

Home Ice Advantage

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Home Ice Advantage

by [Kikielle](#)

Summary

Ilya's conversation with David while Shane and Yuna talk.

Notes

Heated Rivalry is my new special interest, and I wondered what David and Ilya talked about.

The screen door swung shut behind Shane with a soft clatter, and Ilya watched him go. He didn't like the way Shane's shoulders sat a little too high. The tension in his neck was visible as he followed his mother down the porch steps and toward the driveway. Ilya's fingers tightened around his glass.

How long does a conversation like that take? Ten minutes? An hour?

He had no frame of reference for this. His own father had died without ever knowing. Ilya had stood at the funeral beside his brother, both of them silent, and thought about all the things his father would never learn about him. He still wasn't sure if that was a tragedy or a mercy. The Hollanders seemed like the type to talk about things. Process them. Shane had used that word once, and Ilya had laughed at him for it. He didn't laugh now.

He turned back to the table. To David, who sat across from him with a glass of vodka cradled in one hand, watching Ilya with an unreadable expression. Ilya smiled. It felt weird on his face, stretched too tight, but he committed to it anyway and lifted his own vodka to his lips. The taste was familiar, at least. Grounding.

David smiled back. Neither of them spoke. Somewhere deeper in the cottage, a clock ticked. Ilya hadn't noticed it before, but now the sound filled the kitchen, steady and relentless. Tick. Tick. Tick. He became aware of the refrigerator humming. The sound of a stupid Canadian wolf bird. The soft creak of the house settling around them.

Say something, anything. "Shane told me you played for McGill."

David's eyebrows lifted.

"I heard you were good," Ilya shifted in his seat, feeling seventeen again and sitting in the office of some junior coach whose approval he'd desperately needed. "Defenseman, yes?"

And just like that, David transformed. His whole posture changed, chest lifting, a spark flickering to life behind his eyes. "Well, I don't know about good, but I had a few decent seasons. We made it to the championship in my junior year. Lost in overtime, which, you know," he waved a hand. "Still stings a little, if I'm being honest. Thirty years later, and I can still see that puck sliding past Ricky Delacroix's glove. Ricky was our goalie. Terrible glove hand, great guy. He's a dentist now, actually, out in Vancouver. We still talk sometimes."

Ilya nodded, and the tension in his chest loosened just slightly. This, he understood. Hockey stories that lived in your bones long after you left the ice.

"I loved playing D. There's something about reading the play from back there, you know? Seeing the whole ice, anticipating where the puck's going to be," David took a sip of his vodka.

Ilya could see his eyes unfocus as he recalled more old memories.

"When Shane started skating, I thought maybe he'd follow in my footsteps. Gave him my old stick, showed him how to hold the blue line. That lasted about two weeks. The kid just wanted to go. Always pushing forward, always chasing the puck. Yuna kept telling me to let him find his own way, and she was right. She usually is," he laughed. "It was clear pretty early that he was built to play center. The way he moved, the way he thought about the game. Different than me. Better, honestly."

His fondness deepened into obvious pride. "I'm glad he loves it. The game. I know it's hard, at his level, to remember why you started playing in the first place. But I think he still does."

"He does." The words came out before Ilya could stop them, more certain than he'd intended. David looked at him, and Ilya looked back, and the clock kept ticking.

The silence settled over them again. David set down his glass.

"So," he folded his hands on the table, and Ilya recognized the posture. The careful, deliberate way Shane held himself when he was about to say something important. "What are your intentions with my son?"

"You are very direct."

"I'm a father. It comes with the territory." Fair enough. Ilya turned the vodka glass between his palms, watching the light catch the liquid. He could deflect. Charm his way around the question, the way he charmed his way around most things. Offer up some smooth non-answer that would satisfy without revealing. But this was Shane's father. Shane, who deserved better than Ilya's usual bravado.

"I am in love with him." The words still felt strange in English. Too simple for what they meant. "I have never...I don't have the right words, maybe. In English. But I am happy with Shane. The most happy I have been. My whole life, I feel like I am waiting for something bad to happen. Always looking, always," he made a vague gesture, frustrated. "Waiting for the other shoe? Is that right? But with Shane, I don't feel that."

Ilya took a breath, and the words kept coming.

"He is patient with me. I am not easy, I know this. I am," he waved a hand, searching. "Difficult. Stubborn. I make jokes when I should be serious. I push people away. But Shane stays. He sees all the bad parts, and he stays. And he makes me laugh. Real laughing, not for cameras. He is funny, even when he tries to be serious. Especially then. And when I am with him, I feel like myself. The real self. Not Ilya Rozanov, hockey player. Just Ilya."

He realized, suddenly, that David hadn't spoken in some time. That he had been talking and talking, spilling his guts across this kitchen table like a man who had never learned how to keep things inside.

Heat crept up his neck.

"I am talking too much." He smiled, sheepishly, ducking his head. "Sorry. I just," he met

David's eyes. "I love your son very much."

David studied him for a long moment. Long enough that Ilya had to resist the urge to fidget. Then David smiled warm and a little crooked. Shane's smile, Ilya realized, came from his father.

"How do you feel about pasta?"

Ilya blinked, "Pasta?"

"For dinner. Yuna prepped the sauce this morning, so I just need to boil the noodles and throw some things together. You hungry?"

The pivot was so abrupt that Ilya almost laughed. "Yes. Pasta sounds good."

"Great," David pushed back from the table, his chair scraping against the hardwood. "You want to help? I could use an extra set of hands for the garlic bread."

"I can help, Mr.Hollander," Ilya said, standing, draining the last of his vodka.

"David," he was already moving toward the cupboards, pulling out a large pot. "Call me David."

Ilya grabbed the cutting board. David gestured toward a bread knife and the loaf of Italian bread, wrapped on the counter. The kitchen filled with small sounds: water rushing into the pot, cupboard doors opening and closing, the crinkle of plastic wrap. Ordinary sounds. Domestic ones.

Recognition dawned that this was what Shane had grown up with. This kitchen, this cottage, this steady warmth that seemed to seep out of the walls themselves. A father who asked about intentions and then invited you to make dinner. A family that talked about things. Processed them. Ilya's own childhood had been cold rinks and colder silences. His father's voice sharp as a blade, always finding the places where Ilya was softest. His brother learning cruelty the way other boys learned to ride bikes, and carrying it with him into adulthood until Ilya had finally had enough.

And his mother, who he missed in this moment. This week was the most he thought about her in years. Mostly, it was thoughts of him at twelve years, on a grey morning in January. The rest was a door he kept locked. But he felt comfort that Shane knew. Shane, who held him through the telling of it, steady and warm, and hadn't tried to fix anything. He had just let Ilya be broken in his arms. He hadn't known, before Shane, that people could do that.

David was explaining something about the proper ratio of butter to garlic, hands moving in expressive gestures that Shane definitely inherited, when the screen door clattered again.

Ilya looked up.

Shane stood in the doorway, Yuna just behind him. His eyes found Ilya's immediately, and his

mouth curved into a small smile. Tentative. A little wobbly.

But his shoulders had dropped. And the tension in his jaw had eased. And when he looked at Ilya, there was relief swimming in his gaze, bright and unmistakable.

I'm okay, that look said. We're okay.

Ilya smiled back.

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