

cheater-cheater, pumpkin eater

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by [anyabarnes](#)

Summary

The evidence is mounting. It's getting very difficult to ignore: first that sweatshirt, then the definitely-not-a-dick-pic in the locker room, and now the phone call. It's a shame really; Lily's such a sweet girl. She makes Shane so happy.

And Shane? Hayden's almost positive Shane is cheating on Boston Lily with Ilya Rozanov.

Notes

my stupid nosy homoerotic idiot chud son, hayden pike.

please turn creator style on! i played with HTML for the first time thanks to [ireverents](#). check out [their super easy, amazing html text generator here](#). the texts scroll and are accessible if you'd like to read them without creator style.

timeline is loosey-goosey. set sometime post heated rivalry, pre-TLG. don't think too hard about it.

i'd say enjoy, freaks, but this one isn't freaky. sorry. i do use the word dick a shocking thirty (30) times, though.

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

Boston Lily is not a big deal.

Well, Boston Lily is *absolutely* a big deal. Boston Lily is the only woman Shane has ever mentioned. Boston Lily is probably the only woman Shane has ever texted, barring his own mother. Sometimes Hayden worries that Boston Lily's the only woman Shane's ever fucked—not that he likes thinking about Shane fucking, *ew*.

But Shane is a little bit like a petulant cat. Or a toddler who's just learned that they can do exactly opposite what you tell them to, a-la Ruby's Captain America costume phase. He can't provoke Shane. Hayden can't even think the words *Boston Lily*, lest Shane cosmically sense it and refuse to ever bring her up again. If he asks how Boston Lily is or, *god-forbid*, even imply that Shane may spend the night with her, Shane freezes and spirals and can't form words, stammering around. It's a delicate balance, especially when Hayden wants to know whether or not he can have respectable post-marriage phone sex with his wife.

Boston Lily's good for Shane, though. He plays better—far more aggressively—when they're in Boston, no doubt showing off for his anonymous beau (Hayden knows Boston Lily attends their games, a fact that was only revealed when he accidentally read their texts over Shane's shoulder. It's also how Hayden knows that Boston Lily fucking *hates* him, insulting him with so much hockey intelligence that he's a little impressed). Shane chills the fuck out after their Boston games, too; sometimes he'll even let himself eat an airline cookie. Boston Lily does big things to Shane.

Boston Lily is also impressively difficult to find. 2,345 Instagram accounts that have the display name *Lily* follow Shane. Shane follows 0 back. Shane follows exactly two women who aren't PWHL players or WAGS: Rose Landry and a woman named Svetlana. And while Boston Lily *could* be a PWHL player—she sure knows how to chirp, as Hayden's learned—there is not a single PWHL player who resides in Massachusetts named Lily. Hayden knows; he checked.

In a moment of pure weakness, Hayden even checked Yuna and David's Facebook profiles. David is friends with 12 people, none named Lily. Yuna is friends with 345 people, and only one woman is named Lily, though she's 54 and from the UK. Shane has no Facebook friends named Lily, nor is he tagged in any photos featuring a Lily. A Google search for “Shane Hollander + Lily” returns nothing, nada, zilch, zero.

He's getting desperate. Jackie won't entertain it anymore; every time he brings up Boston Lily, she rolls her eyes and tells him to knock it off. His *wife*! His own wife, who famously made him create an organized and dated list of all of the Metros long-term partners, isn't willing to gossip with him.

Again, Boston Lily is not a big deal. Hayden really doesn't care, except he kind of does. He can't—and *won't*—bring up Boston Lily to Shane. Like a skittish cat, he will let Shane approach him about Boston Lily. Hayden will be good and not pry and not look at any more social media accounts of Shane's relatives (he can't promise on that last part; he found some absolutely awful photos of Shane in Yuna's Facebook and has been holding on to them for blackmail).

All that matters is that Shane's happy. And Boston Lily makes him happy. In Hayden's eyes, she's good. It doesn't matter who she is; a friend of Shane's is a friend of Hayden's.

It takes Shane approximately 14 hours after their next Boston game to bring up Lily. It must be a new record; Shane will talk about her before they hook-up, but he has never once brought her up

after they fuck.

Well, it's really Hayden's fault that Shane brings her up. Shane wasn't unprovoked, so Hayden supposes it doesn't actually count for the "Shane Talking About Women" world-record speedrun. Maybe it counts for the any-percent speedrun, a glitch in the Shane-Lily matrix that Hayden's just exploited. It doesn't really matter how Hayden gets Shane to talk about her; all it matters is that Shane talks.

"It's so fucking cold in here, dude." Hayden doesn't mean to whine, but it *is* cold in the airport lounge. The iced americano certainly doesn't help, but he's also tired. And, of course, his hoodie is long gone in his checked-bag. He doesn't want to sit here for the next half-hour freezing his ass off.

"Yeah," Shane agrees. He's not even listening, fingers flying across his phone screen. Hayden tries to subtly lean over and see who he's texting. He fails, miserably and obviously, if the way Shane tilts his screen away is anything to go by.

"Can I have that hoodie you were wearing yesterday?" Shane's fingers pause. He still doesn't look up from his screen. Hayden resists the urge to roll his eyes.

"What?"

"That blue hoodie? You were wearing it when we left the rink?" Shane finally meets Hayden's eyes, only to immediately drop his gaze. Hayden eyes the small duffle next to Shane's leg.

"Oh I don't—uh—have that right now," Shane says. His eyes flit back up to Hayden's face.

"You lost it?" There's no way Shane lost it. Shane has had the same seven pairs of socks—just enough to last him until laundry day—since Hayden has known him. Shane, who is the only one of them to routinely check through their hotel rooms (and, admittedly, it is never Shane who's left anything behind, only ever Hayden and his contact solution and boxers and, once, his house keys), does not lose things.

Shane's being weird—and not the normal Shane-weird. Hayden's fine navigating the normal Shane-weird; in fact, the normal Shane-weird has become a comfort over the last few years. But Shane won't stop shifting around, eyes flickering between Hayden and his bag and the ceiling. It's not even a weird request. They regularly share clothing while traveling, because, inevitably, one will accidentally pack for Ottawa when flying to Tampa.

"No, I—" Shane clenches his jaw. "Lily has it."

"You gave your hoodie to Lily?" Hayden's prying, so sue him. This girl must really have Shane wrapped around her finger if she can get him to leave behind a hoodie; especially if she can get Shane to leave behind his *blue* hoodie, the one he wears before every game when it's between 7 and 15 degrees because *it's good luck, Hayden*.

"Yeah." There's an intentional nonchalance to Shane's voice that Hayden can tell is constructed. Shane shrugs as if it doesn't matter. It does. "She asked for it."

"This girl's got you whipped," Hayden teases. Shane flushes on the apples of his cheeks. His embarrassment is—in Hayden's very bro, masculine, not-at-all even a bit homosexual (not that there's anything wrong with that) opinion—cute.

“I don’t–no–she–” Shane sputters. He swallows so tight that Hayden can hear it across the seats. “She does not *have me whipped*.” The last words come out in a piss-poor attempt at mocking Hayden. They only make him more assured that this girl does, in fact, have Shane whipped.

“Whi–*ipped!*” Hayden sing-songs. Shane blushes harder. “You are so fucking whipped, Hollzy. God, I can’t wait for the wedding. I have so many awful photos of you. Do you remember Colorado? Because *I* remember Colorado–”

“Don’t be an asshole, Hayd,” Shane whines. He sends a half-hearted kick to Hayden’s calf.

“Man, and then you’ll have kids, and they’ll hang out all the time with mine, and it will be so fucking awesome–”

“Fuck off–”

“And Lily and Jackie can do whatever women do together, and we can drink so much beer while the kids play, and we can bring them all to games together–”

“I’m pretty sure there’s an 8 ticket limit per household–”

“And Boston Lily will become Montreal Lily, and we’ll all finally know that you actually have sex–”

“Oh *fuck you*, Pike.”

“I’m just thinking!”

“I didn’t realize you were capable of that.”

“And I didn’t realize you were capable of having sex, Hollzy.” Shane is so red that it must hurt. “Guess you learn something new everyday.”

“I have to take a call.” Shane stands abruptly. Even the tips of his ears are pink.

“Your phone is literally not even fucking ringing.”

“It’s a very important call, Hayden.” Shane kicks his duffle bag under his seat and starts walking towards the terminal’s coffee shop.

“I can see your phone screen. It’s off.”

“Super important stuff. Can’t miss this one,” Shane calls over his shoulder.

“She’s got you *whiiiiipped!*” Shane turns the corner, but not before Hayden can catch the small smile gracing his lips. He knew Boston Lily was somewhat important; it’s not everyday that Shane breaks his carefully crafted rules and rituals. But *blue hoodie* important?

There’s a part of Hayden that wonders if Shane even knows how whipped he is. Hayden won’t say the l-word–not yet, and certainly not until he can actually meet her–but he wouldn’t be shocked if they’re close to it soon. He’s happy for Shane, really.

Shane returns moments before their boarding group is called, fingers still flying over his keyboard. Whipped like cold cream, Hayden can’t help but think. Selfishly, he hopes Shane can realize how

gone he is for this girl sooner rather than later; all in due time, but Hayden wants a face to the ever-ellusive Boston Lily, preferably before she's dressed in white and walking down an aisle.

As Jackie says, patience is a virtue. Not one Hayden has, he'll admit, but he'll try his best. He thumbs back over to Instagram and scrolls just to scroll; Shane clearly isn't ending his conversation anytime soon. He'll probably be like this until they take off, when he'll inevitably lose signal. And then, the second they touch down, Shane will be back with his nose so deep in his phone that he must be able to smell the 5G. It's endearing.

He swipes through a few photos: Boston's goalie is now a dad; the world is going to end, according to a climate infographic; a season-stat graphic of Shane that's so edited it barely looks like Shane. This must be the longest boarding call he's ever sat through. Shane's still texting, so Hayden keeps scrolling.

And—*huh*. That's interesting. There's a set of pap photos, posted just four minutes ago, showing Rozanov in a little pair of shorts and a blue hoodie. He looks so fucking annoying, even through the phone, an iced coffee balanced in his hand alongside his phone and keys. He's winking at the camera, the other hand pulling down the neckline of his hoodie to reveal a smattering of hickeys. Asshole. He zooms in, squints a little, and—

Rozanov owns the same hoodie as Shane. It must be the same hoodie, drop shoulders and a soft navy color. What a fucking asshole. There's no doubt in Hayden's mind that he did this on purpose; Rozanov *would* buy the same hoodie as Shane just to fuck with him. He has no clue what that hoodie even means to Shane, how it's a part of the normal Shane-weird.

Asshole.

"What the fuck?" Hayden says. Shane finally pauses his typing and looks up.

"What?"

"Look at these pics of Rozanov." Hayden turns his phone around.

"Why are you looking at photos of Rozanov?" Despite the roll of his eyes, Shane looks at the phone anyways. He shrugs, glancing up at Hayden. "Ok?"

"He's wearing *your* hoodie," Hayden pushes the phone closer to Shane.

"What—no? He's not wearing my hoodie, what? I—"

"No. Like he's wearing your hoodie." Shane swallows tight, eyes wide. The ire that Hayden feels for Rozanov grows with the discomfort on Shane's face. He's pale.

"No, he *isn't*—"

"No, Shane," Hayden sighs. "He went out and bought your hoodie. There's no way this wasn't intentional, yaknow, just to fuck with you. Asshole."

"It's not that big of a deal, Hayd." Shane swallows again. His jaw clenches, eyes flickering between the photo and Hayden. "It's from Abercrombie. He probably just bought the same one."

"The same one, though? Dude, you're giving him too much credit." Shane is still staring at the photos, his own phone shaking in his hand. Rozanov is such a fucking asshole, purposefully

making Shane upset. Hayden hopes this doesn't ruin the blue hoodie for Shane, especially not now that it's something he shares with Lily. "He's a fucking asshole. Jesus. I hate him."

"Yeah," Shane says weakly. "He's an asshole."

Hayden opens his mouth to respond, but it's finally their turn to board. He has to turn his phone off and shove it away in order to reach his ticket. By the time he's finally through the gate, Shane's lost in the throng of people behind him, probably too upset by Rozanov to keep talking.

What a *fucking* asshole.

It's his fault, really. It's entirely his fault.

Hayden shouldn't be looking at Shane's phone. *Nosy Nellie* is what Jackie calls him. He's trying to be better about it, really, but Shane is always so private. Sometimes the only way Hayden can find things out about him is by snooping a bit (like Boston Lily, whom Hayden really only knows anything about by peeking at Shane's unread messages). It sounds worse than it is, honestly.

Hayden really shouldn't be looking at Shane's phone. He's texting *someone*—Hayden can't quite get a glance at the contact name. It's probably Lily; she's the only girl that Shane routinely texts after their games. They're quipping back and forth, short messages that Hayden's only half-catching out of the side of his eyes, and—

Oh fuck.

Oh *Jesus Christ*. Oh fuck.

Hayden snaps his eyes forward and wills the heat away that creeps up his face. Beside him, Shane slams his phone down on the bench. It's so loud that a few of their teammates turn to see what's going on. Shane swallows so tight and dry that Hayden can hear it.

Jesus *fucking* Christ. He should listen to Jackie more.

That was a dick pic. A fucking dick pic just came through on Shane's phone. A—albeit nicely framed, good lighting, and frankly fucking huge, so big that it must be photoshopped—dick pic was just sent to Shane, and Shane, given the blush on his face and the way he's shifting around, is—

Is Shane aroused? Hayden snaps his eyes forward again. He takes a deep, even breath and counts to ten. *What the fuck?* Shane just received a dick pic. Or some sort of scandalous photo, given Shane's reaction. Maybe it wasn't a dick pic? Maybe it was just a really oddly angled tit photo? Or maybe a dildo-on-vag situation? Or maybe Hayden just caught a really weird angle of Lily's body?

Hayden's lying to himself. That was absolutely a dick pic. There's no other way to explain it; he didn't catch enough to see details, but a dick is a dick. He's a married man; he's seen his fair share of sexy, scantily-clad photos from Jackie. He knows how women typically take their nudes. And it generally doesn't involve a photo of a dick—or a *dildo*?—against their body the way that photo had been framed.

Hell, Hayden's *sent* his fair share of dick pics. He knows how you angle it, how you tilt the camera to show it off best, and how you hold it to not make it look gross. He's very familiar with dicks—not

in a weird way, or anything, he's just seen his own fair share of other men naked in his career, and he has his own—and he knows how to recognize a dick pic.

Holy shit. Someone just sent Shane a dick pic.

Shane turns his phone back on, angling the screen away from Hayden while turning his brightness all the way down. His fingers fly furiously around the screen. Hayden can no longer see who—or what—he's texting. Nor, thankfully, can Hayden see the dick pic. Shane is bright red. He bounces his leg rapidly, sending a glance at Hayden out of the corner of his eye. Hayden immediately snaps his gaze forward in response.

Why would Shane *ever* be receiving a dick pic? Maybe it was a bad prank, or maybe Shane clicked a scam link at some point. That's the only logical explanation; Lily wouldn't be sending him a dick pic.

He doesn't really know where to fit this in his understanding of Shane. Maybe it truly was an accident? Except Shane had such a *reaction* to it. Shane sees dicks all the time; he's a professional hockey player who practically lives in a locker room. One gets over the shame of seeing a dick pretty quickly.

It's whatever. It's really not, but it's whatever. Shane got sent a dick pic. Yeah. That's fine. It was probably an accident. It probably means nothing. Shane probably didn't even want to see the dick pic. He's probably being so weird because getting sent a dick pic at 6pm is a relatively startling thing. That's all.

Hayden really needs to start minding his own business. Jackie can never know how correct she is.

He's being nosy again.

Again, what Jackie doesn't know won't hurt her. And, to be fair, there's only so much Hayden can do to avoid hearing a phone call occurring in the same hotel room as him. Granted, Shane excused himself to the balcony to take it, but the door is still cracked open an inch. And Hayden's airpods are long dead, overworked from their day of travel.

If he's being completely honest with himself, too, there is one single person that Shane would excuse himself to talk to. Shane answers calls frequently—to the point of annoyance, if Hayden's being honest—in public, oftentimes from his mom or dad. Sometimes he'll talk to Rose in front of Hayden (those calls are Hayden's favorite, because Rose may like to shit-talk, but Shane is a *gossip*). Shane must be talking to Lily.

Hayden's eavesdropping a little. So *what*—he's allowed to be a little nosy sometimes (or, if he's being honest, a lot nosy all the time) Hayden can't even really hear the full thing, just bits and pieces of what Shane is saying. Besides, he reasons, if Shane really didn't want Hayden to hear, he could've gone out into the hallway or the lobby. Hayden's done it plenty of times to talk (and he certainly doesn't mean very respectable post-marriage phone sex) with Jackie in odd hotel staircases and backrooms.

Jackie's so right. *Nosy Nellie*. Jackie can absolutely never know how right she is.

A barking laugh is audible from the balcony. Shane's head is thrown back, a look of light happiness that Hayden so rarely gets to see. He's so young, the soft light of the hotel room spilling across his

face. Hayden's once again struck by how much he loves Lily; she's so good for Shane. She makes him so happy.

Lily must say something hilarious, because Shane's cracking up, noise crinkled across the bridge. It's so rare to see Shane without his mask on, the guarded defence that he holds in his shoulders and his eyebrows and his mouth. When Hayden meets Lily, the first thing he's going to say is *thank you*: thank you for loving Shane, thank you for letting Shane be so comfortable, and thank you for being Shane's friend. It's sappy, but seeing his best friend so happy makes Hayden a little sentimental.

He's practicing *emotional vulnerability*, as Jackie says.

"You're a fucking asshole." The words filter through the glass door. Shane's tone is a soft juxtaposition to what he's actually saying, but it's the same fond exasperation he treats Hayden with. The carefully crafted indifference he normally speaks with is absent. "Unfortunately. Unfortunately, I do."

"We're going to fucking crush Boston, sorry!" Shane pauses, barking out another laugh. "Fuck off. I'll dedicate my first goal to you, yaknow. The second will be to my mom, though. Sorry." He pauses again.

"Yeah," Shane's tone is suddenly softer. "She'll be there. She's been talking about it nonstop. I think she's really excited to see you." Jesus. Hayden didn't realize that Lily and Yuna had met. As far as Hayden knows, that makes Shane's parents the only ones who formally know Lily. He tries not to let annoyance creep through the back of his mind. Shane will share Lily when he's ready. "Do *not* do that. Absolutely fucking not."

Shane says something else, but it's lost as the wind briefly picks up.

"No!" he says incredulously. "Do not! Everyone will think you're fucking *flirting* with her, asshole." Hayden lost something somewhere, clearly, because none of what Shane's saying makes any sense. "Absolutely not. If you dedicate *anything* to her, you're going to be on the couch tonight."

"I don't care if she'll find it funny!" Shane continues. The wind picks up again, and Shane throws his head back in another loud laugh. The next sentence comes out softer: "How's your hip? Are you sure you're good for tomorrow?"

"Mhm," Shane agrees. His brows stitch together. "Yeah. Yeah." He barks out another soft laugh, fiddling with the edge of his sweatshirt. He shoots a look over to Hayden, and Hayden pretends to busy himself with the book in his lap. "I don't like when you play injured, old man. It scares me."

Hayden's head shoots back up. Shane's face is no longer visible, tilted towards the city. So Lily is a PWHL player, or something similar, maybe another competitive sport. But—but Shane just said *old man*.

Hayden's ears must be acting up. Maybe Lily's older, and he just called her *old woman*, the first syllable lost in the wind. Or maybe he said something entirely different, and Hayden just misheard. He is, after all, just eavesdropping.

"I don't care!" Shane calls out. "They'll be fine without you for one fucking game." Shane pauses again. "No, I'm not just saying that. I don't want an advantage, you asshole. You know I like the

challenge.” Another pause, this time much longer. “I just don’t want you to actually hurt yourself.”

“Besides, you can’t fuck me if your hip gives out tomorrow.” Shane lets out an honest-to-God *giggle*. “No. I’m not getting on top just so you can play stupid. Protect your hip so you can actually fuck me.”

Huh. So Lily is a player of *something*, older than Shane, and injured. And...Shane likes to be on the bottom? He also keeps implying that Lily’s the one who fucks him, which could mean nothing. It’s probably just some colloquial difference (or, alternatively, Shane is a little freakier than Hayden realizes, which he promptly stops thinking about, because—*eugh*).

“Just don’t be stupid, please?” Shane’s voice is so soft. “Fuck *off*. Let me worry about you.” Shane pauses again, laughing as some of the tension leaves his face. “I’m not sucking you off right before, asshole.”

Hayden freezes again. Shane’s sucking Lily off? Maybe that’s just what they call oral. Hayden probably just misheard again.

Except Shane keeps going, clearly unaware that the door is cracked: “Do *not*. No, fuck you. Do not send me a picture of your dick before a game.”

Hayden’s heart drops through his stomach.

“No, asshole.” Shane pitches his voice low, and the words are lost to Hayden. “Last time *he saw*. I don’t want a repeat.” Shane pauses. “No, he didn’t. But that doesn’t mean he didn’t see—*ew*, don’t fucking say that about him. You’re so gross.”

So it was a dick pic. And Shane knows Hayden knows. Whoever Shane is talking to—because it clearly isn’t Lily—is sending Shane dick pics and—and fucking Shane? And, perhaps most surprising, is a man? Hayden takes a deep breath and contemplates covering his ears. He doesn’t want to hear this.

Shane says something else, but Hayden is now purposefully concentrating on *not* hearing him. Shane is talking to a man about having sex—a man who is a player of something, who knows Shane’s mom, and who is injured? Shane clearly cares about this man, too, given his soft voice and even softer facial expressions.

Fuck. Fuck. Fuuuuuck.

Hayden shouldn’t have eavesdropped. He really shouldn’t have eavesdropped. There’s only one conclusion Hayden can come to, one logical train that his brain follows: Shane is cheating on Lily. Shane is cheating on Lily with a man.

Hayden stares dead ahead. He probably just misheard Shane. For his own sake—for *Lily’s* sake—he prays he just misheard Shane. This is what he gets for eavesdropping. The wind has been loud over the last hour, anyways. He’s probably just hearing shit, making Shane’s voice up alongside the whistle of the wind.

Yeah. That’s all this is. Hayden’s just hearing shit; he’s tired, it’s been a long day, and Shane’s voice is just getting mixed in the wind. Still, when Shane comes back in, Hayden can’t bring himself to meet Shane’s gaze (or Shane’s lack-of-gaze, as is on-par with normal Shane-weird). Hayden just fucks around on his phone, swiping between Jackie’s chat and the weather app and the NHL app.

“Hey, uh—” Shane starts. Hayden tries not to blush. He fails, if the warmth creeping up his cheeks is anything to go by. “Sorry if I was loud. I didn’t realize the door was open.”

“No, it was fine, man.” His voice is dry. “I couldn’t hear much.”

“But you could still hear?” Subtly has never been Shane’s strong suit. He’s clearly prying to see how much Hayden knows.

“Just a little.” Hayden shrugs. Two can play the prying game. “But you were just talking to Lily, right man?” Shane dips his head.

“Yeah,” he replies. “Just—uh—just talking with her. Yeah.”

“How is she?” *Nosy Nellie*. Hayden tells mental Jackie to shut up, then promptly mentally apologizes for mentally speaking to her like that.

“She’s good.” Shane nods, once, twice. “Yeah. She’s good.”

“Good.”

“Yeah. Good.” Shane nods again. He goes to turn on his heel, into their shared bathroom, but Hayden interrupts.

“Is she going to be in town for tomorrow?”

“Yeah.” Shane’s being weird. And not normal Shane-weird. Admittedly, Hayden is also being weird. Shane scratches the back of his neck. “Yeah. She’ll—uh—probably be at the game tomorrow. Mom’s coming down, too.”

“Oh, good.” The mention of Yuna is a balm over Hayden’s anxiety. If Shane’s mom is coming down to see the game too, there’s no way that Shane is cheating on Lily. Shane wouldn’t be that dumb. Hayden misheard Shane. That’s all this is. “Hey, Shane?”

“What?”

“I’m really glad you have Lily, man. She’s good for you.” Shane ducks his head again, a small smile on his lips.

“Thanks, Hayd,” Shane agrees. “She is. She really is.” Shane turns on his heel and excuses himself to the bathroom. The shower turns on.

Hayden’s being ridiculous. He shouldn’t eavesdrop for this exact reason; he’s working himself up about shit that isn’t even true. It’s Shane for crying out loud. There is not a mean bone in Shane’s body, much less one that’s capable of cheating on his long-term partner. Jackie was, as she always is, right. Hayden needs to be less nosy.

And, as he makes a completely unrelated mental note, he should probably talk to his doctor about concussion-related hearing issues.

“Hey man—uh,” Shane starts, ever so eloquently. “What, like, flowers do you get for Valentine’s Day?”

Hayden carefully controls his eyebrows, restraining them from shooting up his forehead. Flowers. For Valentine's Day. Shane wants to know what flowers you get for Valentine's Day. Hayden knew Boston Lily was close with Shane, if their frequent texting and Shane's omnipresent blush and meeting Yuna and that blue hoodie was anything to go by, but he didn't realize that she was *Valentine's Day Flowers* serious.

"For yourself?" Hayden's being obtuse. He's also prying, but hopefully Shane won't realize that.

"No, like, for Valentine's Day." A familiar pink creeps its way on to Shane's cheeks.

"For Lily."

"Yes, you asshole." Shane won't meet his eyes. "For Lily." Hayden doesn't let himself feel giddy. Actually, fuck that. Hayden lets himself feel incredibly giddy, biting back a *giggle* for God's sake. Shane is Valentine's Day flowers serious with Lily. And he's asking Hayden for advice.

The question also soothes some of the worry in the back of his head. He was being silly, earlier. Shane really likes Lily, enough to worry over what bouquet would best suit her. Hayden surely just caught a look at one of her poorly framed nudes. He just misheard their conversation.

"Whipped. You are whipped, man."

"Fuck you, I'm just going to ask Jackie--"

"*No!*" Hayden moans, drawing the vowel out. "I'm sorry! Truce! I promise."

"You're on thin fucking ice, Pike."

"Truce. I swear," Hayden promises. Truthfully, he's a bit warm and fuzzy through his chest that Shane trusts him with this. He cares about Lily, enough to ask his married best-friend for advice. Hayden's not stupid; Shane may not be using the l-word yet, but Hayden's pretty sure that's what's going on here. "What flowers does she like?"

"Um." Shane stares at the ground between them blankly. "Uh. I don't know."

"You've never bought her flowers before?"

"No?" Shane shrugs.

"Shane. Buddy, you gotta buy her flowers more often than just Valentine's Day." Shane blushes. Hayden throws a hand on Shane's shoulder, but it's quickly shrugged off. "This is, like, rule number one of dating. Buy her flowers all the time, for every occasion. Buy her flowers when there's *not* an occasion. Just buy her flowers."

"Listen, Hayd, it's complicated." Hayden's sure it's complicated. There must be nothing more complicated than being Shane Hollander's secret beau. "Look--just--what flowers do I get her?"

"Get her something nice and unique. I would say roses, but Jackie thinks roses are cliché." Hayden fishes his phone out of his back pocket, navigating to the flower delivery website he likes. There's a couple of curated bouquets for Valentine's Day, but Jackie's always told him to get something more personal. And thank god for Jackie, because he'd be entirely out of his depth here if it weren't for her.

“Look, here.” He turns his phone to Shane. Hayden knows fuck all about flowers, but it’s a beautiful arrangement: big, open lilies are strewn between roses and chrysanthemums and greenery. The pinks and purples pop against a number of smaller white flowers. He hopes it’s something she’d like. “Lilies for Lily. It’s perfect.”

“Wow.” Shane takes Hayden’s phone and zooms in, panning across the arrangement. “Yeah.”

“And they deliver to Boston. You can add a note and everything,” Hayden explains. He shares the link with Shane.

“You’re such a fucking lifesaver, dude.” He can see Shane loading the bouquet into his card and filling out the delivery information. He’s half-tempted to lean over and see if he can catch where Lily lives, but that would be such an obvious invasion of her privacy—of *Shane’s* privacy—so he doesn’t. “Thanks. She’ll like this, I think.”

“No problem. Whenever you need it, man.” This time, Shane doesn’t shrug off the hand that Hayden throws onto his shoulder. “You’re good to her, yaknow?”

“Yeah.” The word comes out of Shane’s mouth dry. He blushes a soft pink. “Thanks. I know—uh—I don’t always talk about her. It’s complicated, but I really—she means a lot to me.”

“I think Boston Lily is very lucky to have you, Hollzy.”

Hayden regrets the words five days later.

Nausea rolls through his body in heavy waves as he stares at his phone. A beautiful bouquet of pink lilies, roses, and chrysanthemums fills his screen, shared just three hours ago. The caption on the post reads: *I am so grateful to have you, Моё солнышко*. It’s an overly heartfelt post, one that would make him sick if he wasn’t happily married.

The problem is that the post was shared by none other than *@ilyarozanov*. Hayden’s going to be sick. Hayden is going to throw up. Hayden is going to puke up his lovely dinner of wine and steak and potatoes. He has to set his phone to the side and tuck his head between his legs, taking deep and even breaths.

Everything else he could write off. The dick pic could’ve very well been something else, a poorly angled photo of one of those hairless cats or whatever. The phone call was entirely eavesdropped, so Hayden really could’ve just misheard Shane. But this? *Fuck*.

Maybe it is a coincidence, he tries to reason. Maybe whoever he’s with got him a lovely bouquet, coincidentally from the same small business that Hayden loves, coincidentally the same flowers he recommended Shane get for Lily. Or maybe Rozanov bought them for his partner and is just showing them off!

He knows that’s not the truth. Shane is cheating on Lily. Shane is cheating on Lily with Ilya *fucking* Rozanov. And Hayden assisted, thoughtfully helping him pick out flowers that he was sure Lily would love, a beautiful bouquet that is currently sitting in Rozanov’s kitchen.

Hayden’s going to be sick.

And that blue hoodie—that must’ve been another lie. Shane never gave it to Lily; he gave it to Rozanov and then lied. Of course Shane was so twitchy when Hayden found the pap photos; Shane

wasn't upset about Rozanov, he was worried about Hayden *finding out* about Rozanov. Hayden has to wonder what else has been a lie. Has Hayden backed Shane up, gotten him out of post-game parties and bars, all for Shane to ditch Lily and fuck Ilya? How many times has Hayden wilfully allowed Shane to lie?

Hayden's going to be sick. He's going to puke his guts up.

He has to tell someone. He has to tell Jackie; she'll know what to do. He has to tell Lily—someone does, someone has to tell her that Shane isn't loyal. Hayden is suddenly struck by a deep sense of sadness for her; she deserves better than this, than Shane's infidelity. He can't imagine how hard this will be for her, to find out her partner of *years*—so many years that Hayden can barely do the math—is fucking someone else.

Someone else is an understatement, because Shane is fucking *Rozanov*. Shane is fucking Rozanov frequently enough and tenderly enough to buy him Valentine's Day flowers. And Rozanov cares enough about Shane to post about it with some sappy caption. Shane is likely doing far more than just fucking Rozanov; he's probably taking Rozanov out for dinner, he's probably watching rom-coms with Rozanov, and he's probably staying the night just to make breakfast with Rozanov. The sorrow for Lily grows. Poor girl.

Hayden has to tell someone. He has to tell Jackie. Jackie will know what to do.

It takes Hayden a week to work up the courage to tell Jackie. This will destroy her perception of Shane. He has a whole speech prepared, all of his evidence mentally organized to lead her to the conclusion herself.

Embarrassingly, he blurts out the most awkward sentence right after she gets into bed.

"Shane is cheating on Lily!"

"Huh?" Jackie shoots him a look and returns back to her Kindle.

"Shane is cheating on Lily." Hayden looks over at her. He has her full attention now. She pushes her glasses on top of her head. "I think. I think Shane is cheating on Lily."

"Baby, that's really serious."

"I know." He swallows tight. She puts a hand on his thigh. "I know."

"What makes you think that?" Her voice is soft. She's always so understanding and kind. Hayden doesn't know what he's done to deserve her, but he can't say that, so he just laces his fingers through hers.

"I don't know. I just—" He takes a breath. "Jay, I think he's cheating on her with Rozanov."

"Like Boston Rozanov?" Her voice is clipped.

"Yeah." The word comes out rough around the edges. "It started with these flowers, right? He came to me asking what to buy her, so I sent him the link to this really specific bouquet. Then, come Valentine's Day, Rozanov is posting the same exact bouquet."

"That could be a coincidence."

“That’s not all.” She squeezes his hand. “He has this hoodie, right? The one that he always wears before games?”

“Yeah?”

“Well he told me that he gave it to Lily. The next day Rozanov’s being photographed in the same fucking hoodie.”

“Right.” She says the word carefully.

“And there was this time in the locker room—and listen, ok, I wasn’t trying to look at his phone, but he opened an honest-to-God dick pic in front of me!”

“Uh-huh.” Jackie’s eyebrows are knitted together. There’s a cadence to her voice that Hayden can’t quite place. Her eyes keep flitting across Hayden’s face.

“And then, like three weeks ago, he goes out to take a phone call on our hotel balcony, and he starts talking about a game they’re playing soon, and this mystery person has an injury—a hip one, like Rozanov had! Except he keeps talking about letting her fuck him?” Hayden throws his free hand up. It falls back to the bed with a heavy thud. “And he’s doing all this *while* he’s regularly texting Lily. And maybe meeting up with her—but I guess he could also be meeting up with Rozanov?”

“Right,” she repeats. She draws the vowel out long. Hayden lets out a heavy sigh. It feels good to have this off his chest. It feels good to let Jackie carry some of this. She’ll know what to do. She always knows what to do. “Baby, I—”

Jackie takes a deep breath and pauses. She stares down at their clasped hands. Hayden squeezes once, twice, their silent version of *I love you*. She squeezes back. It makes Hayden sick to his stomach to know that there’s another woman out there, believing she holds something tender and honest with Shane, having these similar intimate moments, only for Shane to turn around and betray her.

“I have to tell her.” Hayden takes the pause to interject. “She deserves to know. Do you have her number? Do you think any of the WAGs would have her number?”

“No,” Jackie says, firmly. “I don’t have her number. No one does. And I don’t think that going about it—I don’t think that you should try to tell her.”

“*What?*” Hayden straightens. He turns his body towards her. She has a look on her face that he can’t quite parse. “Jackie, *what?* What if this was one of your friends, huh? Jackie, what if this was one of the other WAGs?”

“Baby,” she says carefully. There’s a deep crease between her brows. “Baby, I don’t—I think maybe there’s something more going on here.”

“What? You think that they’re all in on it together?” Hayden scoffs. “Shane can’t even talk about sex. I doubt he’s fucking both Lily and Rozanov.”

“No, Hayd. I don’t—I don’t think you should pry into this.”

“What? No.” Hayden shakes his head. “No, Jackie. She deserves to know.”

“Hayden, I think you need to drop it.”

“*No!*” Hayden needs to lower the volume of his voice. He’s going to wake the kids. But he doesn’t understand what Jackie’s on about; why would he *ever* drop this? Shane can’t treat the women in his life like this. Hayden can’t let Shane get away with this. “Literally what else could be going on? There’s no other fucking explanation. Shane is cheating on Lily with Rozanov.”

“Hayden, do not pry—”

“No, Jackie! I’m going to pry! She deserves to know!”

“Hayden.” It’s the same tone she takes with their children. “Hayden. Do not pry. Do not try to talk to her. Do not try to talk to him.”

“You have yet to give me a single reason not to!”

“Hayden.” She pinches her nose between her fingers. Hayden takes a deep breath; he will not yell at Jackie despite the anger and confusion rolling in his gut. Why is she siding with Shane? Why does she not care about Lily? He clenches his jaw, working his teeth back and forth. “I need you to just listen to me. Please.”

“Why?” It comes out soft and broken. “I don’t understand. He’s my best friend. I can’t let him do this.”

“I just think maybe it’s best if you don’t get yourself involved in this.” Once again, her words are careful. She gives him another look. Her eyes are soft around the corners. The edge of her mouth is downturn.

“Okay,” he agrees. He doesn’t understand, but he trusts her. “Okay.”

“Promise?” She squeezes his hand.

“Promise.” He squeezes back.

He’s not getting himself involved. He’s not breaking any promise to Jackie. It’s just—

It’s just a precaution. He should probably have Lily’s number. Just in case. He’s not going to text her, he’s not going to imply that Shane is cheating on her, and he absolutely is not going to tell her that it’s with Ilya Rozanov.

Which—*eugh*. He doesn’t care that Shane’s gay. Or bisexual. Well—he does care, in that he wants to celebrate his best friend. Hayden’s an open-minded guy; he’d use pride tape to support Shane, maybe even convince the Voyageurs to walk in the Montreal pride parade. He has gay friends! Hell, he’d even watch Brokeback Mountain with Shane if that would make him feel comfortable (Hayden’s not entirely sure what Brokeback Mountain is, but he knows it’s gay, and maybe there are cowboys—Shane would probably like that there are cowboys). Or maybe Drag Race, but Hayden doesn’t see Shane as a Drag Race fan. He does care, in that he doesn’t care, because being gay isn’t a big deal, but he also wants Shane to feel supported.

It’s just—*Rozanov*. Out of all the lovely men in all the towns in all the world, Shane chose Rozanov. Which—sure, okay—Rozanov is very attractive physically. But there’s no amount of rippling muscles or beautiful smiles that could mask his personality. He’s heard the rumors; Rozanov is allegedly a good fuck, sure, but again. It’s Rozanov.

That's not even the problem at hand. Hayden really shouldn't dwell on it, not when Lily's being cheated on. His own personal feelings be damned, he needs to stand up for this woman first and foremost. She's too fucking good for Shane. It really is a pity.

And, again, he doesn't want to get himself involved. Shane just so happens to leave his phone unlocked on the bench when they call him out for media. None of the guys are even looking at him. It's the perfect opportunity.

Hayden picks up Shane's phone casually. It's already open on the messaging app, three chats pinned: his mom, his dad, and Lily. There's no recent messages that could be from Rozanov, though Shane probably knows better than to keep those on his phone. He navigates through to Lily's messages and definitely *doesn't* let himself read them.

contact name: Lily

received:

I miss you baby

received:

It has been so long

sent:

We saw each other like two nights ago

sent:

You're fine. Stop being dramatic

received:

You want me to die

received:

You are depriving me of your big dick and beautiful body and pretty freckles and you want me to die

received:

Is cruel and not human punishment

sent:

Inhumane?

sent:

Don't sext me before a game.

received:

You are so boooooorrrriinnnggg Hollander

sent:

You are such a drama queen

sent:

I love you have to go to media

received:

I love you more

received:

See you soon ;-)

note:

Lily has notifications silenced.

Ew. *Ew*. Okay, Hayden really shouldn't have read. And, apparently, they are on l-word levels with each other. That makes everything so much worse, this poor girl, being told she's loved while Shane is off cheating with Rozanov. He's so *short* with her too, a little too mean for Hayden's liking, though he doesn't know their relationship. Maybe this is banter for them. Or—and this is what's more likely, though he hates to think of it like this—maybe he just doesn't know Shane as well as he thought he did.

Hayden clicks through to her contact and presses the *Export* button. He shares it with himself, then promptly deletes the text message. His own phone buzzes in his pocket. He drops Shane's phone back on the bench. It's like nothing's ever happened. Shane will never have to know.

Just in case. It's just in case.

God, it feels good to beat Boston. It feels good to win any game, sure, but there's something about beating Boston on Montreal's home ice that shoots an unmatched euphoria through Hayden's brain.

"Hey, man." Shane looks up from his phone, angling it away from Hayden. "I think a couple of us are going to go out tonight. Want to come?"

"Uh, no. Not tonight, sorry."

"Come *on*, Shane. Please?" Hayden's not above begging Shane to hang out with them. It's not like Shane has anything better to do. Is bedtime yoga and sleepytime tea really what beats out Hayden?

“Please?”

“Not tonight, Hayd.”

“Sh-*aaane*,” Hayden whines. Shane rolls his eyes, a soft smile on his lips. “It’s not like you have anything better to do.”

“Um—” Shane says, ever so eloquent. A blush creeps up his neck. “I actually—Lily’s in town. I—uh—told her I’d hang out tonight.” Oh. Hayden was wrong, then. Shane actually does have something better to do.

“Dude. She’s here?”

“Uh—yeah.”

“Like, here-*here*? Or just here?”

“What?”

“Shane,” Hayden repeats. “Is she at the game? Like now? Or just in Montreal?”

“No, she was—uh—yeah. She was at the game,” Shane stammers. The blush grows.

“Shane.” Shane rubs the back of his neck. “Shane. Boston Lily is here. Right now.”

“Yes! It’s not that big of a deal.” It’s such a big deal. Shane is bringing up Lily, of his own regard, and admitting that she’s in the arena. It calms the anxiety that’s been rolling in Hayden’s chest. Maybe Jackie was right; he’s being ridiculous. Boston Lily is in town, seeing a game, and Shane’s going to take her out for a nice date afterwards.

Selfishly, Hayden hopes they get papped together. Then, a bit embarrassed that he’s even hoping that of his best friend, he mentally apologizes to Shane. He hopes they *don’t* get papped together. Or maybe they do, and Lily’s identity is still hidden. Hayden hopes they get papped together, and it doesn’t reveal Lily’s identity, but it reveals that Shane is with her, and also maybe it gives Hayden enough information to finally find her Instagram.

Even more selfishly, Hayden hopes they get papped together, because that means that Shane isn’t lying to him. If they get papped together, it’s definitive proof that Lily is real, and that Shane cares for her, and, most importantly, that Shane isn’t lying through his teeth to go fuck Rozanov.

“Boston Lily is here, and you aren’t going to introduce us?”

“No,” Shane says firmly.

“Please. I’d give anything to meet her. Please.”

“No. She’s probably not even here anymore.”

“You’re lying. You are such a terrible liar.” Shane’s eyes flit around the locker room, finding anywhere to look except Hayden’s face.

“Hayden,” Shane sighs. “You know it’s complicated. Look—I’ll formally introduce you guys at some point. Soon. I promise. I just—”

“I know.” Hayden throws his hands up in mock defeat. “It’s complicated.”

“Yeah.” Shane gives a solemn nod. “It’s complicated. I promise, though. We’re just waiting for the... the right time, yaknow?”

“Yeah.” Hayden does not know. He announced to the team that he was going to marry Jackie three months after meeting her, though it took him another eleven months to actually propose. Amber was an October baby, just in time for the start of the season and Hayden’s subsequent absence. He knows absolutely nothing about waiting for the right time. “Listen, I’m just fucking with you. Whenever you’re ready, man.”

“Thanks, Hayd.”

“I’m happy for you, yaknow? I’m glad you’ve found someone that makes you so happy. I really can’t wait to meet her.”

“Yeah,” Shane agrees. There’s a weird quality to his voice, but Hayden chooses to ignore it. Shane’s talking about meeting Boston Lily after their game. Jackie was right; Hayden’s being ridiculous, making up lies in his own head about Shane fucking his greatest, longest rival. Boston Lily is here; she’s going to see a game, then she’s getting wine and food by Shane. All is and was and will be well.

Hayden’s really, *really* just being ridiculous.

Why the *fuck* did he let J.J. drag him to this bar?

He’s gross and sweaty and disgusting. He’s also tired, so very tired, and all he really wants to do is climb into bed next to Jackie. *God*, a shower and a pair of sweats and snoring really fucking loud next to his wife would feel so good right now.

Instead, he’s sitting in a tight booth. Hayden’s certain this place is a gay bar—not that there’s anything wrong with that—but J.J. insists it’s discrete. *They’ll leave us alone, Hayd, no pictures.* The music is too loud, and the beer he’s sipping on is warm. J.J. keeps trying to buy him shots, but Jade has a ballet recital tomorrow afternoon, and he’s not willing to be hung-over for that.

And, listen, Hayden is overjoyed for Shane. He’s so beyond happy that Lily has come to see Shane. Shane’s probably out on a lovely date (Hayden should’ve reminded him to get flowers, fuck), sipping expensive wine. But Hayden’s also *bored*. J.J. keeps rolling his eyes every time Hayden checks his watch.

It’s fine. The conversation is nice, and they *could* be at a nightclub. And, Hayden doesn’t exactly know what it looks like when gay men flirt, but he’s pretty sure that people keep making eyes at him. It’s a nice confidence boost—not that he’s interested in any of them—but it’s good to know that he’s still attractive, even after he’s been softened by years of marriage and fatherhood.

“Where’s Shane?” J.J. whines.

“Boston Lily,” Hayden says over the mouth of his bottle.

“He’s in Boston?”

“No,” Hayden calls. The music really is too loud. “He’s with Lily.”

“Ah.” J.J. nods solemnly. “Boston Lily. Yes.”

“Do you know anything about her?”

“Fuck no,” J.J. laughs. “I think Shane would rather be traded to Buffalo than talk about her.” Hayden snorts.

“She’s good for him, man.”

“You think she’s the one?”

“Yeah,” Hayden confirms, nodding sharply. J.J.’s eyebrows shoot up his forehead. “Yeah, man. I don’t know if he knows, but he’s in love. Like *in love*.”

“*Merde*.” J.J. takes a long drag of his bottle. “Hey, if she’s the reason why he’s been playing so well…” Hayden nods in agreement.

“I gotta piss,” Hayden says, threading his way out of the booth. “Be right back.”

There are three bathrooms, all of which are just marked uni-sex. Hayden’s not sure if he can just enter them or not. Gay-bar-bathroom etiquette is out of his wheelhouse. But the little lock is only green on one of the doors, and Hayden’s not going to wait around to see what someone else will do. He pushes the door open with one hand, the other unbuttoning his pants—

“*What the fuck?*” Hayden cries. Shane startles back, ripping his hands out of Rozanov’s hair. A string of spit trails between their bitten lips. That anxiety, which had completely dissipated at the mention of Shane’s date, rolls to a heavy boil. Poor, poor Lily. “What the *fuck*, Shane?”

“Hayden, wait, no this isn’t—” Shane stammers, eyes wide.

“What, what—you’re going to tell me this isn’t what it looks like?” Hayden throws his hands up in the air.

“No—”

“Close the fucking door, Pike,” Rozanov spits.

“No, fuck you.” Rozanov pushes past Hayden and shuts it anyways, lock audibly clicking. “I fucking knew it, Shane. What the fuck is your problem?”

“What?” Shane cries.

“I fucking *knew it*. I knew about you and him.” Hayden runs his hands through his hair, pulling more than necessary. “I fucking knew it. What the fuck is your problem? Jesus.”

“Watch your fucking tone, Pike.” Rozanov angles his body between Shane and Hayden.

“Don’t talk to me, Rozanov.”

“Hayden—no, listen,” Shane begs.

“What the fuck is your problem, Hollander? What the fuck?”

“Hayden, this isn’t what it looks like.”

“Shane, I’m so disappointed in you.” Shane clenches his jaw. The dim lighting of the bathroom makes his eyes look glassy, wet with unshed tears. *Good*, Hayden thinks. He should feel ashamed of himself. Poor, poor Lily. “I didn’t want it to be true. What the fuck?”

“Hayden, listen, can we please talk somewhere else?” Shane pleads. Rozanov shoots him a look that Hayden can’t quite decipher. “Please. Please, I love him. Let me explain.”

“You *love* him?” Jesus Christ. Lily is going to be destroyed. A deep sorrow fills his gut. This poor girl, who’s loved Shane for so many years, is going to be destroyed. “Jesus Christ, Shane.”

“Can you just *listen*?”

“What—listen to you try to *excuse* this?”

“Pike,” Rozanov spits.

“Don’t fucking speak to me.” Rozanov glares at him but obliges. Shane rests a hand on Rozanov’s shoulder. Hayden’s going to be sick. He’s going to puke. His next words come out soft, broken around the edges: “I thought better of you.”

“I’m sorry. I didn’t know how to tell you. I didn’t want you to find out like this,” Shane whispers. Surely Shane didn’t want him to figure out like this; Shane probably never wanted him to figure out, point-blank. Hayden wonders how long Shane has been lying to him—to *Lily*. Shane doesn’t meet Hayden’s eyes. A tear rolls down his cheek as he sniffs hard. “I’m sorry. Please don’t be upset at me.”

“I’m really upset with you, Shane.” Shane throws his head back at Hayden’s words, staring up at the ceiling.

“Would you just let him speak?” Rozanov says. There’s a deep furrow between his brow. He looks, Hayden realizes suddenly, terrified. *Fuck*. Hayden wonders if he was in on it, if he knew about Lily too.

“Please let me explain. Not here, Hayden,” Shane begs. Hayden works his jaw. What is there to explain? Shane’s cheating on Lily with Rozanov, here, in this gay bar in Montreal, tongue down Rozanov’s throat while Lily is clueless. *God*, Hayden prays she’s not actually in town; did Shane blow her off for this? “I’m staying at the cottage. Please come home with us and let me explain.” Jesus. They aren’t even hooking up in Shane’s apartment.

“*Us*?” Hayden tries to keep his tone level. It fails. “Shane, I’m so disappointed in you.”

“I know.” Rozanov reaches a hand up to worry at the inside of Shane’s ear. It’s sickeningly intimate. Hayden’s going to throw up. “I’m sorry. Please just let us explain.”

For the first time, Hayden really looks at them. Shane is so small and tired in the dim lighting of the bathroom. There’s a terror on Rozanov’s face that Hayden’s never seen before, typical constructed cockiness long gone. They stand awkwardly apart, as if the distance will protect them.

“I’ll—fuck. I’ll text you. I need to go, Shane.” Hayden shakes his head. Jackie would know what to do. She would have the right words. “I’m going to say something I regret. I’m sorry. I need to go.”

“Hayden, wait, please—” The slam of the bathroom door behind him cuts Shane’s words short. Hayden’s going to be sick. *Fuck*. Thinking that Shane’s cheating is one thing. The hard proof, seared into the back of his eyelids, is another. Poor, poor Lily.

He throws a flimsy, half-hearted excuse at J.J., shoving his way through the crowd. The drive home is white-knuckled. Hayden has to remind himself to breathe, deep and even breaths. *Fuck, Shane*. He needs to tell Lily. Lily deserves to know.

For once, Hayden is thankful he didn’t listen to Jackie. *Nosy Nellie* be damned, he’s the one with Lily’s contact.

contact name: Lily

sent:

Hey, Lily?

received:

Who is this

received:

???

sent:

My name is Hayden Pike. I play with Shane on the Voyageurs.

received:

Why are you texting me Pike

received:

How did you get this number

received:

????

sent:

It’s a long story.

sent:

Lily, I have some unfortunate news I have to share with you.

received:

What you are renewing your contract for another year

received:

Having another kid?

received:

You have too many kids give your beautiful wife a break

sent:

What? You know Jackie?

received:

Yes Jackie your beautiful wife

received:

Out of your league

received:

Very out of your league

sent:

What?

sent:

Ok, wait. Nevermind.

sent:

Lily, I think Shane is cheating on you.

received:

What

sent:

I'm really sorry. I didn't know for certain at first, but I think it's been going on for at least a few months, if not longer. I'm really sorry, Lily. You are such an amazing woman, and you've really made Shane happy. I don't know why he would do this to you.

received:

???

received:

Pike what are you talking about

sent:

Shane is cheating on you with Rozanov.

sent:

Ilya Rozanov? From the Boston Bears?

sent:

I know he was supposed to be with you tonight. At some point. But I just walked in on him making out with Rozanov. I'm so sorry.

received:

Pike what

received:

Are you fucking kidding me

sent:

I'm sorry. I really didn't want it to be true.

received:

Oh my god Pike

sent:

I know.

sent:

I'm sorry.

sent:

Jackie and I are here for you if you need support.

sent:

I'm sorry. I could've never expected this from Shane. I thought I knew him.

received:

Pike you know nothing

received:

Literally nothing

received:

What an idiot

sent:

I know. I don't know much about your relationship. I'm sorry. I know that you make him happy, though. I'm sorry he couldn't treat you better.

sent:

He is an idiot. I don't understand how he could throw away such an amazing woman for Rozanov.

received:

Wow

received:

Shane is going to be so mad

sent:

He has no right to be.

sent:

We're here for you. If you need somewhere to stay just let Jackie and I know.

sent:

I'm sorry, Lily.

status: Delivered.

Lily stops texting him after that. Poor girl; she seemed so upset. Hayden switches over to Shane's messages. He's missed a number of texts in the last hour.

contact name: Shane Hollander

received:

Hayden, we need to talk. Please call me.

received:

This isn't what it looks like. Please call me or come over.

received:

Hayden? I can't explain over text. Please call me.

received:

Please don't text Lily.

received:

Hayden, I'm not CHEATING???

received:

Please stop texting Lily I'm not cheating on Lily.

received:

Hayden, please stop texting Lily. Please respond. I promise I can explain it all. Please answer my phone calls.

sent:

I'll come over in the morning.

sent:

I'm really upset, Shane. I'm hurt, too. For Lily and for myself.

sent:

I expected better of you.

received:

Hayden, I promise I'll explain. It isn't what it looks like. Please believe me.

sent:

You want me to believe you? When you just had your tongue down Rozanov's throat?

sent:

I'll be over in the morning. I don't want to say anything I'll regret.

sent:

Goodnight, Shane.

sent:

Hayden, I promise.

sent:

Hayden has to take several deep and calming breaths before he steps out of the car. Shane's cottage is beautiful—it always is—and it's not typically somewhere he stays outside of the summer. Guess he needed somewhere to fuck Rozanov that wasn't the same bed he fucks Lily in.

Hayden knocks with far too much force. He can't help himself; there's an anger thrumming through his body like a current. He feels like a live wire. He takes another breath, in through the nose, out through the mouth. Deja-vu rolls over him; he feels like he's preparing to scold Jade right after she pushed Ruby down the stairs. It was the first major injury he had to deal with as a father. He's startled back into himself when the door cracks open.

It's Rozanov. Rozanov, who is currently shirtless and wearing a pair of bunny slippers and in Voyageurs sweatpants, is holding the door open for Hayden. He's smirking, as though this is funny. Hayden is, for the nth time, struck with a harrowing sense of sadness for Lily. Poor, poor girl.

"Hayden Pike," Rozanov says. His accent is softer than Hayden remembers it. He steps to the side and motions with his arm. "Come in. Make yourself at home."

"Fuck you," Hayden allows himself to spit. Rozanov just smiles harder. "Where's Shane?"

"In the kitchen." Rozanov steps in front of Hayden, letting the door shut behind them. He leads Hayden through the house, ducking around corners with a practiced ease. *Jesus*, how long has this been going on for Rozanov to know the floorplan of Shane's summer home?

Shane's in the kitchen, hunched over a cup of tea. The meat of his palms dig into his eyes. His shirt is still rumpled from sleep. He doesn't look up when they enter. He doesn't flinch when Rozanov rounds the counter and rests a hand on Shane's shoulder, squeezing once, twice.

"Why is he here?" The words come out with more venom than Hayden intends. He forces himself to take a deep breath and unclench his jaw.

"I am here because Shane and I are together, Pike." Rozanov is the one who answers. "I figured that was obvious after yesterday."

"Together?"

"Yes," Rozanov continues, far too calm. Hayden wants to hurt him. Hayden will *not* hurt him, because that would upset Jackie. Instead, Hayden clenches and unclenches his fists by his side. "Together. Like boyfriends."

"Boyfriends?"

"Yes!" Rozanov laughs. Shane groans. "Like boyfriends! What is so hard to understand? Is the CTE fucking up your head?"

"Stop it," Shane hisses to Rozanov. Hayden resists the urge to roll his eyes; of course Shane's trying to protect Rozanov. "You weren't supposed to know, Hayden." Oh, that's fucking rich. Hayden's sure he wasn't supposed to know. Most cheaters don't want their best friends to know.

“Know what?” Hayden spits. “Know that you were cheating on Lily with fucking *Rozanov*?” Rozanov has the gall to laugh. Hayden’s going to hurt him. He can apologize to Jackie later. “What, did you know about her, you fucker?”

“About Lily?” Rozanov quirks an eyebrow up, purposefully egging Hayden on. Hayden bites the inside of his lip to keep from responding. “Yes.” Rozanov knew. Shane was cheating on poor Lily this whole time, and Rozanov knew about her. This poor, poor girl; Hayden makes a mental note to deliver her a bouquet of flowers when he gets back home. And maybe a bottle of really nice wine. Or three.

“*Stop it*,” Shane spits. Rozanov immediately backs down, shoulders dropping. The smirk slides off his face and is replaced by a small worry between his eyebrows. He squeezes Shane’s shoulder again and mutters something under his breath. Shane finally releases his eyes, looking up at Hayden. He looks exhausted. “Hayden, please just let me explain. I’m not cheating on anyone.”

“Well start fucking explaining!” Hayden cries. “Because—to me—it looks like you’re cheating on Lily with Rozanov. Lily! The only girl you’ve ever fucking cared about, man! You’re in love with her, and it’s so fucking obvious to all of us. I thought you were going to marry her, Shane! She is your fucking soulmate, and she makes you so visibly happy, and you’re throwing it away for—for fucking *Rozanov*?”

There’s a stillness in the air. Shane’s shoulders rise and fall in a shaking breath. Rozanov squeezes in response, eyes flickering between Shane and Hayden. His smirk is long gone, replaced by a calculating look that Hayden’s seen before. His cheeks are tinged pink. *Good*, Hayden thinks. Rozanov should be embarrassed by this.

“Lily,” Shane says. His voice is firm and loud.

“Yes! Lily!” Hayden repeats. He throws his arms up in the air. “Lily! This is the problem!”

“Lily.” Hayden rolls his eyes. “Hayden. Lily. Ilya. Lily. Ilya.”

“Oh my *God*! You’re on a first name basis with him?” Shane groans, short strands of hair poking out between his fingers. “What the fuck is your problem, Shane?”

“Hayden!” Shane cries. “For fucks sake? Do I have to spell it out for you?”

“Spell what out? That you’re cheating on your girlfriend with Rozanov?”

“Hayden!” Rozanov bites his lip, but a laugh still falls out. Shane and Hayden simultaneously shoot him a look, and he stops. “Hayden. Ilya *is* Lily.”

“*What?*”

“Ilya. Lily,” Shane speaks slowly, drawing the vowels out. “Ilya *is* Boston Lily. Lily doesn’t exist. She’s not fucking real. She’s never been real.” Hayden opens his mouth, then closes it. He opens it again. And again. No words come out. Ilya rubs along Shane’s shoulder blade.

“What?” Hayden’s voice is suddenly much smaller.

“Ilya *is* Lily.” Shane sighs. He finally unthreads his fingers from his hair. “I just—you were never supposed to know. He’s in my phone as Lily because it’s too risky to have him in there as Ilya.

Yaknow, in case someone felt it appropriate to snoop through my texts.” Hayden knows the comment is targeted. *Whoops*.

“We were going to tell you soon.” Shane pulls his shoulders tight to his neck. “We were waiting until the season was over. It’s not—it wasn’t—you weren’t supposed to figure it out like this.”

“So,” Hayden starts. He doesn’t actually know what he wants to ask. “What?”

“We are in love, Pike,” Rozanov clarifies. “You said it. Something about a soulmate, marriage, making Shane so happy and fucking him so goo-”

“*Ilya*,” Shane hisses. Rozanov, for the second time this morning, simply backs down. “We’re in love, Hayden. He’s my boyfriend.” Hayden stares between them. Shane keeps his eyes down. Rozanov keeps his eyes on Hayden, narrowed. He opens his mouth, then closes it.

He truly has nothing to say. Out of every single option, every possibility in the universe, this was not one he had considered. There’s no guidebook for how to approach your best friend being in a long-standing relationship with his rival. Suddenly, he’s hit with a deep longing for Jackie; she would know what to do.

He, also, suddenly feels awful. Of course Shane had been so terrified last night; Hayden’s reaction had been one of anger about Lily, but, to Shane, it probably seemed like one of anger about Shane’s sexuality, about Shane dating Rozanov. In all of Hayden’s plotting and prying, he never once considered that Shane and Rozanov were dating. *Fuck*. Shane probably thinks Hayden to be the biggest asshole ever.

He deserves that, to be honest.

“Can you say something, please?” Shane looks up at Hayden. His voice is small. He looks young. Rozanov squeezes his shoulder again, watching Shane’s face carefully.

“I—uh,” Hayden starts. “I’m not like—uh—homophobic or anything.”

“That is what you choose to say?” Rozanov snarks. He swears under his breath; Hayden isn’t sure that it comes out in English. “Your best friend comes out to you and you tell him that you are not homophobic?”

“No, wait—”

“Jesus Christ, Pike.” Rozanov rolls his eyes.

“*Ilya*,” Shane scolds. Hayden does not think he will ever get used to the way that Rozanov immediately backs off, face softening at Shane’s command. Rozanov throws his free hand up in mock-surrender. “Let him speak.”

“Sorry, I’m going about this the wrong way—”

“You think?” *Ilya* interrupts.

“*Ilya*. Knock it off. Please,” Shane pleads. “You know how much this means to me.”

“I’m sorry, sweetheart.” *Sweetheart?* Rozanov leans down and presses a kiss to the top of Shane’s head. He brings his hand up and pets along the shell of Shane’s ear before dropping it back down.

Hayden's stuck watching, a sort of morbid curiosity keeping his eyes frozen on the two of them.

He's struck with the knowledge that they aren't lying. There's a tenderness to every one of their actions—the scolding, the touching, the kissing—that Hayden reserves for Jackie. They seem to unconsciously follow each other, leaning in where the other shifts, pressing back when the other touches. Hayden doesn't know what to do with this information. It changes everything; it fundamentally reshapes how he views Shane.

Except, if he's being honest, it really doesn't. In fact, the more Hayden thinks about it, the more sense it makes. Only Shane—whose mind, body, and being seem to revolve around hockey, who breathes in nothing but playbooks and game highlights, who's the best fucking player Hayden's ever seen—would revolve his life around hockey all the same. Only Shane would find the one person he absolutely cannot have and fight to make it work.

Shane Hollander is, undoubtedly, in love with Ilya Rozanov.

"I'm happy for you, Shane." Hayden isn't lying. Shane's head rolls back in relief. "I'm really happy for you. I—uh—yeah. It's a lot to take in—uh—but I support you."

"Thank you, Hayd." The words spill out of Shane in one long breath.

"Yeah—I, uh—yeah."

"So eloquent, Pike." Shane doesn't tell him to knock it off.

"Fuck you, Rozanov."

"Sorry, Pike." Rozanov's smile is all teeth. "I am a taken man."

"No—what? Wait," Hayden stammers. He can feel the heat creeping up the back of his neck. "No, asshole."

"Ilya, leave him alone."

"Thank you, Shane. Jesus." Hayden runs a hand through his hair. He hesitates. *Emotional vulnerability*, mental Jackie reminds him. "I'm happy for you guys. Really. It's clear to me that he makes you happy. Shane—uh—I'm sorry, man. I should've just talked to you. I'm really sorry."

"Thanks." Shane shoots a soft smile over. The tension that Shane's been holding in his brows, high and tight, eases out.

"How—uh—long have you guys been together?" It's apparently the wrong question to ask, given the way that Rozanov and Shane shoot a look towards each other. They exchange some form of unspoken communication, entirely through their eyes and the twitch of their mouths and eyebrows. *Complicated*, Shane had always said about Boston Lily. Hayden's even more sure, now, that things were *complicated*. "Sorry, you guys don't have to answer that."

"No—no," Shane starts. He takes a deep breath, trending his hands through the handle of his coffee mug. "You deserve to know. We made it official about a year and a half ago. But we—uh—we've been..."

"We have been involved since summer before rookie year," Rozanov interrupts. *Jesus Christ*. Hayden can't even wrap his mind around that: fresh-faced rookie Shane *involved*—whatever that

means, Hayden isn't willing to think further about that—with Rozanov. That's longer than he's known Jackie. Once again, Hayden is struck by the nauseating feeling that they love each other, deeply and truly, and he was clueless to it.

"No, we didn't do anything until rookie year," Shane clarifies, looking over his shoulder at Rozanov. *Do anything?* Hayden's not sure he wants to know what Shane means by that. Rozanov smiles down at him, a kindness on his features that Hayden didn't know he was capable of.

"Yes, but is first time we felt..." Rozanov trails off, making a hand motion between his chest and Shane's.

"Oh," Hayden says softly. He reigns his eyebrows back in, keeping them from jumping up his forehead.

"Yeah." Shane nods.

"So are you, like, fully gay?"

"Fully gay?" Rozanov repeats back to him. The smirk has returned. "As opposed to what, Pike? Half gay?"

"No—what? You know, like," Hayden flounders. He shoves his hands in his pockets to keep them from flying around, useless movements that won't help him articulate. "Like—do you like girls, too?"

"No," Shane confirms. "Ilya does, but I don't." *Ilya*. Hayden's never going to get used to that. Ever.

"Ah."

"Yeah." Shane's back to nodding again. A silence—neither comfortable nor heavy, just *there*—blankets the room. Rozanov brings his hand back up and pets along the shell of Shane's ear.

Everything he knows about Lily is... is *Rozanov*. That's a pill to swallow, one that sticks in the back of his throat long after he's taken it. Lily makes Shane happy and in love and a good man. Rozanov, he knows now, makes Shane happy and in love and a good man. And Shane is so deeply in love, infatuated enough to give Rozanov pieces of clothing and nice bouquets of flowers and lord knows what else.

He hopes they make it, Hayden realizes. It's an odd wish of Rozanov, praying for his genuine success and happiness, but the soft looks they keep giving each other, entirely unconsciously, are the same looks that Jackie gives him. They're the same looks that Hayden's watched his parents give each other.

Fuck. They're so in love.

"Is the—uh—distance hard?" Hayden knows the answer, but they seem to enjoy talking about each other, if Shane's familiar *thinking-about-Boston-Lily* look is anything to go by. Rozanov nods hard, but Shane's the one who answers.

"Yeah. Very," Shane says. Rozanov squeezes his shoulder. "Very hard. We make do, but we're rarely in Boston, and he's rarely in Montreal. We have the summers together, at least."

“I am moving.” Rozanov gives Shane a nod. “I am going to sign to Ottawa. So then we will only be two hours apart. And maybe someday...” Rozanov trails off. He doesn’t have to finish the sentence; Hayden’s sure it involves something about a wedding, a picket fence, a kid. Maybe, if Rozanov’s being crazy, a shared cup win.

“Yeah,” Shane confirms.

“Ottawa like... sucks.” Hayden kicks himself the second the words are out of his mouth.

“Well, it sucks more to be so far from Shane. When it comes to hockey or Shane...” Rozanov shrugs, as if that isn’t one of the most romantic things Hayden’s ever heard. The unspoken is clear: Rozanov will pick Shane. Shane, he realizes, isn’t the only whipped one. Rozanov is, somehow, far worse.

Hayden can’t wrap his head around that.

“Wait, Shane, listen,” Hayden starts. “Does that mean you actually opened a photo of Rozanov’s dick in the locker room that one time?” Shane turns fire-engine red. Rozanov cackles.

“No—I didn’t—well *yeah*—but I didn’t mean to, I promise—we have—now we don’t—” Shane stammers. He ducks his head down as Rozanov clutches his stomach.

“*Eugh*,” Hayden groans. “*Eugh*, man. Dude. Hollzy.”

“Was a nice photo, no?”

“*Ilya!*”

“I mean—” Hayden begins. A look of horror washes over Shane’s face. A look of amusement washes over Rozanov’s. “Well—the lighting was—”

“*The lighting?*” Shane nearly shouts. “Absolutely not, Hayd. Conversation over. Fuck off, both of you.”

“No, no.” Rozanov says between wheezes. “Keep going, Pike. I want to hear what you thought of it.”

“I mean—it was a nice—”

“*Hayden*,” Shane cries. “For the love of God!”

“I could teach you sometime,” Rozanov offers. “Could make your beautiful wife very happy. Not too happy though. You do not need more kids.”

“Breakfast!” Shane slams his hands down on the table. “I’m hungry! Does anyone want breakfast?”

What ensues is, shockingly, a comfortable meal. Rozanov makes pancakes, and Shane eats them despite the chocolate chips. Shane and Rozanov share awkwardly censored stories, and while Hayden’s not entirely sure what gay sex looks like, he can fill in the blanks. Rozanov goes between insulting and praising Hayden with sickening precision, calling out plays and weaknesses and—most confusingly—strengths. Every time Rozanov says something kind, Shane’s face lights up. They wash the dishes together, telling Hayden to *fuck off* when he offers a hand.

It's disgustingly domestic. They're so in love. Rozanov is so in love with Shane. Shane is so in love with Rozanov.

They send Hayden off with a promise to bring Jackie over. Rozanov walks Hayden out, and, for a split second, Hayden considers thanking him, much like he promised to thank Lily. He then immediately reconsiders himself, because it's Rozanov. At some point, he'll share, maybe over a glass of champagne to a room of Shane and Rozanov's shared lives.

Mental Jackie chides him for not being more *emotionally open*. Hayden thinks he's allowed this emotional constipation just once.

Hayden doesn't let himself take a deep breath until the car door is slammed shut behind him, the *thud* reverberating through the enclosed space. Jackie was right. Jackie was so incredibly right. This doesn't shock Hayden; Jackie is always right, categorically and repeatedly and stably.

Hayden's a fucking idiot. Again, this doesn't shock him; he's an idiot frequently, unfortunately, and, much to Jackie's chagrin, oftentimes against the recommendation of others.

And Shane? Shane is in love with Ilya Rozanov and has been in love with Ilya Rozanov and will be in love with Ilya Rozanov. And Hayden—is also in love with Ilya Rozanov? Not *in love*—listen, he's accepting of Shane, accepting enough of Rozanov, and as attractive as they are together, he has Jackie and is not gay, thank you very much—but he loves how Boston Lily has transformed Shane, brought him out of his shell. A flower metaphor may be too literal here, but Shane's really bloomed over the last few years.

And Boston Lily is—Boston Lily is Ilya Rozanov. And Ilya Rozanov is Boston Lily.

Eugh.

Hayden stares at the steering wheel. He just needs time to wrap his head around this, that's all. Jackie was so right. Hayden is such an idiot.

contact name: My Beautiful Wife ❤️

sent:

You were right. I'm sorry Jackie.

received:

You meddled?

sent:

I meddled.

received:

If only someone had told you not to

sent:

You were right.

sent:

How did you know?

received:

He's insanely attractive, rich, kind, and has had one (1) single girlfriend the entire time I've known him. And that lasted five (5) weeks. I thought you knew he was gay and that Lily was just an alias.

received:

Also one time he got really wine drunk with me and wouldn't stop talking about his beautiful husband and I put two and two together

received:

Also I walked in on them once at an awards show.

sent:

And you didn't tell me?

received:

I thought you knew!

received:

You literally saw them making out and the conclusion you came to was that Shane was cheating on his mystery woman that he only saw after you played the Bears and never showed us photos of and who no one has ever spoken to and who sent him a dick pic and whos name literally rhymes with Ilya.

sent:

Ok when you put it like that

received:

You, Hayden Pike, are so oblivious.

sent:

Guess I'm lucky to have you.

received:

Guess you're lucky to have me.

End Notes

i'd say this got away from me but somehow everything i write gets away from me all the time. one day i'll learn to hold the leash tighter! i hope you all enjoyed; this was just something fun i wrote in-between my other fics.

speaking of which, if you subscribed to my ao3 just for this !! thank you !! i do feel the need to warn you that i will probably not post another light, fluffy pg-13 fic anytime soon. if you are into kinky, freak4freak hollanov, please enjoy your stay. if not, no harm no foul :-)

i'm on twitter! [come talk to me @_anyabarnes.](#)

[come talk to me on tumblr :\)](#)

comments and kudos appreciated! this is me when ever you guys say anything nice lowk:



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