

career day

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/80647671) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/80647671>.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Heated Rivalry (TV) , Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov , Original Children of Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov
Additional Tags:	Married Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov , Retired Hockey Player Ilya Rozanov , Retired Hockey Player Shane Hollander , POV Shane Hollander , Protective Shane Hollander , Angry Shane Hollander , shane lowkey channeling his inner will smith here , keep my husband's name out of your fucking mouth!!!! , minus the slap , Parents Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov , Kid Fic , Parenthood , Family Feels , Family Fluff , Fluff , Slice of Life , Future Fic , One Shot , Not Beta Read , Ilya Rozanov is Whipped , and exactly where he wants to be , intense dad shane hollander , Implied/Referenced Homophobia , Post-Book 6: The Long Game (Game Changers) , Post-Canon , BAMF Shane Hollander , Shane Hollander is Obsessed With Ilya Rozanov , Ilya Rozanov is Obsessed With Shane Hollander
Language:	English
Series:	Part 9 of Our House
Stats:	Published: 2026-03-05 Words: 5,590 Chapters: 1/1

career day

by [hollanov_1410](#)

Summary

"When did you guys fall in love?"

"Guys," their teacher warned. "That's not a question about their careers."

Ilya was already looking at him when Shane glanced over, wearing that stupidly fond smile. Shane felt his own lips twitch in response before he could help it.

"Is very good question, actually," Ilya announced to the room. "Hard to say exact moment." He tilted his head. "But pretty fast, I think."

Shane's chest clenched. The classroom full of nine-year-olds dissolved. Max's mortification somewhere in the background didn't register.

For a moment, Shane was seventeen years old again, watching Ilya Rozanov highlights for the tenth time that week and running out of ways to explain why.

"Yeah," Shane said, voice catching slightly. "Pretty fast."

Shane and Ilya attend career day at their son's elementary school. It ends with Shane going off on another parent and embarrassing their son.

Notes

general disclaimer: this follows the same Hollanov dads universe from my other fics in [Our House](#), but they're all standalones so you definitely don't need to read any of them to read this one!! some general background that might add a little context:

- takes place abt 14 years post-TLG
- their kids are niko (12), max (9), and mila (3)
- they're both retired hockey players, but shane works as a skill development coach for the centaurs

hope you enjoy! xx

Nobody was more obsessed with the legacy of former hockey legends Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov than their son, Max.

So when his fourth-grade class announced they'd be having a career day, Max was ecstatic.

It was going to be a whole-day affair: parents in the morning for presentations on their jobs, then an open afternoon where they'd stick around and run demo stations while the kids rotated through. The plan was straightforward enough. Ilya would take Max to school, and Shane would swing by in the late afternoon once his meetings were wrapped up, where the two of them would present together, then stick around for the demos.

Simple enough.

When Shane came into the bedroom the morning of, he was met with Ilya completely decked out in his old Centaurs uniform. Helmet tucked under one arm. And hanging around his neck, catching the light, was a silver medal that was very definitely not his.

Shane stopped in the doorway. "Are you wearing *my* Olympics medal?"

Ilya glanced down at it, then back up at Shane. "Well, cannot fit all my trophies in the car," he said reasonably. "This is easier to transport. And besides—" He looked up at Shane. "Was rigged anyway. Should have been mine."

Shane ignored that. "You're not actually wearing all of this."

"Why wouldn't I?"

"Because it's Career Day," Shane said slowly. "You're supposed to look professional."

"Shane. Are you forgetting," Ilya gestured at himself with the helmet. "I *am* professional hockey player."

"Retired. You're a *retired* professional hockey player. And it's a fourth-grade classroom, not a signing event."

Ilya studied himself for a moment before meeting Shane's eyes again. "Max's friends are about to be in the presence of hockey royalty. Stanley Cup winner." He ticked them off on his fingers. "Hart Trophy winner. First hockey player in history to marry the prettiest player in the league."

Shane felt his face heat. "Good thing you keep it humble."

Ilya smirked, the corners of his mouth pulling upward in a way that had derailed Shane's rational thinking since 2008.

"If you mock me," Ilya said, putting the helmet on. "You are banned from kissing me. No access."

Shane scoffed. "We'll see how long that lasts."

"PAPA! HOCKEY DRESS UP!"

They both turned to see Mila barreling into the room, her little socked feet sliding slightly on the hardwood as she squeezed between Shane's legs in the doorway.

Ilya's whole face lit up with exaggerated surprise. "What? Where?"

Mila burst into giggles, her feet thundering across the floor as she ran over and grabbed onto the bottom of his jersey with both hands. She bounced on her toes, the fabric bunching in her fists. "You! You're wearing *hockey*!"

He gasped. Looked down at his jersey and grinned. "Da! You are right, Mila."

"Are you gonna play?" Mila asked hopefully, still bouncing.

"No, no, *malyshka*," Ilya said, crouching down to her level "Daddy and I are going to Max's school today, remember? For career day."

Her face fell immediately, bottom lip jutting out. "No. Come to *my* school."

Ilya's expression softened. He reached out and tapped her nose gently with one finger. "Next time," he promised. "When you are in big school like Max, Papa will come to *your* class in hockey dress. Just for you. I promise."

Mila considered this, her three-year-old brain working through the logistics. "Okay," she said finally, reaching for the medal around his neck. "But you hafta bring this to mine, too."

"Of course."

Then, without warning, he scooped her up in one smooth motion and tossed her straight up into the air.

Shane's stomach dropped. "*Ilya*—"

Mila shrieked with delight as she went up, her little arms windmilling, her dark hair flying. Ilya caught her easily on the way down, his hands secure around her ribs, grinning up at her.

"Again! Again!" she demanded, already squirming in his grip.

Ilya tossed her again, higher this time. Higher than he probably should have in a room with an eight-foot ceiling.

Shane was genuinely convinced that one of these days her head was going to hit the ceiling. Or the light fixture. Or she was going to go flying out of Ilya's hands entirely and crash through a window.

It had been the same with Niko when he was little. Then Max. Ilya seemed to operate on the firm belief that the older they got, the higher the toss, and no amount of reasonable concern

from Shane had ever made a dent in this philosophy. Shane had been having minor heart attacks about this for twelve years now, and it hadn't gotten any easier.

"Okay, okay," Shane said, stepping forward with his hands out before Ilya could wind up for a third. "That's enough."

"One more!" Mila begged, her hands reaching for Ilya's face. "Please, Papa! One more!"

Ilya looked at Shane, his eyes gleaming with mischief. "Just one more, Shane. For good luck."

"Ilya—"

But Ilya was already bending his knees, getting ready for the launch. Shane didn't even have time to finish his sentence before Mila went sailing up toward the ceiling. She shrieked, her little body going almost horizontal in the air.

Shane's hands shot out instinctively, even though she was nowhere near him. "Ilya!"

Ilya caught her on the way down, but then—because apparently one heart attack wasn't enough for Shane this morning—he pretended to fumble the catch. He flipped her upside down in one smooth motion, holding her by the ankles so her hair brushed against the hardwood floor, her shirt falling down around her face.

Mila dissolved into hysterical giggles, her whole body shaking with laughter. "Papa! Papa, I'm upside down!"

"Oh no!" Ilya said with mock horror. "How did this happen?"

"Ilya, stop," Shane said, but he was fighting a smile now despite himself. "Her face is turning red."

"I don't know how, Shane. She is stuck like this."

"*Daddy!*" Mila shrieked through her laughter. "Help!"

Shane was fully smiling now, unable to help it. He walked over and reached for her. "Uh oh. Is Papa torturing you?"

"Tor-ter," she confirmed through another fit of giggles.

Shane carefully retrieved her from Ilya's grip, readjusting her right-side-up in his arms. He smoothed back her messy, staticky hair. "There. Back to being a human child, not a bat."

"She would make very good bat," Ilya said. "Already has the sleep schedule for it."

Shane smiled, pressing a kiss to the top of Mila's head as she dropped it heavily onto his shoulder.

He couldn't argue with that.

Shane got to Max's school just before their scheduled time slot to present, juggling his second coffee of the day and the box of equipment Ilya had insisted they bring. When he pushed open the classroom door, Ilya was already seated at the front in one of those small elementary school chairs, fully decked out in his old gear as expected—and, *God*, he had brought his hockey stick too.

The second Shane walked in, Ilya's head whipped around and his entire face lit up.

"Da! Everyone, look who is here!" Ilya announced, gesturing dramatically toward the door. "Who is this?"

Twenty-five fourth graders spun around in their seats to look.

"SHANE HOLLANDER!" the classroom erupted, the sound echoing off the colorful walls in a high-pitched wave.

"Shane Hollander-*Rozanov*," Ilya corrected. "Do not forget it."

Shane felt heat rise to his cheeks. "Hey, everyone," he said, offering a small wave.

Max stood from his seat, puffing his chest out. "That's my other dad," he said proudly. It was a redundant announcement, considering that at least half the kids had been to their house for play dates and the other half had seen Shane at school drop-off at some point. For any remaining outliers, Max had most definitely made sure everyone in the school knew exactly who his parents were.

"Yes, thank you, Max," Shane said, finally taking the empty seat beside Ilya.

The moment he sat, Ilya leaned over and planted a loud, lingering kiss on Shane's cheek. The classroom immediately dissolved into a chorus of exaggerated groans. Shane huffed a laugh, nudging Ilya's shoulder with his own, while Ilya just grinned, looking entirely too pleased with himself.

"Okay, okay," the teacher intervened, smiling. "I think the Hollander-Rozanovs are ready for your questions. Hands up!"

Twenty hands shot into the air like they were trying to reach the ceiling.

"Da. You," Ilya pointed to a girl in the front row. "What's your name?"

"Charlotte," she piped up happily. "Is it true you guys were enemies?"

"I wouldn't say enemies..." Shane started.

Ilya leaned back, his arm finding its way naturally to the back of Shane's chair. "It is true," Ilya said, his eyes glinting. "He was mad at me because I score more goals than him. He was very slow, very boring."

Shane shot him a look, and Ilya just grinned. Shane looked back at the girl. "Don't listen to him. He did *not* score more goals than me," he corrected, and Ilya rolled his eyes dramatically, earning a few giggles from the crowd. "We were rivals. Our teams played against each other a lot."

Another kid piped up from the back, not even waiting to be called on. "Did you ever punch each other?"

"Hey," their teacher warned.

"No," Ilya said. "Not each other. Only other players, when they deserved it."

Shane's head snapped toward Ilya, eyes narrowed. He turned back to the class, forced a tight smile, and cleared his throat. "No one, uh, ever *deserves* it. Sports just get a little...intense sometimes."

"DID YOU GUYS LOSE YOUR TEETH?" another kid shouted.

"Papa has," Max piped up proudly, grinning big. "He told me he had to go to the dentist and get *new* ones. And he broke his nose before, and—"

"Max," Shane warned.

Their teacher clapped her hands once, cutting through the excited chatter. "Alright, everyone. Let's keep the questions focused on the *career* part of career day, please."

The kids quieted down slightly, though the energy was still buzzing. Shane called on another raised hand, a boy in the back row.

"How do you become a hockey star?"

"Well," Shane said, straightening slightly. "It takes a lot of practice. Years of it. You have to be dedicated, show up every day, work on your skills even when you don't feel like it—"

"And you have to want it more than you want to sleep," Ilya interjected, leaning back in his chair. "Which is very difficult when you are teenager who loves sleep."

The kids erupted into giggles.

"But really," Ilya continued, once they'd settled, "you can do anything if you want it badly enough. Even marry the second-best player in the league."

The room erupted in exaggerated *oooohs*. Shane felt heat crawl up the back of his neck.

Another hand shot up—a girl in the front row with her hair in elaborate braids.

"When did you guys fall in love?"

"Guys," their teacher warned. "That's not a question about their careers."

Ilya was already looking at him when Shane glanced over, wearing that stupidly fond smile. Shane felt his own lips twitch in response before he could help it.

"Is very good question, actually," Ilya announced to the room. "Hard to say exact moment." He tilted his head. "But pretty fast, I think."

Shane's chest clenched. The classroom full of nine-year-olds dissolved. Max's mortification somewhere in the background didn't register.

For a moment, Shane was seventeen years old again, watching Ilya Rozanov highlights for the tenth time that week and running out of ways to explain why.

"Yeah," Shane said, voice catching slightly. "Pretty fast."

From somewhere in the third row, Max dropped his head into his hands. "Oh my god. Stop. Please. I'm begging you."

Ilya broke eye contact first, turning back to the room looking completely unbothered.

Shane pressed his lips together to keep from smiling too wide.

After the presentations wrapped, the demo stations went up around the perimeter of the room and the kids were cut loose to wander between them and talk to the parents.

Shane was watching from across the room as Ilya crouched on the floor, stick in hand, a balled-up piece of paper serving as a makeshift puck. He was walking a cluster of kids through stick handling—moving the paper through slow figure-eights, explaining something with his whole face and both hands. The kids were mesmerized, leaning in so close they were practically on top of him.

"So great to officially meet *the* Shane Hollander," a voice interrupted Shane's thoughts.

Shane turned. It was a man about his age, maybe a couple years older, in a well-tailored navy suit. Tall, clean-cut, friendly smile. Shane thought he'd seen him before—maybe at one of Max's games?

"Blake," the man said, reaching out a hand. "I've been a huge fan since you first got signed to the Metros." He nodded toward the crowd of kids near Ilya. "Levi's my kid. The one currently very invested in your husband's hockey lesson."

Shane looked over and spotted Levi immediately—mop of dark curls, sitting in the front of the group, completely transfixed on Ilya. Shane knew Levi. One of Max's closer friends from the team, had been over to the house numerous times. Quiet kid until he wasn't, the kind that took about twenty minutes to warm up and then you couldn't get him to stop talking.

He had met Levi's mom plenty of times—she was at every game without fail—but this was the first time meeting the dad.

Shane shook his hand. "Hey. Nice to meet you."

"Great Q&A out there," Blake said, grinning. Shane didn't actually remember Blake's presentation. It must have been before Shane arrived. But the suit and the leather bag near his feet said corporate. Finance, or maybe law. "I think I was boring the kids half to death. You two were the main event."

Shane smiled politely. "I don't know about that. But Max has been telling everyone in a five-mile radius about his dads' hockey careers for years, so I guess we had a head start."

"Who can blame him," Blake laughed, glancing back at Ilya.

A beat. Then Blake leaned in slightly, dropping his voice. "I've gotta say. It's pretty nuts, huh? Going from arch-rivals to," he gestured vaguely, "all of this. Ten years of keeping it a secret. I remember when it first got leaked you guys were dating." He shook his head. "Holy shit, what a story."

Shane was thrilled their outing was such interesting gossip for this guy. "Yeah."

"Don't think in a million years I would've caught on that you guys were into each other like that," Blake continued, shaking his head. "Definitely not something you see every day."

Shane nodded along, kept his expression even. Blake was probably talking about the rivalry angle. The decade of secrecy, the spectacle of it all.

Probably.

But there was something in the way he said it—that slight pause around *like that*, the way his eyes kept sliding across the room toward Ilya and then back—that made Shane think the thing Blake didn't see every day had less to do with the hockey and more to do with the two men part.

"And look at your guys' legacy!" Blake said. "So political, but you guys still played hard. More players came out after you two. You had a long career. And now you've got a bunch of rugrats following suit. Talk about overachievers."

Shane forced a smile. "We built a good life."

"And I just have to commend you, man."

"For what?"

"I mean," he laughed. "Ilya Rozanov had quite the reputation. On *and* off the ice."

Off the ice. Right. Shane was almost certain he knew that Blake was referring to Ilya's image as a *ladies man*. And he was equally certain that if he'd married a woman, nobody in this room would be bringing up his spouse's former sex life as casual small talk.

"For you to be able to tame him into being a stay-at-home dad?" Blake continued.
"Impressive."

Shane looked back across the room. Ilya had rolled the paper into a tighter ball and was demonstrating a wrist shot, tongue pressed to the corner of his mouth in concentration. It sailed in a perfect arc straight into the recycling bin. The kids lost their minds. Ilya bowed. Max was on his feet clapping, loudest one in the room.

"I didn't tame him," Shane said, his voice tight. "He chose to step back."

It had been a lengthy conversation when they'd decided to have kids. One of the hardest they'd ever had, actually. Shane had been hesitant—more than hesitant—about Ilya retiring. Had spent weeks trying to convince Ilya they could figure something else out, that surely that wasn't what Ilya wanted. But Ilya had been certain. And it was during those long, circular conversations that Shane had finally understood: Ilya loved being *good* at hockey more than he loved the game itself. His mother had been his entry point to the sport. It had led him to Shane. And he was grateful for that. But he was ready to be done. More than ready to embrace fatherhood head-on.

Blake raised his hands. "Oh, I don't mean it in a bad way. I'm just saying. It's clear Ilya is a little whipped, huh? It's a good thing! My wife sure would appreciate it if I was a little more like that."

Shane was beginning to think the suit wasn't for a corporate job at all. More likely Blake was just a pretentious douchebag who enjoyed being the best-dressed person in a room full of nine-year-olds.

Ilya was crouched on the floor now, patiently helping a cluster of Max's classmates wrap tape around a hockey stick, watching with focused attention as they did an insanely unorganized job of it. Tape going every direction, overlapping in weird bunches, nothing even remotely smooth.

This was exactly why Ilya was better at the kind of stuff, these kinds of events. He had a way of leaning into the chaos that Shane had never quite mastered. Even after all these years of parenting. Even after over a decade of running the Game Changers Hockey Camp every summer—something that had expanded from a modest two-week camp into multiple sessions across different cities. Ilya and Yuna had built it out significantly after Ilya retired.

Shane liked to think of himself as a patient man. But things like taping a stick had always been ritualistic for him. A precise process honed over years in the league. The tape had to be smooth, had to be at the right angle, had to feel *right* in his hands. Watching a group of fourth graders slap tape onto a blade at jagged angles made his eye twitch. He knew they had good

intentions, but if he were the one supervising this particular activity, he'd probably have an aneurysm.

"He's not whipped," Shane said shortly.

And, well, he knew Ilya *did* do pretty much anything Shane asked. If Shane wanted him home early, he'd be home early. If Shane wanted Ilya to take off his outside clothes before getting into bed, he'd do it.

Shane could be particular. He worked best with a certain level of order. Ilya had always known this—probably understood it before Shane really fully accepted and embraced it himself. And more than that, Ilya *liked* it about him. It was the stability that Ilya had never experienced growing up. Made their home feel predictable. Shane definitely didn't need some guy talking about it like it was something to twist into a negative.

Blake seemed to finally catch the frost in the air between them, his easy smile faltering slightly. Shane had been told—multiple times, by multiple people—that he was not exactly subtle when he was pissed off.

"Well, Max sure is a hell of a player," Blake said, pivoting awkwardly with a nervous laugh that didn't quite land.

Shane's expression smoothed out slightly at the mention of his son. He nodded, letting himself look over at Max. "He is."

"He's definitely got your speed. And Rozanov's—Ilya's—temper. Kid's going to be a handful when he's older, huh?"

Shane's head snapped toward him. "Max does not have a temper."

His voice came out sharper than he intended. A few nearby parents glanced over.

Blake blinked. "Oh, shit, no—I just mean, like...you know. Kid loves a penalty box! He's got that fire. That—"

"He's nine," Shane interjected, his jaw tight. "He's a kid. He's still learning how to manage his emotions on the ice. That doesn't mean he has a temper."

"Right, right, I just—"

"And Ilya doesn't either."

Blake paused. Something shifted in his expression, careful now. "Shane—"

"Maybe you should focus on making sure your own kid can actually play offense before you start analyzing mine."

The words were out before he could stop them. Louder than he'd intended. But he was seeing red and he couldn't quite find the part of himself that cared.

"I'm sorry?"

Shane turned to face him fully, his eyes blazing. "And what exactly is this bullshit about my husband needing to be 'tamed'?" He could hear his own voice rising and couldn't pull it back. "Did you ask your wife that when she decided to be a stay-at-home mom? Or is this just some special commentary you reserved for Ilya because he doesn't fit your neat little picture of how two men are supposed to parent?"

Blake's mouth opened.

"You're, what, surprised he's the one to stay home with the kids? Not what you expected? Not fitting your idea of who's the—"

"—I didn't mean—"

A warm hand landed on Shane's lower back. He appeared beside him, expression carefully neutral as he looked between Shane and Blake. But Shane could feel the subtle shift in the air, the way Ilya's body had stiffened.

"What is going on?" Ilya asked, his voice deceptively calm.

Shane was acutely aware of the room around them. The way a few parents had glanced over, the way some of the kids had stopped rotating between stations to stare. The teacher was making her way over with a concerned expression.

He exhaled through his nose. "Nothing."

"It didn't sound like nothing," Ilya said, his eyes searching Shane's face. His thumb traced slow circles against Shane's lower back.

Blake cleared his throat awkwardly. "I'm uh—I think there was just a misunderstanding. I should go help with..." He gestured vaguely toward the other side of the room and basically fled.

Ilya didn't watch him go. His attention stayed fixed on Shane.

"Shane."

"Later." Shane's voice came out clipped. He straightened, rolled his shoulders back, tried his best to fix his expression into something neutral. "We'll talk about it later."

The rest of the event carried on. Shane tried to refocus on the kids, answering their questions with what he hoped was appropriate enthusiasm. But he could feel the shift in the room—parents and some of the kids whispering to each other, shooting glances his way.

Ilya, to his credit, doubled down on being entertaining. He let them try on his helmet, told exaggerated stories about game-day rituals that had the kids laughing. He was trying to smooth over what Shane had made jagged.

And Max...Max spent the rest of the session on the opposite side of the classroom, rotating through other parents' stations like his own dads weren't there. Not obviously avoiding them. But not coming back either.

When the teacher finally wrapped things up and parents started gathering their things, Max didn't drift over to help pack up the equipment the way he usually would have. He grabbed his backpack off his chair, slung it over one shoulder, and walked out ahead of them without a word. Didn't say goodbye to his dads in front of his classmates. Just gone.

Shane's stomach dropped.

"Max," he called out, but Max was already halfway down the hallway.

Ilya touched Shane's arm gently. "Let him cool off."

Shane nodded, gathering up the rest of their equipment with hands that felt clumsy and useless. He was replaying everything he'd said. Had Max heard something? God, he must've been louder than he realized.

The drive home was silent. Max sat in the back seat, staring out the window. Glaring, more accurately. His jaw was set in that way that meant he was either about to cry or about to explode, and Shane couldn't tell which right now.

Shane's own hands were locked together in his lap, fingers digging into the heels of his palms. Every instinct in his body screamed at him to fix this. To explain and apologize properly and engulf him in a hug.

Ilya reached over as he drove covered Shane's hand with his own.

When they pulled into the driveway, Max had his seatbelt off before Ilya even shifted into park. He was out the door and heading for the house, his backpack bouncing against his shoulders. He climbed the porch steps and disappeared inside, the door shutting behind him with more force than necessary.

Shane sat there for a long moment, staring after him. "He's pissed."

"Yes," Ilya agreed. "But he will get over it."

Shane wasn't so sure about the timeline on that.

Max had gone straight to his room. Shane gave him some time, enough that the house had settled into that particular late-afternoon stillness, before he finally went upstairs. He stood in the hallway for a second, then knocked once on the door.

No answer.

Shane knocked again, softer this time. "Max."

Shane leaned his shoulder against the doorframe and exhaled slowly through his nose.

"Okay," he murmured to himself. "Okay."

He waited a beat, then opened the door.

Max was at his desk, hunched over a piece of paper, scribbling aggressively with a red colored pencil. The strokes were harsh, angry, dragging across the page with enough force that Shane could hear the wax scraping.

"Hey," Shane tried.

Max didn't look up.

Shane stepped inside quietly and leaned against the wall near the door. He watched the pencil move across the page for a moment. Back and forth, back and forth. Not really drawing anything anymore. Just pressing.

"Well," Shane said after another moment of silence. "I was planning to go for a run," he said, even though he absolutely wasn't—he was exhausted and his hip was complaining from sitting in those classroom chairs all afternoon. "Do you want to ride your bike with me?"

Max stopped doodling, his colored pencil hovering over the paper for a long beat. Then, he gave a single, curt nod.

"Okay," Shane said easily, standing up. "I'm going to get changed. Meet me downstairs in five?"

Max nodded again.

Shane changed into his workout clothes quickly, a long-sleeved compression shirt and track pants. When he came back downstairs, Max was already waiting by the door, his helmet buckled tight under his chin. Ilya was there too, leaning down with Mila perched on his hip. Max was mid-grin, teasingly tugging at Mila's socked foot while she babbled at him, but the second his eyes landed on Shane, the light vanished. His face scowled again.

Ilya caught Shane's eye over Max's head, offering a small, sympathetic smile.

"You two have fun," Ilya said lightly, shifting Mila's weight as she started squirming. "We'll have dinner ready when you get back."

Shane nodded, grabbing his keys and phone. "Thanks."

Max was already wheeling his bike down the driveway by the time Shane got outside. The late afternoon light was going golden and long across the street, the neighborhood quiet in that specific late-weekday way. Shane stretched briefly at the end of the driveway, working out the stiffness in his hip, and then they were moving—Max pushing off hard and pulling ahead, Shane falling into a jog behind him and letting him set the pace.

They moved in silence for maybe five minutes. Just Shane's breathing and the steady tick of Max's wheels against the pavement.

Then, without preamble:

"You embarrassed me."

Shane's heart rate was already elevated from the run, but it kicked up another notch at the words. Max was still looking straight ahead, jaw set, but he'd slowed his pedaling enough that they were side by side now.

Shane nodded, watching his own feet hit the pavement in steady rhythm. He took a few breaths before responding. "I know," he said. "I'm sorry, Max. I should've taken a step back."

"You were supposed to talk about hockey and be fun," Max said, and there was real hurt underneath the anger now. "Like Papa. But instead you got all weird with Levi's dad and people stared and everything was awkward."

Shane winced. "You're right. I did."

Max was quiet for another half block, pedaling steadily. Then suddenly, he squeezed his brakes hard. The tires screeched against the concrete as he skidded to a stop, planting both feet on the ground.

Shane stopped too, his breath coming harder now, and turned to face his son.

Max was looking up at him with eyes that were identical to Shane's own. "What did Levi's dad say?"

Shane stopped, too, his breath hitching. "Things...things that weren't true at all."

"What kind of things?" Max demanded.

Shane sighed, running a hand through his sweaty hair. "Things about me and Papa when we were players. About Papa's decision to retire when he did."

"Did he say something about me?"

"Max..."

"Did he?"

Shane looked at him for a long moment. The set of his jaw, the way his hands had tightened on the handlebars. So much of Ilya in him sometimes it stopped Shane mid-breath.

He crouched down so they were level, his hands coming to rest over Max's on the handlebars.

"Do you know how much I love you?"

Max blinked. The sharpness in his expression faltered, caught off guard by the shift. He scrunched his nose. "Dad..."

"I'm serious. Do you?"

Max looked away, cheeks already going pink. The slightest emotion always painted his face red. Shane had always loved that about him.

"I can't begin to describe it," Shane continued. "I can't put it into words, Max. I'm so proud of the kid you are. Of your heart."

Max didn't say anything. Just stared at the handlebars.

"I know we've talked about the way you sometimes move faster than your brain," Shane continued, keeping his voice even and gentle. "About figuring out what to do with the big feelings before they get out ahead of you. And I know you're working on it." He waited until Max looked at him. "I see you working on it."

Max's throat moved.

"And if anyone can't see that?" Shane said. "Can't see how hard you're trying, or how good you are?" He steadied the handlebars a little more firmly. "Then all that love I don't have words for—it makes me want to step in front of it. Even when I shouldn't. Even when it makes things worse." He held Max's gaze. "Because you're my kid. And I will always, always be in your corner."

Max darted his eyes away, but when Shane's hands settled over his shoulders, he leaned into it, just slightly.

"You're so embarrassing," Max muttered. But there was no heat in it this time.

Shane smiled, standing back up and tapping the side of his helmet. "Yeah. Kind of comes with the job, unfortunately."

"Papa's not embarrassing," Max pointed out.

"Papa's embarrassing in different ways," Shane said. "Like talking about falling in love with me in front of all your classmates. Or dressing up in a full uniform for career day."

A smile flickered across Max's face. Finally. "That was actually kind of funny."

"It was," Shane admitted. "He's better at the fun stuff than I am."

"You're good at a lot of other stuff, though," Max said. He was staring ahead at the street now, picking at the handlebar grip. "Like." He shrugged one shoulder, the gesture loose and vague and very Max. "Like making sure we eat healthy stuff."

Shane snorted. "Wow."

"And you're good at making me feel loved."

Shane's throat tightened. Just briefly.

"Yeah?" he managed.

"Yeah," Max said simply. Like it was obvious. Like it had always been obvious.

They were quiet for a moment after that. Just the sound of the bike chain, the wind, Max's breath steadying out gradually beside him. Then Max looked up, and something in his expression shifted. "I'm sorry I got so mad at you."

Shane shook his head. "You had every right to be. I messed up." He kept his voice even, easy. "You can still be mad. That's okay."

Max shook his head, scrubbing his face with the back of his wrist one last time. "Nah."

"Want to keep going? Or head back?"

"Keep going," Max said immediately, already pushing back down on the pedal. "I'm not even close to tired."

Shane fell back into an easy jog beside him. "Alright. Lead the way."

They made it another mile before turning back toward home, and by the time the driveway came into view, Max was in the middle of telling Shane something about what happened at recess last week; hands gesturing off the handlebars, voice climbing as he got more excited. The anger from earlier had gone completely, dissolved somewhere in the last stretch of pavement.

End Notes

there was a very brief moment (i think in ep 4?) where shane said yuna had bullied a kid on his team for being the worst player, and while ik shane would never go that far, i could totally see him getting intense if someone came at his kid like that lol. hence why i had him tell blake that his son sucks at offense 😭 sorry kid

anyway, hope everyone survived the great ao3 shutdown, and thank you so much for reading!! if you want to check out my other hollanov dad fics, you can read [here](#)! :)

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