

THE JACKSONVILLE RAYS HOCKEY SERIES #1

# PUCKING AROUND

JACKSONVILLE RAYS

BOOK ONE

EMILY RATH

# **PUCKING AROUND**

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JACKSONVILLE RAYS HOCKEY #1

# EMILY RATH

EMILY RATH BOOKS



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Rath, Emily

PUCKING AROUND

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*Consider this my love letter to #hockeyromancetok*

*Oh...and to any NHL equipment managers reading this—all the unhinged  
daddy energy is specifically dedicated to you.*



## AUTHOR'S NOTE

This story starts with a spicy prequel novella called **THAT ONE NIGHT**. While you can definitely read this book without reading the prequel, you'll be missing a bit of character development between Rachel and Jake.

If you're **not** going to read the prequel (or if you just need a refresher), here's what happened:

- Two months ago, Rachel was in Seattle for her brother's wedding
- She meets Jake Compton in the bar of her hotel and they have an instant connection
- They share one passionate night and have tons of great sex
- Jake begs for her name and wants her to stay longer
- In the morning, Rachel leaves without waking Jake

This story starts two months after that one night. Enjoy!

XO,

Emily

# TROPES, TAGS, & CONTENT WARNINGS

## TROPES

Hockey romance, 'why choose', friends to lovers, instalove

## TAGS

MF, MM, MMF, MFM, MMFM, hockey romance, romantic comedy, instalove, friends to lovers, queer awakening, too much sex, don't poke the bear, golden retriever, everyone has tattoos, baby girl, bend over, daddy, Finnish 101

## CONTENT WARNINGS

This book contains some themes that may be distressing to readers including one family's history of receiving harassment, vicious bullying linked to homophobia, and a brief discussion of a family member's attempt to unalive. More than one main character has a history of substance abuse; one went to rehab for treatment (discussed, not shown). A main character also has a history with disordered eating (briefly discussed as part of their past).

This book contains detailed two-, three-, and four-person sex scenes that include elements of impact play, choking, voyeurism, bondage, double penetration, double vaginal penetration, toy use, degradation, dom/sub, spit play, snowballing, and breeding kink.

## STAR SIGNS

- RACHEL: Cancer (water): intuitive, emotional, guarded
- ILMARI: Aries (fire): bold, ambitious, temperamental
- JAKE: Taurus (earth): focused, sensual, steadfast

- CALEB: Sagittarius (fire): adventurous, adaptable, blunt

## **MEET THE RAYS**

### **PLAYERS**

Compton, Jake (#42): defenseman  
Davidson, Tyler (#65): backup goalie  
Gerard, Jean-Luc “J Lo” (#6): defenseman  
Hanner, Paul (#24): defenseman  
Karlsson, Henrik (#17): forward  
Kinnunen, Ilmari “Mars” (#31): goalie  
Langley, Ryan (#20): forward  
Morrow, Cole (#3): defenseman  
Novikov, Lukas “Novy” (#22): defenseman  
O’Sullivan, Josh “Sully” (#19): forward  
Perry, David “DJ” (#13): forward  
Walsh, Cade (#10): forward

### **COACHES**

Andrews, Brody: Assistant Coach  
Johnson, Harold “Hodge”: Head Coach  
Tomlin, Eric: Goalie Coach

### **TEAM SUPPORT**

Gordon, Jerry: Equipment Manager  
Sanford, Caleb: Equipment Manager

### **MEDICAL SUPPORT**

Avery, Todd: Director of Physical Therapy  
Jacobs, Hillary: Team Nurse  
O’Shay, Teddy: PT intern

Price, Rachel: Barkley Fellow

Tyler, Scott: Team Doctor

**OPERATIONS/MANAGEMENT**

Francis, Vicki: Operations Manager

Ortiz, Claribel: Social Media Manager

St. James, Poppy: Public Relations Director

## FINNISH WORDS & PHRASES

En voi elää ilman sua/I can't live without you  
Haluun tätä/I want this  
Joo/Yes  
Kulta/Sweetie  
Leijona/Lioness  
Mä haluan sut/I want you  
Mä kuulun sulle/I belong to you  
Mä rakastan sua/I love you  
Mä tuun/I'm coming  
Mennään naimisiin/Marry me  
Mitä helvettiä/What the hell?  
Mitä vittua/What the fuck?  
Mun leijona/My lioness  
Niin mäkin sua/I love you too  
No niin/\*Versatile meanings  
Oon sun/I'm yours  
Oot kaunis, rakas/You are beautiful, darling  
Oot niin timmi/You are tight  
Rakas/Darling  
Saatana/Goddamn it  
Suksi vittuun/Get the fuck out (literally: ski into a cunt)  
Tule tänne/Come here  
Vain sun/Only yours  
Voi helvetti/Oh, hell



# ***PUCKING AROUND***

***JACKSONVILLE RAYS HOCKEY #1***



# RACHEL

“RACHEL!”

I groan, not ready to open my eyes and face the truth. It’s morning. *Again*. And I’m officially going to murder my roommate Tess... just as soon as I remember how eyelids work. Why did I let her talk me into going out last night?

*Because you’re twenty-seven and single, girl. Live your damn life!* I can hear her voice echoing in my head along with the steady *thump thump thump* of last night’s dance music.

I’m pretty sure there was drinking last night. What else explains why my tongue feels superglued to the roof of my mouth? Oh god—I think I’m gonna be sick. I’m getting too old for this. I can’t bounce back like I could when I was eighteen. There’s only one solution: I’m just never drinking again. No more dancing. No more bars. Consider this my retirement from night life.

“RA-CHEL! Girl, get up!”

I roll onto my back, wincing as I gaze up at the blades of my slowly circulating ceiling fan. I think I slept with my contacts in. My eyes itch so bad.

*Make a list, Rach. Make a plan.*

That’s been my mantra for the last two months as I’ve tried to put the pieces of my shattered life back together.

*Hot shower, strong black coffee, maybe some eye drops—*

“RACH!” Tess stomps down the hall and stands in the doorway, her wild, red curls spilling around her shoulders. She’s a smokin’ hot size twenty with a perfect, pear-shaped body. Per usual, she’s wearing nothing but a crop top and her undies, a spray of peachy freckles dotting across her



chest. The girl sheds clothes around this apartment like a husky sheds hair.

Not that I mind. I'm the daughter of a super famous rock star. Born in California and raised on a tour bus, I've seen some wild things in my time. A naked Tess doesn't bother me one bit.

"Girl, did you not hear me hollerin' for you?" She pops a hand on her hip and tosses my phone on the bed. "Someone's been trying to call you for like thirty minutes."

I reach blindly for it without turning my head. "Who is it?"

"I don't know. A New York number, I think. And there was a missed call from Doctor H."

I bolt upright, swallowing down the instant wave of nausea that hits me. "Ohmygod, Tess!" I snatch up my phone. "My boss is calling, and you let it just keep ringing?"

"Hey, I've got my own boss breathing down my neck, thank you very much," she says with a huff. "You handle *your* arrogant asshole, I'll handle mine." She flicks her hair over her shoulder as she turns. Her cheeky undies show off her freckled booty as she saunters away.

I roll my eyes, knowing she means well. Tess is just being overprotective because she's never liked Doctor Halla. She doesn't like the way he micromanages me or his cold, aloof manner. I guess it's just never bothered me. He can't help that he's European.

I drag a hand through my tousled hair, checking my text messages while I wait for my brain to warm up. Six texts and a missed call from my twin brother and his husband. I'm pretty sure Somchai is back in Seattle, which means this is early for him.

**HARRISON (8:01AM): In NYC for cooking show. Wanna fly up for taping on Sat?**

**HARRISON (8:04AM): You \*skull emoji\*??**

**HARRISON (8:05AM): MISSED CALL**

I grin, shaking my head. Just like a twin to give me exactly three minutes to respond to a question before he jumps to rigor mortis in his mind.

**HARRISON (8:07AM): Hello \*eyes emoji\***

**SOM (8:12AM): Girl, you better be dead bc your stupid brother just woke me up at 5AM. CALL HIM BACK**

**SOM (8:14AM): Plz don't actually be dead**

**HARRISON (8:20AM): I texted Tess and she says you're hungover, not \*skull emoji\* LMK about Sat**

Now I'm laughing. These two are too much. My brother and his husband are rising stars in the culinary world. Apparently, Harrison was asked to be a guest judge on some new cooking show. He's always been more comfortable using our famous father's name and connections. I wouldn't be surprised if he drags him to the taping.

Which means that if I go, I'll be seated in daddy's shadow when the cameras inevitably pan to him for a closeup. Then I'll get three weeks of hassle as the tabloids remember I exist.

*Yeah, no thanks.*

I type out a quick reply in our group chat.

**RACHEL (8:31AM): Not dead. Can't come bc I gotta work. But good luck \*kiss face emoji\***

Spotlight glare is literally the last thing I need right now because, two months ago, my own career rocket crashed out of the sky. I was in Seattle for Harrison's wedding when I got the news that I lost out on the Barkley Fellowship. The top sports medicine fellowship in the industry, it pairs early career doctors and physical therapists with professional sports teams. The last three residents Doctor Halla put up for it all won. After their ten-month rotations ended, they were all offered permanent positions.

I was supposed to be lucky number four. Doctor Halla was so sure I would win that he confidently started interviewing for my replacement in the residency program. I had to crawl back from Seattle with my tail between my legs and beg him not to give my spot away. He was kind about it, righteously indignant, swearing he'd never recommend a doctor to their sham of a program again.

So that's where I've been for the last two months, back in Cincinnati, going through the motions day to day. When I'm not putting in my residency hours at the hip and knee clinic, I'm working out or hiding out... until Tess gets fed up and drags me out.

My therapist might be ready to prescribe Prozac, but Tess has a whole other kind of therapy in mind. Dick therapy. Since I got back from Seattle, she's been on a mission to get me laid. She thinks a wild night with a guy will cure me of my funk. But just the thought of touching another guy has me cringing.

I go still, my phone balanced in my hand.

*Another* guy. God, I'm such a mess. As if I already have a guy and Mr. Random Hookup would be the *other* guy. I don't have a guy. Not even close. But hey, a girl can dream, right?

In my case, my nightly dreams are full of only one guy. *The* guy. My Mystery Boy. I haven't told anyone about him. Not even Tess. We met on my last night in Seattle. It was the best one-night stand of my life. I've never felt so dialed in to another human soul before. But that's all it could be for me. One perfect night. No names. No numbers. I woke in the morning and quietly packed my bags, leaving him naked in my bed looking like my every dream.

I regret not telling him my name. He asked me to stay. He wanted me like I wanted him...*want* him.

I groan, dragging my hand through my messy hair again. I can't think about Mystery Boy right now. I've got to deal with Doctor Halla.

**DR. HALLA (8:08AM): Price, call me ASAP**

**DR. HALLA (8:15AM): MISSED CALL**

Taking a deep breath, I lift the phone to my ear and tap the little green call button. The dial tone chirps three times before it connects. "Dr. Halla, sorry I missed your call—"

"Price, are you here? Come to my office," he says in that posh, slightly accented voice.

"I—no, sir. I'm not scheduled to come in until this afternoon."

"Damn. Well, I didn't want to do this over the phone..."

I do a quick inventory. A shower is pretty much nonnegotiable. And I have to put some food in my stomach. And coffee. Lots of coffee. "Umm...I can be there in thirty minutes—"

"No. I don't want to keep them waiting."

*Them?* Why do I feel suddenly on edge? "Sir, what—"

"You got it."

My mind cranks like a pair of rusty gears as I try to puzzle out his

meaning. “I—what?”

“The Barkley Fellowship. You got it,” he repeats. His delivery is so deadpan that I’m not sure what to say. Is he joking? Because it’s not funny. “Price? Did you hear me?”

“Yes.” My heart is racing a mile a minute. “I don’t understand—”

“I just got off the phone with Dr. Ahmed from the selection committee at the Foundation,” he explains. “Apparently, you were first on the waitlist.”

“Oh my god.” I shove off the bed and stand on wobbly legs, looking helplessly around my room.

“Apparently, one of the fellows made the genius decision to go whitewater rafting and his raft flipped,” Dr. Halla goes on. “Broke both his tibia and dislocated his shoulder, so he’s out.”

“Ohmygod,” I gasp, pacing from the bed to the window. “So, what does that—”

“It means you’re in,” he replies, cutting right to the chase. “Dr. Ahmed called me as a favor. She knows you’re my resident. She wanted to make sure you’d be serious about accepting. I told her you were. I hope I didn’t overstep,” he adds quickly.

“No, sir, I—” I hardly have words to speak. This can’t be happening.

“You *are* still serious about it, right?”

“Of course,” I all but shout into the phone. “I—this is just the last thing I expected. Didn’t the fellowships already begin?”

“They only started this week,” he replies. “That was the other reason she was calling. Usually, the fellows get some say in their placement. If not the specific team, then at the very least gender and sport. You’ll need to be willing to fill this other fellow’s place. It’s already set up and it’s too late to change it now.”

Oddly enough, the total lack of control is giving me a kind of thrill. I feel like I’m skydiving. “Yes,” I say. “I’ll do it. Whatever it is, I’m in.” I’m grinning now.

“Excellent,” he replies. “It’ll be more of a physical therapy role than primary care, but they’re intrigued with your background in both. Dr. Ahmed wanted to check with me to make sure your experience at the clinic will translate well. I told her you’re the perfect candidate.”

My heart flutters. “Thank you, sir. Thank you so much for your support—”

“Say nothing of that,” he says brusquely. He’s not big on gushing. One of the residents hugged him at the Christmas party last year, and I thought he might turn to stone. “I believe Dr. Ahmed already tried to call you this