The Lily Quest

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The Lily Quest

by Climbergirlio

Summary

Hayden Pike is determined to figure out who 'Lily' is, and he plans to get to the bottom of it by questioning his best friend and also possibly doing a little snooping. Set mainly in the year after Heated Rivalry, when Ilya was still playing for Boston and his first year with Ottawa when Shane and Ilya's relationship was a secret.

Chapter 1: Buffalo

Hayden Pike had been best friends with Shane Hollander since their rookie season. Possibly about as long as that, Shane had been hooking up with some girl called Lily. Well, probably not *quite* that long, but for several years now. And Hayden had yet to meet her. As Shane's best friend and just overall a curious person, Hayden was kind of dying to meet her. Now of course, it wasn't exactly unusual for hockey players to have a regular hookup in any given city, but what was extremely unusual was that Hayden had never known Shane to hook up with anyone else on a regular basis. In fact, Shane very rarely hooked up with anyone at all.

On top of all that, things had been…different this year. Shane had been texting this girl more or less constantly since coming back from his cottage, which was not how things had gone in previous years. Before, Hayden had only seen notifications from her on Shane's phone when they were in Boston and occasionally when they played Boston at home. He'd more or less guessed she must've been a Boston fan, which *really?* but she seemed to make Shane happy, so he was willing to overlook it.

"So when am I going to meet Lily?" Hayden asks as his best friend's phone pings with yet another incoming text. They're in Buffalo right now, but they're playing in Boston next week.

Shane nearly drops his phone, "oh, uh."

"And don't say *it's not like that* because clearly it *is* like that. You text all the time."

Shane blushes and stammers.

"C'mon," Hayden tries again, "you've been seeing this girl for what? Three or four years? And I don't even know what color hair she has."

"You want to know what color hair Lily has?" Shane checks.

"I dunno man, I'm your best friend. Shouldn't I know if you're more into blondes or brunettes? Wait. Let me guess. Brunettes. Rose Landry has dark hair."

"That's not-"

"Listen, man, I know you're private about this stuff, or whatever, but it's been *years*. And we play Boston next week so I just figured maybe we could all get dinner, or something?"

Shane sends Hayden a look. "Hayd. Lily and I don't usually…get dinner."

Hayden blinks at him a second before the realization hits. "Oh. Oh!"

Shane blushes furiously and turns back to his phone.

"I thought maybe you were dating now? Officially? You're texting her like all the time, bro."

“It’s complicated,” Shane says tiredly.

Well, that probably wasn’t an understatement. Hayden found himself wondering, for like the hundredth time, what *made* it complicated. Because Shane Hollander was about as uncomplicated as a person you could come by. He liked hockey and weird food and was earnest in just about everything he did. Hayden was sure Shane harbored deeper feelings for Lily, so whatever the complications were were probably on her side. Maybe it was because she lived in Boston and they thought it would be too hard to have a real relationship living in two different countries.

“Is it because she lives in Boston? Because almost any job you can get in Boston you can get in Montreal,” Hayden suggests, “I mean we know plenty of players whose families have had to move for them because of trades and stuff.”

Shane stands abruptly, “I’m going for a run,” he tells Hayden.

The message is pretty clear. Drop it. Hayden wants to, really, he feels kind of bad, being so pushy, but he’s also worried. Like maybe there’s a reason Shane is so secretive about this and it’s not just because he’s private. Like, maybe Lily is in witness protection, or something? No, that’s ridiculous. Maybe she’s married? It would make some sense but Hayden doesn’t really believe Shane would do that. Unless maybe she was only married because she needed citizenship. One of the guys on the team had gotten married three years ago for that reason. His girlfriend was from Portugal and her visa was expiring so they’d gotten married right before Christmas. The whole team had gone. They’d broken up over the summer, but agreed to stay married until she could become a citizen.

Hayden thought about it some more. Lily and Shane had been a thing for a while. Maybe that didn’t make sense. Unless Lily had only gotten married for the citizenship and was never romantically involved with her husband. And maybe she’d gotten her citizenship now, which was why she and Shane were texting more. But then why not be together? That stumped Hayden for a moment before he came up with the answer: because she’d only just gotten American citizenship and Shane was Canadian. He frowns. The theory is very convoluted.

Something else then. She could be famous. Maybe that's Shane's type: famous girls with flower names. He thinks for a second, trying to decide if he knows of any celebrities named Lily. He can’t think of any, and he’s not sure any celebrities live in Boston anyway. Maybe she’s a lot older. That makes kind of a lot of sense, actually. It would explain the secrecy and embarrassment. And also honestly, he kind of sees that for Shane. He’ll have to talk through this new theory with Jackie.

Chapter 2: Boston

Shane is humming with a nervous energy the whole flight to Boston. Or maybe not nervous, exactly. Anticipatory, perhaps? He was checking the flight progress map obsessively. Twice Hayden has had to poke him to get him to stop bouncing his knee. Both times Shane had given him a sheepish smile and gone back to half-heartedly watching his movie.

Not too long before their flight lands, Shane's phone buzzes with a notification. Hayden's nosy and bored with the book he's trying to read so of course he looks over. He's expecting it to be a text from Lily, so he's kind of shocked to his core when he looks over and sees Shane's phone open to an Instagram DM from *Rozanov*, of all people. This is world-shattering for multiple reasons. First and foremost Shane and Rozanov have one of the most well-documented heated rivalries in the league's history. Second, Shane is nearly chronically offline. Hayden didn't even realize Shane actually knew his Instagram password or had the app on his phone.

The message itself is an image of an ostentatious sports car with accompanying text reading *will buy this after we beat you tomorrow*. Shane snorts out a laugh, and types out *in your dreams*. The typing icon pops up, but instead of the snarky message Hayden is expecting, Rozanov simply writes *when do you land?* Shane glances up to where the flight tracker is still showing, seemingly oblivious to Hayden watching all of this, and types back *45 minutes.* Hayden expects the conversation to end there, but Rozanov begins typing again and a few seconds later another message pops up. *See you soon :)*

"Are you texting *Rozanov?*" Hayden asks Shane then, unable to keep quiet any longer.

Shane startles and slaps his phone down. "Uh, yes?" He asks, as if he himself is not sure.

"Why?" Hayden asks, bewildered.

"We're friendly," Shane says carefully.

Hayden is pretty sure his jaw has hit the floor. "Since when?" He whispers. He's not sure why he's whispering, only that it seems like something the rest of the team should maybe not know.

Shane just shrugs and avoids eye contact, "I dunno, we text sometimes."

"You *text sometimes*?" Hayden checks.

"Well, he DMs me," Shane clarifies, "we're not rookies anymore. We thought it might be time to put the rivalry to rest off the ice."

Hayden stares at him.

Shane angles his phone away this time and responds to the message. Hayden is still a little gobsmacked. "*When* did you agree to this?" He asks.

Shane shrugs, a little uncomfortable, “I dunno, this summer, I guess.”

Hayden blinks, “you saw him this summer?”

Shane doesn’t make eye contact with him, “I mean I guess it really started at the All-Star game.”

Hayden nods. That makes sense. He’d watched it with the rest of the team, of course, and Shane and Rozanov had been on fire. Their on-ice chemistry had perhaps surpassed their on-ice rivalry. Hollander and Rozanov had moved like two players with one mind, impossibly in tune and completely lethal. He was extremely glad he hadn’t been on the opposing team. The West had lost rather conclusively.

“You and Rozanov, friends.”

Shane shrugs again, “we have more in common than you might think.”

Hayden initially wants to protest that idea, but as he sits with it for a moment it makes some sense. They’d both been drafted at the same age to struggling teams with similarly rabid fan bases and expectations that they’d revive the franchises. They had then both gone on to compete for rookie of the year, were made captains of their respective teams the same year (and both were the youngest captains in their team’s history) and only had each other for competition in the scoring race. In a weird way, it made some sense.

“But I still want to kick Boston’s ass,” Shane grins.

“Damn right,” Hayden agrees.

About two hours later Hayden is thinking they have a good shot at it too, because Shane is tossing his bag on the bed of their shared hotel room and tossing some sort of explanation Hayden’s way that involves ‘going out’ and ‘back tomorrow’. Things have definitely gotten more serious with Lily if Shane was *openly admitting* he was going to stay the night. Also, Shane hadn’t even bothered unpacking which meant he was going to have to wear today’s clothes tomorrow, something he usually detested. As if that wasn’t enough, they had morning practice tomorrow. Shane was definitely whipped.

Hayden doesn’t ask about it the next morning when Shane *flies* into the room with ten minutes to spare until they have to get onto the bus. He changes quickly and runs through an abbreviated version of his pre-game ritual. Whoever Lily is, she must be pretty damn special, to get Shane Hollander to skip his pre-game routine. Hayden doesn’t comment on it now.

Besides, it obviously seems to work. Shane is so on fire that night that Hayden’s surprised the ice doesn’t melt. In any other game, they’d be running away with it, but unfortunately Rozanov is also having a great game. Rozanov had scored early, winning the first faceoff, but Shane had answered right away. The game had continued like that, Hollander and Rozanov trading goals. Shane was currently up by one, having put up a stunning 4 goals, but Drapeau had let in a goal from one of the other Boston players so they were currently tied 4-4.

Hollander and Rozanov are sent in for what is probably the last face-off of the game. Hayden is on the line as well.

“You will buy me drink after game?” the Russian man asks, “when I win?”

“Absolutely not,” Shane grinds out.

Rozanov responds in Russian, which contrary to Hayden’s expectations, seems to work as an intimidation tactic, because Shane loses the face-off. He goes tearing after Rozanov though, trying to reclaim the puck, and shoves him roughly away. Shane regains control and passes to Hayden, who passes back to Shane, now near the goal, as soon as he gets the opportunity. Rozanov is on him almost immediately, though, and a well-timed (and unfortunately clean) hit sends Shane sprawling. Rozanov tears away, flying past the Montreal defense to sink a goal with just ten seconds left in the game. Rozanov doesn’t celebrate like Hayden is expecting though, instead skating towards where Shane is gingerly picking himself up off the ground and offering his hand. Shane takes it and Rozanov helps him up. Hayden, who had been skating over to do the same thing, eyes the exchange warily, hovering behind Shane in what he hopes is a protective, intimidating manner.

“I did not hurt you?” Rozanov asks quietly. So quietly Hayden almost misses it.

Shane shakes his head, “just knocked the wind out of me a little, I think.” he wheezes out a breath.

“Good,” Rozanov says, letting out a quiet breath, like he was genuinely worried. Then, his demeanour seems to change and the unbearable smirk re-appears on his face. “You owe me drink, Hollander,” he taunts.

“Fuck off, Rozanov,” Shane bites back, and skates back towards the Montreal bench. Hayden watches him carefully as he does so, checking to make sure his friend isn’t actually injured. He seems fine.

“Hollander, you good?” coach checks.

Shane affirms that yes he is, but the Montreal bench’s angry murmurings about Rozanov don’t quiet down.

The two teams line up for handshakes, then head to the locker rooms. The mood is sort of muted. Shane had played an electric game, but the team had been weak in other areas. Their penalty kill, in particular, had been weak. Rozanov scored on them twice while they were shorthanded. Thankfully Shane had answered both goals, or the game wouldn’t have been as close.

Coach more or less says that to them, then tells them to rest up because they play New York in two days. That wouldn’t be an easy game either, since New York had just won the cup and had continued their momentum into this season. It was going to be a tough game.

The loss and the threat of New York hanging over them results in a quiet ride back to the hotel. Shane looks contemplatively out the window. Across the aisle, JJ has his head leaned

back against the seat and his eyes closed. Some of the rookies near the back are talking, so it's not dead silent, which is a small relief. The other small relief is that the hotel isn't far from the arena, so it isn't long before Hayden is opening the door to their shared room and Shane is following him in. Hayden is expecting Shane to run out of the room like he had when they arrived, but instead he rifles through his bag slowly. He pulls out a bottle of Advil and tosses back several pills.

"You good?" Hayden checks.

"Yeah, just a little sore. Probably will be feeling it tomorrow."

"Fucking Rozanov." Hayden vows silently to get him back in the next game.

"Swear jar," Shane says absently as he stretches out on the bed, texting.

Hayden rolls his eyes and picks up his own phone. He has a message from Jackie waiting.

Across the room, Shane sets down his phone and heads into the bathroom. Hayden can't help it, he cranes his neck to get a look.

Lily: I watched replay. You are not hurt?

Shane: No 🙄

Lily: Ok

Lily: Planning to slip out in an hour. Let yourself in?

Shane: Just got back to the hotel. I'll get changed and come over.

Lily: You still have your key?

Shane: yes.

Lily begins typing, and Hayden waits, oddly invested, keeping his ears trained firmly on the bathroom. The sink is still running. Thank god Shane is neurotic about hand washing.

Lily: I'll make you come 4 times, yes? One for each goal.

Hayden falls off the bed. He then scrambles back up onto the bed and hastily pulls up a YouTube video. In the bathroom, the water turns off. In his haste to look busy he hadn't really looked at what he'd pulled up. Unfortunately, it's Peppa Pig. More unfortunately, Shane sees and hears that it's Peppa Pig and sends him a weird look.

"Autoplay," Hayden says, glad the redness in his cheeks can now be attributed to his YouTube video choices and not his snooping. He closes the video.

Shane picks up his phone and predictably blushes bright red.

"I'm, um, going out," Shane says.

They've had this conversation like a million times at this point. Usually Hayden's line is something to the effect of 'don't have too much fun!' except currently Hayden, is still reeling from the implications of exactly *how much* fun his best friend is seemingly about to have, so he doesn't have any snide comments or jokes at the ready. Even his go-to quip of 'I won't wait up' feels like revealing too much, right now. He just nods instead, pretending to be engrossed in his YouTube scroll.

"I, uh, I might not be back until tomorrow morning," Shane mumbles. Hayden doesn't doubt it. Not if Lily is being serious. God, no wonder Shane always played like a beast against Boston if *this* was their deal.

"Alright," Hayden says.

Shane pauses, as if waiting for Hayden to say something else. When he doesn't, Shane slips out the door with an awkward wave goodbye.

Hayden waits fifteen minutes before he calls Jackie.

"Jacks, you're not going to believe this," he starts.

"Okay, one sec - let me start the dishwasher."

Hayden waits obediently. "Okay," she says, "I'm ready."

"Alright. So you know how I've been telling you Shane has been texting Lily more?"

"Yeah."

"Well, get this. He like *sprinted* out of the hotel last night to go see her and then *Shane Hollander*, Mr. Hockey himself, didn't get back to the hotel until 10 minutes before the team bus left this morning."

"Wow."

"Right?" Hayden says. "Like, not even subtle. Just dropped his bags and ran out the door. Didn't even bring a change of clothes with him."

"So he ditched curfew," Jackie says.

"Absolutely ditched curfew," Hayden confirms. "And you know how Shane is. Rules about everything. Being on time is late."

Jackie hums thoughtfully. "That's actually kind of huge."

"That's what I'm saying. If it was just sex, or whatever, he'd have come back last night. But all he'll say when I ask is that 'it's complicated'. Except - get this, he just left his phone open on his bed and a message from Lily popped up saying she was going to make him come once for every goal."

On the other end of the line, Jackie chokes a little. "What?!?"

“I know right? No wonder he always plays so well against Boston, if this is the kind of encouragement he’s getting. But god, I wish I never looked. It’s *weird*. I mean I always kind of assumed Shane was kind of… I don’t know.” He pauses, trying to find the words. “I mean, Lily’s been around for a while, and I assumed they were sleeping together, but I guess I didn’t really think about what that meant. It’s just *Shane,* you know. He never seemed that motivated by…this kind of stuff before.”

Jackie laughs, “maybe he should be. You guys would win more games.”

“Ew, Jacks,” Hayden groans, “Shane is like, practically my brother.”

“Good for him, though,” Jackie says, “and good for you guys, too, I guess.”

“Knowing this does make me rethink meeting her,” Hayden laughs once, “I mean how would I look her in the eye now?”

“At least you know why she doesn’t have time to meet you.”

“Gross. I don’t want to keep thinking about this.”

“You did kind of get what you deserved, for snooping,” Jackie admonishes him. Her tone is more teasing than truly scolding.

“You’re just as curious as I am!”

Jackie hums, but doesn’t deny it.

“And Shane left it open on the bed. For all his secretiveness around Lily, he’s not as diligent around his phone as you’d expect.”

“Hm.”

They move on from the topic of Shane’s secret girlfriend, and discuss the game, the kids, and how soon Hayden is coming home. He agrees to take the kids to the science center on his off day, to give Jackie a break. Maybe he can draft Uncle Shane for the expedition as well, simply to have another pair of arms to use to wrangle the children. And because he owes him now, not that he knows it.

Chapter 3: Seattle

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The topic of Lily doesn't come up again for a while, but Shane texts her more or less constantly while they're on the road. He also, Hayden realizes, calls her a lot. It took him a while to recognize it because Shane always leaves the room to do it, but one time Hayden had found Shane sitting in one of the lounge chairs by the closed outdoor pool at their hotel on a video call with someone. Shane had ended the call as soon as he'd seen him.

Today, they're in Seattle for an off-day before they head up to Vancouver tomorrow. It kind of sucks because it's raining, a sad but persistent drizzle, and overcast. To top it all off, they'd lost last night. Seattle had been on a tear lately, but it had been an embarrassing loss, 4-1. Most of the team had opted to just stay at the hotel for the day, but Hayden was part of the minority that went out. He and JJ, along with a couple of the other guys went to Pike Place market. He'd been to Seattle many times over the years, of course, but he'd never had a day off here before so he was determined to do all the touristy things.

He buys a dried flower bouquet for Jackie, and then a second one in case the first gets crushed. There's not too much to do beyond that, since he's staying in a hotel room and therefore can't really purchase raw seafood. Someone suggests maybe going to a glass museum, but that is something Hayden has no interest in, and he's kind of sick of the rain. It's not raining like, a lot, but it is raining enough to make him damp and cold, so he just heads back to the hotel. They're having a team dinner at the top of the space needle tonight anyway, the whole thing is rented out for a private event, so that should satisfy the rest of the touristy destinations.

He takes a car back to the hotel and heads straight for his room, on a mission to change out of his still-wet clothes. He lets himself into the room he's sharing with Shane.

"I already have buyers lined up for the apartment and the building. As soon as I get back, I can move in."

"You're moving in with Lily?!" Hayden can't help but exclaim.

Shane, who apparently didn't notice him, is so startled he drops his phone. Sure enough, the contact listed on the call screen is Lily.

"Jesus, Hayd," Shane says, picking his phone back up and settling back against the headboard. He's wearing headphones, which is probably why he hadn't heard the door unlock. And then he says, "yeah, I'll call you back later. Good luck today."

"You're moving in with Lily?" Hayden asks again, shocked.

"No," Shane frowns, "I bought a house."

Hayden blinks. “Don’t you already have a house?”

Shane shrugs, “I have an apartment. I’ve been planning on moving to a standalone house for a while. I was just waiting until something private enough near the rink came onto the market.”

“Oh,” Hayden says. He hadn’t known that. And then he thinks some more. “So you aren’t moving in together? You and Lily?”

Shane shoots him a look that suggests he’s prying. “Lily lives in Boston.”

Hayden nods, because he does know that, “I just thought maybe you were buying a house because she was moving to Montreal?”
Shane laughs at that. “No, no, just for me, really. I mean, I bought my apartment when I was a rookie. It was time for an upgrade. I bought a place this fall and the renovations just finished, so it’s officially ready now. I had some cool custom features added in. A private gym with dimmable lighting and a tape room, and other upgrades. I had a hedge added out front and a gate, too.”

Hayden laughs because wasn’t that very Shane Hollander to make a room specifically for reviewing hockey tapes.

“Once I get moved in I’ll invite you and Jackie and some of the others over. Maybe we can watch a game, or something.”

Another very Shane Hollander suggestion, to have a housewarming party with a hockey game as entertainment.

“And Lily? Will she be there?”
Shane frowns at him, “I don’t understand your obsession with Lily.”

“You’ve gotta introduce us man. I’ve never met any of your girlfriends.”

“Lily isn’t my girlfriend.”

“The biggest shame was that I never met Rose Landry,” Hayden reflects, “I can’t believe you never introduced us.”

“We’re still friends,” Shane observes, “I still can.”

“And also I need to know what kind of girl is worth leaving Rose Landry for.”

“I didn’t leave Rose for…” Shane cuts himself off, annoyed. “My relationship with Lily is very different from my relationship with Rose.”

“You always say that and I never know what it means.”
Shane just shrugs.
“Shane, man, c’mon. You were my best man. Don’t you think I deserve to know about the girl you love?”

“I don’t-” Shane sighs. Hayden can see the moment his guilt trip works. “What do you want to know?” Shane asks, sounding defeated.

“How’d you meet?”

“At a…hockey…game?” Shane sounds sort of unsure.

“Are you asking me?”

“At a hockey game,” Shane clarifies, sounding more sure. “After a hockey game, really.”

“A Boston game? Because I’ve suspected she was a rival fan for years now and I cannot understand how that works.”

Shane shrugs. “Lily’s not a Boston fan, exactly.”

“She lives in Boston,” Hayden points out, “and you must have met her after a Boston game.”

“I do think Lily likes Boston,” Shane concedes, “but also Montreal, probably.”

“Well, duh, because of you.”

Shane hums thoughtfully, “and Lily is a fan of Rozanov, too,” his eyes sparkle with a hint of mischief when he confesses that.

“What? That’s fucked up, man.”

Shane just shrugs, “he’s a good player.”

“Your weird new friendship with Rozanov is not going to distract me from my interrogation.”

Shane just eyes him, amused.

“Does anyone else know about Lily?”

“My parents,” Shane confesses, “I told them this summer.”

Hayden raises a brow at that. That doesn’t jive with Shane’s protests about it not being serious.

“Really?”

Shane shrugs. He’s been doing a lot of shrugging in this conversation. His eyes also start to eye the door like he might be considering running away so Hayden figures he better ask whatever else he can quickly.

“Is she older?”

Shane splutters, “what?!”

“Like, is she older, is that why you’re so secretive about it?”
“No! Lily’s the same age as me, dude. What the hell?”

“Is she married?”
“Of course not! Is this what you think about me? It’s just complicated, like I said. I’m not a homewrecker, Hayd. Jeez, you’re my best friend. Please tell me you didn’t actually think that.”

“Well, not seriously, no, but there’s got to be some reason you’ve been so secretive about her and texting for so long but not dating.”

“There is,” Shane admits, “but not any of those reasons. It’s just that-”

There’s a loud knock at the door. Hayden could kill whoever it is. Shane, however, looks immensely relieved and gets up to answer it right away.

Hayden can’t tell who it is from the conversation, which means it’s probably like, one of the Rookies, or Williams who’d just gotten traded.

“Some of the rookies want to look at video in one of the conference rooms,” Shane explains as he re-enters the room, collecting his phone and a jacket, “so I’m going to go…do…that. You know, Captain stuff,” Shane grins weakly at him and flees.

Hayden lets out a frustrated breath and bangs his head back against the wall. He’d been so close.

Chapter End Notes

> That’s all I have pre-written so updates are going to be more sparse now. My plan is to take this story through Hayden’s eventual guess that ‘Lily’ is Ilya and end things there, so I envision there being 3-4 more chapters to go. Let me know if there’s anything you want to see from this and I’ll try to work it in with the ideas I have.

Chapter 4: Los Angeles

Chapter Summary

In which Hayden meets Rose

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Montreal is back on the road again after a series of home games and Hayden is trying not to resent his job. He misses his kids. He misses his perfect wife. He misses sleeping in his own bed *with* his perfect wife. They're in L.A. today, though, which is something of a consolation. Especially because Shane had made good on his promise to introduce him to Rose Landry last night.

Now, Hayden Pike was very much dedicated to his aforementioned perfect wife. But it was probably fair to say he'd been a little star-struck upon meeting Rose. She was easily the most famous person he'd ever been introduced to, and she was just… effortlessly cool. He still couldn't quite believe Shane had broken up with her. Or that she'd broken up with him and Shane hadn't immediately begged for her back.

He wasn't entirely sure who had ended things because Shane was very tight-lipped about it, as he tended to be about his love life.

Whatever. It had been incredibly cool to meet a real-life movie star. He'd called Jackie to tell her all about it immediately after. The meeting had also reinforced his idea that Lily had to be some sort of supermodel and also, like a sex goddess. Because not only was Rose Landry a famous movie star, she was also genuinely very nice. And she liked hockey.

He'd actually asked Rose about Lily, when Shane had gotten up to go to the bathroom, because when they first arrived Rose had asked Shane, not very subtly, "how are things with you and your mystery suitor?"

Shane's response to that had been predictably vague, which was what prompted Hayden to question her separately as soon as Shane left them alone.

Rose had looked at him closely when he posed his question, "he's never used a name," she had said carefully, "but I know there's someone he cares about very much."

Hayden had then filled her in on what he knew about Lily. The basics, like that she was from Boston, that they'd met at a hockey game, and that it had been going on a while. He'd felt bad about that, after saying it, because he realized that made it look kind of like Shane was never really interested in Rose. But she didn't seem too bothered. Instead, a sort of

understanding had seemed to show in her eyes. Like maybe she'd figured something out. But he hadn't gotten the chance to ask her more about it before Shane had returned.

He'd asked Shane if he could have Rose's number, intending to add her to the Lily Sleuthing Group (it was currently just him and Jackie so they really needed another member) but Shane had said "absolutely not" and accused him of wanting to 'fanboy' over Rose like he apparently had at dinner. Which was unfair because he had kept it together pretty well, he thought, for having dinner with an A-list movie star. He'd have to find someone else.

The problem was there wasn't really anyone else. Shane had no friends other than him, JJ, and Rose Landry that he knew of, and he was pretty sure JJ didn't know about Lily. Given the extreme secrecy Shane seemed to want to maintain about her, Hayden felt weird telling JJ about it. And that was the extent of people Shane was friends with, so. Well, not the extent. Supposedly he was friends with Rozanov now, which was very weird.

A brilliant idea comes to him: maybe Lily is one of Rozanov's friends. That would explain the secrecy, and they both lived in Boston. Plus, Shane had said she liked Rozanov. It made a lot of sense, actually. It might even explain how Shane and Rozanov had become friendly out of the blue. Yeah, this was his best theory to date. The only problem with it was that if he wanted more information, he'd have to talk to Rozanov. Not only was that extremely unappealing, but it was also unlikely. He couldn't think of a reason he'd ever be in the same room as Rozanov aside from a game where he was playing against him. And did he care enough about who Lily was to talk to *Rozanov*?

"So I've been thinking," Shane says, almost nervous from where he's sitting next to Hayden on the bus, "I just finished moving into my new house, and I thought, uh, that it might be nice to have you and Jackie over for dinner. When we get back. If, uh, you want?"

That derails Hayden's train of thought, "sure, man," he agrees easily. "We'd love to see the new place."

"Cool, cool," Shane says, still sounding nervous, "uh, just you and Jackie though. I want to start with you guys."

"Okay, yeah," Hayden agrees, wondering why he's being so weird about it.

"Would Saturday be okay?"

"I'll ask Jackie but I think we're free."

"Good," Shane exhales, "good."

"Hey, let's win this tonight, yeah?" Hayden bumps his shoulder, changing the topic.

Shane rolls his eyes, "obviously."

They do win the game, and most of the guys head out to a nearby strip club to celebrate. Shane and Hayden, as well as most of the married players and two of the rookies are notable

exceptions. The first thing Shane does when they get back to their room is turn their tv to the Boston-Seattle game. It's late in the game, and Seattle's leading by 1 point. It's looking increasingly likely they'll be making a cup run this year.

Rozanov is seemingly in rare form. Even through the TV, Hayden can see him flitting around being his usual pest self. The Seattle players are looking increasingly annoyed, so it's probably only a matter of time before a fight breaks out. Sure enough, less than a minute later, Rozanov is getting sent to the sin bin for an Unsportsmanlike Conduct Minor, and one of the Seattle players, Hayden isn't sure who, has been handed a Major for punching him.

On the other bed Shane sighs. The camera zooms in to a shot of a pissed-off Rozanov sulking in the penalty box as the players line up. Despite being shorthanded, Seattle scores another goal, stretching their lead to two with Boston's leading scorer out for another thirty seconds. In the box, Rozanov breaks his stick.

It does bring Hayden some satisfaction to know their rival team isn't going to best Seattle either. And that they'd won tonight and Boston probably wasn't going to.

Rozanov exits the penalty box for the Boston power play, and does make a good attempt at scoring, but his shot is blocked by the Seattle goalie. It probably wouldn't have mattered anyway, since the game clock is winding down. Sure enough, a few moments later the buzzer sounds and Boston has lost the game. The Seattle crowd goes wild. Boston had been favored, he thinks, even though it was an away game and Seattle had been having a strong year. The players start lining up to do handshakes, so Hayden figures they can probably turn it off now.

"Want to watch a movie?" Hayden asks Shane, "I don't think I can sleep quite yet."

"Sure, yeah," Shane agrees, "you can pick."

Hayden starts browsing. "Hey, have you watched Jumanji yet?"

Shane looks up. "Uh, yeah? Didn't that come out like forever ago? I watched it as a kid."

"No, no, there's a new one. Came out recently. The Rock's in it."

"Oh, then, no, I haven't."

"Oh, it's great, actually," Hayden promises, "you'll like it."

"Sure, sounds good."

About halfway through the movie, Shane's phone starts buzzing. "Sorry, uh, don't bother pausing it" he says. Hayden glances over and, sure enough, Lily's name is lighting up the screen.

"Hey, I miss you," Shane says before the door shuts all the way.

Hayden follows Shane's instructions and doesn't pause the movie. It's a good thing too, because Shane doesn't return until basically the final scene.
"What'd I miss?" he asks as he settles back onto his bed.

“The whole plot,” Hayden laughs.

Shane blushes, looking rather embarrassed, but he does watch the falling action with some interest.

“We can watch it again some other time,” Hayden promises, “it’s a good movie.” And then, because he can’t help himself, he asks: “How’s Lily?”

Shane blushes, “uh, good. Yeah.”

“Must be rather late in Boston,” Hayden observes, mostly because that had just occurred to him.

Shane glances at the alarm clock. “Uh, yeah, I guess it is,” he says like that had just occurred to him too.

“Nice of her to stay up so late to talk to you,” Hayden continues.
“Uh, yeah. I mean, I guess. I don’t think that’s what happened, really.”

“No?” Hayden asks, amused. And then, because he’s now wondering if maybe Lily works late shifts or something he asks, “hey, what does Lily do for work?”

Shane looks a bit like a deer in the headlights, “uh, I… don’t know?”

Hayden feels the disbelief all over his face. “Dude. You’ve known this girl for what? Four years? And you don’t know what she does for work?”

“I mean, I do know, obviously. But it’s…private?”

“Bro, what?”

“Jeez, is that really the time? We’ve got an early flight tomorrow. I’d better brush my teeth.” It’s such an obvious deflection that Hayden has to laugh. His best friend is a *terrible* liar.

Chapter End Notes

I know I said I wasn't going to be fast with the next chapter but I've been avoiding my responsibilities and writing this instead. Next up, we're doing dinner at Shane's!

Chapter 5: Montreal

Chapter Summary

Shane invites Jackie and Hayden to see his new house

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hayden rings the doorbell of his best friend's new and frankly massive house. It's in a quiet part of town, nearish to the rink. Shane's house is the last one on the block, set back from the road, with massive hedges and a gate. Shane opens the door right away.

"Hey," he grins, stepping aside to let them in. "So, uh, I made some baked chicken and asparagus thing. It's ready, but if you're not hungry yet I can give you the tour."

"Sure, yeah, that would be great," Jackie agrees, "this place is great, Shane. Very private."

"Yeah, that's really what I was looking for," he tells her, "and when this place came on the market, well, I thought it was just about perfect."

He leads them through the massive living room and the games room before heading for the basement. "Here's uh, my new gym. I figured it was probably time to get my own space, so I don't have to go to the rink as much."

It's a big open space with egress windows that could probably rival some of the gyms in the area in terms of size. The room is well-outfitted, with two of just about every workout machine Hayden can think of, as well as a space in the middle for yoga and several types of exercise balls and weights lining the walls.

"Wow," is all Hayden says.

"Yeah, uh, now that I'm a little farther from the rink I think it'll be nice to have this here."

"And then, um, this way is the trophy room," he says, leading them back out into the hallway and pointing at an open door. Shane is too humble to lead them in there, but Hayden pops his head in anyway. In the middle of the room was a leather armchair facing glass shelves with Shane's two Stanley cup miniatures, as well as a large assortment of individual trophies. Game pucks lined the walls, all neatly labeled. Many of his jerseys were hanging as well, mostly Team Canada ones, but also, weirdly, a CCM jersey Hayden didn't even know he had. Before he could get a closer look, Shane was ushering them into the next room.

"This is my recovery room," he tells them. Inside is an indoor hot tub and what looks like an ice bath, as well as all sorts of equipment for physical therapy. Shane was probably the only

person he knew who would have both a gym and a dedicated recovery room in their house.

They head back to the main floor, passing the wine cellar on their way, and Shane shows them the kitchen and dining room, one of the first-floor guest rooms, and points to the door for the laundry room without bringing them in before leading them upstairs.
"Uh, here's my tape room," he says.

The tape room has a large table in the center, a giant whiteboard on one wall, a bookshelf full of hockey books, and a giant flatscreen TV that takes up most of one of the walls. The TV is currently paused on a shot of Rozanov from a game almost a year ago. Shane seems to realize this as well because he flushes and turns the TV off.
"I'm trying to learn the Rozanov," he explains.

Hayden laughs at that. Of course he is. "Can you do it?"

"Almost," Shane grits out, clearly annoyed. "Hard to get the right set-up for it and I've only been practicing it on my own so far. Don't know if I can do it in a game yet."

"He's going to be pissed when you do."

Shane laughs, "I know."

"This is a nice view," Jackie says. She's been looking out the window.

"Yeah, my room's next door and it has it too."

Hayden takes a look out the window and sees…Montreal. He shrugs and looks back at the room. It's so very Shane to have a room dedicated to learning hockey when he's already the best player in the league. Even the photos in the room are of hockey. They're mostly stills of the first times iconic moves were played, with the Rozanov notably missing, but one photo is different than the others. It's Shane on draft day, looking distinctly displeased even though he's smiling and holding up a number two on his fingers while Ilya Rozanov beams beside him holding up the number one. The third pick is there too but Hayden can't remember his name. It's a strange choice of photo, but maybe it's like motivation?

He would ask but Jackie and Shane are in conversation about how close the nearest grocery store is, and are already leaving the room. Shane points out the rest of the guest rooms before they make their way back downstairs.

"I picked up that wine you liked last time," he tells Jackie, "but I also have like, Coke, some sparkling water, and some beer. And Ginger Ale, obviously. Or you can have whatever my mom keeps in the wine cellar downstairs."

"Wine's perfect, thanks," Jackie tells him, "whatever you have up here already." Hayden grabs a beer for himself.

Shane begins plating their meal then, buzzing around the kitchen with what can only be described as a nervous energy. He insists they sit while he serves them, so they do. Jackie

sends Hayden a concerned glance while Shane isn't looking, which means she must've picked up on it too.

"I hope the food's okay," Shane says nervously as soon as they've both taken their first bite. Hayden is actively still chewing his, so he's thankful when Jackie answers.

"It's great. Is this a family recipe?"

Shane shakes his head no, "I've been trying to do a little more cooking, especially on nights off. I've never been a very good cook, but I can follow a recipe decently well."

"It's good, yeah," Hayden agrees. It's maybe a bit of a lie, but it *is* vastly superior to whatever Shane usually eats, so Hayden counts that as an absolute win.

"So, um, there was actually something I wanted to tell you guys," Shane says, fidgeting with his fork and not looking up from the table. "And, um, it's not a big deal, or, well, I hope it's not a big deal, at least. I mean, I don't want it to be. But, uh, um, what I'm trying to say is, that, um, *I'mgay*." He rushes through the last two words and then looks at the two of them fearfully.

"Oh, Shane, honey, thank you for telling us," Jackie says instantly.

Hayden sits there blinking for a second, trying to process everything.

"But what about Lily? And Rose Landry?"

Jackie hits him. "Ow."

"Seruiosly?" she asks Hayden, "your best friend comes out to you and that's what you have to say? Shane, we're happy for you. I'm glad you told us."

"Sorry, sorry," Hayden says, "Yeah, man. Thanks for telling us."

"I'm not like, into you or anything, in case you were worried about that!" Shane rushes to explain, "that would be…gross, actually, yeah."

"Oh. I didn't think you were," Hayden says.

"Okay, yeah, no." Shane agrees, "I just like, wanted to make sure. That you knew. Which you probably already did."

"Now it makes sense why you broke up with Rose," Hayden realizes.

"Hayden!" his wife chastises him.

"Sorry!" he apologizes again, "It's just that I never understood why anyone would break up with Rose Landry."

Shane laughs, less nervous now. "Uh, she broke up with me, actually. She kind of like, came out for me? She was really nice about it, which made me feel a lot better about the whole

thing. I don't know how much longer I would've lived in denial without Rose."

"Aw, that's sweet," Jackie says, reaching over to grab Shane's hand, "and I hope you know you can come to us anytime too. We support you wholeheartedly."
"Yeah, for sure man, anything you need."

Shane starts crying then, which makes Jackie cry too and get up and hug him, and then Hayden gets up too and finds his eyes are kind of wet. After a minute of the group hug they all separate and sit down to their meals again.

"So wait, then, what about Lily?"
Shane sort of avoids eye contact, "it's a fake name. Lily is a man."

"Oh. OH! That makes so much sense, actually," Hayden says.

"We're not - he's not out, yet, either. To anyone. I mean I'm barely out to anyone either."

"Do your parents know?" Jackie asks.

"Yeah, yeah, they know. They told me they kind of always thought I might be, when they found out, so. But yeah, my parents know, and Rose knows, and uh, you guys know. And that's it, really. But I've been thinking of trying to come out to the team, maybe. Like towards the end of the season, or maybe next year? I don't know. I'm worried it might not go well."

"Maybe you should talk to Scott Hunter," Jackie suggests, "he might have some advice."

"Yeah, Scott's a nice guy. I reached out when he came out last year, sent him an email. I didn't say anything about me, but I thanked him for being brave. What he did changed things for me, and he's a nice guy. I've always liked him."

"Plus, his boyfriend is cute!" Jackie observes.

"Jacks!" Hayden objects.

"What? He is. Good for Scott Hunter."

They all laugh and the conversation progresses from there. Shane and Hayden discuss the upcoming game against Boston briefly, then their mutual theory that Seattle is going to win the West. Shane tells him that his mom agrees, so that means it's basically a given. After that conversation winds to a close, they discuss the kids for a while. Shane agrees to help supervise them when Hayden brings them to the science museum later in the week.

Then Jackie insists that they'll help clean up, which isn't a huge production since there was really only their dishes and the casserole pan.

"Thanks for inviting us over," Jackie tells Shane as they head for the door, "and seriously, anything you need, just ask. Our house is always team Shane Hollander."

And then they start crying and hugging again and it takes them another half hour until Jackie is wiping at her eyes and insisting they have to go for real because their babysitter has to

leave soon.

As soon as they're in their car, Hayden turns to Jackie, "I haven't been, like a bad friend, not noticing this, right?"

Jackie laughs, "my love, you're as observant as a brick wall. I've kind of suspected he might be gay for years now."

"And you didn't tell me? All those theories I came up with about Lily and you never once corrected me?"

"It wasn't my place to speculate. Besides, I wasn't *sure* sure."

"It does make a lot of sense now that I think about it. Why he's so secretive about Lily."

"He might be worried about the team's reaction, if it gets out."

Hayden nods, thinking about that. "Well, we're not *Toronto*, but there are a few guys who might not be cool with it. I'll try to pay attention when we play New York. See if anyone says anything homophobic about Scott Hunter."

"Good idea. And maybe lay off the Lily questions for a while, yeah? He'll tell us when he's ready."

"Yeah."

And then, when they stop at a red light, Jackie leans over and kisses him. Man, he was so lucky to have this woman as his wife.

Chapter End Notes

> Alright this is the last one for today. Hope you enjoyed! I loved bread crumbing Ilya in Shane's house. The fact that he has two of every kind of machine, the CCM jersey, the draft day photo, which in my vision is bigger than all the other photos in the room and Shane put up because he feels like he can get away with that one and he wants just one photo of him and Ilya. And then him having Coke in the fridge for him too, obviously. Also I love thinking that Hayden has no chill and also no awareness and 100% thought Lily was a woman until Shane explicitly told him otherwise.

Chapter 6: Boston II

Chapter Summary

Boston and Montreal are going head to head in the playoffs and Hayden does some more snooping

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The season continues on. Montreal plays Boston at home and wins, then goes on the road in New York and loses. No one on the team says anything homophobic about it that Hayden hears of. Then they trounce Ottawa in Ottawa, 6-0, which Shane seems weirdly guilty about. Shane has always had a bit of a soft spot for Ottawa, though, since it's his hometown. Plus, the guys on the team there are really nice. They just also happen to be terrible. They have a couple days off after that game, which is nice. Shane decides to stay in Ottawa for some reason, and Hayden later finds out he went to the Ottawa-Boston game with his parents. Hayden hadn't even realized that Boston was playing Ottawa after them, but that was the type of thing Shane kept track of, and it was seeming increasingly likely Montreal and Boston were going to meet in the playoffs again this year, so it actually made some sense. That game hadn't been particularly close either, 5-1.

He doesn't ask Shane anything about 'Lily' until they're actually in the conference semi-finals nearly two months later and Shane is getting ready to sneak out and go see him. Hayden is dumbfounded. He knew his friend was head over heels for this guy, but he can't believe he'd be willing to sneak off during the playoffs to go see him.

"Really, dude?" Hayden asks.

Shane has the decency to look embarrassed. "I mean, we don't get to see each other a lot," he says sheepishly.
Hayden just holds his hands up, "only because it makes you play better, dude."

Shane slinks back into the room several hours later smiling uncontrollably.

"Thought you'd be out all night," Hayden grins at him teasingly.

"Yeah, well, we do have a game to win tomorrow," Shane glares at him and tosses his phone and jacket on the bed before heading into the bathroom and turning on the shower.

And Hayden knows he promised Jackie he wouldn't snoop, but the phone is *open* and right there and he just can't help himself. He stands over the bed, careful not to move the phone and navigates to the most recent text thread. It's between Shane and 'Lily', obviously. He scrolls up a little, but Shane has seemingly deleted everything sent before this morning.

Shane: Less than 12 hours until I see you again!

Lily: yesss hurry up

Lily: you are making me wait so long Hollander!

Lily: I miss kissing your cute freckles

Shane: I miss you, too.

Shane: We'll probably only have a few hours though. I can't spend the night with the game the next day.

Lily: is okay

Lily: with any luck we will knock your team out of the playoffs quickly and then you can stay in Boston with me

Hayden snorts. He *knew* 'Lily' was a Boston fan. His best friend had terrible taste.

Shane: Yeah, right. In your dreams

Lily: yes

Lily: call me and I'll tell you exactly what I dream about 😉

The next messages seem to be from later in the day.

Shane: Boarding the plane now. See you soon!

Lily: do I get a special prize if we win?

Shane: Absolutely not. We're going to win.

Lily: 😢

Shane: fine. Maybe.

Lily: 🥳

Shane: I'll text you when we land. Love you!

Lily: yeah yeah

Lily: love you too

Hayden gasps then, out loud and audibly. He slaps a hand over his mouth and looks to the bathroom. The water in the shower is still running. He'd assumed things with 'Lily' were serious, but he wasn't expecting 'I love you' serious. They had been texting for forever, though. Now Hayden had to meet him, godammit. The water in the shower shuts off. Hayden quickly navigates off the text thread and locks the phone. He crosses the room quietly and pretends to be looking through his bag.

He's still fake-looking through his bag when Shane emerges from the bathroom. He pulls out his phone chord in a victorious motion. He needn't have bothered with the theatrics though because when he looks back over to the other side of the room, Shane is burrowing into the blankets and paying no attention to him. Hayden plugs in his phone for real and then climbs into his own bed. Shane is clicking away at his phone and Hayden realizes the motion is probably him deleting all his texts with 'Lily'. It strikes him as unbearably sad, all the sudden, that Shane feels like he needs to hide this so badly that he keeps erasing his boyfriend's? messages. Is 'Lily' Shane's boyfriend? Probably. If they were telling each other 'I love you' they were probably officially dating.

Should he offer Shane to bring 'Lily' over for dinner this summer? Would that be a cool thing to offer, or would that be like, pressuring 'Lily' to come out before he was ready? He'd probably better ask Jackie.

Hayden: Is it rude if I ask Shane if he and Lily want to come for dinner this summer?

Jackie: Focus on your game tomorrow and not Shane's mystery boy

Jackie: But no, probably not. So long as you don't pressure them into accepting

Hayden: Shane told him he loved him

Jackie: WHAT?! On the phone? Has he started talking to him in front of you?

Hayden: No. I may have snooped on his phone again.

Jackie: Hayden! We talked about this. You were supposed to let Shane have his privacy.

Hayden: I know.

Hayden: I feel bad about it.

Hayden: But it also confirmed my suspicion that he's a Boston fan.

Jackie: I thought we already knew that?

Hayden: We knew he was a Rozanov fan which is honestly worse

Jackie: LOL

Jackie: He is hot tho…

Hayden: Jackie!

Jackie: I'm just saying I get it

Jackie: all the WAGs agree

Hayden: I can't believe you right now

Jackie: Shane thinks so too, trust me

Hayden: Shane hates him

Jackie: I thought they were friends now?

Hayden: Honestly idk what's going to be next for him. Friends with Rozanov. Dating a Boston fan. Who is he?

Jackie: I think it shows a maturity in character from both Shane and Rozanov, tbh

Hayden: There's an idea. Rozanov being mature

Jackie: Lol. Get some rest now. Talk tomorrow before the game?

Hayden: yeah of course. Goodnight. Love you!

Jackie: Love you!

Shane is up and already going through his pre-game routine by the time Hayden wakes. It's days like this that make him long for those rare times they get their own rooms. Shane's stretching out on the floor, doing his yoga or whatever, and texting. He obviously doesn't realize Hayden is up yet because he sets his phone against the wall and takes a photo of himself on his hands and knees and sends it to, he assumes, 'Lily'. And *wow* that really wakes Hayden up because *what the actual fuck?* No wonder he was deleting messages if he was going to send himself in suggestive poses. Jesus Christ.

Hayden closes his eyes again and stays as silent as possible. How long does he have to wait until he can pretend to get up so Shane won't know he saw that? He counts to 100 silently in his head and then shifts on the bed, opening his eyes slowly.

Shane is blessedly doing a different stretch now, so Hayden gets up and heads to the bathroom to brush his teeth. He can't quite reconcile what he'd just seen with Shane Hollander. Well, actually as far as sexts went it was probably pretty tame, actually. It was just the idea of sweet, innocent, Shane Hollander sending a sext at all that was disturbing. Up until he'd started snooping on texts from 'Lily' he wasn't even fully convinced Shane wasn't a virgin. Although the whole being gay thing probably accounted for his lackluster attempts at describing his sex life the few times guys on the team had ribbed him for it.

“Ready to win today?” he asks as he exits the bathroom.

Shane gives him a wicked grin, “of course.”

They win the game narrowly, but a win is a win. Hayden goes out with the team after. Shane actually just leaves for ‘Lily’s’ house directly from the arena, which is kind of crazy bold for Shane. The team stays out until almost 1 am, which is very late in Hayden’s world. After all, he has *four* kids. 8 pm is late for him. Shane isn’t there when he gets back but he’s not exactly shocked by that. They have a rest day tomorrow and the game after is only game two. The team will start getting stricter as they get deeper in the series.

Shane doesn’t end up showing up until the team dinner the next day. Hayden sends him an unimpressed look as he slides into the chair next to him. “How was ‘Lily’?” Hayden whispers.

Shane turns an alarming shade of red, “shut up,” he whispers back, and then studies the menu with a singular focus. Hayden would think it was an attempt to get out of the conversation, but Shane is obsessive about his diet so it’s at least halfway genuine.

The team is in a good mood, having won the game, so dinner is fun. Afterwards they all go back to the hotel and Shane is back to his strict self, making sure everyone is obeying curfew. Hypocrite. Hayden talks to Jackie while Shane showers and goes around enforcing curfew. When he gets back they go to sleep.

“Ready to win, Captain?” Hayden asks the next morning.

“For sure,” Shane agrees, “four and out?”

“Hell yeah!”

It’s an evening game, so they head to the rink to do a morning skate and some simple drills. Shane hosts a video review in one of the conference rooms that most of the starting players attend. Then they all have a rest for a while. Hayden calls Jackie again. Shane stretches out on his bed, presumably texting ‘Lily’. Hayden leaves him alone about it.

A few hours later, they’re out on the ice, getting ready for game two of the conference semi-finals. Shane is stretching out near center ice. As soon as Boston takes the ice, Rozanov goes skating over to where Shane is. Hayden doesn’t know why Shane always stretches so close to the line. If he moved back a bit, Rozanov wouldn’t be able to bother him. The man in question is currently skating little loops in front of his friend, talking at him. Hayden sighs to himself and pushes off, skating in their direction.

“Stop pestering our captain, Rozanov,” Hayden warns him.

Rozanov blinks at him, “sorry, who are you?”

God, Hayden hates this guy. They’ve been playing against each other their entire careers. He knows who he is.

“He’s not bothering me, Hayden.”

“Is true. We are friends, yes?”

Shane sighs, “I don’t know why.”
Hayden doesn’t know why either.

“Was just asking Hollander for stretching tips.”

“And I was telling Rozanov to go fuck himself,” Shane says, shooting him a heated glare.

Rozanov laughs at that, loud and genuine. “Maybe later,” and then he skates away, blowing a kiss at Shane as he does so.

“What an asshole,” Hayden spits.

Shane just shrugs and finishes up his warm-up.

Shane and Hayden are sent out for the first face-off. So is Ilya Rozanov. He gets there first.

“Hollander. Still slow, I see.”

“Rozanov. Still watching me.”

Rozanov just *winked*. And then won the face-off.

The first period ends without anyone scoring. Then, in the beginning of the second period Rozanov scores on a breakaway. Hayden and Shane are on the bench when it happens and Shane scowls at the Russian man, apparently not quite as friendly with the man as he had claimed. Their line goes out again not long after but they don’t get any more goals, and then Rozanov scores again. Shane actually jumps up from the bench and pulls on his hair a little, clearly frustrated. Their scoring opportunity comes not too long after that, though, when Rozanov gets called for cross-checking. With Boston shorthanded, Shane scores on the power play at the end of the period.

The atmosphere is tense in the locker room between the second and third periods, but J.J. does his best to try and boost team morale. They head back out onto the ice and it’s another Hollander-Rozanov face-off. Shane wins this one, and sends it back to Hayden. Rozanov steals it from him, and then Shane shoves him hard into the glass. Rozanov doesn’t look too upset about it. In fact he just smiles brightly, wide and genuine. “Not having a good night?”

Shane skates off after the puck instead of replying.

In the end, they lose the game 3-1.

It’s a quiet Montreal team that gets on the bus that evening. They’re going directly to the airport. The next game is in just two days, so they’ve got to get back. He’s excited to go home, and happy that his family will be at the next game. Boston was the higher ranked team, he reminds himself. It wasn’t realistic to assume this would be a clean sweep.

The next two games in Montreal go almost exactly like the first two: the first to Montreal, the second to Boston. They fly back to Boston and lose again, but thankfully the extra pressure has always made Shane come alive and he gets three goals of his own in the next game and an assist. Boston only scores twice and they head into game 7.

Game 7 in Boston brings a new kind of pressure. Rozanov plays like a man possessed, almost like he thinks it's going to be his last game. None of the weird camaraderie he'd had with Shane this season seems to be present. The two men are seemingly on a mission to prove the rivalry is not dead, constantly battling each other for the puck and shoving each other into the boards. In the end, Montreal prevails, but the game is a bloodbath. There's no less than three fights.

When they fly out that night after the game, the plane is loud, full of boisterous hockey players celebrating a hard-fought win. The only person seemingly not celebrating is Shane. He's normally more serious than everyone else, so that's not a huge shock. Except Hayden had looked over once and he had been staring at his message thread with 'Lily', empty except for one message, from Shane.

Shane: Sorry

The message was unanswered.

Chapter End Notes

I know I said I wasn't going to post again but it turns out I'm lying to myself too at this point. Sorry for ending that on such a sad note! I think Montreal kind of had to win the game, though I went back and forth a bit about whether it should be Boston. Ultimately I wanted it to parallel the Long Game but with Shane emerging victorious. I would say I'm not going to start working on chapter 7 but at this point I recognize that is a lie, so expect that soon, hopefully.

Chapter 7: Montreal II

Chapter Summary

Ilya Rozanov signs with Ottawa and Hayden meets a surprise guest at Shane's house

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

In a shocking and completely unexplainable turn of events, Ilya Fucking Rozanov had signed with *Ottawa*. The worst team in the league.

“This has to be a prank, right?” Hayden asks his wife.
She’s reading the article with a small smile on his face. It’s her *I know something* smile.

“What is it?” he asks.

“Nothing,” she says, shutting off the iPad and grinning up at him, “it’s unexpected, isn’t it? I wonder what Shane thinks about it.”

“Well, he’s probably just as confused as us. I mean, who saw this coming?”

Jackie shrugs, “it’s a pay raise for him. Ottawa has a pretty high salary cap and they’re not using it.”

“Yeah, because they suck. And Rozanov is already a millionaire. A couple million more can’t be worth tanking his career.”

Jackie just shrugs, “there’s probably another reason.”

“Could be issues with the team. But I don’t know, I never saw anything like that over there. I mean you don’t always know, you know, but there are some obvious teams with culture problems.”

God, what did Shane think about this? It was a stroke of luck for their team, that was for sure. Undeniably an easier path to their third cup. “I’m calling Shane,” he tells his wife after a moment.

His best friend and Captain picks up on the second ring. It’s something of a miracle. Hayden hasn’t heard from him much since they lost to New York in the conference finals. He hadn’t even come to Hayden and Jackie’s cup party to see Seattle win it all. “Hey man,” Hayden greets him, “did you see the news about Rozanov?”
“What news?” Shane asks, sounding a little nervous.

“He’s signed with *Ottawa*.”

“Oh. Yeah. I know.”

“Oh, you already saw it?”

Shane laughs, sounding a little breathless on the other line, “no, we talked about it. He knows I’m from Ottawa. I told you we were friends.”

Hayden actually drops the phone in shock. He scrambles to pick it up, “What do you mean, you talked about it? Like *Rozanov* called you to ask your advice about moving to Ottawa?”

Shane hums, “something like that. Did it get announced today?”

“Yeah, it did. When you told me you were friends with Rozanov I assumed you meant like you got along at All-Star games.”

“We do,” Shane says, interrupting his flow.

“Are you joking with me right now? Like is this whole thing some elaborate prank?”

“No,” Shane says, and he can hear the frown in his friend’s voice. And then he hears another sound in the background. It’s a splashing noise, like someone swimming in water.

“Stop, I’m on the phone with Hayden,” Shane says to someone on his end.

“Shane. Are you with ‘Lily’?” Hayden asks, Rozanov forgotten.

“I’m at my cottage,” Shane says, “but can I call you back later, man? I’ve got some things I want to talk to you about.”

“Yeah of course, and my offer to bring ‘Lily’ by for dinner still stands. If you guys are both up for it, of course.”

“Thanks, Hayd, really. Love you, man.”

Hayden doesn’t end up seeing Shane at all until training camp starts. Hayden isn’t too upset about it. He figures Shane is probably in Boston with his mystery man now that he has time off and he doesn’t want to disturb him. Or they’re at Shane’s cottage together, assuming ‘Lily’ can get time off work. Shane doesn’t say much about it when Hayden asks him. He does, however, accidentally leave his gym bag behind in the locker room.

It’s very out of character for Shane. In fact, Hayden doesn’t think it’s ever happened before. He probably wouldn’t know if it had - Shane was the type to arrive first and leave last. But he does know that Shane will realize he’s left it and freak out about it and drive all the way back to come get it. Shane’s house is sort of on Hayden’s way home, so he grabs the bag and sends a quick text letting Shane know he’s dropping by with the bag.

He pulls up to the gate and punches in the password, having been given it almost as soon as Shane had moved in. He's surprised to see an unfamiliar Mercedes SUV in the driveway. Had Shane gotten a new car? Or, his heart starts beating a little faster, is he about to meet 'Lily'? He doesn't really register the fact that the car has Ontario plates, too caught up in his excitement.

He climbs the steps and rings the doorbell, expecting to see the thankful face of his best friend. He's already planning what he is going to say to convince Shane to let him meet 'Lily' when the door opens and he is greeted by the grinning face of Ilya Rozanov. The grin quickly turns to confusion.

"You are not Yuna," he observes.

Hayden can't do anything but stare at him. Rozanov is in Shane's house. Rozanov has answered Shane's door. Rozanov is on a first-name basis with Shane's *mom?*

Rozanov doesn't really seem to know what to do either. He seems frozen in the doorway. After what is either an eternity or just a few seconds, Rozanov opens the door a little wider, "come in, yes? We will explain."

"Ilya?" Shane calls out from some other part of the house, "mom? What is taking you guys so long?"

"Is not your mother!" Rozanov calls back quickly, "is Hayden Pike."

Shane rounds the corner and comes into the entryway and then looks between Hayden and Rozanov with something a little like fear in his eyes.

"Shane? What is Rozanov doing in your house?" Hayden asks, completely blindsided.

Rozanov shrugs, "training camp in Ottawa does not start for three more days." As if that clears anything up.

Shane and Rozanov share a look, then Rozanov turns away and says something in Russian, seemingly to no one.

"Okay, look, Hayd, I was actually going to tell you this Thursday when I came to your house for dinner, but I guess the opportunity came sooner than I expected. Ilya and I are starting a charity together."

Hayden blinks. It doesn't escape his notice that Shane keeps saying *Ilya* and not *Rozanov*. "Sorry, what?" he asks. "Starting a charity together? Why?"

Shane rubs at his temples. "Okay, sorry, come sit down. I can explain it better." So Shane leads them to the dining room and Hayden takes a seat. Shane offers to get everyone something to drink, which Hayden says yes to mostly because it's just awkward to sit at the table with nothing to do but look at Rozanov.

Shane comes back a moment later with a Ginger Ale for himself, a Coke for Rozanov, and water for Hayden.

“Okay,” Shane begins, “I know this is kind of a lot to take in, but I’ve been telling you Ilya and I are friendly. When he approached me with the idea for the charity, it made a lot of sense.” Next to Shane, Rozanov grins smugly. “I think it’s fair to say that we are both great hockey players. Anything either of us had attached our name to would probably get some attention. But if we did it *together*, that was sure to bring in a whole different level of attention to the cause.”

Rozanov nods. “First and second best hockey players in the league. Big deal.”

Shane glares at him, “we’re going to be announcing it in November.”

“None of this explains why he is at your house,” Hayden observes.

“Cannot have business meeting in public, Pike. Would spoil it.”

Shane nods, “we’re hoping the shock value of us announcing it together will help build the excitement around it. My mom is helping us with the logistics. She’s coming by for dinner to talk about it. She’s going to be the director and treasurer.”

“Wow.” Is all Hayden can think to say. He takes a sip of his water, eyeing the two men across from him as he does so. This is *weird*. Why are Shane and Rozanov so buddy-buddy all of the sudden? Their team had just knocked Rozanov’s out of the playoffs, for god’s sake. And now he was sitting in Shane’s house in sweatpants and a T-Shirt talking about starting a charity and using his mom’s first name?

“This is weird,” Hayden says.

Shane grimaces. Rozanov laughs.

“I mean, like how’d you guys even become friends?” Hayden wonders, more to himself than either of them.

Shane shrugs, “we’ve been thrown at each other since before we’d ever even met. I mean the league tries to get us together at any possible chance.”

Rozanov nods. “Is true. Always want us to do same event at All-Stars. Poor Hollander never gets to win.”

Shane glares at him, “I’ve literally beat you more times than you’ve beat me.”

“Even other players, they are always wanting us to do things together. Darts, shots, pool.” Rozanov grins, “and others, too. Many times I have even been asked for threesome with Hollander.”

Shane hits him.

Rozanov puts up his hands like he is innocent, “has happened whole career!” and then he pulls out his phone and scrolls for a minute before showing it to Shane, “look, see?”

Shane makes a face at whatever Rozanov shows him. Presumably an instagram DM. Hayden gets that kind of thing too, sometimes.

Rozanov pats Shane consolingly on the hand, “these women, they will be so upset when they learn you are gay.”

Hayden nearly chokes on his water. *Rozanov* knows Shane is gay? This night has been too weird.

“ANYWAY,” Shane says loudly, redirecting the conversation, “we’re going to have hockey camps, to raise money for the charity. I mean, I’ve already sold my investment property, and Ilya’s sold most of his cars, so we have some money to start, but we’re going to host hockey camps every summer, and I was going to ask you if you would want to be one of the coaches?”

Hayden smiles, “of course, dude. I’d be honored.”

Shane lets out a breath, like he was actually nervous Hayden might say no, “great! That’s great man, thanks!”
Just then, the doorbell rings. “That must be my mom,” Shane says, “I’ll go get it.” And then he leaves Hayden alone with Ilya fucking Rozanov.

“So Shane’s told you he’s gay?” Hayden asks, trying not to sound jealous. God, is he jealous of Ilya Rozanov? What has his life come to? He’s known Shane for longer, and they’re obviously closer friends than Shane and his fucking archrival. He’s being ridiculous.

Rozanov just sort of *smirks* at him. Hayden wants to punch him. “Yes, of course,” Rozanov replies.

“So do you know about ‘Lily’?” Hayden wonders.

Rozanov’s grin widens. “I am surprised you know about Lily, Pike. Shane does not like to talk about this.”

“I’m surprised *you* know, asshole.”

“Mm. Have known longer than you, I think.”

Hayden really wants to punch him. There’s no way Rozanov had known about Lily for longer than him. He’d known about Lily for *years.* The idea that ‘Lily’ is one of Rozanov’s friends reappears in his mind. He knows Rozanov, for all his faults, is not a homophobe. He’s sitting here proclaiming friendship with a man he knows is gay, and he’d heard Rozanov had gone to a gay bar with Scott Hunter and his friends. He only knows this because he’d looked up a list of non-homophobic players after Shane had come out to him. He’d been surprised to see Rozanov on that list at the time. But, he concedes, it is plausible that ‘Lily’ is a friend of his. It would even explain the friendship between him and Shane. He decides to just ask.

“Is Lily, I mean, is he a friend of yours?”

Rozanov laughs loudly at that. “You think this is why Shane and I are friends, yes?”

Hayden shrugs. He hates this guy. He has no idea why Shane is friends with him, even if his boyfriend is.

Shane and his mother come into the room before Rozanov has a chance to say anything else.

“Hayden!” Yuna Hollander greets him warmly, “it’s so nice to see you. How are Jackie and the kids?”

“They’re great.” He checks his watch, “I really should be getting back for dinner, though, and I guess you guys have business.”

Shane nods, “I’ll see you out?”

“This is weird, man,” Hayden tells him at the door.

Shane mutters something in French that Hayden doesn’t quite catch. His French is kind of atrocious for someone who’s lived in a bilingual city for as long as he has.

“It’s a little weird for me, too,” Shane agrees, in English this time, “but it’s a good cause, Hayd. It’s important to me.”

Hayden nods, “I can see that. And whatever you need, coaching or support when you announce it or whatever, I’ll be there.”
Shane smiles, “thanks Hayd. You’re a great best friend.”

“Hell yeah I am!” Hayden agrees.

Shane laughs and shoves him out the door with a promise to see him tomorrow at training camp.

He can’t wait to tell his wife about this new development. He has to, though, because when he gets home Jackie’s trying to wrangle their kids into sitting at the dinner table, and then they actually eat dinner, and then they have to put the kids to bed. Finally, when they’re all down for the night and Jackie has a glass of wine and some reality TV show playing, he drops the bomb.

“So I went over to Shane’s house today, because he forgot his bag in the locker room, and you’ll never guess who was there.”

“Uh, J.J.?”
“Ilya fucking Rozanov.”

“Swear jar,” she chastises him.

He continues, undeterred. “He was just like, hanging out at Shane’s house. In sweatpants. It was *weird*. Anyway, apparently they’re starting a charity together.”

Jackie hums thoughtfully, “are they?”

“Yeah, they’re, like, putting aside their differences or whatever to start this charity and they're going to run hockey camps together in the summer. Shane asked me if I’d be interested in coaching.”

“That’s fun. Sounds like a nice idea.” His wife isn’t nearly as shocked by this as he was expecting her to be.

“Also, apparently Rozanov knows Shane is gay.”

Jackie smiles into her wine glass, “does he now?”
He frowns at her, “what aren’t you telling me?”

She takes a sip of her wine, still smiling, “you can’t think of a reason why Rozanov might know that?”

Hayden nods, “I think I know what you’re getting at. I had the same thought. ‘Lily’ must be friends with Rozanov. But like, what are the chances of that? I mean of all people, Shane’s boyfriend is friends with Ilya Rozanov? It’s just weird man.”

Jackie laughs and chokes a little on her wine. “Yeah,” is all she says. “Now c’mon, I can’t make fun of these guys by myself,” she gestures to the TV.

Chapter End Notes

Poor Jackie, her husband is a little dense. In my mind she suspects who 'Lily' is for a while, because she, like Ilya, is perceptive. Her poor husband, however, does not. How much longer until she takes pity on him? Not long, I think because the next chapter is probably going to be the last. I do have to get work done eventually.

Chapter 8: Montreal III

Chapter Summary

Hayden finally finds out who Lily is

Chapter Notes

I debated whether or not to make this chapter canon compliant for a while, but ultimately decided I was going to. But Hayden's reaction has always kind of bothered me, so I tried to fix that a little. So basically, stay with me! It is all going to be okay in the end!

Disclaimer: Shane/Hayden dialogue during the confrontation is from Heated Rivalry by Rachel Reid and is not my original work. All other writing is my own including Hayden's thoughts/internal dialogue in that scene

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"I think Shane and 'Lily' might've broken up," Hayden tells his wife as they're sitting on the couch, both scrolling on their phones.
"Oh? What makes you think that?"

"Well, we were in Boston for part of this series and he didn't sneak out to see him. And he came out to the team and he's been going to Ottawa a lot recently, so I am thinking maybe 'Lily' didn't want to come out and Shane did and they broke up? And he's sad so he's visiting his parents a lot."

Jackie purses her lips like she's trying not to laugh and nods. "Baby. Can you think of another explanation that might make sense?"

Hayden frowns.
"Like, maybe 'Lily' moved?" she suggests when Hayden doesn't say anything.

He frowns. "To Ottawa? What, is this guy following Ilya Rozanov?"

Jackie really does start laughing now. "Hayds. I love you baby, but you aren't the most perceptive person I've ever met."

"Hey!" he says, offended.

“Okay, so look. Shane has a mystery man from Boston that he’s been seeing for years. Then, suddenly, seemingly out of nowhere, Shane and Ilya Rozanov are friends. Rozanov moves to Ottawa. You find Rozanov in Shane’s house and he tells you he knows Shane is gay. He also knows about ‘Lily’. He calls his mom by her first name. Suddenly, this year, Shane stops sneaking off after Boston games and starts driving to Ottawa all the time. And do you know what sounds an awful lot like Lily? Ilya.”
Hayden gapes at his wife. It makes a lot of sense when she lays it out like that. “I can’t believe this. Shane and *Rozanov*?”

She shrugs, “I mean we can’t be positive, but I’m pretty sure, yeah.”

“You’ve known for a while, haven’t you? How long?”

She shrugs again, “I’ve suspected since Shane took that hit against Boston last year. They showed this close-up of Rozanov and he looked horrified. The way I would’ve looked if it had been you. It was just a feeling, really. Nothing concrete. And then I knew ‘Lily’ was from Boston and Lily to Ilya isn’t a big leap.”

“You never told me!” he says, aghast.

“I wasn’t *sure* sure until this year. And it wasn’t my secret to tell. It’s got to be awful, for them,” she says sadly, “I mean I don’t think the league would take kindly to it if anyone finds out.”

“I can’t believe you didn’t tell me. All those times we talked about it. Oh my god, all those times I asked *Shane* about it. Why didn’t you *tell me*?”

“I was waiting for you to figure it out. And I thought if I told you, you’d ask Shane about it, and I was pretty sure he wasn’t ready for that. I mean, he hadn’t even come out to us yet. I didn’t want you to scare him off.”

Hayden frowns, but he can’t deny his wife is probably right. He wouldn’t have been able to not ask Shane about it.

“But what about Rozanov and all those women? There’s no way he’s gay. This can’t…I mean, you can’t be right.”

Jackie considers him. “Maybe I’m not,” she acknowledges.

“I mean, why would Shane be with someone who’s as big of an asshole as Ilya Rozanov? Shane is like, one of the nicest people I know.”

“Maybe you should ask him,” Jackie suggests.

Hayden nods, still not willing to believe it.

He waits until after the next Boston game. When Shane doesn’t leave, he gets a sinking feeling in his stomach. It can’t be true, can it? He thinks about it the whole ride home, how

and where to confront Shane. His original plan is to manufacture a time for them to meet outside of practice. Maybe ask Shane to come over and entertain the kids while Jackie's out and ask him when the kids ultimately get distracted. Instead, he makes it about all of fifteen minutes from when they're exiting the plane.

"Hey, can I ask you something?" He begins as soon as they're alone and walking to their cars, and then before Shane has a chance to respond, he plows on, kind of nervously. "You know how you used to go meet up with your mystery man every time we played in Boston? But now you don't?"

Shane looks a bit like a deer in the headlights, "um. We, uh…broke up," Shane says rather unconvincingly.

"Uh-huh," Hayden continues, "but you've been driving to Ottawa a lot this month."

"Yeah, my parents live there. I've been, um, visiting." Shane looks kind of like he wants to throw up, which indicates to Hayden that this is a lie. Oh god, it's true, isn't it? It can't be true. Maybe this whole thing is a joke Shane and Jackie are playing on him. He hopes so.

"Your parents have always lived there, and they drive to Montreal even more than you drive to Ottawa," he points out. "So I have another theory," *or Jackie does, anyway,* he thinks, "I think your mystery man is Ilya Rozanov."

Shane doesn't speak. Hayden is freaking out internally. Maybe he's just weirded out by the accusation. As weirded out as Hayden had been when Jackie had first proposed it to him. But then they reach Hayden's car and Shane blows out a breath and nods.

Hayden blanches. "Holy fuck. I was sort of joking. Are you for real…doing stuff…with Rozanov?"

"Yes."

"Wait, *seriously?*" Hayden confirms. It's the answer he was expecting and yet he's still astonished. "Did he sign with Ottawa to be *closer* to you? What the fuck is happening?"

"It's one reason, yes." Shane says. Hayden is astounded. This was too much. It was too much. Even when Jackie had suggested it, he never *really* thought it could be true. Even though it did make sense and all the pieces aligned he'd thought *surely not.* Because it couldn't be, right? I mean this was his best friend, innocence kindness personified and *Ilya Rozanov*, Russian menace and well-established asshole. He places his hands on the roof of his car, trying to breathe through this madness.

"Shane, this is not good, buddy." Is all he can think to say. Jesus, what on earth would happen if someone found this out?

"It's not ideal, no. But…I love him."
Hayden just turns and stares at him. Shane *loves* him? How had that even happened? What was Hayden's life? Had his whole life been a lie? This was *insane*. Lily was Rozanov. Well,

shit. No wonder Shane had never wanted to bring him around for dinner. Well, maybe he would now. If Shane liked him, there had to be something redeeming about him, right?

“I think I need to meet him properly, then,” Hayden finally says, because he’s important to his best friend and therefore Hayden is willing to try. For Shane.

And he does. In perhaps the most disastrous, awful dinner party of his life, Hayden Pike is officially introduced to Ilya Rozanov, Shane’s boyfriend. It had not gone well. At one point Hayden was worried Shane was going to kick both him and Rozanov out of the house permanently. Which would have made Hayden happy, to get Rozanov kicked out, at least, except Shane had looked so disappointed in both of them that he just sort of felt bad about it. But by the end of the night, they’d reached a truce of sorts, and Shane had launched into an extremely complex, multi-step plan for slowly acclimating the hockey world to the idea of their relationship.

Hayden was probably never going to be the guy’s best friend, but even he was willing to admit that Shane clearly loved Rozanov a lot. And in an even more stunning turn of events, *Rozanov* seemed to love Shane just as deeply. Even if that idea was extremely gross and weird. And to make things even grosser and weirder, Shane had apparently been into him since he was 18. But Shane was his best friend. If Rozanov was who he loved, he supposed he’d have to get over himself. He could do that for Shane.

So he sucks it up and goes to their press conference and looks at Shane, looking at Rozanov up there like he wants to kiss him into next year and wonders *how did I miss this?* And he sees them together in the bathroom, hiding out like schoolkids, and god help him, actually finds it kind of *cute*. What is his life?

Lily Ilya. Ilya Lily. It makes a lot of sense, the way Shane stares at him with just so much love. He wishes it was anyone else for his best friend, really, mostly because then he wouldn’t have to hide behind charities and excuses, but he understands now, that it can’t be. Does that mean he likes Rozanov? Absolutely not. But it probably does mean he’s going to have to love him. Ugh.

Chapter End Notes

Stay tuned for the epilogue!

Chapter 9: Epilogue: Ottawa

Chapter Summary

Montreal plays Ottawa and Hayden really wishes he'd never learned about Lily

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Montreal was playing in Ottawa, and the discourse in the locker room before the game was much the same as it always was. That is to say, it was about why the hell Rozanov had gone to Ottawa. Shane is glaring daggers at him currently, as if Hayden is suddenly going to come out and announce to the locker room at large that the reason is because Rozanov happens to be in love with their captain. Hayden knows he can be a little stupid sometimes, but he's not a complete idiot. He'd never tell Shane's secret. He rolls his eyes at him.

And then twenty minutes later he's pissed because if anyone is going to give up this secret, it is definitely Rozanov.

"Loving your ass in those pants, Hollander," Rozanov chirps as he skates by during warmups. Hayden stares after him, astounded. Shane just sighs. No one else was near them, but it still seems risky. Hayden wonders how long he'd been saying shit like that.
Then, when they meet in the middle for the face-off: "Fancy seeing you here. I can't believe they still let you be captain."

"Fuck you, Rozanov."
"Hm. Maybe later."

Shane wins the face-off, which is good because Hayden is reeling. Had this been happening the whole time? Was the rivalry never really a rivalry and instead flirting? Foreplay? How much had he missed? How much had he written off as Rozanov being a pest?

By the end of the first period, Hayden had counted no fewer than six innuendos disguised as chirps that Rozanov had tossed at Hollander.

The latest: "You always leave yourself open like that, or just for me?" Had actually made Hayden want to break his stick. Especially when Shane had responded: "only for you," and *winked*. Which, admittedly, had distracted Rozanov enough that Shane had gotten the puck back and scored. So, at least they were getting something for Hayden's suffering. He wasn't sure it was enough.

And that was just what he overheard. There were definitely several instances where they'd slammed each other into the boards and whatever discourse was happening was unintelligible. Hayden was glad for it.

In the locker room, he tries to confront Shane about it, but never finds an opportunity.

The second period is nearly as bad. Shane and Rozanov take the first face-off, naturally, but it's Shane who starts it.

"Rozanov. Try to keep your stick down, would you?"

Hayden's jaw drops.

Rozanov smirks, "it never is, around you."

Rozanov wins the face-off.

It's probably Hayden's worst night of hockey ever. It shouldn't be a problem because Ottawa is truly a terrible team, but they'd just gotten a new goalie who is actually really good and Rozanov is playing like a madman. If they get anyone decent on their line for him to work with they might actually be contenders. Fortunately, Dillon is terrible and Shane is outskating Rozanov. And possibly also out-flirting him. Hayden's brain hurts.

Rozanov slams Shane into the boards again and says in a tone that's almost clinically observational, "you're playing a *hard* game tonight."

Hayden does actually break his stick, then. He's not sure how he's ever supposed to play a game with these two again, knowing what he knows. It feels supremely unfair. He wonders briefly if Rozanov is only doing it tonight to mess with Hayden, but Shane's participation and the fact that he's not telling Rozanov to knock it off makes him think this is commonplace. How had he never picked up on this? He wants to go back and re-analyze every interaction he's seen them have on ice, but he actually also really *doesn't*. It's best not to think about it, he decides. It might scar him even further.

He's going to have to tell Jackie about this when he gets home. He cannot suffer like this by himself. It's not fair.

Montreal wins the game, which is the only silver lining of the whole game. Hayden wonders if he should possibly bring earplugs to the next matchup. It seems like a good idea, given the circumstances.

They all trudge into the locker room and begin getting out of their gear. A plane is waiting to take everyone except Shane home to Montreal tonight. Shane was theoretically staying to see his parents, something he'd been doing for years after Ottawa games, but unfortunately Hayden suspected that was definitely not what Shane would be doing tonight.

He frowns as he watches Shane giddily pack up his gear. He's happy for his friend, of course, but he does not like the knowledge he has been cursed with. He should've never gone on a quest to unmask Lily. Ignorance, it turned out, was bliss out on the ice.

Chapter End Notes

And that's the end! Hopefully I can now be freed from my all-consuming urge to write fan fiction and go back to being responsible. Or maybe I'll write the post-tlg fic that's also banging around in my head. We will see! Until next time!

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