

Ribs

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Ribs

by [hoko_onchi](#)

Summary

“Yes, sweetheart. I’m here.” She tries to school her voice into something neutral, something that hadn’t been up all night, pacing Shane’s luxury hardwoods.

The place felt haunted without him, not just empty—but expectant. Ginger ale and coke in the fridge, four pieces of salmon marinating in lemon and thyme. There’d been condoms on his nightstand. And *lubricant*—which was good, wasn’t it? He obviously cared about his partner. *Or partners*, David had said, unhelpfully.

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Or: Yuna visits Shane in the hospital.

Notes

This was inspired by Smugrobotics' brilliant fic, *delirium*, in which Shane spills some details to his nurse.

This is... just... Shane talking to his mom in the hospital, and not really saying anything at all. And a lot of my own feelings about parenting are certainly coming through.

- Translation into Русский available: [Рёбра](#) by [sige_vic](#), [WTF Фандомная Плесень 2026 \(fandom mold\)](#)
- Inspired by [delirium](#) by [smugrobotics](#)

“Mom! Hey, Mom, heeyy.” Shane grins, wide—so, so wide—when Yuna walks in, her heels clicking against the hospital linoleum. She can feel each step in the balls of her feet, in her ankles; next time she’s hauling ass around Montreal, she’s wearing her fucking flats. “Moooom. Mom!”

“Yes, sweetheart. I’m here.” She tries to school her voice into something neutral, something that hadn’t been up all night, pacing Shane’s luxury hardwoods.

The place felt haunted without him, not just empty—but expectant. Ginger ale and coke in the fridge, four pieces of salmon marinating in lemon and thyme. There’d been condoms on his nightstand. And *lubricant*—which was good, wasn’t it? He obviously cared about his partner. *Or partners*, David had said, unhelpfully.

“Did they have the broccolini?”

“They did. And the beef with barley soup was the daily special. So I got that, too. Dr. Madsen says you need carbs.”

“Mm, no I don’t. Just the protein and fiber.” Shane rubs at one eye and squints, which he’d been doing last night, too. She makes a note to ask the doctor what it means. To google it. Or both. Probably both.

“Hush. No rules when you’re sick.”

“Yeah,” he echoes. “Home from school means no rules.”

“That’s right. No training. Just healing.” She sorts out the food—roasted chicken breast, broccolini, soup, pears and *mikan* and two tall cups of tea—and leaves Shane’s bag by the door. “I went across the street and I got matcha—it was hot, but it should be just warm now.”

“You’re the best mom,” he says. His cheeks are pink from smiling. There’s something about the way he says it that—hurts, almost physically. She feels it right in her ribs, where he’d kicked all through month eight and nine. Like his feet are still just there; an invisible ache.

“I got a few magazines, too. Hockey News. And a book of puzzles. For when you can—you know, look at things again.” She pulls a chair close to his bed and takes his hand, threading their fingers together.

“Mm, Mom.” Shane squeezes her fingers, and he snorts, a little laugh she hasn’t heard in years. Her stomach pulls terribly tight. “Did you take mom lessons? Because you’re *so* good at being a mom.”

“Usually, you’re telling me to buzz off by now.” She nods at the IV bag. “They’ve got you on the good stuff, huh?”

“Yeah.” He stretches the word out: *yeahhh*. “S’pretty great. I think I—maybe I’m talking too much.”

“Then it’s definitely the good stuff. Your dad” —she laughs— “was so funny. After that fall —”

“His ankle.” Shane gives her an exaggerated nod, which is so funny because—because normally he tells her it’s embarrassing. Especially if she’s talking about her and David in front of someone else. But he nods again and says, “It was all fucked up. And you came to see him.”

“Right. That last year at McGill. I came to visit and—he woke up. And I had to tell him who I was. And he said, ‘Holy shit, you’re so fucking beautiful. I can’t believe I—’”

“—landed such a catch.’ Yeah, I know. You told me, like, a million times. And every girlfriend I ever brought home. And—hey, listen. S’so embarrassing.” But Shane’s smile does something *soft*, his eyes crinkling around the edges.

“Did Rose—was she planning to come by? I thought, maybe.”

Shane glances at the window, away from Yuna’s face. The softness goes with it. “She called. She’s, y’know, filming. We’re really just—”

“Friends. I know.” She sighs. Thinks of the extra toothbrush, next to his, in the ceramic holder she’d gotten him when he moved to Montreal. “Every relationship has its—ups and downs. Your dad and I, we had so many fits and starts. Just—being young. That’s how it is.”

“I’m almost twenty-six. I’m not really—” There’s a pause, and Shane is looking out the window again. There’s something a little sad there, and she wonders if she’ll have to hate Rose, now. “I’m not all that young.”

“Oh, honey, I know. You’re all grown.” Something twists in her stomach, and she reaches for the words, but the feeling is vague and nebulous, and the answer to it sits just at the edge of her mind. “I know—and really, no pressure with Rose. We just want you to be happy. We want you to be so, so happy. Not just successful. You know that, right?”

Shane’s face melts again—that bright look, almost radiant, a look she rarely ever sees on her son. But he’s looking at the wall behind her, maybe the door. “I know, Mom.”

“So it doesn’t have to be with Rose,” she says. “We just like her so much, and she looks at you like you hung the moon. You know, I really do hope she comes to the cottage this summer. Even if it’s just—”

“Just friends? Yeah.” Shane swallows. His eyes flick to her face again. “Yeah, she might.”

“Like I said, you don’t have to be—in love. There’s a period of time with any relationship where you might not know. It might not be totally clear.” Shane’s brow furrows, and Yuna can tell she’s stepped in it. She’s up to her waist in it, she’s pretty sure. “Shane, I—I’m sorry, honey. I meant to come in here and sit with you—and maybe read to you. Like we used to—”

“How’d you know?” He blinks hard and dabs at his eyes.

“How’d I—”

“With Dad. How’d you know it was him—how’d you know? Like that he was the one.”

Yuna pushes out a breath of a laugh. This is easy. Easier. “Oh. I think it was around the time he broke his ankle. He asked me out twice the year before—”

“Yeah. I remember.” He grabs awkwardly for his tea, and she gentles it into his hand.

“It’ll be harder with your left.” He nods and drinks and sits back, like he’s waiting for the story. She can’t remember him ever asking, ever caring. But she keeps on; it seems important that she give him the words. “I said yes the second time. I went to all his games. And it was so *fun*. It was just fun, at first. He’s so handsome, you know. Still is. All my friends were jealous.”

Shane rolls his eyes.

“He told me he loved me right after that fall. It scared me, scared both of us. The fall. And the love. It popped up, and it wasn’t anything we expected. I just didn’t want to lose him. I remember feeling that. Like I’d stop living if he did. It was so—*dramatic*. Young.”

“I don’t think that’s dramatic,” Shane says, voice low. “That was that. You were in love?”

“Yeah. We were. Inseparable after that. That was it for me.” She pushes out a laugh, shakes her head. “*And* I knew my mom wouldn’t like him.”

Shane snorts. “That’s a lie. She always liked Dad.”

“Not always. Not until you, maybe.”

“That’s—” Shane swallows hard. He blinks again and she makes another mental note—ask the *doctor* about the *blinking*. “That’s a long time not to like Dad.” He sniffs. “Dad’s the best. Why wouldn’t she—why wouldn’t she like him?”

Yuna’s throat pulls tight. Something in Shane’s tone makes her want to scoop him up like she did when he was little and he cried so hard—*so* hard—she had to hold him tight tight tight until he calmed down. Until he could pull up a word or two to tell her what hurt. Most of the time, he couldn’t, so she held him until he slept. So much of the time, she was none the wiser about what went on in that head.

“He wasn’t,” Yuna says carefully, “what she had in mind.”

“But he’s *Dad*.” Shane pushes out a puff of air. “Whatever. I’m not making any sense.”

“Shane,” she says, and her voice almost breaks, “Shane, look at me.”

He gives her a glance, and his eyes slide down to the lid of his carry out cup. He worries it with his thumb. “Yeah?”

“You can tell me anything that’s on your mind. Anything. It doesn’t matter what.” She thinks of the toothbrush. The salmon in the fridge.

Shane shrugs. “Nothing’s—nothing is bad. There’s nothing to worry about.” A half-smile returns. “It’s all good, actually. *Really* good. I was just wondering if—” He huffs. “It’s kind of dumb. And I’m talking too fucking much. Too much, Hollander. Time out.”

“Anything. Come on,” she says, and squeezes his arm. There’s something she’s missing, she knows it. Like when he had all those cases of strep and she waited on getting his tonsils out—god, she was guilty for months. A *year*. And David had told her again and again she hadn’t done anything wrong. She doesn’t know if she believes him, even still. “Anything.”

“Just—if you can know something without knowing it. Like for a long time. But then you know it and—it won’t go back.” Shane closes his eyes and sits back, head against the pillow. She takes the tea from his hand.

“Like a feeling?”

“Maybe,” he says absently. Then, frowning: “Yeah, like a feeling. Like knowing about a feeling.”

“Sweetheart, is this about Rose?”

“No.” It’s low and quick. Definitive. “It’s not. Just—generally. I’ve just been thinking.”

“Well, then. Um. I do think that’s how things work sometimes. Everything is clearer, looking back. It does seem silly but—listen, it’s really not. It takes time to know, sometimes.” It feels very pressing that Shane hears this, even if she doesn’t know exactly *why*. She squeezes his arm again. “Because when you know with things like that, you *really* know. No going back.”

“No going back.”

“Is there someone—you have an awful lot of food at your place. There were bagels on the counter.”

“Mm,” Shane says. “Bagels are good.”

“Shane—”

His arm twitches beneath her hand, and he starts snoring lightly.

She watches him for a few moments, her throat still tight and raw. She remembers the purposeful press of his feet inside—beneath her ribs, her lungs. An unseen bruise that spanned the width of her torso. And later: the heft of him in her arms, the heat of his tears, the late-night pacing through colic and meltdowns and concerns from his nursery school teacher. His weight on her knee when the doctor said he was so sorry, there wouldn’t be a brother or sister. How she mourned that each new step he took was utterly singular. How he was absolutely irreplaceable, and she’d still decided to push him into this. Because he’d *asked*—and Shane never asked for anything. So she moved heaven and earth for this one impossible dream.

“I’m sorry,” she says. “I love you.”

She watches him sleep for a little while. Does a word search. Stacks the hot food together so it stays hot—or warm enough, anyway. Peels an orange and arranges the slices on a napkin.

Near dusk, Shane startles awake and sits up, yawning, then groaning when the pain of his expanding lungs hits him. “Fuck.”

“Marleau. Fuck that guy.” She says it, just for something to say. “We wish him suffering. Did he visit? I know some of the guys do that.”

“Oh.” Shane presses his lips together, then pushes out a puff of air. “No. But Rozanov did.”

“Him? He’s so smug. I can barely believe it.” The food is lukewarm when she opens it, but it should still taste okay. It looks decent when she arranges it in one of the takeout boxes.

“He’s not so bad,” Shane mumbles. He tucks into his dinner and looks at her with wide, alert eyes. The crinkles next to his eyes are gone.

“Well, I’ll have to take your word for it.” She pulls out *The Hockey News* and sets it on Shane’s tray, next to his tea. “Maybe he’ll go somewhere decent when his contract is up.”

Shane blinks at her and looks back at his food. Outside, the sun is sinking beneath the skyline. The sky is orange and pink, clouds long grey tufts behind tall black buildings. It looks like an announcement of spring, and soon the shopfronts and menus will follow until it echoes through the city. Shane will come home for a while after this, and maybe that’s good. Maybe that’s where he ought to be for a little while, at least until summer comes.

Works inspired by this one

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