not as dumb as you look

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by CherrryBlosssoms

Summary

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> "Jesus Christ," Shane muttered. "This is not how I thought this was going to go.”

Notes

> I’m back…literally a day after already posting. The obsession continues! In the books, I don’t remember there being an actual scene where Shane sits Hayden down and comes out to him. So, I decided to write it, because I love their friendship and how Hayden’s literally Shane’s ride or die.
>
> Any and all feedback is greatly appreciated. Enjoy!

Hayden had been called an idiot many times in his life. By his coaches when he first picked up a hockey stick, by his teammates when he accidentally lost the puck or got into a fight for some bullshit reason, by his wife when he said something particularly distasteful. But he liked to think he wasn't *that* bad.

Sitting across from Shane in his living room, his youngest drooling onto his chest as they stared unblinking at one another, Hayden wondered if maybe it was true. If maybe he really was the fucking idiot everyone believed him to be.

He opened his mouth, then snapped it shut, jaw clicking. His arms tightened around Amber as he stared at the wall just past Shane's shoulder, trying and failing to conjure up words to relieve the heavy silence, but none came to mind. Unfortunately, words seemed to be escaping him, in this particular moment. And Hayden had never felt more like an idiot.

Shane swallowed audibly, and when Hayden focused on his face, he felt ill at the panic etched into his features. "Fuck," Shane muttered, a shaky hand coming up to tug at his hair, trying to ground himself. "Fuck, I'm sorry. Just forget I said anything, yeah? I just- let's just-"

Hayden's eyes widened as he shook his head. "Jesus, dude. Don't apologise. Fuck, you don't have to apologise to me," he said, and smiled at him, trying to wipe the shock from his expression. "Seriously, man. I'm glad you told me, happy that you trust me enough to tell me. Like, I'm proud of you, man. I guess I'm just...processing?"

A beat of silence.

Shane stared at Hayden like he was trying to hold back his tears. And Hayden was wincing internally, because *Jesus*. He sounded like he was trying to convince himself just as much as Shane that he didn't care that he was gay, when really, *he didn't*.

He just...wasn't expecting Shane to come out to him. Not because he couldn't believe Shane was gay- he was a little shocked, sure, but it's not like he'd never thought it once or twice- but Shane was just so private. About fucking everything.

Shane was a quiet guy, always had been. At first, Hayden thought that maybe Shane just didn't like the team, had taken one look at them and was instantly off-put, and it wasn't like Hayden could really blame him. Some of the guys were assholes- he'd heard homophobia and misogyny being tossed around carelessly in the locker room, and had pressed his lips together and ducked his head, because calling it out did fuck-all in making the comments go away. He knew from experience, knew from other teams and other players. The best he could do was ignore it.

Hayden didn't want the worst of the team to define all of them, and had made it his damn mission to become Shane's friend. It had taken weeks of questions and shitty jokes and dragging Shane into whatever conversation he could manage, but his work had paid off, in the end. Shane had quickly become one of his best friends.

But being friends with Shane didn't change much. Shane remained quiet, offering up only bits and pieces of himself, and Hayden had learned not to push. It wasn't his place, as Jackie often had to remind him. His place was to be Shane's friend and accept whatever information he provided, was to be someone he could confide in if needed.

And here Shane was, confiding in him, and Hayden was acting like a damn idiot. He wanted to slam his head against the wall in hopes of knocking some fucking sense into himself.

"You're not...mad?" Shane asked, and Hayden felt like a piece of shit for making Shane think, for one fucking second, that he would ever feel angry at Shane for just being himself. "Or like, uncomfortable?"

Hayden frowned. "Of course not."

"But we've shared hotel rooms. A locker room for the past eight years. We've showered next to each other, like, a thousand times, Hayd. I've seen you naked."

"And? That doesn't matter."

"Yes, it does," Shane said, frustration building in his eyes, but his voice wavered. His jaw clenched as he looked away, staring a hole through Hayden's bookcase. "How are you not uncomfortable with that? I fucking lied to you, for years."

"You didn't lie, Shane."

"I didn't tell the truth," Shane said, shaking his head, and Hayden wanted to hug him. Wanted to grab Shane by the damn shoulders and look him in the eye and tell him that he didn't give a fuck, that this changed absolutely fucking nothing and Shane would continue to be his best fucking friend in the entire fucking world.

He looked down at his daughter, looked back at Shane, and stood. He walked over to the corner of the room, careful not to wake Amber as he gently lay her down in her cot. He lingered for a moment, smiling at her, before he turned and settled down next to Shane on the couch, knocking their shoulders together.

"Shane," he said, and waited for Shane to look at him before continuing. "Shane, you're my best friend. Have been for years now. And I know we don't do many heart to hearts, that we're awkward as fuck and don't really talk about our feelings, but I love you, man. You being gay doesn't change shit. And it won't."

Shane was quiet for a moment. "Really?"

Hayden knocked their shoulders together once more. "Really, man. I don't see you any differently." He paused, laughing a little. "You know, you aren't the only gay person I know. My brother's gay, came out to me nearly ten years ago. He's getting married next summer."

"Oh," Shane murmured. "You've never mentioned that."

"What, that he's gay?" Hayden tilted his head because yeah, he doesn't think he has. "Not really something I think's worth mentioning, honestly. It just...is, you know? When I talk

about him, it's not the first thing that comes to mind. He's so much more than that. And he'd probably fucking kill me if he heard me calling him my gay brother instead of just, you know, my brother."

"How did you feel, when he told you?"

Hayden couldn't quite hide his grimace. "Not going to lie to you, man. I felt so fucking awkward. Not- not because he's gay, but because..." Hayden trailed off with an uncomfortable shrug. "I guess because I didn't expect it."

When his brother had come out to him, freshly eighteen, his words catching in his throat and looking smaller than Hayden had ever seen him, Hayden had been a little confused, more taken aback than he'd like to admit. Because he had never expected Harvey to be gay. Harvey had always been taller and broader than him, loved hockey almost as much as he did. Had always been the most popular in a room, leaving girls charmed and guys jealous, and Hayden had always teased him about being a womaniser, about leaving a trail of broken hearts in his wake.

One of the first things Hayden had thought was *You don't look gay*. He'd wanted to smack himself as soon as the thought entered his head, shame and guilt churning in his stomach, because he knew there was no looking gay. It was just some stupid stereotypical bullshit that people took as gospel.

His parents were progressive as shit, and had raised him to know better. They had taught him that the world was much more diverse than his small little bubble, that just because he didn't understand or didn't interact with one thing or another didn't mean it was wrong. They told him that he couldn't put people into boxes, that the stereotypes the world had drilled into his skull shouldn't influence his views on others.

He had made it a point very early on in his life not to feed into that crap. He may be a hockey player, but he wasn't an asshole. He may be a man, but he wasn't aggressive.

And yet the first thing that had come to mind when looking at his brother, the words *I'm gay, I'm sorry,* knocking around his skull, had been some fucking stereotype about how his brother couldn't be gay because he was too masculine. *Fucking bullshit*.

"Honestly, the first thing I think I said to him was 'do you really think you're gay?'"

Shane made a face. "Yikes."

Hayden nodded with a sigh. "Yeah. Not my proudest moment. Kind of wanted to jump out the window as soon as the words left my mouth. Luckily, it made Harvey laugh his head off and call me a dumbass. He said if he wanted help with making the discovery he sure as shit wouldn't come to me."

"And you're good now? It didn't change anything?"

"No, Shane. Not a thing. He's still my annoying little brother who pisses me off more often than not." He smiled at Shane, said, "And you're still my best friend and captain and the best

fucking hockey player in the league. Nothing's changing that, man."

"Okay," Shane said, and the relieved slump of his shoulders, the sigh that escaped him, made Hayden want to cry, just a little. "Okay, that's- that's good."

Shane's voice came out a little choked, and Hayden put a hand on his shoulder, squeezing. "So," Hayden started, smile on the more teasing side. "How long have you known you were gay? Have you been with a guy? What's it like, man? I never got to ask my brother because that's fucking gross, I don't want to know that shit."

"But you want to know all about my sex life?" Shane raised a brow.

"Of course! You've heard all my sex stories over the years. The good, the bad, the ugly. And yet I haven't gotten a single story out of you."

Shane spluttered, cheeks flushing crimson. "Because it's none of your business? What the fuck?"

"Aw, so you don't kiss and tell?" Hayden teased, laughing when Shane's blush deepened. He shoved at his shoulder, trying to wipe the smile from his face. "Relax, dude. I'm only messing with you. You don't have to tell me anything. But, like, we can talk about this shit. Sex, you know. I don't care that it's between two guys. Honestly, it's kind of interesting-"

"Jesus Christ," Shane muttered. "This is not how I thought this was going to go."

Hayden barked out a laugh. "So," he said, dragging the word out, wiggling his brows at Shane. "Tell me about your conquests, buddy. I'm all ears."

Wrinkling his nose, Shane said, "You're so gross, Hayd." But he was smiling, easier than Hayden might have ever seen before. "And, uh, there's not much to talk about. Not really."

Hayden raised his eyebrows. "There's someone, though," he pointed out. "Boston Lily. I'm going to assume that's a guy? And that his name isn't actually Lily."

Hayden watched Shane tense up, expression going startlingly blank. He gnawed on his bottom lip as he turned his head, looking away. Hayden didn't push; he just watched him, silent as he waited, letting Shane sort out his thoughts. When Shane finally turned back at him, Hayden couldn't quite make out the look on his face.

"Yeah, uh," Shane swallowed. "We've been seeing each other. For a while now."

"Is it serious?" Hayden asked, because as much as Shane was quiet, was private, Hayden liked to think he knew his friend. At least a little bit. And he knew Shane cared about this. He could see it every time Shane smiled, giddy, down at his phone, every time they arrived in Boston and Shane disappeared for hours on end, only to return, all flushed and relaxed and so fucking happy, even if he tried to hide it. All because of this one person- Boston Lily.

Shane nodded, looking a little terrified, eyes watering like they usually did when he got overwhelmed. Hayden didn't call him out on it. "Yeah, it's serious. He's- we're, together."

Hayden's smile was wide. "That's good, buddy. I'm happy for you."

"You can't tell anyone," Shane said quickly. "I'm serious about him. Really fucking serious. But we can't be out. It would ruin everything."

"I won't tell a soul," Hayden said, and he meant it. He wouldn't even tell his wife, who since they met, had practically become an extension himself. But he'd keep this to himself, if that's what Shane wanted; it wasn't his secret to share.

"I'm being serious, Hayd. This would fuck up everything I've worked towards. Being- being gay isn't something I'm supposed to be. It just doesn't...fit."

"Dude, I'm not telling anyone, I swear," Hayden said. "But fuck that it doesn't fit bullshit. You've always been gay. It doesn't change anything."

"But it does," Shane insisted, furiously scrubbing at the side of his face. "You've seen the fallout with Scott Hunter. He's gotten a lot of praise, sure, but there's been just as much bullshit being said all over the media. He's been reduced to his coming out- not his talent, not the fact he won the fucking cup. But the fact he's gay and in a relationship with a man." Shane sighed, slumping back into the couch cushions, squeezing his eyes shut. "It's already been fucking hard being one of the few Asian players in the league. Sometimes it feels like it's all I'm reduced to.

And I'm not ashamed- of course I'm not. But I hate that sometimes it's all that people see. And it'll be the same with my sexuality. Fuck, it'll be worse, maybe. I don't want to deal with that."

Hayden sat with Shane's words for a moment, a wave of sadness washing over him. "So you're going to keep this a secret? For how long?"

"Fuck, man. I don't know. I'd keep it quiet until retirement, if..." Shane trailed off, shrugging his shoulders.

"If you weren't dating Boston Lily?"

Shane snorted out a quiet laugh. "It's so weird to hear you call him that," he muttered. "But, yeah. I don't know how long I can keep it a secret. How fucking crazy it's going to make me to have to keep hiding him."

"You've been doing a good job so far."

"I've been losing my goddamn mind," Shane admitted softly.

"How long have you been together? Years, yeah?"

Shane nodded with a little smile. "Yeah," he said, then cleared his throat, avoiding Hayden's gaze. "I love him. More than should be possible. I don't even know when it happened, but. It did. And he loves me too which is." Shane blew out a harsh breath. "Crazy, man. Fucking unbelievable, actually."

"Do I know him?" Hayden asked, and when Shane went still, expression freezing, he knew the answer. "Do you mind telling me who? I mean, unless that's outing him. I don't really know. But, like, if you can tell me, that'd be cool. I want to know about your boyfriend, man."

"Uh." Shane scratched the back of his neck, sheepish. "I don't know, Hayd. He, like, wouldn't have a problem with me telling you. He trusts me. But I don't know if you should know." His eyes went wide. "Not because I don't trust you! Of course I do. It's just...him, I guess. I don't know how you'll react."

"That sounds ominous," Hayden raised a brow. "But I trust your judgement, dude. I don't think you'd be dating an asshole. If you like him, then I'll like him." He paused, making a considering noise. "Actually, scratch that. If they're a Boston Raiders fan then we might have some issues."

The laugh that burst out of Shane's mouth made him tilt his head, curious and a little happy to hear Shane laugh, because it was a sound so fucking rare no matter how hard Hayden tried to coax one out of him. Shane bit at his bottom lip, trying to fight his smile. "I think you could get along...if you put aside your differences."

"Oh no," Hayden groaned. "You're dating a Raiders fan, aren't you? What the fuck, Shane! Did you not have any other options? Like, you're hot as fuck, best freaking hockey player of our generation! All the guys would be throwing themselves at you, man. Why pick a Boston fan?"

"Hayden," Shane said around another laugh.

"Like, I'm not judging you!" Hayden said quickly.

"Kind of sounds like you are, man."

"I'm just surprised. Shocked, maybe. A little fucking horrified, if I'm honest with you." Hayden looked back at Shane then, furrowing his brows. "You said I know him, though. And I'm telling you, I do not know any fucking Raiders fans. I think I'd rather die."

"I never said you knew him."

Hayden rolled his eyes. "Dude. I know you've been keeping this under wraps for years now, but you're a terrible liar." He studied Shane's face, mind racing as he tried to figure out who the hell he knew that was a secret Raiders fan and liked men. There were a couple guys who could fit the latter description, he guessed, but a fan of the Raiders? And then, it hit him.

"Oh god."

Shane's eyes widened at whatever expression he was wearing. "What?"

"You're dating a fucking player."

Silence, and then, Shane gave the tiniest of nods. Still wide-eyed, still looking a little scared, and Hayden barked out a laugh that sounded only a little crazed.

"You're dating a player from Boston. Oh dear god." Hayden tried to hide his horror, really, he did, but what the hell? What the actual fucking fuck? Was Shane out of his damn mind? "Shane. Buddy. What the actual fuck? That's even worse than dating a fan."

"You're freaking out," Shane said softly, as if Hayden didn't already know that.

"How long has he been on the fucking Raiders? One season? Two? Because I can work with that, I think. So long as he didn't want to be traded to those bastards-"

"They drafted him."

Hayden felt a little sick, because there wasn't many players who hadn't been traded since their draft. On the Metros, Shane was the only one. There was a similarly low number for the Raiders. "Shane," he said, trying to remain calm. "Besides the rookies, there is only three players I can think of that have been with Boston their entire careers. And those options are all going to give me a heart attack, but buddy. Please, please don't tell me Boston Lily is Ilya fucking Rozanov."

But there was a part of Hayden that already knew. Like a weird sixth sense or some psychic bullshit. But he was desperately hoping he was wrong, because if Shane fucking Hollander was dating who Hayden thought he was...he didn't know what he'd do. Flip the coffee table, maybe, if his daughter wasn't sleeping peacefully in the corner. Maybe grab a couch cushion to muffle his screams.

Shane nodded slowly, hands clasped tightly in his lap. "Yeah," he said, clearing his throat when the word came out as a whisper. "Yeah. Ilya's Boston Lily."

Hayden put his head in his hands, groaning. He felt Shane rest a hand on his shoulder, as if trying to comfort him, and Hayden felt ridiculous. Just a little.

"I'm sorry."

The apology, the way Shane sounded so guilty, so ashamed, had Hayden's head shooting up so quickly he nearly gave himself whiplash. He turned his entire body towards Shane so he could grab his shoulders. "No, no, no. Don't apologise to me. Jesus fuck, you shouldn't have to do that. I'm just being a dramatic asshole." He gave him a little shake. "You can date whoever the fuck you want to date, alright? You don't need my permission. I'm just processing. I wasn't expecting Ilya Rozanov to be the love of your fucking life." Hayden blinked. "Oh my god, Rozanov's the love of your life."

Shane sniffled quietly, his lips twitching. "You look like I just broke your mind."

Hayden laughed. "You kind of did, man. Wow. Now I'm thinking back on every time we've played Boston. You two always had a weird vibe, but like, I thought you both just took the rivalry too seriously," he said. "Jesus Christ, how long has this been going on?"

"We've, um, kind of always been together?" Shane said awkwardly, quick to continue when Hayden's jaw dropped. "Not like dating! Just seeing each other?"

"You mean fucking?" Hayden supplied dryly.

Shane groaned, ducking his head. "Jesus, Hayd."

"But that's what it was, right? Just hooking up? What the fuck changed? You told me you love him."

"Not much changed. Not really. I guess I just started...wanting more?" Shane shrugged. "I would see him and I'd think 'what if things were different?' 'What if we could be together and not be terrified?' It was just, like, a gradual shift until it was all I could think about. Until every time I seen him I just wanted more. And I knew, knew that it was basically impossible. It'd be fucking crazy to be more. But then we just...were. And now I can't believe we'd ever been anything else."

Hayden stared at him, then tightened his grip on Shane's shoulders. "Dude, you're going to make me cry."

"Please don't."

"My best friend's a fucking goner for Ilya Rozanov," Hayden said, almost to himself. He then swore under his breath. "This means I'm going to have to be friends with Rozanov, doesn't it?"

Shane was smiling as he said, "I'd like you to be. Or like, get along."

"Rozanov's an asshole."

"So are you," Shane argued with raised brows.

"Hey! I can at least be fucking civil. When has Rozanov been civil a day in his life?" Hayden asked, and when Shane only laughed at him, the sound a little watery, Hayden couldn't stop himself from smiling.

Nothing had changed. Shane was the same person he'd always been- his best friend, his captain, his family. He was just...dating Ilya Rozanov. Hayden could deal with that, could put up with all of Rozanov's bullshit, if only so he could see Shane smile like he had when talking about the love of his life.

Ilya fucking Rozanov.

Jesus fuck, Hayden needed a drink.

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