

a simple case of mistaken identity

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a simple case of mistaken identity

by [LiarsandThieves22](#)

Summary

"What could Hollander possibly need with Boston social media lady?" Rozanov asked.

"Shane's in love with her," Hayden said.

Rozanov's face did something *very weird*.

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Or: after becoming a bit obsessed with solving the Mystery of Boston Lily, Hayden thinks he finally has it figured out. She must *work* for the Boston Raiders. Now all he has to do is find her next time he's in Boston and tell her that her and Shane shouldn't have to hide their relationship.

Problem is, the only person he *can* find is Ilya Rozanov, and Rozanov is being a real dick about the whole thing.

Notes

my official entry into the "other ways hayden finds out" canon. takes place before the epilogue of Heated Rivalry, in Ilya's last season as a Boston Raider.

this is mostly show canon (hayden is a bit older than shane, i spell it marleau, i use the show team names) but it's possible some book stuff slipped in as a warning.

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

The thing was, if he was being *really honest*, Hayden had become a bit obsessed with Boston Lily. Or, at least, with the *mystery* of Boston Lily. Maybe it was because he was so happy in his own life – being a dad was *awesome*, being married to an absolute smokeshow was somehow even better – or maybe it was just because he'd known Shane for a few years now, and considered him a best friend, and therefore cared a lot about his happiness. And Boston Lily, she made Shane happy. It was obvious – the way he smiled at his phone, the way he broke curfew for her. He'd never done that for anyone else, not even *literally Rose Landry*, and that was saying something.

And, okay, maybe the best friend thing was most of it, because Hayden just couldn't figure out why Shane wouldn't introduce him to this girl already. In the start he sort of got it – busy schedules, they were both probably seeing other people, it wasn't serious. But A.R. (After Rose) it seemed like he and Boston Lily had maybe actually figured something out. Shane seemed happier. He certainly wasn't seeing anyone else. Hayden didn't know enough to say if Lily was, but – he felt like he *should* know, was the thing. Should know what Lily did for work, and what her interests were, and if she was as serious about Shane as he was about her.

These were the things best friends were supposed to talk about. Girl troubles! Relationships! He told Shane about all his big fights with Jackie, all the difficulties with the kids, every time his mother-in-law said a passive aggressive thing about the way he dressed. Shane, meanwhile, told him about yoga routines and dinners with his parents. Shane never, ever brought up girls or dating. And he never, ever brought up Boston Lily.

Every *once* in awhile, though, he'd tell a weird, vague story – *oh, well, my friend did this the other day*. The friend was never named. And, look, Hayden wasn't trying to be an asshole but *how many other friends could Shane possibly have?* They basically lived together from October to June. It wasn't like Shane was going to bars or clubs or even *book* clubs or whatever. He'd never heard Shane mention a friend from school or juniors before, and even if those guys existed somewhere surely Shane could just *say* their names in a story. Surely he wouldn't be so cagey about them!

So, Hayden was pretty sure all those stories were about Boston Lily. Which endeared him to her, really. She sounded funny and sweet and attentive; Shane retold her jokes and mentioned she ragged on his diet too and sometimes he'd get a faraway, happy look in his eye that Hayden *knew* was how he looked when he was thinking about Jackie, because he'd seen it in his own wedding photos.

But Shane was *Shane*. Reluctant to open up at best and absolutely, unbearably stubborn at worst. Hayden loved the guy, but trying to have a heart to heart was like trying to get a feral cat into a fucking cage – it was *hard*. It took him months to convince Shane to *come to dinner at his house*. He couldn't just spring *so tell me about this girlfriend you keep pretending you don't have* on the guy.

So, instead, he tried a different track: solving the case. He was basically Nancy Fucking Drew, or, like, at least one Hardy Boy at this point. He was *gathering clues*. He was *making observations*. He was going to figure it out, and then confront Shane with the evidence so

Shane could understand that it was actually normal and okay to have a girlfriend, even one in a different city, and Hayden of all people would only chirp him *minimally* about it, really.

It was just that Shane was bad with emotions. Hayden could work with that. Hayden could forgo emotions and bring *cold hard logic* into the situation.

So, okay. The Facts Were These:

- Boston Lily lived in Boston (perhaps obvious)
- Boston Lily was sometimes in Montreal (less obvious, but Hayden had caught a glimpse of Shane planning to meet her on more than one occasion after home games)
- Boston Lily was a Secret for some reason

And that. . . was sort of it.

Well, okay, maybe there were *two* mysteries here, really. Maybe if Hayden could figure out why Boston Lily was such a secret, he could figure out who she was. There had to be a reason. And it couldn't be anything the other, jerkier guys on the team would say, like when Drapeau joked that Shane never talked about girls because he only fucked "fatties and uglies."

Shane wasn't like that. He wouldn't be Hayden's friend if he was like that.

The thing was, though, he was pulling an *absolute blank* on why the hell this was such a big secret.

Hayden had played hockey for long enough that he'd heard basically every single chirp in the world. Apparently no less than a third of pro MLH players had slept with this mother, for instance. Mostly that stuff rolled off his back. But there was one chirp that stuck in his teeth, said by one player over and over.

Ilya Goddamn Rozanov, who was completely obsessed with calling Hayden stupid.

The other Rozanov chirps were annoying. (*15th Best Metro* was so specific, for one. Like who were the other 14? Obviously Shane was first, then maybe J.J, but after that? *WHO??*) It was annoying because while he was *fairly* sure his mother was not, in fact, having an affair with some unwashed heathen on Nashville with half his teeth missing Hayden did, from time to time, wonder if maybe he wasn't *that great* at hockey. Like, he was *good* at hockey, he knew that, although he certainly wasn't Shane (but no one was Shane, not even Rozanov, although god knew Rozanov tried). But, okay then, maybe he wasn't *the best*, so, whatever. He could let that one slide because the Metros were a winning team, and they had two Cups to Rozanov's one, which meant Rozanov could fuck right off. *15th Best Metro* was kicking his ass.

The stupid chirps, though. They kind of hurt. Because, like: yeah, okay. Hayden could admit it. He was kind of stupid. Not in *important* ways, but he basically barely scraped by secondary school and even then only really graduated because he was too good at hockey for them to kick off the team. He didn't bother with anything beyond that, instead opting to go into the minors to see if he could make a career out of playing. He'd never been great at

math, he was a terrible speller, and he wasn't always the most observant dude in the world. Jackie had told him the last thing enough times – pointed out that he was being insensitive and not thinking things through.

Rozanov, slamming into him on the boards, apologizing for making Hayden even stupider with the hit – it fucking stung, man. No way around it.

But, tragically, Rozanov might have had a point in that department. Hayden was maybe not smart enough to solve the Mystery of Boston Lily on his own.

Luckily, his smokeshow wife was also a *fucking genius*. Because Hayden just had pull like that. So he looped her in on it.

It was just after the start of the season when he did it. Shane had won two cups now and was going for his third. Last year, on the ice, Shane celebrated with his parents, which was nice, but the guy turned 28 over the summer – it would be nicer for him to have someone he *loved* up there when he won again. Hayden was going to make both things happen: a third cup, and Boston Lily on the ice in Shane's arms when it happened. He was *determined*.

Hence: Jackie.

The kids were asleep, and the two of them were on the couch finishing a bottle of red wine together, and he laid the whole thing out. The timeline, the secret texts – everything he knew.

Jackie, because she was, again, a *genius* immediately saw something he didn't.

“When is she in Montreal?” she asked.

Hayden stared at her, a bit blank. “What do you mean?”

Jackie raised one lovely eyebrow. “I *mean* does her being in Montreal follow any timeline? She's always in Boston, fine, so Shane sees her in Boston – when does he see her in Montreal?”

Hayden thought about it for a minute. He tried to pull the schedule through his head to remember when, last season, he'd seen Shane with that *Boston Lily* smile on.

It clicked.

“Oh shit,” he said. “Shit. She's in Montreal when we *play* Boston.” The mystery, suddenly, seemed so much clearer. “Babe, what if she *works* for the Raiders?”

“It would make sense why it has to be a secret,” Jackie said, taking another sip of wine.

That, though, Hayden didn't get. “I mean, not really? Like, there's no *rules* against it.” Jackie scoffed. “What! I'm not *wrong*.”

Jackie lifted her feet off his lap, which felt a bit like a punishment, and sat up to look him very sternly in the eye. “No *official* rules, maybe, but. . . she's a woman, working in a male dominated field, and she's sleeping with *the competition*.” She raised her eyebrow again. “At

best, she's slut shamed for the rest of her career – the guys in the office jeer at her, say she's only getting promotions because Hollander's pulling strings, they whisper behind her back. At *worst* she gets accused of, like, spilling Boston secrets to the Metros, and they find some bullshit reason to fire her, and her career goes down the toilet."

Hayden shrugged. He felt a little uncomfortable that he had missed what his wife was implying were fairly obviously sexist implications here. He considered himself a feminist, man. He was supposed to know this shit. "I mean, she could come work for the Metros?"

Jackie let out an unpleasant bark of laughter. "And, what, be *the girl they hired because Hollander is sleeping with her* forever? It's the same thing! She could be the best in the world at whatever she did, and she'd still never be seen as anyone more than *Hollander's little girlfriend*." She took another, slightly angrier sip of wine. "It makes sense why Lily would want to hide it. She needs to establish herself as too big to get rid of before she could ever go public."

Hayden supposed she had a point. He could see the guys on the team, for sure, being gross about it. Joking about getting their mistresses jobs if Hollander could get his one. "Dang. That sucks for Lily."

"Yeah," Jackie agreed, with a sigh. "It's nice that Shane supports her, though. He's obviously committed to keeping this a secret for her."

"Shane's a great guy," Hayden said, a bit unnecessarily because Jackie 100% knew that. "But man, what do we do *now*? If he's trying to protect her so hard he won't tell *me*, I mean. . . can they ever even really be together?"

Jackie smiled sadly, and shook her head – a helpless little *I don't know*. "What I do know," she said, "is you need to stop meddling. Shane obviously cares about this girl, and she obviously cares about her privacy. You leave it alone, and if Shane comes to talk to you you support him. You understand?"

Hayden said he did.

Except. Kind of. He didn't?

Well, okay: Jackie had made him understand why Boston Lily had to be a *public* secret. But Hayden *wasn't the public*! He was Shane's best friend! He wasn't going to tell anyone!

And, look, this girl had to be really important to Shane because, again, he'd dumped *ACTUAL, LITERAL ROSE LANDRY* for her. Most guys had hall passes with their wives; Shane had left the hall pass for *this girl*! And knowing Shane it wasn't because she was, like, more beautiful than Rose (which would probably be hard, given Rose was a movie star and Hayden was already *married* to the only woman more beautiful than her *bah dum tish*) but probably more because he just, like, *actually, really loved her*. He loved her so much that even when she dumped him he went back to her. When he had an out with someone big and famous he didn't take it.

That was *love* man. It seemed unfair that Shane had to hide it from anyone, but it was *especially* unfair that Shane felt he had to hide it from *Hayden*. He wondered if at least Shane's parents knew. He wondered if Shane's mysterious dropping off the radar over the summer was because of Boston Lily. Not that Shane was the most talkative guy over the summer anyway, but this year it'd been *particularly* hard to get a hold of him, for some reason. Maybe Boston Lily had shown up? Maybe he'd introduced her to his parents, told them about the relationship? When he got back from Ottawa he seemed happier. Lighter. It wasn't super obvious to anyone else, but Hayden knew him well enough to see that some tension had left his shoulders. Was that why?

Or maybe that was wishful thinking. Maybe Shane's shoulders were exactly the same, and no one knew about Boston Lily, and Shane was suffering in secret silence all by himself because he felt he couldn't talk to even his best friend about this.

The thought kept him up at night. And he was normally inclined to listen to his much smarter wife, but he thought that maybe just a *little* meddling would be okay, here. Just a touch. If he could figure out who this girl was before they played in Boston at the end of October, then maybe Hayden could find a way to meet her and, like, communicate that he was totally cool and would keep her secret and that also it would be great if she didn't crush his best friend's heart into a million little pieces.

So: he made a plan.

The really nice thing was that hockey leagues were pretty open about their staff. All he had to do was Google *Boston Raiders Front Office* and boom: a list of names. He hit "control+F" for Lily.

Three names came up.

THREE Lily's in one hockey organization? What kind of backwards town was Boston, anyway? Didn't they have *any other names*?

One Lily was a massage therapist – Hayden considered this a good, if slightly gross lead. On the one hand: massages were hot. There was like, an entire Pornhub category dedicated to that shit. On the other hand: how the hell would Shane have met a *Boston staff massage therapist*? He supposed *maybe* one of their therapists could have stepped in if someone got hurt, but the only time Hayden could recall Shane being hurt against Boston was The Big One, and that had happened in Montreal. Besides, it seemed really unlikely that *Shane Hollander* would hit on a woman giving him a massage as part of her job. He wasn't *gross*.

The second Lily was a scout. This seemed even more promising because, well, Shane had been scouted. Everyone knew he'd be a top three draft pick – he'd probably talked to a million scouts. Maybe he'd met Lily then, and they'd reconnected over the years when he was visiting Boston – a casual drink turning into something more.

Except that meant that Shane would have been eighteen when they met, and she would have already been an established professional. Actually, maybe that added *more* to the *why it had to be a mystery* pile. Bad enough to be a professional sleeping with another team's star; worse to be a *much older woman* sleeping with another team's star.

He felt good about that one. He copy pasted her full name into a new search window.

The Google Image search result that came back was a woman who had to be, by his best estimation, 65 years old.

For a brief, destabilizing moment, Hayden wondered if his best friend was in some sort of *trouble*. Had this woman, like, taken advantage of him as a kid? What the hell?

And then he considered that for two seconds and thought: *or maybe it's just the third Lily*.

He didn't close the tab though. Just in case.

The third Lily was on the social media team. Which, actually, seemed like the most likely person for Shane to have met. It was rare for them to talk to other team's social media teams, but the social media folks sometimes coordinated for pressers, and Shane did a lot with Boston because of the Rozanov thing. Plus, sometimes the social media people from other teams came to parties and stuff for content – she might have been floating around the MLH Awards, filming Boston players to put something together. Maybe she and Shane had stood next to each other at the bar and hit it off. Hell, maybe he didn't even *know* she worked for Boston until it was too late. Although, she had to know he was *Shane Hollander*. But maybe she thought it would just be a one night thing, and didn't realize it would be, you know, *love*.

Hayden found himself growing fond of that story he was inventing in his head. He could see it. Shane in Vegas, looking awkward in his suit, always uncomfortable at events like that. Maybe just after he won his Rookie of the Year Award. Or maybe the year after, actually – Shane had notably vanished from that party on the early end, and he'd seemed more unhappy to be there than usual. Maybe he'd met her and thought *what the hell, it's just one night* and now, years later, they both found themselves entangled in this huge, messy thing they didn't know how to get out of. And when they *tried* to get out, when she'd dumped him and he'd tried dating Rose, they realized they needed to be together, that they couldn't be apart, and they decided to try and make it work.

Damn. When he thought about it that way, it was romantic as hell.

Hayden typed her name into Google. Lily Adams was sort of generic, so he got too many results. He tried again. "Lily Adams Boston Raiders."

And there she was – a personal Instagram account.

Look: Hayden was married, alright, but he had *eyes*. The girl was a stunner. And she was exactly the type of girl that Shane would go for. Or, at least, the type of girl Hayden thought Shane would go for, if Hayden had ever seen him go for a girl. Her Instagram was filled with her jogging and kayaking and, of course, at hockey games. She had a cat, and seemed to see her parents and sister regularly.

But she was also exactly the type of person who would be screwed by this coming out, he could tell. The pretty social media chick, sleeping with a hockey player. Jackie was so right. No one would ever take this girl seriously again.

He clicked over to see her followers and typed “@shanehollanderhockeyplayer.”

Nothing.

But, okay, that wasn't *that* weird. Hayden was half convinced Shane's mom ran his Instagram account anyway. The other day he'd asked what a *filter* was.

He clicked to see who *she* was following. And sure enough, there he was:
@shanehollanderhockeyplayer

Alongside, admittedly, a lot of *other* players, including basically everyone from Boston. @ilyarozanov81 stood out ugly and stark on the screen. Hayden scowled at it. But it didn't look like she was following a lot of other non-Boston players – just some legacy guys, Scott Hunter, the usual.

This was totally the girl. He was convinced.

Now he just. . . had to meet her.

He hit follow on her account. Then, abruptly, he remembered those Twitter accounts that tracked every follow and unfollow on hockey players accounts to try and guess trades before they happened and panic unfollowed her. But he couldn't *message* her if he didn't follow her. But, also, why would she answer a random DM from a pro hockey player she didn't know?

Shit. Maybe he hadn't thought this through.

He was sort of in it now, though. He knew that going to Shane would do nothing, here. Shane would shut down, or he'd say Boston Lily was just a friend, or he'd deny there even *was* a Boston Lily. This girl was the way in. He had to make her see that he'd be supportive, and that Shane *needed* somebody in his corner to get through . . . whatever it was they were doing.

She'd almost certainly be at the game in Boston. Maybe he could find some sort of excuse to talk to her. Make up some reason. The issue was he couldn't think of a single valid reason to speak to this girl. He'd come across as a raving lunatic or a total creep if he wasn't careful.

He looked again at the picture of her kayaking, her warm smile, her long brown hair tumbling down in waves. He thought of Shane smiling at his phone like it was something precious and private and perfect.

Ah, fuck it. He was sure he'd come up with something in the three weeks before the game.

—

He did not, in fact, come up with something.

Boston had lost, but just barely – 4-3, and Roznov had scored two of those goals and assisted on the third, the asshole. Hayden didn't spend a ton of time watching Rozanov game tape, but he knew talk among their video coaches was that Rozanov brought something special to the

Montreal games. Like, he was always good, but he was somehow *better* playing the Metros. Guess he really gave a shit about the rivalry.

The locker room was filled with chatting and chirping, guys making plans to meet up at bars. Shane had vanished five minutes ago to do post game press. If Hayden was going to take an opportunity, it was right now. He was in his jeans and an athletic shirt and his sneakers – he could probably sneak away without anyone noticing before Shane got back and they had to clear the locker room properly.

So: he snuck out into the hallway.

And promptly realized he had *no idea where the fuck he was going*. It wasn't like he *explored* the place ever. He went from the bus to the locker room to the ice to the locker room to the bus.

He looked helplessly for a sign and found none.

Alright, so: time to follow his gut.

He turned left and walked that way until he could turn, and then turned left again. He went out a door which, frustratingly, apparently led *outside* to some sort of deserted loading dock. Annoyed, he turned around to go back inside–

And barreled directly into Ilya Rozanov.

Ah, shit. Rozanov looked pissed. Also: confused. Actually, mostly confused now that he'd registered that the person he'd run into was Hayden.

“Pike, what the fuck are you doing here?” Rozanov said, voice a bit gravelly, like he'd been yelling. Possibly at his team for losing? He still *sounded* pissed, but maybe Rozanov just always sounded pissed in English. He had a pack of cigarettes in his hand.

“I'm, uh–” Hayden scrambled for an excuse and found no good one.

Rozanov shook his head a little and held out a hand, like, *well? What?*

Shit.

Or, well. Maybe actually this could be good. Maybe – and Hayden truly shuddered to even *think* these words, but this is how much he cared about Shane, really – maybe Ilya Rozanov could *help him*.

“I need your help,” Hayden said.

Rozanov looked even more confused, somehow. “With *what?* You get lost between showers and locker room?” And then the bastard smirked. “Or maybe you come to beg me to help you with bad slapshot and slow ass skating?”

Hayden groaned. God, of all fucking guys. Cliff Marleau wasn't, like, the nicest dude ever but he probably would have just asked what Hayden needed instead of *this* bullshit. “No, you

motherfucker, I—" he stopped himself before he could offend Rozanov badly enough that the guy walked away. "There's a girl on your social media team I need to find."

Okay, *now* Rozanov looked pissed. Like, shockingly so. "Of all people I expect to be trolling around arena looking to cheat on their wife, you were not one of them," Rozanov snapped.

Which, *what*?

"Don't talk about my wife," Hayden said automatically. And then, "wait, you know I have a wife?" And *then*, "wait, Jesus, what the fuck I'm not – I'm not trying to *cheat on Jackie*! What the hell is wrong with you?"

"Of course I know you have a wife," Rozanov snapped back, like this was totally normal information for a guy Hayden had spoken to maybe four times off the ice *ever* to have. "Only interesting thing about is that you are apparently trying to build your own junior hockey team with children. You have like nineteen, yes?"

"I have *four*." This was getting really out of hand. Why the fuck was he in the some random ass Boston arena loading dock telling Ilya Rozanov about his *kids*? Worse, why couldn't he clamp down the irrational Dad Instinct to whip out his phone and offer to show *Ilya Fucking Rozanov* pictures?

"If you are not looking for creepy reasons, then why do you need any social media *girl*, as you say. Not woman, I note." Rozanov held his hands up in a little *don't blame me gesture*. "Perhaps not most feminist way of speaking about professionals at work."

Hayden buried his head in his hands. "Jesus fucking Christ." Truly, truly, he wished *anyone else* would show up. He'd even take Comeau. Gilbert Comeau, come save him from Rozanov Hell.

But. Ugh. This was for Shane. He was *doing this for Shane*.

He pulled his face out of his hands and barreled on. "It's for Shane," he said.

Okay, Rozanov was back to confused. This was going great. Hayden had really, truly fucked this up. Maybe Jackie had been right about meddling. Too late now!

"What could Hollander possibly need with Boston social media lady?" Rozanov asked.

Hayden thought about it. His first thought was *he has a cousin who is trying to become an influencer*. An insane lie, and anyway everyone knew Shane's parents were both only children. Even Rozanov probably knew that. Surely, at least, he had more reason to know about the family life of his greatest rival than he did to know about *Hayden's* family, which he apparently *also knew about*.

Were Russians romantics? They had a lot of novels, he knew that. But the only two he knew were the one about war and peace and the one where that chick threw herself in front of a train. Neither of those seemed, like, *particularly* romantic. But who knew? Maybe Ilya Rozanov had depth. He was *such* an asshole on the ice – maybe it was to cover up a secret,

gooey interior. Maybe he was the type of guy who watched romcoms on weekends and craved a real connection, instead of the meaningless sex he had often enough that even tabloids got bored reporting about it.

Ah, fuck it. In for a penny, in for a pound.

“Shane’s in love with her,” Hayden said.

Rozanov’s face did something *very weird*. There was no other way to describe it. It was like seventeen different emotions flashed across it at once and then went abruptly silent. He landed on something *close* to the confused he’d been before, but there was something *else* happening there. Something almost *hurt*?

Oh, shit. Shit! Was *Rozanov* in love with this chick too? Or maybe they were just banging? God knows Rozanov slept around enough. If Boston Lily was stepping out on Shane with Rozanov, that was it for her. It didn’t matter how much Shane loved her – that was a *total dealbreaker*.

This was getting complicated. More complicated than it had already been, which was, honestly, *pretty* complicated.

“Shane told you this?” Rozanov asked. “Shane told you he is in love with social media girl?”

Shane? Since when the fuck did Rozanov call him *Shane*? Fuck, that wasn’t important. Hayden was getting bogged down in details, and more importantly he was running out of time. He’d be expected back at the bus, and then his window would be closed, and Rozanov would probably find the social media girl and try to seduce her away from Shane because he was a bastard who did shit like that.

“No,” Hayden said. Rozanov, strangely, relaxed at this. Okay . . . weird, but whatever. Again! Running out of time! “It’s like – it’s a big secret man. She works for you, so she could be fired, but – her name is Lily, do you know her?”

For a moment, Rozanov’s face was perfectly blank.

Then he burst into laughter.

Like *real* laughter. Like, he *bent over himself to clutch at his sides* laughter.

“Dude,” Hayden said, irritated. “I know you hate Shane, but you don’t have to be such a massive fucking dick about this, alright? He’s not like you with girls in every city man, he’s a fucking *romantic*.”

Rozanov did not stop laughing, but he did calm down a little – from pure hysterics to these little ridiculous giggles that, frankly, sounded really, *really* weird coming out of the scariest Russian Hayden had ever met.

Then, like he was fucking *summoned*, Shane came through the door. He saw Rozanov first, and actually *smiled*, which. . . again, what? And then he saw Hayden and he *stopped smiling*! The exact *opposite* order of events Hayden would have expected!

What was *happening* in this loading dock? Had Hayden secretly sustained a concussion during the game that was making everything nonsense?

“Hayden, why are you *here*?” Shane asked, walking to stand next to Rozanov. He was using his *Captain Voice*. “Did you come here just to talk shit to the other team, man?”

“What? No!” Hayden was a little annoyed Shane thought so little of him. “I was – I didn’t even mean to *run into* Rozanov, I was looking for, uh. . .” Shit. What was he supposed to say? “Someone else.”

“You have been found out, Hollander,” Rozanov said. He was looking at Shane with complete amusement. It was Shane’s turn, now, to look baffled. “He has found out about your romance,” Rozanov continued.

Something that looked an awful lot like fear flashed across Shane’s face, just for a second.

But then he seemed to take in how Rozanov was saying it – like it was a joke, something funny – and he relaxed again.

Rozanov kept *talking*, because he did not at all believe in bro code, apparently, and lived to absolutely humiliate Hayden. “Pike is here asking me to help him find your secret girlfriend. Our social media girl.” He paused, a little dramatically. “*Lily*.”

There was a moment of silence. Shane did not seem to compute this information at all for a beat, then two, then three.

And then he, too, burst into laughter.

What the fuck!

Shane laughing just made Rozanov laugh *harder*. The two of them were mirror images of mirth – they were even leaning *into* each other, Shane dropping a hand onto Rozanov’s shoulder and Rozanov tilting his whole body into Shane.

“What the hell is going on?” Hayden asked, largely to himself.

Him speaking again seemed to finally get Rozanov and Shane to calm down. Strangely, though, neither of them acknowledged Hayden. They just. . . stared at each other. For, like, a weirdly long time.

Fuck. Shane looked *fond*, almost. So did Rozanov. Seriously. What the hell?

“Alright,” he said, pointing at Shane. “Enough of – of whatever is happening here! I was trying to do you a favor, man. You’ve been mooning over Boston Lily for *years*, and I could never figure out why it was this big secret, but then Jackie thought maybe she worked *for* Boston, and I was trying–” he cut himself off with a frustrated groan.

Shane took this time to cut *in*. “You told *Jackie*?” He sounded deeply horrified.

Rozanov also piped up. “Years?” He sounded *delighted*.

Shane turned to him with a little scowl. “Shut *up*, Rozanov.”

“I was *trying*,” Hayden said, desperate to get this conversation on the rails and away from *whatever the fuck was happening*, “to be a good friend and tell Boston Lily. . . tell her I wouldn’t tell anyone, you know? And that I understood why it had to be a secret, but that you deserved someone to talk to, a friend who was in your corner to help you navigate this whole *thing*.” He pointed to Rozanov. “But then I ran into *this asshole* and instead of helping me find her, he just laughed in my face. Because he doesn’t believe in true love, or whatever!”

Rozanov made a sound of disagreement. “I believe in true love, Pike,” he said. He sounded very serious about it. Hell he *looked* serious, all the amusement on his face evaporated. He met Shane’s eye with that look, eyes level and very clear. “I promise, Hollander, that I believe in true love.”

Shane, somehow, looked *even more fond*.

This was fucking baffling.

“Are you two, like, friends or something?” Hayden pointed an accusatory finger back and forth at them. “Is this – why does he know about Boston Lily?” Suddenly, he felt a little sick. “Shit, did you tell *him* about Boston Lily and not *me*? What the *hell*? When could you even have done that? *Why* would you even have done that?”

“No, Hayden, that’s not–” Shane stopped himself with a sigh. “Look, it’s complicated, and I can’t really explain it right now, there’s this whole–”

“You know,” Rozanov interrupted, “Pike is maybe right.”

Hayden gaped at him. So did Shane. “You think I’m *right*?” This was, maybe, the nicest thing Rozanov had ever said to him. And it *wasn’t even that nice!*

“I said maybe,” Rozanov said, which promptly ruined it. “But, yes. Secret relationship. . . is hard. Can be hard. Maybe is nice to have a friend who knows. Someone to, uh,” he snapped his fingers vaguely in Shane’s direction.

“Confide in?” Shane offered.

“Da, that,” Rozanov said. He shrugged, a loose little gesture. “Not worst idea.”

“You really think that?” Shane asked. He seemed to *really, really* care that Rozanov did.

“Yes,” Roz said back. His expression was – well.

Well, it was sort of the same look Hayden had in his wedding pictures. That Shane had when he texted Boston Lily.

Fuck. That Shane had *right now*, looking Ilya Rozanov directly in the eye.

Fuck. Fuck. *Oh fuck*.

“Oh my god,” Hayden said.

Rozanov glanced at him briefly and turned back to Shane. “I think he figured it out.”

“I guess this wasn’t that subtle,” Shane said, gesturing between them.

“*Oh my god*,” Hayden said again. He felt faintly ill. He pointed at Rozanov. “You! It’s? You! You’re Boston Lily?”

“In a way, Pike, your wife was right,” Rozanov said. “Lily does work for Boston Raiders. Just not social media.”

“And not a woman,” Shane added. He scratched the back of his neck, sheepishly. “I’m, you know. Gay, by the way. If that wasn’t obvious.”

“What the fuck,” Hayden said again. Because, like, it needed to be said again. It would be, perhaps, the only thought he ever *had* again.

Shane’s Boston Girlfriend was *Ilya Rozanov*.

Ilya Rozanov who was, now, fixing Hayden with an incredibly terrifying stare. “You have problem with this?”

“Well, in my defense, it’s *pretty fucking insane!*” He was aware his voice was edging a little towards hysterical, and perhaps a little towards a piercing scream. Shane shushed him.

“We’re still in *public* and this is—” Shane cut himself off. “This isn’t how I wanted to tell you, okay? But, yeah, it’s. I mean. . .” he sighed. “Look, Hayden, you can’t – you can’t tell anyone, okay? It would ruin our careers, but more than that, Ilya could be in really serious shit with Russia and—”

And suddenly Hayden realized that his best friend looked *fucking terrified*. That Shane’s hands were *shaking*. That Rozanov was glaring at him like a guard dog. That he was, perhaps, reacting inappropriately to this news, just a bit.

“Oh my god, *Shane*, come on man, I wouldn’t – I’m not going to *tell* anyone, man. Swear on Jackie, swear on my fucking *kids* I wouldn’t do that to you.” He registered Rozanov’s earlier question about having a problem. “And, fuck, I don’t – it’s fine that you’re gay, man, that’s – honestly, maybe I should have realized that when you dumped Rose Landry, because why else wouldn’t you want to date *her*—”

Rozanov actually growled a little. It was an incredibly scary sound.

Which, actually, sort of proved his point. “I’m just. . . I’m *what the fuck* because. . . him?” He gestured at Rozanov. “I mean, all the men in the world, and you picked your number one rival and the biggest asshole in the sport?”

“He’s not an asshole,” Shane said. Then he paused. “Well, okay, he’s a *bit* of an asshole, but mostly he’s . . . mostly he’s great, really.” He looked – fuck, he looked *bashful*. But also

happy. And *young*. So, so young. Hayden forgot, sometimes, what it was like to be that young. Shit.

“All those vague stories you tell. About your *friend*. All the jokes and dinners – that’s all Ilya Rozanov.” Shane nodded. “You really love him,” Hayden said. It was settling into his stomach slowly.

“Yeah,” Shane said.

Okay. Shane Hollander was in love with Ilya Rozanov. Okay. Hayden could – it was weird, and it was insane, but Hayden could find a way past it. Maybe. His best friend loving the worst asshole he’d ever met.

Which, speaking of. “And what about *you*?” he snapped at Rozanov. “From what I’ve heard you’ve fucked half the women on the East Coast. I’m really supposed to believe you’ve been Shane’s secret boyfriend this whole time?”

“Hayden,” Shane said, half a plea.

Rozanov just glared. “I have answered this question for people more important than *you* Hayden Pike,” he sneered. Whatever *that* meant. “But I will say it again: I love Shane. I have only ever loved Shane. We were not always. . . exclusive. But he was only one who mattered.” He paused, seeming to think for a moment about what to say next. “Shane had Boston Lily. I had . . . Marleau called her *my Montreal girl*. In my phone. *Jane*. Marley said she made me blush. That I was obviously obsessed with her.” He shrugged. “You understand? This is. . . for me, too. Serious.”

“Jesus Christ,” Hayden said. Because there wasn’t much else to say. Shane had Boston Lily and Ilya Rozanov had Montreal Jane. And, apparently, Rozanov’s version of Hayden was *Cliff Marleau*. This was so deeply insane. “So you two really are. . . you’re gonna. . . be together?”

“We’re gonna try,” Shane said, softly.

“We will succeed,” Rozanov said, all that cocky self-confidence Hayden saw all the time on the ice on full display. “Plans already in motion for future.” He turned a small, soft smile Shane’s way. “We will make it work.”

This made Shane *grin* at Rozanov. A pure, megawatt grin – the type Shane almost never, ever made. Rozanov smiled back, a little shyer, and then reached out to tangle his fingers with Shane’s so they were holding hands.

“Jesus Christ,” Hayden said, again. His vocabulary was really failing him, here. But this was *Shane* and *Rozanov* and despite all logic and order in the world they appeared to actually, really, be in love with each other. He took a moment to consider this. To consider what it meant. To consider if it changed anything.

It didn’t. Shane was his best friend. His best friend with *absolutely appalling taste* but, whatever. He could live with that. “Okay,” said finally. “Okay, this is – I won’t tell anyone.

Obviously. And you two will . . . make it work. I guess. Somehow.”

“Like I said,” Rozanov cut in. “Plans in motion.” He did not elaborate on the plans. Hayden could see Shane squeeze Rozanov’s hand a bit.

Ugh. It almost made him sick.

Not because of the gay thing! Because of the *Rozanov* thing! Oh, whatever. It was gonna take some getting used to, that was for sure.

“They’re probably looking for us,” Shane said, softly.

“Shit.” Hayden had forgotten about the bus. “What do we tell them?”

“Pike was stupid and got lost, Hollander went to find him, you both got locked outside and were rescued by beautiful, sexy Russian hockey player when he went out for a smoke.” Rozanov looked very proud of this answer. Hayden, tragically, had to admit it made a bit of sense. “We go back inside now.” He gestured towards the door.

“I’ll see you later?” Shane asked Rozanov, softly.

“Yes, moya lyubov,” Rozanov said back, soft as well. Shane leaned him and kissed him, and Rozanov lifted a hand to Shane’s jaw as he did so. It was very . . . *gentle*. Tender.

Loving.

And that was just. Wow. Okay.

At least Hayden had the room to himself tonight, he supposed.

They made it to the bus and stumbled through their story – Coach wasn’t amused, and there was no way Hayden wasn’t going to get fucking run to the ground in the next practice and chirped forever for having to be rescued by *Rozanov* but, whatever. He’d saved Shane’s secret. He could live with some chirping.

Later, in the hotel room, he was sitting quietly on his own bed running through the events of the day as Shane got his shoes on to go see *Ilya Fucking Rozanov*, his secret boyfriend.

Shane cleared his throat. He looked horrifically shy again. For a brief moment, Hayden wondered if he would do what he always did with Boston Lily and somehow claim he was just going to *meet a friend*.

But there was no reason to lie anymore.

“Hayden, look,” Shane said. “I just wanted to say. . . what you wanted to do for me. With Boston Lily. That was really sweet man. I appreciate it.” He paused. “You’re a good friend. I’m sorry I didn’t tell you earlier. It’s. . . complicated. But I wanted to tell you. Really. I did. I’m glad you know.”

Hayden considered this for a moment – Shane’s earnestness. It wasn’t a lie out of malice. It was a lie for survival. He supposed he could understand that, even if he still couldn’t understand the Rozanov bit of it. “I just want you to be happy, man,” Hayden said. Which was the truth. It was the whole point of confronting Boston Lily. Shane’s happiness *mattered* to Hayden. And, apparently, to Rozanov too. Who knew?

“I am happy,” Shane said. And his smile was so fucking *sweet*, it was almost embarrassing to look at. “I’m really happy, Hayden.”

Well. That was that then, wasn’t it.

“Go have fun with Boston Lily,” Hayden said. Shane smiled and left the room, and Hayden settled onto his pillows and wondered how the hell he was going to explain any of this to Jackie without admitting to meddling after she had *explicitly* told him not to do that.

He buried his head in his hands. God, he was gonna be in *so much trouble*.

End Notes

i'm in the middle of two longer pieces but i thought of hayden assuming lily is a social media person for boston and instantly had to write this. i am a hayden pike apologist because i love when a man is a little stupid.

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