Matryoshka

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at https://archiveofourown.org/works/76043911.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Heated Rivalry (TV)
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander, Ilya Rozanov, Yuna Hollander, David Hollander, Hayden Pike
Additional Tags:	Single Dad Shane Hollander, Secret Children, Shane Hollander Needs a Hug, Ilya Rozanov Loves Shane Hollander, POV Alternating, Shane has a secret Daughter and she's obsessed with Ilya Rozanov, Anxious Shane Hollander, Subspace, Bottom Shane Hollander, Top Ilya Rozanov
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2025-12-19 Words: 5,910 Chapters: 1/1

Matryoshka

by pitlanepeach

Summary

Lily:
Are you busy this weekend?

Jane:
I'm always busy

Shane doesn't consider how that might sound until his phone buzzes again less than ten seconds later.

Lily:
You have girlfriend now?

Jane:
No
No I don't have a girlfriend
I'm just busy

Notes

I fear I'm going to need more single parent HR fics asap.

See the end of the work for more notes

Shane Hollander is good at hockey. He is good at smiling when it's required. He is good with languages, with finding the right words and tucking them neatly into place.

For reasons Shane still doesn't entirely understand, Ilya Rozanov seems convinced that Shane is good at… other things too.

Ilya gives that praise casually, like it's a fact, but sometimes Shane suspects that he's just smoothing the edges, nesting reassurance inside teasing inside something almost sincere.

And the worst part is that Shane isn't sure whether he doubts Ilya because he doesn't believe him—or because believing him would mean admitting something Shane has spent years carefully avoiding.

His resistance to the idea that he could be good in bed feels disproportionate, almost irrational, but he recognizes it anyway.

Because accepting Ilya's certainty wouldn't just be about skill or praise. It would be an admission: that this matters, that Ilya matters, that whatever this is isn't just a fluke or a joke or something Shane can compartmentalise and move on from.

And Shane is very good at compartments. He has built a career out of them. He just… isn't ready to open that one yet.

He lies on his side, head propped on his hand, staring at the red digits of the alarm clock. It's early, so early that the birds outside haven't started singing yet.

Soon enough, small footsteps will pad down the hallway, far too loud for someone so small, and the door will push open without hesitance. A little whirlwind of red hair will tumble into his room, all sleepy and warm, clutching onto her blanky and climbing onto his bed.

She will then demand—politely, but firmly—her daily three minute in-bed-with-Daddy hug.

And Shane will give it to her. Because if there's one thing he knows for certain, the one truth that doesn't splinter or require careful handling, it's that his daughter could ask for anything and he would find a way to make it happen.

This, at least, is simple. This fits neatly into a space he understands. He can hold her weight, count the minutes, breathe her in and anchor himself to something solid and unmovable.

Loving her is the easiest part of his life.

So he waits for the footsteps, for the door to creak open, for the day to begin.

The sequence unfolds exactly as it always does—predictable, reliable, perfect in its simplicity.

They eat breakfast together on the couch. She watches cartoons on her iPad, volume a little too loud, while Shane rewinds through the game he missed the night before, eyes flicking

between the screen and her without really thinking about it.

She offers him her slice of unwanted pumpkin seed toast. He grunts, takes a bite, and trades her half of his apple in return, reminding her to eat the peanut butter too. It's organic. Non-processed. He knows this because a chef comes by three times a week to stock the fridge with the kind of food that makes him feel like he's doing at least one thing exactly right.

She accepts the trade with a happy hum, feet tucked under her, crumbs everywhere. Shane lets it happen. The cleaner is coming this afternoon; he'll remind them to vacuum the couch. Easy. Manageable.

Daisy is on her feet a moment later, dancing in uneven circles around the living room, singing along to something only she can hear, when Shane's phone chimes.

He checks it automatically. He's expecting a confirmation from the pediatrician's office, maybe a reminder from Daisy's online pre-school programme that he's forgotten to put into his calendar.

Instead, the screen lights up with a name he hasn't seen there in six months.

Lily

Are you busy this weekend?

Shane stills.

He bites at his lower lip.

It's been six months since he's seen Ilya. In those six months, he's thought about him roughly nine hundred times, give or take.

Despite that, this is the first message they've exchanged since the playoffs in January.

And maybe it isn't fair to blame that entirely on Ilya. Shane had, for all intents and purposes, disappeared. He still showed up to games, still stood in front of microphones and answered the same questions with the same steady calm, but beyond that… well. Daisy had turned three in March, and having a three-year-old was far more time-consuming than Shane could have ever guessed.

And maybe it was just his three-year-old—but Daisy's schedule was packed. She was enrolled in an online pre school program, attended weekly therapy sessions, saw a dietitian three times a month, and committed herself wholeheartedly to her biweekly ballet classes. Her pink slippers were always lined up neatly by the door; her tutu and leotard steamed and hanging from the front of her dresser.

Shane tells himself this explains things. That it's reasonable. That it's enough of an excuse not to have reached out to Ilya, even though he lay in bed every single night and weighed the repercussions of doing exactly that.

He tells himself a lot of things.

Jane

I'm always busy

He doesn't consider how that might sound until his phone buzzes again less than ten seconds later.

Lily

You have girlfriend now?

Jane

No

No I don't have a girlfriend

I'm just busy

He slams his phone down on the coffee table harder than necessary and carries both empty breakfast plates into the kitchen. He loads the dishwasher. Wipes down the counters. Disinfects them, even though they're already clean. He's halfway to taking out the trash when he hears it—a sharp, sudden shriek from down the hall.

Shane is there before he can think, crouching in front of his baby girl, hands running over her arms, her legs, her shoulders with blind, frantic urgency. His heart is in his throat, nausea and dizziness crashing together in a way that feels familiar and terrifying all at once.

Then he blinks.

She's fine. Completely fine.

Daisy is clutching a jersey, bunched tight in her fists the same way she holds her blanky, eyes wide and bright and thrilled.

"Roza!" she shrieks.

She shoves the jersey into his face, like he doesn't already know exactly what name is stitched across the back.

Shane goes cold.

He had kept it tucked into the bottom drawer of his dresser for years. A drawer he now realizes has been thoroughly ransacked during Daisy's brief, unsupervised independence. Clothes spill everywhere—once neatly folded, now tossed carelessly all over his bedroom floor.

He tries to take the jersey from her, murmuring soft, disbelieving nonsense under his breath. Daisy's face crumples instantly.

“Mine!” she yells, shrill and furious, and then she bolts down the hallway, jersey still clutched against her chest.

Shane stays where he is.

He sits amid the wreckage of his bedroom, heart still racing, breath uneven. Before he fully realises what he’s doing, he lifts his hand to his face and inhales.

The jersey still smells like Ilya. His aftershave. Sweat. Something unmistakably him.

Shane squeezes his eyes shut and forces himself to breathe.

Some compartments refuse to stay closed.

—

Jane

Are you busy

Lily

I am always busy

Jane

Are you fucking with me?

Lily

Nooooo

Busy busy busy

Always busy

Too busy for you

Jane

Fuck you

Lily

If you insist

Jane

Stop texting me

Lily

I am not liar like you

I am busy

I am in Russia

Jane

Oh

Okay

Sorry

Lily

I will see you at quarterfinal

Jane

I'm not playing this year

Lily

You are team captain

Of course you are playing

Jane

Do they not have the news in Russia?

I'm out. Pike's captain now.

There's a pause.

Lily

You are fucking with me

I am googling

What the fuck, Hollander

You are fucking idiot

Why?

Explain

Jane

Have fun in Russia, Rozanov

Lily

Answer my calls

Jane

Busy

Lily

Fuck you

—

They're spending Labour Day weekend at his parents' house.

It's the first time Shane has missed a quarterfinal since he joined the NHL, and it's a weird sort of feeling—like watching the world move without him, like standing on the sideline while the rest of it spins at full speed. He's got Daisy perched on his lap, her little knees bumping against his chest, and they're watching the game on the flatscreen in the living room. His parents are on the edge of their seats, hands clasped together, eyes sharp and tense.

Shane, meanwhile, leans back and pretends to follow the game. He glances at the players on the ice, nods when the announcer calls a shot—but really, he's only got eyes for one of the men on the ice.

And like she's plucked the thought straight from his brain, Daisy suddenly jolts forward and yells, "Roza!" just as the camera pans to Ilya.

His parents swivel in unison, eyes wide, mouths half-opened in confusion.

Shane laughs, a little awkward, letting Daisy down from his lap. She bolts toward the TV like she's got a mission, tiny feet pounding against the carpet, hands reaching toward the man who has defined half of Shane's professional life—half of the rivalry, half of the obsession.

"Uh… she…" Shane starts, searching for a plausible explanation. "She… likes the name?" He trails off, realizing he doesn't need to lie. He can just… embellish the truth. "Can't read the whole thing yet, so…"

"Flower like me!" Daisy chirps, grinning so wide that even Shane's parents can't help but smile back. The room warms around her, the intensity of the game fading into background noise.

His dad chuckles, shaking his head. "Betrayed by your own kid."

Shane shrugs, a faint blush creeping over his neck. "Guess so."

Daisy squeals again, bouncing in place, hands waving at the screen. Shane watches her, this tiny whirlwind of red hair and excitement, and feels something twist in his chest—something he can't name.

He digs his phone out of his pocket.

Jane

When are you in Toronto next?

The timing is perfect, in that impossible way. Ilya is still on the ice, which obviously means that he can't respond anytime soon, so Shane sets the phone aside for now.

He glances at Daisy, still bouncing on the carpet, eyes bright and hair a little wild from running around the living room. Without thinking too much, he swoops down and lifts her off her feet, careful to catch her squeals and laughter in his arms.

"Daddy!" she squeals, wriggling and kicking, but she doesn't fight him. Not really. Not when it's playtime.

He carries her into the kitchen, spinning her gently in a circle as she giggles uncontrollably, arms flailing, legs kicking, hair bouncing.

He's happy.

He could be happier.

But he's happy.

—

Lily

I am in Toronto

Shane stares at his phone, frozen mid-step.

It's been three days since the quarterfinal, and he'd assumed that Ilya had blocked his number. Finally called it quits on whatever dance they'd been doing for the past half-decade.

But no.

He had just… come to Toronto.

Shane panics.

He paces his penthouse apartment, hand coming up instinctively to chew on his thumbnail—then he stops and curses under his breath. He'd broken that habit for a reason. Daisy had started copying him, and he couldn't handle that.

Ilya was in Toronto.

It was almost ten p.m. The apartment is quiet. One glance at the camera feed from Daisy's bedroom confirms she's fast asleep, chest rising and falling gently under the covers. Her red hair spreads across the pillow, and the sight of her sleeping calms some of Shane's rising panic—just a fraction.

Except… she's wearing Ilya's jersey.

It has taken over from her usual pure-linen nightgowns, much to Shane's dismay. The fabric irritates her eczema, but she refuses to sleep without it.

He has to pick his battles carefully.

He exhales slowly, trying to steady himself. Then he sinks into the couch, phone in hand, heart hammering.

Jane

Door code is 0417

Lily

I should try every door in Toronto?

Jane

What?

Lily

I don't know your address, Hollander.

Jane

Oh. Sorry. The building is called Trent Klaus. I'll tell the concierge to expect you. I have the penthouse.

Lily

10 minutes.

Shane stares at the screen, thumb hovering.

Ten minutes. Ten. Minutes.

He exhales again, shakily. The apartment is quiet and clean and tidy. Daisy is asleep. And Ilya… Ilya is coming.

He sets the phone down, hands trembling slightly, and runs a hand over his face.

This is happening.

And Shane is completely unprepared.

Ten minutes. That's all he has. Ten minutes to… what? Be normal? Be calm? Be himself?

He moves with precision, almost militaristic, throwing on a clean hoodie, jeans that don't have any visible crumbs or marks, socks pulled up straight. He checks the living room—the coffee table wiped, the dishes gone from dinner. Daisy's little blanket is folded just-so at the end of the couch, and he hesitates, hand hovering over it.

He goes to her bedroom and stares at her from the doorway. She's sleeping. Peaceful. Her chest rises and falls, mouth slightly open, one tiny hand curled under her cheek. He swallows the lump in his throat.

He goes back to the kitchen and digs through the drawer to find a mint. He runs a hand through his hair, cursing softly under his breath at the wild spikes from stress.

And still, his mind is screaming. Ilya is in the city. Ilya is coming. Ilya is… probably already imagining what this night is going to look like, and Shane is just trying not to lose control before the door even opens.

He glances at the clock. Eight minutes.

Shane takes a deep breath, inhaling as though he can somehow lock in his composure. He rehearses what he'll say. Nothing comes out right in his head. Half of it is stupid, half of it is desperate.

He stops in front of the living room mirror, staring at himself. His reflection is clean, calm, collected; or at least it looks that way. His eyes betray him, though. Sharp, taut, anxious. He forces a slower breath, rubs his jaw, and mutters under his breath, Don't screw this up. Don't screw this up.

Seven minutes.

He pauses before he goes once more to Daisy's bedroom. She stirs slightly in her sleep, murmurs something, and he freezes, stuck in a perfect balance of panic and awe. She's safe. She's here. She's everything he's supposed to protect.

And then the front door clicks open.

Shane's chest tightens. He pulls Daisy's bedroom door shut, squares his shoulders, and walks toward the door.

—

Shane notices it immediately. He's not the best at reading faces, but Ilya isn't good at hiding his emotions either. And whatever this is—it's anger. Pure, sharp, unmistakable anger.

"You quit hockey and did not tell me?" Ilya's voice is low, deliberate, and brimming with heat. Before Shane can even process, Ilya steps closer. Shane finds himself backed against the

wall between the entryway and the kitchen, heart hammering, chest tight, breath coming faster than it should. “What the fuck, Hollander?” Ilya seethes.

Shane swallows, searching for words. “I—” He stumbles, eyes locking with Ilya’s, the intensity pressing down on him. “I just—”

Ilya tilts his head, mockingly imitating him. “I-I-I,” he says, the syllables sharp and cruel, “Excuse. Do not lie to me. I hate liars, and you are bad one, so I will know.”

Shane shrinks slightly, the wall pressing against his back like a cage. “I… I don’t know how to explain,” he admits, voice low, hoarse.

“Try!” Ilya bellows, and Shane flinches, hoping, praying, that the soundproofing he spent good money on is worth it, that the neighbors, his daughter, won’t hear the eruption.

Shane swallows hard. Words fail him. Every excuse, every rationale, every careful explanation he rehearsed over months evaporates under the heat of Ilya’s gaze.

He opens his mouth, closes it again. His chest rises and falls. The apartment feels too small, too quiet, except for the echo of Ilya’s anger pressing against him from every side.

“I…” Shane tries again, voice breaking just slightly. “I won the Cup. More than once. And I made money. Enough to live comfortably for the rest of my life. So I just…”

He falters, realizing the words he needs don’t exist. The truth is heavier than any trophy, more permanent than any contract.

“So I just…” Shane swallows, blinking rapidly, wishing he could shrink, disappear, or at least slow the air around them. “I… had other priorities.”

Ilya’s eyes narrow, sharp and unrelenting, as if he can smell the lie layered over the truth. “Other priorities?” he asks, voice low and dangerous. “You quit hockey, and this, other priorities, they are more important than this?”

Shane shifts slightly, back still against the wall. The space between them feels electric, suffocating. He wants to say her name, but he can’t. He can’t tell Ilya the secret he’s carried for years, the little person who makes this pause in his life necessary, who defines every decision he’ll make between now and the day he dies.

He swallows again, desperate for words that don’t exist. “Yes,” he finally says, almost too quietly. “More important than everything else.”

Ilya’s gaze sharpens, accusing.

Shane exhales slowly, bracing himself. “I missed you,” he admits, the words heavier than he expected.

Ilya scoffs, eyes flashing, and shoves him back against the wall. The force is sharp enough to make Shane stumble, back pressing into the cold surface of the entryway. “Do not try to sweet-talk me,” Ilya snaps, voice low and dangerous.

“I did,” Shane says, meeting his gaze, voice steady despite the pounding of his heart. “I’m not sweet-talking. I’m telling the truth.”

Ilya’s eyes narrow, scanning his face, searching for deceit. “You… missed me?” Ilya repeats, disbelief threading through the words, like he’s tasting something he didn’t expect. “But you did not call. Or text. And you did not tell me that you quit hockey.”

Shane swallows, nods once. “I did miss you though.”

Ilya grinds his jaw, eyes sharp, calculating. Shane can see the storm of thoughts behind them.

And then the words come, low, deliberate, “Get on your knees.”

Shane freezes for a heartbeat, and then something inside him untangles, slackens. Resistance feels pointless, impossible. He lets himself obey, chest tightening with anticipation, heart hammering in a way that has nothing to do with fear.

The air between them hums with the weight of unspoken truths, unvoiced confessions, and months of longing finally condensed into this one, unyielding moment.

Shane doesn’t resist. He can’t.

He falls to his knees, and he lets Ilya take him for everything that he has.

—

Shane drifts in the quiet aftermath, body still humming with the memory of everything that came before. He’s slightly floaty, the edges of his thoughts softened, his mind replaying Ilya’s touches.

They’re tangled on the bed, legs intertwined, and Ilya’s fingers thread through Shane’s hair, gentle but purposeful, tugging just enough to make Shane sigh against the pillow.

Ilya’s voice breaks the silence, soft but probing. “Why did you quit?”

Shane swallows, his chest still tight with the echo of tension and release. He buries his face a little deeper into Ilya’s shoulder, trying to find words that won’t ruin the fragile equilibrium of the moment. “I… I needed to,” he admits quietly. “It’s… complicated.”

Ilya frowns, tilting his head, fingers still moving through Shane’s hair. “Complicated? You were injured? Something happened?”

Shane hesitates. “No. Nothing like that. I’m fine. Not hurt or anything. I just… I don’t want to talk about it right now, okay?”

Ilya’s gaze sharpens, dark and intense, but there’s a flicker of understanding hidden in the depths. He tugs Shane’s hair gently again, drawing him closer. “Go to sleep.” Ilya demands.

Shane closes his eyes, lets himself float, tangled in the safest arms he knows.

—

Ilya Rozanov is not fool.

And Shane Hollander? He is very bad liar.

So when Shane is finally snoring, Ilya slips out of bed. Careful. Quiet. Only small rustle of sheets, and he grunts—disgusted.

Ridiculous pillows. So many. Too many. One bed did not need this mountain. Stupid. Stupid waste of effort. Interior designer must be idiot. Ilya hates them.

He steps carefully over them, muttering under breath. *Why so many? Why?*

But no time to think about pillows. He has work to do. Shane… his Shane leaves traces. Little clues. Tiny things that show life outside of the rink.

Ilya first looks at the dresser. Picks up notebook. Tilts head. Eyes narrow.

He flicks through it. Hm. Half of the words he does not understand. Shane's handwriting… it is like someone was fighting him for the pen. Letters and loops all smashed together. Ilya's eyes start hurt from trying to read them. He drops the notebook back with sigh, muttering under his breath. *Stupid handwriting, Hollander.*

Next, he goes to the kitchen. Opens drawers, cupboards, fridge. Suspicious. Shane quit hockey. He is definitely injured? Or maybe he was fired?

Something is wrong. Shane is hiding something. Ilya will find out. He always finds out.

He checks the fridge: healthy food. Organic, overpriced. Nothing suspicious. Opens drawers. Bills. Receipts. Still nothing. Hm.

Then he sees folder marked "Medical." He thinks: Ah, maybe… yes. Injury. Secret surgery. Knee. Shoulder. Something. He opens. Papers. Letters. Notes. Scan quickly. Nothing suspicious. Nothing… about hockey. He grumbles.

Then, he hears it. A small squeak. Rustle. Something tiny moving.

He freezes. *Is he caught?*

Floorboards creak. And there. At the other side of the penthouse, a little girl, eyes wide, wearing… a jersey. Shane's old jersey? No… no. Not Shane's. His.

The poltergeist is smiling at him. Little curls, red hair like fire. Jersey too big, slipping off shoulders.

Ilya blinks. Then blinks again. *I hallucinate? This is joke?*

"Roza!" she squeals, little legs pumping, arms flailing, hair bouncing like flames.

Before she can fall on her face, Ilya catches her. Holds her up like a doll, one hand under her back, one under her legs, completely baffled. He blinks rapidly, tilts his head. *Is this… horror movie?* he mutters to himself in Russian, voice low and incredulous.

He shakes her gently, trying to make sense of it. "Who… who are you? What… why you here? Explain… now," he says, more confused than loud, eyes narrowing as if sheer concentration might pull an answer from her tiny brain.

The child giggles, oblivious. "Roza! Flower like me!" she shouts, clutching the jersey to her chest.

Ilya freezes. His gaze drops. The jersey. His name. On this little creature. Tiny human. Like… like something from one of the dreams he would never admit to have, the impossible dreams of Shane, and a baby, and… him.

He stares, slack-jawed. His brain scrambles, firing alarms in three different languages. *This… impossible. This… wrong. This… how?!*

She beams up at him. "Roza! Flower like me!" She repeats, like she thinks he might not have heard her the first time.

Ilya's hands tighten slightly around her. He can feel the absurdity, the fear, the surreal perfection all at once.

Shane… what have you done?

"Shane!" he croaks, voice small, incredulous, completely undone by confusion. Then suddenly he yells, high-pitched and out of breath, "Hollander!"

The child wiggles happily in his arms. Ilya stares at her face. Tiny freckles across her nose, bright, mischievous eyes, perfect little mouth—like a miniature, girl-version of Shane.

A startled bang echoes through the kitchen. Shane appears, all wide-eyed, messy hair, and heavy breathing. The sight of him, so disheveled and vulnerable, hits Ilya like a punch in the chest.

Ilya glances down at the child again. She's smiling and babbling, oblivious to the mess she's made. Confused, he raises an eyebrow. And then Shane exhales slowly, and his eyes start to glisten with moisture.

Ilya stares.

"You quit hockey," he says, his voice low, carefully measured.

Shane nods jerkily. "For now."

Ilya huffs, muttering under his breath, then shakes the child gently to regain her attention. "You have… stupid father."

The child erupts in laughter, pure and loud, like it's the funniest thing she's ever heard.

Ilya stares down at her, exasperated, bewildered, and suddenly, almost without thinking, decides he likes her.

“She wears my jersey,” he says, voice low, but there’s an edge to it; something possessive, something that presses tight in his chest. He feels a strange, unfamiliar swell of pride, impossible and entirely irrational.

Shane shifts uncomfortably, scratching the back of his neck. “Yeah… uh… she likes watching you play,” he says, trying to keep his voice casual, though it comes out breathy, awkward. His eyes flick from Ilya to the child in his arms, and back again.

Ilya narrows his eyes slightly, head tilting. “Likes me, *da*?” he asks, voice a mix of cockiness and curiosity. “Or likes… jersey?”

Shane blinks. “Uh… maybe both?” he says, and instantly regrets it. He knows better than to answer honestly around Ilya—it always makes everything worse, somehow.

Ilya huffs softly, but there’s the tiniest, almost imperceptible smile tugging at his lips. He shakes the child gently again. “This… small human… she is a fan of me?”

Daisy giggles, wiggling, completely oblivious to the tension.

Shane exhales, the corners of his lips lifting despite himself. “Yeah… she’s got good taste,” he mutters, voice soft, almost shy.

His cheeks flush faintly pink, a subtle warmth that makes Ilya pause. It’s ridiculous—and completely irresistible. He wants to reach out, wants to press his lips to Shane’s cheek, just to see if that warmth spreads, just to mark the moment, just to…

Ilya swallows, blinking rapidly. The small child in his arms babbles happily, oblivious, and the absurdity of the scene hits him full force. But he doesn’t care. His eyes lock on Shane, intent and unflinching, and the world shrinks until it’s just the three of them in this ridiculous, impossible little bubble.

“Stupid… Hollander,” Ilya mutters again, voice low, almost under his breath, and Shane’s blush deepens, lips parting slightly as if to say something he can’t quite get out.

—

Ilya leans against the doorway of the pink bedroom, arms crossed loosely, watching. Shane moves with a strange, effortless authority that Ilya has not seen on him before.

“Okay, pumpkin,” Shane says, voice low but firm, guiding Daisy into her little bed. “Time to sleep. No more rendezvous. Night-night.”

But Daisy, and Ilya only knows that is her name now because Shane had said it while taking the child from him, protests. “Roza! Want Roza!”

It is strange that Ilya cannot stop staring at the tiny red headed girl with his Shane’s face.

Shane crouches beside her, tugging the blanket gently around her shoulders. “I know, I know. But you need sleep, or else you’ll be too tired to go to ballet tomorrow, and you’ll have to go to Grandma’s book club instead.”

Daisy huffs and it is awfully dramatic and reminds him to much of his Shane, but her little body melts against her father as he smooths her curls back from her forehead.

Shane’s thumb brushes her cheek for a fraction too long, the tiny, automatic gesture making Ilya blink.

Ilya’s eyes follow every movement, quietly fascinated. Shane is flustered, cheeks pink, muttering softly under his breath about her eczema, the pillow arrangements, but he never loses patience.

“You… handle her… very well,” Ilya mutters, voice low, almost admiring.

Shane glances up, cheeks burning, words catching in his throat. “I… yeah. She… she needs me to be stern sometimes,” he says, voice uneven. “It’s… important.”

“You are good father.”

They step into the hallway, and when Shane pulls the child’s bedroom door closed, Ilya’s eyebrow pinches.

“How will you hear when she cries?”

“I have an app,” Shane says.

Ilya frowns. “You have… app that tells you when your baby is upset?”

Shane makes a face. “No, I— it’s a camera sensor app. There’s a camera in her room.”

Ilya blinks. “You spy on her?”

“She’s three!” Shane defends.

Ilya just stares at him. “I will stay here tonight?” he asks.

Shane suddenly looks flustered again. “I mean— if you want.”

“I will,” Ilya says. Then he walks back to the child’s door and cracks it open.

Shane protests.

Ilya’s jaw moves. “I would like to be able to hear if she cries.”

“She doesn’t really cry anymore.”

“She used to?”

“When she was a baby, yeah. She cried a lot. She had colic.”

“Colic. I do not know this word,” Ilya says.

“Uh, it’s like… she would cry for no reason. Nothing you do could stop her. It was… exhausting.”

Ilya balks. “You… survive this?”

Shane exhales, brushing hair back from his forehead. “Barely. But… I had to. I… I wanted to be there for her. Every time. So I didn’t really sleep much. My mom helped but… Daisy only ever really wanted me, so.”

Ilya blinks, processing. “You… are good father,” he mutters again.

Shane swallows, cheeks still pink. “Thanks.”

“She does not have a mother?” he asks.

Shane tenses. “No.”

“She is dead?” Ilya asks, his tone soft, almost consoling. Poor Hollander. Poor baby girl Hollander.

Shane pales. “What? No!”

“So… she is dying?” Ilya says again, sorrow creeping into his voice.

“No, I—she’s fine,” Shane says quickly, voice tight.

Ilya stares at him, blinking slowly. “I do not understand.”

Shane shifts, uncomfortable, running a hand through his hair. “She just… didn’t tell me she was pregnant until after she gave birth. And then… she tried to blackmail me. Wanted me to pay her just to let me see the baby. I… got the cops involved. She got arrested. I got Daisy.” He swallows, the words tasting bitter even now. “The charges didn’t stick, but my team made her sign an NDA… and she’s under a lifetime restraining order against me.”

Ilya cannot believe it. “You… had sex with this… demon woman?”

Shane stiffens, cheeks pink, defensive. “I didn’t know she was that bad at the time! It was only… a one-night stand.”

Ilya grunts angrily, jaw tight. “She should be in prison.”

“I agree,” Shane says slowly, rubbing the back of his neck. “But… it’s not up to me. And… I got Daisy, so…” He gestures vaguely toward the floor, as if that explains everything.

Ilya clenches his fist, eyes dark. “I am angry.”

Shane swallows, nodding. “I can tell.” He exhales and rubs the back of his neck. “Uh… I guess… we should—”

Ilya tilts his head, eyes still slightly narrowed with anger. “Go to bed?”

Shane nods quickly, fumbling as he moves past him. His hair is messy, his shirt slightly wrinkled.

They slide under the covers, Shane curling on his side, stiff, almost rigid. Ilya lies behind him for a moment, quiet, then shifts closer. Shane tenses again, but Ilya’s hand comes to rest gently on his side.

“You are nervous?” Ilya murmurs, voice low, almost teasing.

Shane swallows. “A little… yeah. I don’t… uh… I’m not used to this,” he admits, voice quiet, hesitant. “We don’t normally… you don’t stay.”

Ilya’s hand snakes around him, pulling him closer. Shane feels the warmth of Ilya’s chest, the steady beat of his heart. The panic in his chest slowly softens, replaced by a strange, fluttering calm.

“You will tell me about your parents?” Ilya asks, thumb brushing Shane’s side, tracing tiny circles. “Daisy. She likes them?”

Shane exhales softly, cheeks warming again. “Yeah… she loves them. Loves visiting my parents. Playroom, little bed, all her things… they’re good with her. They adore her.”

Ilya hums, curious. “They were surprised?”

Shane swallows, then nods. “Yeah. Same as me. But they came around quickly. Helped me make sure I got full custody. Looked after her whenever I had a game.”

Ilya’s chest rises against Shane’s back as he shifts slightly, nuzzling the curve of his shoulder. “She is lucky to have you.”

Shane inhales sharply, almost embarrassed by how much he wants that affirmation, by how much it matters. “Thanks… I guess. I just… I don’t always know if I’m doing it right.”

“She is happy girl,” Ilya murmurs, pulling him flush against his chest. “Beautiful like you.”

Shane shoves his chest. “Fuck off.”

“I am not kidding,” Ilya croons. “She is girl-version of you. Her matryoshka. Pretty freckles, bright eyes… obsessed with Ilya Rozanov.”

“Fuck off. I’m not obsessed with you,” Shane scoffs, voice rising slightly.

Ilya hums, kissing the top of his head. “Okay, Shane.”

“I’m not,” he insists, cheeks pink.

“I am not arguing with you,” Ilya retorts, calm, teasing, pulling Shane closer.

“You’re doing it… without doing it,” Shane says, voice catching, frustrated.

Ilya hums again, brushing his lips along Shane’s hair. “Doing what?” he asks softly, voice teasing but steady.

“You know… making me feel… stupid,” Shane mutters, face buried slightly in the pillow, words tumbling out awkwardly.

Ilya chuckles low, tightening his hold. “You are obvious. It is easy to see what you feel.”

Shane groans. “Shut up.”

“Okay,” Ilya murmurs. “You will be mine tonight?”

Shane swallows, heart hammering, cheeks burning. “Yeah… yeah,” he whispers. “Tonight. Okay. I’ll be yours.”

—

Three weeks later, Ilya Rozanov lies in the pink bedroom, in the canopy bed next to the tiny red-headed child, reading her a children’s Russian poetry book. Daisy’s little hands fidget with the edges of the pages, eyes wide as she listens to the unfamiliar words roll off his tongue.

That day, they had visited a new ballet studio. It was run by an ex-Russian prima ballerina—carefully researched by Ilya himself. He had decided it would be much better for Daisy than the sub-par Canadian woman Shane had originally chosen.

“You like new teacher, yes?” he asked softly, turning the page with delicate fingers.

Daisy nodded, curling closer to him.

Ilya hummed, lips quirking into a small, amused smile. “Good. You will be very disciplined. Much better than… other options,” he murmured.

He glanced across at Shane, who was quietly observing them from the doorway, leaning against the frame with a slightly flustered grin. Shane looked small, awkward, like he had just realized he’d been caught staring, and Ilya’s chest warmed at the sight.

“You will be very talented ballerina,” Ilya muttered, eyes returning to Daisy.

Daisy yawned again, resting her head against Ilya’s arm. “G’night, Roza,” she murmured sleepily.

“Spokoynoy nochi, Daisy,” he said softly, brushing her curls back. The words were foreign to her, but soon he’d start to teach her the basics of his language and, eventually, talk Shane into enrolling her in classes.

Shane cleared his throat softly. “Uh… Rozanov?”

Ilya looked up. “Yes, Hollander?”

Shane shuffled awkwardly. “She… she looks happy. Really happy. Thanks.”

Ilya’s lips quirked into a small, satisfied smile. “Yes. She likes her new class.”

Shane swallowed, heat rising in his chest, and Ilya returned to reading quietly to the drifting child, voice calm and melodic.

Slowly, Shane sat down, leaned his head back against the doorframe, and closed his eyes.

He woke up in Ilya’s arms, being carried into his bedroom.

“Tired,” he murmured.

Ilya chuckled deeply. “Yes, Shane. I see that. We will fuck tomorrow morning, yes? In shower.”

“‘Kay.” Shane smiled, and promptly fell back asleep.

—

Ilya never officially moved into the penthouse.

But by the time they moved into the cottage full time, he was no longer Daisy’s Roza.

He was her papa.

And that was that.

End Notes

Comments are always appreciated <3

Mafia AU coming soon

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!