

a game of telephone

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a game of telephone

by [RufusTBarleysheath](#)

Summary

"Hollander? Can I ask you something?"

"Yeah, sure. What's up?"

"Listen, is... Is Ilya Rozanov... dating your mom?"

Notes

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

Hayden Pike was not a complete idiot. He was a good dad and a good husband and a good hockey player, none of which were possible if you were a complete idiot. Hayden had had a teacher, back in high school, who told him once about multiple intelligences, the idea that even if you weren't book smart, or good with numbers, you could be intelligent in the way you moved, or made art, or noticed things about people. That made a lot of sense to Hayden, and he had carried it through moments of his life when he felt out of his depth.

Whichever type of intelligence Hayden had, it was not helping him navigate this conversation with Davey.

Davey was just Davey. That made sense, since his jersey said *Davies*, but Hayden found out after the kid's first few months on the team that his full name - his actual given name - was David Davies, which was crazy. Besides the name, though, Hayden liked Davey. He was the corn-fed midwestern type - maybe Mormon, or something like that? - and it seemed like the kid looked up to him, had come to him a few times to ask him for advice on improving his wrist shots, and even once about relationship stuff, which had been awkward.

Hayden started getting concerned when he noticed Davey approaching him with the same look on his face as he had that day. Hayden was already on edge, like he always was when Montreal played Ottawa. Not that he thought anything was going to happen - Shane and Rozanov were always careful, and really were good about not letting personal stuff affect their game at all - but the whole situation was one big fucking powder keg, and it was giving Hayden what he thought might be the beginning of an ulcer.

Hayden was too young to be getting ulcers.

"Hayden?" Davey said, half-whispered. "Can I talk to you for a sec?" He gestured towards the locker room door with his head.

"What's up?," Hayden said, once they were around the corner and safely out of earshot of the team.

"It's about Hollander?" Davey looked seriously shifty, his widened eyes darting to the side like he was making sure no one else was walking by. Hayden's stomach sank. "I saw him, uh, with Ilya Rozanov, and-"

"Shit." *Shit, shit*. Of course someone was going to figure it out. Hayden had figured it out himself, and he was so unobservant that he had once left the TV remote on top of the TV and not been able to find it for three weeks. "Listen, Davey, you can't tell anyone, okay-"

Davey suddenly looked incredulous. "You know about this?"

"Yeah. But look, I'm the only one. Seriously, no one else can know about this, okay?"

"You're- You already know. And you're seriously not going to tell anyone." Davey exhaled. "Wow."

"No, I'm not." Hayden was getting a little put off by Davey's reaction. He had expected surprise, sure, but not an attitude that looked a lot like disappointment, and maybe even disgust. Was he really religious, or something? "Shane's my best friend, and honestly, it's not anyone's business."

Davey didn't seem convinced- if anything, that argument agitated him more. "I would think it's the team's business!" he hissed. "I would think it's the *league's* business, if its star players are involved in super illegal shit."

"*Illegal?*"

"God, Hayden. I can't believe you're okay with this."

Now the nerves Hayden had felt at the beginning of this conversation were dissolving into anger, and disgust at Davey's attitude. Hayden had more reason than anyone to be mad when he found out, but at least he hadn't come over all bigoted like this.

"Yeah, I am okay with it, actually," he said. "Because it's not the fucking middle ages, man!"

"So, what, that means it's fine for everyone to juice up? To use drugs? To *cheat*?"

It took Hayden a few seconds to process that - was *juice up* some kind of slur he wasn't familiar with? - then he did a double-take. "Wait, what? What are you talking about?"

"Hollander. And Ilya Rozanov. That's-" Davey dropped his voice back down again- "That's what I was going to tell you, that I saw the two of them coming out of a bathroom before the game, and Hollander looked really pissed, and he kept saying, like, 'they're gonna find out, we're gonna get caught.' I thought they were, like, shooting up in there. PEDs or something."

Hayden let out a long, long sigh. He hadn't even realized he had been holding his breath.

"No," he said, emphatically. "No, no, no. God, no." Hayden had to suppress the growing urge to laugh. "Shane would never, *never* do anything like that, I promise you."

"Oh, thank God. I was freaking out about this, man, you have no idea."

"No. Fuck." It wasn't a completely crazy assumption to make. Shane was looking bulkier lately, a result of workout and diet changes. Rozanov had apparently convinced him to drop the rabbit food, add more protein to his diet, which Hayden had privately (and begrudgingly) approved of. And Rozanov had always been big, and Russian, and a dirty player. With the two of them spending more time together, publicly...

The assumption made sense, in a way. It was no less crazy than the truth, anyway. "No one is doping," he said again. Whew. Bullet dodged!

"Wait, so then what were you talking about?" Davey said.

"Huh?"

"Before. Just now. You said, 'you can't tell anyone.' Tell them what?"

Hayden blinked, took a second to collect his thoughts, and came up with "Oh. Uh. Nothing."

"Come on, that's such bullshit, man." And to think, Hayden had liked Davey so much before this conversation ever happened. "If it's not doping, then what?"

"Well..." Now it was Hayden's turn to be shifty. "I promised I wouldn't tell anyone."

"Bullshit," Davey said again. "It can't be worse than drugs, can it?"

"No!" It wasn't. Except, considering the potential consequences for Shane and Rozanov, it maybe kind of was.

Hayden wracked his brain for a good lie, and came up with... still nothing. "Hollander and Rozanov, they, uh." Davey raised his eyebrows silently. "They're going into business together."

Great one, Hayden.

"What kind of business?"

"Oh, you know, like... investing in stuff? Real estate, that kind of thing? They're maybe thinking of buying a horse." That hung awkwardly in the air like the dumb lie it was.

"A horse?"

"Yeah, like a racehorse. Shane's always been way into horse racing." Hayden couldn't have made that sound less convincing if he tried. "But they're not sure if they can yet, with their foundation, and Rozanov not being a Canadian citizen. There's a lot of legal... stuff..." Yeah, that totally sounded real. "So they don't want anyone to know yet."

It was probably a sign of Davey's respect for Hayden that he didn't call him a total fucking liar to his face, which was nice of him. "Okay," Davey said. "Sure."

"Look, it's just not my secret to tell, okay? Ask Shane. I mean, please don't ask Shane. But if you're going to ask somebody, it would have to be him."

"I get it." Davey slapped Hayden on the shoulder. "You're a good friend, Pike. And a terrible liar."

Hayden waited until Davey was out of sight. Then he exhaled and banged his head, gently, against the wall. God, he hated playing Ottawa.

Ilya loved when Ottawa played Montreal. Facing Shane on the ice was exhilarating, almost as good as fucking him sometimes. Of course, he got to do that too, which made the game days doubly nice. And before that, he was going to help Yuna and David make a lasagna- one with real noodles, even, not fucking zucchini and garbage low-fat cheese.

Ottawa still lost, of course, but Ilya left the stadium with a bounce in his step. He even whistled a bit as he headed to the parking lot, attracting a weird, puzzled look from a

Montreal third-line forward - Dave something?- which he shrugged off.

"Ilya!" Yuna Hollander was waiting in the driver's seat of her black SUV. She gave him a little side hug, and a kiss on the cheek, which he returned. "Shane has a team meeting, but he'll be by later for dinner."

"Yes, he texted me." The team meeting probably about how they had almost lost to fucking Ottawa. Ilya wasn't sure if he should be proud of that, or depressed.

"You played great out there," Yuna said. Singular *you*, Ilya guessed. It took a lot to get her to say anything complimentary about the Centaurs.

Ilya shrugged. "We lost."

"You scored."

"Yes." Ilya could have done without Yuna's dissection of the game, but it was her way of showing that she cared, and he liked that she cared. So he leaned his head against the window and let her stream of thoughts wash over him, and soon they were arguing good-naturedly about power plays and one-man advantages and what was going on with New York's defense.

"If you get hungry before dinner, the spring rolls are in the fridge. They're not cooked, but you can just pop them in the air fryer for ten, fifteen minutes. Shane can help you, when he gets here."

"I know how to use air fryer." Ilya frowned. "What did he tell you?"

"Nothing," Yuna said, placatingly. "You're the brains in the relationship, I know."

"Well, it does not help that your son loves to get knocked over and hit his head on the ice." That was maybe too far, especially for a woman who had made him spring rolls. "Kidding," he added.

"Playoffs!"

"Fucking playoffs, man!" JJ popped a bottle of champagne. The cork flew inches from Shane's face.

"Jesus, man. Way too close."

If you asked Shane, it was never really in question that Montreal would make the playoffs, but he couldn't begrudge the team the celebration. Their win against Tampa had been decisive. *Embarrassing*, Ilya had texted him. *For them and for you. Two measly goals?*

The celebration was mostly clearing out, and as Shane left the locker room he paused for a second and leaned against the wall, trying to come up with a response, something funny about *scoring twice-*

"Hollander?" Davies was standing in front of him, looking concerned. "Can I ask you something?"

"Yeah, sure. What's up?"

"Listen, is..." Davey's eyes were darting from side to side. "Is Ilya Rozanov... dating your mom?"

When Shane's blood had turned to ice at the beginning of that sentence, he did not think that was how it was going to end. He shook his head, like a dog shaking off water, trying to wrap his head around the combination of words he had just heard, and finally forced out: "You're asking. If Ilya- Rozanov- Is dating. My mother."

"Yeah. I, uh, saw him get in her car after the last time we played Ottawa? I didn't see her, but I recognized her car, and... yeah."

"Oh," Shane said mildly. He probably should have been annoyed at Ilya or his mom, or both, but he didn't have it in him right now to be anything but dumbfounded.

"Shit," Davey said. "Did you not- did you not *know*?"

Maybe, Shane thought, he should just go with it. Let Davey think that Ilya was (gross, *gross*) secretly dating his mom.

Then, for one wild moment: What if Ilya *was* secretly dating his mom?

No. Obviously not.

And as for the first thought, going with that story would probably create more problems than it would solve. The last thing he wanted was to make life more complicated for his mom- his dad too, for that matter. No, that would be a disaster.

"Davey," he finally said. "I appreciate your concern. But Rozanov is definitely not dating my mom."

"Oh. Then what- you know what? It's none of my business."

Shane didn't know what made him do it- maybe because Davey looked a little dejected, or that he had seemed genuinely concerned about Shane's reaction to the news he thought he was breaking.

"No, wait. It's..." Shane sighed. "Rozanov and I, we're dating."

Davey looked blank. "Dating who?"

"Dating," Shane repeated. "Each other."

"Oh," Davey said again. Then: "Wait, what?"

"Please don't tell anyone," Shane said. He was beginning to feel very tired. "Hayden knows, but no one else."

Davey was still staring. "But isn't Rozanov, like..." He frowned. "He gets with mad women."

"Madwomen?"

"No, like, mad women. Like, a lot of women."

"Yeah. No, he's bisexual. He likes both," Shane added, because he didn't want to scare Davey with big words. "Men and women. You know. But there's no women anymore. Just me."

"Good. That would be messed up," Davey said. Shane was starting to suspect the kid had maybe had a little too much champagne, too quickly. "If he was dating you, but going out and banging mad chicks on the side."

"Right."

"Or dating your mom."

"Yeah, that would definitely be not good." *Understatement of the year.*

"Hey, but good for you man! I have a cousin who's gay, I think. He doesn't play hockey, but he's cool. And you guys have that whole charity thing together." Ilya, Shane assumed he meant, not the gay cousin. "Is that where you two-"

"Look, I should really get going," Shane said, cutting in.

"Of course, of course."

"And listen. You really, really can't tell anyone. Yeah?"

"Yeah." Davey looked, if anything, psyched to be in on a secret with his captain. "You're the man, Hollander." He turned to leave and then suddenly stopped and turned back towards Shane. "So just to be clear," he said, "There's no horse?"

"What?"

"Hey Davey, you hear about this?" Shane said as he sat down next to Davey in the locker room.

"Hear about what?" Davey looked up from where he was wrapping his stick.

"Hayden is buying a racehorse. He's buying a gay racehorse with Ilya Rozanov."

"Screw you, dude," Hayden said.

"Yeah, but- here's the problem- it turns out the horse is on drugs. Yeah." He nodded faux-solemnly. "Horse steroids."

The three of them laughed, and Hayden reached over to whack Shane with a shin guard.

Everything was going to be fine. Right?

End Notes

Look, would Shane tell a random younger player on the Metros/Voyageurs about him & Ilya? Probably not!

Why wouldn't Hayden tell Shane about his original conversation with Davey? Don't know, but it's classic Hayden behavior!

Does the conversation with Ilya & Yuna have any bearing to the story whatsoever? No but I left it in anyway!

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