

How Shane and Ilya Became Parents (the first time)

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How Shane and Ilya Became Parents (the first time)

by [liljenrocks](#)

Summary

Shane and Ilya have talked about being parents even before they were married. But when Ilya's brother dies, parenthood comes a lot sooner than they expected.

Notes

Hi everyone! Like everyone else, I've become a little obsessed with Heated Rivalry.

Just a couple things:

1. I'm playing fast and loose with laws and immigration and such. I know that this happens within a very quick timeline but it's fiction so...
2. This is written primarily from Shane's POV. So there are a lot of details about the process that I don't include because it's not Shane who would experience them.
3. It's a little choppy because I wanted it to be snapshots.

Thank you for reading! Enjoy!

See the end of the work for [more notes](#)

How Shane and Ilya Became Parents (the first time)

It was an obnoxious buzzing from Ilya's bedside table that brought Shane out of the deep sleep.

"Ilya," Shane says as he shoves his sleeping husband. He can't help the slight panic rising in his chest. Phones don't ring in the middle of the night for good reasons.

"Mmm," Ilya responds but makes no effort to wake. They're at the cottage for two weeks before camps start, both still on a high from the Stanley Cup win, but being at the cottage always relaxes Ilya in a way that he sleeps like the dead. Shane would be jealous if he weren't irritated at the moment.

Shane sits up to reach across Ilya to grab the phone, "Dammit, Rozanov."

Svetlana...

Shane's eyes go wide as he shoved Ilya a little harder. She wouldn't call this late. "Ilya, it's Sveta."

Ilya sits up quickly then and slides his thumb to accept the call. "Da," he answers, forcefully.

Shane mostly watches the conversation, Ilya speaking so quickly that he doesn't have time to translate what's being said. After what seems like minutes, Ilya inhales deeply before letting out a shaky exhale. There were more words but none of them make sense to Shane without context. Ilya throws the covers off of himself before his legs swing and he's standing.

Ilya puts his fingers to his temple. It's something Shane knows he does when he's having a conversation he doesn't particularly like. "Ya syadu v samolet kak mozjno skoreye," he says.

Shane catches "plane" and starts to ask what's going on. But Ilya says a quick goodbye and then throws his phone on the bed. Ilya Rozanov has many forms of anger and Shane has seen most of them. This, however, is something different. The pained look on his husband's face is heartbreaking and it's followed by the most guttural groan.

"What happened?" Shane asks.

Ilya shakes his head and rubs his eyes, "I need a cigarette."

It takes everything in Shane not to reprimand him. Ilya had thus far unsuccessfully tried to quit smoking three times since they married two years ago but this time he'd made it six months and Shane hoped this might be the time it stuck. But who was he to say anything when Ilya looked like he might collapse?

Instead, he watches Ilya open the drawer of his bedside table and pull out a half-empty pack of cigarettes and a lighter he'd hidden away. Shane follows close behind him as Ilya almost

runs down the stairs to the porch on the back of the cottage.

“Ilya, you’re starting to scare me,” he says. The panic that Shane felt earlier returns to his chest. He has to remind himself to take deep breaths.

Ilya puts the cigarette in his lips and starts to flick the lighter until the orange flame appears and he lights it. He takes a long drag and then blows it out. “My brother and his mistress are dead.” The way Ilya says it...there’s no sadness. Shane recognizes anger, maybe hurt, but not even a little sadness.

“What? How?” Shane isn’t really surprised, if he’s honest. The stories Ilya has told him of his corrupt police officer brother, Shane figured it was only a matter of time.

Ilya doesn’t answer though. He just shakes his head. “I have to go to Moscow,” Ilya says.

“For a funeral?” Shane assumes. He knows the brothers have a tumultuous relationship and, when his father died, Ilya washed his hands of everything. But Shane still can’t help but wonder.

Ilya lets out a dark chuckle. “No. Alexei can rot for all I care.” Ilya takes another drag of the cigarette. “But they had kids. Two boys. Nikolai and Maksim. Obviously Alexei’s wife wants nothing to do with them. Not that I blame her. Now those kids have no one. I want to...” Ilya starts. Shane can see the conflict in his eyes and so he pulls Ilya into his arms. He holds him to his chest in the way he does when he knows Ilya needs comforting. “If my brother were not dead, I would kill him.”

“I’ll go with you...to Moscow,” Shane says. He’s not sure exactly how long this trip will take and knows they have to be back in time for the start of the first camp in Ottawa. But Shane wouldn’t allow Ilya to face this alone, and as much as Shane knows Ilya despises his brother, he knows there’s a certain amount of trauma in just the travel itself.

“No,” Ilya responds almost immediately. “Is not a good idea.”

Shane knew what he meant without saying the words. “Is it safe? For you to go?” he asked. They had been lucky in Canada. Their relationship wasn’t easy by any means: Being gay, being professional hockey players, being one-time rivals married to each other. But Shane knew what might happen in Russia, to an openly gay man, was much more dangerous than anything they might face here. And Ilya hadn’t been back to Russia since they were outed, let alone married.

Ilya shrugged. “Probably not,” he finished the last of the cigarette before pressing the butt into the ground. “Svetlana will go. She knows people.” Ilya pauses for a minute. “I am only going because...I will not let those boys stay there.” Ilya looks directly at him and there’s a determination in his eyes. A softness, but a determination, as well. “I know we talked about kids, I know it was always later, when we retired.”

Shane doesn’t think. He just says the first thing that comes to his mind. “Then you will go to Moscow and you will bring Nikolai and Maksim back here,” Shane is matter-of-fact in the

way he says it. He knows there will be red tape, forms to complete, it won't be easy, either. But they will do it all, they will do anything, they will pay whatever they have to.

Shane notices then that Ilya's shoulders have started to shake. "I hope they never remember," Ilya sobbed. "Anything. My brother. Any of it." Ilya swiped his hands down his face to wipe a few tears away. "I hope that they will only know that will be their family."

"We will," Shane said. He couldn't help the smile that formed. Nikolai and Maksim would have two men who loved them like fathers. They would have grandparents who adored them. They would have a team of honorary uncles and aunts. They would be loved.

Ilya calls Svetlana back as Shane books Ilya's flight. Ottawa to New York City to Moscow. Svetlana will meet him in New York. They will be in Moscow for less than twelve hours before they fly back to New York. The less time Ilya is in Russia, the better. Ilya was right to include her because Shane hears her already naming people to contact to expedite getting Nikolai and Maksim out of Russia and eventually into Canada. She tells them the name of an attorney who can help with formally adopting the boys once they are in Canada. She also knows people that can protect him for the small amount of time he will actually be in Moscow. Shane can feel himself panicking again. Then, as Ilya shoves things into a leather duffle bag and Shane sits awkwardly on the side of the bed, he turns to Shane. "Call Mom and Dad," Ilya says.

There's a part of Shane that still melts every time Ilya calls his parents, Mom and Dad, even when it's the last thing he should be thinking about. He knows that as much as Ilya wants them to know what's happened, he probably also knows how much they are going to need their help.

So that's what he does. He calls his parents and he tells them everything. He tells them about Ilya's brother, about the boys, and then about Ilya having to go to Russia to get them.

"I'll come over after you drop Ilya off at the airport and we can start putting rooms together for the boys. We'll have to go shopping, get furniture and clothes," Mom says, already in manager mode. "Put me on speaker." Shane does as he's told. "Ilya."

"Yes," Ilya responds. He's putting documents in a leather pouch but pauses to look at the phone.

"Oh, Ilya, I'm so sorry," his mom says. "Know that I am sending you the biggest hug right now."

Ilya's eyes fill with tears again and Shane reaches for him. He pulls him into a tight hug.

"You be careful, son," Shane's dad adds in.

"How old are the boys?" Shane's mom asks.

Ilya clears his throat. "Maks is two. But Nikolai is still a little baby. Maybe five months."

There is a silence that follows, like no one is quite sure what to say. But then Yuna Hollander, in all her maternal wisdom, breaks it.

“Bring our grandsons home, yeah?” His mom says. Because that’s the reality now. Shane and Ilya will adopt the boys and Yuna and David will be their grandparents.

Shane’s still holding him but Ilya straightens a bit. “I will.”

Shane has mostly kept it together, up until the moment it’s time to drop Ilya off at the airport. He wants to park, walk in with him, help him get checked in. But Ilya says no. Within the time they left the house, up to the moment he pulls up to the drop off, Ilya has switched to the Ilya he sees on the ice. He’s laser focused with a job to do. There’s emotion there but Shane knows it’s easier for Ilya to separate what he feels from what needs to be done. He’s been on the phone with different people the entire ride. A Russian-Canadian attorney, Svetlana again, someone at the Russian embassy in Ottawa.

“Call me when you get to New York, yeah?” Shane leans across the console of the car and Ilya meets him with a kiss. “I love you so much.”

“I love you too,” Ilya responds. “It will be okay, moya lyubov’.”

As Ilya gets out and grabs his duffle, Shane watches him. Then watches as he walks through the sliding doors. “It will be okay,” he repeats. “It has to be.”

Ilya keeps his promise and calls when he reaches New York. At that point, Shane and his mom have purchased a toddler bed, a crib, bedding, toys, clothing, car seats. Yuna has also called to have someone come and paint both of the guest rooms that only really get used by the Pikes, Rose, and Svetlana when they come to visit. The first, Nikolai’s room, a soft sage green to go with the bears and forest they’ve picked out (a bit of an inside joke for Ilya); the second, Maks’s room, a bluish-grey to suit the blue flannel plaid bedding. Shane is not for the first time grateful for his mom. He would have never thought about all the intricate details or all the little things children need. But he was excited the boys would have their own spaces and this would be just as much their home as it was Shane and Ilya’s.

Ilya calls again when he’s reached Moscow. He speaks in English and his demeanor is harder, protective. He tells Shane he has never been as scared as he was when going through customs and having the agent look at his passport, then look at him. Ilya knew that the young man had to know who he was. But for whatever reason (Ilya wasn’t going to argue), he let him through.

They hang up again as Ilya makes his way to the police station where the boys are. This is the part Shane is most worried about. Ilya had made it very clear that the police were the ones with the authority to hold him.

Shane waits with bated breath until the moment his phone rings with a FaceTime call. And there, on the screen, Ilya smiles widely, and he's standing in front of a giant Canadian flag. Shane wishes he was there with him, to touch him, to feel grounded, safe.

"Hey," Shane says.

"We made it to Canadian embassy. They are helping us get the papers ready," Ilya answers quickly.

There's an entire legal process required for this and Shane doesn't pretend to know any of it. He's trusting lawyers and Svetlana to help. It's better for his anxiety if he doesn't ask questions about the specifics.

"No problems getting the boys from the station?" Shane asks.

Ilya scoffs at that. "You would be surprised what money can do in Russia."

Shane wants to ask how much it cost but he doesn't because he knows it doesn't matter.

Ilya turns the camera then to a little boy sitting in a chair too big for him. Shane's breath catches. His hair is neatly combed and he's wearing a grey jogger set. The family resemblance is uncanny. "Say hello, Maksim," Ilya says in Russian, off camera.

For a minute, the boy, maksim, Shane realizes, doesn't say anything but stares at the screen. He eventually points and asks, "Kto ero?"

"Hello, Maksim. I'm Shane," Shane answers him in Russian.

"Sheyn?" Maksim says the name back, like he's practicing.

Shane smiles. "Da, Sheyn."

Shane has a thousand questions he wants to ask but he stops himself when Maksim smiles at him and says, "Sheyn."

"Rozanov!" Shane hears a voice call out.

"Sorry, they are calling us. I'll call back when we leave," Ilya says. "Love you."

"I love you too," Shane gets out just before the screen goes black.

It's almost five hours later that Shane's phone rings again. It's Svetlana this time. Ilya's phone is dead and they are rushing to the airport to make their flight. It's hard to hear what she's saying with the wail of a baby in the background. The cry is mixed with hiccups and Shane wonders how long the baby has been crying. But Shane doesn't miss the sound of Ilya's soothing tones of voice trying to calm Nikolai.

They have 90 minutes to make it through security and customs and Shane would be lying if he wasn't worried they wouldn't make it. So far it's been smooth sailing but Shane wants Ilya

and the boys out of Russia. The phone call lasts less than two minutes and Shane tells Sveta to pass his love to Ilya and the boys before she hangs up.

Almost 80 minutes later, a text comes through from Ilya's phone.

Made it on the plane. Ready to be home. I will never come back here. Ever. I will bring nothing from this place but these boys. I would burn it all if I could. I love you and I will call when we get to New York. Try to sleep, moy lyubov.

Shane realizes at that moment that he hasn't truly slept since they received the call from Svetlana. He might have cat napped in the car with his mom or dozed off while the people put the furniture together for the boys' rooms. But he hasn't rested in almost 40-hours. He's not sure he really can either, his anxiety is on high alert and he keeps pushing down the panic. That in itself is exhausting.

It's still light outside when he takes Anya out for a walk. She also knows that their lives are about to change. He can tell she misses Ilya too and he spoils her by letting her sleep in Ilya's spot on the bed next to him. He takes a quick shower, crawls under the covers, and closes his eyes to the sound of Anya's deep breathing and the occasional loud sigh.

He wakes up almost eight hours later to a FaceTime call from Ilya.

"We made it to New York," Ilya says. Shane can see the exhaustion in his eyes but then sees Ilya's eyes light up. "Is that Anya on the bed?"

"No, I don't know what you're talking about," Shane lies and turns the camera quickly.

Ilya laughs and it feels like the first time Shane's been able to catch his breath. "It's okay to spoil her, moy lyubov. But she will still love me best."

Shane knows he's not wrong. "Anyway, we have an hour. Sveta is headed back to Boston but we got a stroller and one of those funny things that people have to put their babies on them."

"Like a Baby Bjorn?" Shane asks.

"Yeah, I'm wearing Nikolai on my chest," Ilya turns the camera down to show him. The baby is asleep and he looks so cherubic with his pink cheeks and pouty mouth. "But Maksim is being a big boy in his stroller. Da, Maksim?" He points the camera to the little boy in the same grey clothing from before.

"Da," Maksim says.

Ilya runs his hand over Maksim's hair. "Maks speaks a little English but mostly Russian. We will teach him though."

Shane nods. "We will."

Maksim looks at him and smiles. "Sheyn," he says. Shane is taken aback that he remembers his name or his face.

“That’s right, Maksim. I’m Shane,” he answers.

The conversation continues until it’s time for Ilya and the boys to board the plane. Shane is forced to say goodbye again but promises that he will be at the airport to pick them up as soon as they land.

Shane tries to relax his nerves as he sits on the bench in the airport lobby area. This time he ignored Ilya telling him to stay in the car. He wanted to be there to greet his new family members. He also knew Ilya hadn’t checked any bags. They had both been conditioned to pack light for travel.

He sees Ilya’s curls first, above the heads of the other travelers. Then as the crowd thins and his husband gets closer, Shane sees that Ilya has his duffle slung over one shoulder. In his arms, a head resting against his chest, is a baby, with a mop of curls that match his uncle’s. Shane can tell the baby is awake and taking in everything around him. Ilya looks natural like this and Shane swallows hard at the lump forming in his throat. Then the person walking in front of Ilya moves and Shane sees the stroller he’s pushing. There sits another wide-eyed little boy, who he knows is Maksim, looking at EVERYTHING, his mouth moving, but Shane can’t hear what he’s saying. All the conversations they had about having children, they had seemed like just that...conversations...dreams. They were all real now. Shane hated that Alexei and the boys’ mother were dead but his heart felt such gratitude for the view in front of him.

Ilya spots him and lights up. Shane wonders if it’s the first time he’s smiled since he left as they both increase their speed. “Daddy Shane!” Ilya says loudly.

It takes Shane a full five seconds to realize that he’s the one Ilya is referring to. It’s the first time he’s been called Daddy.

Shane picks up his pace and meets Ilya with a kiss. “I missed you,” he says.

“I missed you too,” Ilya gives him another quick kiss. He turns a little so that the baby in the carrier is looking at Shane. “Say hello to Nikolai.”

“Hello, Nikolai,” Shane smiles at the baby who gives him a gummy smile back.

Ilya moves the stroller to Shane. “Push Maks to the car?”

Shane nods but stoops down so he is at Maks’s level. He recognizes something in the little boy’s face. He’s taking everything in, absorbing it all. But recognizes a little fear too. He’s sees a little of himself in Maks. “Do you want me to carry you, Maksim?” He asks in Russian.

The little boy instantly reaches his arms out for Shane and Shane hurries to unbuckle the harness that has him secure in the stroller. Maks buries his head in Shane’s neck and starts to

relax. “I got you, I got you,” he says through his own tears.

Ilya is watching them and then licks his lips and holds his tongue between his teeth. “That is the most...settled he has been since I picked them up at the police station. I think he knows he’s safe now.”

When they arrive back to the house, it takes a good twenty minutes to figure out the ins-and-outs of car seats and baby carriers. They’re saved by his mom and dad when they pull up armed with food and parental knowledge.

Later, after they’ve all been fed, Maks and Nicky bathed and in pajamas, Yuna asks the question, “So are you two going to be Uncle Ilya and Uncle Shane?” She’s running her long fingers through the baby’s soft curls. “Or is there a name in Russian you’re using?” Nikolai is resting his head against his new Nana’s shoulder. Maks is sitting on a stool with his new Popsicle (David) helping him color in an Ottawa Centaurs coloring sheet.

Shane and Ilya hadn’t discussed to in detail, there really hadn’t been time to. But Ilya has an answer.

“Eventually, I will be Papochka,” Ilya smiles softly. “Means ‘daddy’ in Russian. Less formal than Papa.” Then Ilya looks at Shane with the goofy grin he gets when he’s about to say something that might be insulting to Shane. “That’s why Shane will be Dad. He will be boring and make them follow all the rules and eat their vegetables. I will be the fun one who buys them McDonalds.”

“I will be Daddy when they are little, asshole,” Shane says. “Dad makes me sound like I’m going to be asking for their stock portfolio and warning them about the dangers of overloading electrical outlets.”

“Sounds just like,” Ilya smirks.

Shane looks at the boys. “Do you think it’s too soon? For them to call us that? Their parents haven’t been gone but...” He knows it really probably isn’t for Nicky because he will have little to no memory of his biological parents. The one he worries most about is Maks.

No one answers for a beat. Then Shane’s dad says, “Follow their lead. Right now, the only thing you have to do is love them and let them know they’re safe. You can worry about the rest along the way.”

(Maks calls Shane “Daddy” almost six-months later when they buy him his first skates and take him on the ice. Winning Stanley Cups couldn’t even compare to that moment.)

The first camp after Ilya returns from Russia and Nikolai and Maksim have entered their lives is blessedly in Ottawa. It should be easy, right? They will go home every night and sleep in their own beds, get the boys situated in what will be their primary home now. But a five-

month old baby and a two-year old, both of whom have just lost both his parents, have moved to a new country, and have only just begun to become comfortable with the two men who are his family now, still complicates things mildly. What will they do with the boys during the day while they run the camps? They know they'll have to hire a nanny eventually. But...

"I don't know if we can leave them with strangers yet," Ilya says.

They know too that they could easily call Mom/Nana and she would stay with them. Nicky and Maks (as Shane has taken to calling them) seem to be okay with Yuna. She smothers them both with kisses and plays silly games with them. But she isn't Ilya. She doesn't sing Russian lullabies to Nicky to calm him when he cries so hard he starts to hiccup. Yuna wasn't Shane, the person Maks calls out for in the middle of the night when a nightmare comes and Shane holds him as he sways back and forth until he goes back to sleep. And deep down, Shane too worries that the boys might feel abandoned again, even if it's just for a few hours. He also realizes how much his husband has thrown himself into being a father, how much Ilya has always sacrificed for them.

So he speaks up. "We'll take them and I'll sit out. I'll keep them in the stands and we'll watch."

Ilya looks at his husband. "You would be okay not running the camp with me for a few days? Just watching?"

"Yeah, I mean, I can still observe and point out things," he responds. Shane smirks before he continues. "Besides, you really are a better teacher than I am." He's not lying. Ilya is a better teacher. Shane thinks one day, after he's done playing, Ilya would make a great coach.

Ilya's eyes go wide. "What is this? I am better teacher? You finally admit it."

"It's the truth," Shane leans in to kiss him.

Shane knows they look almost comical when they eventually enter the rink. Nicky is strapped to his chest. He has a giant diaper backpack on his back filled to the brim with diapers, bottles, and toys. Ilya is holding Maks's hand with his hockey bag on his other shoulder. They have the stroller too, just in case Maks needs it or Nicky gets too heavy. Shane kind of wonders if they should have brought the pack-and-play with them too because you just never know.

"Now, we are going to be very good for Daddy Shane today, yes? And we are going to watch so that maybe one day we become the best hockey players in the world, yes?" Ilya says in Russian.

"Da," Maks says back. Shane's almost positive he has no idea what Ilya just said but he smiles anyway.

They will spend most of the time in the bleachers or on the bench but for now they follow Ilya back to the locker room. The rest of the staff is already lined up in the hallway.

Wyatt is the first to see them. “Oh boy! What’s this? Did you guys kidnap someone’s babies?”

“No, idiot,” Ilya says. “These are my nephews. My brother died and now they live with us.”

“Well that got dark quickly,” Ryan Price adds with a panicked look.

“Like when did this all happen?” Wyatt asks.

Shane can tell Ilya is annoyed so he answers. “A few days ago. Ilya had to go to Russia to get them. We’ve kind of just been a spending the past few days settling in.”

“Wait,” Troy starts. “So you like went back to Russia? How was that?”

Ilya looked very serious as he said, “Terrible. Like always.”

Yuna saves them from further conversation as she ropes Shane into helping her gather forms as campers arrive. Maks plays with a toy dinosaur under the table while Shane occasionally runs his hand over Nicky when he starts to fuss. The boys are remarkably well behaved and the check-in process is seamless.

Shane stays to the side while the coaches are introduced. Maks has moved on to coloring and eating goldfish crackers while Nicky is no longer in his carrier and Shane is holding him to feed him a bottle.

“You all know who that guy is?” Ilya points towards Shane.

“Shane Hollander!” A cacophony of voices says.

“Sheyn!” Maks lifts his hands and cheers from his spot at the table, not looking up from his coloring.

It earns a laugh or two but when Shane looks at Ilya, the smile on Ilya’s face...it melts something inside him.

They switch off days of sitting out with the boys. Though Shane is correct, the camps are more productive when Ilya is coaching.

By Friday, they’ve hired a nanny. She’s a middle-aged Russian woman who will stay with the boys during the day. When the season starts, Yuna and David will relieve her in the evenings. They know it’s not going to be easy but they’ll make it work. As long as the boys feel loved and safe...

When the first week of camp ends, their little family is still in their little bubble . “Come on,” Bood says. “It’s nothing fancy. But you know the team wants to officially meet the boys and you know there will be barbecue.”

Ilya looks at Shane. He knows they both want to say no. They're exhausted. It's been a whirlwind and they both need an evening to relax. But Bood has that look in his eyes, the one he gets when he won't take no for an answer. Plus they figure, with it being the off-season, a lot of the actual team is probably off doing other things. They say yes.

And they're wrong. Everyone is there! Troy and Harris, Bood, Haas, Hayes, Dykstra, Coach Wiebe, the wives, partners. They're all there. They've also invited the Pikes who drove in from Montreal.

"We know this all kind of happened fast but we wanted to do something. It's like a not baby shower-baby shower," Harris tells them.

There is a table with mostly neatly (and some not so neatly) wrapped gifts on it, a banner over it which reads "You're never having sex again!" in bright blue lettering.

Shane worried that the boys might be overwhelmed by it all but he's surprised to find Maks playing with a few of the younger kids, while Nicky is passed around to different team members through the night.

At one point, Bood gets up to make a toast. "You guys made history as the first married couple to play together. Now you're the first parents to play together. But more than that," he says. "We, we are a family."

It takes eighteen months to finalize the adoption. There have been so many people come into their home to do inspections. Or to interview Maks and Nicky (as best as they can). There have been meetings with attorneys and social workers. They would do it all again to get to this place.

"I just hope he's a Centaurs fan," Yuna laughs but there's a little nervousness in her voice. She's straightening Ilya's tie for him and then leans down to kiss both of her grandsons on the cheeks. They're dressed in their own little suits.

"Who isn't?" Ilya jokes back with a smile.

They walk into the courtroom when it's their turn. He holds Maks's hand while Ilya holds Nicky. What they don't expect is for most all of their teammates, as well as Harris and the Pikes to be sitting in the audience area. It's enough that Shane has to stop the sob he's been holding in all day from coming out.

The judge is an older gentleman who looks down at his paper, then up at the couple in front of him, then back down at the paper as they stand in front of him.

"Ilya Rozanov and Shane Hollander?" He asks.

"Yes, sir," Ilya says. He reaches out his empty hand to take Shane's.

"Yes, sir," Shane says too.

The judge smiles. “And we’re here today to finalize the adoption of Maksim Sheyn Hollander-Rozanov and Nikolai Ilyich Hollander-Rozanov?”

“Yes, sir,” Shane and Ilya say at the same time.

The judge shuffles some papers and then looks at them. “I’m going to ask you both a few questions. If you agree, you’ll answer with, ‘we do’. Sound good?” They both nod. “Okay. Do you both understand that this is a permanent, lifelong commitment?”

“We do,” they say together.

“And do you promise to provide a safe and loving home for these boys?”

“We do.”

The judge is smiling at them. “I want to add in a clause about promising to win another Cup but that would just be unprofessional.” Everyone chuckles at that. “Then, the court finds that it is in the best interest of Maksim and Nikolai that this adoption decree be approved. It is my honor to declare you all officially a family. Congratulations!”

There’s a cheer that goes up from the crowd. Shane knows he’s crying, Ilya is too. Wyatt hands them two child-size centaur jerseys. The smallest is for Nicky and says Hollander-Rozanov 81. Ilya starts to put it on him over his suit. The other jersey is for Maks. It reads Hollander-Rozanov 24. Shane leans down to put it on Maks and then adjust the strings.

“All set,” Shane says, wiping his eyes.

Maks looks at him. “Does that mean you're really my Daddy now?”

“It does,” Shane says. “Is that okay?”

Maks pulls him down and does the exact thing he did the day they first met. He wraps his arms around him and puts his head in his neck. “That’s okay.”

“Ya syadu v samolet kak mozhno skoreye,” means “I will be on a plane as soon as possible.”

End Notes

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