

Where the Love Is

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Where the Love Is

by [burkiebeans](#)

Summary

Eva was Ilya and Shane's miracle child, born prematurely in the summer of their third season together on the Centaurs. The moment they laid eyes on her in the NICU of The Ottawa Hospital was the moment they both felt their life truly had purpose.

Eva was smaller than the other babies but already had a head of soft blonde curls. Her tiny hands would grip Shane's fingers as Ilya sang Russian lullabies, their favorite pastime, and her big blue eyes would marvel at the world around her.

She was kind and sweet and truly an angel, which is what made it so, so terrifying when she told them at 5 years old that she wanted to play hockey like papa and daddy.

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A 5+1 of Ilya and Shane's life as parents, through the lens of their daughter's experiences with hockey. Or, 6 times Ilya and Shane are hockey dads.

Notes

Hellooo! I had so much fun with this story!! I hope y'all enjoy it!

POV alternates about every section, but it should be clear anyways when that happens.

TW below::

Shane's eating is very briefly mentioned, but only as a 'healthy food habit'. Ilya's relationship with Grigori is also mentioned, as in it was hurtful and he wanted to leave Russia. There aren't any scenes that really dive deep into either of the situations, they're just mentioned as passing thoughts.

Shane also has a panic attack, nothing too crazy. It's very brief and gets resolved!

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

June 2029

Eva was Ilya and Shane's miracle child, born prematurely in the summer of their third season together on the Centaurs. The moment they laid eyes on her in the NICU of The Ottawa Hospital was the moment they both felt their life truly had purpose.

Eva was smaller than the other babies but already had a head of soft blonde curls. Her tiny hands would grip Shane's fingers as Ilya sang Russian lullabies, their favorite pastime, and her big blue eyes would marvel at the world around her.

She was kind and sweet and truly an angel, which is what made it so, so terrifying when she told them at 5 years old that she wanted to play hockey like papa and daddy. Of course, she'd grown up on skates already, so it was only the natural progression. Shane and Ilya still had their hesitations, though. Hockey was dangerous, and kids were mean. Even with the advancements they've seen over the past 20 years, teams and players becoming more open-minded, it was still a pretty conservative sport. They didn't want her to ever go through anything like they had when they were growing up.

But, Eva would be great. She had the two best players in the league as parents, and the second, third, fourth, etc. best players in the league as uncles. People would be amiss to mess with her. Truly.

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"Ok Eva, do you want pink or purple tape?" Shane asks, crouching down to where she's sitting on a bench in the middle of an Ottawa SportChek. He's holding up both kinds in front of her, watching her eyes dart back and forth between the two options. He would've laughed if he didn't know himself how important this decision was. Tape color could really make or break your game...

She hums for a solid thirty seconds, before yelling "pink!" with a big laugh. Shane grinned and shook his head, placing the hot pink tape on the pile of already hot pink equipment. He should've suspected, really.

"Ah, you should have known." Ilya rounded the corner, holding a pink helmet in his hands. "Let's try this size, solnyshko. May fit better."

Eva started kicking her legs back and forth, wriggling while Ilya tries to fasten the oh so small helmet to her head. They'd already been there for an hour, and he suspected they had at least another 30 minutes before they could brave the checkout line.

Shane could not believe his child was about to play hockey. Which, ok, it's just Timbits, but it still felt like the biggest rush of excitement, and anxiety-inducing situation, that could happen. It feels like they were just bringing her home for the first time and enduring the nights where they were both too scared to sleep, worried that her heart monitor might go off or she would roll over and they wouldn't be awake to know.

But hockey was part of their life. A huge part of their life. And it would be okay, because *they* were okay. Watching Ilya dote on Eva was easing at least some of his stress about the situation. He loved to spoil her rotten on a normal day, and the fact that they were buying hockey equipment was exacerbating the problem.

Shane sat back and watched the pile continue to grow, where she now had a jersey in every color of the rainbow as well as two different sets of skate laces, different colors, of course.

“You know, I think they actually give the kids jerseys when they get there.” Shane said with an amused look on his face.

“No, no. Is nonsense. She wants the colors and CCM makes best jerseys, so...” Ilya trails off, making quick work of tying up her shiny, new skates.

“Yeah daddy, I want to wear a red jersey like you.” She squeals, pulling the bright red jersey out of the pile to show him. “See?”

Shane’s heart had officially melted.

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Exactly one week later, they found themselves at a small suburban rink near their house where the first Timbits session was taking place. They had gotten Eva dressed at home, which was a feat in itself, and were now having a mini photoshoot. They’d done all the combinations: Eva by herself, Shane and Eva, Ilya and Eva, Eva and her stuffed bear.

Everyone was photographed and accounted for.

Eva, in her bright pink helmet, red jersey, black pants, and neon green stick, was also making quite the fashion statement, Ilya thought.

“I feel like a unicorn. Do I look like a unicorn? Do they make glittery socks?” she was bounding on and on, bouncing up and down in her crocs.

Ilya was thrilled. This was the most excited he’d ever been, outside of when Eva was actually born. And maybe their wedding, too. Winning the cup was also good, but it was not at all the same as this.

Nothing like a first hockey session.

“Yes, this is all very ‘unicorn.’” Ilya motioned in the general direction of Eva. “I am big fan, maybe next game I will wear more color.”

“Yes papa! You can use my tape!”

After they got Eva all set up, they drop her off with the group of kids her age. There had to be at least 30 other toddlers, wobbling around in tiny skates and jerseys that hung down to their knees.

Ilya watched with a grin as she immediately beelined to another girl in her group, also wearing a pink helmet, but this girl has stickers on hers. Ilya thinks suddenly that they might be forced to make a stop at the crafts store on the way home.

He'll do whatever makes her happy, always.

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"This is nuts." Shane says, watching all the little kids stumbling around on the ice. They had been standing against the glass for the better part of 45 minutes, just watching and admiring the hockey session at hand. Eva was doing great with the skating, having been on the ice since she could walk. Having a stick was a new development, but Shane was just glad she wasn't using it to slash the other kids like her papa so loved doing.

He'd have to figure out how to dissuade Ilya's hockey tendencies in her later.

"Da, yes. They are so small. Coaches have so much patience." Ilya responds.

Shane snorts.

"Yeah, maybe you should volunteer sometime."

Ilya elbows him and raises his eyebrows, side-eyeing.

"Fuck no."

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By the time they put her gear in the trunk and get themselves buckled into Shane's reliable Jeep, Eva is asleep in her car seat. She'd babbled on while they unlaced her skates and brushed her hair out, and they listened with very frequent praises.

"Did you see me skate around the circle? We did passes too. I got to pass with Sophie. Do you know Sophie? She's my friend now and she has a really cool stick. It's like purple but also shiny! But I also like my stick. I think mine is cool... Can I have a playdate with her?"

Shane and Ilya exchanged delighted glances.

"I think she likes it." Shane says quietly, pulling out of the parking lot.

"What? Hockey?" Ilya asks.

Shane nods.

"Did you think that she wouldn't fall in love with it?" Ilya says, shifting so that he can look at Eva in the back seat.

"No." Shane pauses and shrugs, "I mean, I don't know. I don't remember what I thought when I first started playing. It's just always been there."

Ilya hums.

“I’m glad she chose it. Like, that we waited for her to.”

“Me too.”

August 2032

“Dad! Daaaaaad! I made the team!” Eva screeches from the front room.

Shane hears the front door slam as Eva runs around the corner into the kitchen, where he’d just been preparing a celebratory dinner of greasy cheeseburgers and milkshakes. Since they had both retired a few seasons ago, Shane had let his healthy food habits go a little bit. It also helped that Eva was born with the biggest sweet tooth known to man (she always wanted to see the dessert menu when they went out to dinner).

While he knew that Eva would make the team, she was one of the best 8-year-old hockey players in their town, it still helped him feel peace of mind when Ilya sent him a thumbs up half an hour ago.

Eva ruffled a piece of paper in front of his face, excitedly jumping up and down.

“See! Look!”

Shane carefully picked up the paper and made a show of finding his reading glasses and very slowly putting them on. He quickly glanced at Ilya who was smirking, leaning against the doorway.

“Hmmm. Let’s see here.”

His eyes scanned the list, **Ottawa Kings 8U Travel Team**

“I don’t know... I’m not seeing an Eva on here.” Shane watched Eva roll her eyes and stomp.

“Daaaad. Look. Here!”

She stood on her tippy toes to point out her name, about halfway down the list. It was definitely the longest name on the list; they didn’t really do her any favors with the hyphenated last name.

But that was never up for debate.

Shane smacked his forehead and kneeled down.

“Oh! How could I miss it. That’s my star, right there.”

He picked her up and twirled her around, planting a big kiss on her head.

“Best forward in all of Ottawa!”

Travel hockey would be new for them. She was old enough now to where they could actually see some difference in skill level between Eva and some of the other kids. She’d played with most of the other kids on the list before, so that would be good too.

“Sophie will be there, yes?” Ilya asks, taking a bite of his burger.

Eva nods enthusiastically.

“Yes! The tournaments will be soooo fun.”

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“Are we there yet?” Eva asked from the backseat. She had her headphones on with a movie playing from the iPad in her hands. She also, Shane notices, has her feet up on the back of the chair. Even though he’d told her a million times not to do that.

“Almost, just one more hour, okay? Can you put your feet down, too? I don’t want you to get hurt.”

She huffed, but tucked her feet under herself instead.

Kind of a win, at least.

“Remember when she said this would be fun?” Ilya asks. He’d been dozing on and off on their infamous drive from Ottawa to Montreal. They were playing a weekend tournament there, which felt weird for Shane.

Not only had he and Ilya done this drive hundreds of times before when playing in the MLH, but Shane also experienced this when he was a kid.

He had a child, now playing in the same tournaments he had when he was younger.

“What? You’re not enjoying the scenic drive? And the stellar example of patience we have back there?” Shane poked back.

“How do we even teach patience? Do they tell you that in your boring parenting books?”

“No clue.”

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Ilya watches Eva fly down the ice from the stands. She’s since moved on from the colorful kit she used to wear, now settling into her team colors, but she still has her signature pink tape on her stick.

Ilya likes how hockey is fun to her. How she *makes* it fun.

Ilya always found it fun, but he knows Shane grew less fond of it over time. He thinks Eva has just enough carefree in her to always love it, even when it gets harder. He hopes, at least.

When the buzzer sounds, the Ottawa Kings have lost 5-3. Eva is the first person to make their way to their goalie, Alex, and bump helmets with him. Ilya watches her pat Alex on the shoulder and say something to him, which makes his crumpled face ease up a bit.

“What do you think she said?” Shane asks.

“Maybe that he’s still best goalie? She always says right thing.” Ilya responds.

Eva was now heading the handshake line, fist bumping the team that just kicked them out of the tournament. Always a great leader, just like her dads. Maybe mostly like Shane, but Ilya likes to think he had something to do with that, too.

February 2036

Shane and Ilya both watch the scene in front of them happen in slow motion, hearts nearly stuttering to a stop. One second, Eva is racing across center ice, picking up a long pass from the boards. She angles her stick across her body, trying awkwardly to both collect the puck and dodge the defenseman coming right towards her.

Then they both collide.

It’s instantaneous and a lifetime all at once.

There’s little movement, silence.

It was an accident. Shane knows - thinks? Knows it was an accident. But all he understands is the way she got knocked off her skates, body flailing before crashing down. Her helmet hits the ice in a deafening *crack!*

Ilya, God bless him, moves before he does. He’s steady and sure, calmly walking down the bleachers and standing before the door. Like he’s done a million times before. Because he has.

Shane followed, slower, less sure. He always got shaken up by injuries, to himself and to his family. When Eva fell off her bike for the first time when she was four, he thought he was the worst father ever. She’d skinned her knees and cut her arm, and all Shane could do was bandage it. He couldn’t take the pain away.

When he got his last concussion, the one that kickstarted his retirement, he shut down. He was starting to feel that haze again, now.

Her coaches and the medical staff for the rink were already there, hovering over Eva, shining lights in her eyes and asking her questions that Shane could only faintly hear. He tried to read lips, but between the scratches in the glass and his vision blurring, he can only guess what they’re asking.

“What’s your name?”

“Do you know where you are?”

“Eva, how old are you?”

He starts to feel the bile rising in his throat, sour and acrid. His hand, the one that Ilya was now holding, started to tremble.

“Is okay, Shane. She is okay.” Ilya whispered. He was strong, confident. His expression was set somewhere between concerned and assured, but he didn’t seem like he was breaking down. Not in the way Shane felt right now.

Helpless.

Scared.

All the things a father shouldn’t be when facing the situation at hand.

Ilya softly tugged at his hand, and Shane looked up to see the medical staff and her coaches helping to hoist her up. She was a bit wobbly, but mostly skates off the ice on her own, bracing the rail when she gets to the wall leading to the medical room.

Shane deflates. She’s okay from what he can see.

Ilya places his hand on the small of Shane’s back, leading him around the rink to the room she stepped in with medical. Her coach intercepts them.

“Is Eva okay?” he asks immediately. “What’s wrong?”

Coach Simon is a short, kind man with a heart full of hockey. He gives his everything to the team, but is never mean-spirited or harsh. Those features show when he gives them a soft smile and nods.

“She’s okay, just a little shaken up. There are signs of a mild concussion, but no neck or head injuries otherwise. She’s asking for you, if you’d like to talk to her.” He motions towards the door.

Shane’s fears melt away. Most of his fears, at least. It felt like the cloud above him, dimming his brain and dampening his emotions, just disappeared. He squeezed Ilya’s hand.

“Thank you. Thank you.” Ilya said, tipping his head to him.

Together, though Shane was moving a little faster now, they walked through the door to the sight of her laying on the stiff nurse’s bed, one leg hanging off it. Her gloves were dropped by the door, and she has one hand hovering over her eyes.

Surprisingly, there were no tear stains. The only sign of pain was the light sheen of sweat and furrowed eyebrows.

Their girl. Okay.

“Hi solnyshko. You scared us.” Ilya said, reaching down the tangle of flyaway hairs on her forehead. Shane placed a hand on her shoulder, lightly pressing down.

“I’m okay. Just nauseous.” She mumbled.

Ilya pulled the trash bin closer to the bed. Just in case.

“It’ll pass soon sweetheart. We’ll get you home and in bed.” Shane said.

The drive home was quiet and dark. Ilya drove as carefully as Shane had ever seen, avoiding all the bumps in the road and going under the speed limit.

Very uncharacteristic for him, Shane thought. Most of their car rides with Ilya in the driver’s seat involved loud music and sudden braking.

Not today though.

Shane was sat in the back seat with Eva, letting her rest her head on him, but ensuring she was still awake by asking questions every few minutes.

“Almost home.” Ilya said from up front, meeting Shane’s eyes in the rear-view mirror. Shane winked at him.

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“That was something.”

Ilya nodded in response. He watched Shane clean the kitchen up from where they’d just made a very bland chicken and rice for Eva and themselves. It reminded him of what they used to feed Anya when she was sick.

Ilya could see the tiredness on Shane’s face. How he was still a little shaken up from the day’s events.

When they played together, especially toward the end, it seemed like Shane was always the one taking a beating. He was faster, albeit smaller than Ilya and most of the other guys. When he would sprint to the boards, more often than not, the opposing defensemen would slam into him.

Much harder than necessary. Targeting Shane was more important to them than the penalty minutes they racked up.

It resulted in at least 4 concussions, and a couple of fractures here and there. Only one concussion was considered to be more serious, but it was still something that affected them. It made Shane more skittish on the ice, and Ilya more dominant and daunting.

Ilya considered that this was still true today, especially with how they both acted seeing Eva get knocked down.

“Are you...” Ilya wanted to ask this question thoughtfully, carefully, “Are you doing okay? After that?”

Shane turned around slowly from his spot by the sink. Ilya could see him weighing the question in his head, head moving side to side while he wrung out his hands on the dish towel.

“I think so. I mean, I know I kinda panicked. So, I’m sorry for that. Um...” Shane groaned and pressed the heels of his hands into his eyes.

Then he looked back at Ilya.

“I’m sorry. It just reminded me of playing, and how I felt. And how you probably felt. Not that, like, Eva wasn’t the first thing on my mind. Obviously, she was. She is, I mean. Just... the initial shock turned into panic really quickly.”

Ilya was *not* looking for an apology. He stood up swiftly and moved towards Shane, wrapping him into a warm, tight hug. The graying hair on his nape tickled Ilya’s chin as he spoke.

“No, Shane. I’m not worried about that. At all. I just want to make sure are okay.” He moved Shane back so that he was looking into his eyes.

“It was scary, yes? I never want it to happen again. But she is good.”

Shane hummed.

“Just bedrest and no electronics for a few days. Best case scenario.” Ilya finished.

Shane nodded. His head fell on Ilya’s shoulder.

The Hollander-Rozanovs would be fine, just like they always were. It was something good to face now, get the scary part over with.

Deep down, Ilya figured this would happen eventually. Eva was a good – *great* player. And she was still playing with the boys, something that would probably change in the next few years anyways, but she wasn’t all that thrilled for that. She liked the competition, and with that came the physical differences that would soon be more prominent.

But for now, she was okay.

July 2038

Ilya loved the summer camp. He *loved* it.

They’d taken the summer off that Eva was adopted, letting Ryan and Scott take over the coaching and managing. He had been just a little hesitant to let the dinosaur run the show, but

all the kids left with good lessons learned and cheerful smiles, so he guesses it must've been a success.

But still, at the age of 47, he still absolutely adored Game Changers Hockey Camp.

What he did not adore, however, was the phone call he just received from Hayden who was watching over Eva while they were in Montreal for the week.

“Hey, um, Ilya? I called Shane, but I think his ringers off. Not that... I don't want to talk to you, I just... would much rather have this conversation with Shane.” He mumbled that last part. Ilya still picked up on it.

“What's wrong?” he gritted out.

His relationship with Hayden had gotten exponentially better over the years, especially when Jade and Ruby became old enough to start babysitting when they would visit Montreal. Hayden still had his moments, but Ilya was glad him and Shane remained best friends through it all.

But he still didn't appreciate the call in the middle of camp. Unless... unless there was something wrong with Eva? She was playing summer hockey now, and by the time on his watch, she should be mid-game...

His tone softened, and he hurried out “Is something wrong with Eva? Is she okay?”

“She's good. Great, even ... But, um –” Hayden trailed off.

“What is it, Pike?” Ilya was back to being annoyed.

“So, she got into a fight? She's good. Like no one threw any punches or anything, it was more like them just dragging each other around. It was kinda funny, actually.” Ilya could see his stupid grin right now. “But um, anyways. She's suspended right now. Do you want to talk to her?”

What. The. Fuck.

This was so, incredibly, unlike their daughter. Shane was adamant about teaching her how to resolve conflict healthily. How to ignore other kids on the ice. How to remain calm, breathe, and fight back by getting the puck to the back of the net.

Is Hayden even sure that Eva was the one in the fight?

This had to be a misunderstanding.

He then remembered that he was now the one who had to tell his husband. His sweet, kind, very nervous husband who was currently showing a group of seven-year-olds how to stickhandle between cones.

“Just – Pike?” Ilya was flustered. “Let me talk to Shane. I will call back soon, okay?”

“Yeah, okay.”

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Shane was reeling. No way Eva got suspended from summer league.

“Are you sure? Is there another Eva that could’ve been fighting?” he asked Ilya who was standing calmly in the office. Shane was pacing back and forth. Nothing new.

“I think the big ‘HOLLANDER-ROZANOV’ on the back of her jersey kinda tipped off who was fighting.”

Shane stopped and glared at Ilya. He watched Ilya’s face contort into something of a grin. The asshole was holding back laughter.

“This isn’t funny, Ilya! Our daughter just got suspended from summer league! Who the fuck gets suspended from summer league? It’s *summer league*! There are barely any rules!” Shane resumed his pacing, which was getting difficult in his skates.

“Relax, Hollander.” Ilya said.

Shane stopped again, glared again.

“We have the same last name, dipshit.”

Ilya rolled his eyes.

“*Okay*, relax Hollander-Rozanov. Relax, Shane. This is probably just, what, mistake? Maybe she had a good reason to fight! You know, I always tell her that boys suck and they should never look her way so maybe one just lo—”

“Enough.” Shane really glared at him this time. Like, full on, eyes wide, face grim, glare. Ilya took a step back and put his hands up.

“Did you talk to her yet?” Shane asked.

“No. Wanted to tell you first. We could speaker call?”

Shane nodded and pulled out his cellphone.

“Hey Shane!” Hayden said cheerfully. “Um Eva—”

“I know. Is she there? Can we talk to her?”

“Right. Yes. She’s right here.”

Shane heard him hand the phone off. It shuffled a bit, before—

“Hey papa. Hey dad. Look, I know this is like, bad. But...I really think it could’ve been *worse*. Like, it’s just house league. At least this isn’t—”

“Eva.” Shane spoke sternly. “We’re not mad... yet. Can you just tell us what happened?”

Shane could practically see her on the other end. Shifting from foot to foot, like she had always done in these situations. Not that they ever got mad at her, upset sometimes, maybe, but that was just parenthood.

She sighed.

“So, you know Draper? She’s that asshole that goes to Northside?”

“*Language.*” Shane glared at Ilya who was stifling a laugh.

“Right, sorry... Okay, anyways, Draper. We were on the face off and it was like the second period? and she was talking. I think she was just trying to get under my skin. I don’t really know *why* because we’ve been playing each other since we were seven. Like why start now, y’know? And in summer house league! Like, what? But she said something really mean, and then she said it again... so I just pushed her. And then she pushed me. But... yeah. I wouldn’t really call it a ‘fight,’ but I guess they have different rules.”

“What did she say?” Ilya asked. Shane had his eyes closed. Just trying to picture the situation that led him here, now.

“Ummmmm. Just something mean.”

“Was it about you?”

“No. Well, not really, anyways.”

“Did she say something about one of the other girls?”

“No.”

“Then... what was she talking about?”

“Well... she kinda said something about you guys.”

Shane opened his eyes and frowned at Ilya. They were now hovered over the desk table.

“*Eva*, you know shouldn’t respond to that kind of stuff.” He supplied gently.

“*I know.*” She said. “It was just really bad. Like, worse than anyone’s ever said to me before.”

“I’m sorry.” Shane sighed, “I hate that people still do that.”

It wasn’t easy for Eva, growing up with two hockey player parents. Two *gay* hockey player parents. She was always an easy target when she missed a shot or caught an edge during a game. But, for the most part, people didn’t really chirp her for it all that often. There was the occasional nag, but it was probably intimidating to tease two of the greatest hockey players of their generation. That wouldn’t... end well.

“It’s okay.”

There was silence for a moment, then Ilya picked back up.

“So, what did she say?”

Shane rolled his eyes.

“She called you guys... the f-word? Like, a few times. And then she said that I was a shitty player, which I’m not. But... yeah. That was it.”

Shane watched Ilya’s eyes soften, and his mouth tug into a frown.

This was a new one. She’d definitely heard the insults about them being gay. Way younger than they expected her to, but no one had ever said that word before. At least to their knowledge.

“I’m sorry myshka. That is not... good. We can call the league tomorrow. To tell them.”

“Yeah,” Shane’s voice faltered. “We’re not upset at you, honey. I would have gotten upset too. Just, we’re here if you want to talk, okay? I’m sorry that kids use us against you; it’s not fair. We never wanted that.”

“Yeah dad, duh. I know. I’m fine, really. Like, promise.”

Ilya rolled his eyes. Teenagers.

“But maybe do tell someone? That’s, like, not cool. I don’t want my friends to hear that.”

“Da, yes. Of course. We will call first thing.”

Shane nodded. “First thing.”

“Okay... well, I’m gonna go watch a movie with Jade. Love you! Bye!”

Shuffling, scratching, random voices, and then,

“Soooo. All good?” Hayden’s voice chirped in.

“All good Hayd. Thank you again for watching her.”

“Of course! Have fun at camp. I’ll text you later.”

Ilya fell back onto the desk and sighed a long, drawn out breath.

“What the fuck. What the fuck, Shane?”

“I know. That’s crazy.”

“Yes, crazy.”

Shane moved to sit next to him on the desk.

“I hoped that wasn’t still an issue, y’know? It’s been so long since we’ve played, but I hoped it had gotten better.”

Ilya was quiet next to him, thinking. His curly hair had started to thin, just a bit. The way he was running his hands through his head didn’t help either.

“I guess just means we have more work to do.” He said finally.

Shane huffed and nodded. Always more work to do.

March 2039

Ilya is being totally cool about this. He’s pointedly *not* looking at the scoreboard hanging on the right side of the rink wall, which currently displayed the tied score of the Ontario Girls AAA Hockey Championship.

3-3. 1:52 left in the 3rd.

And Eva Hollander-Rozanov, freshly 15 with a dark blue ‘A’ emblazoned on her chest, is milling around the face-off circle chewing on her mouthguard.

“She’s just like you.” Ilya says softly, bumping shoulders with his husband, who is also staring daggers into center ice. Neither of them had worn mouthguards for years, but Ilya can still remember fixating on Shane’s mouth every time they stood across from each other, separated by a puck and a referee. Now though, Shane was chewing on the bottom of his lip, threatening to draw blood if this game didn’t end soon.

“She’s better than me.” Shane mutters. Ilya can’t argue with that, and just nodded in agreement.

The excitement and suspense were one of the things Ilya truly did love about hockey. He remembered watching the NHL on a grainy TV when he was younger. The audio was shot and the video would go in and out, but there was something about the last few minutes of a game that made the blood pump harder through his veins. Especially, when it was the Stanley Cup.

He has a vivid memory of waking up extra early and sneaking past Grigori and his moms room to go downstairs where the TV was. He set up pillows on the ground, right in front of the box to watch. As the sun started to rise out the window, he watched the game go into one overtime, and then two. It was a blur of green and red, and he couldn’t really understand what the announcers were saying, but it all made him happy, nonetheless.

He remembers how fast the game was going, how stressed it made him to see the puck weaving past players. They were *good*. They knew how to work in the space, how to move so gracefully and pass with such speed that you would never even know where the puck was. He would hate to be a goalie.

He also remembers, distantly, watching the puck go to a corner and a player rush to get it. As if he had superpowers, like he could see in the back of his head, or he was just telepathically communicating with his teammate. The player passed it behind himself quickly. So quickly.

And then there was a one-timer.

And then the puck hit the back of the net.

And then, by the grace of God, the New Jersey Devils won the Stanley Cup and the crowd *erupted* through his TV.

That would be him one day. He promised himself. One day, he would leave Russia. He would take his mom, and they would escape and live in a small house in the US, or Canada, whichever team wanted him. They would never have to speak to or feel pain from Andrei or Grigori again. Never.

And, he would play on a great team, and he would have great teammates that loved him and that he could telepathically communicate with. He wanted to make those passes, to know where his teammate was going to be without him even seeing them move.

Shane was that, to him. From the All-Star Game to the minute he retired.

On the ice in front of him though, he watched Eva lean down. She had a glint in her eye and wore a small smirk. Just like Shane, always.

He watched the puck drop and Eva pass it back to Sophie who was behind her on her right, with so much speed it looked like the player across the face-off circle was still trying to battle for it. But it was gone, halfway down the ice.

Sophie deked through a defenseman and backhanded it to Eva next to her, who was speeding through the blue line. It's one-on-one, Ilya realizes.

Just Eva and the goalie.

Slyly Ilya thinks, this is Eva's favorite place to be. Herself and no one else. Easy, fun, and fast.

So fast.

She comes in from the right, dribbling the puck between her forehand and backhand. She glides to the left, slows down, pushes the puck back, then flicks it up, right, and into the net.

Easy, fun, fast.

Ilya jumps up and screams.

"Yes! Yes! Eva!"

Shane is right beside him, hollering and holding up a massive picture of her face. She would die if she saw it, which she does through her teammates hug.

“Let’s go Eva! Woouoooo” Shane yells.

Ilya watches her face go pink and her eyes crinkle behind the cage. He can see the wide, toothy smile on her face as she skates to the bench to fist bump her team.

With one minute to go, it’s a simple game of keep away. It’s slow and steady now, with overanalyzed passes in their zone.

“5...4...3...2.....1” Shane whispers next to him.

The horn blares, all the girls skate out, gloves thrown around like confetti, and dog pile next to their goalie.

It’s truly beautiful.

Ilya feels the sting in his eyes, tears threatening to spill over. He turns to Shane who’s facing the same dilemma.

A gorgeous smile lit up every part of his face.

“That’s our girl! A champion!” he yells over the crowd.

Ilya pulls him in by his waist as they watch the girls fumbling around. They line up for handshakes, and then are presented with the trophy and banner that will hang from the ceiling of the local rink.

Ilya guides (pushes) Shane down to the glass, camera out so he can get his own copy of the group photo. Eva is front and center, holding up her finger and smiling so wide.

1st place, baby.

Wild.

-

“So, Megan is having everyone over tonight...”

They’d just finished the initial celebration. Shane ensured that every photo opportunity was taken. They’d gotten hundreds of her zoomed in on the ice, then once she was off the ice, they had her stand with the banner and the trophy and all her friends. Shane and Ilya got some too, and Yuna and David were there as well. So, all in all, they had more than enough pictures to pick out a few good ones.

Shane glanced at Ilya who hadn’t stopped grinning for the past hour.

“I mean, I suppose you could ditch us for a celebratory party.” Shane said, ruffling her hair.

“Ugh. Stop. It’s not like a party party. It’s just the team.”

Ilya hummed. “Sure. Just be careful. Don’t drink *too* much.”

Eva gawked at him.

“Papa.”

Ilya held up his hands in innocence.

“I am just saying. I was teenager once too. Your dad, on the other hand...”

“Asshole.” Shane swatted at him. “But yes, of course. You can go. One of us will pick you up in the morning.”

She grinned and gave them both a hug.

“Great, thanks! I’ll text you, ok?” She said, already turning around and running off to where the other girls were huddled around a table.

Shane just shook his head and sighed.

It was bittersweet. Mostly sweet, though.

She was a great player, student, friend, daughter... all of the above. He didn’t want her to grow up.

“Was it this hard for you too?” he said to his mom.

She laid her hand on his shoulder.

“Oh, honey. It was harder, maybe. Eva is at least as social as Ilya, so...”

Now it was his turn to gawk.

“*Mom!*”

January 2041

Eva stared at her phone. It was nearing the end of Christmas break, and she had just a few days left of freedom before the second half of her senior year would start.

Maybe freedom isn’t the right word for it. She was sure that this semester would also be pretty damn free. It’s the most fun part of high school, right? The time when you go to parties with your friends and sneak liquor into music festivals and prank the administration and skip school.

Well, maybe some of that, at least. She still had the rest of hockey season, which was more important than anything.

But in her room, she’d just received a phone call from the head coach at the University of Wisconsin – Madison. The school she’d been eyeing for the past seven or so years. The

school that was *so good* at hockey, that produced WCHA champions and Olympians and PWWHL players.

And she'd just been offered a spot on the team.

The coach said her grades were great, that she seemed like a hard-working, determined player. Like a *team* player.

They wanted to fly her out next week so she could visit, meet the team, meet the coaches.

So, she said yes, of course. She'd love to come for an official visit. It seemed like an amazing opportunity, and she'd always dreamed of continuing to play in college.

And now, she was staring at her phone and pinching herself to make sure she hadn't made any of it up.

How was she going to tell dad and papa?

-

"Hey bug! We're just watching TV. Did you want to go to the mall or something?" her dad said from the couch. Her papa was smushed next to him, with his arm wrapped around his shoulders.

Ew. They were so gross sometimes.

Her dad also hated the mall, so she knew he must already be missing her even though she hadn't even left for college yet. Ever since the school year had started, he'd been so nostalgic. Pulling up her baby pictures, talking about her favorite bands and movies that she hadn't liked since she was in middle school, she even caught him spending an embarrassingly large amount of time just staring at her wall of plaques and ribbons and pictures from different tournaments.

She hadn't even wanted a wall of those. But her papa did it anyways to "remind her that she should be proud of herself. We are always so proud of you!"

His words, not hers.

"I'm okay, dad. Thanks though." She said, walking so she was in front of the couch now.

Her papa furrowed his eyebrows and sat up.

"Is something wrong?" he asked.

Great, she must look guilty.

She shook her head.

"No... just." She couldn't help her smile now. "Coach O'Neill from UW just called."

She watched both of them sit up, almost simultaneously, in surprise.

“He asked if I want to go on an official visit. For the team.” She was full on grinning now.

“Holy shit!”

“Eva, oh my god!”

“That’s amazing!”

Dad stood up first and pulled her into a hug, papa quickly following behind.

They kinda just stood there for a minute, in this big hug with the TV still playing in the background. Then she heard a snuffle.

“Ew dad! Are you crying?”

Dad pulled away.

“What? Am I not allowed to be proud of my amazing daughter?”

“Not like that, no.”

He huffed.

“We are very proud of you, kroshka. So proud. You are amazing.”

Papa kissed her forehead.

“Amazing.” Dad echoed.

She tried to put on her most disgusted face, but deep down, she felt very loved and very happy and wouldn’t change this moment for anything.

She stood there for a minute, just thinking about it. Then she frowned.

“Wisconsin is kinda far away…” she muttered. It was. She hadn’t thought of that before, well, because she wasn’t sure she would get in or make the team.

“No!” her dad shot out. Papa looked at him like he was crazy. Then, a quieter, “No, Eva. Don’t worry about that. It’s a great school, and it’s not that far.”

“Yes, and we will move. Buy cottage on lake. All will be fine, no worries.” Papa said with a smile.

Now dad looked at papa like he was crazy.

“I mean… I guess we could do that. If you want it, honey. Whatever you want. We can visit every weekend. Or buy a house. Anything.”

“I think you are getting ahead of yourselves.” She said.

They were starting to look a bit sappy now. She could tell the reminiscing was about to begin again, and she did not want to hear it.

“You started it.” Papa pointed out.

She rolled her eyes.

Whatever.

They sat in silence for a minute, the Hollander-Rozanov’s.

“But um, we can go? Visit at least?”

Dad sighed and smiled.

“Yes Eva. Just forward me whatever details they send over. Papa and I don’t even have to go, if you don’t want us to.”

She considered it.

“No, I think I want you there. You guys know hockey and all. It might be helpful for this.”

“Then we go.” Papa confirmed.

-

Part of Eva wished that their flight to Madison had gotten cancelled. She was looking through the tunnel at the arena, the lights flashing in white and red creating a very blurry atmosphere. She could see her dad and papa very clearly though. Unfortunately.

Both of them were decked out head to toe in red. Jerseys, caps, face stickers. The whole nine yards.

It would be incredibly embarrassing if a part of her didn’t feel home in it.

“Are those your parents?” Eliza, one of the seniors standing next to her, asked.

“How could you tell?” Eva’s voice dripped with sarcasm.

In addition to their outfits, papa was now holding up her numbers in giant, posterboard form.

Eliza bumped her shoulder.

“I think it’s really sweet. Your next four will go by so quickly, so make sure you enjoy this.”

Eva felt her face turn pink.

“I know. I will definitely enjoy it.”

“Good, now get out there. It’s time!”

In the end, Eva did thoroughly enjoy it. All four years of college, her February at the Olympics, and her pending draft date for the PWHL.

Her dad and papa never missed a game, except for the one where they got a flat tire on the way from the cottage they had purchased an hour away. But still, miraculously, they made it to watch the end of the third period.

She smiled, looking at them waving as she took her seat at graduation.

She wouldn't trade any of it for the world.

End Notes

I love this little family that I've created <3 So sweet and cute!

Lmk what else y'all want to see and what y'all think!! I've had so much fun writing recently.

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