

Uncle Ilya

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Uncle Ilya

by [agreatwave](#)

Summary

“He still didn’t know when Ilya fucking Rozanov wrangled his way into the Uncle title. No one ran the decision by him, that’s for sure.”

In which Ilya is an uncle to the Pike children, whether Hayden likes it or not. (Spoiler: He doesn't mind as much as he thinks he does.)

Notes

Hello everyone! This is my first story in this small, but mighty fandom. I’m very excited to be writing about this series after falling head over heels for it last year.

Somehow the first story I finished in the Game Changers universe is a lot about Hayden Pike and parental anxiety. Who knows how that happened! However, it is definitely also about Ilya winning hearts and finding family in Shane's loved ones. It was inspired by Shane's explanation to the Pike kids about why Hayden might have the opinion that boys don't wear nail polish as well as the scene in which Hayden is frantically searching for Mr. Chompy. I wanted to explore a Dad who feels a bit out of his depth but who is willing to learn because he loves his kids, and the influence Shane and Ilya might have on his parenting and vice versa.

I hope you enjoy! Please feel free to drop me a comment and say hi.

“UNCLE ILYA!”

Hayden winced, partly due to the sheer pitch and volume of his children’s shrieks and partly because he still didn’t know when Ilya fucking Rozanov wrangled his way into the Uncle title. No one ran the decision by him, that’s for sure.

It was Jackie’s birthday, and they were having a big backyard barbecue with all their friends to celebrate. Shane had driven down that morning to help set up and to hang out before everyone else arrived. Ilya had an appointment in Ottawa, so the plan was for him to follow in the afternoon because he and Shane were a package deal now and also because Jackie, for some unknown reason, actually liked Ilya and wanted him at her birthday party. Hayden didn’t get it, but happy wife, happy life, and all that.

Ilya had just pulled into the driveway, and Hayden watched Ruby, Jade, and Arthur race across the grass, launching themselves into the Russian’s arms as he stepped out of the SUV. The giant bastard scooped all three of them up together, swinging them around alarmingly. Hayden softened a little hearing their hysterical giggles. He cuddled little Amber closer in his arms, but even she betrayed him, clapping and stretching her chubby arms out for Ilya as he strode over with a giggling little girl under each arm like a football and Arthur following close behind.

“Hello little angel,” Rozanov said quietly, putting Ruby and Jade down and tickling Amber under her chin, ignoring Hayden completely.

“Hi Iwya!” she said back.

They were working on her Ls. But not really that hard, honestly, because it was so damn cute. Her tiny dimple poked out, and Hayden was so distracted by the sight that he didn’t notice his wife coming out to join them on the front lawn until Ilya smacked a hand over his chest, staggering back dramatically.

“Jackie, you are radiant,” Rozanov smiled crookedly, his accent curving awkwardly around the word in a way that somehow made it sound more charming.

“Thank you, Ilya,” Jackie said sweetly, hugging him hello.

“Where did you learn that word?” Hayden grumbled.

“Why, do you not know what it means?” Rozanov asked innocently over Jackie’s shoulder.

He let Hayden’s wife go and turned to grab a huge cooler out of the back of the SUV, slamming the door shut with his hip.

“I have to keep finding new words for how beautiful your wife is,” he added, winking at a laughing Jackie as he pushed past them to bring the cooler inside.

The kids trailed after him like ducklings. Hayden huffed, meeting his wife’s amused eyes.

“Uncle Ilya, hurry up, last time you said we could play pirates!” Ruby reminded him bossily.

“I don’t want to play pirates, I want to play princesses,” Jade whined.

“Is easy, we can be princess pirates,” Rozanov said just as the screen door slammed behind them.

Hayden only noticed he was scowling when Jackie came over to poke at his furrowed brow.

“Be nice,” She scolded gently, a laugh in her voice.

“I am nice!” Hayden protested.

Jackie raised an eyebrow skeptically.

“Pike,” Rozanov bellowed from inside the house. “Where have you hidden my husband?”

Hayden heaved a sigh, passing Amber to Jackie, and headed inside only to be confronted with the sight of Rozanov pressing his best friend up against the fridge, fortunately with no kids anywhere in sight.

“Looks like you found him,” He said sourly.



“Unc-o Shane, watch me!”

“Woow,” Shane said appreciatively, dutifully watching Amber do an unimpressive but very adorable twirl in the shallow end of the pool where he and Hayden sat with her, the water barely covering their thighs.

Shane’s arms were comically outstretched as if he was sure she would fall at any moment. Hayden smiled privately at how cautious he was with the kids. He was getting more comfortable, but he still treated them all like glass. He remembered back to when the girls were born, Shane holding one tiny twin stiffly with a serious expression on his face, refusing to stand up out of fear of dropping her and looking at Hayden like he had lost his mind when he suggested he try holding both of them at the same time.

Shane’s husband on the other hand . . .

“My turn Uncle Ilya!”

Ruby and Jade were playing a game that seemed to involve making Ilya toss them into the deep end from the side of the pool one at a time. They laughed hysterically every time they emerged and scrambled out to go again. Jackie’s girlfriends were gathered in a huddle with

their legs dipping into the pool just outside the splash zone, whispering and giggling like teenagers. Hayden couldn't help but notice many of them glancing appreciatively at Ilya.

"Your husband is getting a lot of attention," Hayden poked at Shane.

Shane smiled to himself.

"I'm used to it," he said, shrugging and looking a bit smug.

They looked over just in time to see Ilya diving into the water after the girls, his body a perfect arc. When he emerged, he flipped his wet curls back in some kind of Baywatch move that had Shane himself staring with a slack jaw. Hayden rolled his eyes.

"Hollander!" Ilya yelled across the pool, "Come help. We have two very brave and terrifying pirate princesses about to battle!"

Shane sighed, but immediately swam out to meet his husband, who pecked him on the lips in greeting. They gamely helped Jade and Ruby up onto their shoulders, each twin armed with a pool noodle. Ruby had particularly bad aim, hitting Shane in the face more often than she hit her sister while Ilya cheered her on enthusiastically.

Hayden couldn't help but smile. He made eye contact with his incredibly hot wife across the pool where she was watching the girls with a matching smile on her face, surrounded by friends. He was happy she was having fun. She caught eyes with him and stretched out her arms, making grabby hands that he knew were for Amber.

"Baby girl, do you want to try swimming all the way to Mummy? Daddy will help you!" Hayden asks his littlest girl.

Amber nodded determinedly, and Hayden put her on her belly in the water, dying of cuteness as she kicked her little feet as hard as she could while he moved her toward Jackie.

"Wow, Amber!" Jackie cooed when they arrive. "You are getting so good at swimming!"

She cuddled her daughter close, adjusting one of her pink water wings and giving Hayden a bright smile. They settled in to chat with her friends, interrupted every now and then by various children coming over to ask their parent for another popsicle or for help fixing their bathing suit. The backyard was filled to the brim with people they loved - it was loud and happy and buzzing with energy, just as Hayden liked it.

Shane and Ilya eventually managed to tire Ruby and Jade out enough that they came venturing out of the pool for snacks, content to suck on freezies on their towels and dry in the sun for a while before the neighbour's kids came to find them and draw them into a game with the big kids. Amber snoozed in Jackie's arms in spite of the shrieks coming from the lawn.

Hayden lazily did a headcount, a habit now that they had more kids than parents.

One, two, three -

One, two, three -

four, where's four? Where's Arthur?

Hayden sat up, suddenly on alert. His eyes darted around the backyard, trying to remember when he had last seen his quietest child today. He relaxed partially when he found him sitting a little ways away from everyone else on a lounge chair by the pool. Arthur was wrapped in a big beach towel. He had his arms around himself and his head ducked low. Hayden's chest felt tight. He got to his feet to go check on his son, but stopped in his tracks a few metres away when he noticed that Ilya had apparently spotted him first and was currently pulling himself out of the water next to his son's chair. He plopped down on the pool chair next to Arthur's, dragging a towel over his curls unhurriedly. Hayden hovered close by in case he was needed.

Ilya dropped his towel on the chair behind him.

"Is a little noisy, yes, Arthur?" he asked simply.

His son nodded. He looked up at Ilya, and Hayden's heart cracked at the sight of his anxious, overwhelmed eyes. Ilya nodded back decisively and got to his feet. He pulled a loose tanktop over his head and stepped into his slides.

"I would like some quiet time," Ilya announced loudly to the group. "Arthur, would you please keep me company?"

Arthur nodded and put his tiny hand in Ilya's.

"We will just go inside for a little break, hmm?" He asked Arthur.

He met Hayden's eyes as they passed him and jerked his head toward the living room window that overlooked the backyard with a raised eyebrow. Hayden nodded gratefully and watched as they walked toward the house, privately fretting over his most sensitive child. He always felt like he was half a step behind with him, and being away so much didn't help. He wished he had noticed he wasn't having a good time sooner. He'd follow in just a moment and bring Arthur his favourite grape popsicle to make sure he didn't miss out on treats just because he didn't want to be outside with everyone.

No sooner had he had the thought, when a wail took up from behind him, and Hayden spun around to see Amber's face scrunched up, fat tears rolling down her cheeks and an ice cream bar smashed on the ground.

"It wasn't my fault," Ruby insisted defensively, face stormy and lower lip trembling.

"Yes, it was," Jade argued. "I saw you."

Ruby's face went red, and all hell broke loose. Grape popsicles would have to wait.

Close to fifteen minutes later, disaster resolved, Hayden finally headed up to check on Arthur, a wrapped popsicle tucked in the side pocket of his board shorts. Stepping inside the cool, quiet house, he kicked off his shoes and made his way toward the living room. He found Shane there, leaning against the doorframe. Hayden came up behind him quietly and looked over his shoulder.

Ilya and Arthur were sitting together on the couch, legs crossed identically. Ilya was carefully painting his son's nails and chatting quietly to him, focused and relaxed. Arthur watched with wide eyes, holding still for his manicure. Ilya made a joke, ducking his head to look at Arthur with his eyebrows raised exaggeratedly, and Arthur smiled. Ilya screwed the cap back on the nail polish bottle and instructed Arthur to blow on his nails to dry them by demonstrating on his own, which Hayden could now see were a blinding shade of neon pink. Arthur copied him seriously.

"You must be melting," Hayden muttered in his best friend's ear.

Shane didn't deny it. He couldn't have if he wanted to; his eyes were glowing even in the dim light of the room, a peaceful smile on his face. They watched silently for another few moments as Arthur leaned into Ilya, resting in the crook of one enormous arm as his eyes fluttered slowly shut. Ilya seemed content to act as a pillow for the time being, staring out the window at the rustling trees with a calm expression to match.

Shane gestured silently for them to head into the kitchen, leaving the pair to their peace and quiet in the next room. Hayden stowed Arthur's popsicle safely in the freezer and grabbed a couple of beers out of the fridge. They cracked them open at the kitchen table. Hayden was suddenly incredibly tired, the chaos of the party and the hot sun making him feel sluggish. He slumped down in his chair. It was nice to get a moment away with his buddy, something that was all too rare now that they lived two hours apart when they were even both home at the same time. Hayden noticed that Shane's freckles stood out a little more than the last time he'd seen him.

"He had a really hard childhood," Shane said suddenly, breaking the comfortable silence.

Hayden swallowed his mouthful of beer, unsure what to say. Shane wasn't really looking at him, gazing out the window behind him and slowly peeling the label off his bottle.

"Yeah, I know, his Mum," Hayden said finally.

"No, I mean - well yes, of course. That was - I can't even imagine. But his Dad was like . . . a really bad father," Shane said, his tone telling Hayden that the words he had chosen were probably an understatement.

Hayden's heart was in his throat. Shane never shared like this. He and Ilya were really quite private, in spite of everything or maybe because of it. And to be fair, it's not like Hayden had done much to encourage Shane to talk more about Ilya.

“I think he wants every kid to feel like they’re important. Like he likes who they are,” Shane added thoughtfully.

And what could Hayden really say to that? Luckily, he didn’t have to think of something, because Ilya interrupted the odd, quiet moment with his signature timing.

“Arthur is going to spend some quality time with Mr. Chompy. You are having beer without me?”

Shane rolled his eyes, like that did anything to distract from the way they lit up the moment Ilya entered the room.

“There’s more in the fridge. Get yourself one, lazy.”

Ilya grumbled goodnaturedly, grabbing his own beer from the fridge and coming to stand beside Shane’s chair with a hand resting gently on the back of his husband’s neck. He took a deep pull from his bottle, making a satisfied sound.

“Thanks for painting his nails,” Hayden felt compelled to say. “And the girls’ too, earlier.”

Shane beamed at him, always so stupidly happy when he and Ilya played nice. Ilya pulled up a chair beside his husband, sprawling out next to him.

“Yes. I will be good enough to open a shop when I retire! A - Shane, what is it called?”

“A nail salon.”

“Yes, that.”

Ilya and Shane smiled at each other in that way they had that sometimes made Hayden feel left out. Ilya briefly thumbed over the darkened freckles Hayden had noticed earlier. The three of them sipped their beers in silence, relaxed and pleasantly drowsy.

“Do you think it means anything?” Hayden found himself saying after a while. “The nails?”

He tried to convey with his tone that it didn’t matter to him, not that way. He loved his kids no matter what, period. He’d love them no matter who they turned out to be, but he couldn’t pretend it didn’t terrify him to think of his kid being teased or targeted or to think that maybe he wouldn’t know the best way to be their Dad.

“Maybe, maybe not,” Ilya shrugged. “Look at Shane. He is the gayest person I know, and he has to hire someone to dress him.”

“Or like, remember Ryan and his boyfriend, from the wedding?” Shane chimed in, completely ignoring Ilya’s comment. “Fabian likes make up and jewelry and stuff, and Ryan looks like a lumberjack.”

“Both very hot,” Ilya chimed in.

“Thanks,” Hayden said sarcastically.

“Kids like colour. Could be simple as that,” Shane said.

Hayden nodded, looking down at his beer and beginning to chip away at his own label. He didn't know what any of it meant. If his son not liking noises and crowds meant there's was a diagnosis in his future or if it was just his personality. If the nails were just nails or a sign of something more. It felt like he should just know already, like he should be able to put the pieces together and be ready for when his son was old enough to figure out who he is.

“I feel like I'm always messing up with him. Like with the nails and stuff. He's just so different than me when I was a kid. He's sensitive, and he's got a lot going on inside,” Hayden said tentatively, not really used to talking about this stuff with anyone other than Jackie.

He sighed heavily, stomach squirming.

“I love him so much, but I don't always understand him,” he admitted.

“Is the first part that matters most,” Ilya said, uncharacteristically serious. “As long as he knows that, he will be good. Do not worry so much. You are a very good Dad.”

Hayden was surprisingly touched. It meant more than he would have expected, coming from Ilya.

There was a soft sound at the door, and Arthur wandered into the room rubbing his eyes and clutching Chompy under one arm. The three adults straightened up, smiling at him.

“Hey buddy,” Hayden said, heart squeezing with love for his son.

“Daddy, look,” he said, shyly thrusting his hand out so Hayden could see the colour on his fingers, pale green with silver glitter.

Most of it was even in the lines because Ilya actually was getting pretty good at this.

“Wow, bud, that's so cool! I love the colour. Did you pick it yourself?”

Hayden saw Shane smile out of the corner of his eye. Arthur beamed, nodding fast. He crawled up into Hayden's lap, and Hayden held him close, cradling his head and breathing in the sweet smell of his hair. He kissed the top of his head.

“I love you very very much, did you know that?”

Arthur squeezed tighter, and Hayden feel his little head nod under his.

“Love you too, Daddy.”

Hayden basked in the moment, feeling himself relax fully for the first time since he saw Arthur's face by the pool that afternoon. Maybe he wasn't doing such a bad job after all.

“Shane, we need to have a baby.”

Ilya's voice effectively shattered the moment. Hayden looked up to see Shane, tomato red and glaring at Ilya.

"Yeah Shane, get on that," Hayden added.

Ilya barked out a surprised laugh, delighted, and Shane's scowl deepened, his expression clearly torn between annoyance and delight that Hayden and Ilya were getting along.

In that instant, Hayden suffered the sudden and silent revelation that he might actually *like* the stupid smug Russian who'd stolen his best friend. It was deeply unsettling. He hugged his son tighter for comfort.

"Daddy?"

"Yeah, bud?" Hayden replied distractedly.

"How do Uncle Shane and Uncle Ilya make a baby together?" Arthur asked.

Hayden blanched. Shane's head thunked down on the table. Ilya grinned widely at Hayden, tilting his head faux-inquisitively and leaning back in his chair.

Yeah, no, he really fucking hated Ilya Rozanov.

"I think it's time for popsicles," he said grimly.

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