

Rules for Survival

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Rules for Survival

by [Hatchigo](#)

Summary

Yuna Hollander has spent a lifetime hiding her fear behind competence. From Shane's childhood to his rise as an NHL star, she has carried anxiety so he wouldn't have to. Until one unplanned moment forces her to confront the limits of planning, the weight of anxiety passed down through generations, and the quiet courage it takes to let her son live his own life.

Or: Shane's anxiety came from Yuna. What if Yuna went to the cottage instead of David?

Notes

Yuna is a very interesting character for me. A loving mom, but mostly described as a strict and competent woman. In my mind, maybe it's just a way for her to find some control in her life...

Yuna Hollander liked rules.

Rules were clean. Predictable. If you do something a certain way, then the outcome is predictable. If you woke up at six, if you checked your emails before breakfast, if you answered journalists politely but firmly, if you read every contract twice, then nothing bad would happen. Or at least, fewer bad things.

People liked to say she was strict. Cold. Difficult.

Unkind, sometimes.

Yuna knew what they saw: the tight bun, the sharp suits, the way she didn't laugh at jokes that weren't funny, the way she corrected people when they got things wrong. She knew the nickname online, "MoManager", half mockery, half admiration. She read everything. She always did.

What people didn't see was that every rule was a brace holding her together. That control wasn't about power. It was about survival.

Yuna needed a way to fight anxiety.

Anxiety was the tightness behind her ribs, the way her jaw ached from clenching, the constant low-level hum of anticipation. Not excitement, never that, but readiness. Readiness for disaster. For rejection. For disappointment. For being different.

When Yuna was eight, a boy in her class pulled his eyes back with his fingers and asked her if she ate dogs.

The teacher laughed awkwardly and told him to stop being silly.

No one asked Yuna if she was okay.

At ten, a girl told her she spoke English "really well, considering." Yuna had been born in Montreal. She spoke French at daycare. English at school. Japanese at home, sometimes, though less and less as the years passed.

At twelve, someone shoved her into a locker and told her to go back where she came from.

Yuna went home that day and made a list.

She didn't know why. She just knew she needed one.

Things I can control:

– *My grades*

– *How I speak*

– *How I dress*

– *How much I know*

She added hockey later.

Hockey was everywhere. Hockey was Canada. Hockey was the thing that separated real Canadians from the rest. Yuna watched games obsessively, memorized stats, learned rules better than the boys who mocked her. If she couldn't be on the ice, too small, too Asian, too much of a girl, then she would master everything else.

She would be the best. Now she knows that it was a stupid idea, a childish idea. But still, it gave her something to love, and now to share with Shane.

She went to a great university. Stopped speaking Japanese entirely. Learned how to smile just enough. Married David, who was kindness embodied, calm, warm, unshakeable in a way she had never been.

Her family worried she was drifting too far from tradition. That she was losing herself and her identity. They told her anxiety was a weakness. That she thought too much.

They didn't feel their chest tighten every time someone stared a second too long.

They didn't hear the way people slowed their speech, raised their voices, like Yuna might not understand.

They didn't know what it was like to be born somewhere and still be treated like a guest.

Shane was different.

Shane was everything soft in her.

From the moment she held him, impossibly small and red-faced, Yuna loved him with a ferocity that terrified her. Love, she learned quickly, was the most dangerous thing of all. You could do everything right and still lose it.

So she planned.

She planned his childhood. His education. His safety. She planned around bullies and teachers and coaches. When Shane told them, shy and hopeful, that he wanted to play hockey professionally, Yuna smiled and hugged him.

She waited until he ran back outside before she went to their bedroom and cried so hard her ribs hurt.

She cried because she loved him. Because she knew how cruel the world could be. Because there were no Japanese-Canadian stars to point to, no easy proof that this dream was possible. Because what if she was the reason it wouldn't work for him?

David found her, like he always did.

He didn't try to fix her. He never did. He sat with her, steady hands, calm voice, reminding her that she had once been a frightened child with an impossible goal too. That she had fought back with everything she had.

That Shane was her son.

That he was strong. That he had her.

That was the night Yuna began planning in earnest.

She never told Shane how scared she was.

Shane had been an anxious child.

Yuna noticed it before anyone else did, because she recognized it immediately. The way his fingers curled into his sleeves, the way he asked the same questions over and over, the way new places made him quiet and watchful instead of excited. Other parents called him sensitive. David called him thoughtful.

Yuna called it familiar.

She labeled everything for him. Lunch boxes. Jackets. Homework folders. She made schedules and stuck them to the fridge with magnets shaped like little hockey pucks.

When Shane had nightmares, she didn't tell him monsters weren't real. She sat on the edge of his bed and talked him through breathing, slow and steady, until his heartbeat matched hers. When school got hard, when boys got cruel, when teachers misunderstood his quiet for disinterest, Yuna was already there, emails drafted, meetings requested, solutions prepared.

She never raised her voice.

She never let him see her shake.

On game days, when arenas were loud and unpredictable and full of eyes, Yuna arrived early. She learned which benches felt safest, which exits were quickest. She packed snacks in the same order every time. She smiled, chatted, acted effortless while her mind catalogued every possible thing that could go wrong.

Shane thought his mom was unflappable.

She never told him how often her hands shook, how change made her skin itch, how planning weeks or years ahead felt like breathing.

That was the lie she was proudest of.

She became stronger. For him.

She hid her own anxiety behind competence, behind preparation, behind the calm precision that made coaches trust her and parents admire her. She hid it behind late nights and early mornings, behind lists and spreadsheets and contingency plans Shane would never see.

When Shane struggled, she made sure he thought it was manageable. Temporary. Something you worked through, not something that owned you.

They took him to specialists quietly. Exercises, grounding techniques, breathing methods. Yuna nodded, took notes, implemented everything perfectly.

Inside, she hated herself.

Because she knew where this came from.

She watched Shane use the same tricks she used: counting steps, memorizing routes, rehearsing conversations. She felt like she had cursed him with her own mind. So she doubled down on strength. If she could be steady enough, calm enough, maybe he wouldn't feel it as deeply.

Maybe she could carry it for both of them.

She became his manager not because she wanted control, but because she trusted herself to protect him more than anyone else. She negotiated contracts like battles. She read brand proposals like threats. She made sure no one took advantage of his kindness.

And Shane grew into someone extraordinary.

Kind. Serious. Talented.

An NHL player.

A team captain.

A role model.

Yuna watched children online talk about him with awe. Not despite his difference, but *because* of it. Brands lined up because he was special, because he meant something. She handled it all. For him.

Still, sometimes, late at night, scrolling through comments, she wondered if she had taken too much space. If she had become MoManager instead of Mom, even in Shane's mind.

When she saw the photo of Shane with Rose Landry, she laughed. Truly laughed. A modern fairy tale, she thought. Her son, the star athlete, dating someone brilliant and beautiful.

She was happy for him.

She was also sad that he hadn't told her.

Going to the cottage to find her charger should have been simple.

She had forgotten it last week when she cleaned the cottage. David offered to go, but Yuna didn't mind the drive. Driving calmed her. Rules. Lanes. Signals.

She didn't ask Shane before coming.

That was her mistake.

She let herself in quietly with her key, already planning dinner with David, already running through emails in her head. She found the charger and turned around.

And froze.

On the dock, sunlight catching on the water, Shane was laughing.

Not polite laughter. Not media-trained laughter.

Real.

He leaned in, kissed Ilya Rozanov like it was the most natural thing in the world.

Yuna's brain shut down.

She moved without thinking, ducked behind the counter, crept to the door, and fled like a criminal. She probably looked ridiculous. Her heart pounded so hard she thought she might be sick. She didn't breathe until she was in the car.

Then the tears came. She hated that.

She wasn't homophobic.

She knew that. Shane looked happy. Radiant. She could learn to love Ilya. She wanted to.

So why was she crying?

Her hands shook on the steering wheel. She let the tears fall silently, furious at herself.

Shane hadn't told her. He had let her curse Ilya during games. Let her joke, complain, dismiss him. She felt terrible.

Why hadn't he trusted her?

Or worse, had he felt trapped by the life she built?

Her plans. Her rules.

Sitting in the car, tears drying on her cheeks, she realized something else and felt pure panic.

She had stolen something from Shane.

Coming out wasn't just information. It was trust. Timing. Control over one's own story. And she had taken it without meaning to, without permission, like a trespasser in his most private space.

How was she supposed to pretend she didn't know?

She imagined dinner with David, his easy questions, his gentle curiosity. Yuna had never been good at lying to him. David could always tell when something was wrong, even when she said nothing.

Would she avoid his eyes? Change the subject? Let Shane decide when, knowing she would already be braced for it?

The thought made her chest ache.

She had built her entire life around planning for Shane. Protecting him. Anticipating every obstacle. And now the one thing he needed, space, was the one thing she didn't know how to give him.

Maybe that was why this hurt so much.

Because for once, love required her to do nothing.

No emails. No strategies. No rules.

Just patience. Just trust.

She pressed her forehead to the steering wheel and whispered an apology Shane couldn't hear.

"I'm sorry," she said again. "I should have waited."

For the first time, Yuna had no next step. She needed David.

She wiped her face, nodded once to herself.

And when she finally looked up, she saw him standing in front of the car.

Frozen. He looked terrified.

That broke her.

Yuna understood with sudden clarity that this moment wasn't about her fear at all.

It was about his fear.

Yuna opened the door before she could think. She stepped out, hands still shaking, and did the hardest thing she knew how to do.

She spoke without a plan.

“I’m sorry,” she said, voice thin but steady. “I should have knocked.”

Shane swallowed. “Mom...”

She shook her head quickly. “You didn’t do anything wrong.”

Silence stretched between them, fragile.

Shane came up to her and held her like he used to when he was small, arms tight around her middle, forehead pressed into her shoulder. For a moment, Yuna let herself forget everything else, the dock, the charger, the years of planning. She just breathed him in.

“I’m sorry,” Shane said, voice muffled. “I didn’t mean for you to find out like that.”

Yuna pulled back enough to look at him. Really look at him. He wasn’t a boy anymore. He was strong in ways she didn’t even know. His eyes, though, those were the same as when he was her little boy. Watchful. Worried.

“You didn’t do anything wrong,” she said again, firmer this time. “I mean it.”

Shane nodded, but didn’t look convinced.

“I love you,” Yuna said. “I always have. I always will.”

Shane’s eyes filled.

They stood there awkwardly until Yuna gestured toward the cottage. “Can we... sit inside?” she asked. “I don’t think I should drive yet.”

Relief crossed his face. He led her inside like she was the fragile one now.

Ilya was waiting.

He stood when he saw her, visibly tense, hands clasped in front of him like a schoolboy awaiting judgment. Up close, Yuna noticed details she hadn’t from a distance, the careful way he watched Shane, the way his posture softened when Shane smiled at him.

He cared.

That realization settled something sharp inside her.

“Mrs. Hollander,” Ilya said. His accent was thick, voice shaking. “I’m... I’m sorry. I didn’t know...”

Yuna raised a hand. “Yuna,” she said. “Please.”

She took a breath.

“Ilya,” she continued, choosing her words with care, “I’m glad you are here. I’m glad you make my son happy.”

The silence that followed was stunned.

Shane blinked. Ilya looked like he might cry.

“Thank you,” Ilya said finally, voice rough. “I... I care about him very much.”

Yuna nodded. She believed him.

She told David that night.

Not everything, not the panic, not the crying in the car. But enough. David listened the way he always did, without interruption, without judgment. When she finished, he reached for her hand.

“He’ll bring him when he’s ready,” David said gently.

“I know,” Yuna replied. And for once, she meant it without resentment.

Letting go didn’t mean stepping away. It meant stepping back sometimes.

It meant trusting the boy she had raised to choose his own timing, his own words.

She didn’t bring it up. Didn’t hint. Didn’t plan speeches in her head. When Shane eventually asked them if Ilya could come to dinner soon, it was weeks later. Over dinner, voice shaking despite his confidence. Yuna listened. She smiled. She hugged him.

Ilya became part of their lives in small, careful ways.

Dinners where Yuna cooked too much food. Conversations where she asked practical questions, about his family, his routines, his plans. Soon, she allowed herself to ask softer ones.

She caught herself sometimes, wanting to intervene, to manage, to protect Shane from the world and from himself.

And then she stopped.

She watched Ilya bring Shane tea when he was tired. Watched him listen. Watched him wait.

Yuna realized, slowly, that Shane didn't need her vigilance anymore.

He had built something of his own.

One evening, much later, she found herself alone with Ilya on the porch. The lake was still. The quiet felt earned.

"You don't have to be afraid for him anymore." Ilya said softly.

Yuna smiled, small but genuine. "I know," she said. "I'm learning that. Even if it's difficult."

Ilya nodded, like he understood.

Maybe he did.

Yuna still made lists. She always would.

But some things, she learned, didn't belong on paper.

Love wasn't a problem to solve.

Shane wasn't a project.

And control, real control, wasn't about holding tighter. It was about knowing when to open her hands.

For the first time in her life, Yuna allowed herself to trust that everything didn't have to be planned to be safe.

Sometimes, it was enough to simply be there and watch her son live.

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