

Maybe, Finally

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/77105341) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/77105341>.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid , Heated Rivalry (TV)
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Character:	ilya Rozanov's niece
Additional Tags:	Family Reunions , Post-Book 6: The Long Game (Game Changers) , Mild Hurt/Comfort , Anxiety , Ilya Rozanov's family , Original Character(s) , Spoilers for Book 6: The Long Game (Game Changers)
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2026-01-04 Words: 3,275 Chapters: 1/1

Maybe, Finally

by [beyondtheclose \(BeforeEternity\)](#).

Summary

The fact that Kat's gay uncle she isn't sure she has spoken a word to in her life is the captain of this particular hockey team has nothing to do with anything. It's just another tourist activity while she's in Ottawa. There's no guarantee that she's even going to see him as more than a speck on the ice.

She takes another deep breath. She has tickets for the signing. She's planned what she's going to say. It'll be fine.

Kat Rozanova, freshly 18, travels to Ottawa with one goal in mind: to meet her uncle.

Notes

My take on Ilya's niece and Ilya meeting! This borrows elements from the books and from the shows. I tried to get a timeline based on how old his niece looked in ep 1 but I'm not great at guessing ages of babies and also wanted to match it up to when the Ottawa senators fan fest was last year, so please ignore any timeline hand waving. Also this takes place post TLG and there are some general spoilers for it.

I'm canadian, so while that part will hopefully be accurate, I'm not familiar with Russia beyond the internet in general and some reddit posts from Russians I read this morning. Please correct me if there's anything glaringly wrong.

Title from the song "Maybe, Finally" by dodie.

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

Kat loses momentum suddenly, the mixture of adrenaline, anticipation, and anxiety that had propelled her this far—that she has been operating on for the last two months since she turned eighteen—now serving to freeze her in place. The Ottawa Centaurs' arena is in front of her, bold letters proclaiming it the “Canadian Tire Centre” catching and holding her attention.

She did it. She's actually here.

Kat takes a deep breath, steeling herself as crowds of people speaking indistinct too-fast English stream past her. No expectations, she tells herself. This is a vacation, for fun; do some sightseeing and attend a hockey game because that's what you do when you go to Canada's capital city.

The fact that her gay uncle she isn't sure she has spoken a word to in her life is the captain of this particular hockey team has nothing to do with anything. It's just another tourist activity. There's no guarantee that she's even going to see him as more than a speck on the ice.

She takes another deep breath. She has tickets for the meet and greet. She's planned what she's going to say. It'll be fine.

Kat manages to force her feet to move after more than one person bumps into her, and someone lives up to stereotypes and apologizes to *her* when she was the one standing in the middle of the sidewalk like an idiot.

The Ottawa Centaurs Fan Fest. Should be fun.

Shane is neutral about the Centaurs Fan Fest. He's not a stranger to fan events like this, and even if he would rather they not take place before a game and disrupt his pre-game routine with what typically amounts to chaos, he knows the fans appreciate it and it's only a preseason game. The first preseason game of the season, and against Montreal—both reasons he would like to win. But not life or death.

The team is all sitting at a long table set out in the arena's parking lot, the crowd corralled to give each fan five seconds to meet them and get an autograph before they have to move on. It's such a short interaction that Shane is glad that they're not the only attraction. There are also bouncy castles and fair games and face painting for the children.

Maybe Shane's favourite part of events like this in the last 5 seasons is that he gets to do them sitting beside his husband. He now gets front row seats to how happy the fans' excited energy makes Ilya, and how gently he treats the children.

Troy bumps his shoulder on Shane's other side, jerking his head towards the person Troy had just finished signing an autograph for, who is obviously waiting for Shane to stop daydreaming about his husband and do his job. Shane flushes, jerking his gaze away from Ilya's. Though not before he sees Ilya's mouth quirk up into a smirk.

“Hi,” Shane manages, accepting the autograph card the young woman passes him and quickly scribbles his name. “Sorry about that.”

“Is okay.”

The strong Russian accent catches Shane’s attention, and he properly focuses on her. She has light brown hair of a similar shade to Ilya’s and is wearing a dark blue bomber jacket. She examines him in an intense way he can’t put a name to, her gaze flickering to Ilya. Shane gets the feeling she’s probably here more for their only Russian player than for the rest of the team.

Shane passes the woman’s autograph card to Ilya and turns to greet the next person in line, determined to not hold up the line again. This resolution doesn’t even last until he can accept the next card before his attention is pulled to Ilya again.

Kat just managed to speak to Shane Hollander, her uncle’s *husband*, in *English*. Yet face to face with Ilya Rozanov all her carefully planned words vacate her brain. Is announcing herself to a famous relative something that she should be doing here? Will he even believe her? Will he even want to talk to her if he does?

No. She’s gone over this. She doesn’t know of any other ways to meet him. And she wants to meet him.

Deep breaths. She just needs to say it.

“I’m gay,” Kat blurts out in Russian. *Fuck*. Well, that got Ilya’s attention. Hollander’s too, if the eyes she feels from his direction are any indication. “I mean, hi, that was not the introduction I was planning.”

Ilya brushes her words away with a careless motion of a hand. “Do not worry. It is not an uncommon introduction. What were you planning to say?”

The Russian helps. It’s only been a few days since she last had a conversation in her own language, but being able to understand easily is a relief. *C’mon Kat*. She commands herself. *Say the words. You did not travel this far to give up the opportunity.*

She’s outgoing at school, and loud and dramatic with her friends. Her friends called her fearless for even imagining this trip. She can do this.

On the other side of that, she was raised to act a certain way towards her elders. Especially the men of her family. Especially her father. However, while Ilya may be a man of her family, Ilya is not her father. Ilya is sitting beside his husband, having cut ties with Alexei probably for the same reasons that Kat wants to, and looking at her kindly as if she isn’t one person in hundreds he has met today.

“My name is Ekaterina Rozanova. My father is Alexei Rozanov. Unless I’m mistaken, you’re my uncle. I don’t have any expectations of you, but I wanted to meet you and—”

Kat cuts herself off when Ilya stands up. Hollander stands up a beat after Ilya, his hand landing on Ilya's back. The gesture is such a casual show of public support and affection that Kat has to work to tear her eyes away and look back at Ilya.

"Ekaterina," Ilya repeats, eyes wide.

Her name in his mouth is said with so much wonder that Kat relaxes enough to say, "You can call me Kat."

"Kat, then. You are Alexei's? You are my niece?"

"Yes. I got your trust fund a couple months ago," she says quickly. "I used some of it to come here." She then realizes maybe he wouldn't want her wasting the money on a vacation, but he smiles at her. "I have a photo. From when you were little. I can show you, as proof."

"Wait," Hollander says in accented Russian. Kat freezes. The Russian makes sense, a far off part of Kat's brain says. He's been reacting to her words the same as Ilya. The rest of her brain is looking for the mistakes in what she said.

Ilya turns to glare at Hollander, who rolls his eyes. "Maybe we shouldn't flash proof of relation out in the middle of the crowd of cameras before we know if she's okay with being publicly associated with you, mister very publicly married to a man and can't go back to Russia?"

"Associated, big word."

"Ilya."

"I'm being serious, I'm being serious," Ilya says, turning back to her. It's only at Hollander's words that Kat realizes how many people—most of the team and the nearby crowd—are staring at them with varying levels of covertness. The looks are largely confused, likely wondering why the two star players are standing, so probably no one else is understanding the conversation. "I will see the photo, but later. Shane is correct, if a worrier. I am well known and it may be better for you if we talk about it first before the world knows I am your uncle. So you can make informed decision. Yes?"

Kat nods quickly. That sounds like Ilya is planning to meet with her again.

Ilya—her uncle, this is her uncle—stares at her, and she stares back at him. She hasn't planned what to say past this. There are a lot of things she wants to ask him, and to talk to him about. But they are surrounded by people, and the next person in line is starting to give her dirty looks. Ilya seems similarly lost for words, something she wouldn't have expected from watching his outspoken interviews.

"If you want to go, I'll cover for you," Hollander mutters, still in Russian.

Ilya visibly steels himself. "The signing is almost done. Are you okay to wait 10 minutes? I'll come now with you, if you want."

"I can wait," Kat forces herself to say.

“Okay, um, Harris?” Kat is momentarily confused before a man, standing at the end of the table beside Ilya that she only notices now comes closer. Ilya switches to English that she catches 60% of.

“He’s going to make sure we don’t lose you in the crowd.” Ilya says, back in Russian. “I will be there soon.”

The hockey players sit back down. As she turns away, Hollander gives Ilya a brief chaste kiss. A comfort thing, Kat thinks distantly.

Kat forces herself to follow this man out of the crowd, feeling like she doesn’t quite belong in her body. Ilya believed her right away. Or at least enough to agree to see her again. Kat wasn’t sure what to expect from her uncle. Her father barely talked about him, and when he did it was always to complain about him abandoning their family or to call him slurs. Kat learned the meaning of homophobia when she was 6 or 7, listening to her drunk father rant about the many ways his brother was a disgrace to their family. It took embarrassingly long for Kat to realize her uncle was semi-famous in North America. She was around sixteen before she first connected the dots her father wasn’t drawing and realized she could look Ilya up.

Ilya was kind to her and joking with his husband. And, god, the first time Kat has properly come out to anyone, and it was to him *as the very first thing she said*. But he accepted it easily. She wonders if his response would have been different if she had managed to explain who she was before announcing her lesbianism.

She’s never seen a man nonchalantly kiss another man out in public like that before.

Kat clues back into her surroundings to realize the man she had been told to follow asked her a question. She grimaces.

“Can you repeat that?”

“Are you okay with English? I heard you speaking Russian with Roz.”

“If you speak slowly,” Kat replies honestly. “And simple words.”

“Okay, well, Roz didn’t explain anything to me, but I can bring you inside if you’re comfortable with that? I can leave you in my office or the changeroom. We can also stay around people and stay out here.”

The last minutes of the autograph session are syrupy slow agony. Ilya is sure everyone he meets after Kat is perfectly lovely, but his brain is completely devoted to his niece. As soon as Kat had said her name, the recognition clicked into place. His memories of child-Kat from the last time he was in Russia are blurry at best, but she looks enough like his mother that Ilya was immediately convinced she was telling the truth.

Shane’s knee pushes against his under the table, and he pushes back, refocusing on the fans. Shane’s touch is just grounding him enough to keep him seated.

When the last of the line finally dissipates, and the Centaurs' staff releases them from the table, Ilya quickly stands up. Shane looks at him with concern, but Ilya ignores that for now, pulling out his phone to figure out where Harris brought Kat.

"Harris' office," Ilya relays, setting off towards the building.

"Okay," Shane says, hurrying after him. "Do you want me to come?"

"Yes. No. Do you think it'll overwhelm her if you're with me?"

"We can ask her," Shane suggests.

No one else on the team tries to approach them as Ilya sets a pace that toes the line between walking and running. Ilya is thankful for whatever has encouraged the team towards restraint and lets him do this without having to find an explanation.

"How does she not hate me?" The words slip out before Ilya can consider censoring himself. "I basically abandoned her. I was so focused on never talking to my brother again that I never attempted to reach out or check on her as she got older."

Shane catches one of Ilya's hands and gives it a squeeze.

"She likes you enough to fly to Canada to find you."

Ilya groans. "I could have at least left my phone number instead of forcing her to come to a meet and greet to get the chance to talk to me."

Shane pulls him to the side as they enter the building. "Ilya, you can't beat yourself up about this. You were put in a really hard position. She's found you. You have a chance to be there for her now. Besides, who would give her your phone number? Your brother?"

Ilya nods, trying to believe Shane. This is at least giving him lots to talk about with his therapist next time he sees her.

"Are you going to be okay? We don't have to do this right now."

"No, no, we're going. Let's go. I need to properly meet my niece."

Ilya knocks on the door to Harris' office before pushing it open. Harris isn't in the room, but Kat turns to him. She really does look like a mixture of his mother and her own. Ilya takes pleasure that it's hard to find Alexei or their father's features in her face.

"Kat?" Ilya asks like it would have been possible for him to forget her name. "I'm so happy to meet you. Thank you for waiting."

Kat lets out a snort of amusement. "Of course."

"This is Shane, my husband," Ilya introduces. "Are you okay with him staying?"

With permission granted, both Ilya and Shane take seats. The three of them alone in an office with Harris' big desk, it feels too much like a business meeting, but there's not much they can do about that now.

"You have photo?" Ilya asks, determined to bulldoze through any awkwardness.

"Yes," Kat scrambles for her bag, pulling out an old photo, gone soft around the edge. Ilya takes it from her carefully, and Shane leans closer to see it too. Ilya's breath catches. He must be nine or ten in the photo. It's one of just him, his brother, and his mother. It's posed; Alexei standing stoically at the edge of the frame while little Ilya is smiling at his mother, who has an arm around him. He didn't know this photo existed.

Ilya brushes a careful finger over his mother's face. Ilya has exactly two photos of his mother he brought back with him the last time he went to Russia, and he's not in either of them. She looks happy in the photo, more than she does in the other photos at least.

His voice is uneven when he speaks. "That's definitely me."

"I have another one, of me and Alexei. Or what I probably should have done is just shown you my passport. I have it too."

Ilya shakes his head, doing his best to push down his old grief to focus on Kat. He doesn't miss the fact that she calls Alexei by his first name. "It's okay. I believe you." Ilya looks down at the photo, adding softly, "You look like her."

Kat leans forward. "Grandmother? Can you tell me about her? Alexei rarely talks about her, and his stories are...different, from what I've heard you say in interviews."

"You've watched my interviews?"

"Whenever I could use my friends' VPNs," she answers proudly. "Probably missed a lot though. Alexei talks about you so little that I didn't realize you're semi-famous until a couple years ago and by then," she gestures vaguely, probably to encompass Russia's whole censorship problem they have going on.

Ilya also pushes down anger at Alexei and at Russia as a whole.

"I can tell you about Irina. Whatever you want. And I want to hear everything about you too. We're going to have to go soon, our game is in a couple hours, but let me give you my contact information, then we can find out how long we can push it before someone comes looking."

In the end, they get forty-five beautiful minutes before someone comes looking. In that time, Ilya manages to not cry while telling his only remaining not-awful blood relative about her grandmother, and in return learns bits and pieces of her life growing up in Moscow.

The conversation flows easily once the ice is broken; almost surprisingly easily. Other than Irina, they don't broach anything too deep. Ilya knows growing up queer with Alexei as a father couldn't have been easy, and that there are definitely reasons she's here in front of Ilya

so soon after turning eighteen. She may be his niece, but she's still a stranger, and he's not going to force her to reveal more about herself than she wants to.

Throughout the conversation, Shane's office chair migrates closer and closer to Ilya until they're touching. Kat very obviously notices when Shane ultimately presses their shoulders together, but she doesn't say anything. Shane stays as a silent support at Ilya's side. It's a support Ilya wishes Kat could have as well, this two against one feels unbalanced.

He does learn that she's in Canada on vacation for another two weeks, and that she's currently taking a year off school to work before considering university.

"Sorry you come on gap year vacation and it's to boring Ottawa."

Shane pokes him.

"What? It's true! Ottawa is boring. We have tulips in the spring and the canal skating in winter and that is all."

Kat laughs. "It's okay, I'm considering leaving Russia for university. I can see more then."

Ilya wants to point out that she's agreeing with him on Ottawa being boring, but more pressingly: "Yeah? Ontario?"

"Maybe."

"No, maybe, you should. Then we can see each other more, and you can get out of Russia."

Shane pokes him again. "What? Get out of Russia for a while, it's not a bad thing."

"You're maybe slightly biased," Shane mutters. "And I meant don't pressure her to move here."

"I have the right to be biased."

Kat laughs again. "We'll see, but if you're serious about wanting to see more of me, then maybe I'll move the Canadian schools higher on my list."

"I'm serious. I want to talk more now too, before you go back."

"I'd like that."

When Harris knocks on the door, it breaks through the bubble they've created and Shane jumps, making Ilya chuckle. Harris lets himself into the room, looking curiously at Kat but not commenting.

"Sorry to interrupt guys, but people are starting to look for you. Warmup is soon."

"Thanks Harris, we're coming," Shane says.

"You have seats for the game? Do you want better seats?" Ilya asks Kat.

Kat shrugs. "I wouldn't say no."

"Can I tell him you're my niece? He's a friend."

"Sure."

Ilya switches back to English. "Hey Harris, do you think you could get my niece better seat for the game? Nice and close to the action."

"Yeah, we have some reserved ones left." Harris does a double-take. "Wait? What? Your niece?"

Ilya grins at Kat. "I'll see you after the game."

End Notes

Kudos and comments always make me happy. (I will say, I'm not great at replying to comments but read and appreciate every comment I receive).

I wrote this and edited it in one day, so hopefully it makes sense. I'll probably come back and edit it again later. I also might make this into a series and write more moments of Kat and Ilya meeting while she's at uni and get more into her backstory if there's interest.

And finally, don't come at me for the Ottawa opinions. They're borrowed from a friend who lived in Ottawa. I do not know enough to have an opinion either way lol.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!