

you're still young, that's your fault

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by [residentrookie](#)

Summary

Shane just might be the world's most enthusiastic hockey dad, but when Ilya points out their son might not be enjoying the sport as much as Shane thought, he struggles to reevaluate his expectations.

Notes

WELCOME TO HOLLANOV BEING PARENTS!!!! i am so so fond of them always, but especially in this one. it was really fun to explore hollanov's family dynamic and i also loved playing around with a seasoned hollanov who have been married for over a decade now and imagining what that might look like. your honor, they are still in love, and it's still fucking gross (i love it). misha and sophie are my oc's and i am VERY eager to keep writing one shots about them In Situations because that's where i like all my characters to be.

this fic is named after the song "Father and Son" by Yusuf/Cat Stevens. the lyrics are a little too angsty for this scenario, maybe, but a great song nonetheless!

hope you enjoy!

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

Shane doesn't look up from his computer screen when he hears Ilya's footsteps thump down the stairs and trail towards the living room to find him, but he smiles softly, knowing they will soon. The house is as quiet as it ever is since both kids are asleep instead of playing or bickering or watching tv at extreme decibels or eating food with a single-minded determination of hitting their forks against their plates on every single bite. Shane loves the sound of his kids being kids, proof of their sheer *joy* at life in general, but he'd be lying if he said he didn't enjoy the quiet as well. The peaceful, silky kind that follows a busy day like a coda to a song you know will start all over again tomorrow.

Ilya appears, and Shane can tell he's smiling even without looking.

"Sophie get to sleep, okay?" Shane asks, because it was Ilya's night to tuck in their five year old and he had a bad habit of mistaking her bedtime routine as the 30-more-minutes-I- get-to-hang-out-with-my-awesome-kid routine. Some nights, when it's taking him longer than necessary, Shane has to go make sure Ilya is actually getting her to sleep and not telling her some story that will keep her up hours past her bedtime. Often, he stays to put them *both* to bed.

"Yes," Ilya says with a contented sigh, plopping himself down on the couch beside Shane. He stretches his long legs out on the ottoman in front of them and bumps his socked foot against Shane's. "She wanted to hear the Bluey story, so I had to get very creative. Good luck topping my performance tomorrow."

Shane groans, dropping his head back against the sofa. They had made the mistake, months ago, of buying Sophie a Bluey book she loved so completely it ruined all other books for her. She would cry every time they finished it, so heartbroken the story was over, that Ilya decided one night it didn't have to be over... if he invented something else to happen next. Fast forward to now, and Sophie only wants to hear the Bluey story completely fabricated by her parents who popcorn the plot back and forth on alternating nights. It has plot holes and continuity issues like you would not believe, but none that their five year old ever truly minds. In fact, Shane fears she *prefers* to see them scramble to come up with things, the little fiend.

"Great," he says, voice flat and unenthused. "It better not have ended with an explosion again, because there's no fucking way I can come up with something more interesting."

"Was definitely an explosion," Ilya assures him. At Shane's glare, he smiles brightly, then mimics an explosion sound, spreading his fingers for emphasis like he no doubt did for their daughter earlier.

"Thanks so much for that."

Ilya's grin widens, eyes sparkling. "The point is to get her to fall asleep, yes? You are so much better at that because your stories are so boring. Is a skill!"

Shane rolls his eyes. "Whatever, asshole."

He returns his attention to the screen before him and they sit in contented silence for a bit, Ilya with his head resting on Shane's shoulder, the fingers of his left hand fiddling idly with Shane's track pants. The sun room, built to be optimally enjoyed during daytime hours, is still rather cozy at night, with all the lamps lighting up the room in a soft, warm glow. The sun has long since set, so it's nearly impossible to see the water in the dark like this, but he knows Ilya likes to look out the large window facing them anyway. Or perhaps he just likes to see their reflections in it, cuddling and content, a still life portrait of all the things they once feared they would never, ever have.

"Well," Ilya says after a long moment, dragging out the syllables long enough that Shane knows exactly what will follow. The hairs on the back of his neck, well trained to sense the slightest shifts by now, raise in anticipation. "Our jobs are done. Kids are asleep, dogs are asleep... house is quiet..."

Those sinfully long fingers drift meaningfully up Shane's leg, taunting almost, and Shane shivers despite himself. This never gets old, with Ilya. Never.

"Mm. I think I can see where you're heading with this," Shane teases, fighting the smile tugging at the corners of his lips.

Ilya's brows raise. "Oh, you think, do you? I can be more obvious if you like." Ilya's hand continues its journey— and squeezes slightly for emphasis at his destination.

Shane jerks, gasping softly. Those damn *hands*—

His forehead bumps into Ilya's as he turns his head, and his husband wastes no time capturing his lips, his tongue flicking into Shane's mouth with practised ease and drawing a low moan from his throat. The sensation sends jolts all the way down to Shane's toes, even as he thinks stupidly somewhere in the very back of his head that something as simple as a kiss shouldn't have *this* kind of effect on his nervous system after all these years. Like he's being electrocuted, gripping a live wire and riding out the shocks rocking his body, too blissed out to mind.

When he pulls away to gasp for air, Ilya chases his mouth, far from finished.

"Where can I have you tonight?" he pants, nuzzling his nose against Shane's hot cheek. "Here, on the couch? The bed, maybe, where there is more room? But that is boring, no? A different bedroom, then. I want to leave stains on your precious guest sheets. How long has it been since we left a fucking mess behind us, eh? Too long," he sighs, his hand sliding up Shane's chest to grip his chin, "much *much* too long."

Shane doesn't get a chance to answer *any* of the questions posed since Ilya immediately occupies his mouth, clearly too impatient for a response. He kisses his way down Shane's jaw, then takes his mouth back for himself before pulling back yet again.

"Tell me, Hollander—"

"Hollander-Rozanov," Shane corrects breathlessly, still giddy years later at the sound of their names pressed against each other so comfortably and perfectly, tied together as they always

have been, except this time literally. And legally. He also knows Ilya *loves* to be reminded of this at every possible opportunity and is proved correct instantly when the man next to him grins with all his teeth.

“*Fuuuck*,” Ilya moans into his mouth. “Yes. Exactly right. Tell me, Hollander-Rozanov—Jesus, is a fucking mouthful, no? — tell me, *Shane*, where you want to go. Right now. You are giving me nothing. Am having to think of everything all on my own. The kitchen then? Should I fuck you against the counter? No, too loud, too open. Cannot wake up the kids with this. Where, then? The shower? The gym? The fucking *celiing*—”

“You’re being ridiculous, you know that right? Why the fuck are you so horny? We literally had sex last night.”

“Ah but I was ready for round two and *someone* fell asleep with their ass still in the air.”

Shane’s cheeks heat. “You got round two *this morning*, dickhead!”

Ilya bats this away with a hand and an overly exaggerated eye roll. “Blah, blah, blah. Excuses, excuses. You are irresistible to me always. You know this.”

Well, *that* Shane isn’t going to complain about. In fact he’s pretty sure he’s sporting a goofy grin, one he very much hopes Ilya will continue to kiss off his face in a moment. He has about two seconds before any attempt at planning goes out the window and Ilya starts taking exactly what he wants, right here on the couch, but there’s still something Shane needs to do before he loses himself completely to sensation.

When Ilya moves to pounce on him again, he gets out, “Oh my god, *okay*, yes, just— fuck, give me five minutes, and I’m all yours.”

“Five *minutes*?” Ilya demands incredulously, like Shane has just told him he’ll be busy for the rest of their lives.

He laughs and looks down meaningfully at the bulge in Ilya’s sweatpants. “Think you can wait that long?”

“It has been all day! All day I have been waiting for this!” Ilya protests, and Shane just laughs harder. “Inconsiderate asshole.”

“Big word,” Shane quips back, still fond of teasing Ilya even though his English is superb, and reaches for his laptop that was rudely pushed from his lap moments earlier.

Ilya makes a show of tossing up his hands and grumbling his displeasure in Russian, words that Shane is very familiar with both from being married to a Russian for as many years as he has and from practicing the language in his own time. And of course, because his kids speak it fluently, mostly with Ilya, but around Shane enough that he gets the gist.

As dramatic as the fucker is, Ilya’s patience is no small feat, Shane knows.

When they both finally retired from the NHL and realized that there was truly nothing stopping them from spending any given moment of their newly acquired free time in bed

fucking if they wanted to, there was very little reason not to take advantage of the perk. And take advantage of said-perk they absolutely did. Constantly. For years.

However, adopting two children put a very firm end to that. In the grand scheme of things, it wasn't a huge sacrifice. The kids were still young and oblivious and their sex life was very much healthy. But it was more scheduled now than it used to be, spontaneity often thrown out the window in favor of practicality. In a strange way, it was a return to how they used to always fuck, back when it was all they did, in tight, one to two hour windows with enough passion and vigor to last them until whenever they could find the time again. Now, as opposed to *then*, there's the added benefit of being out and living together and being married and in love and all that, so Shane supposes this is better.

Who is he kidding? It's the fucking *best*.

"What are you even doing that is so important, hm?" Ilya demands.

Shane knows what Ilya's really asking is, *What the fuck could be more important than this?*

He just shakes his head. "I'm looking for a new stick for Misha that has a different grip. He says the one he has now is giving him blisters, so I think we should try out some different shapes and see if something else works better."

Misha, their eight year old son, had only recently joined an 8U Mite group, a novice division for early hockey players learning the basics. His parents being who they are, Misha had been skating almost as long as he could walk, but he was just now getting into the finer points of the sport, and Shane was, to put it mildly, overjoyed. He and Ilya both were. Just thinking about his son, all geared up and already skating circles around the other boys, made Shane's heart clench with pleasure and pride. He was so fucking good already, and Shane wasn't just saying that because he was *theirs*. He couldn't wait for the day he could say his son was *great*. Just like his dads.

Ilya stiffens a bit beside him. Then he *hums*, and Shane's hackles raise immediately. Thirteen years of marriage will do that to a person.

"What?" he asks testily.

As if intent on annoying Shane further, Ilya just shrugs. "Is nothing, Shane."

Now it's Shane's turn to push his computer to the side as he faces Ilya head on. "It's clearly not *nothing* because you're making noises, and you know I *hate* it when you make noises."

Ilya rolls his eyes skyward. "Ah, yes, just what every husband wants to hear. Thank you, my love."

"You know what I mean! When you hum or huff instead of saying what you're really thinking. It's irritating, and you do it all the time."

"Not all the time. Just when I know you don't want to hear what I have to say."

Shane scoffs. *Here we fucking go.*

“Just spit it out, please. I’d rather not spend all night guessing at whatever it is you won’t say.”

Ilya hesitates, which is the first indication to Shane that this is... serious. At least semi-serious. Ilya rarely takes the time to think through what he’s going to say to him. He twists on the couch, giving Shane a full view of his disapproving expression.

“Did you talk to Misha today?” he finally asks. “About practice?”

“Of course I did,” Shane grits out. “That’s why I’m looking for sticks right now, because he was complaining about his, and I didn’t want him to have to deal with an avoidable issue. It’s fine, I’ve got it handled.”

As if Shane wouldn’t make sure their son was taken care of. Jesus.

At this, Ilya laughs once, sharply, and the sound is far from kind. It’s sharp and edgy and dangerously close to slicing. “Well, thank goodness for that. Shane Hollander to the rescue, everyone, we are saved!”

Shane blinks at his tone, almost too stunned to be angry. *Almost*. “Okay, what the fuck? Why are you being a dick right now?”

Ilya rises with a giant, pointed huff, and his footsteps to the kitchen echo a bit louder than usual, like they always do when he’s in a mood. Shane has no choice but to rise as well, since he sure as shit plans on getting an answer out of Ilya as to why he’s turned their pleasant evening into whatever *this* is.

Shane watches dispassionately as Ilya fetches a Coke from the fridge, popping open the tab and taking a long, annoying sip, before looking him in the eyes again. The energy simmering between them now is starkly different from the light, playful one on the couch moments before, and Shane feels the absence of that warmth acutely. Ilya’s hazel eyes are irritated but also sad in a way Shane isn’t sure he knows what to do with.

“I am... worried,” Ilya begins slowly. “Worried that you hear him, but you are not *listening*.”

Great. More nonsense for Shane to sort through.

“Can you speak straight with me right now because you’re actually starting to piss me off. Of course I’m listening to our son, what the fuck?”

And now they’re facing off, the two of them, standing with the island between them instead of their sticks on the empty ice. They aren’t in the rink, but there’s a chill in the air between them that feels eerily similar.

“You are angry at me for saying this.”

Ilya’s observation is met with another scoff from Shane.

“Yeah I’m kind of fucking angry, Ilya. I don’t like whatever it is you’re implying about my parenting.”

Is that what Ilya is even doing? Implying that Shane is, if not an outright *bad* parent, then at least an unobservant one? Shane feels heat rise to his face at the thought, deeply offended that Ilya's even thinking this and even more horrified that he's right.

He's not right. He's not. Shane is a good dad. Until this exact second, he thought *Ilya* thought so too.

And then Ilya takes a deep breath and says, "He doesn't like it, Shane."

Shane's heart stutters in his chest. "What? Doesn't like what?"

"Hockey," Ilya says flatly, as if Shane has somehow missed a billboard right before his eyes with bright, flashing letters on it, announcing this news. "He doesn't like it."

Shane's mind blanks, then restarts, working double time.

Now this... this is... What exactly *is* this? Funny? Laughable? Ridiculous? Yes to all three.

Shane still remembers that day he and Ilya took two-year-old Misha to the rink, remembers the tiny skates they bought, that he had gripped, dwarfed by his hands, and wondered how on earth anyone's feet could be so tiny— how on earth their *son's* feet could be so tiny. But they fit when Shane slid them on, and Misha had laughed, delighted. Ilya had held him while Shane stepped onto the ice, a move he'd done millions of times by then, but still never got old. He had turned when Ilya joined him and watched as he placed Misha, so, so carefully, onto the ice as well, still clutching his chubby fingers, suspending him midair until he could get his footing. Shane had been anxious about every part of this experiment, of course, but the argument could be made that Shane was never really *not* anxious and simply had to push through it. There was every chance in the world that Misha would not like the cold or would fall and hurt himself and have a terrible association with hockey for the rest of his life, but instead he looked... curious. Curious and trusting and perfect. His large, brown eyes, nearly as dark as Shane's, had simply observed the ice around him and then, to both of their surprises, had taken one intentional step towards him. Shane, who had whooped so loudly it echoed like a boomerang around the rink, swept in and grabbed Misha before he could fall, twirling him in the air in a carefree way he could only ever feel on the ice and never on solid ground. And Misha had laughed and Ilya had laughed and they had spent the rest of that afternoon getting him acquainted with the thing they both loved so fiercely.

Ever since then, when Shane watched Misha step onto the ice, graceful as a swan taking to water, he'd felt that same burst of joy echoing in his chest, knowing this was a love they all shared.

The idea that that could be a lie...

"Oh come on," he says, incredulous. "What are you talking about? He loves hockey! He talks about it all the time—"

"Because *you* talk about it all the time," Ilya inserts.

It's the wrong thing to say to Shane in this moment, who sees red streak across his vision at the words.

"Oh, so this is *my* fault? Great. No, that's perfect, actually, thanks."

He has the sudden and overwhelming urge to be absolutely anywhere but in Ilya's vicinity and turns on his heel, stalking back to the living room with all the fervor of a stormcloud.

"Where are you going?" Ilya calls after him.

"Away from you. I need some fucking space."

He needs to be on the fucking moon is what he needs, somewhere with quiet and solitude and without the voice chanting in the back of his head that his whole life is a fucking lie. Ilya must need to see his wish in writing or something because he pays no heed to Shane's words, following behind him far too close than Shane would prefer right now.

"I have not finished telling you what I want to say."

Shane whirls on him. "Then get to the fucking point. Right now."

He hates this. Hates fighting with Ilya. Hates the outright panic that sets in at even the slightest implication that he might not be a perfect parent, even though he knows it's very much true. And he hates this *conversation*, whatever Ilya is implying about Misha and hockey and the incomprehensible claim that their son just... doesn't like it? It didn't make sense.

Ilya seems to steel himself before speaking. He clears his throat. Looks Shane dead in the eye.

"Our son does not like hockey, and he does not want to tell you this because you love hockey. And he loves you. And he is afraid that you will... not handle it well."

It honestly might have been better if Ilya had pulled his arm back and flat out punched Shane in the face. For a moment, he flounders as if Ilya actually had.

"He *said* this to you?" Shane demands. "He explicitly told you that he doesn't like hockey and he doesn't want to play anymore? Like actually said those specific words?"

He wants Ilya to be clear. Crystal fucking clear with him.

"Yes."

Another punch, this time to the gut.

"Then what the *fuck*, Ilya? You didn't think that was something you needed to share with me?!"

From a very distant, very outside perspective, Shane knows he's *not* handling this well. He's probably handling this worse than Ilya feared he would. But all he has the space to feel right

now is betrayal from the man standing in front of him, wearing a matching ring on his left ring finger. He feels out of the loop in a way that makes him sick, dizzy with discomfort at the thought of both his son and his husband hiding something this crucial from him. Purposely. Intentionally.

Ilya sighs a bit before saying softly, “He asked me not to.”

And if that admission doesn’t throw ice cold water on the already roaring grease fire, Shane doesn’t know what will.

“Well, that’s just great, Ilya. Really fucking great. When did he tell you this, hm? What prompted it, did he say? And why the *fuck* does he feel like he can’t come to me, but he can come to *you*, *you* who are also a retired professional hockey player, by the way. Like, shit, you love hockey too! Why am *I* so different in this scenario?”

Because you’re a bad parent, a voice whispers in the back of his mind. *Because Misha doesn’t trust you, doesn’t love you the same way he loves Ilya.*

Shane squints to block out the noise, and then stops when he realizes the tears in his eyes are dangerously close to falling.

Ilya cards his fingers through his dark curls. “You are making this out to be more...” Ilya fumbles for the right word, “on purpose than it was. He did not want to tell me what was bothering him at first, but I made him. He probably would have never told anyone at all, but I’m glad he did.”

This sounded more like Misha, Shane can at least admit. He’s a ridiculously sensitive kid, in touch with his emotions in ways that shock and humble him and Ilya both. He complained like any other kid, sure, but less often and quieter than most, including Sophie.

“But he couldn’t tell *me*, for some reason,” Shane says, his voice sharp and accusatory. “Like, what, he can’t trust me? He doesn’t think I would be kind or understanding?”

Ilya’s *expression* turns sharp and accusatory. “*Would* you?”

“How can you even ask me that, Ilya?” Shane nearly shouts, all the while knowing *exactly* how Ilya could ask him that.

“Because,” Ilya says anyway, “I am telling you right now. And you are not being kind or understanding. You are being angry and mean.”

“I’m not talking to *Misha*,” Shane spits through gritted teeth. “I’m talking to *you*, dickhead, and you’re pissing me the fuck off.”

The sigh drawn from Ilya is deep, traveling up through his core like a lava lamp and popping on the way out. “The thing is, he *has* told you, Shane. A million different little ways. He does not like waking up early for camp, his gloves are too tight, he cannot practice with some of the other boys because they are assholes, his coach is too hard on him,” he pauses, looking at Shane with raised brows, “his *stick* is giving him *blisters*. Always, he is saying these things,

sometimes hidden and sometimes obvious. He has told you in every way but one that he does not like it. That he is not having fun anymore.”

Panic starts to seep back in at Ilya’s long winded list. Had Shane really missed all of that? Was he truly so terrible of a listener? Of a *parent*?

“He’s a fucking kid, Ilya,” Shane rebuffs, disbelief coating every word. “Kids complain. God knows I complained about every single one of those things to my mom growing up. But it didn’t mean I *hated* hockey!”

Disappointment is etched in every single corner of Ilya’s expression. Shane wants so badly to wipe it away, but he can’t. He’s the one who put it there.

“You do not see it, do you?” Ilya asks quietly. “The dread on his face every day he has practice or if we ask if he wants to go to the rink? He is not *happy*, Shane. And he has been waiting for you to notice, I think, but...”

“But what?” Shane pushes— he’s always pushing, always challenging Ilya in every capacity.

For the second time that night, Ilya hesitates, as if bracing himself for impact.

“I am going to say something that will upset you,” he warns Shane, which feels so ludicrously moot right now that Shane almost laughs.

“Well, you’re on a legendary roll, so you might as fucking well say it.”

When Ilya pauses again, Shane loses what’s left of his patience.

“Go on, Rozanov,” he says cruelly, “go for the hat trick.”

“I am,” Ilya begins carefully, “more... perceptive, I think, to... bad emotions with the kids. Because of my upbringing. I think it lets me see more than you. There is so much fucking pressure on him, Shane, and he does not want to disappoint you. I am very familiar with this feeling.”

It’s almost as if Shane can hear the imaginary buzzer sound indicating that Ilya’s puck has found the net. Has hit its mark. Sailed home. Point fucking made.

Rage isn’t the right word for what he feels. Sadness, horror, disgust— all too weak of words to describe whatever sensation is coursing through Shane’s veins, filling them with ice or venom or something worse. He’s actually not sure he’s ever experienced this feeling before, so it’s no wonder he doesn’t have a name for it. Shane has never once felt anything close to violence towards Ilya, not even as opponents on the ice, but this... this fury scares him enough to wonder if he might not resort to it.

“Wow,” Shane murmurs, the word coming out hushed and breathless. “Wow. So, let me get this straight. In this scenario, *I’m* your controlling, abusive father who puts too much pressure on his son to play hockey? Is that what you’re *actually* trying to fucking say to me right now, Rozanov? Because it better not *fucking* be or so help me *god*—”

“Shane.” Ilya’s voice is severe. Deadly serious in a way that is so unlike him. “Never. *Never.*”

That, at least, extinguishes some of the rising fury in Shane’s gut.

“Am talking about *me*,” Ilya points to himself, sticking his finger into his chest. “My childhood. What I experienced. What Misha is experiencing is nothing like that, but also not good, okay? We want him to be happy, do we not?”

“Until ten fucking minutes ago, I didn’t know that he *wasn’t*!”

“*Shhhhh*, you will wake them with all this yelling, Hollander—”

“Oh, go fuck yourself.”

But Shane stalks off anyway, heading to the gym where he knows their voices have less chance of being overheard. Where he knows Ilya will follow him to finish this nightmare of a conversation.

As soon as Shane hears Ilya open the door behind him he unleashes himself.

“I can’t fucking believe this! I can’t believe he would say it, and I can’t believe you wouldn’t *tell* me!”

“He asked me not to,” Ilya repeats, as if it’s obvious he wouldn’t break his son’s trust in this way. It makes Shane want to put his fist through the wall, but he manages to contain himself.

“Yeah, you mentioned that,” he says coldly.

Ilya frowns. “He was very upset, Shane. He begged me not to tell you.”

Somehow, that only makes Shane feel worse. The bench next to him seems sturdier than his own legs right now, so he sinks down on it and places his hot face in his hands, misery incarnate.

“He’s that fucking scared of me?” Shane whispers, horrified and broken at the thought. “Am I scary? When did I get scary to him?”

After a terrifying moment of freefalling through open, endless air, Shane feels Ilya’s shins brush up against his knees, soft and questioning. Testing to see if Shane will open his legs and let him back in. After a few deep, steadying breaths, Shane does. It’s not exactly surrender, but it’s not *not* surrender. Whatever that fucking means.

“Hey,” Ilya says gently, kneeling between Shanes’ knees and stroking his hands through Shane’s hair in a way he knows Shane finds soothing. “Hey, look at me, Hollander.”

“Can’t,” Shane manages, knowing his tears are obvious but intent on hiding them anyway. It’s shameful, this feeling bubbling up in his gut. He’s let everyone down, everyone he cares about. He’s collapsing on himself, and he doesn’t want an audience.

Ilya's voice is harder this time. "Shane. You will look at me."

And as per fucking usual, Shane can't make himself ignore a command from Ilya. Story of his fucking life.

Shane drops his hands, and looks into the eyes of the only man he's ever loved. Eyes that are reflecting that same love back to him like a beacon, like when beams of sun return back to earth as moonlight. Miracle of miracles, even after all this time.

"Misha is not afraid of you," Ilya says firmly. As if it's obvious. As if he believes it. "You are not scary, Hollander. You cannot even yell properly at the kids when they are behaving badly. Is very embarrassing watching you try to be mean. I have to cover my eyes sometimes."

"That isn't helpi—"

"Is not fear, idiot," Ilya grips his face in both hands, shaking it a bit. "Is love. He loves that he can connect with you over the sport, that you care so much about every little detail and that he always has something to talk about with you. He does not want to lose that. Can you not understand how that must feel for him?"

"Ilya—"

"He is eight years old, Shane," Ilya continues ruthlessly. "He is little boy, and already he is feeling the weight of the world on his tiny shoulders because of who his parents are. Kids calling him nepo-nepo— fuck, I forget the word—"

"Nepotism," Shane provides, then feels his brows furrow. "Who's calling him a nepo baby?"

Ilya shrugs impatiently. "Other kids, I don't know. It upsets him, though."

"That's fucking bullshit," Shane says angrily, cheeks heating. "He's not doing anything any of those little shits aren't doing, too. I mean, he's going to the same camp I went to as a kid before we were rich from the sponsorships and the league."

Ilya shakes his head. "Is more about his name than actual money, I think."

"Okay, so kids are assholes. That's fucked up, but it's not the *sport's* fault."

Still, Shane feels like he has to defend hockey. Defend his and Ilya's choice to set Misha on the path to play it.

Ilya brings his face closer, his eyes seeking Shane's for even a flicker of understanding.

"Shane," he says, near begging, "listen to me. Hockey is... demanding sport. We both know this. It is hard, it is challenging, it is exhausting, it takes everything out of you, and if you love it, you learn that all the hard things don't matter in the end. They mean nothing compared to that feeling you get on the ice, like your heart may burst with happiness just to be playing. You've never experienced anything different than that feeling. But can you imagine not having that? Imagine all the terrible things that go into playing this sport and there is not one single thing about it that makes you happy. That is how he feels, I think."

Already, at an age where it will only get worse. And we cannot ask him to endure it just because *we* love it.”

Ilya rarely makes speeches in English, even when he’s just talking to Shane. He’s fluent in English, of course, but he struggles sometimes to find the exact words he wants to say and understandably, finds it frustrating to have to *translate* his feelings while he speaks them. This speech, however, rings true like a fucking bell. He’s right. Shane knows he’s right. It’s still breaking his heart to admit it, though.

“You mean *I* can’t ask it of him,” he replies softly.

“It makes me sad as well that he does not enjoy it, Shane,” Ilya admits with a huff. “How could it not?”

Shane inhales deeply, then lets it all out in one big breath, swiping at his eyes to wipe away any moisture left there. “But you’re not the problem here, apparently. I am.”

Ilya shrugs a bit, smiling softly. “You love hockey more than me. You always have. It shows, I think.”

“I don’t want him to be miserable. *Ever*.”

Shane wants Misha to get every fucking thing he wants in life. He wants the world to bend down and offer itself to him. He wants him to be happier, lighter, more carefree than Shane felt even at Misha’s age, but he fears sometimes that he passed it on to Misha, that timid, stiff way *he* approaches almost everything, tense and bracing for the worst, despite the fact that they don’t share genetics.

He thought, stupidly, he realizes now, that hockey could be a unifying factor for both Misha and himself, the one thing that has the power to take them completely out of their clouded thoughts. But maybe Shane was projecting that onto his son. Maybe Misha still had to find that one *thing* that made everything else click into place for him without Shane’s help at all.

“He is not completely miserable, Shane,” Ilya points out reasonably. “You know this. He has many things to be happy about and grateful for outside of hockey. Friends. Good school.” He swallows past something in his throat before continuing softly. “Two parents who love him very much and want the best for him.”

Yes. *Two*. Shane has always known the love of two present, adoring parents, but Ilya hasn’t, and the tenderness in his husband’s eyes lets Shane know just how grateful Ilya is to provide that for his son.

“What do I do?” Shane asks. “To let him know it’s okay with me if he doesn’t play?”

“Listen,” Ilya says simply, rising to his feet. He leans over, placing a chaste kiss on the top of Shane’s head. “Watch. He will tell you again soon enough. When he does, you say what you need to say.”

Shane opens his mouth to speak, then closes it, deciding it's better to swallow what he was about to say. Ilya, however, isn't willing to let him off so easily.

"What is it, Hollander? Spit it out, we are practicing honesty tonight. Very annoying, uncomfortable honesty, all the mushy, gross stuff. You must say your mind. Right now."

"*You* started this shit," Shane points out, but Ilya just raises his brows expectantly.

"It's nothing... it's just that... just... *fuck*, Ilya he's so *good*!" Shane cries and Ilya laughs at the pure dismay no doubt splayed across his features. "If he were *bad* I could understand it more, but he's the best fucking skater in his age group and probably the age group above him, too. He's talented, I mean it!"

Ilya sighs a bit. "You are not wrong. But... oh well, right? Is his decision."

"I guess," Shane mutters, then corrects himself at Ilya sharp glare. "I mean, yes. Of course it is. Just... hate to see it go to waste."

"Is his talent to waste or not waste. But with a kid as fucking great as ours," Ilya grins, "who knows what he'll be the best at next?"

The opportunity presents itself a few days later, when the whole family is gathered in the kitchen for a hasty breakfast before school.

"Hey!" Shane exclaims upon opening the pantry and spotting a box of the gross, sugary cereal he's absolutely banned from the house. "What did I say about buying this stuff? It's terrible for you, and your teeth are going to rot out of your heads."

He takes it out and shakes it in a very non-irritating and totally endearing way, he's sure, which is why every member of his family (barring Misha) rolls their eyes at him.

Sophie looks at Ilya with disdain in her eyes and says in a whisper-yelled Russian, "*You said you would hide it better this time, Papa.*"

Ilya shakes his head mournfully.

"*I'm sorry, my angel. I must have put it too low. Daddy is shorter than I remembered,*" Ilya whisper-yells back, flashing Shane a cheeky wink. Sophie, however, looks unimpressed and pouts into her scrambled eggs.

"*You* are setting a bad example," he points at Ilya, and doesn't break eye contact as he tosses the whole thing in the trash.

"What?" Ilya cries, indignant. "Is Mimi's favorite! He loves it."

"Nuh uh!" Misha denies, his eyes going wide at being brought into the line of fire. "Sophie asked for it, not me! I *like* scrambled eggs."

Shane's stern expression almost cracks at that. His boy was so mild, much more of Shane's mind and temperament than either of the wilder members of their family.

"*Kissass*," Sophie mumbles in Russian, proving his point succinctly, and Ilya claps a hand to his mouth, physically turning his body away so the kids, who have started exchanging *more* concerning words back and forth, won't see the laughter taking over his entire body.

Shane, abandoned by his other half to manage this chaos, is barely keeping himself together enough to be disciplinary. "What— *Sophie!* Hey cut it out, you two! Sophie, *don't* call your brother names at breakfast! Where did you even learn that word?! Ilya!"

The morning passes in a flurry after that, Ilya running around upstairs with Sophie to help her find the book she needs to bring and has lost somewhere in her room while Misha calmly puts his lunch box into his backpack.

"Practice is at 3:30, and we'll have to go straight there from school, so I packed an extra cheese stick and orange as a snack, okay?" Shane tells him, and this time keeps a firm eye on his son's reaction, anxious for any signs he's been missing all this time.

Sure enough, Misha seems to dim at the mention of it, and Shane's heart sinks. Ilya was right. Shane had not been paying close enough attention.

"Can we... not go today?" Misha asks a moment later, almost too quietly for Shane to hear.

"Not go where, bud?"

"To practice after school. It's warm outside and... I wanted to go down to the dock and swim a little bit. Maybe."

"Misha," Shane says, leaning down to catch his eye. It's a lost cause though, since his eyes are glued to the floor.

"Just this once, though, Dad, I promise. I-I'll go back tomorrow and work even harder—"

"Mimi. *Hey.*"

Shane kneels before his son, reaching over to grasp his slight shoulders, the ones that appear, as Ilya suggested, to be bearing the weight of the world in total silence. *How* could Shane have missed this? It seemed so obvious now, how Misha truly felt.

"Is there something you want to tell me?" Shane is trying his best to be so gentle, so careful about this. "Something you're not saying but you've been thinking for a long time?"

Misha's brown eyes flash up to his, alarmed. They're big and round, doe-like on his small face, and the dark shade matches the freckles splattered across his cheeks. Ilya had been utterly smitten by them when they'd started popping up everywhere on his smooth baby skin.

He is Russian like me, Illya had cooed. And he has freckles like you. He is perfect.

Adopting a child from Russia had been anything but easy—in the end, though, it was one of the best decisions they had ever made. Misha *was* perfect. Shane knew you weren't supposed to tell your kids things like that because it could go to their heads and make them spoiled and bratty and awful, but every single time he looked at his son, he had to fight the urge. He wondered if his parents had felt the same about him and if that instinct ever really goes away over time.

It's clear Misha's struggling with himself, torn between keeping up the lie and telling Shane the truth. "I don't— It's not—"

"Hey, *pourquoi pas essayer de parler en français?*"

English was fair game and Russian was reserved for Ilya mostly, but French was Shane's special language with his children. Sometimes, it felt sacred to use it; when tensions were high and emotions were strong, speaking French felt safe, like a private channel they could tune in and out of.

Misha nods. "Yes," he whispers.

Shane takes a deep breath, steeling himself. "*It's okay if you don't like it. Hockey, I mean. I'm not angry with you.*"

His son looks stunned, for a moment, tears springing to his big eyes. "*No! No, I don't—*"

"*Are you having fun? Do you still like playing it? Be honest with me.*"

And then the dam seems to break and the tears spill over his cheeks and Shane wants to go back in time and fucking kick himself for not seeing sooner, for not avoiding this altogether.

"*I'm sorry, Dad. I'm sorry, I really tried to-to like it,*" he sobs, and Shane wraps his arms around fiercely, pulling him tight against his chest and holding him there. Safe.

"*Don't be sorry. At all. I'm sorry for not asking you sooner. It's my fault.*"

Misha snuffles into his shoulder. "*I don't hate hockey. I just hate playing it. It's too many things all at the same time. It makes my stomach hurt.*"

Shane sucks in a breath. They'd found out last year, after consulting some doctors and therapists, that Misha gets stomach aches from anxiety sometimes. To think that *hockey* had been doing that to him... Shane was fighting back tears of his own now.

"*Listen to me. You never have to play again. Ever. You never have to step foot on the ice again if you don't want to, though I can't promise one of us won't drag you to the rink from time to time.*"

Occupational hazard, after all.

After a long moment, Misha pulls back, swiping at his eyes, and says in English this time, "I d-don't hate everything about hockey. I like.. skating. A lot."

Shane can't stop the smile spreading across his face. "Oh, yeah? It doesn't have anything to do with the fact you can skate better and faster than any of the other little shits out there, does it?"

At this, Misha smiles shyly back, clearly pleased at Shane's praise. "Maybe. It's fun. I want to be as fast as you someday."

"I want you to be *faster*," Shane grins and tugs his son closer, pressing a kiss to his warm, damp cheek. "In fact, if you keep practicing at it, I know you will be."

"Could I... do you think I could try ice skating lessons instead? Like... the dancing kind. With the spins and jumps and stuff. I think it might be cool. To try it."

Of course, Shane wants to scream. Of fucking course you can. Have whatever you want. Be whoever you want to be. I'm so proud of you. I love you so much.

"Yeah, buddy," Shane manages and brushes his fingers through Misha's curls. So grateful to be his dad, to exist in the world as a man capable of so much love because of the love that others have poured into him, filling him up, making him whole. "I think we can make that happen."

End Notes

GOD OKAY shane as a dad is SO special to me. as always, he wants to be perfect and struggles when he's faced with his own imperfections (he is so real and so me i fear).

pls leave a comment if u enjoyed! i plan on exploring this cute little world quite a bit more, so stay tuned for updates :)

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