

all we need

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by [lisa6](#)

Summary

Hayden nods slowly. “Are you on, like, any dating apps?”

“What?” Shane asks, half a laugh, as if the idea of an attractive guy in his early twenties being on Tinder was completely absurd. Is he not getting laid? Like, ever?

Or: Hayden finds out about Lily.

Notes

hi! my heated rivalry brainrot is still ongoing, so here's an outsider pov fic of hayden worrying about shane over the years and finding out about lily.

also I totally messed up hayden's position -- he's a forward. idk why i thought he was a defenseman lol. sorry about that xx

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

Hayden Pike signs with the Montreal Metros when he's eighteen. It's a good year for hockey, ESPN says — lots of fresh talent and many rebuilding teams, including the Metros, one of the most prestigious franchises in the sport. Hayden can't quite believe they want him to play for them; he checks his copy of the multi-million dollar contract sometimes, just to remind himself that this is real, that it really is his signature scribbled across the high-quality paper, right next to the embossed NHL logo.

He's not the only new player on the Metros' roster, of course. There's a new goalie — an older player who used to play for the Lions — and Shane Hollander, who was this year's second draft pick and will most likely be replacing Witherspoon as center. Hayden would never admit it, but he can't imagine being in Shane's shoes; there's been so much buzz about Shane leading up to the draft that Hayden probably would've collapsed under the pressure of it all, and it's only gotten worse since he'd signed his contract.

But Shane appears to be handling it well. He's shyer than Hayden expected — definitely shyer than the first draft pick Ilya Rozanov, who seems to be basking in the glow of attention — and only seems to really come out of his shell when he's on the ice; that's when he's a fast, calculating, shockingly competitive nightmare, who Hayden would absolutely *hate* to play against. His technique is perfect, he's got the most accurate aim out of everyone Hayden has ever played with, and he anticipates passes so well that he's always right where he needs to be to score. He's kind of like water; he finds every crack, fills every space.

Hayden decides to skate up to Shane during their second practice session. They're both new to Montreal, and Shane is a bit awkward, and Hayden misses his brothers back in Vancouver.

"Dude," he says, breathless and sweaty underneath his gear. Shane's sharp gaze flicks to him; he's breathing calmly, but at least there is a pink flush to his cheeks. Human after all. "I'm so glad we're on the same team."

Shane just blinks in response, so Hayden claps him on the shoulder.

"Because I'd hate to play against you, man."

"Oh," Shane says, ducking his head. "Thanks, I guess. You're good, too."

"Yeah, well," Hayden says, "I'm still nervous about Friday."

They win their first game on Friday. Shane scores twice, which only fuels everyone's glowing praise and raises their expectations even more. He's asked to join Witherspoon for the postgame presser, where he gives perfectly media-trained answers and offers practiced smiles, and Hayden can't help but wonder who Shane Hollander is behind these carefully arranged layers. He doesn't have time to peel them back though, because that night, at a small Montreal club Shane had suggested they go to, he meets Jackie, a really pretty girl in a really pretty dress, and he thinks she might be the one.

When they're in New York, Shane goes out with them mostly because it's Witherspoon asking, and Witherspoon is a seasoned player with two Stanley Cups and an Olympic silver medal under his belt. *I'm not twenty-one yet*, Shane had still tried to argue, but Witherspoon had just waved him off and claimed to know the owner of the club.

By midnight, Hayden is drunk. He finds Shane sitting at the bar, talking to one of the left wingers, and sits down next to him.

"Good game today, Pike," Gilbert Comeau says. He's a few years older and a bit of an asshole both on and off the ice. Hayden nods at him, but Comeau's attention has already shifted to a group of women to their right. He pushes himself away from the bar, grinning. "If you'll excuse me."

Hayden leans closer to Shane. "I can't stand him."

"He's a dick," Shane agrees, taking a sip of his ginger ale.

"Have you ever been drunk?" Hayden asks.

"Not during the season."

Hayden nods, mulling this over. He's made friends with a few other rookies, all of them their age, and just like Hayden, they don't really cut back on a lot of stuff despite hockey. They're young, rich and newly independent; there aren't any parents nagging at them for coming home late. As long as they show up to practice and perform well during games, they can do whatever they want. But maybe Shane does feel the pressure more acutely than Hayden thought, especially considering his position. He does have a determining influence on the amount of goals scored after all, and it's no secret that forwards get a lot more attention than defencemen, both from the press and fans.

On top of that, as much as Hayden loves hockey, it is a predominantly white sport. As a white man, Hayden has never really had to think about it too much but with Shane now playing on his team, it's impossible to stay unaware of the questions he sometimes gets during media availability, or the looks on some peoples' faces when it's Shane scoring yet another hat-trick instead of one of the white centers on their roster, or the comparisons to Serena Williams and Tiger Woods when Hayden has never been asked about Bobby Orr or Ray Bourque. There's a reason Shane's mom wants him affiliated to prestigious, renowned brands such as Rolex.

So Hayden just says, "Smart," and orders himself a glass of water.

Over the course of the next months, he and Shane become close friends. On the road, they always end up sharing hotel rooms. Shane invites him to spend a weekend at his parents' house, which means Hayden gets to try yakisoba for the first time. In turn, Hayden introduces Shane to his favorite artists — even if Shane doesn't show the same appreciation for music that Hayden does — and his girlfriend Jackie, who, like most people, is immediately endeared by Shane. They spend a lot of time at the rink together, mostly because Shane stays longer than everyone else anyways and Hayden joins him because he figures if he can improve his defensive tactics against Shane Hollander, he can ward any other player off.

Despite his quickly accumulating goals and countless pairs of eyes on him at all times, being friends with Shane is easy. People keep expecting him to become arrogant like so many other promising rookies before him have, but Shane continues to be soft-spoken and humble; the same cannot be said for his rival, Ilya Rozanov.

"You've played against him before, right?" Hayden asks, fastening his shoulder pads. In a few minutes, they'll be on the ice to face Boston, and Hayden can already feel tomorrow's sore muscles. At least it's a home game; the Montreal fans can be heard all the way to the locker room.

"Yeah, in Juniors," Shane says. He bends down to tie his laces.

Hayden grimaces. "I can't stand him. He's a dirty player."

"He's a *good* player." Shane sits up and looks Hayden in the eyes. "He likes to feint, so don't let him trick you, and don't get distracted by his chirping. You know he's an asshole, so expect him to act like one. He's a strong skater — he won't try to go around you. Just make sure you're closing down the line, and I'll make sure to score more goals than he does. All right?"

"Yeah," Hayden says, blinking back at Shane before the corners of his mouth twitch into a grin. "All right."

Shane nods, gets up, and lightly bumps his helmet against Hayden's. "Let's win this."

Shane scores a goal right off the face-off he wins against Rozanov, which is great for the Metros but sucks for Hayden, because Rozanov is pissed.

"Nice hands," Rozanov jeers when the puck gets away from Hayden in a tussle, and then he's off to score a goal of his own with a truly deceptive shot into the upper right corner of the net.

Shane was right; Rozanov doesn't hold back, verbally or physically. He's not only the biggest asshole Hayden has ever had the misfortune to play against, but unfortunately a tough

opponent as well. No matter how much Hayden hates him, he can't deny that Rozanov is irritatingly good at hockey. It is frustrating playing against him because he's as good as Shane, which means that he's better than everyone else, including Hayden, and that shouldn't come as a surprise considering Rozanov was the number one draft pick, but it's still a blow to Hayden's ego.

He grits his teeth and tries not to feel like Rozanov is just fucking toying with him until the final horn echoes through the arena, and the Metros have won their first game against Boston this season.

"That cocksucker can fuck off back to Russia," Comeau says back in the locker room. "No wonder he was drafted by fucking Boston. They're a shit team."

The Metros were a shit team before Hollander joined, Hayden wants to say but luckily manages to keep his mouth shut. It probably wouldn't be wise to antagonize one of the vets, and Shane is under enough stress as it is. He doesn't want to add to that. Instead, he reaches for his phone and checks it for a text from Jackie.

good game babe <3, she'd sent.

Hayden types back, *Not really. Fucking Rozanov.*

Her response comes just a few seconds later, *A win's a win!*

Hayden puts his phone back into his bag and turns to look at Shane, who's also on his phone, thumbs tapping away quickly. "Got any plans for tonight?"

Shane looks up, wide-eyed and flushed. He's showered but still shirtless, and there's a bruise blooming on his hip from a dirty body check half an hour ago. "No, I'll just have something to eat and go to sleep."

Hayden nods slowly. "Are you on, like, any dating apps?"

"What?" Shane asks, half a laugh, as if the idea of an attractive guy in his early twenties being on Tinder was completely absurd. Is he not getting laid? Like, ever? Hayden tries to remember if Shane has ever told him about any regular hook-ups or girlfriends, but he comes up empty. There was that girl at the club, a few months ago, when Hayden met Jackie. Shane had gone home with her but got all weird when asked about it the next day.

"I mean, I'm just asking," Hayden says. "Jackie has lots of hot friends. I could set you up with one of them, if you want. And they're cool, too. Not, like, just in it for the money or something."

Shane's face does something complicated, but the look in it is gone before Hayden has time to analyze what it was. He turns away to pull his shirt over his head, and then he smiles at Hayden. "That's nice of you, man, but I'm not really looking for anything right now. Just... I just want to play hockey, you know?"

Hayden raises his eyebrows. He doesn't think he's ever met a guy his age who'd willingly turn down a very realistic chance to have sex. It makes sense, though — Shane is obsessed with hockey, more than any other player on their roster. Still, Hayden can't help but worry.

It's Comeau's voice again that jolts him out of his thoughts. "Leave Hollander alone, Pike. If being celibate means he scores enough goals for us to wipe the floor with fucking Boston, we don't need him getting distracted by good pussy."

Shane bristles. "Fuck off. I'm not a virgin."

"No, of course you're not," Comeau says, the grin on his face only slipping when JJ shoves his shoulder.

"Stop bothering the rookies, Gil," JJ says.

Months later, Hayden still hasn't stopped worrying about Shane.

He introduced him to *all* of Jackie's single bridesmaids, offered to play wingman for him if Shane ever wanted to act like the twenty-two year old he was and actually go to a club, and even asked his friends in other cities if they knew any attractive girls to set him up with if only for a one-night-stand, but every time Shane just defaulted to his favorite excuse: hockey.

Hayden is a married man now, which is awesome because he absolutely loves Jackie, but he'd be lying if he said that their relationship hasn't changed. They'd only been dating for a few months when Hayden went down on one knee, because Jackie is funny and beautiful and the sexiest woman he's ever seen and somehow seeing the ring on her finger makes him really horny, so the sex has only gotten better and better.

So everything is great, except for the fact that Jackie for some inexplicable reason really loves double dates and the only couples they hang out with are Jackie's girlfriends and their husbands. Usually, that's fine, even if Bradley, Chris and Mike prefer football over hockey, but sometimes Hayden wishes he had a friend to invite on double dates. Unfortunately Shane refuses to date any of the many women throwing themselves at him, JJ is in an open relationship with a girl Hayden finds incredibly annoying, and all of his other friends are still busy sleeping around instead of settling down.

So, that sucks. Hayden won't give up, though. He saw the way Shane smiled during the wedding reception, he never misses the softness in Shane's face when he is over at Jackie and Hayden's house and catches them making eyes at each other, and he certainly notices the texting.

One Thursday evening, when they're sharing yet another hotel room and Shane has been on his phone nonstop for the past twenty minutes, Hayden is just about to ask who he's texting when suddenly Shane's eyes widen and he slams his phone down onto the mattress next to him. He holds it there, like he's scared it'll levitate and reveal whatever is on it for the entire hotel to see if he doesn't, and stares at the wall.

Hayden darts a questioning look at him but Shane quickly gathers himself and shifts his attention back to his phone.

"You alright?" Hayden can't help asking.

"Yeah," Shane says, more breath than anything.

It's pretty dark in their room — the quietly humming TV the only source of light — but Hayden thinks there might be a blush high on Shane's cheeks, tinting them a deep pink.

Hayden doesn't mean to see — it just happens. He's been curious of course but he'd never invade Shane's privacy; if there's anything Shane wants him to know, he'll tell him. So it truly is a coincidence when Shane's phone lights up where it sits on Hayden's kitchen island while Hayden is standing right there and Shane is in the living room cradling Jade (or Ruby? Jackie's still better at telling them apart) in his arms.

Lily, it says on the display. The text message is short but it's enough to make Hayden blush. *Knew I should have blown you before you left last week.*

Hayden doesn't know what kind of face he makes but when he locks eyes with Jackie from across the room she furrows her brows in confusion, so he must look as baffled as he feels. Does Shane have a secret girlfriend? No way, Hayden thinks, immediately dismissing the idea; Shane would tell him if it was serious, even if it's surprising to find out he's entertaining a casual hookup. But then again, why *would* he keep it under wraps?

Shane used to date a Jessica back in Ottawa but that was before they were friends, so Hayden has no idea what she looked like. He doesn't know Shane's type but he does know that there is a certain image that comes to mind when one imagines a top player's girlfriend, and maybe Lily doesn't answer those expectations. Then again, Shane has never given the impression that he'd be the kind of guy to care about that; he's probably the least superficial person Hayden knows.

A few strides away, over on the couch, Shane sniffs and says, “Oh, I think—”

Jackie laughs, already reaching out to relieve Shane of the baby in his arms. “I’ll go change her diaper.”

“They poop so much,” Hayden says as Jackie heads upstairs. He glances at Shane’s phone before he rounds the kitchen island into the living room, wondering if he should bring it to him and mention the text, but Shane is the furthest thing from cool a human being could possibly be and Hayden doesn’t want to risk him feeling uncomfortable. Shane gets drilled with enough questions on a daily basis already, and if Lily is here to stay, surely Shane will tell Hayden about her.

Lily remains a poorly kept secret. It’s so easy to identify when Shane’s texting her that Hayden really wonders how no one else has picked up on it yet; he gets all cagey, always checking for prying eyes before he opens her text messages, and there is a light pink tint to his cheeks and glint in his eyes every time he talks to her. Maybe she sends him a nude for every goal he scores, like Jackie sometimes does after a particularly good game.

Still, Shane hasn’t mentioned Lily at all. Ever. Not to Hayden at least.

During one of their off-ice workouts, Hayden walks up to JJ, who’s hanging off a pull-up bar. “Has Shane mentioned dating anyone to you?”

JJ squints at him. His face turns red when he pulls himself up. “Hollander? No, dude. Not even convinced he’s got a life once he leaves the rink. Why? Do you know something I don’t?”

Hayden decides to lie. “No, just heard a rumor he’s dating some Swedish model and he’s not here to confirm or deny, so.”

“Huh,” JJ says, dropping to his feet. “I don’t think I’ve ever heard about any dating rumors.”

“Usually all bullshit anyway,” Hayden says with a one-shouldered shrug.

“Except when it’s about Rozanov.” When JJ smiles, it’s with all of his teeth showing.

Hayden grimaces. He will never understand the magnetic pull Rozanov seems to have on women. He’d considered asking Jackie about it once but very quickly dismissed that idea; if there is one thing he doesn’t need, it’s to hear his wife admit to finding Ilya Rozanov attractive. He can deal with the occasional mood swings and her being a bit of a gossip, but *that* is not a character flaw he wants to be aware of.

“That reminds me,” Hayden says, “I need to get my skates sharpened.”

“Do Shane and Ilya Rozanov really hate each other?” Jackie asks once everyone has left. Hayden had invited his closest friends on the team over to watch the Stanley Cup final, which had unfortunately concluded with Boston winning the Cup, but at least the steaks had been good. It turned out that spending several thousand dollars on a grill *was* a good investment, but Hayden valued his marriage too much to remind Jackie of her hasty scepticism.

“Yeah, of course,” Hayden says with an upward quirk of his brows. He shovels a forkful of JJ’s black mushroom rice into his mouth. “What makes you ask that?”

Jackie’s gaze flickers across Hayden’s face pensively. He waits her out, and smiles around his mouthful of food when she steps close to wrap her arms around his shoulders. “I don’t know. He just seemed... upset.”

“Yeah, ‘cause fucking Boston won,” Hayden mumbles, nuzzling her temple. “He’ll have to hear journalists pester him with Rozanov getting there before him until we’ve won the Cup.”

“It’ll be yours next season,” Jackie says, and catches his bottom lip between hers. “You are the better team.”

Hayden leans down. He tightens his arms around his wife and breathes her in. He’s twenty-three and married and so in love with his beautiful wife, who has gifted him two equally beautiful girls, and honestly, who gives a fuck about the Stanley Cup? He is the luckiest man in the world.

Two Stanley Cup wins later, Lily is still in the picture, and still nothing more than a mysterious name occasionally plopping up on Shane’s phone. Like clockwork, every time they’re in Boston Shane is off to see her, and Hayden is happy for him even if it is a bit insulting that not only has Shane still not told him about his secret fling, but he keeps coming up with obviously fabricated excuses as to why he has to leave their hotel room for a few hours like Hayden is too dumb to notice the post-sex glow when he returns.

Lily also seems to either supply Shane with performance enhancing drugs or her pussy is magic because Shane somehow manages to play even better after he gets laid.

“Honestly, it’s getting old,” Hayden complains to Jackie on the phone late one of those nights, when Shane is gone and Jackie is in bed with the twins, waiting for them to fall

asleep. “I don’t know what’s stopping him from just dating her. Obviously they like each other.”

“Maybe it is just casual,” she suggests.

“I don’t think Shane is capable of being casual. Like, about anything. I told him I knew he was going to see Lily today, and he got so weird about it.”

“Well, then maybe it’s she who doesn’t want it to be serious.”

Hayden frowns, immediately upset on Shane’s behalf. Lily would be a fucking idiot if she didn’t want to date Shane Hollander. “No, that can’t be it. Shane isn’t, like, heartbroken or anything. He’s the opposite. Lighter. Like the orgasms give him wings or something.”

“Wow,” Jackie laughs. “Maybe he should just go ahead and marry her.”

“Yeah, would do wonders for his anxiety. Doctor’s orders, at least two orgasms a day,” Hayden jokes, and listens to Jackie’s quiet giggle. “Seriously, though. I think he’s happier. Not quite as high-strung, at least.”

“I think so, too,” Jackie says. Her voice has gone soft the way it always does when she is emotional. Hayden counts himself lucky that the love of his life and his best friend like each other so much; he doesn’t want to think about how much it’d pain him if they didn’t. “He’s such a sweetie. I really hope Lily and he will work it out, so he can feel what I feel when I’m with you.”

Hayden’s heart stutters in his chest. He turns around in the hotel bed that smells nothing like home, and switches to FaceTime so he can see Jackie and his daughters’ faces.

Shane gets back to the hotel around midnight, and even through his sleepy haze Hayden can tell immediately that something is wrong. There is none of the usual post-Lily glow; instead, his eyes are wide and panicked, his face void of color and his breathing irregular.

Hayden sits up. “You okay, buddy?”

“What? Oh, yeah,” Shane says, his voice hollow. He shrugs out of his jacket, flings it across the armchair and heads to the bathroom. “I’m okay.”

Feeling out of his depth, Hayden reels. “Everything all right with Lily?”

Shane stops with his hand on the door handle. He glances at Hayden over his shoulder, then turns to lean heavily against the frame. His mouth opens, and shuts. Opens again. “She’s barely even a friend, Hayd. I don’t know who you think this is, but it’s not that.”

Hayden bites the inside of his cheek so he doesn’t call Shane an idiot. “All right, man. I’m here, though, if you ever want to talk about what Lily and you are not.”

Shane huffs. He looks like he wants to argue but there is a suspicious amount of blinking happening; in the end, he says nothing, pushes himself off the doorframe, and closes the bathroom door behind himself.

For the first time since Hayden has known Shane, there is no Lily. There is, however, Rose Landry, who's more famous than any hockey player in the league but apparently knows most of them because she's a fan of the sport. She goes to some of the Metros' home games wearing a Hollander jersey even though she grew up supporting Detroit, posts photos of Shane on her Instagram account, sleeps over at his place often enough that Hayden starts announcing himself before dropping by, and sends him several texts over the course of the day, randomly, like she can't help herself.

Shane, it turns out, never needed Hayden trying to set him up with any of Jackie's friends.

They're in the locker room after a truly gruelling practice session when Comeau says, "So, Hollzy, what's Hollywood pussy feel like?"

"Fuck off," Shane mutters, and pulls his shirt over his head. It's Bottega Veneta — Hayden hasn't seen Shane wear athleisure in ages.

"No, seriously. You've never dated anyone but now the whole world knows you're banging Rose Landry. I thought you were one of those no-sex-during-the-season freaks, but I guess she's got you pussy-whipped."

Clenching his jaw, Shane searches his gym bag for his car keys. It doesn't seem like he's going to respond, so Hayden decides to intervene.

"Don't say shit like that, dude."

Comeau raises both hands in an exaggerated show of innocence and smiles. "I'm just happy Hollander's finally getting laid."

Shane slides his sharp gaze over to him. "Maybe pay less attention to the tabloids and focus on improving your movement instead. There's a reason I kept scoring on you today, and it's because you're not getting between your mark and the net. We can't afford a sloppy defence if we want a third Cup."

"Man, it's fucking practice," Comeau says. "I'm not risking a broken bone just to keep you away from the goal."

"That argument doesn't really hold when we keep conceding goals because you're not doing your job, does it?" Shane asks. "We'll play Boston in a few days. I don't want to lose that game."

"And I do?" Comeau scoffs. "Fuck you, Hollander. I'll keep Rozanov in check so you can win another Hart trophy."

Shane, who looked like he was about to argue just a second ago, stutters to a halt. He swallows, nods, and studies Comeau, like he's seriously considering his next words. "I don't need your help to win any awards. We're a better team than Boston, and I want that to show on the scoreboard when we play them on Friday. That's all."

The Metros grant Shane his wish, even if only barely. It was a physical and ugly game, but Hayden is content with the result; Rozanov played the worst game of his career so far, only managing a single assist and three shots on goal, fucking up passes and amassing penalty minutes. Hayden would be happier about it if Shane hadn't also been off his game today.

"You okay?" he asks Shane in the showers.

"Yeah."

"Is Rozanov hurt or something?"

Shane glances at him, eyebrows drawn. "How would I know?"

"No, I'm just asking. Maybe you've heard something," Hayden says, squeezing shampoo into the palm of his hand. "Did he say anything to you during face-off? I don't think I've seen him trying to bait you at all tonight."

Shane abruptly turns his shower off. "No," he says, and leaves to get dressed.

"What's up with him?" JJ asks, a few showers to his right, and Hayden can only shrug.

A week later, Rose Landry breaks up with Shane.

"It's fine," he says when Hayden makes a face at him. Jackie had really wanted to meet Rose — it would've been the perfect double date. "Wouldn't have worked out anyway with both of our schedules. She's got to go back to LA eventually and we're always on the road."

"Dude, I have a wife, three kids and a fourth on the way and you can't figure out a way to date one of the hottest women in the world?"

Shane gives a one-shouldered shrug and pays for both of their coffees. He thanks the barista before he turns to Hayden and says, "We're still friends. It's better this way." He guides Hayden out of the café with a hand gently shoving at his shoulder.

"Is she coming to the All-Star Game, then?" Hayden asks, unable to help the way his voice goes a little snippy. The All-Star Games are more gimmicky than anything else, but the bonus is nice and you can bring your family, so it does sting a bit that he's once again not invited. Shane goes every year. So does Rozanov, of course, the asshole.

“No.”

“I heard you’ll play on the same team as Rozanov this year. East versus west, right?”

Hayden expects Shane to go into a tirade about it or at least roll his eyes in annoyance, but all he does is take a sip of his coffee and shove his free hand in the front pocket of his hoodie. He pulls his shoulders up at a chill breeze and says, “Yeah. Should be fun.”

“Fun,” Hayden repeats flatly.

“He’s a good player.” Shane shrugs. “Still an asshole, obviously.”

Hayden shakes his head. His fingers close around his car keys, unlocking his Audi. “Yeah, *obviously*. I hope they’ll make you captain, at least.”

Hayden watches the All-Star Game with his mouth hanging open. He hates Rozanov, but there is no denying that there is something electric about the way he plays with Shane.

Rozanov doesn’t seem to have any hard feelings about only being alternate captain or having to play wing so Shane can center. He scores goals, feeds Shane several absolutely perfect assists, and fucking kisses the side of Shane’s helmet after a particularly impressive shot into the upper left corner of the net, which normally wouldn’t be too weird because Rozanov is an asshole and likes pushing peoples’ buttons, but then he’s just kind of smiling at Shane, and Shane is smiling back.

“The fuck?” Hayden asks no one in particular. He’s on the couch with Arthur on his lap, and it’s not like he expects his two-year-old to respond.

“Swear jar,” Jackie says, startling Hayden, who hasn’t heard her walk in. He rolls his head on the backrest of the couch, and puckers his lips for a kiss hello. Jackie leans in, smiling, then presses her lips to Arthur’s wispy hair.

“Sorry. How was the zoo?”

“Ruby was scared of the elephants and Jade made fun of her for it. My mom is getting them ice cream now, so their mood should be better when they come back later. How’s Shane playing?”

Hayden frowns at the TV. “Good.”

“Oh, is that Ilya Rozanov?” Jackie asks and sits next to him. Hayden lifts one of his hands — the one not holding Arthur to his chest — to run his fingers over the nape of her neck. She looks exhausted, which isn’t a huge surprise considering the fast approaching due date.

“They’re on the same line? How’s that working out?”

“Surprisingly well,” Hayden grumbles. He can’t help it. The commentators keep going on about their incredible chemistry on the ice and how, if they ever played on the same team, they’d dominate the league.

“What’s surprising about that?” Jackie asks. “They’re always leading the scoring race.”

“Yeah, but Rozanov’s got an ego the size of his shitty country.”

On screen, Rozanov is easily slipping past two very skilled defensemen and passing the puck to Shane again, not even taking the other winger, who’s also free, into consideration. A beat later, the goal lights up red with yet another point for Team East.

Jackie raises one neatly plucked eyebrow. “Shane looks happy. Like, not just *playing-hockey-and-scoring* happy, but actually happy. Is he seeing Lily again?”

Hayden dragged his attention back to the TV to find that Jackie was right — this was Shane’s *Lily* smile. He’ll have to ask Shane about it next time they see each other.

“Are you and Lily talking again?” he asks a week later when they’re getting ready for a game against Boston, which Hayden has a feeling they’re going to win. Shane is always an absolute terror on the ice but he has been on a tear lately; JJ also thinks it’s because he’s back to consistently getting laid.

Shane’s face does a series of unreadable things, something like surprise to concern to panic to tentative acceptance.

“Um,” he says once his expression has settled on neutral. “Not really.”

Hayden blinks at him. “‘Not really’ or no?”

Shane shakes his head.

“No?” Hayden prompts, exasperation tugging at his nerves. He’s just asking about a girl Shane has been seeing for ages. Literal ages. Hayden has no idea why Shane is being so weird about this.

“No,” Shane confirms. Then shrugs, sending Hayden a nervous look. “I mean, kind of, but not in the way you think. We’re friends.”

Hayden nods. “I’m just wondering.”

“I *can’t* date her.” Shane goes back to getting dressed, avoiding eye contact.

“Hollzy, score as many goals as you possibly can,” Koch, one of the defensemen, says, effectively putting a halt to Hayden and Shane’s quiet conversation. “I heard Rozanov’s dad bit it. This might be our chance for the game with the biggest goal difference against Boston yet.”

Surprisingly, it’s Comeau who finds fault with that. “Shut the fuck up, Koch. And don’t fucking underestimate Rozanov.”

“What?” Koch says. “Like he doesn’t have like ten puck bunnies lined up at home to kiss it better. You think he hasn’t been getting his dick sucked?”

“Don’t say shit like that, man,” Hayden hisses. “It’s fucking misogynistic.”

He glances to his right, about to go back to his conversations with Shane, but Comeau is in his line of sight and he’s staring down at his hands, and— right. Comeau’s mother died of cancer a few months ago. He sees Shane squeeze Comeau’s shoulder on his way out the door.

Hayden follows after him. Five strides later, he’s caught up.

“Why not?”

Shane cocks an eyebrow at him questioningly.

“Why can’t you date Lily?” Hayden clarifies.

Shane squeezes his eyes shut for a moment. When he opens them again, they’re hard with barely-concealed displeasure. “It’s just— it doesn’t matter. We’ve got a game to focus on.” He turns to step onto the ice, and jerks his chin at Hayden. “Let’s win this,” he says, and puts on his helmet.

At 11 a.m. the next morning, Hayden is at the hospital. Yuna and David have given the staff notice of his visit, so he’s allowed to enter Shane’s room once they’ve verified his identity.

Shane is awake and high on drugs, happily babbling away, which would be more amusing if he didn’t have a concussion and a broken collarbone. Hayden is pessimistic about the Metros’ playoff chances without Shane there to rely on.

Babies are awesome. Their eyes always look a little bit too big for their faces and their noses are tiny and they have the cutest little fingers and Hayden absolutely loves babies. He does. He really, really does. But he's been home for five weeks and changed a million diapers and Ruby and Jade keep throwing tantrums because *Mommy is feeding your cute little sister Amber but we can go outside and play in the pool*, and Arthur has suddenly developed some mysterious skin condition that might be linked to an allergy and has Hayden driving to the doctor's five times a week, and because Jackie is busy caring for their baby, Hayden has to bring the twins everywhere, and Hayden is five seconds shy of losing his mind.

He almost starts crying with relief when Shane answers the phone on the sixth ring because his pitch is deep and familiar, and he's not putting on baby talk. "Hey, buddy."

"Dude, you haven't called me in *weeks*."

Shane breathes out on a laugh. "I know, I'm so sorry. But how's... Amber, right?"

Hayden can't stop the words from tumbling out of his mouth. "She's *so* adorable and, like, the easiest baby we've had. Thank God, because the twins were absolute nightmares. Did you see the photos I sent you?"

"Oh, yeah, the pics are cute."

"I'll send you more," Hayden promises and immediately cringes. He knows Shane loves his kids but he can't believe he and Jackie have turned into *those* parents. The ones that send millions of photos and can't shut up about their children. But fuck it. It's Shane, and this is just payback for all the hours he's talked Hayden's ass off about the importance of micronutrients and body optimization and silent retreats and all that stuff. "We'll have you over for BBQ when you're back in Montreal."

Shane sounds just slightly distracted when he says, "Good. And, uh, Jackie's good, too?"

"Oh yeah, dude. She's so happy. I think she missed having a baby."

"Is it better than, um..."

Hayden blows out a breath. His heart bloats in his chest, pressing against his ribcage, painful and sharp. "Yeah. The twins were rough. It was good Jackie's mom stayed over for, like, two months after."

"Yeah, no, I— I remember that. That was a tough time," Shane says, his voice a bit more strained, and Hayden remembers Shane coming over a few times, offering to go grocery shopping or bringing food his dad had cooked. He changed diapers and took the babies for walks in the stroller to give Jackie and Hayden a couple minutes to themselves, and sat with Hayden as he researched postpartum depression.

Hayden blinks against the onslaught of emotion. "Can't wait for you to meet her. Mark—"

"Uh, sorry, Hayd, just— um, my mom's on the other line. I'm just going to get rid of her, okay?"

Before Hayden can respond, Shane's end of the line is muted. Hayden presses his palm to his face, massages his temples with his index finger and thumb, and waits. It takes about a minute until Hayden hears the call click back to life.

"Yuna keeping you booked and busy?"

"Sorry, man. Yeah, my mom can be so annoying sometimes."

Hayden doesn't think he has ever heard Shane call his mother annoying before.

"You were saying?" Shane asks, and it's enough for Hayden to get over his surprise. He's desperate for a simple, grown-up conversation with his best friend.

"Mark said he's going to buy these German sausages for the BBQ."

"Oh, right, right. Mark. That's her middle brother?"

"He's Jackie's brother-in-law. Tess's husband from Frankfurt," Hayden says.

"Brother-in-law. Right. But he's the one—"

"The one who made that godawful kale dish," Hayden huffs, although he's pretty sure Shane secretly liked it. It was kale, after all, and Shane appreciates nutrient density and has most likely wrecked his taste buds with his freakishly regulated diet anyway.

"Got it. Right, yeah. From Thanksgiving," Shane says, and Hayden can't stand it anymore.

"Please come to my BBQ, Shane. I think I'm going to lose my mind at home. Like, I'm so happy, but the kids are killing me. I don't know how Jackie does it. She rules, seriously, and she'll be there, obviously, and so will Mark, which is cool—"

"Yeah, yeah, he's— he's great," Shane says, and... has his breathing gotten louder? There's no way he's allowed to be working out yet but it's Shane, who'd go insane if he didn't get any physical exercise in for even a single day, and if there's one thing no one should ever be subjected to it's Shane in one of his bitchy moods, so Hayden decides to let it go. That's part of the reason, anyway. The other part is that Hayden is still brimming with simultaneously too much and not enough energy.

"—yeah, and he and Tess are visiting for a while before he goes back to Germany for a bit because his mother is sick."

Shane makes a breathless sound. "Well, that's nice he could come and stay."

"Totally. Jackie's so happy," Hayden says, "to spend time with her family. Most of them are still in Toronto, you know, and she misses them, so it's great having them all over."

Hayden's phone crackles with Shane's sudden sharp exhale. He sits up, alarmed, and is just about to ask if everything is okay when Shane says, "Cool, cool, yeah, that makes sense."

Still, Hayden frowns. Shane is definitely panting. Is his head causing him trouble? The collarbone is definitely healed by now, but concussions can be tricky. Hayden read up on them when Shane was still in the hospital and stumbled upon way too many worrying medical studies.

A slap followed by a low hum jolts him out of his thoughts.

“Anyway, how are you?” Hayden asks slowly. “What’s up?”

Shane breathes in through his nose, sharp and quick. “Uh, nothing much here,” he says, and then there’s another slap, this one softer. “The headaches are better. *Fuck.*”

“What? You good?”

Shane groans, and says, “No, sorry. Just— uh, just a text.”

“So you’re cleared to play when the season starts?”

“Totally,” Shane breathes. Hayden has trouble hearing him over the rustling of fabric and some other somewhat fainter sound he can’t quite pin down, wet and rhythmic.

“You sure you’re all right?”

“Yeah, it’s totally clear, so all’s well there,” Shane says. His voice has gone soft in a way Hayden’s never heard it before. “Ah, jeez.” Another pant, louder, almost a moan. “Sorry, hey, one second,” he adds just a beat later, right when the muffled wet sounds in the background become just a tiny bit louder, and mutes his phone.

Hayden brings his own phone down to stare at it.

Shane is back a few moments later. He’s not breathing any easier. Or quieter. He stumbles over his words, “Ah, sorry, man. I just had s— I have to run, someone’s at the door.”

Is he laughing? Hayden can’t keep up.

“Fuck,” Shane breathes out on what is definitely a laugh now, his voice wrangled under control again.

Hayden shakes his head, trying to make sense of the second half of their conversation. All it does is make him dizzy. “Is your mom coming over?”

“No, it’s just... It’s just Amazon. But I’ll call you next week and—”

“And you’ll come to the BBQ?”

“Yeah,” Shane says. “Yeah, totally. And, uh...”

Hayden interrupts him. “Cool. The kids have missed their Uncle Shane. I’ll send you photos.”

“All right, yes. Love you, man, and, uh, give my best to Jackie and the kids.”

“Love you, too,” Hayden says, but the line’s already dead.

What the fuck?

He brings it up to Jackie later, when they’re getting ready for bed and he’s been thinking about it the entire afternoon.

“So I talked to Shane today,” Hayden says. “On the phone.”

“How is he?” Jackie asks, running some weird light green stone thing along the edge of her jaw. Her hair is held back by a pink headband and she looks so cute with it that Hayden can’t help smiling dopily at her reflection.

“Good, I think. He says the headaches are better.”

Jackie meets his eyes in the mirror and smiles back at him.

“If I…” He stops to clear his throat, then starts again, “If I thought Shane had gotten a blowjob while he was talking to me, how realistic do you think that would be?”

Jackie turns to look at him, wide-eyed. “What?”

“Yeah, like… That would be super uncharacteristic for him, right?”

“Yes,” Jackie says. “Is he seeing Lily?”

Hayden shakes his head. “No. He said they couldn’t ever date, so.”

“Why?”

“I don’t know,” Hayden says. He squeezes soap into his hands and spreads it over his palms. “I asked but he just said it wouldn’t work. JJ thinks she might be older and married.”

Jackie rolls her eyes. “Come on. Shane would not have an affair with a married woman.”

“Yeah,” Hayden says, watching the left strap of Jackie’s nighty slip down her shoulder. It’s still too soon to have sex, so he just leans in to kiss her skin there, and gently pulls it back up.

Maybe that’s why his brain immediately jumped to conclusions — he’s not had sex in at least two months. Obviously Shane would not let someone suck him off while he’s on the phone with his best friend. It’s *Shane*. Good, responsible, private Shane, who’s not seeing anyone and would never invite a random person to the cottage to fuck.

“Whatever. I think maybe I’m just horny,” Hayden says. “He was probably just working out or something.”

Jackie grins up at him. “You know, we can’t have sex yet, but if you’ve been thinking about blowjobs so much...”

For some reason that makes sense to absolutely no one, Ilya Rozanov leaves Boston to sign with Ottawa at the end of the next season.

On the day the news break, it is naturally the number one topic in the Metros’ locker room.

“He must be moving for pussy,” Comeau says.

Drapeau snorts. “Dude, haven’t you heard? They’re paying him fifteen million. I’d play in fucking Europe for that kind of money.”

“I’d honestly get Europe, but fucking Ottawa? What is there to do?” Fisher asks. He’s from New York, so every city that’s not New York automatically sucks. Hayden thinks he’ll ask to get traded again next year.

“Ottawa can be fun,” Shane says, lacing up his skates.

“No offense, bro,” Comeau says, “but I think you and Rozanov might have different ideas of what’s *fun*.” Pulling his practice jersey over his head, he adds, “There’s definitely a girl.”

Fisher shakes his head. “Rozanov isn’t settling down. Are you crazy? He’ll sleep around until he’s fifty and then date a twenty-five-year-old.”

Out of the corner of his eye, Hayden sees Shane reach for his phone. Their teammates’ chatter becomes mere background noise as he watches Shane type out a message, tap the screen, and wait. Thirteen seconds later, Shane is writing another text, lips twitching up into a soft smile.

Hayden walks over.

“Lily?”

Shane locks his phone and looks up. His cheeks are flushed, which reduces the intended effect of his eye-roll. “Hayd. We’re friends.”

Hayden nods slowly. “Right. You’ve been texting for, like, ten years now, dude. Ask her out.”

“Let it go, Hayden,” Shane says, which does sting a little bit. He softens the blow by gently bumping his shoulder against Hayden’s on his way out of the locker room, though, and Hayden, as usual, follows.

A thought pops up in Hayden's brain one day. It clings, takes root, and won't fucking leave no matter how hard he tries to get rid of it.

Rozanov has been playing for the Cens for just as long as Shane hasn't made any moves to meet anyone in Boston.

It's stupid, ridiculous and makes absolutely no sense. Still, it sticks.

He's half joking when he asks Shane if Ilya Rozanov is Boston Lily. Even if Shane hadn't said yes, the angry flush on his face and the panic in his eyes would've been answer enough.

"Okay," Hayden sighs. "Want to come over for dinner tonight?"

Shane, as usual, arrives on time. The kids are asleep by the time dinner is ready, so it's just Hayden, Jackie and Shane sitting at the table. Shane won't stop biting the inside of his cheek and staring down at his plate.

"Shane," Hayden says. "Relax, will you? I don't have a problem with you being gay."

Shane looks up, eyes glistening.

Hayden's heart clenches. He puts both of his feet flat on the floor and leans over the table as much as he can while staying seated in his chair. "I love you, and you're my best friend."

"Love you, too," Shane says.

"You have shit taste in men."

Shane rolls his eyes ceiling-ward. "You don't really know him."

"Uh," Hayden says, "yeah, I do."

"You know one side of him," Shane says.

"So he's not an asshole?" Hayden asks, which makes Shane press his lips together. "Yeah, all right. I would've gone to gay bars with you, man. We could've found you a nice guy here in Montreal. I mean, we can still do that. It doesn't have to be Rozanov."

Jackie darts an angry look at him.

“I’m not dating Ilya because he’s the only guy who’s interested,” Shane says slowly. “I’m in love with him.”

The admission zips through Hayden’s body in a sharp little shock. It’s not particularly surprising, of course, that Shane isn’t just dating anyone for the fun of it, but it is hard to imagine him being in an actual romantic, committed relationship with Ilya Rozanov, who’s promiscuous and hot-headed and arrogant.

“Are you, like, exclusive?” Hayden asks.

Shane stares at him. “Yes, Hayd.”

“Okay,” Hayden says, and Shane schools his expression into something softer.

“Look, I know this is... new for you, but... it’s not for me,” he says quietly.

Jackie wraps her fingers around Shane’s wrist, squeezing gently. “When did it start?”

“Before our rookie year.”

Hayden’s eyes widen, startled. He reminds himself that he’s known that. *Lily*. He’s seen that name pop up on Shane’s phone countless times over the course of the past decade.

“And... Rose Landry?” he asks. “What was that about? Shit, I called you gay a few minutes ago. I’m sorry if I—”

“I am gay,” Shane clarifies. “Rose was... an attempt to get over Ilya, I guess. Or to prove to myself that I could like girls. She— uh, she told me I was gay, actually. I mean, I knew, but she helped me accept it. I felt better afterwards.”

Hayden gives a single slow nod and wipes his nose.

They sit in silence for a few moments, during which Hayden doesn’t know what to say and Shane clearly doesn’t either.

Hayden tries to figure out where to go from here when words are suddenly spilling out of his mouth before he has the chance to catch them. “So, um. Why Rozanov?”

Shane’s gaze flits between Hayden and Jackie. “Why Jackie?”

“It makes sense to me,” Jackie says, running her fingertips soothingly over the back of Shane’s hand. “I’m sure that with how your career started and how it’s progressed — and the pressure that comes with it — there is no one who’d understand better than him. And, well, he’s gorgeous.”

Shane opens his mouth, and closes it again, squinting his eyes. He blinks at Jackie a handful of times, then ducks his head, and huffs a laugh. “Yes, I— he is.”

“What makes sense is that hockey is apparently also part your love life,” Hayden says. “So what are you going to do? Stay closeted till retirement?”

Shane shrugs. He’s staring down at his plate again. “Don’t know what else we can do. Neither of us wants to come out yet. But my parents have met him, and now you know, too. So. I guess the next step would be to introduce him to you? Officially. As my boyfriend. If you’d like.”

“Yes!” Jackie says. “Of course, Shane. I’d be honored.”

Shane slides his hopeful gaze to Hayden, then. He’s Hayden’s best friend, and Hayden loves him so much, despite his truly horrible taste in men, so he says, “Yeah, alright. Let’s do a double date.” He can’t help his wry smile because he’s pretty sure this is going to be a disaster, but at least Shane is smiling again.

Shane excuses himself from the table half an hour later. He steps outside and pulls out his phone before he brings it up to his face.

Hayden hears him only because he’s on his way to the basement to get a bottle of wine and one of the windows is open.

“It went well, I think,” Shane is saying. He’s on FaceTime; Hayden can see Rozanov’s face on his display, too small to make out any expressions but big enough to see he’s not wearing a shirt. “I asked them to have dinner with you and me.”

“Hollander,” Rozanov complains, “why are you doing this to me?”

“Come on,” Shane says. “I’ll suck your dick as a thank you.”

“Nice try. You do that anyway.”

“Ilya, please. For me.”

Rozanov hums. “You’re so good at asking for what you want. It just doesn’t translate well over the phone, you know? We should have this conversation later, when you’re home and you can ask me for a favor personally.”

Shane’s face splits into a grin. “What, do you want to fuck me or something?”

Hayden’s mouth falls open. He shakes his head, grabs the bottle, and punches the light out on his way back into the dining room.

End Notes

please let me know what you think; thank you!!! <3

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