

Access

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Access

by [AC91](#)

Summary

Shane makes some changes to protect his privacy. People notice.

*5+1 of Shane establishing his boundaries. AU where Shane and Ilya were never caught at the cottage.

Hayden

Hayden frowned as the door beeped angrily at him and flashed red.

1919, he was sure of it. He'd typed in that code hundreds of times since Shane's first official year as a Metro when he'd bought the condo and had him over to watch hockey and chirp at the television with him. He knew the code to Shane's place like the back of his hand.

He must have typed it in too fast, too lazily. It wouldn't be the first time. Hayden typed it in again, frowning when it beeped and flashed at him again.

Hayden knocked on the door instead, waiting for Shane to answer. He relaxed a little when Shane answered, his damp from a recent shower, dressed in baggy sweatpants and black hoodie that looked fleecy and warm.

"Hey Hayd," he greeted, stepping aside to let Hayden pass.

Hayden returned the greeting and took off his shoes before he passed the kale chips he brought to Shane.

"For you. All dressed for me," Hayden smiled. "Did you change your code?"

Shane led the way into the kitchen, humming. "Yeah, sorry, remind me to text you the new one."

Hayden watched as Shane tipped the bags into two separate bowls, letting him grab the drinks and meet him on the couch. They switched cans and bowls and sat and watched the teams warm up for the Florida vs Toronto game.

"Barrett's a fucking mess," Hayden said, watching him skate laps.

"Tell me about it," Shane agreed, cracking his can of ginger ale. "Did you see that hit he took from Bennett last week?"

"Fuck, yeah," Hayden remembered.

Bennett had cleared across the rink in about three seconds flat to smash Barrett into the boards. Even through the television, Hayden had been able to see the glass shake and Barrett's head bobble in shock.

"I bet it's his shoulder," Shane said.

Hayden turned to ask him how he knew, but Shane was looking down at his phone and smiling.

Hayden knew that smile.

"How's Boston Lily?" he asked.

Shane locked his phone and tucked it under his thigh as he reached for his kale chips. “Fine.”

“Are you guys..” Hayden trailed off.

Shane looked at him with a raised eyebrow, his face blank. “Are we..?”

“Like, exclusive? It’s been ages,” Hayden tried.

Shane just looked at the television. Hayden could see him twitch, and realised he could hear the repeat buzzing of his phone, sandwiched between his leg and the couch cushion.

“Is she sending you like thirty text in a row? Jackie does that,” Hayden laughed.

Shane loosened up just a little and nodded. “Yeah. I don’t get why she doesn’t just send one long one.”

“I know!” Hayden smiled, thrilled that Shane was sharing *something* about his mystery girl. “It’s like she has to narrate every thought as she has it.”

“Yeah,” Shane agreed. “I’ll still be replying to the first message and ten more come through. And by then, she’s already moved on from the first thing.”

“Women,” Hayden lamented.

Shane's posture tightened just a little, and Hayden kicked himself. He had been doing so well – Shane had shared *something*, even if it was the most stereotypical thing about an annoying girlfriend that every man could have said. For Shane, it was huge.

Hayden looked at Shane, and for the first time in a while, he was struck by how young he looked. Sure, at twenty six, Hayden already had the twins and one on the way, but Shane had always seem sort of delayed in having a personal life to make room for hockey. It was nice to see him splayed out on his sofa, chips in his hand, talking about a girl as he chewed on the string of his hoodie.

“So you guys talk about, like, regular things?” Hayden asked, doing his best to sound nonchalant and like he didn’t care.

Shane shifted on the couch a little next to him. “Yeah. I mean, we’re friends, so. We talk.”

Hayden nodded to himself. *Friends*. He could work with that.

“That’s cool,” Hayden said, grabbing more chips for himself. “I mean, Jackie’s my best friend, so, I get it.”

It might have been too much, but when Hayden snuck a look at Shane out of the corner of his eye, he could see that Shane was doing his best not to smile.

Hayden was happy he had Lily, he really was. He wasn’t even a little bit heartbroken that Shane talked to her more than he talked to him.

>>>

Hayden and JJ had beaten Shane to his own apartment from the arena. Practise had been shit, and Jackie was off with the kids for the weekend visiting her sister, so when JJ had suggested a movie marathon, Shane had smiled and agreed to host.

“Weird that he volunteered though, no?” JJ asked as they climbed the stairs.

“What do you mean?” Hayden asked.

“Well, he doesn’t keep fun food in the house,” JJ shrugged. “Normally has to prepare to have us over. But he just said to come straight here.”

Hayden frowned; maybe that was a bit weird. “Maybe that’s why he’s late? He’s stopping to grab snacks.”

JJ hummed as they got to the front door, typing in 1919 –

The door beeped angrily and flashed red.

“Slipped,” JJ muttered to himself, typing in the code again –

The buzzer sounded even louder the second time.

“Did he change it?” JJ asked.

“Must have,” Hayden frowned. “He probably forgot to tell us.”

Hayden had forgotten all about it. He’d forgotten to ask for the new code, too, so maybe that was on him.

They turned when the door at the bottom of the stairs open, smiling as Shane made his way up to them.

“Sorry, I got caught behind the slowest truck,” Shane grumbled.

“I don’t think I’ve ever seen you complain someone is driving too slow,” JJ teased.

“Mm, well, today was shit and I just wanna be home,” Shane said.

Hayden frowned; if Shane was tired, they could have skipped this. He could have gone and hung out with JJ on his own, at his place where he knew there was a stockpile of cokes and chips.

But Shane smiled at them as he manouvered in front of them to the door. Hayden noticed the way Shane sort of covered the keypad with his body, only catching a 7 as the door beeped and opened for them.

JJ caught his eye as they followed Shane inside, taking off their shoes and making their way into the kitchen.

Hayden watched in surprise as Shane grabbed two cans of coke, a box of cookies and a family sized bag of chips, grabbing plates and glasses to put everything into nicely.

“Did you have a party, Hollander?” JJ teased.

Shane looked up, confused. “What?”

“I’ve never seen you with all these snacks,” Hayden said.

“Oh, I had extra from the last time my parents stayed over,” Shane waved off.

Hayden followed the boys to the couch, parking himself between Shane and JJ and listening to them argue about what movie to put on.

He had missed this, he realised. Hayden couldn’t remember the last time the three of them hung out together and talked about something other than hockey.

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It wasn’t until the next time he was at Shane’s place that he started asking questions.

Hayden hadn’t even thought about the code change until Shane stepped in front of him weirdly and angled his body so Hayden couldn’t see the keypad as he typed the number in.

“Hey, is – did you change the code because of me?” Hayden blurted out.

Shane blinked, looking bewildered. “What?”

“It’s just – I used to know it, and you changed it,” Hayden said.

“I mean, I had the code for years, and so many people had it,” Shane shrugged, his face clearing. “I just thought it was safer to change it.”

“Okay,” Hayden said, still feeling ill at ease. He wasn’t sure if he’d done something to breach Shane’s trust or if he’d been a shitty friend or something.

He knew he’d been even more preoccupied with Jackie and the kids since the baby had come along. His mother had been right when she said more than two kids is too many to manage, but he’d never admit that to anyone. But he knew he hadn’t been as available as he could have for Shane, and Shane was never really great at reaching out without a push.

“No one has the code,” Shane said.

Hayden raised an eyebrow at that.

“Everyone has keys and codes to all my shit, and I just – I’m an adult, you know?” Shane said.

Hayden nodded; he understood that. They’d had to have a difficult conversation with Jackie’s sister when they had first started dating after she let herself into Jackie’s apartment and

walked in on them having sex.

“Yeah, no, I get it,” Hayden nodded.

“It’s not about *you*, ” Shane stressed.

Hayden got it, he really did. Something was shifting with Shane. He could feel it, and it was a good thing, Hayden could tell. Shane had been lighter recently, less stressed. More driven with hockey, but beating himself up about things a lot less in general.

He just wished he was close enough to Shane to know what had changed.

Yuna

The first time Shane pulled out the sky blue card to pay for lunch, Yuna thought she was seeing things.

They had banked with BMO their whole lives. She and David had opened their first joint account with the Bank of Montreal, because there was a branch across the road from their tiny apartment where they had lived in their final year of university and they had been too excited to look anywhere else.

She had signed Shane up for his first bank account when he was nine. David’s mother had given him a twenty dollar bill when he’d swept all the leaves in her backyard up, and Shane had asked her where he could keep it safe.

His rookie signing money went into that same bank account. He’d gotten his very own royal blue debit card, and he had kept it in his Velcro wallet, tucked safely in his bottom drawer. His Metro’s contract money went into his other, better yielding business account, too. That card was black. His properties were owned through the trust she had set up for him when he was nineteen, and he hadn’t had a credit card in his entire life.

Shane didn’t have any cards that were sky blue.

Except he did, and he was handing it over to the waiter with a polite smile.

Yuna tried to get a look at it, frowning when she saw his name and the Royal Bank of Canada logo at the top.

“Did you switch banks?” she couldn’t stop herself from asking.

Shane blinked as he looked down at his card. “Oh. No. I just opened a new account.”

“Why?”

Yuna could tell from the look on Shane’s face that it was none of her business.

“Aren’t you the one that keeps telling me it’s important to diversify?” Shane teased, but Yuna could sense a hard edge in there somewhere. “Don’t put your eggs all in one basket and all that.”

“Well, yes, but now you’re with three banks,” she questioned.

“I need three banks to hold all my money, apparently,” Shane muttered under his breath.

Yuna didn’t understand what he meant, but it almost looked like he was trying not to smile.

“Is there a problem with –”

“No,” Shane cut her off.

Yuna waited, expecting him to say more, but he didn’t. He just walked her to her car and hugged her goodbye, watching as she drove off and back home. She looked through her rearview mirror and saw Shane pull out his phone and turn to his own car, wondering why he bothered with a third bank.

>>>

Yuna tapped the keys a little too hard.

Your password is incorrect or this account doesn’t exist. Please reset your password.

She auto filled the log in on her laptop, frowning when she got the same error message.

“Are you trying to break it?” David asked as she tapped the enter key repeatedly in frustration.

“It’s saying my password’s wrong,” Yuna complained.

“Did you change it?” David asked.

“No,” she said, trying not to grit her teeth. As if she would forget she had changed a password. The laptop would remember and save it, anyways.

“Does someone else have the login?” David asked as he wandered out of the living room into the kitchen.

Yuna chewed on her lip as she considered. Shane’s personal accounts were still with the Bank of Montreal. His business contracts, his investments, that was all with the Royal Bank of Canada. She checked, still able to log into that account, at least.

Shane had changed his personal banking account.

That was fine; she rarely checked it, and she didn’t *need* to check it. Shane was an adult, and his money was his own.

Yuna was just curious about the *why* of it all.

>>>

She watched Shane smile softly to himself as he talked on the phone, pacing leisurely up and down the backyard.

“Who is he talking to?” David asked.

“He said Hayden. But...”

“Oh,” David raised his eyebrows, watching Shane. “He’s talking to a girl.”

“He looks *happy*,” Yuna said.

Shane turned to look at them through the glass door, and Yuna and David stepped away too fast to be subtle. They moved quickly to the couch, each grabbing a book and trying to look occupied as Shane stepped back inside, his phone tucked into his pocket.

“Are you guys okay?” he asked.

“Fine,” David said breezily. And Yuna loved that about him; he was always so calm. So unlike her, living in her constant state of anxiety.

“Is Hayden good?” she asked.

Shane’s mouth twitched before he schooled his face and nodded. “Yeah. Kids are all good.”

They watched as Shane sat on the couch against the wall, pulling his phone out and smiling at it in a way Yuna had never seen before as he typed out a response.

Yuna wished she could meet whoever was making her son smile like that. His face looked completely new, like she’d never seen it before. He looked younger and happier and relaxed. Yuna deflated when she realised she’d never actually seen Shane look *happy* like that before.

He was happy on the ice, she knew. He loved it, he lived for it. His face always lit up when he made a great play or scored a goal.

But this was softer. Lovelier, calmer. It was the way David made her feel, Yuna thought. She wondered, looking at Shane, his face so similar to hers, if that was the same smile she made when she thought of David.

She hoped it was.

JJ

JJ had walked out with Shane after their practise, talking about their game the next day, when Shane had stopped at a new Jeep in the car park. It took him a moment to realise that Shane was unlocking it and moving to the backseat to throw his bag in.

“Hollander, did you upgrade?” he asked.

Shane grimaced before he nodded. “Yeah.”

“Holy shit,” JJ smiled, dropping his bag in the middle of the lot and climbing into the driver’s side.

Shane didn’t say anything as JJ looked around. It was *flashy*. More flashy than Shane’s typical style.

“This is top of the line,” JJ said as Shane opened the passenger side door and watched him open every compartment.

“Yeah.”

“I didn’t know you were looking for a new car,” JJ said. “You should have said. I’ve been looking at the G-Wagons.”

“Nice,” Shane said. “Are they good in the snow?”

“Yes,” JJ laughed. “Safety first, Captain. This is *nice*.”

Shane hummed. “Yeah. I mean, it’s comfortable to drive.”

“How much was it?” JJ asked. “With all the extras, it had to run you an extra twenty grand or so.”

He looked to Shane when he didn’t answer, confused to see him looking pained.

“Twenty grand for the extras?” Shane asked.

JJ nodded. “Yeah, I mean, these are worth what, two twenty? You probably ended up paying two fifty or something?”

He watched as Shane pulled his phone out of his pocket and started typing furiously.

“Sorry, JJ, I need to get home, you good for tomorrow?” Shane asked.

JJ nodded and climbed out, watching as Shane locked himself in, connected his phone and started calling someone.

It was weird. He’d ask Hayden about it tomorrow.

>>>

“Oh shit, that’s *nice*,” Hayden said, pointing at the new painting on the wall by the kitchen.

Shane beamed as he moved closer to it, ready to show it off.

“Fuck, Hollander, when did you start buying art?” JJ asked.

He stood closer to the painting, the oil paint raised in some areas more than others, making the picturesque lake on the canvas look like it was moving. It was beautiful. And very unlike anything Shane would have bought in the past.

“I was watching some house architectural show during the summer, and this artist was mentioned by someone,” Shane shrugged. “She had all these oil paintings of landscapes, I just thought they were nice.”

“It kind of looks like I’m standing on the water if I stand right here,” JJ said.

Hayden pushed him out of the way and stood where he had been staring at the painting.

“Oh shit, yeah, it does,” Hayden agreed.

“Mm, reminds me of the cottage,” Shane said, his face serene as he stared up at the artwork.

JJ had heard a lot about the cottage, and he knew Shane had done some sort of television special about it, but he’d never watched it. He’d also never been invited out there.

Which was fine. JJ usually spent the summers with his family, taking his brothers on trips to Europe or the Caribbean, doing something new and fun every year. Shane liked to decompress by himself in total silence, which made sense. He spent at least ten months out of the year working like a dog.

“Are you an art guy, now?” JJ teased.

“Mr Art Guy,” Shane snorted. “No, that’s not me. Just this one. Maybe.”

JJ watched as Shane’s face did something confusing, as if *he* was the one confused.

“Anyways, you guys want drinks?” Shane offered.

“Fuck yes,” Hayden said. “Can’t wait for New York to smash Boston tonight.”

“Scott Hunter’s hurt that hand, he’s having trouble shooting,” JJ said.

“How do you know?” Hayden asked.

“Saw him two days ago when they played Florida, he jammed it against the boards,” JJ shrugged.

“It’ll take him three months to heal at his age,” Shane joked as he led them to the couch.

JJ laughed as Hayden jumped over the back of the couch and grabbed the remote, turning the television up.

>>>

“Is that designer, Hollander?”

JJ forced himself to open his eyes and sit up straight as Shane walked up to where a few of the team had gathered by the gate. Drapeau was eyeing off Shane as he joined them, gesturing to his suitcase with a mean glint in his eye.

“It was a gift,” Shane said, his cheeks turning a little pink.

“Oh shit, it’s nice,” JJ complimented.

He smiled reassuringly when Shane met his eye, gesturing for Shane to sit next to him, raising his eyebrows when Shane yawned.

“Sorry,” Shane said, still covering his mouth.

“Can’t believe we beat you to the airport,” JJ smirked. “I don’t think that’s happened since I joined the team.”

“I know, I didn’t sleep last night,” Shane said.

JJ took him in; his hair was fluffy, messy like he didn’t even brush it, which couldn’t be right. Shane was always perfectly groomed, just in case his photo was taken. But right now, his eyes were tired and red rimmed, and he was yawning *again*.

“Are you feeling okay?” JJ asked.

Shane hummed, sliding down in his seat and closing his eyes. “Yeah. I’ll sleep on the plane.”

JJ chose not to say nothing about the fresh hickey he could see on Shane’s collarbone. If Shane was late because he was busy with a girl...it made sense now, at least. The way Shane had been lighter lately. The way he had smiled more – real smiles, and not the uncomfortable mouth twitches he normally made.

Shane Hollander had a girl.

JJ relaxed into his seat, too. He felt better knowing that Shane had someone.

David

David had been watching Shane for the last few months, utterly confused at the change in his behaviour. To anyone else, maybe it just looked like Shane was more secure in himself, starting to relax and take a little bit of the pressure off, but David knew it was something else.

The first curiosity had been when Shane had met up with them for lunch before his home game. He and Yuna had driven down to see him, and Shane had turned up at the restaurant in a new car.

Yuna maybe hadn't noticed exactly how fancy it was, but David did. Yuna asked if he had been planning on upgrading since his Jeep wasn't even three years old, and Shane just turned a little pink and said that he hadn't been planning on it.

The second oddity had been the banking situation. Yuna had mentioned that Shane had revoked their access to his personal banking accounts and opened up a new one.

David hadn't been too concerned about that. They didn't check his bank accounts; he only ever used the log ins when he helped Shane prepare his taxes, but he hadn't even done that in the last couple of years. Shane's personal accountant had taken care of that.

The most recent, and most obvious sign had been the sheer amount of time that Shane had spent on his phone. David watched over the Christmas break as Shane moved with his phone glued to his hand, constantly smiling and texting. Twice, David had heard Shane in his old bedroom, whispering and laughing quietly to someone on the phone.

Shane was growing up, David could see it. It was nice; he was proud of Shane. He had always been proud of how strong and secure Shane was; how he always marched to the beat of his own drum, always pushed through with hockey when it got tough, how he was always able to regroup when things were tough.

But *god* did it settle David's heart a little that Shane might not be alone.

He wasn't a big believer that everybody needed to couple up. He had always been more practical than that. He'd long thought it was more responsible to be alone and wait for the right person rather than settling for the sake of it. He had just always worried that Shane wouldn't be open to the right person walking into his life when they did. If they did.

But there was somebody, David could tell. He could see it in the way Shane's face relaxed completely when his phone lit up with a new message. He could see it in the way Shane came back from a *walk* that was clearly an excuse to get out of the house and talk on the phone, his shoulders lower than David had ever seen them.

It was nice seeing Shane happy like this. He just wished Shane would tell them about whoever it was that was making him smile like that.

>>>

They had snuck off to the cottage for the long weekend, intending to stay out of the city and disconnect from work entirely.

And then the storm had hit.

Yuna kept the house stocked with plenty of food, and David kept a back up generator. It had been oddly peaceful to simply sit around with Yuna and just read as the snow piled up outside, but soon enough, it was time to drive back to Ottawa.

"We should stop at Shane's on the way home," David said.

Yuna nodded as he drove to the lake, wanting to just do a drive by and make sure the place was secure.

He frowned as he drove up; the heavy wooden poles at the front of the property weren't there the last time he was here in the summer.

"What's that for?" Yuna asked.

"A gate," David said.

"Oh. Well, that's smart," Yuna said.

David nodded as he parked in front of the door, grabbing his keys from the console. "I just want to make sure the pipes aren't frozen."

Yuna nodded, relaxing into her seat as he climbed out and made it to the front door. He frowned when he couldn't get the key in, turning to the light to make sure he was using the right one.

The silver key was for the front door to the main house in Ottawa. The red key was for his cottage. The green key was for the storage shed in the backyard. The two blue keys were for his office. The gold key was Shane's cottage.

He tried again, but the key didn't go all the way in. It jammed a third of the way in until he couldn't push it in anymore.

"What's wrong?" Yuna asked from behind him.

"My key isn't working," he frowned.

Yuna ran her hand down his bicep before she shuffled behind him. David tried the key again, barely hearing the car door open and shut before Yuna was at his side again.

"Here," she offered, handing him her own set of keys.

David settled on the gold one on the keychain and –

It jammed a third of the way in again.

Yuna frowned, pushing David out of the way and trying for herself.

"It's the right key, right?" he triple checked.

"Yes," Yuna nodded. "He changed the locks."

"Huh. Weird," David said, peering in through the window.

The place looked fine, at least. There was a fruit bowl on the counter filled with chip packets that he hadn't expected to see, but otherwise, the place looked perfect.

"Maybe he had contractors in and changed the locks for security?" Yuna asked.

“Yeah, that’s probably it,” David said.

They were silent as they made their way back onto the road. David didn’t look at Yuna as she unspooled the gold keys from each of their sets, keeping his eyes on the road.

>>>

I'll meet you at the apartment Shane had text them.

David and Yuna had shot off from the Metros home game, doing their best to beat the traffic. He knew Shane would have media and have to wind down his team before he made his way back home. The benefits of an afternoon game was that they could drive down, see Shane, squeeze in a meal and be home at a reasonable hour.

It was perfect.

Until they made it to the door and they couldn’t get inside.

David watched as Yuna typed in 1919 and frowned when it flashed red at them. He reached passed Yuna to type in the code himself, but –

Red again. *Denied*, David thought idly, picturing the lockout message on the security system at work when he scanned his access pass at the wrong angle.

Yuna pulled out her phone and dialled Shane, but it rang out. She text him for the new code, but there was no answer. David sat on the step at the top of the landing, not saying anything as Yuna sat down next to him.

“Something’s going on,” she said quietly.

“Maybe he’s just refreshing his security or something,” David suggested.

“He opened a new bank account,” Yuna said, her voice flat and analytical. “He’s making all these weird changes, and he’s not telling us anything.”

“Maybe there’s something new that he’s not ready to talk about yet,” David shrugged.

They waited for forty minutes before the door at the bottom of the stairs opened and Shane pushed his way inside, breathless like he’d run from the car.

“Sorry,” he said as he ran up the stairs.

David lamented, for just a moment as he stood up, his knees cracking, how much he had taken his youth for granted. He used to be so athletic, the way Shane was.

Shane, who hugged them both and took Yuna’s bag when he got to them on the landing. Shane, who not so subtly pushed in front of them and moved his body in front of the keypad like he was at an ATM and scared of being robbed.

David met Yuna’s eye as Shane led them inside as if he hadn’t done anything weird.

He wouldn't say anything about it, he decided. Shane was making changes, and his son didn't do that without reason. If they asked about it, Shane would move further away from them.

So when he saw Shane's phone buzz on the kitchen counter and saw *Lily* on top of the message, he ignored it.

Shane would tell them when he was ready.

Jackie

She was almost certain she was the first person to notice that Shane had fallen in love.

Hayden had mentioned years ago that Shane had a regular hook up in Boston – just the one. Jackie had subtly tried to ask Shane about it, but he had shut down immediately, so Jackie had left it alone.

But she had seen the way Shane was spending more and more time on his phone this season. Hayden said that the boys were training harder than ever, determined to win another cup in the next season or two, but Shane seemed lighter somehow. His eyes were less tired.

“Does he have a girlfriend?” Jackie whispered in the kitchen to Hayden as Shane disappeared to the bathroom.

“How would he date someone and keep it a secret?” Hayden whispered back.

“I don't know? I mean, why would he tell anyone?” she asked lowly.

Hayden looked affronted. “Why would he be seeing someone and not tell us about her?”

“I don't *know*,” Jackie repeated. “Maybe it's new, or he's taking it slow.”

“I don't think he's serious with anyone,” Hayden said.

They fell silent as Shane came back into the main room, his hand tucked into his pocket.

“How can I help?” he asked.

“Grab the cheese?” Jackie asked, nodding to the fridge.

She stirred the sauce into the whole meal pasta as Hayden grabbed the roast vegetables out of the oven, all of them convening at the dining table. They served themselves quietly, Jackie thrilled to see that Shane took a good portion of the pasta along with the vegetables.

She had made a real effort to adhere to Shane's diet over the years. His dedication sometimes made her wonder why Hayden and the other boys on the team didn't try harder to get to Shane's level, but she supposed the discipline and drive was what made Shane so special and unique.

Jackie let Hayden and Shane chatter away as she ate, half listening to complaints about players on other teams she still hadn't bothered to learn the names to, looking down the table when she felt a vibration at her elbows.

Shane's hand flew to his phone. Jackie watched his eyes flick to it so fast before landing back on Hayden, smoothly leaning up to grab the cheese between her and Shane –

Lily. Lily was texting Shane.

Jackie tried to do the math; she'd heard Hayden mention Boston Lily even before she had met Shane in person. He had been so quiet and sweet that first time he had come over for dinner, more reserved than she expected, even though Hayden had told her that he was shy.

Except he wasn't. Shane was sharp and hilarious and kind of an asshole, and Jackie *loved* him. They had become fast friends, and even Hayden had commented on how much faster she had bonded with Shane that he had been able to.

So it bothered her just a little that Shane hadn't told her about Lily.

There must be a reason. Jackie figured that either they weren't as serious as Shane would like them to be, or that there was someone else. When he had dated Rose Landry last year, Jackie had been sure that she was the one he had been pining over for too long, but it became apparent pretty quickly that it wasn't her.

It was Lily. It had always been Lily. And that was lovely; Jackie was happy for him.

She just wished Shane was in a position to talk to them about it.

>>>

"God, this is nice," Jackie said, rubbing the blanket against her cheek.

"You're gonna get us thrown out of here if you keep acting like you've never felt good cashmere before," Shane said flatly.

"Not all of us have Rolex money to spend on this shit," Jackie teased, grabbing Shane's arm and rubbing the blanket against him.

"Nice try, but I know how much Hayden makes," Shane rolled his eyes. "Oh, that is nice."

"Look at the navy, that would look so good against your couch," Jackie pointed out.

"Yeah, it's nice," Shane said, stepping back to look at the shelf of options before he reached for a baby blue blanket.

"I don't know if that will compliment your furniture," Jackie wrinkled her nose. She loved Shane, but she understood why he hired an interior decorator, or why he dragged her out to shop for things with him.

"It's for the bedroom," Shane murmured.

She watched as he grabbed the deep berry one she had grabbed and added it to the pile of stuff in his cart, walking off for her to follow.

“I can buy that myself, you know!” Jackie called out as she trotted after him.

“Mm, but you won’t have to,” Shane said flatly.

“I’ve gotta say,” she said as she caught up, threading her arm through his elbow and forcing him to walk at a normal pace. “It’s nice having a sugar daddy best friend.”

“Don’t call me daddy,” Shane grimaced.

“Don’t most guys have a daddy kink?” Jackie teased.

“Not in my experience,” Shane retorted.

Jackie blinked at that as they made it to the register, helping Shane unload the cart and greet the cashier politely. She supposed she had no idea what sort of locker room talk men took part in. She’d ask Hayden when she was home.

>>>

Jackie heard Shane’s laugh before she saw him.

Her mother had come to stay for the weekend with her father travelling for work, giving her a blissful afternoon to herself. She’d gotten her nails done, taken herself out for a coffee and made her way down to the arena to catch the Metros play Toronto.

They dominated Toronto, of course. She watched Hayden and Shane skate circles around the rest of the players on the ice, biting her lip as Hayden wiped the sweat off of his face. *God*, he looked so good.

She needed to stay away from the wine tonight; she couldn’t risk baby number five.

Jackie hung around after the game, chatting to a couple of the other players wives before she caught Hayden’s eye. He smiled excitedly when he saw her, making a gesture about calling her as he filed off the ice. She watched the arena slowly empty as her phone buzzed.

Meet me at my car. We’re going to dinner. Already cleared with your mom.

Jackie couldn’t help but beam as she left the seats, going down the players hallway with a smile to the Metros rink staff and out the exit to the players’ car park where Shane was about ten paces ahead of her.

She would have gone and said hello, but he was *giggling* as he spoke to someone on the phone. She could see it even from behind, how relaxed and happy he was in his whole body.

“Please don’t,” Shane said, laughing again. “No, we have enough.”

Jackie sped up just a little, only about eight paces behind now.

“Well, it’s there for you, too,” Shane said. “Why don’t you replace the ones at your place?”

He was quiet as he approached his car. Jackie faltered when she realised she had no idea where Hayden had parked his car; she had been too single minded on eavesdropping on Shane. She felt ashamed as Shane dug into his pocket for his keys and unlocked his SUV.

“I mean, it’s up to you,” Shane said as he went to the back to throw his gear bag into the car. “If you wanna just replace it all when you move, we can do that, too.”

Moving. Was Boston Lily actually moving to Montreal to be with Shane? She had to ask Hayden about this at dinner.

Jackie breathed a sigh of relief when she saw Hayden’s car about eight spaces down from Shane’s, walking past him with a smile, ready to catch his eye, but he was just staring at the ground, his cheeks still flushed from his shower.

“Yeah, leaving now,” Shane was saying. “I’ll call you as soon as I’m home. Yeah, I know. I love you, too.”

Love. She was right – she knew Shane was in love.

She finally caught Shane’s eye as he climbed into the driver’s seat, waving and smiling when he saw her. Jackie considered stopping to talk to him, but she didn’t want to keep Lily waiting.

Ilya

It had started with such small things at first.

Shane always kept cokes in the fridge. He noticed what hot sauces Ilya liked best, and added them to his pantry next to his own favourites. He made space for Ilya’s things in his house, like space in the closet and a drawer in the bathroom. Shane had even noticed what brand of shaver he used and bought him a duplicate for Montreal. He had slippers at Shane’s house – and he had noticed the matching pair Shane brought for himself.

That in itself was enough to make Ilya’s heart flutter. This was *real*. They were slowly doing it, what they had talked about at the cottage; building a life together.

But the thing that had cracked his heart open and made him fall to his knees at Shane’s feet was the first time he went to the Montreal place after the summer. Shane met him at the bottom of the stairs, like usual. Ilya had kissed him and shoved him away, running up the stairs and throwing his arms up in victory when he won the race Shane hadn’t even been aware of.

“Asshole,” Shane shook his head.

“Too slow,” Ilya laughed, turning to unlock the door.

“I changed the code,” Shane said from behind him as he wound his arms around Ilya’s waist.

Ilya sagged against him a little, tipping his head back against Shane’s. “You going to tell me, or is it a secret?”

“2307,” Shane said, kissing his shoulder.

Ilya punched in the code, smiling when it turned green and let him in. He grabbed Shane’s wrist and took awkward, goofy steps into the apartment, breathing a sigh of relief at being home, or something like it.

“Wait,” he realised as Shane closed the door behind him. “Why did you change it?”

“Too many people know it,” Shane shrugged. “You’re the only person I want coming and going as you please.”

“Speaking of coming –”

“Fucks sake,” Shane rolled his eyes, but Ilya could see the smirk on his lips as he reached into the fridge and pulled out a dish covered in foil.

“Wait, what’s 2307?” Ilya asked.

Shane looked down at the oven, turning it on and busying himself with the settings. “It’s a date.”

Ilya smiled brightly; they were at the cottage in July. The days had blurred together, but –

“You made the new code the day we said I love you?”

Shane looked up at him, his cheeks a little pink with embarrassment, and *fuck* Ilya needed to taste him right now. “Is that stupid?”

“No,” Ilya said emphatically. “Come on, put that in the oven and come shower with me.”

Shane didn’t need to be told twice. He lowered the setting on the oven slightly and set a timer on his phone, rounding the counter and following Ilya up the stairs.

>>>

“What the fuck is this?”

Ilya rubbed his eyes, trying to make sense of why Shane sounded so furious. “Good morning.”

“Did you buy me a car?” Shane asked, clearly seething through the phone.

Ilya finally felt awake as he smirked to himself, stretching across his bed. “You like it?”

Shane was silent for a long moment. “Why did you buy me a car?”

“It’s safer in the snow than what you have now,” Ilya said.

It had been a no brainer, really. Shane had had the same car for almost as long as Ilya had known him. Ilya knew that Shane wasn’t a car guy, which was fine. Ilya could buy cars for the both of them. But he hadn’t loved how rough the Jeep had been, even in the perfect summer weather. He had mentioned it to Shane, but he didn’t seem to notice.

“I googled it, you spent too much money,” Shane said.

“Cheapest car I have ever bought,” Ilya dismissed.

It wasn’t. He had splurged for every single extra, wanting Shane to be as safe and comfortable as possible. And Svetlana had been the one to sell to him, so she got a hefty commission bonus from him.

“You spent –”

“I don’t want you sliding around the roads in the fucking snow, Hollander,” Ilya said, regretting the snippiness in his voice.

Shane took a deep breath. Ilya prepared himself for a fight, for another smart ass comment –

“Thank you, Ilya,” Shane said instead, his voice soft.

Ilya blinked, sitting up in bed for the first time since he woke up. “You’re not going to fight with me?”

“Not about this,” Shane said. “You wanted me to be safe.”

Ilya sighed and threw himself back down against his sheets. “Don’t make this a big deal.”

“Because you love me,” Shane said softly.

“Yes, Shane,” Ilya agreed. “Because I love you.”

>>>

It became a little easier after that, to give Shane things.

The painter Ilya had reached out to on Instagram over the summer had finally finished the commission he bought from her. He had blinked back the overwhelming feelings of joy and despair, both fighting for space in his heart, as he looked at the photo she sent him.

It was a perfect replica of the photo he had taken of the lake at sunrise. He had taken it on his last morning there, standing at the path before the dock, needing to immortalise it.

Shane loved those grand design shows, Ilya had learned. He loved watching how things were made, and he was always fascinated by the art discussions that people had. *I can’t ever tell what makes it good*, Shane had complained to him. *Random shapes, how is that art?*

Do you like it? Ilya had asked. Shane had shrugged, and Ilya had said *if you like it, then it is art to you.*

Then he had arranged for the painting to get shipped to Montreal as an early Christmas present for Shane, and Shane had said that he loved it, and that without question, this was art.

“It doesn’t really go with my apartment, though,” Shane pouted on their FaceTime call.

“It will match our house next year,” Ilya waved off.

He had said it nonchalantly, but he was watching Shane’s reaction carefully as he said it. He could see the way Shane’s eyes lit up, elation and excitement at the thought, and it made him so happy and horny and lonely, stuck in Boston by himself.

>>>

It went both ways though, these huge ways they were building this partnership together, and every time, Ilya was overwhelmed.

Shane gave him a key to the cottage, telling him that he’d changed the locks and now they were the only two people with access. He told him that he was even getting a gate installed, so there’d be no surprise visits.

Ilya had given Shane a key to his Boston house in return, even though he’d probably only use it two or three times before the season was over and Ilya would sell it.

They looked at Ottawa real estate together, talking about how many bedrooms they wanted and how big their backyard had to be and high fences for privacy and a proper tree line out front. Ilya noticed himself buying more dark brown sweaters in soft fabrics, subconsciously choosing a new favourite colour. Shane’s house looked bluer than ever in turn.

The kicker came when Shane handed him a bank card with a sticker over the front, covering his name.

“Here,” Shane said, tossing it at him unceremoniously.

“What is It?”

“I opened up an account with the Royal Bank of Canda,” Shane shrugged. “You should probably do the same when you move here. For like, citizenship and stuff.”

“Okay,” Ilya agreed, still confused by the card in his hand. “But what is *this*?”

“Oh, like, I guess we can’t really have a shared account, but I thought we can start putting money aside in one place for next year?” Shane suggested.

A joint bank account. Ilya looked down at the card in his hand, unsure of what to think. His father hadn’t given his mother access to his money; instead, he had given her cash every week to buy food, demanding change after every visit to the butchers and the grocer’s.

And here was Shane, giving him a bank card that Ilya had no right to like it was nothing.

He looked at Shane, frowning when he saw Shane's face fall.

"Shit, I should have asked first," Shane grimaced. "We haven't really talked about money."

"We haven't had to, we have so much," Ilya waved off. "We will never fight about money."

Shane watched him for a moment before he nodded. "No, I know. But I should have asked if you would have preferred to have an account in your name that I put money into."

"No, this is fine," Ilya said, cutting himself off before his voice cracked. "I didn't know someone being so practical and crazy could be so sexy."

Shane looked like he was struggling to choose between feeling flattered or offended, before he seemed to settle on both.

"You're welcome, you asshole," he shook his head.

Ilya laughed, turning the card over in his hand. "Come here."

Shane moved towards Ilya, letting him be pulled down to the couch before Ilya pushed him down and kissed him.

"So it's okay?" Shane checked as Ilya kissed his neck.

"Yes, it's very good," Ilya panted. "Put your hand down my pants and be quiet."

Shane laughed as he did what he was told. He bent down to suck Shane's nipple into his mouth, wondering how he got so lucky as to be with someone who would flay their entire life open to make space for Ilya like this.

He didn't think he'd ever have this.

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