ilya is so fucking in love with him. He's not sure how he's going to manage not to get into Shane's bed in the hospital and hold him. How he's going to be able to leave Shane's bedside and fly to fucking Washington.

An hour later, Ilya is taking the elevator to the eleventh floor. Jessie meets him outside the door to Shane's room, her long black hair in a low, tired ponytail. She's still wearing a Voyageurs t-shirt from the game last night.

Ilya must look as bad as he feels, because for a second, he thinks Jessie's going to hug him. She seems to quickly remember herself and the situation.

"Listen," she says, voice low in the echoey hallway, "my promise of bodily harm still stands, but he's been asking about you ever since he woke up." Her words are aggressive, but her tone is warm, as if she means it significantly less than last time. As if she trusts him. A shiver zips down Ilya's spine.

"Oh," Jessie continues, chuckling, "he's super high right now, so be prepared."

Ilya smiles back, a tight, impatient thing, because he needs her to get out of the way so he can *see Shane*.

"Alright, I'm going to meet my parents in the cafeteria. Don't stress him out." She sighs. "Please just make him smile. You always do," she adds. After a moment of consideration, she squeezes Ilya's arm as she walks past him down the hall. For a moment, he has a flash of a life that will never be his. One where he's part of a family. One where he has a person, a *family*, who loves him.

Shane is so happy to see him. His smile, even on his bruised and battered face, is so beautiful. Once he confirms with his own eyes that Shane is alright, Ilya is able to breathe.

"How are you here?" Shane asks, looking around the room, as if for the portal Ilya appeared through.

"Jessie texted me."

"You met Jessie?" Shane's eyes are wide. Is he tearing up?

Ilya smiles, trying to keep Shane calm. "We've met before. A few times."

"Oh. Oh yeah. I knew that," he says, slowly. Then he fucking *giggles*. "She knows *everything*."

Well, that would definitely explain the murderous threats, Ilya muses.

"Everything, huh?" Ilya confirms, smirking. It's difficult to tell if Shane is blushing, what with the bruises, but it's likely.

"Fuck off," Shane slurs.

"You scared me," Ilya tells him, quietly.

"I'll be okay," Shane promises, almost whispering now. He's drifting off, and Ilya wants to wrap him in his arms and never let go. Despite the fact that Ilya convinced himself that he was going to end things, after seeing Shane laid out on the ice last night... Well, it's making things much harder.

"Come to the cottage," Shane asks, and Ilya almost says yes. He knows he shouldn't. So he keeps it noncommittal.

"Maybe."

When Ilya gets off the plane in Washington, he has a text waiting for him.

Jessie: he didn't stop smiling all day. thank you.

June 2017

In the seconds after Scott Hunter kisses his boyfriend on the ice, Shane's phone floods with messages—

Jessie: oh MY GOD I JUST HEARD OMG HOCKEY IS GAY NOW

Nayoung: What in the fucking history making shit?!?!?!?!?

Hayden: Did you know Hunter is gay???

—but all he cares about is the incoming call from 'Lily.' He doesn't get a chance to say more than, "Holy shit, Ilya! Can you belie—" before Ilya interrupts.

"I'm coming to the cottage."

Two weeks later

"You think this is going to be okay?" Shane asks.

He and Jessie are sweating on a couple of deck chairs in their parents' backyard in Ottawa. Jessie is looking at her phone. She taps away for a second, then looks up.

"Yeah, dude. Your plan sounds good to me. I mean, you're weird. Why wouldn't Mom and Dad believe you're having a personal wellness retreat or whatever?"

He kicks the side of her shoe. "Dumbass. You promise you're going to keep them away? At least while you and Sam are there?"

"Yes, duh, I promise. They'll be under lock and key." She rolls her eyes, then checks her phone again. "Sam's gonna be here in a few. Hey, d'you think we could tell her about you and Ilya? I hate keeping things from her. She knows something is up because I keep leaving the room to talk to you on the phone."

Shane winces. While he's glad he hasn't been alone in this secret all these years, he hates that he's making Jessie keep things from her partner. But...

"I just... I can't. I don't know if we are anything, really. I don't know if there is anything to tell. It wouldn't be fair to him, either."

Jessie mutters something that sounds a lot like, "I'll just text him, then."

"What?"

"Nothing." Her phone buzzes. "Sam's here. Bye!"

July 2017

Shane rushes out to the front porch, but Dad's car is already out on the road.

"Hollander? He was already gone?" Ilya asks when Shane gets back inside.

"Yeah," Shane says, shocked into silence for a moment. Then he springs into action. "Where's my phone?"

Ilya's eyes dart around before seeming to remember. "Deck table, I think."

"Oh my god," Shane moans. "This is bad. I'm going to kill Jessie." With that, he rushes out to the deck and finds his phone under a discarded towel.

Shane: S O FUCKING S

Jessie calls him immediately. "What's wrong?" She's a little out of breath, Shane notices. He thinks he hears a displeased groan on her end of the line.

"Why the hell did Dad just come to my cottage?" he demands, hearing the panic in his own voice. "He saw me and Ilya kissing!"

"Shit," Jessie breathes. There's a pause before he hears a car door slam. "Fuck, I'm so sorry. Sam and I were just at the library. You know, the one where we did those summer reading challenges as kids? I wanted to show her that plaque that's still there from when I read like, eighty *Clifford* books that one year. And then... We might have gotten a little distracted. Jesus. Did they definitely see that it was Ilya?"

Shane feels like he's going to vibrate out of his skin. "Of fucking course they did, Jessica! He's pretty unmistakable!"

"Okay, breathe. Sam and I are going to head back right now. We'll meet you there. Can I fill her in on the way? Seems like we're past the point of secrets."

From some deep, giddy place inside of Shane, a giggle bursts forth.

"You good?" Jessie asks, sounding worried.

"Yeah," Shane says. "Uh, you can tell her that... we're in love. He said he loves me."

The responding shriek on the other end of the line is ear-piercing. "I'm so happy for you! Holy shit! We will be there in ten. Breathe, Shane. Mom and Dad are going to be fine."

"Kay," Shane says, though he doesn't think fine is going to be the reaction he's going to walk into.

When they hang up, Shane hears Ilya come out onto the deck.

"Are you okay?" he asks, looking at Shane a little warily.

Despite himself, Shane finds himself smiling. "I told Jessie that we're in love."

Ilya takes a deep breath. "That is... alright? She does not want to murder me?"

"No, she doesn't," Shane says with a laugh. "She's going to love you," he whispers, and damn it, he's going to cry. Ilya wraps him in a hug and Shane is somehow able to keep the tears at bay. They have a job to do.

After he helps Shane through a few deep breaths, they get out of the car and walk into Shane's parents' cottage. Even though this is sure to be a bit of a shit show, Ilya is more than a little excited to meet the parents of the man he loves.

"Hello? It's me. It's... Shane."

They head into the living room and Shane's parents stand up, matching shocked looks on their faces.

"Shane?" Yuna Hollander says, and her alarmed tone makes Ilya want to wrap Shane up in his arms.

"Mom. Dad. I... I think we should talk."

"We forgot to buy dishwasher tablets," David says. "I suppose I should have asked Jessie and Sam to pick some up, but I just wanted to see if I could borrow some. I didn't know you had company."

Ilya can feel the nervous energy radiating off of him.

"Dad, it's okay. I'm sorry. You... shouldn't have found out that way," Shane says.

"Found out what, exactly?" Yuna asks. Ilya realizes she's staring straight at him and he kind of wants to bolt. She's a little scary. He won't leave, though. He is here for Shane.

"Well, I... I'm gay. Which I was going to tell you. Soon. I just... sorry. I wish I'd told you."

Now Yuna and David are both staring at Ilya. He tries to smile, to seem less threatening, but he's afraid it comes off as more of a grimace.

"Um," Shane starts, "and this is... Ilya Rozanov. You probably know that."

"Hi," Ilya says.

"And he's been... visiting. He's we're, um..."

Shane seems to be struggling to explain, so Ilya tries to help. "Lovers." He says it right as Jessie and Sam burst through the front door.

"Ew, Rozanov! Way to choose the grossest word possible!" Jessie says, nose wrinkled.

Yuna doesn't even seem to see Sam or her daughter. Shane throws Jessie a glare that probably communicates more than Ilya can understand. Ilya barely succeeds at holding in a laugh at the interaction.

"But... you hate him," Yuna says.

"He does not," Jessie says, gleefully, dropping a shopping bag by the door and dragging a slightly confused looking Sam over to the loveseat. "Why don't we all sit," she suggests.

"Yeah," Shane breathes.

Yuna and David sit back on the couch, Jessie and Sam on the loveseat, and Shane and Ilya in two armchairs beside each other. Ilya mourns the foot of space between them.

Yuna tries again. "I thought you hated him."

Shane sighs. "No, I... I don't. I mean. Sometimes I do, kinda. But mostly I... love him. Actually." He isn't looking at Ilya or his parents. Shane's glance darts over to Jessie, who gives an encouraging smile. Something in Ilya's chest twists. Jealously, maybe, that Shane has someone like Jessie? No. While he does ache for a loving family, this feeling is gratitude. He's so fucking glad Shane has had someone standing by his side when Ilya couldn't.

No one says anything for a moment, and then Yuna seems to remember her other child.

"Jessie, Sam. This is... Ilya Rozanov," she says, his name sounding sour in her mouth.

Jessie grins. "Oh, we've met."

"Sup," Sam adds.

It takes a second, but David puts the pieces together. "Jessie, you knew about this?"

Jessie looks to Shane. So does Ilya. He looks lost, eyes glazing a little. He shrugs.

"Uh, yeah," she confirms.

"When did this happen?" Yuna asks. "Wait, was it the All-Star Game? You were on the same team and Jessie was there and—"

Jessie snorts at the same time Shane says, "It was already going on then."

"So, when?" Yuna asks, again.

"Since, um, our rookie year," Shane says, quietly.

"You can't have been... since your rookie season?"

That's not true, and if they're telling this story, Ilya would like to tell it correctly. "No. That's not right. Was before that."

"Before that?" Yuna gasps.

"The CCM shoot," Jessie supplies, waggling her eyebrows. This elicits another death glare from Shane. Ilya glances over at Sam, whose eyes are ping-ponging back and forth. She catches his eye and smirks. It's a tiny thing, but it says, 'I'm on your side,' and Ilya likes her already.

"You've been... in *love* this whole time?" Yuna asks, incredulous.

Ilya says, "God no."

Shane nods. "Definitely not." Yuna opens her mouth, but Shane cuts her off. "It was... like Jessie and Sam."

Yuna glances at her daughter and a blush spreads across her cheeks. This seems to explain things, and Ilya has a lot to catch up on.

"Right. I see. But... are you together, like Jessie and Sam?"

Ilya finds he absolutely loves being compared to Jessie and her long-term girlfriend.

"Sort of. Or we'd like to be. If it wasn't basically impossible," Shane says, bringing Ilya back down to earth.

"You didn't ever... let him win, did you, Shane?" Yuna asks, which, in Ilya's opinion, is a bit offensive.

"God, Mom, No!"

"He does not need to let me win," Ilya agrees.

Yuna doesn't look convinced.

"Jesus fuck, Mom. What kind of question is that?" Jessie asks, sounding truly affronted. "Your son is like, the best hockey player out there, and you're asking him if he lets other guys win?"

Yuna has the good sense to look a bit chagrined at that. "I suppose I never let your dad win at Yahtzee," she says, understanding.

This is going to be alright, Ilya just knows it.

The following evening, Shane and Ilya show up on Shane's parents' doorstep with a bottle of wine Shane insisted on buying at the tiny grocery store in town. Almost immediately upon arriving, Shane is whisked away to the kitchen to "help with dinner." Ilya is pretty sure that's code for "Yuna wants to interrogate him," but perhaps it's good for them to talk. Sam is

upstairs, taking a work call, and David is in the garden, watering. That leaves Ilya alone in the living room with the force that is Jessie Hollander.

"Hi," Ilya says. Jessie is clearly on their team—her offer to help with anything legal regarding Ilya and Shane's joint charity proved that tenfold—but she's still a bit intimidating.

"Sit, *Ilya*," she commands, patting the couch cushion beside her.

He obeys. "So, I will live?"

"Jesus," she says, laughing. "Will you let that go?" Jessie puts her hand over her heart. "On my honor, I will not murder you, Ilya Rozanov."

"That is relief."

"I'm glad you two figured it out," Jessie says. "Shane's been nuts about you for so fucking long."

"Oh, has he?" Ilya grins. Having a sister is going to be fun. "Tell me more."

"Do not tell him more," Shane says, coming in from the kitchen. He glares at Jessie, but it's weak. There's too much love in his eyes. "I should not leave you two alone."

"He used to google your '*hockey stats*.' But it was just an excuse to stare at your picture," Jessie reveals.

"You asshole!" Shane declares. Then, he charges across the room, coming straight for Jessie.

She screeches, stands up, and bolts. "Help! Sam! My brother is attacking me!"

Shane flops down onto the couch beside Ilya. "You two are going to be lethal, aren't you?"

"Lethal?"

"Like, you're going to be the death of me," Shane explains.

Ilya knows Shane is joking, but the joy in his own chest is too much.

"I hope not. I want to live long life with you."

Shane smiles. "Me too."

After dinner, Ilya offers to help with the dishes like some kind of dream boyfriend. He winks at Shane as he follows Mom into the kitchen and Shane is so fucking charmed.

Jessie finds him on the deck and passes him a beer.

"Big fucking couple of days, huh?"

Shane huffs a laugh. "Understatement of the century."

"I'm proud of you," Jessie says, knocking her bottle against Shane's.

God, he doesn't want to cry tonight. "Me too," he says, instead.

She laughs. "He's so perfect for you. Like, I knew it, seeing you two bicker and shit, but this domestic nonsense? It's adorable. I think he worships the ground you walk on."

"I love him so much," Shane says, quietly. "Do you think... Do you think Mom and Dad are going to love him, too? Once the shock fully wears off."

"If he doesn't get a Yuna Hollander hug goodbye after tonight, I'll eat my hat," Jessie declares. "I think she might want to adopt him. We've all got your back, you got that?"

Shane's chest fills with warmth. "I've got it."

The next year, while Ilya is still in Boston, is going to be hard, but Shane is so fucking happy right now, and he knows with all the support they have, he and Ilya are going to get through it just fine.

End Notes

Comments and kudos make my day!

I have a lot of ideas for a sequel to this story, covering the time after HR and throughout The Long Game, so let me know if that's something you'd like to see!!

You can find me on tumblr at miss-minnelli.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!