

Messaging: Boston Lily

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Messaging: Boston Lily

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Summary

So, Shane was maybe-sort-of dating a Boston Raiders fan? Was that why all the secrecy? If Shane was anyone else, Hayden would think it was overkill, but the guy had gone into tailspins over things that would get him less ribbing in the locker room. Still seemed extreme that he wouldn't even admit she existed, but what did Hayden know? It made as much sense as any other theory he'd ever come up with.

In which Hayden reaches out to Boston Lily about Shane's condition after he goes down on the ice. Despite his curiosity, he's determined not to pry... But things come out all the same.

Notes

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

"I gotta... e'll worry... Someone tell..."

"Shane, don't talk, man," Hayden said, trying to sound less panicked than he felt. Hits like that were fucking awful, the waiting to learn if it was just a ding or a career-ender.

"Hayden? I gotta call..."

"Don't worry about it right now, okay? They're calling your parents, they'll be here soon." He was trying to stay out of the way of the medics and talk Shane out of trying to get up at the same time. While on skates. And his knuckles were still smarting from hitting Marlow.

"Not them," Shane whined. "Gotta call... You'll call? Say I'm okay?"

"Yeah, of course, buddy." He had no idea who he was supposed to call.

"Good."

That calmed Shane down enough to get him off the ice. Hayden was dropping off to let the medics take him and return to the team when Shane started pawing at him again.

"Hayden! Hayden..."

"I'll meet you at the hospital after the game, okay, Shane?"

"But I gotta tell..." His face scrunched up. "You don't... You need my phone." He was having a hard time stringing a sentence together, and Hayden was doing his best not to panic about it.

"It's fine, Shane, I've got my own phone."

Shane looked like he'd tried to shake his head and been reminded of the neck brace. "You don't have... number... tell 'm 'kay..."

"Shane, stay awake for us, okay?" one of the medics said.

"Hayden!"

"It's okay, Shane, just let the medics do their thing, all right?"

"You need my phone. You don't have the number."

"Okay, Shane, I'll take your phone." Whatever calmed him down enough to stop fighting against the medics.

"Mm. Good. Wait! You nee... It's... 1221! You gotta... don't want... worry..."

They finally wheeled Shane out of the stadium and out of hearing. Hayden stood there for a moment, feeling worried and useless, until Coach Theriault called him back to his senses and back onto the ice.

Even with a loss, he'd never been so glad to hear the final buzzer and get off the ice as he was that night. He changed in record time and, just before taking off, grabbed Shane's phone. He didn't know who Shane had been so desperate to get hold of, but Hayden would at least be able to hand it off if Shane still wanted to contact them.

Assuming he was awake anytime soon.

He shoved that thought down hard. No sense in catastrophizing.

He called Jackie first, and he didn't even have to say anything before she was ordering him to stick close to Shane until his parents got there. Then he called Yuna Hollander and got an earful about what a nightmare getting a flight was proving to be and that they might end up making better time if they drove. She had already called the hospital and told them they could relay all information through Hayden, so he at least wouldn't be trapped in a game of telephone trying to find out how his friend was doing.

The answer was *still being examined* when he finally arrived and he collapsed into the most out-of-the-way seat he could find in the waiting room, hoping the paparazzi wouldn't be too out for blood tonight. They didn't typically have much interest in him - he was no Shane Hollander, after all - and he'd never figured out how to deal with them on the few occasions he'd gotten swarmed.

Shane's phone buzzed in his pocket as he sat down.

Lily: please call as soon as you can. tell me you are ok

Hayden felt like an idiot. Of course, *Lily* must have been who Shane was so desperate to contact. Hayden still didn't know the first thing about the girl, but he knew Shane well enough to know she *had* to be into hockey. Shane's life revolved too much around it for her to not be a fan. She'd probably been watching, would have seen him go down. Maybe she'd even been there live - Hayden always thought that was worse. Seeing it on TV meant watching the replays again and again and again, but being in the stadium meant feeling the air vanish as the crowd took a collective gasp.

Hayden hesitated, then put in the code Shane had given him. He'd wanted someone to reassure Lily. Hayden could do that. And despite the fact that he sometimes felt like he was going to go crazy with curiosity about the girl - why the hell was Shane so goddamn cagey about her? - he wasn't going to go snooping around.

Shane: This is Hayden Pike, one of Shane's teammates. He's still being checked out. He gave me his phone so I could keep you in the loop.

He was pretty sure, anyway. It had to be Lily Shane had been talking about, right? As far as Hayden knew, anyone else Shane was close to would already be being informed.

Shit, Rose Landry. He found her messages and sent her the same message he'd sent Lily.

Rose: Thanks, I was just wondering if I should reach out. Tell him to recover fast.

Hayden did not know how Shane had managed to date *Rose fucking Landry*, decide she *wasn't his type*, and end up with her as a close friend, but the messages still on the screen said they really were on good terms. It looked like they were *gossip buddies*.

And Hayden wasn't prying. He was very determinedly *not prying*.

Lily: pike. shanee has told me of you. you are with him? at hospital?

Hayden was conflicted about Lily knowing who he was. On the one hand, it was nice to know that Shane had told his maybe-girlfriend about his best friend. Very reassuring - at least Shane wasn't leading some bizarre double-life or anything. On the other hand, if *Lily* got to know about *him*, how come *he* didn't get to know anything about *her*?

Shane: Yeah, I'm in the waiting room. I'm going to stay here until his parents get here, at least.

It was taking all of his self-control to not scroll up in their chat history. He wasn't strong enough to have refrained from reading the messages that were still on the screen:

Lily: 3 days! ready to admit you miss me yet?

Shane: You fucking wish.

Lily: rude. call me. i will make you admit

Lily: ready to come after you lose?

Shane: Hah, you wish. After YOU lose, maybe.

His curiosity was being partially fended off by the idea that he might find the two of them sexting if he went farther up. He hadn't known Shane had it in him, but it seemed Lily brought something out in him. It was... weird, seeing Shane banter with someone. Fairly aggressively. Hayden knew he *could*, had seen Shane's snark more than anyone else, as far as he knew - Shane was polite to a fault when he wasn't comfortable around people, and the number of people Shane was truly comfortable with could be counted on one hand.

Apparently, that hand included Lily. Which made sense, the way Shane always got that dopey grin on his face and lit up like the fucking sun when she texted, but it made Hayden all the more curious about why *he* didn't know anything about her. Not wanting to engage in locker room talk was one thing, but why didn't he at least want to talk to his best friend about this incredible girl he apparently counted down the days to seeing? Tell Jackie to stop setting him up?

After you lose, she'd said. Just a couple hours ago, so she was obviously talking about the game against Boston. And Shane had trash talked her right back.

So Shane was maybe-sort-of dating a Boston Raiders fan? Was that why all the secrecy? If Shane was anyone else, Hayden would think it was overkill, but the guy had gone into

tailspins over things that would get him less ribbing in the locker room. Still seemed extreme that he wouldn't even admit she *existed*, but what did Hayden know? It made as much sense as any other theory he'd ever come up with. He kept coming back to the theory that it was a big secret because she was married or something, but he really couldn't imagine Shane being a homewrecker.

Lily: Good. I know his parents are far away. I am glad he is not there alone.

Hayden bit his lip. Would it be overstepping to invite her to the hospital? Shane apparently didn't want Hayden - or anyone - to know anything about her. He'd wanted her to be kept in the loop, but he'd said that while half out of his head.

But Lily was obviously worried.

Shane: Do you want to come wait with me?

It seemed to take a really long time for her to text back.

Lily: Very much. But it is a bad idea. I should not even be messaging you.

Fuck, but Hayden really wanted to know what their deal was.

Shane: Okay, if you say so.

And then, because his self-control was at its limit, he sent:

Shane: Seriously, what is up with you and Shane? Are you married or something? Don't want your husband seeing you in the tabloids?

Lily: You think Shane would sleep with a married woman?

Shane: No, but I don't have any better theories

Lily: Married woman is best you can come up with? You have a bad imagination, Hayden Pike.

Lily: Maybe I am a whore he does not want to admit hiring.

Lily: Maybe I am more famous than Rose Landry and do not want anyone to know I am having a affair with a simple hockey player.

Lily: Maybe I am a man and we must forever hide our love from the world of sports.

Lily: Maybe I am in witness protection and I would be killed if the press found out about me.

Lily: Maybe I am blackmailing him and he only sees me because he has to.

Lily wasn't the fastest texter - nearly a minute went by between each one - but Hayden didn't know how to reply so they just kept coming. Shane's not-girlfriend was apparently a

firecracker. Not what Hayden would have expected.

Shane: Okay, I get it. And I know that last one's not true because he's always really happy to hear from you

Lily: He is?

Come on, Shane, Hayden thought. Being squirrely around me is one thing, but how does this girl not know how much you like her? It's not like you're a good liar.

Shane: Oh yeah. He always plays better when we're in Boston, pretty sure because he gets to see you

There was a long pause before Lily said, simply:

Lily: Thank you.

An hour crawled by. Yuna Hollander confirmed that she and David were going to drive to the hospital and that it was probably for the best because Shane probably shouldn't fly home anyway. Hayden bothered the front desk and was told they were doing more tests and nothing significant had changed, which made Hayden think of the speeches Shane and their coach gave when everyone knew they weren't winning the cup this year but it wasn't time to throw in the towel just yet.

He paced around the waiting room a few times and forced himself to sit down before he freaked out anyone else.

Lily: There is no news?

Hayden felt a pang of sympathy for her, imagining her pacing around some Boston apartment, worried sick over Shane and, for some reason, not even able to be in the hospital with him.

Shane: No, sorry. Going kinda crazy here. Must be even worse for you

Lily: Yes, it is terrible. I think if I saw Marlow now, I would punch him.

Shane: I hit him twice, you can imagine one of them was for you

And then, because he couldn't help it:

Shane: Aren't you a raiders fan?

There was a fairly significant pause at that, enough to have Hayden wondering if that really was the whole big secret.

But it wasn't like that would keep her out of the hospital. She didn't have to show up decked out in Raiders gear.

Lily: Shane told you this?

Shane: Saw your last texts when I went to message you

Lily: Ah. Yes, I am from Boston, am a Boston fan. But Boston winning is no good with Shane off the ice.

Hayden really didn't know what to make of this relationship. He would have imagined Shane with someone more unconditionally supportive, not a 'I am actively rooting against you unless you're hurt' dynamic. If Shane didn't just backflip out a window to avoid talking about Lily, he might try to bring it up with him. He deserved better than sneaking around and bickering.

But then he thought about the stupid smile Shane often got when checking his phone these days. More and more often lately, which had gotten Hayden thinking maybe he was getting over whatever the Lily-weirdness was.

Talking to Lily was not offering any answers to Hayden's thousands of questions. It was, maybe, doing the exact opposite of that. He couldn't even figure out which of them was behind the secrecy. And it was really hard to come up with *anything* that could have kept him out of the hospital if it was news about Jackie they were waiting on, which made him feel less than charitable with her. Shane deserved someone who would beat down the hospital door to see him.

Fuck, but he *really* wanted to know what the big deal was. Lily's list of absurd possible scandals made it clear she wasn't any more interested in telling the truth than Shane was - and going over Shane's head to interrogate his girlfriend was a complete violation of privacy, Hayden reminded himself - but texting her, getting this confirmation that this was definitely a real, breathing person, was kicking his curiosity into overdrive. It had been much easier to ignore, to say it was none of his business if Shane wanted to be a weirdo, when she'd just been a quick flash on Shane's phone screen sometimes.

Plus, Lily was a distraction from worrying about Shane. Scandal or not, he wished she'd come by just so he could have someone to talk to.

Shane: How serious are you guys anyway? Should I let his parents know I'm updating you?

Lily's response came in almost instantly.

Lily: no

That wasn't exactly a surprise. Though imagining Shane try to pull his stammering 'she's not anything' routine on Yuna Hollander was a challenge. Maybe he just muted her messages when his mom was around to spare himself the awkwardness.

Shane: You realize you're throwing up some serious red flags, right?

Lily took a long time to come up with a response to that one.

Lily: Can you please just trust that Shane would not keep this secret if it wasn't important to both of us?

Hayden wanted to shake her through the phone. *But why? What could be such a big deal that mama's boy Shane Hollander would lie to his mother? What could be so important that you'd refuse to come to the hospital to see him? What could make Shane - nervous, anxious, control-freak Shane - keep coming back to this disaster of a relationship again and again and again? Back to the secrets?*

Not for the first time, Hayden wondered if Lily was the real reason things hadn't worked out with Rose Landry. Shane had said they 'weren't compatible' but then insisted they were still friends and Hayden hadn't pried, but how could someone be friends with *Rose fucking Landry* and say they were incompatible, unless there was someone else? Someone Shane couldn't walk away from, even though he acted like his phone had turned into a bomb every time Lily texted?

He loves you, he wanted to say. He hasn't told me that, barely admits you exist, but he's crazy about you in a way I didn't know Shane was capable of. You make him do things like skip curfew and hide his phone and lie about where he's going and I don't know if I should be happy he has someone who means so much to him or worried that you're going to pull him into something he can't get out of.

He didn't say any of that. Obviously. Shane was an adult, and he wasn't doing anything that would have raised Hayden's eyebrows coming from anyone else. Out of character for Shane, sure, but the guy couldn't stay in his shell *all* the time or he'd eventually pop. When Hayden had first realized Lily's existence, he'd thought she was pulling him out, and thought it was great that she was. Half the time, he still felt that way. The other half, he worried something way worse was going on.

He shoved Shane's phone into his pocket and tried to ignore it. He was getting way too close to prying into Shane's business and learning more than his friend wanted him to know. Possibly he was already sliding over the line and needed to get back to minding his own business and let Shane decide who got to know what.

Lily messaged again, breaking his determination.

Lily: Please do not tell them. It is for Shane's good as much as mine.

Hayden felt a pang of guilt. He'd told himself he wasn't going to pry. And he knew how valuable privacy was to Shane - lord knew he didn't get enough of it.

Shane: I'm not going to tell. I'm really fucking curious, but Shane's an adult. He wants to keep his maybe-girlfriend a secret, he can do that. I'm not going to tattle to his parents

Lily: Thank you.

Lily: And thank you for keeping me in the loop even though I'm giving red flags.

Shane: Like I said, he's always happy to hear from you. You obviously matter to him.

Shane's phone blinked a warning at him.

Shane: Shit, Shane's phone is about to die. Okay if I put your number in my phone, so I can keep messaging you?

Lily: yes

Lily: Please.

And something about her *please* seemed desperate, like she really thought Hayden might go silent on her and leave her worrying.

He added her to his own contacts, sent her a message, and started digging through his bag for a charger. He always had one - usually two - on him, but he'd left the locker room in kind of a rush tonight. Things were just shoved haphazardly in his bag, and JJ had taken the rest of his stuff back to the hotel for him.

At least with Lily's number now in his own phone he'd be able to message everyone updates from the same device. The team group chat had pestered him for the first thirty minutes, then shut up so quickly Hayden knew Coach had ordered them to back off. They'd still be keeping a close eye on their phones, waiting to hear just how bad off their captain was.

Almost certainly out for the playoffs, Hayden knew. Which meant they were screwed. Shane could talk about teamwork all he liked, he carried the Metros.

He wouldn't say it in front of the guys, but he could live with that. Yeah, he fucking loved the game, loved bringing home that trophy. He also loved extra time at home with his wife and kids, rather than jetting all over the country. There was no real bad end to a season for him, except maybe for the defeated look his best friend got when he got it in his head that he'd failed the team.

He was on his third cup of bad coffee when someone finally called for Shane Hollander's family, and he jumped to his feet so fast he nearly spilled it.

He's fine. Fractured clavicle and a concussion.

Could have been worse, Hayden thought with relief as he started his way down the line of people waiting for updates. Could have been *a lot* worse.

And Shane high out of his mind on painkillers was one of the funnier things Hayden had seen. He had a lopsided grin on his face, his head rolling back and forth across the pillow like he'd forgotten how his neck worked. "Heeeeyyyyy, Hayden. Hello."

"Hey, Shane." He messaged Shane's parents first, then the team. "Looks like they gave you the good drugs."

"The *really* good drugs," Shane corrected. "I don't even feel it."

"I can tell."

Hayden: Finally got to see him. Fractured clavicle and a concussion. He'll be out for the playoffs, but he'll be fine. Very loopy on painkillers right now.

Lily: thank god

"Who're you texting?" Shane asked, his words slurring. "I'm not supposed to text right now."

"Yep, no screens for you for a while. I'm telling everyone you're okay."

"Good." Shane's forehead scrunched up, like he was performing a herculean task of stringing his thoughts together. "Everyone?"

"Your parents, Jackie, the team, Rose, and Lily."

Shane jerked like he'd been zapped by something. "Lily?"

"Yeah, you gave me your phone password so I could keep her updated, you remember that?"

Shane did not look happy. "Nope. No. You talked to Lily?"

"Only about you. I promise I didn't find out whatever your big secret is, okay?"

"No secret." Drugged Shane was an even worse liar than regular Shane. It was almost impressive. "She's not even... I don't even know her."

"Okay. Well, the Lily who you don't know is glad to hear you're okay."

Shane brightened. "Yeah? Lily was - I shouldn't be glad she was worried, huh?"

Was that a question? You take a spill like that on the ice and you're not sure this girl you've been texting for years is going to worry? "You can be a little glad."

That earned him another dopey grin. "I knew he - Lily. 'd be worried. Knew that. But Lily never *admits* it." He looked as pleased with himself as if he'd just won - well, not quite the cup, but close. "What'd you think?"

Hayden blinked at him. He was not following drugged-Shane's train of thought at all. "About what?"

Shane huffed, like Hayden was being deliberately difficult. "About Lily. Did - do you like her?" And then his eyes were big and sad, like Hayden not liking his not-girlfriend who he claimed didn't exist would be the worst thing ever.

Hayden cast around for something that was a yes but also was true. Honestly - and if Shane hadn't been high he'd have said this - he wasn't sure. The massive amounts of secrecy made it hard to judge anything. But if he said that to Shane in his current state, he'd probably hurt his feelings. Or doped-up Shane would say something sober Shane would regret. "All we talked about was how we were worried about you. But she said she wished she could punch Marlow, so she's okay in my book. Even if she is a Raiders fan."

Shane looked alarmed again. "She... said that?"

"You two were trash talking before the game. I didn't go snooping, I swear, the messages were still on the screen. But she said cheering for Boston is no fun if you're not on the ice, so you have to recover."

That seemed to settle him. "Lily likes to compete. 'S a bad competition if I'm not there."

"Just tell me she's not a Rozanov fan."

Shane snorted. "She's a Roz- A Rozan - Yes. But. But." Shane struggled to sit up until Hayden pushed him back down - thankfully, he didn't put up much of a fight. "But." He lowered his voice to a stage whisper. "I think. Lily likes me *more*."

"She better."

"Where's my phone?" Shane looked around. "I should ask. I should ask if Lily likes me more."

"No screens, remember?"

Shane pouted. Actually pouted, like one of Hayden's kids. "Okay, *you* ask."

"I am not going to ask Lily if she likes you better than Rozanov."

"Why not?"

"Because if she says Rozanov, I'm going to have to force you to break up with her."

Shane scowled. "We're not *dating*. And she probably would. It's just not true." He frowned. "Wait. It's tomorrow, huh?"

It took Hayden a second to realize Shane probably meant no longer the day it was when he got hit. "Yeah, buddy, you've been here all night."

"Damn. I was supposed to see... Lily. Was going to ask something. I had a whole plan."

"What were you going to ask?" Hayden asked, before he could think better of it. *It better not have been a marriage proposal before you've told literally anyone she exists, Hollander, because I have limits.*

"Was gonna ask if she'd come to my cottage this summer."

Hayden's jaw dropped. Actually dropped, staring at Shane for a full five seconds before he forced it shut again. Shane didn't take *anyone* to the cottage. Hayden had been there twice, and one of those times had been because Jade and Ruby had wanted to go swimming at the lake for their birthday. It was his private refuge. He'd allowed a documentary crew to go out there after the most intense contract negotiation Hayden had ever seen and he'd checked the place over for anything that was too personal for weeks before hand. Nobody went there.

Even Shane's parents only swung by rarely, and only for personal family dinners. It was the one place where Shane Hollander didn't feel the need to be *Shane fucking Hollander*.

And he wanted to take Lily there during the tiny window of time Shane didn't have to worry about hockey.

Damn, but that might be *bigger* than a marriage proposal in Shane's world.

"Do you... I could clear out for a bit. Let her sneak in to see you before your parents get here."

Shane perked up. "Yeah? You'd do that?"

And the hope in that pretty much killed any hesitations he had. "Yeah, of course. Let me text her." He had to angle the phone away to keep Shane from trying to look at the screen, obviously eager to hear what Lily had to say.

Hayden: shane wants to know if you'll come by and see him (since he's not supposed to be on his phone). I'll clear out so I don't see whatever it is you two are hiding

Despite the drugs, Shane's gaze didn't shift once from where he was staring at the back of Hayden's phone, waiting for an answer.

"You're pretty smitten, huh?"

Shane grinned. "No. Don't know what you're talking about."

The tragic thing was, Hayden was pretty sure Shane believed he was being slick. He was *definitely* doing a great job at not giving anything away about Boston Lily, not even her existence.

Hayden accepted that after the drugs wore off, he would let this whole thing go. Shane didn't want to talk about it. Hayden really, really, *really* wanted to talk about it, but he would overcome that.

Lily: ok

It had been way too long of a wait for just two letters. Hayden imagined her weighing the pros and cons, the risks of whatever secret it was getting out against how badly she wanted to see that Shane was all right with her own eyes.

He hoped it was a good reason. He didn't know what could be worth all this, but Shane deserved someone who loved him loudly.

"She's on her way," he told Shane. "I'll go down to the cafeteria until she texts me she's leaving, okay?"

Shane nodded with his whole body, like lifting his head back up at the end was an afterthought. "Okay." He grinned again. If being stoned had this strong of an effect on Shane,

Hayden wished he'd do it more often. Minus the injuries, obviously. "You're my best friend, man."

Hayden smiled back. "Thanks, buddy. You're mine too. Have fun talking to Lily, okay?"

"I don't even know her."

"Of course you don't."

Hayden: ok, im gone. message me when you leave and I'll head back up. Room 317

Lily: Thank you.

He made his way down to the hospital cafeteria for more shitty coffee. He had no idea how long it might take Lily to show up, or how long she'd stay once she arrived. Was this just a secret from friends and family, or would they not want to risk even hospital nurses stumbling across whatever it was? A secret that would be noticed immediately or one that would only be discovered after enough time had passed?

Not. His. Business.

Hayden: tell me again shane's relationship is none of my business

Jackie: its none of our business

Jackie: even when I really think he'd get along with Marcie from my yoga class

Hayden: thank you

If Shane ever introduced them to Lily, Jackie was going to be all over the girl. They'd either be best friends within a day or Jackie would personally undertake making sure Shane knew he could do better.

He messaged Yuna that he'd spoken to Shane, that he was fully coherent (save for the drugs) and she and David didn't have anything to worry about. Not saying anything about Lily felt weird, like she'd somehow know there was something else going on that Hayden and Shane were purposefully leaving her out of.

Maybe Lily and Shane just really didn't want to deal with whatever Yuna Hollander was like when she was trying to decide if someone was good enough for her son. Maybe Lily hated the idea of the attention she might get if she was dating a hockey star, or maybe Shane desperately didn't want to do that to someone.

Not. His. Business.

He ate. Drank two cups of possibly the worst coffee known to man. Checked how long it was going to be before Yuna and David arrived, because he was ready to go back to the hotel and get some sleep. Double-checked that Lily hadn't messaged again.

After thirty minutes, he got up and started walking around the hospital, just to keep his blood pumping.

Which was how he saw Ilya fucking Rozanov slipping out of the stairwell with his hood pulled up, like he was trying not to be noticed.

Probably it was good enough for the average Bostonian. Nobody looked how they did in pictures, he wasn't wearing anything Raider related, and who expected to find Ilya Rozanov just strolling around the hospital?

Hayden sure didn't. What the fuck was he doing here? Because if it was fucking with Shane, Hayden was going to put him through a wall.

Hayden's hand clenched around his phone. Still nothing from Lily, but Hayden was feeling a very strong need to go check on Shane and make sure Rozanov hadn't come to kick him while he was down. He was half tempted to just walk over there and deck the guy on principle.

But, you know. Maybe he had a valid reason to be at the hospital. Maybe he'd hit somebody in one of those fancy cars of his.

Rozanov pulled out his phone, texting as he walked.

Hayden's phone chimed.

Lily: Leaving now. Thank you again.

Rozanov put his phone back in his pocket, looked up, and saw Hayden.

It was the look on his face that did it. The timing of the texts had felt strange, but coincidences happened, right? There was no reason to think it was *Ilya fucking Rozanov* texting him.

Until Rozanov's eyes went huge and he froze like a deer in the headlights.

Holy. Fucking. Shit.

Hayden opened the message thread with Lily, typed out a message without taking his eyes off Rozanov.

Hayden: lily?

Rozanov's phone dinged. He glanced down at it and his skin seemed to go several shades paler.

Hayden's mouth was open to talk before his brain had gotten with the program. "What the actual-"

Rozanov was a fast guy on the ice. Somehow, he seemed even faster off it. He was across the room and shoving Hayden into the wall before Hayden could get to the end of his sentence.

"Shut the fuck up, Pike." His voice was low, quiet, but the words were a snarl.

"You're-"

Rozanov shoved him harder. "Shut up. You will tell no one, understand?"

Hayden's head was spinning. "You-"

"Not even Shane. He does not need this right now. You shut your fucking mouth and you forget you know anything, understand?"

It was like Rozanov had brought out every Russian stereotype to inject as much *or else* into his words as possible.

Hayden just nodded. Everything else felt outside his capabilities right now.

"Good."

And then Rozanov turned and marched out of the hospital.

Hayden stood there dumbly for a minute. Maybe several minutes.

Lily. Ilya.

Boston Raiders fan.

Come after you lose.

Maybe I am a man.

Ilya. Fucking. Rozanov.

Well, that started up about a thousand more questions, but at least it answered why the two of them were so damn secretive. This *was* a bigger deal than Shane dating a married woman, or a prostitute, or someone in witness protection.

Ilya. Fucking. Rozanov.

He made his way back to Shane's room slowly. He shouldn't tell Shane he knew while Shane was still drugged up. After his head was back on straight... he didn't even know. He couldn't *not* tell him he knew, he wasn't a good enough liar for that. And he was going to be reminded every time Shane's phone went off with a message from 'Lily,' every time he saw Rozanov on TV, every time Shane turned down an offer to set him up with someone.

Ilya. Fucking. Rozanov.

"Heeeeeey, Hayden," Shane greeted when he returned, still drawing out the words and grinning like an idiot.

Hayden sat down heavily in the chair next to him. Rozanov. Hayden had been up all night texting *Rozanov*.

"You, uh - Was it good to see Lily?"

Shane looked so happy that he might just float away. "Yeah. He - She - She's..." He let out a happy sigh. "She's great. And she said - she said maybe she'd come. To the cottage."

Maybe, Rozanov, really? That's all you're gonna give him? "That's great, man."

"Yeah."

Shane seemed content to fall silent after that, and Hayden was grateful that he didn't have to try and pretend everything was still normal. His brain was just stuck on a loop of *Ilya Fucking Rozanov*. He felt like he'd slipped into some other world. Shane *hated* Rozanov. He'd hated Rozanov from the moment they'd met. How had this even happened? How had *Shane*, of all people, fallen into Rozanov's circle like this? And what about the hookups that were always getting Rozanov splashed across the tabloids?

Mercifully, Shane fell asleep and Hayden was able to escape when Yuna and David arrived. He needed a nap and a drink.

Two days later, he messaged Rozanov. He'd kept his name as Lily in his phone, both to keep himself from wanting to break the phone every time he looked at it and... just in case.

Fuck, how did Shane live like this? Texting people under fake names? Did the two of them monitor every text they sent for things that might give away too many clues? If Hayden was gay and hiding a relationship with a guy he was supposed to hate, he was pretty sure he'd have gone completely gray by now. No fucking wonder Shane was always ready to panic about something.

Hayden: Do you want to tell Shane I know about you or should I

Lily: i told you, do not tell him

Hayden glared at his phone like Rozanov could somehow see him.

Hayden: He's off the worst of the painkillers. He deserves to know I found out.

Hayden: and he'll realize I know something the next time I see him anyway. I can't lie to him.

He also couldn't lie to Jackie. He'd told her he'd found out something Shane didn't want him to know and that he *really* wanted to tell her but he couldn't without Shane's permission. She respected that, but he could see that she was just about dying of curiosity. And she'd definitely worked out it had something to do with the mystery of Boston Lily.

Rozanov took approximately a century to reply.

Lily: fine. you should tell him, so he does not have time to freak out about what you think

Lily: what DO you think?

Hayden: that you're a dick and he has bad taste in men

It took him a full fucking minute to realize both Rozanov and Shane were probably more concerned about what he thought about the *Shane likes men* aspect.

Hayden: wait, i dont care that he likes guys

Hayden: or i do but like. in a supportive way

Hayden: im not gonna be a dick about it, i mean

Hayden: its the YOU part thats throwing me, he HATES you

Hayden: how long has this been going on???

Hayden: nvm, dont tell me. i should be asking him that

Lily: you should

Lily: tell him im sorry. i know he didnt want anyone to find out like this

Hayden thought it might be more accurate to say Shane hadn't wanted anyone to find out at all. But he was more than a little thrown by Ilya Rozanov telling him to relay an *apology* - he hadn't thought Rozanov knew what those were - and decided not to point that out.

Shane was staying with his parents while his head and his collarbone healed, which had Hayden once again wondering if his parents knew *anything* about this. They couldn't, right? Rozanov would have been talking to them while Shane was in the hospital, if they knew. And Hayden couldn't imagine David and Yuna not supporting Shane if they knew - even if it *was* Ilya Fucking Rozanov. And Lily - Rozanov - had said not to tell them anything.

So Hayden came by while Yuna and David were out and was immediately met by a Shane Hollander who was looking like he was about to be sent to the principal's office.

"Hey, Hayden." They went inside, sat down on the couch, and proceeded to enter the most awkward silence Hayden had encountered with his best friend since the day they met.

"How, um - How are you feeling?" Hayden had asked that earlier when he'd asked to come over.

"Better. Thanks for, um, for staying with me at the hospital."

"Yeah, of course." Hayden bit the bullet. "I know who Lily is."

Shane went *white*. Hayden half expected him to faint. "Wh-what?"

"I didn't pry, I swear! It was just... really bad timing. I saw him as he was leaving the hospital and he messaged me that he was leaving and... Yeah. I know. I'm sorry."

Shane stared at him for several seconds, then let out a high-pitched, manic giggle.

"*You're* sorry?"

"Yeah. You should have... I didn't... Look, I have no idea what to say here. You didn't want me to find out, I get why, I'm sorry I found out anyway. *Rozanov*?"

Shane leaned forward, fingers laced behind his head, head almost between his knees, breathing hard. "You - He - Does anyone else...?"

"No! No, I wouldn't tell anyone! Rozanov knows I know, obviously, and Jackie knows I found out *something* about Lily - and I don't know how long I can keep a secret from her, man, no matter how good the reason - but I haven't said a word to anyone else, I swear."

Shane took a few gulping, shuddering breaths. Hayden had seen a few of Shane's panic attacks over the years, covered for him while he recovered from them a few times, talked him through a few more. But this was the worst he'd seen, and he'd never had to worry if he'd make it worse before.

"He's-" Shane tried to say. "We're not - It's - It's *complicated*, Hayden."

"Yeah, I didn't need *that* spelled out for me," Hayden said, trying for a little bit of humor.

"Look, you don't - I have a *million* questions, I'm not gonna lie. But you don't, like, *owe* me an explanation. I get why you wouldn't tell anyone about this." He honestly didn't know if he meant the 'gay' part or the 'Rozanov' part.

Shane was rocking back and forth, looking like he wanted to knock himself unconscious to get out of this conversation. It made Hayden feel like shit and kind of killed him a little - how long had Shane been carrying around this kind of terror? And what the hell was Hayden doing to make him feel better?

"Look, Shane, just give me permission to tell Jackie so I don't feel like I'm going to explode every time I talk to her, okay? Neither of us will say a word, you know that. We'd never do something like that to you." He wanted to grab his friend, shake him, shout *You know that don't you? You know we love you and you're family and we would never, never hurt you like that, right?*

"You don't have to say anything else," Hayden pressed on when Shane didn't respond right away. "Look, Rozanov already threatened to kill me if I didn't keep my mouth shut, okay? He's got you covered on the threat front. And - Yeah. I don't get why they hell you're apparently head-over-heels for Ilya Fucking Rozanov, of all people. But that's - It's not my business. It wasn't my business when it was some girl named Lily, and it's not my business now." Whatever made Shane stop looking like he was going to have a heart attack.

Shane managed a few more gulps of oxygen and slowly sat up. His eyes were bright, on the edge of tears. After a moment's hesitation, Hayden reached out to grab Shane's shoulder.

"You're good, man. We're good. I swear."

Shane nodded, screwing his eyes shut. He was still rocking back and forth, but his breathing had evened out, at least. "I - Sorry. You can - You can tell Jackie. Just. Just ask her not to say

anything to anyone else. I don't even - *We* don't even - I really don't have answers about what - what we are. We don't - I invited him to my cottage this summer. To try and figure it out."

And Rozanov had said *maybe*. "Is... did he say yes?"

Shane shrugged one shoulder, which sounded like a *no* to Hayden. "He hasn't answered me yet. It's - There's a million reasons it's a bad idea."

Oh yeah. Hayden couldn't hold a candle to Shane's ability to come up with the worst possible scenarios, and he could still come up with a *long* list of reasons not to be involved with Ilya Rozanov. Only a handful of which were *because it's Ilya Fucking Rozanov*.

"Well." Hayden managed. "If he's stupid enough to let you go, I'm sure Jackie can find some yoga dads to try to set you up with."

That got a wet laugh out of Shane. "Trying to tell me I can do better?"

"I mean, I didn't think I should say it just yet..."

Shane smacked his arm, then managed a smile. "So... we're good?"

And it fucking killed Hayden that Shane had to *ask*. "Yeah, man, we're good. We're good."

And if Rozanov took Shane up on his invitation to the cottage, if they figured out whatever this was and the answer was something like *committed*...

Shit, he was going to have find something to make fucking *small talk* about with *Ilya Fucking Rozanov*.

End Notes

This got a lot longer than planned, and originally there was going to be some Ilya POV but that didn't happen, so please know that the reason 'Lily' is typing so slow and the texting style changes is because Ilya is spiraling that Hayden's going to figure out his accent so he's triple checking everything before he sends it. He also had to google what a red flag was.

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