

Talk to Her

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Talk to Her

by [Llamafarm](#)

Summary

Shane needs help, so he turns to the smartest person he knows... his best friend's wife.

Notes

Here's one for all the Jackie lovers. You are my people. ❤️

Title is from a Pedro Almodóvar film: *Hable con Ella* in Spanish. *It's brilliant.*

All italicized non-English words will be translated in the End Notes, as is Jackie's dumb joke.

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

For the first time in eons, Jackie Pike was free to take as long as she wanted lingering over her cup of coffee. Scrolling through her texts, she nibbled on an imported cookie from the box she kept stashed on the very top shelf of the pantry. No one ever looked there, and even Ruby was too short to be a serious threat. For now.

Stretching her arms above her head and letting loose with an obnoxiously loud yawn, Jackie looked up at the new light fixture on her kitchen ceiling and smiled. She'd been released from toddler jail. It was a temporary furlough, but still. Only mothers responsible for multiple young children would understand. Her babies. The love she felt for them was impossible to measure, but they were tiny terrorists, hell-bent on destroying everything their chubby hands could reach. As she listened to the blessed silence of a mostly empty house, she let the sensation of transcendent bliss flow through and around her.

Then her phone started to buzz.

"Shit," Jackie hissed, visualizing her prison doors slamming shut.

But when she looked at the caller ID, it wasn't her parents. Hmm. This was certainly unexpected.

"Hey Shane! What's up?"

There was no response for a few moments, but Jackie could hear her friend breathing on the other end of the line. Even without speaking, his anxiety was palpable.

"Hi Jackie," Shane managed eventually. "Not much. How're you and the kids?"

"We're fine. My parents have the kids for the weekend and Hayden's passed out on the couch in front of the TV."

"Oh. That's good," Shane replied, clearly distracted. "Do you, um, have some time to talk?"

"Sure," Jackie said, clocking his tone right away.

"Hayden won't hear us?"

"Hayden can sleep through fireworks," she assured him. "He *has* slept through fireworks. But hang on a sec and I'll run upstairs to the bedroom."

"Thanks, Jackie," Shane said, sounding relieved.

"No worries. Ok, we're behind closed doors now. What's going on?" she asked.

"Um... I need to tell Hayden something, but I don't know how he'll take it."

Jackie sucked in a breath. "Are you ok, Shane?"

“No, it’s not... I mean yes, I’m fine,” he answered. “It’s just, uh... pretty personal and I don’t think he’s gonna like it.”

“Hayden worships you, Shane,” Jackie said because it was true. “If you told him you were a serial killer, he’d probably help you hide the bodies.” Also true.

Shane chuckled nervously. “Hopefully, it won’t come to that.”

“Shit. That bad?”

“Uh...” he waffled. “It’s kind of a good news, bad news situation.”

Since this was Shane, Jackie opted to start with the easier part. “What’s the good news?”

“You know how you and Hayd are always trying to set me up?”

This sounded more like the bad news. Jackie shuddered. Her friend, Lisa, was still having flashbacks about her dinner “date” with Shane over two years ago. Hayden had insisted on hosting it at their house, giving Jackie a front row seat to that dumpster fire of an evening. It was pure carnage. *Never again*, Jackie vowed to herself.

“Yes...” she said cautiously.

“I met someone. I mean, I’m with someone now.”

Uh oh. Jackie could guess where this was heading.

“That’s great, Shane!” she exclaimed, and she meant it sincerely, but...

“It’s a guy,” he said, and Jackie could practically hear him vibrating over the phone.

Jackie made encouraging noises. “Still great.”

“You don’t sound surprised.”

Jackie detected a little attitude in his voice. *Oops*.

“Uh... I guess I thought it was a possibility,” she ventured.

Shane huffed. “My parents said the same thing.”

“Huh,” she said, grasping at diplomacy. “Well, we know you, Shane. And we love you,” she added. “Hockey culture’s total bullshit, but Hayden’s not like that. He won’t care who you’re with as long as the guy makes you happy.”

Jackie wasn’t too sure about that last part, but Shane didn’t need to hear it.

“I’m not too sure about that last part,” Shane said. “The guy... he’s someone you know.”

“Is he someone *everyone* knows?” Jackie asked, hoping to grease the wheels a little since Shane was obviously sweating this.

Wrong move, she thought when she heard him start to hyperventilate.

“Who told you?”

“No one, Shane. I promise.”

“Then how...”

“That home game with Boston when you got flattened by Marlow. Your concussion,” she explained. “Rozanov stayed on the ice while you were... well, he wouldn’t leave. Even when the ref got in his face.”

“Oh,” Shane said, sighing. “Did anybody else think it was weird?”

Jackie thought back to that night, the people around her. J.J.’s girlfriend had definitely noticed. She was the one who’d pointed it out. But Jackie had seen Camille a few times since then and she’d never mentioned it again.

“Not that I could tell,” she answered. “You’d have to know what you were looking for.”

“What do you mean?”

“I listened to the recap,” she said. “After Hayden told me you were ok. All the commentators were saying Rozanov was worried because you’ve been playing against each other for so long. Like a respect thing. Captain to captain.”

“But you knew something was up,” he pressed.

“I’m a WAG, Shane. Most of my friends are WAGs.”

When Shane didn’t speak for a while, Jackie realized she needed to elaborate.

“I know what it feels like when I see Hayden get hurt,” she said. “I know what it looks like too.”

“Yeah?”

“Rozanov was panicked. Like in shock. He kept staring at you and he wouldn’t leave your side. I thought he was gonna lose it when they put you on a stretcher. He wanted to go with you, but they wouldn’t let him. You don’t act like that unless...”

“What?”

“You’re batshit crazy in love.”

“Swear jar three times, Jackie.”

Jackie snorted. “Shoulda known you were keeping score. Listen buddy, you’re the first adult I’ve talked to in days. Cut me some slack.”

“What about Hayden?”

“I said what I said.”

Shane chuckled for the first time since he'd called her. “Look, you know Hayd. He hates Ilya.”

“True,” she acknowledged. “But it’s mostly because of you. You're like a brother to him.”

“Uh... yeah. Maybe that’s part of it,” he allowed. “But I think Hayd kinda hates him in general.”

“I wouldn’t say ‘hate,’” she equivocated. “Hayden just thinks Roz... Ilya... is an asshole.”

“He is.”

“Seriously?”

“Yeah,” Shane confessed. “A lot of the time. But he can also be sweet. And supportive. We get along pretty well when we’re not, uh...”

“Trying to slaughter each other on the ice?”

“Right,” Shane said. “He cares about me and he makes me laugh. And he’s, um...”

“Super fucking hot?” Jackie chimed in. “And if you say, ‘swear jar,’ I’m gonna dump all the ginger ale in my fridge down the sink.”

“Jesus, Jackie!” Shane squawked in alarm. “Ok. But you shouldn’t waste food like that.”

“Are you the same guy who just got voted ‘Hottest Man in the NHL’ by *Cosmopolitan*, or my 82-year-old grandmother?”

“I like Esther,” Shane said mildly. “She lets me beat her at Yahtzee.”

Jackie giggled. “I think you might be winning fair and square.”

“Will Hayden understand?” he asked, cutting right to the chase.

“To be fair, it’s sort of hard to believe,” she admitted. “I mean, you and Ilya are so... he’s such a wild child, and you like to be home by 8:00 pm. How does that even work?”

“Sex,” Shane said bluntly.

“*Putain de merde*,” Jackie gasped when she finally stopped laughing. Then she sighed dreamily. “You two would have the most beautiful kids.”

“Jackie!”

“What? I’m not allowed to covet your gorgeous biologically impossible babies?”

“Gross,” Shane complained, but his heart wasn’t in it. “So, Hayden...”

“Sorry. Yes. The reason you called. Look, I love Hayden, but the man can be oblivious,” she said. “He definitely won’t see this coming. You’ll have to ease him into it.”

“How?”

“Drop little hints,” she suggested. “Like when Hayden starts talking shit about Ilya, you could say, ‘He’s not as bad as he seems.’ Something like that.”

“That’s what I said to him last season. Almost word for word.”

“How’d it go?”

Shane exhaled loudly. “Not well.”

“*Merde,*” Jackie muttered. “*J’ai épousé un idiot.*”

Shane laughed. “*Espérons que les enfants te ressembleront.*”

“Ruby’s already running circles around him,” Jackie confided. “She convinced him to let her play with his credit card and set up an Amazon account for herself.”

“That sounds about right,” Shane chuckled. “She’s what, almost five now?”

“Yeah. The twins turn five next month,” she confirmed. “I’m sure he’ll come around eventually, Shane.”

“After we’ve been retired for ten years,” he said despondently.

Jackie’s heart hurt for the poor guy.

“We’ll figure this out way before then,” she promised.

Shane sighed again. “Thanks, Jackie. You’re a good friend.”

Wishing she could do more, Jackie thought it was worth trying to cheer him up a bit.

“My grandfather used tell to this dumb joke,” she said. “You wanna hear it?”

“Ok,” Shane agreed a little warily.

Jackie braced herself. Stand-up comedy wasn’t her strong point.

“Ok. Here goes:

A woman’s on vacation and calls home.

She asks her husband, 'How’s my cat doing?'

The husband says, 'The cat’s dead.'

The woman's upset and says, 'Well, you could have broken the news to me when I got home. I can't enjoy my vacation now. You could've just told a little white lie, like the cat's on the roof and you can't get her down.'

'Okay, I'm sorry,' says the husband, 'I'll remember that.'

The woman says, 'Anyway, how's my mother doing?'

The husband says, 'Your mother's on the roof and we can't get her down.'

"Is that it?" Shane asked after a few beats. "That's the joke?"

"Yup," Jackie said, praying she hadn't made things worse.

But wonder of wonder, miracle of miracles, Shane started laughing. Really laughing. Like what you'd call a true belly laugh. Looking up at her freshly-painted ceiling, Jackie sent a silent prayer of thanks to Grandpa Rudy.

It took a while for Shane to stop laughing, and Jackie smiled the whole time.

"That's the worst joke I've ever heard," he said.

"Do you feel better?"

"Yeah."

"Good," she replied. "Now let's come up with a plan."



The plan they came up with was pretty simple. It boiled down to Shane coming over for dinner like he did every other week when he was in town. Jackie would bribe her parents to take the kids again. Or, she'd guilt Hayden's parents into doing it. That would probably work since they were trailing slightly in the grandparents race.

Step two of the plan involved Jackie cooking food Hayden loved. But not his favorites, just in case that tipped him off. Sometimes her husband was surprisingly perceptive, but usually not at the *right* time. Step three was up to Shane. After debating for two hours about whether it was best to ease Hayden into it slowly or detonate the bomb right away, they'd settled on the most aggressive approach.

Shane was terrified, but he also didn't want this thing to drag out forever. He figured ripping off the band-aid in one go was better than prolonging the torture by peeling it back millimeter by millimeter. And Jackie would be there to provide moral support and logistical backup all the way through. That was step four, the most important one.

When they were all sitting together at the table, munching on meatloaf, mashed potatoes, and bourbon-glazed green beans, Jackie cleared her throat and looked at Shane. Crossing her

fingers, she prayed he wouldn't chicken out.

"Hayd, there's something I've been meaning to tell you," Shane said, his voice wobbling just a smidge.

Jackie beamed with pride.

"I'm all ears, dude," Hayden replied, looking up from his meatloaf.

Taking a deep breath, Shane glanced at Jackie before turning back to his best friend. "You know how I..."

Hayden's phone pinged and he looked down at it reflexively.

"Fuck! Boston's in the playoffs. This fucking sucks!" he ranted. "Check out Rozanov's face. I'd love to punch that smug motherfucker right in his..."

"Hayden!" Jackie yelled. "You think I'm gonna let you kiss me with that mouth?"

Hayden wilted like a cut flower. "Sorry, Jacks."

Jackie shook her head and glanced heavenwards. "I bet if you got to know the guy, he wouldn't be so bad."

"Who?" Hayden asked.

Jackie rolled her eyes. "Rozanov."

"Gimme a break," Hayden protested. "If that ass... that *guy* told me he was drowning, I would not let a hand."

Shane was horrified. "Did you just quote Phil Collins?"

"It's my favorite song," Hayden admitted without shame. "Now what is it you wanted to tell me?"

Shane turned to Jackie and shrugged. "Your mother is on the roof."

End Notes

French to English translation:

"Putain de merde" = "Holy shit"

"J'ai épousé un idiot" = "I married an idiot"

"Espérons que les enfants te ressembleront" = "Let's hope the kids take after you"

DISCLAIMER: I can't claim any credit for Grandpa Rudy's joke. I heard it from my uncle ages ago and it's been around forever. Apparently, no one knows who told it first.

Also, my chirp about Phil Collins was meant with the utmost affection and respect. The song Hayden quotes, "In the Air Tonight" is really quite amazing. Every once in a blue moon, Hayden gets it right.

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