Ilya Rozanov's Adventures in Babysitting

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at https://archiveofourown.org/works/77398926.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid, Heated Rivalry (TV)
Relationships:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov, Ruby Pike & Ilya Rozanov, Jade Pike & Ilya Rozanov, Arthur Pike & Ilya Rozanov, Amber Pike & Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Ilya Rozanov, Ruby Pike, Jade Pike, Arthur Pike, Amber Pike, Shane Hollander, Hayden Pike, Hayden Pike's Children
Additional Tags:	POV Ilya Rozanov, Ilya Rozanov is Good With Children, Soft Ilya Rozanov, Emotional Hurt/Comfort, a little bit, Ilya helps the kids when they're sad…which also helps him, And then Shane rolls up with hugs and kisses bc, Ilya Rozanov Needs A Hug, Shane Hollander Loves Ilya Rozanov, Ilya Rozanov Loves Shane Hollander, Texting, Babysitting, Hayden may hate Ilya but he trusts him whole-heartedly with his kids you can't convince me otherwise, Uncle Ilya Rozanov, Is my agenda for this fic :)
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2026-01-09 Words: 6,526 Chapters: 1/1

Ilya Rozanov's Adventures in Babysitting

by kabnd

Summary

When Ilya is the only one available to watch the Pike kids, he proves that he's the world's best babysitter (who can't go five minutes without texting Shane or roasting Hayden…or both)

Notes

This takes place at the front end of TLG (no spoilers though!) Ilya's on the Centaurs and Shane plays for Montreal; Hayden and Jackie know about Hollanov, but no one else does

This exists because I love the ASG pool scene and decided to write 6.5k words about the adorable-ness that it Ilya being good with kids :)

Please bear with me on the kids' ages and age-appropriate abilities, I did my best, and it's all for the plot lol

See the end of the work for more notes

Ilya is laying on Shane's couch in Montreal when his phone rings. He's bored out of his mind. Shane is in Tampa with the Metros until late tonight, and Ilya was sent home by Wiebe because he took a puck to the ribs last game and got the teeny tiniest bruise.

Ilya answers the call. "Shane, I'm so bored," he complains. "How do you do it all the time?"

"You're hilarious," Shane replies. "Listen, uh, I need a favor."

The tone of Shane's voice sends a streak of panic shooting through him. "What is it? What is wrong?"

"Nothing really."

"Nothing is never *nothing*," Ilya insists.

Shane sighs. "Okay, nothing wrong with me. But Jackie's dad fell, so she needs to drive out to her parents house to help him."

"Okay?" Ilya feels bad for Jackie's dad, his poor daughter has to put up with Hayden and now he fell down? When does it end? Still, Shane could have just told him this over text.

"Hayden is in Tampa, obviously," Shane continues.

"With you. I am jealous." Ilya imagines the pretty blush that probably put on Shane's cheeks.

"And their regular babysitter isn't available."

“Ah.” Ilya is starting to see where this is headed. Shane knows the answer will be yes. That doesn’t mean Ilya isn’t going to be difficult about it.

“And I know you’re so bored, so I thought that you might babysit the kids?”

“Shane, you said this was a favor for you, not Hayden.”

“It is a favor for me. Please, Ilya. Hayden’s stressing out, and we need to play well this afternoon.”

Ilya sighs dramatically. It’s fun to make Shane beg. “Well, if it is a favor for you, you must pay me.”

“That’s not really how favors work, Ilya.”

Ilya hums. “I can think of so many good ways you can repay me. No money. Just your mouth, and your thighs, and your-”

”Yes! Fine, yes! I will pay you, okay?”

Ilya grins. “I will go now. Tell Hayden he must call me his hero.”

Shane laughs. The sound runs warm through Ilya’s veins. “Yeah, yeah. Text Jackie so she knows to expect you. I’ll let Hayden know you said yes.”

“You know you could just text me. You know I will go,” Ilya tells Shane.

“Yeah. Well, I wanted to hear your voice,” Shane mumbles.

Ilya grins stupidly at the receiver. “You are obsessed with me.”

“I regret teaching you that word.”

“It is true though, yes?”

“Yes,” Shane mutters.

“Good. I am obsessed with you too. Play well moya lyubov.”

“You play well too. You know you’ll need it. And listen, we should be home late tonight, so Hayden will relieve you at one or two in the morning.”

“I know you’ll be home. I’ve been counting down the hours. Kids will be good distraction.”

“Okay good,” Shane says. “I’ll score a goal for you.”

“No no, do not score. Then I can have more goals then you.”

“Fuck off. I have ten more already. You aren’t even close.”

“I will be,” Ilya challenges. “Play well, but no goal.”

“Nope,” Shane says. “I’m going to score, and you’re going to know it’s for you.”

“Boo.”

“Love you, gotta go bye!”

Shane waits until Ilya returns the sentiment before hanging up.

—

The Pikes’ house is annoyingly homey. Ilya enjoys being there, even if the general Hayden-ness of the place is off-putting. Luckily, Jackie has enough taste that she doesn’t allow any hockey decor outside of the basement.

She thanks him six times while she reminds him where the emergency numbers are clipped to the fridge and the diapers are stored before kissing each of her kids on the head and running out the door. It’s not an unfamiliar experience for Ilya. He’s babysat the Pikes a few times with Shane, but he’s never been fully alone with them. He hopes he doesn’t mess up.

Ruby, he thinks, is the one with her hair in pigtails, and Jade is wearing a headband. Arthur is clutching a stuffed alligator, and Amber is sitting in a high chair waving a spork in the air. He can do this.

Ilya claps his hands. “Okay Pike children. Let’s have fun!”

—

Like any self-respecting hockey player, Hayden has purchased each of his kids a tiny hockey stick to use in the driveway for street hockey.

Jade and Ruby are facing off between two tiny goals, Arthur and Amber behind them. Two-year old Amber looks very intense for someone who couldn’t walk a year ago. Ilya drops the

puck. Ruby wins the face off and passes it to Arthur. He shoots it wide of the goal, so Ilya grabs it and throws it back into play. “Go! Go!” He cheers.

Ruby scores. On the next face off, Jade takes it to the goal. Arthur sneaks up the sideline on the next possession and manages a, probably accidental, but very impressive slapshot. Even Amber manages to get her stick on the puck a couple of times, even if she immediately hits it into the grass. Ilya is clapping and hollering as he goes to retrieve it. He takes a video and sends it to Shane even though he knows he’s getting ready for the Metros game against Tampa.

Ilya: [sent a video]

Ilya: tell Hayden his children could beat him at hockey

“Come on! Drop the puck!” Ruby screams.

“Okay. I am coming.” Ilya jogs back and drops the puck for what feels like the one hundredth twin versus twin face off that morning. Jade wins it.

“Me, Jade!” Amber’s little voice calls, still standing where she first started. “I wanna get a goal too!”

“Look, your teammate, Jade!” Ilya encourages. Jade is definitely a better hockey player than her dad and a more generous player than Ilya because she shrugs and sends the puck absolutely hurtling towards her little sister.

“Oh fuck,” Ilya whispers under his breath. He can see what’s about to happen, so he takes off running across the driveway. The puck thwacks into the thick part of Amber’s stick with enough force to move it out from under her. Ilya lunges across the driveway and just manages to get his hand between Amber’s chin and the pavement as she tumbles down.

“Uh oh,” Arthur whispers.

There's a split second of silence and then a piercing wail erupts from Amber. Ilya rolls himself up to a sit, and immediately hoists Amber onto his lap. "Are you hurt?" He asks her.

All Ilya gets in response is another wail.

Ilya checks her face, which is fine, but there are a few scratches on her arm. He rocks her soothingly. "Oh, Solnyshko. It is okay. We will make it better."

Amber buries her wet face into Ilya's shoulder. Arthur drops down next to them and plasters himself over his sister's back, hugging her.

"I'll get the bandaids!" Jade declares.

By the time Jade returns. Amber's sobs have subsided into hiccups, and Ilya is making funny faces at her to get her to smile. "You are real hockey player now," he tells her. "I am very proud."

"Because she got hurt?" Arthur asks.

"Oh no, no, no. Not that. It is because she is so strong and brave."

"I am?" Amber asks. Ilya takes the first aid kit from Jade and gently washes the scrape on Amber's arm. He puts a bandaid over it. He picks out a blue and red striped one even though those are the Metros' colors.

"Oh yes, definitely," Ilya tells her. "Are you done now or want to keep going?"

"Keep playing with us, Amber!" Ruby urges.

Amber looks wary for a moment, and then she gazes up at Ilya with big eyes. “You help me, Uncle Ilya?”

The Pikes have never called Ilya their uncle before, and the title makes Ilya’s entire body glow with warmth. He gives Amber another hug. “Yes, of course. We will be a team, yes?”

Amber nods vigorously.

Ilya keeps ahold of Amber as he gets to his feet, picking up her tiny hockey stick. He has to bend nearly in half to get it to touch the ground, but it’s worth it when he pops a goal in the top left corner of the net one-handed and Amber hugs his neck and giggles.

After that, Ruby recruits Jade to her and Arthur’s team, so it’s Ilya and Amber against all three of them. Ruby is as much of a beast as Hayden says, because she’s darting all over the place and swinging her stick like she’s got something to prove.

Ilya has Amber in one arm, and is standing with his legs apart defending the goal Ruby is aiming for. “You can’t get it past us!” He declares.

Ruby’s eyes narrow, and she swings the stick high behind her, whacking the puck between Ilya’s legs. Her follow through with the stick nails Ilya right in the groin. The world blacks out for a second, and Ilya crumples to the ground, managing to set Amber down before he curls into the fetal position on the driveway.

“Ruby!” Jade calls from behind him. “You scored!”

Ilya groans.

“Oh no! Uncle Ilya! Are you okay?” Jade comes running over, and her face appears in Ilya’s field of vision. Maybe he’s seeing double because a matching face pops into view. Ilya’s smile at the title is more of a pained grimace.

“One minute, please.”

“I’ll call 9-1-1,” Jade decides, taking Ilya’s phone out of his back pocket.

“No!” Ilya chokes. “No. Do not do that. I am fine.”

“But you look like you’re dying,” Ruby explains.

“You hit him in the privates!” Arthur chimes in. “He’s injured.”

Amber just pats Ilya on the shin.

“Then I’ll call Mommy,” Jade decides.

“Do not call Mommy,” Ilya manages. “She is busy today.”

“Daddy then.”

The horror of that possibility has Ilya shooting up to a sit, despite the pain. “No. Very much no.”

“Oh, I got it,” Jade continues. Ilya must have forgotten to lock his phone, because she seems to be doing something on it. Thank God he put all his sexy pictures of Shane in a locked album.

The phone rings for a second then connects. “Ilya, what’s up? I’m about to leave the locker room.” And that’s Shane. Great.

“Jade,” Ilya chides. “You called Uncle Shane?”

“Ilya? Are the kids okay?”

“We’re okay,” Jade replies. “But Ruby hit Uncle Ilya in the privates with a hockey stick on accident and now he’s laying on the ground like he’s dying.”

And Shane, the fucker, *laughs*. “Oh my God. Jade, take a picture!”

Ilya tries to make his face look angry as Jade snaps a photo. “Give me phone,” he tells her. Taking the call off speaker he presses it to his ear. “Sorry. Go play. I will be fine.”

Shane laughs. “Can the kids hear me?”

“No.”

“In that case, you better be fine because I like your dick how it is.”

“Oh my God, that is such a boring joke, Hollander.”

There’s a noise in the background. Someone is calling Shane for warm ups. “Listen, I’ve got to go. I love you and I’ll see you later tonight. I’ll kiss it better later.”

Ilya makes a smacking kissing noise into the phone. “I love you too. Have a good game.”

Ilya hangs up the phone.

“Do you feel better?” Arthur asks.

Ilya nods. “Yes I am all better.”

Jade grins. “I knew calling Uncle Shane would make him feel better!”

Ilya sighs. He’s so fucking transparent even children can see right through him. “Let’s go watch a hockey game!”

—

Ilya gives the kids chocolates as a game-watching snack because he found a bag labeled ‘Hayden’ and Jade informed him that Hayden would be ‘so mad’ if they ate them all. Of course, to add insult to injury, Ilya gets a selfie with two of the four kids smiling eating them. Ruby and Amber are too busy chowing down to look at the camera. He sends the picture to Shane, who will think it is cute, and to Hayden, who will hopefully have his intermission ruined.

Unfortunately for Ilya, the chocolate means that the kids get hyper halfway through the first period, so Ruby and Jade spend twenty minutes teaching him a dance that involves him shaking his butt and spinning around while hopping. He doesn’t think it’s a real dance.

Ilya catches sight of the TV just as Shane nudges a goal past the Tampa goalie. “Yay! Uncle Shane scoooores!” Ruby cheers.

Apparently, that goal is for Ilya. Shane is definitely having the same thought right now, and the idea of that makes Ilya fuzzy inside. He pulls out his phone.

Ilya: such a nice goal you scored for me, Hollander

Jade tugs on Ilya's arm. "Do the dance! Do the dance!" She insists.

"What? Why now?" Ilya asks.

"It's a Metros Victory Dance!" They chorus.

"What?!" Ilya cries dramatically. "You tricked me! I only do Centaur victory dance!"

Ruby laughs manically. "You're cheering for Metros though."

"Because you want Uncle Shane to win!" Jade echoes.

"Ah, yes. You caught me. I want Uncle Shane to win unless he's against me. Then you cheer for Uncle Ilya, yes?"

"No!" Arthur giggles. "We cheer for Metros!"

Ilya slaps his chest. "You hurt me, Pike children!"

"Don't worry, Uncle Ilya," Ruby says. "We'll root for you unless you play Daddy."

"Yes, okay. That is good."

"Victory dance time?" Jade asks.

"Yes yes," Ilya agrees. "You do this every time they score?"

Jade counts them into the routine.

“Yep!’ Ruby says proudly. “Daddy says it makes him extra proud to know we’re cheering when he scores.”

Ilya heroically does not say the chirp that comes to mind about Hayden never scoring. Arthur and Amber have now joined their sisters, and they’re all yelling gleefully every time they see Hayden on the screen. He can let it slide one time, especially because the goal they’re cheering for Shane scored for him. In fact, Ilya’s such a nice babysitter, that he records a few seconds of the kids’ excitement and sends it to Hayden to soften the blow of the chocolate. When they start chanting ‘Uncle Shane’ as ESPN replays Shane’s goal, Ilya records a clip of that as well and sends it to Shane.

Ilya: [sent a video]

Ilya: your biggest fans. I did not tell them that the goal was actually for me.

Ilya is smiling when the first period ends, hoping that he might get a response from Shane. Arthur tugs Ilya’s sleeve.

“Yes, Arthur?”

“Uncle Ilya, I have to go potty. Can you help me?”

Being called Uncle Ilya softens the blow of being the bathroom helper because as it turns out, by ‘potty’ Arthur means a tiny plastic toilet on top of the real toilet, and by ‘help’ he means talk him through pooping on said plastic toilet.

“This is so I don’t fall in,” Arthur explains when he’s washing his hands.

There’s no response from Shane yet, so Ilya texts again.

Ilya: Hayden owes me one million favors

Ilya: I helped his kid take a shit

—

When the game ends, Montreal wins 2-1. Ilya ends up sitting criss-cross applesauce on the Pikes' living room floor with the post-game show playing in the background and Amber bouncing happily in his lap. They're playing a game called "Pretty Pretty Princess" which entails spinning a wheel to try and get a matching set of jewelry. It's the dumbest game that Ilya has ever played, but Amber is tugging at one of the green plastic earrings clipped to his earlobe, and Jade is giggling as she acquires a pink necklace. Ruby crosses her arms in a pout next to her, and little Arthur seems to be content trying his blue ring on every finger.

Ilya is currently the holder of the coveted princess crown, so he has it on Amber's head. He takes a selfie of the two of them and sends it to Shane.

Ilya: [sent a photo]

Ilya: we are pretty pretty princesses

A response comes quickly.

Shane: I am not calling you that

Ilya: hmm then I call you that, princess?

Shane: Fuck off

Ilya grins

Shane: Getting on the plane. Let the children win, Rozanov.

Ilya: hmm maybe

Ilya pockets his phone. “Ruby. Is your turn,” Ilya prompts.

Ruby spins the wheel and marches her piece forward.

“No jewelry!” Jade cries out when Ruby lands on a blank square. Ruby looks murderous, and Jade shoves the spinner at Arthur, who holds it sideways and spins. Unsurprisingly, he gets the number that’s facing the ground.

“That doesn’t count!” Ruby shouts, pointing accusingly at her little brother.

“Is okay,” Ilya smiles. “He likes to spin it.”

Ruby huffs. “But if he wins, that’s cheating.”

Ilya is pretty sure Arthur is not going to win seeing as he keeps forgetting to take his jewelry pieces. There is an assortment of round plastic people in his lap, and they seem to be having some sort of important meeting.

Jade gets another piece of jewelry on her next turn, then Ruby does. They just skip Arthur, and they go around in circles until Jade has everything she needs to win but the crown, which is now sitting on Ruby’s head. “I need a three to win,” Jade announces. “I’ll steal the crown from Ruby!”

Jade squeezes her eyes shut, crosses her fingers and spins. It’s a three. “Yes! I win! I’m the prettiest princess!” Jade snatches the crown off her sister’s head and puts it on her own.

Amber claps from where she sits on Ilya's lap, and even Arthur looks up from his toys as Jade does her Metros victory dance. Ruby's bottom lip is pushed out, and there's hair falling in her face from where the crown pulled it from her little pigtail.

"Ah. We are all pretty princesses, yes?" Ilya tries. "You and Ruby, and Arthur, and Amber, and me."

"You?! No way!" Jade laughs. "But I'm the prettiest princess because I won the game!" Ruby's eyes start to water, and Ilya's chest constricts. Ilya delights in making Hayden Pike cry, but tears from the guy's kids are torture.

"Then Ruby is too," Ilya tries. "She is your twin, yes?"

Jade shrugs. "I guess so."

Ruby flings off all her purple jewelry, bursts into tears, and runs out of the room.

Ilya lifts Amber off of his lap and puts her next to Arthur.

"What happened?" He asks Jade instinctively.

"I didn't do anything, I promise!" Jade says. Her voice is shaking, and Ilya really doesn't want two crying little girls on his hands.

"No, Jade. You are okay. I know. Let me see what is wrong. Stay with your brother and sister."

—

Ilya finds Ruby sitting on the end of her bed. Even though she and Jade are twins, the Pikes' house is enormous enough that she has her own room. Ilya can tell because there are 'Rs' all over the place.

Ilya knocks on the open door. "Hello princess Ruby. Can I come in?"

Ruby looks up, eyes big and watery. She wipes at her eye with one hand, the other clutching a very stringy blanket. Ilya catches a tiny nod.

"What is wrong?" He asks gently, kneeling in front of her. He should probably remind her "Pretty Pretty Princess" is just a game, but he's a fully grown adult and had cried over losing a game of hockey once or twice in the privacy of his own home, so he can't do that.

"Nothing."

"Ah, no see. I know that there is something wrong, Ruby."

"How?"

Because you're crying is what Ilya doesn't say. "Because I spend a lot of time with your Uncle Shane, and when he says nothing is wrong, something is always wrong. I have a lot of practice knowing this."

"You think I'm like Uncle Shane?" Ruby asks.

"Well, you're much prettier," Ilya smiles. It's kind of a lie. Ruby is an adorable little girl, but Shane is the prettiest person Ilya's ever seen, no competition.

Ruby blinks. Then her eyes flood with tears. "No, I'm *not*!" She sobs.

“Whoa whoa, hey,” Ilya soothes, rubbing his knuckles gently over Ruby’s knees. “You are. You’re so pretty.”

Ruby chokes on her next cry, and snot dribbles from her nose. Ilya should probably get a tissue, but then Ruby tips forward, and Ilya catches her against his chest. “Oh Ruby, Solnyshko, it is okay.”

“No, it’s not!” She gasps between cries. “I’m *ugly*.”

“What?” Ilya pries Ruby off of him and holds her by the shoulder. “No you are not.”

Ruby just nods, tears still falling.

“How did you get a thought like that?” Ilya asks.

Ruby squeezes her eyes shut.

“You look like your mama,” Ilya says to her. “Now if you looked like your dad maybe I would believe you because he is very funny looking.”

Ruby tries to keep the frown on her face, but her cheeks gradually lift into a tiny smile.

Ilya doubles down. “I will text him right now, see?” Ilya takes his phone from his pocket and opens the messages app, selecting Hayden’s name. “Look. I type, *we think you are very funny looking.* Good?”

Ruby nods. Ilya sends it. He hopes that Hayden looks at his messages when they land. “You don’t think I’m ugly?” Ruby asks.

Ilya waits until her eyes meet his. “Of course I don’t think you are ugly. You are so pretty. So beautiful. Why do you think you are ugly?”

Hayden owes him a million dollars for parenting his children so well.

Ruby drops her head. Her feet dangle off the side of the bed and kick Ilya in the shin every few seconds. “A boy at school said so.”

Oh. Ilya will get Shane and Hayden and they will go whoop this boy from school. “What did he say?” Ilya asks. Shane would kill him if he suggested violence to a child, especially one who’s already pretty ruthless. A beast, as Hayden calls her.

“He said that Jade got all the pretty and I got none.”

“That is-” *stupid. They’re fucking twins dumb boy from school*. “Not true at all.”

“But it is!” Ruby starts to cry again. “My hair always falls out from how Mommy does it in the morning, and I have a freckle on my nose and my chin, and I have cuts on my knees from falling down at recess.”

Ilya’s heart breaks. He’s felt like this before. Not exactly, but close enough. Accent too thick, attitude too harsh, play too showy. Then Shane told Ilya how much he loved those things about him. It was almost enough. Then Shane made Ilya stand in front of the mirror and tell himself how much he loved those things while Shane plastered himself to Ilya’s back and hooked his chin over Ilya’s shoulder. The night ended in tears. Very good tears.

“Come on, Ruby,” Ilya says. He gathers her up in his arms, and carries her to the bathroom. He stands her on the countertop next to the sink and holds her waist, turning her so she faces the mirror. Through the open door, he sees Arthur with his arm around little Amber, and Jade carefully sorting the jewelry pieces from their game.

Ilya pokes his head out from behind Ruby and grins at her in the mirror. “Say it with me. ‘I am pretty.’”

“I am pretty,” Ruby mumbles.

“Ah, no. My English is not so good. You must be louder.”

“I am pretty,” Ruby says again.

“Oh! I turned my ears off. Go again please.”

Ruby is giggling softly now. “I am pretty!” She screeches. It’s so loud Ilya winces.

“You are! What is next? How about, ‘I am strong!’”

“I am strong!” Ruby screams.

From the living room, Amber shrieks happily in response.

They go through *fun* and *smart* and *kind* and *has really cool uncles* before Ilya asks, “What else are you?”

“My daddy always calls me a beast.”

“Oh yes? Let’s do that one.”

Ruby turns in Ilya’s hold. “Is that bad?”

“What? No, is good.” Ilya thinks Hayden is a clumpnugget, but he’s a good friend to Shane and a great dad, and he would never say something to his daughter that made her think bad of herself.

“I thought it was good. Daddy always swings me up and says ‘that’s my little beast’ when I tackle him.”

“Yes, good job tackling your dad, Ruby.”

She doesn’t laugh this time. “But.” Her bottom lip trembles. How can the poor kid have any tears left?

Ilya squeezes her gently.

“But a boy at school-” This fucking boy at school. Ilya will end him. “When I get him in tag or something, he says it’s because I’m in beast mode and then sticks his tongue out.” She takes a deep breath. “So I think it must be bad.”

“No.” Ilya jostles her so she looks at him. “No. He is jealous that you are better than him. It happens when you are as good as you and me and Uncle Shane.”

“And Daddy?”

“No, no. Just me and you and Uncle Shane. And your mama.”

Ruby giggles.

“They call us mean names when we are good and strong.”

“Why? That’s mean.”

“It is mean. That is why we must be nice to ourselves. We must say, ‘yes! I am beast. And I roar!” Ilya spins Ruby to face the mirror. “Go on.”

Ruby takes a deep breath and bellows so loud Ilya temporarily loses his hearing. “I am beast! And I roar!” She lets out a growl. Three more growls come from the living room, followed by Jade walking into the bathroom carrying Amber and Arthur toddling behind them.

“Yes!” Ilya cries. “Roar, Pike children! Roar!” He manages to get out his phone and take a video as they all roar at the mirror. Through the screen he watches Jade take off her princess crown and put it on Ruby’s head.

Crisis averted. Ilya texts Shane.

Ilya: [sent a video]

Ilya: I am the king of babysitting.

—

Getting the kids to eat dinner and get ready for bed goes surprisingly smoothly, even if Ilya has to bribe them with four bedtime stories (one each).

They insist on cuddling in the guest room bed that Jackie pointed Ilya to, so he’s in sweats and an Ottawa Centaurs sweatshirt and under a pile of kids. Amber hands him a book. There’s a brown bear on the cover, and when Ilya flips it open he breaths a sigh of relief. ‘Brown Bear, Brown Bear, what do you see?’ Is not going to test the limits of his English while he’s this tired.

Arthur hands him a book next. It's about a creature named Arthur that doesn't quite look like a bear. Arthur (the human) says that Arthur (the creature) is an aardvark.

In between that book and Ruby's pick, Ilya texts Shane. The flight app says they're above Pennsylvania.

Ilya: I learned a new word

Ilya: aardvark

Ruby picks a book about a child named 'fancy Nancy' who wears crazy outfits. Ilya doesn't read this one, because Ruby insists that she's been practicing the voices and will read aloud to them. It's quite entertaining. Amber is fighting sleep against Ilya's chest by the time Ruby finishes. Arthur is yawning next to him.

"Okay, Jade. Your turn. Do you want to read out loud like Ruby?" Selfishly, Ilya hopes she says yes because he's getting tired too, and the English part of his brain always falls asleep before the Russian part.

"Um, yeah," Jade shrugs.

"Okay. Go on."

Jade opens the book. There's a woman in a little maid outfit on the cover. "Oh, A-me-li-a Be-de-lia," she starts slowly. "Your. First. Day. Of work. And I. Can't. Be. Here." Jade looks up at Ilya.

Ilya nods at her to keep going. "Good job Jade. What happens next?"

It takes half an hour for Jade to get through the story, and by then Amber is conked out, and Arthur has cuddled into Ilya's side, snuffling.

“Bedtime, okay?” Ilya tells the still-awake girls.

Ruby scrambles off the bed and her footsteps sound as she runs to her room. Ilya hoists Arthur into his free arm, depositing him in his bed first before putting Amber in her crib.

Ilya half expects to have to wrestle Ruby under the covers, but she’s asleep (or pretending to be) when he peeks into her room. Ilya leaves the door open a crack.

When he gets to Jade’s room, she’s sitting in the middle of her floor with a pile of books in front of her.

“Four only,” Ilya reminds her. “Time for bed now.”

Jade kicks the pile of books, sending them thumping to the floor.

“Time for bed after cleaning these up,” Ilya amends.

“You should just throw them away,” Jade says.

“Why?” Ilya asks. “Do you not like your books? You read a whole book one minute ago.”

“But I’m so slow!”Jade cries. “I like books when Mommy reads to me, but the words are hard when I have to say them.”

“It is okay to go slow,” Ilya assures her.

“I’m stupid.”

“Hey! No!” Ilya reaches forward and tips Jade’s chin up. “You apologize to Jade for saying such a mean thing about her.”

Jade’s eyebrows wrinkle. “I *am* Jade.”

“Yes. Jade, apologize to Jade for saying a mean thing.”

Jade scrunches her nose. Ilya takes the opportunity to tap it with his finger.

“Jade is waiting,” Ilya says.

“I’m sorry,” Jade mumbles, still frowning.

“Ah no, she is still sad. She did not hear you I don’t think.”

Jade turns away from Ilya and crosses her arms. So that plan failed.

Ilya scoops Jade off the floor and plops her on her bed. She doesn’t protest as he pulls the blanket down and tucks it around her.

“I do not want you to be sad,” Ilya says, patting her head and sitting on the edge of her bed. “I want you to have nice dreams.”

Jade scoots towards him and puts her head on Ilya’s knee. He can’t imagine that’s comfortable, but she seems content there.

“Is okay, Solnyshko. What are you feeling?”

“I wish I could read fast.”

“Okay.”

“Ruby goes fast,” Jade mumbles. “Way faster than me.”

“I go slow too,” Ilya reminds her. “It is okay to be slower at reading.”

“Yeah but you do voices. Amber and Arthur fell asleep while I was reading.”

“Oh Jade. Was late. They were tired. That is what bedtime stories are for.”

“They were bored because I can’t read fun like Ruby.”

The girl underestimates how great boring is. Ilya would cry if Shane stopped being boring. “Well tomorrow you practice. That is how you get better.”

“I’m too stupid to get better.”

“Ah, no. I do not think that is right.”

“How do you know?” Jade pouts. “You don’t know everything.”

Ilya leans down and knocks a fist gently on Jade’s head. “Yes. There is big brain in there. It is ready to learn.”

“My brain is bad at learning.”

“Is not bad at learning. You need to make it want to learn.”

“How do I do that?” Jade asks. Her voice is soft, like sleep is coming for her.

Ilya thinks about Shane’s face when Ilya pulls out a new word or English phrase. At the beginning Ilya delighted in shocking him, now, he loves the pride written across Shane’s face when Ilya learns something new. Yesterday, when Ilya used the word ‘philanthropy’ in their video chat for the Irina Foundation, Shane gave him bedroom eyes through the screen. The call ended very quickly after that. Shane called him back from bed.

“Tell brain why learning would make you happy. You want to read to your brother and sisters?”

“Yes. And my mommy and daddy.”

“Good. Then you tell brain that it wants to learn so you can do that.”

Jade sighs and nestles closer to Ilya. “What if the words are too hard?”

Ilya knows the answer to this one. “You ask for help. Is the best way to learn new things. We all help you. Uncle Shane helps me a lot.”

“Okay,” Jade whispers. “Will you read me a story now?”

Ilya huffs a soft laugh. Little trickster. “Yes, okay. Short one.”

Jade is asleep before he gets to page three.

—

Ilya is dozing off in the guest bedroom with Amber's baby monitor on the bedside table when his phone buzzes.

Hayden: fuck you rozanov

Hayden: steal my chocolate and say I'm funny looking

Hayden: I will end you

Ilya laughs out loud.

Ilya: your children love me. You lose.

Ilya gets an emoji hand flipping him off in response. A message from Shane pings in immediately after.

Shane: Do I even want to know why they're roaring?

Ilya: they are being centaurs

Shane: weirdo

Shane: we just landed. Taxiing on the runway but they said it's going to be another twenty minutes

Ilya pouts. He wants Shane in his arms now.

Ilya: that is not good. I want to see you :(

Shane: me too :(

Shane: we should be back in an hour or so. Gonna get a ride with hayd back to his. Then you can drive me home.

Ilya: okay princess

Shane: oh my god shut up

Ilya grins. Shane is so easy to rile up. But he is with his team, so Ilya dials it back.

Ilya: see you soon

There's a noise of shuffling by the open door. When Ilya looks up, Arthur is standing there clutching his stuffed alligator and dragging a blanket behind him.

Ilya sends a quick request to the universe. *Please not vomit.*

"Arthur, what is wrong?" Ilya asks. He climbs out of bed and pads over to the little boy, crouching in front of him.

Arthur opens his arms, so Ilya gathers him into a hug. He's shaking a little bit. The look on his face is haunted. Ilya knows it well.

"Did you have a bad dream?"

Arthur nods against him.

“Ah. Is okay. Want to come to big bed with me?”

Arthur nods again, so Ilya carries him back to the guest bed. The kid clutches at Ilya’s shirt so hard he thinks it might rip.

“What did you dream?”

Arthur starts crying. Ilya adjusts his grip so Arthur’s head is nestled in the gap of Ilya’s arm and his hair brushes Ilya’s neck. Ilya rocks them until Arthur’s cries subside.

“What happened in the dream, Solnyshko?” Ilya tries again.

“My daddy disappeared,” he says.

The joke is *right there* but Ilya holds it back. “He’s coming right back home,” Ilya assures him.

Arthur shakes his head. “And then my mommy disappeared.”

Ilya holds the boy tighter to his chest. It’s not the same thing. Arthur’s mom and dad are coming back. But Ilya understands where the dream came from. The Metros have been gone for a few days now, and Jackie ran out the door in a rush this afternoon.

“That’s scary,” Ilya says.

A fresh batch of tears wells in Arthur’s eyes. “Then Ruby and Jade went away. And Amber.”

“They are here at home, Arthur. Is okay.”

“If they leave I’ll be all alone,” Arthur cries.

Ilya hugs him tighter. “Ah, no. You won’t be alone. I will come. And I will bring your Uncle Shane. We will go on mission to find your family. You can bring alligator.”

“His name is Chompy,” Arthur says, wiping his nose on Ilya’s sweatshirt.

“You can bring Chompy.”

“But you’ll come with me?”

Ilya doesn’t know how to explain to Arthur that Ilya will never let a kid be alone if he can help it. Being alone is Ilya’s least favorite feeling in the world. So, instead, Ilya says, “Of course. I will always come.”

“Even though daddy calls you his enemy?”

Ilya laughs. “He is joking. You are awesome, Arthur. I will always come.”

“Thank you Uncle Ilya,” Arthur breathes.

Ilya smiles. He was so jealous that Shane got that title. If this day has proven anything, it’s that now Ilya has it too. He expects that Shane will be just as delighted by that development if his voice on the phone call earlier was any indication.

“Can I stay with you?” Arthur asks.

Ilya checks his phone. Shane has texted that they're ten minutes away. "Yes. Your daddy will be home soon."

Arthur smiles and closes his eyes. He's asleep before the front door opens. Ilya hears Shane and Hayden's whispers, and Ilya's body instinctively wants to leap out of the bed and clobber Shane with a hug and an it's-been-four-days kiss, but there's a lump of child on top of him, so he has to wait until Shane pokes his head in the room.

Warmth bursts in Ilya's chest when Shane's face splits into a smile when he sees Ilya. "Hello moya lyubov," Ilya says. Shane strides over and kisses Ilya once on top of the head, then the center of his forehead, then his nose before taking Ilya's lips with his.

"Hello."

"I am such a good babysitter," Ilya says.

"I can see that," Shane smiles. "Here, let me." Shane scoops Arthur off of Ilya and hands him off to Hayden in the hallway.

"I will get you for stealing my chocolate, Rozanov," Hayden hisses under his breath at the door.

"Your children love me, Pike. Will be very annoying for you when they ask for Uncle Ilya all the time."

"*Uncle* Ilya, Jesus Christ," Hayden mutters. "What has my life become?"

Ilya looks up at Shane and raises his eyebrows. They both burst out laughing. "Come on, king of babysitting. Let's go home."

A surge of affection washes over Ilya, so he wraps his arms tighter around Shane and pulls him onto his chest, squeezing them together.

“Whoa there,” Shane says. His voice is garbled from where his face is squished against Ilya.

“I love you so much,” Ilya says. “You know that, right?”

Shane pulls back, propping himself on one elbow and cradling Ilya’s face between his hands. “I know,” he whispers. “I love you so much right back. My whole entire world.”

Ilya turns his head to kiss Shane’s palm.

“Did something happen?” Shane asks.

Ilya shrugs. “Kids were sad. I helped them.”

Shane’s face falls. “And when you were a kid-”

“No one helped me after my mom died.”

“I’m sorry,” Shane whispers, pressing a light kiss to the skin beneath Ilya’s eye. “You’re so good to help them. They are so lucky to have Uncle Ilya.” Ilya watches Shane fail to fight the smile that appears on his lips saying those words.

“I’m lucky to have you,” Ilya whispers.

“Not as lucky as I am,” Shane replies.

And Ilya loves Shane so much it takes over him. Ilya hauls Shane on top of himself again and hugs Shane as hard as he can. “Let’s go home,” Ilya says eventually. “I want to hold you all night long.”

Shane leans in to kiss him. “Sounds perfect.”

End Notes

Yay thank you for reading! I hope you enjoyed reading as much as I enjoyed writing it!

Hugs if you want to leave kudos or a nice comment :)

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!