

THE JACKSONVILLE RAYS HOCKEY SERIES #1

PUCKING AROUND

JACKSONVILLE RAYS

BOOK ONE

EMILY RATH

PUCKING AROUND

JACKSONVILLE RAYS HOCKEY #1

EMILY RATH

EMILY RATH BOOKS



WWW.EMILYRATHBOOKS.COM

CONTENTS

[Author's Note](#)

[Tropes, Tags, & Content Warnings](#)

[Meet The Rays](#)

[Finnish Words & Phrases](#)

[Chapter 1](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

[Chapter 6](#)

[Chapter 7](#)

[Chapter 8](#)

[Chapter 9](#)

[Chapter 10](#)

[Chapter 11](#)

[Chapter 12](#)

[Chapter 13](#)

[Chapter 14](#)

[Chapter 15](#)

[Chapter 16](#)

[Chapter 17](#)

[Chapter 18](#)

[Chapter 19](#)

[Chapter 20](#)

[Chapter 21](#)

[Chapter 22](#)

[Chapter 23](#)

[Chapter 24](#)

[Chapter 25](#)

[Chapter 26](#)

[Chapter 27](#)

[Chapter 28](#)

[Chapter 29](#)

[Chapter 30](#)

[Chapter 31](#)

[Chapter 32](#)

[Chapter 33](#)

[Chapter 34](#)

[Chapter 35](#)

[Chapter 36](#)

[Chapter 37](#)

[Chapter 38](#)

[Chapter 39](#)

[Chapter 40](#)

[Chapter 41](#)

[Chapter 42](#)

[Chapter 43](#)

[Chapter 44](#)

[Chapter 45](#)

[Chapter 46](#)

[Chapter 47](#)

[Chapter 48](#)

[Chapter 49](#)

[Chapter 50](#)

[Chapter 51](#)

[Chapter 52](#)

[Chapter 53](#)

[Chapter 54](#)

[Chapter 55](#)

[Chapter 56](#)

[Chapter 57](#)

[Chapter 58](#)

[Chapter 59](#)

[Chapter 60](#)

[Chapter 61](#)

[Chapter 62](#)

[Chapter 63](#)

[Chapter 64](#)

[Chapter 65](#)

[Chapter 66](#)

[Chapter 67](#)

[Chapter 68](#)

[Chapter 69](#)

[Chapter 70](#)

[Chapter 71](#)

[Chapter 72](#)

[Chapter 73](#)

[Chapter 74](#)

[Chapter 75](#)

[Chapter 76](#)

[Chapter 77](#)

[Chapter 78](#)

[Chapter 79](#)

[Chapter 80](#)

[Chapter 81](#)

[Chapter 82](#)

[Chapter 83](#)

[Chapter 84](#)

[Chapter 85](#)

[Chapter 86](#)

[Chapter 87](#)

[Chapter 88](#)

[Chapter 89](#)

[Chapter 90](#)

[Chapter 91](#)

[Chapter 92](#)

[Chapter 93](#)

[Chapter 94](#)

[Chapter 95](#)

[Chapter 96](#)

[Chapter 97](#)

[Chapter 98](#)

[Chapter 99](#)

[Chapter 100](#)

[Chapter 101](#)

[Chapter 102](#)

[Chapter 103](#)

[Chapter 104](#)

[Chapter 105](#)

[Epilogue](#)

[Thank You](#)

[Leave A Review](#)

Also by Emily Rath
About the Author

Copyright © 2023 Emily Rath Books.

All rights reserved.

First published in 2023.

Rath, Emily

PUCKING AROUND

No part of this book may be reproduced, circulated, stored, in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means other than which it is published without the prior permission of the publisher. All characters in this publication are fictitious and any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

eBook ASIN: B0BPVJ4RVR

eBook ISBN: 979-8-9877933-1-2

Paperback ISBN: 979-8-9877933-2-9

Cover Design by: Maldo Designs

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 morning. Call her back, and formally accept the fellowship. And don’t worry about your shift this afternoon,” he adds. “I’ll apprise Wendy of the situation.”

“Thank you,” I stammer again.

“This is a great opportunity, Price. I’m pleased for you. Maybe you can get me tickets to a game this season.”

His words register and I stop in my pacing. The fellowship started *this* week. Meaning I have to quit my job, pack up my life, and move, and I don’t even know where I’m moving!

“Wait—what’s the team?” I call out. “What sport? What city? Did she tell you?”

“Yes,” he replies. “Your fellowship will be with the Jacksonville Rays.”

My mind spins. Jacksonville. Atlantic side of Florida, I know that much. But my mind is drawing a blank at the Rays. The Jaguars are the NFL team...baseball maybe? God, if this is a test of my fit for their program, I’m utterly failing.

“I’ve never heard of the Rays,” I admit.

He chuckles. “Well, you wouldn’t. The Rays are the newest expansion team for the NHL. I don’t think they’ve even finished the new arena yet.”

I all but shriek with excitement, which is completely unprofessional, but I don't care.

Hockey. It's one of the most ruthless, injury-prone sports. The men play with literal knives strapped to their feet. Lots of bone breaks. Lots of shoulder, hip, and knee injuries. Dislocations. Groin pulls. It's my dream placement. And a new team means all new equipment, new facilities, over-eager fans.

"Sir—" I squeak out, unable to think of any other words.

He just chuckles again. "Have fun, Price. You've earned this." Then he hangs up.

I stand there with the phone in my hand, utterly speechless. I won the Barkley Fellowship.

Tess ducks her head back in my room, green smoothie in hand. "You talk to Dr. H? What—girl, what's that smile? What happened?"

I start laughing, tears brimming in my eyes.

She pushes off the doorframe. "Girl, what—"

"I'm moving to Jacksonville," I blurt out.

"What—*when*?"

I wipe a tear from under my eye, shaking my head in shocked disbelief. "As soon as possible."