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KISS & TELL

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A D I B K H O R R A M

KISS & TELL



DIAL BOOKS

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**FOR EVERYONE WHO'S
EVER BEEN AFRAID TO SING
ALONG TO BOY BANDS—
BUT SECRETLY WANTED TO**

COME SAY HELLO: KISS & TELL'S
NEW STADIUM TOUR SELLS OVER A
MILLION SEATS IN SECONDS

NewzList

Date: February 12, 2022

With stops at stadiums and arenas across North America, Canadian sensation Kiss & Tell's *Come Say Hello* tour promises spectacle and song for their legions of tween fans. Tickets went on sale at 8:00 A.M. Pacific Standard Time, and within minutes, heartbroken fans were getting error messages and sold out notifications; by 10:30, the entire tour had sold out. Estimates put the number of tickets sold at upwards of 1,000,000 seats.

Kiss & Tell member Hunter Drake, who is openly gay, has promised that fifty front-row seats at each concert will be given free of charge to local LGBTQ+ youth, and a portion of each concert's proceeds will benefit local LGBTQ+ shelters.

CHECK OUT THE FULL TOUR SCHEDULE BELOW

March 25-27: Vancouver, BC

March 28: Seattle, WA

March 29: Portland, OR

March 31-April 2:
Los Angeles, CA

April 3: Las Vegas, NV

April 4: Phoenix, AZ

April 5: Salt Lake City, UT

April 6: Denver, CO

April 7: Albuquerque, NM

April 8: Austin, TX

April 9: Houston, TX

April 12: Dallas, TX

April 13: Oklahoma City, OK

April 14: Kansas City, MO

April 15: St. Paul, MN

April 16-17: Chicago, IL

April 19-21: New York, NY

April 22: Boston, MA

April 23: Philadelphia, PA

April 24: Hershey, PA

April 26: Montreal, QC

April 28: Baltimore, MD

April 29-30: Washington, DC

May 1: Raleigh, NC

May 2: Charleston, SC

May 3: Atlanta, GA

May 4: Orlando, FL

May 5: Miami, FL

May 7: Nashville, TN

May 8: Louisville, KY

May 9: Columbus, OH

May 10: Detroit, MI

May 12-14: Toronto, ON

May 17-19: Mexico City

Kiss & Tell's Ian Souza Rates Cheese Bread Recipes

***Build a Poutine Order and We'll Tell You Who Your Kiss & Tell
Soulmate Is***

HUNTER DRAKE & AIDAN NIGHTINGALE

CALL IT QUILTS

TRS (The Real Scoop)

Date: March 5, 2022.

BREAKING 11:15 A.M.: Kiss & Tell singer Hunter Drake and his boyfriend Aidan Nightingale (twin brother of Hunter's bandmate Ashton) have broken up after two years, a source close to the band has confirmed.

Fans got to know the couple—called Haidan by their shippers—in a series of candid videos posted last year during rehearsals for Kiss & Tell's first tour. The couple met while playing youth hockey and started dating while Hunter was recovering from a career-ending injury and subsequent knee reconstruction.

While rumors of unhappiness have followed the pair for the last six months, they were spotted together at Granville Island Public Market on Valentine's Day, sharing artisanal doughnuts. Posts on Nightingale's social media showed what seemed to be a happy couple.

The news comes just weeks before Kiss & Tell's *Come Say Hello* tour is set to kick off with three nights in Vancouver, BC.

UPDATE 7:05 P.M.: Hunter has confirmed the breakup via Instagram. In a brief post, he said he will “always love” Aidan but that their lives were taking them in different directions.

***Ashton Nightingale Surprises Fans With Shirtless Jog
Around Kits Beach***

Singer Kelly K Comes Out As Bisexual

SET LIST

BC Place (1 of 3) – March 25, 2022

Heartbreak Fever

Found You First

Young & Free

By Ourselves

Find Me Waiting

Competition

No Restraint

Kiss & Tell

Intermission

Come Say Hello

Missing You

Wish You Were Here

My Prize

Chances

Prodigy

Your Room

Poutine

1

VANCOUVER, BC • MARCH 25, 2022

I can hear them out there: the buzz of excitement, the occasional whistle or shout. The electric anticipation, humming against my skin, as 36,000 people wait for us to take the stage.

I used to feel this way before games, too, and that was only a few hundred people at best: parents and grandparents, friends if they're not too busy, siblings if they're not pissed off that day.

But this is the home game to end all home games. This is BC Place. We've never played a stadium before.

Owen's bouncing on his feet in front of me, rolling his mic back and forth between his hands. I can't see the rest of the guys in the dim blue backstage light, but I'm sure they're just as anxious.

The vibration of the audience makes its usual pre-show shift, like they can tell we're about to start. Shaz, our stage manager, says something into her radio. The brim of her cap casts her face in shadow.

The preshow video starts, a bass drum beating out a low heartbeat. Slow-motion video of us laughing, singing, goofing off fills the screens on stage, not that we can see them from back here. The audience goes wild, clapping and screaming so loud I can't hear anything else. I pop my in-ear monitors in, make sure they're snug. At the front of the line, Shaz taps Ashton on the shoulder, and we take our places in darkness. Haze condenses against my eyelashes and I blink the moisture away.

Drumsticks click. The guitars kick in, and then the keyboards, for the first chords of "Heartbreak Fever." The audience cheers even louder.

I find my mark, a little spot of glow tape, and glance offstage out of habit. Last time we played a show at home, Aidan was watching from the wings, cheering me on. Not this time.

I stare out into the arena. A constellation of mobile phones and exit signs twinkle through the dark.

I get that urge to vom again, but it's swallowed by adrenaline as a spotlight picks up Ashton at center stage. He shakes his hair off his face as the crowd screams. He waves, struts downstage, brings his mic to his mouth and sings.

He ain't got no game
Just a dimple in his chin,
A twinkle in his eye,
A gentle laugh, and then

Stage right, another spotlight picks up Ethan, who gives a cheesy grin. He's trying out a new hairstyle, sort of swoopy, and the stage lights turn his inky black hair almost blue.

He whispers "Are you listening?
I wanna see you smile."
He promises a dance but then
He leaves with no goodbye

Ian's next, with his shy smile, hand over his heart; across the stage, Owen jumps as his light finds him, and they sing in harmony.

Oh

I can't shake this feeling,
I just can't believe, no,
I've just got to sweat it out,
This heartbreak fever—

The bridge hits, and my body crackles with electricity. This feeling, at least, is familiar. It's the same thing I used to

feel at the starting buzzer, when I knew the puck was mine.

It's euphoria. There's no other word for it.

The spotlight blinds me as I lift my mic and sing.

I'm still floating as the last chord of "Poutine" rings and the lights cut to black. The crowd is still screaming, crying, even throwing a few flowers toward the stage as the lights come up for our last bow, but the barricade is far enough back they can't actually reach us.

No underwear this time, which is a relief, because gross.

We wave and smile and exit stage right, duck between two pieces of scenery (a stylized Lions Gate Bridge and a huge maple leaf, which both double as video walls) and head to our dressing rooms. We've only got five minutes before the meet and greet.

Ahead of me, Ashton spins around to walk backward. He's breathing hard. We all are.

"That was awesome!" His canines show when he smiles, and I can't stop myself from grinning back. "Do you think every night's going to be like this?"

Next to me, Owen says, "I hope so."

Ashton smiles wider and turns around, nearly skipping to his dressing room door.

Ethan grabs my shoulders from behind, almost hanging off me, as he laughs in my ear. "It's only gonna get better." He gives me a shake and turns toward his own dressing room.

Mine is the last one on the right. I duck inside and peel my

black T-shirt off, wipe my chest and armpits with the towels on the little table, and put on some fresh deodorant. I tug at the waistband of my jeans to try to get some airflow down there, because I have terrible swampass, and my underwear's giving me a wedgie.

I pull on an identical dry T-shirt, pop in a couple breath mints, and try to salvage my sweat-soaked hair as best I can. It's not as bad as helmet hair, but then again, I wasn't getting photographed after games.

I wash my hands, take a deep breath, and step back out into the hallway. Ashton's already done and waiting, leaning against his door. His eyes brighten, blue turned nearly gray in the fluorescent lights. He looks so much like Aidan it makes me ache.

We broke up over a month ago. When is it going to stop hurting?

"Hunter?"

"Yeah?" I fix my face and put my smile back on. "Tonight was great, eh?"

"It was fucking amazing."

Ashton says it like we've never done a concert before.

Then again, this is the biggest by far. Last tour we were in theaters and smaller arenas, not stadiums.

Not BC Place.

"It was pretty fucking cool," I agree. "Come on. Let's go meet your adoring fans."

"You mean yours!"

“Ours, then.” I smack his shoulder and lead him into the hall toward the Reception Suite.

The meet and greet is packed. Ashton’s line is the longest (like usual), but the rest of us have pretty respectable lines too. For some reason, my line has a weirdly high proportion of moms.

I don’t know why moms like the gay boy so much.

Some of the people in line are crying as they meet me. I thank them for coming, sign their posters, pose for pictures.

“I came out because of you,” one kid says.

“You’re such a good role model,” their mom says.

“I’m sorry about Aidan.”

“Your music got me through some tough times.”

“I want to be like you when I grow up.”

“Do you think you and Aidan are going to get back together?”

“Is it okay if I hug you?”

There’s a crew shooting footage for our documentary, and one of the camera guys is hovering over my shoulder. I think his name is Brett. All the camera guys so far have had the same full beards and worn the same black Henleys and black cargo pants, so it’s hard to tell.

When the shelter kids come through, I drop my fake smile and put on my real one.

It’s really overwhelming sometimes, to be honest, meeting people my age who got kicked out of their homes, disowned, hurt by the people that are supposed to love them the most.

And it makes me feel kind of shitty, too, because I'm a rich white gay cis boy and so many of them are poor and brown and trans.

I thought they'd be sad. I thought they'd be mad at the world for the way it never cares enough for queer kids unless they look like me. But they're laughing and smiling and telling each other jokes, accepting my hugs and thanking me for the tickets.

The lines finally start to dwindle. I'm the last one done, after thanking the shelter director for bringing her kids out tonight. I'm a terrible person because I've already forgotten her name, but she's wearing rose-tinted glasses and a huge, dimpled smile.

"Thank you for making this happen," she says. "I haven't seen our kids this happy in a long time."

I shake my head and fiddle with the cap of my empty water bottle. "I'm glad we could do it."

"These kids are lucky to have you to look up to."

My freckles itch as she shakes my hand and walks away. Once she's out of the room, I collapse back into my seat and sigh. I'm a wrung-out towel.

"Hey," a low voice says to my side. I start and turn to find Kaivan Parvani leaning against the wall behind me.

Kaivan and his brothers are our opener—PAR-K. (I still can't believe we get to have an opener this tour.) I've seen them around, during sound check and stuff, but haven't really gotten to talk to any of them.

Kaivan's my age, with short cropped black hair, thick eyebrows, and dark brown eyes. He's PAR-K's drummer, which means he's got drummer's forearms, which I have to admit I find kind of sexy. They're brown and corded and crossed over his black tank top.

I take a sip from my water bottle but then remember it's empty.

"That was awesome," Kaivan says.

"Thanks. You guys were great too." I only heard the first bit of their set, but they've got a good sound, edgy yet somehow nostalgic.

"I meant what you did, here. Like, with the queer kids. That was really cool."

I start to blush, because Kaivan is looking at me with his big brown eyes like I'm some sort of hero, and I'm not.

"Cheers. I mean, I try."

"Well, it means a lot to all of us queer kids, seeing you out there doing this."

I blink at Kaivan, and now it's his turn to blush.

"I guess I'm gay too," he says softly. "I came out a couple months ago."

"Oh. Wow. Congrats, dude."

I can't believe I missed that. But there's this lightness in my chest, like the ringing of a celeste.

I'm not the only gay boy on this tour.

Kaivan shrugs. "It was easier, you know? Seeing you out there? Made it less scary."

“Wow. I mean, I’m glad. I mean, does The Label know?”

“They do now,” Kaivan laughs. “Our manager was kind of hesitant about it, but I told him if they were fine with you, they’d have to be fine with me.”

“That’s awesome.” I’m smiling like a goof, and he probably thinks I’m a weirdo, so I ask, “What’s your story, eh? No one ever tells us anything.”

“The usual story? Wrote some songs, got picked up by The Label, got lucky I guess?”

“Nah, you guys sound good.”

“Thanks. But it’s still luck. Lots of bands sound good.”

“It helps that you’re good-looking too,” I say before I can stop myself.

But he is good-looking. He’s got the kind of face that demands attention, a smile that deserves to have songs written about it.

I clear my throat and look at my hands. “Sorry. That was super awkward.”

“It’s cool. You are too.”

I bite my lip to stop myself from smiling, but I’m sure he can see my blush. I’m a ginger: When I blush, you can see it from space.

“It’s all a clever ruse,” I say, because he’s looking me in the eye and there’s this weird tension between us.

But Kaivan laughs, and the tension seems to relax, though it doesn’t go away entirely. I take the chance to scan the

room. The other guys are gone, except for Ashton. He hangs by the door, head cocked to the side in a question. I wave him off and stand, running a hand through my hair.

“I guess we’re the last ones out. Where’s The Label putting you guys up?”

“The Fairmont?”

“Oh wow. I’ve never stayed there.” It’s this super fancy hotel downtown. “I’m kind of jealous.”

“You’re not there too?”

“Nah, Mom wanted me to stay home until we hit the road.”

“Aww.” Kaivan opens the door for me and follows me down the hall. The back of my neck tingles from his proximity. I think I’ve got butterflies in my stomach. Actual butterflies.

It’s been over a month since Aidan and I broke up, and some days I still wake up missing him. I promised myself I wouldn’t like anyone new until after this tour. That I’d focus on myself.

I can’t be into a new guy. Even if he is cute. Even if he does have those little dimples in his shoulders, and the kind of collarbone I want to press my lips against.

I take a deep breath, try to think about something else, but instead I get a whiff of his scent. He’s wearing some sort of inky cologne, vetiver maybe, but underneath is sweat and warm skin.

I don’t let myself wonder what he tastes like.

I'm just pent up, that's all. I'll be fine once I get back home and take care of myself.

Kaivan and I are going to be friends—I desperately need queer friends, especially on tour—but that's it.

KISS & TELL'S HUNTER DRAKE

ON LIFE, LOVE, HOCKEY, AND MUSIC

Profile in Perception Magazine, January 21, 2022 issue

It started as a joke: five Vancouver teenagers singing a jokey song about poutine, the Canadian fast-food favorite. No one could've predicted the explosion that followed. The teens' viral music video quickly caught the attention of manager Janet Lundgren. Lundgren, in turn, connected the boys—Ashton Nightingale, Ethan Nguyen, Ian Souza, Owen Jogia, and Hunter Drake—with executive Bill Holt at The Label, which released their debut album.

Kiss & Tell's fans have embraced the ethnically diverse band's impressive harmonies, charming musicality, and lyrics (largely penned by Drake) that alternate between wry and heartfelt.

A former youth hockey player, Hunter wrote "Poutine" while recovering from a knee injury, and convinced his friends to record it in their school's cafeteria using their iPhones. *Perception* caught up with him at a tea shop in Vancouver's Kerrisdale neighborhood.

PM: Your second studio album just came out. How are you feeling about it? Nervous? Excited?

HD: All of those things. Also tired and a little nauseated. There's a lot of pressure on us to make sure this album is even better than our first one.

PM: You were a driving force behind that album, and *Come Say Hello* as well. Where do you get your ideas?

HD: I mean, it's a team effort. Did you know Owen's a classically trained pianist? So he wrote some of the songs, and helped produce both albums too. Some of my favorites are the ones where he did the music and I did the lyrics. And on this new one, we convinced Ian to contribute some lyrics too. I guess maybe we bullied him after we saw him writing poetry one day. But they're really good.

I don't know, I really enjoy the whole collaborative process. It's like being on a team again. I miss that about hockey.

PM: You were on track for a career in hockey, weren't you?

HD: Yeah, I was the top scorer in our league. Me

and Aidan and Ashton were unstoppable on the ice. I thought I'd get a scholarship to play for UBC or something, maybe study sports medicine and become a physical therapist. Either that or make it to the NHL, but everyone hopes that'll happen and the statistics aren't great, right? Especially for gay guys.

PM: That didn't stop you from coming out while you were playing, though?

HD: No. I thought about it a lot, but me being gay was kind of obvious if you know what I mean. But it was cool. The team was cool. And, you know, Aidan came out a couple years later, and we know how that turned out.

PM: Indeed. It's safe to say you're everyone's favorite gay couple.

HD: I don't know about that.

PM: Why do you say that?

HD: I don't know. We're two middle-class white boys. I don't think we're supposed to be, like, the face of queer liberation or anything. We're both still figuring all this out, and now there's this spot-

light on us. And I want to do good—we want to do good—but it's not always easy to figure out what good looks like. But on this new tour, we're giving out tickets to local queer youth, and donating to shelters and stuff. The Label was really cool about helping me set that up.

PM: That's amazing. I'm sure it'll make a difference.

HD: Cheers. I think that's giving me too much credit, but it feels like a start.

KISS & TELL DOCUMENTARY

Footage transcription

003/04:12:57;00

IAN: So, we've just finished our first night at BC Place.

ASHTON (O/S): B! C! PLACE!

IAN: It's strange. Usually we'd all get on the bus to our next stop, or get in a car and go to a hotel if we're spending the night. But tonight we're just going back home.

ETHAN (O/S): I need a shower, dude, I've got BO like you wouldn't believe.

OWEN (O/S): We believe it.

IAN: And I got a text from my stepdad asking me to start the dishwasher before I go to bed. It's weird, like, we've just started this big tour, but I've still got chores for a few days.

OWEN: My mom's getting weird.

IAN: Oh yeah?

OWEN: Yeah, I caught her crying yesterday looking at photos from last tour. She'll be fine though.

IAN: Yeah. Like I was saying, it's weird, but it's good. We'll be on the road for almost three months. I'm gonna be stuck with these guys. Hey, where's Hunter?

ETHAN: I think he was talking to one of the PAR-K guys.

IAN: Really? Ashton, you see him?

ASHTON: Huh? Oh. Yeah.

IAN: Cool.

2

VANCOUVER, BC • MARCH 25, 2022

I'm not sure how it happens, but Kaivan and I keep talking as I head to my dressing room to pack up, and since he's in the middle of a story, he follows me right in.

"So The Label decided since we were PAR-K we should do parkour for our music video."

I shake my head. The Label can be truly ridiculous.

"What happened? I'm listening," I say as I step into the washroom in the corner. I grab my Invisaligns out of their case and give them a rinse before popping them in, then stuff everything into my backpack.

Kaivan's half sitting on the armrest of the beige pleather couch. "Well, Kamran used to run track, so he wasn't super awful, but Karim tried a somersault and managed to sprain his wrist and bruise his tailbone."

"Ouch."

“Yeah, The Label freaked out about it, so then they tried to make it into a super-choreographed dance video.”

“Oh yeah? You got any sweet moves?”

“No way, I don’t dance. And we didn’t want it to be like all those other bands, you know?”

I shake my head. I mean, me and the guys do lots of choreo, for our videos and for our shows. It’s hard work, but it’s a lot of fun.

“Just, you know what they say, people only dance if they can’t actually sing.”

“Wow.” I must pull a face, because Kaivan holds up his hands.

“Sorry, I didn’t mean it that way. You guys can do it all. But you know, me and my brothers . . . we were going for a certain look, and The Label kept trying to push us in a different direction, to be what they wanted instead of what we wanted.”

“Okay, I get that. So what happened?”

“Well, we finally got them to scrap the idea and let us do a concert video instead. Kind of basic but at least it felt like us.”

I rest my hip against the other end of the couch, but my knee is starting to ache, so I let myself slide down onto the seat. Kaivan slides down to sit next to me.

“Okay, I told you mine, what’s your best horror story?”

“Oh man. There are so many.” Like our first video, for “Kiss & Tell,” where no one got the memo I was gay and they tried to have me kiss a girl, before Janet finally got it sorted out.

Or the one for “No Restraint,” where they tried to make it look like Ashton was hooking up with his schoolteacher.

Or even all the stuff with Aidan, like when one of Bill’s assistants asked if I was “really sure” Aidan and I were never getting back together.

“Okay. Got it. So, we did a cover of this song called ‘Don’t Speak’ for an AIDS charity, and we did a whole video too.”

Kaivan nods.

“We were shooting on the beach, standing in the surf, and I heard this weird *ting* sound, and one of the cables on the jib camera broke, and it sideswiped me.”

Kaivan’s eyes bug out. “Oh my god, really?”

“Yeah, got me right here,” I say, pointing to the right side of my rib cage. “Sent me tumbling under the water. Thankfully Ian fished me out. But I ended up with this huge bruise.” I splay out my hands to demonstrate.

“Holy shit.”

“Yeah, they had to wrap me up. And after, we did a whole press conference, and I had my ribs wrapped up, and they had like flown in a bunch of kids who had HIV, from Africa I think, and we had to do all these photos and the whole time I was grimacing because my everything hurt.”

“Dude . . . that’s kind of messed up.”

“I know, but they couldn’t reschedule.”

“No, I mean . . . flying kids in. Couldn’t they have just spent that money on more research or something?”

“Oh. Yeah.”

He's right.

"But you know how The Label is. They like good press." I clear my throat. "Besides, we raised over a million dollars. And me and the guys did a matching thing."

"That's cool," Kaivan says. "What did you do after, though, with your ribs?"

"Thankfully they were just bruised. We were mostly in the studio at that point, so I got to let them rest. Healed up fine." I pull up my shirt to show him.

"Ahh!" He acts like I've blinded him.

"Come on, I'm not that pasty."

He laughs. "Nah, you're fine."

I let my shirt fall and shift a little. The pleather couch cushions have slowly sunk, and my knee rests lightly against his, but it's weird. It feels warm, but in a comfortable way, not a sexy way. I smile.

"What?" he asks.

"Nothing. It's just nice. Talking to another gay guy for a change."

"Dude, you just talked to a whole line of queer kids."

"It's not the same. That's, like . . . it's not work, it's awesome, but it's kind of exhausting too. Hearing all their stories and stuff, it's really heavy. Trying to make the world better for those kids, and all the ones that couldn't come." I shake my head. "I mean, they're our age. That's . . ."

Kaivan nods.

“Anyway, that’s not really a conversation. Not like this. Us just talking.”

“I feel that.”

“Yeah.”

He studies my mouth for a second, which I only notice because I might be studying his eyes. They’re dark brown, but the lighting in here highlights the flecks of amber in them.

“What?” I ask.

“Are you wearing Invisaligns?”

I close my mouth.

“Hey, it’s cool, I had braces too. Mine had this thing in the roof of my mouth, and I had this key I had to crank every so often to expand my palette. It was awful.”

It sounds truly heinous, but it paid off, because Kaivan’s smile is luminous.

I should really stop looking at his mouth.

I can’t tell if he’s leaning in toward me or I’m leaning in toward him. And I honestly couldn’t say what I want to happen. Because he’s really attractive. But also, it just feels so nice to talk to someone like me. Ever since I got pulled out of school, I don’t really have gay friends to talk to.

Kaivan’s lips part, and I can’t tell if he’s going to say something or go in for a kiss, but a knock on my door startles me.

“Hunter? You in there?” Nazeer’s low voice asks.

Nazeer is our security lead. He’s like an escort/driver/sort-of-bodyguard when we need it.

I clear my throat. “Yeah. Sorry.” I glance at the clock on the wall. I was supposed to be outside ten minutes ago. “I got distracted. I’m ready.”

I turn back to Kaivan. “Sorry. My car . . .”

Kaivan stands. “It’s cool, my brothers are probably wondering where I am.”

He offers me his hand and I take it. It’s warm and callused, except for the meat of his palm, which is surprisingly smooth. He pulls me up.

“Thanks.”

He grins. “Anytime.”

I open the door, and Nazeer’s black eyes immediately shift to Kaivan behind me.

“Sorry,” I say again. “We were talking and lost track of time.” I hoist my backpack over my shoulder and grab my guitar case. “All set.”

Kaivan follows us out to the loading dock.

“Well,” he says.

“Yeah.” It feels weird, just saying bye. Not like this was a date or anything, but still.

Maybe it’s just that I’m tired, but I step close and give Kaivan an awkward one-armed hug and a quick peck on the cheek. It’s totally platonic.

But I’m not as careful as I should be and my guitar case smacks him in the face.

“Sorry!”

He just laughs and rubs the spot I kissed (and hit) with his fingers.

“All good. See you, Hunter.”

“Yeah. See you.”

I watch him head toward an idling SUV, then turn back to find Nazeer studying me.

“We really were just talking.”

Nazeer smirks at me, his thin lips twitching. “Come on. Better get you home.”

There’s still a crowd of fans lining Pacific Boulevard, headed toward the Skytrain Station. A few wave, like they know it’s me (or one of us at least), and I wave back even though no one can see me through the tinted windows.

A soft drizzle coats the windshield as Nazeer heads toward the Cambie Bridge.

“Good show?”

I catch his eyes in the rearview mirror and smile.

“The best.”

Mom’s already gone when I get home, working a night shift at the hospital. The apartment is dark and quiet, but I’m still too antsy to sleep, so I change out of my show clothes into a faded Canucks T-shirt and a pair of ocean-print leggings I bought off an Instagram ad a while back.

I used to be a sweatpants guy, but it turns out leggings are super comfy, plus I like the way my ass looks in them. I don’t

really have a hockey butt anymore, but it's still pretty good. Aidan always liked it.

There's a text from him. I must've missed it while I was in the car.

show okay?

I sigh and ignore it. I'm not in the mood to deal with him tonight.

Instead, I post a couple backstage photos from tonight, along with a thanks to everyone for coming and a link for people to donate to the shelters we're supporting. I plug my phone in to charge, brush my teeth, moisturize, and then curl up in bed with my notebook.

The Label's been on us to start recording our third album, but *Come Say Hello* only came out a couple months ago, and we've barely had time to breathe since then, with rehearsals and the documentary. Plus there's the tour. It's not that bad working on the road when we've got the bus, but once we're abroad and flying all around the world it'll be a lot more hectic.

And we have to make this one our best yet. Everyone knows a band's third album is what makes or breaks them.

Owen's already put together three demos that he wants me to write lyrics for. They're really good, a perfect evolution of our sound, but every time I pick up my notebook my mind goes blank.

I try free-writing some poetry, but it just ends up getting really dark really quick, because it doesn't take long for my thoughts to wander back to all those queer kids with sad sto-

ries to tell. I try really hard not to cry in front of them, but I want to. They're my age, and they've been kicked out of their homes; and here I am, safe and secure, whining about writer's block.

This knot of guilt spreads its coils through my stomach, but that just makes me angry at myself, because that's a useless, shitty feeling.

I just wish I knew how to make things better. Something that would make a difference

"Damn it." I wipe my eyes, grab my phone to check the time. It's filled with notifications already—comments and questions and likes on my post about the concert—but there's a follow notification too. From Kaivan.

I follow him back. Should I send him a message?

I type out a couple different ones, but they all sound either way too formal or way too sappy, so finally I just send him a wave emoji. Totally cool and neutral.

I'm still too antsy to sleep, so I slide my leggings down to jerk off, which always makes me sleepy. I imagine all the things me and Aidan used to do. Even when everything else was bad, the sex was good. But it's not Aidan I imagine; it's Kaivan. The way he smelled, the rumble of his voice, the strength of his shoulders when I hugged him, the way the stubble on his cheeks scratched against my lips when I kissed his cheek . . .

I run to the washroom to clean off, then find a cool spot on my pillow and finally fall asleep.

AIDAN NIGHTINGALE TURNED OFF INSTAGRAM COMMENTS AFTER THE END OF HAIDAN

NewzList Canada. Date: March 6, 2022

It's been less than 24 hours since Hunter Drake and Aidan Nightingale announced their breakup, and while most fans have been united in their mourning, some have settled in the "anger" stage of grief. While no reason has been given for the split, a small but vocal segment of fans have decided that Nightingale was at fault, flooding him with messages accusing him of "breaking Hunter's heart," calling him "a loser" and "an embarrassment."

Nightingale (and Drake) are no strangers to online harassment: The pair have faced homophobic abuse separately and as a couple, but this time the invective has taken on a much more personal note.

"You were never good enough for him!" one angry comment (since deleted) read; "Hunter deserves better!" another commenter wrote; "i'll never forgive you" wrote a third.

One user (since banned for terms-of-service

violation) even suggested Nightingale should kill himself.

Nightingale has since turned off comments on his posts. In his last post before locking down, he stated that people “don’t know the whole story.”

Drake, who unfollowed Nightingale in the wake of the split, has remained mum, except for a request for fans to “give [them] both space.”

Masha Patriarki Is Not Your Magical Negro

Pick a Pho Order and We’ll Tell You Which Ethan Nguyen Solo You Are

3

VANCOUVER, BC • MARCH 26, 2022

My alarm goes off at 6:30, which is pure homophobia, but Ashton's picking me up at 7:00. I cram a protein bar in my mouth as I pull on my sweats and pack my skate bag.

Mom gets home as I'm tying my shoes. Her green eyes have dark circles under them, but they crinkle up when she sees me.

"Hey, Hunter," she says, and pulls me into a hug. Her red hair's in a messy bun, and the stray strands tickle my cheeks. "Going skating?"

"Yeah." She kisses me on the cheek and pushes my messy hair off my forehead.

"Good show last night?"

"It was."

“Sorry I missed it.”

“Don’t be. How was work?”

Mom doesn’t really have to work anymore, with the money I make. I told her so. But she insists she likes her job as a neonatal nurse, and she won’t let me support her financially.

“Good,” she says. “Long.”

“Get some sleep,” I say. “Love you.”

“Love you.” She gives me another hug. I putter around in the kitchen, doing a couple dishes I should’ve done last night, until I get a text from Ashton that he’s here. I grab my bag, pull on my tuque, and head down.

“Okay,” Jill Nightingale says into her Bluetooth. “Okay. Uh-huh.”

She’s on the phone with Anthony, her ex-husband, Ashton and Aidan’s dad. Ashton turns around in his seat and gives me a sympathetic look.

Me and him and Aidan used to skate every day, before and after school. I’ve barely clocked any ice time lately, though. Rehearsals kept me too busy, and my knee wouldn’t take skating on top of the hours of choreography.

Plus, the rink reminded me of Aidan.

But we’re going to be on the road for three months, and who knows if we’ll have time or opportunity to go skating, so Ashton made me promise to come skate with him before we leave.

“No, he’s got to keep a C average, you know that.” Jill lets out an exasperated sigh. “You’ll have to, we leave Sunday right after the show.”

Jill’s going with us as our chaperone and tutor. Our parents wouldn’t let us leave school unless we got tutored to pass our Dogwoods.

“Well then ground him, I guess.”

I wonder what Aidan’s done. I know I shouldn’t care. Ashton turns toward his mom and opens his mouth, but he doesn’t get a chance to speak.

“I don’t know what else to tell you, Anthony. I told you that was a bad idea in the first place.”

We finally pull up to the rink, and I get out of Jill’s Prius as fast as I can, because otherwise I’m going to suffocate.

“Thanks!” I call as I close the door.

Ashton takes a little longer to get out, but when he does his shoulders slump.

“Sorry you had to hear that.”

Growing up around the Nightingales, I got used to Jill and Anthony arguing. “It’s fine.”

As soon as we step into the rink, though, Ashton transforms. He stands up straighter, and a smile dawns across his face.

I take a deep breath and enjoy the smell of fresh ice. There’s nothing like it.

We’re the first ones on the ice. It’s pristine, freshly Zam-boni’d, and the air in the rink is crisp and cool.

As soon as my blades hit the ice, I'm wide-awake. There's nothing in the world quite like it. I don't know who it was that woke up one day and decided to strap knives to their feet, but I'm glad they did.

I feel alive. It's different from performing, more primal.

It's euphoria.

Ashton's right behind me, watching like always, but I'm not going to fall. I take it slow, warming up my knees as I do some easy laps, working my crossovers. Ashton passes me and turns around to glide backward.

"So." He narrows his eyes at me.

"So?"

"Kaivan Parvani, huh?"

"We were just talking."

"Yeah?" Ashton gives me a toothy smile, the same one Aidan used to give, and my heart does this weird twinge because most of the time I'm still pretty pissed at Aidan but sometimes I just miss him. I'm never sure which feeling I'm going to get, but being here, on the ice, is making it worse.

Sometimes it really sucks, being best friends with your ex's twin brother. Sometimes Ashton will smile or laugh or something, and it'll remind me so much of Aidan it aches.

"It's totally platonic," I explain. "In case you haven't noticed, I don't have a lot of queer people around to talk about stuff with."

I mean, we've got a few queer people on our crew, but that's not the same. They're all older, for one thing. And

they're all guarded around me, for another, which I guess makes sense since I'm "the talent," but it still sucks. The only one I ever really talk to is Patricia, my guitar tech, this cool lesbian from Kamloops.

"Okay, fair point." He does a quick loop around me. "How're the new songs coming?"

I groan.

"That bad? Still got writer's block?"

"It's not writer's block." I can't have writer's block. We've got to get this album written.

"You know Bill said we could bring on other writers if we want."

"We don't need other writers."

That's always been our thing: We write all our own stuff. We're not going to change that on my account. I've just got to focus.

"Hunt, if it's too much pressure, it's okay to ask for help."

"It's fine, really." It's going to be fine. I definitely don't have writer's block.

We skate in silence for a while, the only noise the music of steel edges against smooth ice.

"Aidan said he texted you last night," Ashton says after a while.

"He did?"

From the moment we started dating, me and Aidan made a rule: We wouldn't talk about the other to Ashton, because

it wasn't fair to put him in the middle of our stuff, whether it was good or bad.

There were lots of other rules, too, though The Label liked to call them “branding” while we were dating and “crisis management” after we broke up.

“Yeah,” Ashton says. “You didn't get it?”

“No, I got it,” I say. “I meant, he told you that?”

“Oh. Yeah.”

I still haven't answered the text. I'm probably not going to.

“I'm sorry. I didn't want you to get stuck in the middle of us.” His parents always played tug-of-war with him and Aidan, and I won't let that happen with me.

“I know.” He sighs. I wonder exactly how much Aidan has told him. I wonder what percent of it is true. “I'm okay, Hunt. Really. And I can still love you both even if you don't love each other.”

“Thanks, Ash.”

“Now, you warmed up? Wanna race?”

There's no way I'll win, but that doesn't matter. “You're on.”

I'm sweaty but happy when the buzzer sounds the end of public skate. Ashton and I head back to the bleachers to take our skates off.

As I massage my right arch, which has been cramping a little, my phone buzzes. Kaivan's finally answered my



Hey

Hey!

Know any good lunch spots near me?

Hotel keeps suggesting fancy places.

“Hunt?”

“Huh?”

Ashton’s studying me with the hint of a grin. “You’re smiling.”

“Am not.”

But to Kaivan I send:

You like sandwiches?

KISS & TELL: THE BOYBAND

OF THE FUTURE?

VAN ART, December 16, 2021

On paper, Kiss & Tell seems like just another group of good-looking baritones hoping to make money off a coveted demographic—but the group has quickly proved themselves anything but. A delightful mosaic of ethnicities (there are Vietnamese-, Brazilian-, and Indian-Canadian members) and an out gay member (Hunter Drake) make the band feel refreshingly representative of Canada today. That diversity is paying dividends in fans' imaginations, especially Drake's high-profile romance with band-mate Ashton Nightingale's twin brother Aidan. The two first started dating shortly before Kiss & Tell broke out with a self-produced YouTube music video shot on iPhones in and around the members' Kerrisdale secondary school.

Drake and both Nightingale brothers got to know each other playing youth hockey before an accident and subsequent knee replacement ended Drake's hopes for a hockey career, but Drake spent the time in recovery writing songs that he even-

tually convinced Ashton—plus their classmates Ethan Nguyen, Ian Souza, and Owen Jogia—to help record.

“It started as kind of a joke,” Drake recalled in an early interview. “We were all in choir together. Our teacher always called us the Back Row Boys, because we were always laughing and joking and stuff. And we just started making little videos for fun.”

After the viral success of “Poutine,” the boys quickly signed with The Label.

“It took us a long time to pick a name,” Drake said. “I got voted down when I suggested ‘Queerly Canadian.’ I think it was Ian who suggested Kiss & Tell, and everyone liked the sound of it.”

Though Aidan Nightingale didn’t join the band, he was never far from the action: As the band geared up for their first tour, cameras caught the couple cuddling during downtime at rehearsals, playing hockey in the hallways, and sharing kisses when they thought no one was looking.

A shaky, poorly lit video of Hunter serenading Aidan with one of the band’s new songs immediately went viral, with over five million views to date.

Describing the start of their relationship, Drake recalled, “Aidan and Ashton have been my best friends since I was like ten and we ended up in Atom league together. And then when I came out,

and later Aidan came out, things just kind of happened. After my accident, when Kiss & Tell started looking like maybe it was going to be a real thing, he was always super supportive and sweet.”

That has certainly resonated with the band’s fans.

“I love Haidan,” Cam, a young person from Burnaby, said, referring to the “ship name” fans have assigned Drake and Nightingale. “They’re so pure!”

Linda, Cam’s mom, agreed. “Even though it’s two boys, they’re respectful and showing what a healthy relationship looks like for their fans. I hope my child will date someone like that.”

4

VANCOUVER, BC • MARCH 26, 2022

I shower at home, then catch the bus to meet Kaivan in Gastown. With a tuque covering my hair and a pair of aviators that take up half my face, no one notices as I sit in the back and play on my phone, reporting dick pics.

I get sent a lot of dick pics. And buttholes too. I don't know what's wrong with people.

I get off outside Harbour Centre and make my way to Sammies. Kaivan's waiting outside, in a plain gray jacket and black jeans.

"Hey," I say.

He looks up from his phone. "Hey! This place smells amazing."

I get the door for him. "Wait until you taste."

Sammies is this little hole in the wall that makes the best

sandwiches in Vancouver, if not the world. They serve them on fresh-baked rosemary focaccia, and they use this olive tapenade instead of mayo or mustard.

I pull off my shades as we get in line.

“What’s good?” Kaivan asks.

“Everything.”

“What’s your favorite?”

“Smoked turkey.”

We order two of them. Kaivan insists on paying, since The Label’s giving him a per diem for food, but when I point out I get one too, he just says, “Never argue with an Iranian over a bill. There’s no future in it.”

So I smile and let him buy me a sandwich.

The other thing that makes Sammies amazing: The sandwiches are huge. Like, as big as my head, wrapped in white-and-red-checked paper that’s already soaking up the olive oil oozing from the bread.

“Oh no,” Kaivan says when he sees them. “This looks amazing.”

We grab a corner of the dark wood counter running along the windows, and I grab a handful of brown paper napkins for us, because things tend to get messy.

As we eat, Kaivan asks me about growing up here: what school was like, what I do for fun, where I like to eat.

“There used to be this macaroni and cheese bar in Kerrisdale,” I tell him. “Real close to the rink where I skate. You’d

pick your noodle and your cheese and your toppings and they'd make it in a little cast-iron skillet for you. It closed a couple years ago, though."

Kaivan tells me about growing up in Columbus, Ohio. About his family, and his brothers.

"You guys have been to North Van, right?" I ask. "Where all the Iranian shops and restaurants are?"

Kaivan's eyebrows furrow for a second before he laughs. "Yeah, we went there for Nowruz."

"Nowruz?"

"Persian New Year. Couple days ago."

"Oh," I say, and my freckles itch. "Sorry."

"It's cool," he says. He leans in toward me. "You've got . . ."

He gestures at my mouth, and I wipe at it with a napkin.

"Did I get it?"

"No. Here." He uses his own napkin to wipe at my lip. My skin tingles where his thumb brushes my jaw, and my freckles burn.

"Thanks."

We talk for hours: about the music industry, songwriting, about touring.

"Make sure to eat lots of vegetables," I tell him. "That's the hardest thing to get on tour."

"You brought me to a sandwich shop!"

"I mean, it had lettuce on it!"

He balls up a napkin and bounces it off my chest.

He's genuinely easy to talk to. I didn't realize how much I missed having gay friends. Back in school, I was in the QSA, but I haven't had a real queer community since I quit school.

"Shit," Kaivan says, looking at his phone. "Thirty minutes until sound check."

"Oh! We'd better go." I bus our trash and hold the door for Kaivan. The sun came out while we were talking, and downtown is bathed in the golden afternoon. "You need to go back to your hotel?"

"Nah." Kaivan shrugs his backpack at me. "All good."

"Cool." I pull my hat back on, but not before I get spotted by a couple girls across the street. I smile and wave as they snap a photo of me, then head toward Cambie. "Come on."

HUNTER DRAKE REBOUNDS

WITH KAIVAN PARVANI

TRS (The Real Scoop)

Date: March 26, 2022

Has Hunter Drake already found a new flame?

Photographers caught the Canadian singer at Sammies, an eatery in Vancouver's Gastown neighborhood, sharing a cozy meal with PAR-K drummer Kaivan Parvani. PAR-K is opening for Kiss & Tell on their *Come Say Hello* tour; the band is playing their second of three sold-out shows at Vancouver's BC Place tonight.

Drake recently parted ways with long-term boyfriend Aidan Nightingale; reps for both Drake and Parvani were unavailable to comment.

Owen Jogia's Colorful Holi Celebration

Ian Souza's Sweet Birthday Message to Lily Yeoh Sparks Dating Rumors

**TEXT MESSAGES RECEIVED BY
HUNTER DRAKE FROM AIDAN NIGHTINGALE**

March 27, 2022

Hey

You free?

I miss you

Delivered 11:35 AM

Are you really hanging out with that kaivn guy?

I thought you wanted to focus on yourself

Delivered 11:48 AM

You ignornig me???

Delivered 11:56 AM

I'm working

Please don't start against

Again*

I miss you h

I'm not starting anything, i just want to know

I deserve to know

Just leave me alone.

Fuck you

Not anymore

Slut

Delivered 12:11 PM

5

VANCOUVER, BC • MARCH 27, 2022

I hate interviews. I never know what to do with my hands.

And I like my voice, but something about being on camera makes me wonder if I sound gay. Which is ridiculous, since I am gay, but how much gay voice is too much?

We all let Ethan do most of the talking. He's funny and quick-witted and the hosts of *Sunday Morning*, Stacey and Nicole, are immediately charmed by him. I smile and nod along and hope I won't have to do any talking until—

“Now, Hunter, you've been through it lately, haven't you?”

I try to give a disarming laugh, because what else am I supposed to say to that? I glance toward Janet, who's standing offstage behind one of the cameras, but she shrugs at me.

“Your breakup was so unexpected,” Stacey says. She's a skinny white woman with perfect teeth, an alarming amount of eyeliner, and a pencil dress that looks impossible to walk

in. “And right before your tour, no less. How have you been coping?”

I hate talking about the breakup. It’s no one’s business but me and Aidan’s.

Everyone acts like they knew what my and Aidan’s relationship was like. They didn’t see our fights. They didn’t see the way Aidan got jealous when I was on tour, the way he texted me every time some tabloid wrote something about me, about him, about us.

They only saw what we shared on social media, what The Label wanted them to see. The cute pictures, the goofy dancing, the love songs. The Label approved all of it.

I shake my head and put on my game face. “I mean, like you said, we’re on tour, so that keeps me busy. Plus we’re working on our next album, and I’ve been pretty hands-on with that.”

Nicole, who is Chinese-Canadian and also wearing a metric ton of eyeliner and a blue pencil dress, does one of those Sympathetic Interviewer nods.

“So many of your songs are about love. Has the heartbreak made it hard to work at all?”

“I mean,” I start, but I don’t know how to answer that.

Yes. No. It’s not the heartbreak that’s hard, it’s the attention. It’s having people think that who I am on stage is the same as who I am at home. Who I am in bed.

Not literally, thank god. No one’s asked about what me and Aidan do—did—in bed. Not to my face.

The Internet is full of creeps.

“It’s a team effort,” Owen says, grabbing my shoulder. “So when Hunter’s feeling down, we step up to help. That’s what friends do.”

Stacey gives him a TV smile and turns back to me. “Well, it’s nice to hear you’re keeping your spirits up.” She turns to the camera. “When we come back, Hunter’s going to lend his keen eye to our Sunday Brunch setup. Invite the girls! You won’t want to miss it when *Sunday Morning* returns!”

I look toward Janet again, eyebrows raised, and she nods and starts typing on her phone.

I can’t believe I have to do another brunch segment.

Like all gay guys love brunch or are good at place settings or flower arranging or whatever.

The guys head offstage to get their mics taken off, while a PA leads me over to the kitchen set, which seems unnecessary since I could see the kitchen from the couch where we did the interview. TV studios are so much smaller in real life.

Brunch is already laid out on the kitchen island: scrambled eggs, roasted asparagus, a stack of English muffins so perfectly toasted they look fake, a plate of avocado wedges, little cups of espresso, a carafe of orange juice and a couple bottles of champagne with the labels turned away from the camera. Everything looks perfect and pristine, but there’s no steam rising, not even from the espresso. It’s all cold or fake or both.

I’m in a light blue button-up, my sleeves rolled Italian-style,

and black jeans. It's a new publicity look I picked for this tour, and I really like it.

A different PA hands me a salmon-colored apron to put over everything. I look heinous in salmon: It clashes with my freckles and my hair, which is "burnished copper" according to The Label's marketing but "red" according to normal people. Dad had red hair too, though it had turned more auburn by the time he died.

I think a producer realizes how awful I look, because the PA runs back with a pastel purple apron and ties it on me as we're being counted back in.

"And we are back with Kiss & Tell's Hunter Drake, here to help us plan the perfect Sunday brunch. Hunter, what's your favorite brunch staple?"

I summon up what I hope is a winning smile. "I mean, I'm trash for anything Florentine."

Stacey laughs and rests her hand on my bare forearm. "Well, I'm afraid we don't have any spinach today, but we've got a healthy, protein-rich scramble, sure to give you plenty of energy whether you're getting ready for a day at the park or a night of dancing."

I smile and nod as the ladies walk through the menu, and try not to flinch every time they rest their hands on my shoulders or comment on my hair or how I look in my jeans. "You've got to share your leg day routine," Nicole adds, with a cheesy television glance toward my ass and a wink to the camera.

“Now, no brunch is complete without a good, spicy Caesar, wouldn’t you say, Hunter?”

“Well, I wouldn’t know. I’m seventeen.”

“That’s right! Thankfully we’ve got all the fixings for a mocktail here, perfect for the kids.”

They make a virgin Caesar—just Clamato and some hot sauce—and then hand me the cocktail shaker to “see what I’ve got,” commenting on my technique and “strong arms” as I shake the cold metal as hard as I can.

I feel so gross, but I’ve gotten used to it. Mostly. We’ve all got our parts to play, and right now mine is the gay boy helping make brunch.

I help the ladies pick out napkins and napkin holders, set the table with mismatched plates and stemware that were all “antiquing finds,” and then toast our successful brunch with the virgin Caesar, which tastes awful.

And then it’s finally, finally over.

“Hey, thanks for being a good sport,” Nicole says once they’ve gone to commercial again.

“It was perfect,” Stacey agrees. “Can’t wait to have you back.” She gives my arm another squeeze, then takes her mark for her next segment.

I shake myself off and let a PA help me out of my apron and microphone. Janet’s waiting by the door, answering emails on her phone judging by the set in her jaw and the furrow between her brows, but she looks up when I approach.

“Good save, Hunter,” she says. Janet’s about my mom’s

age, or maybe a little older, with black hair that's always in a ponytail, brown eyes, and a little mole at the edge of her right eyebrow. She's white but always has a tan, even in the winter, and she's still got a hint of her Plains accent from growing up in Saskatoon. "I told The Label you weren't doing brunch segments anymore, but someone in publicity missed the memo. I'm getting it sorted out now."

"It's fine." I'm used to it by now. It just sucks, being singled out all the time.

"You sure?" Janet asks.

My throat is tight, and I take a couple breaths to try and loosen it up. It's not Janet's fault; she always looks out for us.

"I'm sure."

She gives me a nod. "Come on. The car's outside."

From: Bill Holt (b.holt@thelabel.com)

To: Janet Lundgren (janet@kissandtellmusic.com)

Subject: Re: Brunch again?!

3/27/22 1:32 P.M.

By the way, got updates for you on the FMW shoot. Booked a studio on the Universal lot, 3/30-4/2. How long can the boys shoot and still be fresh for concerts?

Finalizing cast for video now; see attached.

Thanks,

BH

From: Janet Lundgren (janet@kissandtellmusic.com)

To: Bill Holt (b.holt@thelabel.com)

Subject: Re: Brunch again?!

3/27/22 2:15 P.M.

Thanks Bill. I think 10am-4pm is the best we can do. Might be able to push to 9am, but they like to sleep in. Will talk with them and circle back.

Cast looks good.

Thanks,

Janet

6

VANCOUVER, BC • MARCH 27, 2022

Sunday night, after our final show at BC Place, we board our bus and hit the road.

We got a new bus for this tour, with comfier beds, a better lounge, and most importantly, a recording studio in the back. When we're parked and plugged in, we can actually record in there, instead of soundproofing a random room with mattresses and blankets.

Once we're through Customs and on I-5, I change out of my show clothes and into a faded Canucks T-shirt and some gray camo leggings. Ian and Owen are in the lounge, playing the new NHL on the PlayStation we've got hooked up to the TV. Ethan wanted an Xbox, but me and the rest of the guys outvoted him because we're not actual monsters.

I grab a spot on the couch, this candy-red pleather thing, and record a short video.

“So, we’ve just crossed the border into the USA. Did you know I was technically born here? My parents were on vacation when my mom went into labor. Anyway, I hope to see all you Seattle fans at Key Arena tomorrow. Or I guess it’s tonight now? Love you all.”

I post it and then check my DMs. PAR-K’s got their own bus, but Kaivan and I have been talking, sending each other funny memes. Just friendly stuff, despite what the tabloids are saying.

We’re just friends, and Sammies wasn’t a date.

“Uh, Hunt?” Ashton asks as he sits next to me.

“Uh, Ash?” I smile and bump his shoulder. “Good show tonight.”

“Yeah. You’re smiling again.”

I put my phone down. “Am not.”

Ian keeps his eyes on the screen, but he asks, “This doesn’t have anything to do with a certain drummer, does it?”

“Hunter Middle Name Drake,” Ethan says, stepping into the lounge. “Are you hooking up with the opener?”

“He’s a friend,” I say. “Unlike you clowns.”

Ethan gasps and clutches imaginary pearls as he plops down beside me. “You know we can see your junk in those, right?”

I roll my eyes. I grew up being a gay guy in locker rooms, and then doing quick changes backstage with the guys. We’ve all seen each other pretty close to naked at one time

or another. “You’re just jealous your butt is too flat to pull off a look like this.”

“Oh yeah? I’d look great in tights!”

“Leggings.” I kick my legs in the air and re-cross them languidly, which makes Ian laugh and miss a goal.

He pauses the game and shakes his chestnut hair out of his eyes. He’s got light brown skin, so light he gets mistaken for white sometimes, a sharp nose, and gray eyes, and a strong brow that furrows as he studies me. “What was up with that interview anyway?”

“You mean the stuff about the breakup?”

“I mean the brunch segment. It was . . . a lot.”

I shrug. “Eh, I’m used to being treated like a handbag.”

Owen cocks his head to the side. “Handbag?”

“You know, like an accessory she’d like to collect.”

“Oh . . . that’s kind of messed up.”

His voice is scratchy from the cold he had during rehearsals, and he’s got dark circles under his honey eyes, which makes them pop even more against his russet skin. Owen’s parents are Indian (Gujarati, he told me, and I’m kind of embarrassed I had to look it up), and he’s got this elegant nose, perfectly shaped eyebrows, and beautifully lush black hair. It always smells like coconut and he’s constantly pushing it off his face.

“I guess,” I say. “I’m kind of used to it. I mean, it is what it is.”

“You should talk to Janet, though,” Ethan says. “Tell her you don’t want to get teabagged.”

“Dude! Handbagged!” I swallow a laugh. “She knows. She tries.”

Still. None of the other guys get handbagged.

My phone buzzes again. Kaivan.

“You’re smiling again,” Ashton says, digging his elbow into my ribs.

“Am not! We’re just talking.”

Owen narrows his eyes and shakes his head. “You owe us all pizza!”

We made a rule last year that anyone who starts dating has to get the group pizza, to make up for if they start acting like an asshole, which all the guys tended to do. Especially Ethan, who can never seem to keep a girlfriend for more than a month.

I was already with Aidan when the rule was made, so I never had to get the pizza.

Besides. “We’re just friends.”

“Yeah. Sure.” Ethan shakes his midnight hair off his forehead and turns back to the TV. “I play winner!”