

it's friday, i'm in love

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it's friday, i'm in love

by [hollanov_1410](#)

Summary

There were many things about Shane's upbringing in Canada that Ilya found hard to understand. Like why he insisted on hiking into the brush to find the "perfect" marshmallow sticks for a bonfire. To Ilya, it seemed like a lot of unnecessary effort and a high risk of mosquito bites when they could just buy a pack of skewers and be done with it.

But, like with everything that came with Shane Hollander, Ilya had learned to love it.

And now here he was, years later, the one leading Shane and their kids through the woods behind the cottage on this warm summer evening.

Or,

Shane and Ilya take their kids on a weekend getaway to the cottage.

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, but shane works as a skill development coach for the centaurs

thank you for reading! xx

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

The drive up to the cottage from the Hollander-Rozanov home in Ottawa took two hours on a good day.

This was not shaping up to be a good day.

An hour in, and Ilya had already threatened to turn the car around. Twice.

The boys had bickered about something neither of them could fully explain when asked. Then Niko felt carsick and they pulled over for what turned out to be a false alarm. Then Max needed to pee ten minutes after their last gas stop, despite Shane having asked no fewer than three times if anyone needed to go before they pulled back onto the highway. And somewhere in between all of that, Shane and Ilya had gotten into a mild argument about backseat driving—or, depending on who you asked, about Ilya's complete refusal to admit that his supposed shortcut had added twenty minutes to the drive.

Mila had been fine for the first hour. She'd scribbled through half her coloring book, eaten most of a granola bar, and fallen asleep against the window for twenty minutes with her mouth slightly open. Then she'd woken up and decided she was done. With the car, with sitting, with all of it.

She was currently driving a small toy car up the window, down her leg, back up the window, making engine noises under her breath. Her feet had started thumping against the back of Ilya's seat in a steady rhythm. Not hard enough to be a real problem yet, but with the persistence of someone working up to one, making little frustrated sounds escaping between the engine noises.

Every parent knew this zone. The bored toddler with nowhere to redirect, nothing new to look at, and still an hour from anywhere.

She let out a frustrated whine. Then another one, louder this time, banging her car against the armrest of her car seat.

Shane exhaled slowly through his nose from the passenger seat. "Mila," he said, his voice still calm. "That's not going to work for me, honey. Inside voice."

"I AM."

"Like this, Mila," Max said from behind her in an exaggerated whisper.

"That's what I did," she retorted, at full volume.

Shane just looked at the winding road ahead, trying to decide which battles to pick today. Maybe if he let her be, he thought, she would mellow out on her own. Self-regulate. It was good to let kids practice that.

"Daddy!" she announced shrilly, not even a minute later, her feet kicking harder against the back of Ilya's seat. "Gimme smoothie!"

"Hey." Shane turned in his seat. "How do we ask for things?"

Mila tilted her head all the way back against her headrest and made a sound that was definitely not any words in the English language. Or French. Or Russian.

"Honey, I can't understand you. Use your words, please."

The sound got louder. Still not words.

"She's broken," Max said. He had seen this process many times before and had become detached.

"Max," Ilya warned.

"I'm just saying—"

"I know what you are saying. Stop saying it."

Ilya reached back with one hand without keeping his eyes off the road and held Mila's ankle, stilling the kicking. "Mila," he said, calm and even. "Do we need to pull over and take a little break?"

"No," she garbled.

"Then we listen to Daddy and use our words, yes?"

She cried out again, louder, and tried to kick her feet, but Ilya's grip stayed firm. After a few more seconds of resistance, when it became clear Ilya wasn't budging, she jerked her head to the side and glared out the window.

"Please gimme smoothie, Daddy."

Not her finest work. But Shane would accept it. He reached into the tote bag by his feet and pulled out the smoothie pouch, handing it back to her.

She took it from his hand with a mumbled "thank you," then immediately jammed the straw in her mouth.

"Please gimme goldfish, Dad," Max piped up from the back.

Shane shot him a look in the rear-view mirror. "Don't start."

Max laughed. "But can I actually have some?"

Shane grabbed a pack and tossed it back without a word.

After a few pulls from her smoothie, Mila furrowed her brow and looked at the pouch. "Daddy, this isn't the right one."

Shane closed his eyes for a moment and took a long breath. "Mila. That is the one you have literally every day."

She scrunched her freckled nose. "No."

"Yes."

"It tastes different," she said, her voice rising again. "I don't like it."

Niko outstretched his hand beside her. "Then I'll take it, Mils."

She handed it over without ceremony. Then looked at Shane. "Daddy," she moaned. "Other smoothie. Please."

"That's the only flavor we brought," Shane said, gripping his armrest and trying to cling to the last shred of patience he had left. "Because, *as I said*, it is the one you drink. Every day. For the past six months."

She went to kick her legs again, crying out loudly.

"You can have apples or goldfish if you don't want your smoothie, Mila," Ilya said calmly, reaching out behind him to stop her feet again. "Those are your options."

She yelled out and banged her toy car against the armrest of her car seat. Once. Twice. Then, in one swift motion, she threw it.

The toy sailed over the center console and hit Shane square in the back of the head with a solid thunk.

"Ow—*fuck*," Shane hissed, his hand flying up to the spot.

The car went very quiet.

Shane rubbed the back of his head, then bent down to pick up the car from where it had landed near the gearshift. He held it in his hand, staring at it for a long moment. Then he stared straight ahead through the windshield, his jaw working.

After a few moments, Shane turned his head and made eye contact with Ilya.

Ilya was already putting on the blinker.

"Okay," Ilya said. "We are taking a break."

"No—" Mila started, her voice pitching up immediately.

"Oh my God," Niko grumbled, dropping his head back against the seat. "We're never getting to the cottage."

"Yeah, we *just* stopped twenty minutes ago for a fake puke emergency," Max complained, jerking his thumb at Niko. Niko turned around and threw a wadded-up wrapper at him.

"And we are stopping again," Ilya said, pulling onto the shoulder. The car rolled to a stop. He shifted into park, set the parking brake, then turned around in his seat to look at Mila, who

was full-on crying now.

"When we can't be safe with our bodies," Ilya said, his voice measured, "we take a break. Yes?"

"No!" Mila sobbed, her face already crumpling, tears spilling over. She kicked her feet against the back of Ilya's seat. "No, no, *no*—"

Ilya unbuckled his seatbelt without a word and got out of the car.

He opened the back door. Mila saw him coming and immediately started writhing, turning herself sideways in the car seat, both feet pushing against the door frame like she could brace herself in place. It accomplished nothing except making the unbuckling take longer. Ilya worked the harness clips methodically, letting her exhaust the resistance. As soon as the buckle released, she went completely boneless, sliding down in her seat like she had been unplugged. Ilya caught her under the arms and lifted her out.

He carried her away from the car, toward a patch of grass a few yards off.

"I know you are tired, *malyshka*," Ilya said, his voice steady over her crying. His hand moved up and down her spine in slow, soothing strokes.

"No!" she sobbed, pushing both palms flat against his chest, straining away from him with her whole body.

Ilya squatted down with her. He pressed his face close to her ear. "Hey," he said quietly. "Can you look at Papa for a moment?"

She shook her head hard, her whole body jerking with the force of it, and cried harder. One hand came up and shoved at his face, her small fingers catching his cheek and pushing.

Ilya gently caught her wrist and moved it down. He tried to find her eyes anyway, ducking his head lower, following her gaze as she deliberately turned her face away and pressed it hard against his shoulder.

Shane watched from the car, brow furrowed.

"Dad," Max said from the backseat.

"Hm?"

"How much longer?"

Shane glanced in the rearview mirror. "That depends on when your sister decides to calm down."

Max groaned and kicked the back of Niko's seat. Niko looked up from his phone immediately, yanking out one earbud. "Stop."

"What if she never stops screaming?" Max asked, staring out the window. "Like, what if this is just forever now?"

"Then I guess we're stuck here forever," Shane said dryly.

Max was quiet for a second. "We'd have to eat each other eventually. There's no food around here."

"I don't really like how that's your first thought, Max."

"I'd eat Niko first."

Niko pulled his other earbud out. "Are you talking to me?"

"You wouldn't taste good. But I'd have to do it."

Niko stared at him. "What the hell are you talking about."

"Okay, here's a fun idea," Shane said, his voice tight. "Let's maybe stop talking and enjoy some silence for a bit."

"We can't enjoy silence if Mila's screaming," Niko pointed out.

"Then let's try for less noise," Shane amended. "From the people who can actually control their volume."

Shane watched through the windshield as Ilya said something to Mila, his voice too quiet to hear from inside the car. She was still writhing in his arms, twisting and pushing, her movements less wild now but still resistant.

After a few more minutes, Ilya managed to get her to look at him. He was smiling in that soft way Shane always adored. He wiped her tear-streaked face with his sleeve and said something that made her whine again, fresh and pitiful. But then she nodded, her chin wobbling.

Ilya carried her back to the car and came around to Shane's side. Mila's face was still buried in his shoulder, one fist balled in the collar of his jacket. Shane opened the door as they neared.

"Mila has something she'd like to say to you," Ilya said.

Shane's mouth curved a little. "Yeah? What is it, Mila?"

She didn't move. Just pressed her face harder into Ilya's neck, her breath coming out in small, uneven hitches. Ilya dipped his head close to hers and murmured her name, his hand making slow circles between her shoulder blades.

Mila lifted her head slowly. Her eyes found Shane's—red-rimmed, still glassy, her lower lip doing that particular wobble that indicated she was one wrong word away from melting down again.

"S'rry," she said, barely above a whisper.

Ilya leaned his cheek against her temple. "For what, hm?" he prompted quietly. "Tell Daddy what you're sorry for."

Her face crumpled again, but she got the words out. "S'rry for throwing."

The last of Shane's frustration dissolved somewhere around the second syllable. He exhaled through his nose, slow and quiet. "Thank you for apologizing, baby."

She hiccuped, a wet little sound, her breath still stuttering in that post-cry way that always made Shane's chest hurt. She rubbed her first over her eye. "Can I—" She stopped. Tried again. "Give you hug?"

Shane completely melted at that. He held his arms open. "I would love that."

She launched herself at him from Ilya's arms with more force than her 3-year-old had any right to produce, arms locking around his neck so tightly it nearly choked Shane. But Shane didn't mind. He pulled her in tight and pressed a long kiss to the side of her head, her hair warm and a little damp against his lips.

"We're okay," he murmured into her hair. "Yeah? All good."

She nodded against his neck, still sniffing.

Over the top of her head, Shane found Ilya's eyes and mouthed thank you. Ilya just winked and blew him a kiss.

They arrived at the cottage in one piece, miraculously. Only ninety minutes behind schedule, which, given everything, felt like a victory.

It was a warm afternoon, the kind that made the drive worth it the second you stepped out of the car. The pine trees, the light coming through them at that angle it only ever did up here, the smell of the lake underneath everything. Shane stood beside the car for a moment after he got out, just breathing it in, letting the quiet settle over him.

Max and Niko had their bags out of the trunk before Ilya had even put it in park, racing each other to the front door with the energy of people who had been sitting for nearly four hours and needed to burn it off immediately. They hit the door at roughly the same time, shouldering each other out of the way. Max grabbed the handle first and shoved hard. The door didn't budge. He shoved again, harder.

"Maybe try one more time," Ilya deadpanned, moving Mila to one arm so he could fish his keys out of his pocket. "Really put your back into it."

Mila turned in Ilya's arms to look at Shane, who was hauling the rest of the bags out of the trunk. She kicked her little feet excitedly. "Swimming, Daddy?"

Shane smiled. All three kids' first thought when they arrived was always the water. And they all knew by now that there was a strict process they had to follow before anyone was allowed near the lake. Sunscreen, reapplied every two hours, even though none of the kids ever really burned. Life jackets checked and fitted properly. A reminder of all the rules: how far they could swim, no running on the dock, and absolutely no going in without an adult watching.

"Yes, sweetheart," Shane said, coming up behind Ilya to kiss the top of Mila's head. "You'll have lots of time to swim."

It was the usual flurry after that—kids thundering up and down the stairs, suitcases unzipped and exploding across bedroom floors, the scramble to find swimsuits that had somehow migrated to the bottom of everyone's bags. Shane made multiple trips between the car and the kitchen, unloading the coolers and grocery bags while Ilya wrestled Mila into her swimsuit and located everyone's goggles and towels from the mudroom closet.

By the time they all reconvened on the back deck twenty minutes later, Max was already vibrating with impatience, and Niko had his towel slung over his shoulder like he'd been waiting for hours.

"Alright, who's up first?" Shane asked as he walked out to the deck, holding up the sunscreen bottle.

There was a collective groan. Niko came over first anyway. He'd learned years ago that arguing only delayed the inevitable. A lesson his siblings had not yet accepted.

Shane worked the sunscreen across the back of Niko's shoulders in even strokes, making sure to get the constellation of moles scattered there. The same pattern Ilya had. Shane loved that Niko had inherited them, even as the sight of them nudged at the back of his brain the way it always did—Niko's annual checkup was coming up in September, and he'd need to remind the pediatrician to do a thorough skin check. Just like every year.

"Alright," Shane said. "You're free to go."

He went through the rest of them quickly after that, Ilya included. Ilya always made a point of reminding Shane to really make sure he gets his lower back, which inevitably earned him a smack from Shane.

The moment Max was done, he whipped his goggles on and took off toward the water. Years ago, Niko had told him there was gold somewhere at the bottom—a complete lie, invented on a day when Max had been particularly annoying and Niko had wanted him to leave him alone. Nobody had ever corrected him. At this point, it had become too funny to ruin, and on a good day, it could keep Max occupied for hours.

Mila was bouncing on the dock beside Shane with a huge grin plastered on her face. Ilya was in the water below with outstretched arms.

"You ready, Mila?"

She nodded.

"Okay. One...two..."

She jumped too early, but Ilya was ready. He expected this with his daughter. He caught her with an exaggerated grunt, and she squealed in delight. He dipped her down until the water lapped at her chin, then launched her up and caught her again on the way down.

Shane watched from his spot on the dock, legs dangling over the edge, sunglasses on, book open in his lap. He kept telling himself he was reading. He wasn't really reading. His eyes kept drifting out to the water on their own, just to check, and Ilya didn't make it any easier, calling his name every few minutes to make sure Shane was watching whatever came next.

"Shane!" Ilya called over the water. "Your children think they can take me down."

Shane lowered his book and took in the sight of him, waist-deep in the lake with Mila clinging to his back and Max and Niko flanking him on either side.

"Is that so."

"Tell them it is not possible."

"I don't know," Shane drawled. "Seems entirely possible to me."

Max took that as an endorsement. He threw himself at Ilya's waist with everything he had, arms wrapping around him, feet scrabbling for purchase in the sand. Niko went for his arms a second later, yanking sideways. Ilya staggered, fighting to stay upright, turning in a slow circle with Mila shrieking encouragement at her brothers, hands covering Ilya's eyes.

He held out longer than he needed to. Shane could tell by the deliberate way he let the resistance build, drawing it out, giving the boys the satisfaction of the struggle. Then Niko yanked one more time, and Ilya let himself go, tipping backward with his arms wide, pulling all three of them under with him in one massive splash.

"Okay, okay," Ilya sighed when he resurfaced, shaking the water out of his curls dramatically, droplets flying everywhere. "You are all very strong. Which means taking down your father next will be easy, yes?"

"Please leave me out of this." Shane said.

"We can get him," Max said confidently.

Ilya waded through the shallower water toward shore and deposited Mila on the sandy bottom so that she could run up to the dock on her own. "I heard from little birdie that Daddy is very ticklish on his sides."

"Ilya."

"I think you should all show Daddy how big and strong you are."

Max and Niko exchanged a look and started swimming toward shore. Mila was already running up the dock, her life jacket making her arms stick out, squealing with delight.

Shane stood and put his book down. "Guys, wait, let me at least take my shirt off—"

But they were already there. Max grabbed his arm and yanked with his full weight. Niko got behind him and drove his shoulder into Shane's back. Mila crashed into his side and grabbed two fistfuls of his shirt, pulling with total conviction in entirely the wrong direction, which was actually the only thing keeping Shane upright.

"Traitors," Shane said, laughing as he tried to stay upright. "All of you."

"Get him in the water!" Max yelled, leaning back and pulling harder.

Shane was trying to stay planted, digging his heels into the dock, but Max had surprising leverage for a nine-year-old, and Niko had shifted to a better angle now, pushing at the backs of Shane's knees. Then Niko dug his fingers into Shane's sides, and Shane immediately folded, shrieking.

That did it. Shane's balance gave out completely. He went sideways off the dock in a splash that sent water everywhere.

When he resurfaced, the kids were laughing. Shane was laughing too, soaking wet, his shirt plastered to his chest.

"You're all grounded," he said, spitting out some water.

From the shallows, Ilya was cackling. "I am such a proud father," he announced. "Of each and every one of you."

Shane splashed him on his way back to shore. "I hate you."

Ilya swam up to meet him anyway and pressed a sloppy, wet kiss to his cheek. "Do not tell lies in front of the children."

By late afternoon, Mila had inevitably hit a wall.

Shane had moved to one of the Adirondack chairs a little while ago, fresh towels stacked beside him, book open in his lap. Ilya came out of the water carrying a soaking wet Mila against his chest. Her hair was plastered flat, her swimsuit dripping, and she was draped against him with the specific limpness of a child who had used up every last ounce of energy she had.

"Excuse me," Ilya said, stopping in front of Shane's chair. "I found a little swamp creature at the bottom of the lake. I think it might be yours."

Shane put his book down. Mila's eyes were at half-mast, too tired to mount any kind of defense against the swamp creature characterization.

"Hmm," Shane said, opening his arms. "Let me take a look."

Ilya transferred her over and Shane pulled her in immediately, wrapping a towel around her shoulders and tucking her against his chest. She exhaled heavily and turned her face into the crook of his neck.

"Hi, pretty girl," he murmured, pressing a kiss to her damp cheek.

"Daddy," she mumbled, without opening her eyes.

"You are so sleepy," Shane teased. She made a small sound of agreement and went still. He rubbed slow circles on her back until her breathing evened out completely.

He closed his eyes as he listened to her soft little snores. He didn't mean to fall asleep after that. But he did.

He woke up to the smell of charcoal and the sound of plates being set out on the picnic table. The light had shifted. Mila was still completely out against his chest, mouth slightly open, one fist curled in his shirt.

He turned his head. Ilya was at the grill with the boys, spatula in hand, saying something to Niko that made Max laugh. Then Ilya looked over, grinning when he realized Shane was awake.

"Look," Ilya said as he walked over, pulling out his phone and showing him a picture. "We have new pictures to frame. See? Like daddy, like daughter."

Shane looked at the photo. He and Mila were both dead asleep in the chair, mouths parted open in the exact same way. He sighed. He was used to this by now. And he knew that Ilya had, at minimum, fifty other versions of this exact photo already saved on his phone.

"You always know my angles," he said dryly, but he was smiling.

They ate at the picnic table outside as the sun dipped lower. Mila had woken up by now, and Ilya was cutting her hot dog into pieces while Shane poured everyone their drinks.

"Ah," Ilya said as he settled into his seat beside Mila. He gestured broadly at the water, the trees, the last of the afternoon light cutting gold across the lake. "Look at this. Aren't we so lucky your father had such a good eye all these years ago?"

Niko took a bite of his hamburger. "I thought the cottage was both of yours."

"It is now," Ilya said. "Thanks to legally binding marriage. But it was your father's first." He pointed his fork at Shane. "If it had been up to me, we would have a vacation home

somewhere much more exciting. Vegas, maybe."

Shane glared at him.

"You had this place all by yourself before Papa?" Niko asked.

"I did," Shane said. "I had it built. Your grandparents have their vacation home not far from here. We spent summers there growing up, so I wanted something like that too."

"And this," Ilya added, leaning over to wipe a smear of ketchup off Mila's cheek before she could spread it further, "is where your grandparents found out about your father and me. That we were together." He grinned. "Very special place."

Shane's face went red at the memory. It always did.

"Did they like you at first, Papa?" Max asked, mouth still full of hamburger. "Or were they mad 'cause you guys were rivals?"

"They loved me," Ilya said simply. "Of course. How could they not."

Shane rolled his eyes playfully. "Yeah, yeah."

"You agree, though."

Shane took a bite of his food and glanced over at him. It did always make his chest swell, thinking about it. How much his parents had taken Ilya in. How completely.

"Yeah," he said. "I do."

There were many things about Shane's upbringing in Canada that Ilya found hard to understand. Like why he insisted on hiking into the brush to find the "perfect" marshmallow sticks for a bonfire. To Ilya, it seemed like a lot of unnecessary effort and a high risk of mosquito bites when they could just buy a pack of skewers and be done with it.

But, like with everything that came with Shane Hollander, Ilya had learned to love it.

And now here he was, years later, the one leading Shane and their kids through the woods behind the cottage on this warm summer evening.

Mila was more invested in finding pine cones. She already had three in her arm and was squatting to pick up another one.

Shane smiled. "Mila, we're supposed to be finding sticks, remember?"

She looked up, ponytail whipping sideways. She picked up the fourth pine cone and stood with all of them clutched to her chest. "Pine cones."

"Those are very nice pine cones," Shane agreed, catching up to her and crouching down to tighten her ponytail, which had come mostly loose. "Do you want Daddy to find you a stick?"

She frowned. "No. *I* wanna."

"Then you have to start looking, okay?"

She considered this. Then toddled up toward where Niko and Max were searching through the underbrush, pine cones still in her arms. Niko glanced down when she appeared suddenly beside his leg and gently held her upper arm, steering her a few inches to the left to avoid a root she was about to walk straight into.

Ilya came up to Shane, kissing him as they watched the kids. "Look at our little scavengers."

Shane smiled, watching as Max compared two sticks he found, both too big. "They're so cute when they're not trapped in a car for hours."

Ilya laughed, reaching over and carding his hand through Shane's hair, feeling along the back of his head. "Did you get a bump? From the toy car?"

"No, I'm fine."

Ilya kept rubbing anyway. "Our daughter has quite the arm."

"I know. Maybe we should put her in baseball."

Ilya looked at Shane. "I am a very supportive father, but I draw the line at baseball," he said. "I would die from boredom. *She* would die from boredom."

Shane laughed. "It's not that bad."

"Oh, so you would be a baseball dad?" Ilya said. "Sitting on the bleacher, eating bad hot dog, watching foul balls for three hours?"

"Our kids wouldn't be hitting foul balls."

"No," Ilya agreed immediately, grinning big. "Home runs. Obviously. But even a home run is still not even half as exciting as a hockey goal."

Shane didn't argue with that.

They watched in real time as Mila clumsily tripped on her sandal and went down onto her hands and knees, pine cones scattering. Not hard, but enough to startle her. Niko was closest and turned around immediately, crouching down and brushing the dirt off her palms. She let him, but her pre-cry face was already on, eyes finding Shane and Ilya over Niko's shoulder.

Shane instinctively moved to scoop her up, but Ilya was faster. He lifted her to her feet with an exaggerated gasp. "Oh no! Was the ground mean?"

She nodded, her face crumpling.

Ilya tsked sympathetically and looked around at the scattered pine cones. "We need to get your collection back, yes? How many pine cones did you have? Papa forgot." He squinted. "Was it fifty?"

She sniffed hard and shook her head.

"A hundred?"

She let out a watery giggle. "Noo."

"A thousand?"

"Papa, no!" she said, laughing properly now. "I had *four*."

"Four! Of course. How could I forget?" Ilya said, crouching down with her. "Help Papa find all four, okay? You are very good at finding them."

Shane stood there watching them, hands in his pockets, a stupidly fond smile on his face that he wasn't doing anything to hide.

Shane thought about Ilya's father sometimes. Not often, and never for long. But in moments like this one, it crept in anyway—the fact that Ilya had learned none of this from him. Had figured it out entirely on his own. And now, preventing a full-scale meltdown with pinecones.

Shane will never quite get over it.

Shane started the bonfire when they were back.

Ilya had made his peace with bonfires over his many years living in Canada. Maybe they weren't so boring after all. He'd also discovered they were ten times better with kids around, mostly because kids were an airtight excuse for s'mores.

He had already eaten three marshmallows, which was entirely Max's fault. Max's approach to roasting involved holding the marshmallow directly in the flame, watching it catch fire with genuine interest, letting it burn for a moment, then blowing it out and examining the result—charred black on the outside, cold in the middle—before handing it to Ilya.

Ilya ate them without complaint every time. They were genuinely awful. He didn't mind.

"You're going to make yourself sick," Shane said from where he was squatting beside Mila, helping her thread a new marshmallow onto her stick.

"Do not worry about me," Ilya said, licking some of the sticky residue from his thumb. "I'm fine."

"Well, don't come crying to me when your stomach is hurting in an hour," Shane muttered, helping to guide Mila to roast her marshmallow over the fire.

She was bouncing and clutching the stick with both hands.

"No jumping by the fire, remember?" Shane said, pulling her gently back toward him. She went still with a small huff of frustration, then looked up at him, face illuminated by the firelight.

"Is it ready, Daddy?"

It had been *maybe* four seconds since it touched the heat. Shane smiled anyway. "Not yet, honey. See how it's not golden brown yet? We have to wait for that."

She looked at the marshmallow. Then frowned at it, personally offended by its pace.

Niko was on the outdoor couch eating a graham cracker and chocolate sandwich. No marshmallow. Just the two crackers pressed together around a square of chocolate, neat and deliberate.

Shane knew it was simply because Niko didn't like marshmallows. Which was fine. Completely fine.

It still bothered him in a way he couldn't fully justify. Something about the structural integrity, or the ratio, or the fact that it was missing the entire point—he couldn't articulate it exactly.

But he kept his mouth shut anyway, because the last time he'd said something about it, Niko had given him a look so withering that Shane was still thinking about.

When Mila's marshmallow was done roasting, Shane helped her make it into a *proper* s'more and handed it to her with a napkin. "Remember, it's going to be hot, baby."

She nodded and took it with both hands, immediately biting off more than half of it in one go. Shane watched her chew with her eyes closed, completely blissful.

He stood, watching the kids settle into their own rhythms around the fire. He didn't hear Ilya get up behind him.

Ilya dropped into the Adirondack chair and pulled Shane back into his lap in one motion.

Shane made a startled sound, hands coming up to grip Ilya's forearms. "Jesus—"

"Mm." Ilya's arms wrapped around his waist as he pulled him in closer, nuzzling his nose into the crook of Shane's neck.

"You could warn a guy," Shane said, but he was leaning back into Ilya's embrace.

"Where is the fun in that?"

Shane rolled his eyes, but didn't complain as Ilya tightened his hold on him. He settled back into Ilya's chest, lacing his fingers through Ilya's where they rested across his stomach, and they watched the kids together in the warm dark.

Niko, for all his hatred of the actual taste of marshmallow, had somewhere along the way developed a real investment in roasting them. Particularly for Mila, who treated every perfectly golden one like a personal gift and responded accordingly—clapping, grabbing his arm, telling him he did a *really, really, really* good job.

He was making her another one now, one hand loosely holding the stick, the other resting on the back of her hoodie, ready to yank her back if she got any closer to the fire. She would, if given the opportunity. She was watching the marshmallow with complete focus.

After a few more minutes, Niko pulled it off the stick and pressed it between two graham crackers with a square of chocolate, then leaned down to hand it to her outstretched hands.

"Thank you, thank you, thank you," she babbled as she grabbed it.

"Blow on it, Mils," Shane called out.

She did. Loudly. Then took an enormous bite and got half of it on her hoodie. She hummed, deeply satisfied, and swiveled around to make her way back to Shane and Ilya. She stopped when she saw them. Her face fell.

"That's *my* spot, Daddy."

Ilya grinned, squeezing Shane. "Is occupied, *malyshka*."

She pouted, marshmallow clinging stubbornly to the corner of her mouth. "But Papa's lap is mine," she whined, a little pathetically.

"Technically," Ilya said, grin widening as he pressed a kiss to Shane's shoulder, "was Daddy's first."

Shane elbowed him in the ribs. Ilya laughed and held his hand out toward her. "Why the pouty face, *malyshka*? Do not tell me Miss Mila is jealous of her own daddy?"

She ignored the hand entirely and rubbed her eyes with her sticky fist, leaving white streaks across her cheek. Her face was beginning to crumple in the way that meant real tears were approximately sixty seconds out—despite the fact that Shane being in Ilya's lap was, at a minimum, a weekly occurrence in this household. But maybe that was forgotten when it was past your bedtime and you had consumed half your body weight in marshmallows.

"Come here, honey," Shane said gently, shifting forward slightly in Ilya's lap and patting his own thighs. "There's room for everyone."

"No," Mila wailed, dragging the word out.

Shane reached for her anyway, hoisting her up by her armpits. She protested the entire way, a continuous sound that cut off the moment her back hit his chest. He settled her facing the fire, her short legs dangling over his knees. She sat there for a moment like she was deciding whether to keep being upset about it.

Then she leaned back into him.

Shane wrapped his arms around her waist and rested his chin on her head. "See? Nice and comfy."

She didn't reply, but her settling more into him told him she agreed.

Ilya reached around Shane and tickled her sides lightly. She squirmed immediately, a reluctant giggle escaping before she could stop it, and batted at his hands with her sticky fingers.

"Noo," she said again, but most of the whine was gone from her voice.

"No?" Ilya said innocently, and did it again, his fingers tickling just above her ribs.

She giggled properly that time, hunching her shoulders, grabbing his wrists. "Papa, *stop*."

He stopped. Rested his chin on Shane's shoulder instead, looking at her.

She took another bite of her s'more, got more chocolate on her face, and settled deeper against Shane's chest with a long, contented sigh.

"Someone's tired," Shane murmured, his hand coming up to tuck some of her hair behind her ear.

"M not tired," Mila mumbled, even as her head tipped sideways against his arm.

"Of course not," Ilya agreed seriously. "You could stay up all night, yes?"

She nodded. Her eyes were already closing.

Shane carefully worked the remainder of her s'more out of her loose fingers and set it on the table beside the chair. He pulled her hood up and tucked her in closer against him, one hand spread across her back.

"We should probably bring her inside," he said softly.

Ilya hummed against Shane's neck, looking down at her. He kissed just below Shane's jaw.

"Few more minutes."

Once Mila was down in their bed, and the boys were occupied playing a video game in the den, Shane and Ilya finally had a moment to breathe.

Shane was in the kitchen, putting the last of the dishes in the dishwasher. Ilya came up to him, leaning against the counter with a grin as he watched him.

"No," Shane said, not even looking at him as he rinses a plate.

"What? I didn't even say anything."

"You're scheming." Shane passed the plate under the water. "I can feel it. And whatever it is, no. I'm about to pass out just standing here."

Ilya pushed off the counter and came to stand directly beside him. "You think so little of me, Hollander."

"I actually think I'm a bit too generous of you."

Ilya leaned against the counter beside him, shoulder to shoulder, and sighed heavily. "What I was going to say," he said, with great dignity, "was whether the great Shane Hollander would like to skate with me. But if you are so tired..."

Shane dried his hands and looked at him. His mouth was already pulling into a smile. "Oh. Just skating, huh?"

Ilya hooked a finger into the waistband of Shane's pants and tugged him closer to him. "Wow. Always with your mind in the well."

"Gutter."

"What?"

"Mind in the gutter."

Ilya rolled his eyes. "Okay, *whatever*. The fancy well water here is throwing me off." He unhooked his finger and stepped back toward the door, spreading his hands. "Fine. I will go skate by myself. All alone. In the dark."

"What, you can't turn on lights now?"

"Very sad," Ilya continued, already heading for the door. "Very lonely."

Shane sighed and looked up at the ceiling.

"Give me five minutes."

When Shane came downstairs, Ilya was already on the ice with a puck and stick. He grinned when he saw Shane step on the rink.

They didn't get time like this often anymore. Shane had his skills sessions with the Centaurs, and they'd skate with the kids, but this—just them—was rarer than it used to be.

"First to get ten goals wins," Ilya said, and before Shane could respond or negotiate terms, he was already skating away with the puck.

"What—*hey*," Shane said, taking off after him immediately.

What followed was not, technically, a hockey game. It was two retired professional players using every underhanded trick they'd spent decades perfecting against each other, in an empty rink at 9 PM, for absolutely no stakes except bragging rights. Ilya stole the puck with the kind of casual ease that was specifically designed to be irritating. Shane checked him into the boards harder than strictly necessary for a casual game, and Ilya would retaliate almost instantly, flashing his shit-eating grin.

They were tied 8-8 when Shane got a breakaway, skating hard toward the net. He was lining up the shot, could already feel it going in—

Ilya came out of nowhere and checked him into the boards, pinning him there with his full weight. Before Shane could shove him off, Ilya's mouth was at his neck, teeth grazing the skin just below his ear, and Shane made a sound that echoed embarrassingly off the walls.

"You know," Ilya purred against his skin, "we will not get much intimate time for the next few days. Not with our little heat-seeking missile in the bed with us."

It was true. The cottage had three bedrooms—the boys each claimed one, and Mila slept in the master with Shane and Ilya, which worked fine for now. Eventually, when she got older, someone would have to share. Or they'd need to think about adding a fourth bedroom, which was a conversation neither of them had been willing to start yet. The cottage was the cottage. Changing any aspect of it just felt wrong.

Shane tilted his head back against the boards, giving Ilya better access, and smiled. "This is true."

Ilya sucked gently at the sensitive skin just below Shane's ear. "If only there was somewhere private we could be," he said, breath hot against his skin. "Somewhere soundproof. With a door that locks."

"You want to fuck me on the ice?"

Ilya pulled back just enough to look at him, grinning big. "Wow. You leave so much to the imagination, Shane."

Shane's face flushed a little pink. He pushed him back by the chest. "Oh, *sorry*. Is there something else you were trying to say?"

Ilya came right back, closing the distance again, his hands finding Shane's waist and tugging him in close. "Maybe a few things," he said, and kissed him properly this time.

The puck sat forgotten in the corner of the rink. Neither of them went back for it. They'd settle for a tie.

Ilya woke up hours after going to bed to the sound of shouting from downstairs.

He groaned, blinking into the darkness of the bedroom. Mila was sprawled beside him, one foot planted squarely in his ribs, her face mashed into Shane's pillow, her dark hair everywhere.

"I GOT IT!" Max's voice carried up the stairs.

"*FUCK!*" Niko's voice was even louder, followed by what sounded like a controller hitting something.

Shane groaned awake beside him, lifting his head slightly. "What...?"

Ilya put his hand on his arm, ushering him back down. "I'll handle it," Ilya muttered, extracting himself carefully from under Mila's leg and sliding out of bed.

He padded downstairs in just his boxer briefs, following the glow of the TV in the living room. Max and Niko were on the couch, controllers in hand, playing EA Sports NHL on the big screen. Exactly where they'd sworn they wouldn't be past their bedtime.

They both whipped around when they heard Ilya clear his throat from the doorway.

Niko winced immediately. "*Jesus*, Papa, do you ever sleep with pants on?"

"Do you two realize what time it is?" Ilya asked, ignoring the question.

Niko paused the game. The sudden silence was almost louder than their shouting had been.

"We were just about to go to sleep," Max said, leaning back against the couch cushions. "Like, literally right now."

"You told me that two hours ago," Ilya said, crossing his arms. "When I came down at 10pm and you promised you were turning it off."

Max groaned and let his head fall back dramatically. "But it's vacation."

"Yes. Is vacation," Ilya agreed, his voice deceptively calm. "And you realize you have woken up your father, yes? Because if he does not get enough sleep, you will not have such a nice vacation. You both know this."

Both boys went very still. They knew exactly what he meant. Shane on insufficient sleep was a special kind of misery for everyone involved—short-tempered, headache-prone, and completely unwilling to tolerate the usual chaos that Ilya could typically smooth over.

"We didn't mean to wake him up," Niko said.

"And yet," Ilya said, gesturing upward. "Here we are."

"Is he mad?" Max asked.

"I don't know. Why don't you go and ask him yourself?"

"No," both boys said in unison.

"Then I suggest you turn off the game, go to your rooms, and pray he is able to go back to sleep soon." Ilya said. "And maybe tomorrow you make him his coffee the way he likes it. Big splash of almond milk. Bring it to him before he has to ask."

Niko was already putting his controller back on the coffee table. "Okay."

"Good decision," Ilya said. He waited until they'd both shuffled past him toward the stairs before adding, "And Niko?"

Niko stopped and looked back.

"Next time you swear like that in my house, I will throw the whole console in the lake."

Niko met his gaze. Then, reminding Ilya that his kid did in fact have half his DNA, muttered, "I thought it was *Dad's* house first."

Ilya looked at him for a long moment. "I did not realize you had a death wish, Niko."

Niko groaned and tipped his head back. "Okay. Sorry."

"He also said shit earlier," Max volunteered helpfully from a few stairs up.

Ilya raised an eyebrow. "What was that word, Maxim?"

"Shi—" Max stopped himself mid-word, dark eyes going wide as he registered Ilya's look. "...Shoot."

Ilya held the stare until they both scrambled the rest of the way up the stairs.

When they were gone, he looked at the paused game on screen—his own digital avatar frozen mid-stride in a Centaur's uniform.

He shook his head and turned the TV off.

Shane came downstairs the next morning, Mila on his hip in her overalls, bubble braids slightly lopsided on one side because she'd kept turning her head, to find a coffee waiting on the counter for him. With an absurd amount of milk.

He set Mila in a chair and picked it up. Then looked at the boys.

Niko was already watching him from the kitchen table with the careful, assessing look of someone waiting to find out what kind of morning it was going to be. Max was doing the same thing, slightly less subtly, a piece of toast halfway to his mouth and frozen there.

"Good morning," Shane said slowly.

"Good morning, Dad," they said, a little too cheerfully.

There was a beat of silence.

"You look," Max said, "really well rested."

Shane took a sip of the coffee and nodded. "...Thank you?"

Ilya turned from the stove with a spatula and a huge grin. Shane crossed the kitchen and kissed him.

"Good morning," Ilya said against his mouth.

"You told them to make me coffee, didn't you?" Shane murmured with a smile.

Ilya pulled back just enough to look at him, the picture of innocence. "I don't know what you are talking about."

Shane smiled into his next sip. There was way too much milk, and it was lukewarm now.

But it was perfect.

End Notes

it is my truth that ilya and shane bicker a lot when driving and the kids are so used to it they don't even bat an eye when it happens 😊

it is also my truth that ilya plays an obnoxiously upbeat song like mr. blue sky or hooked on a feeling or something to get everyone's mood up after a meltdown in the car and it drives shane insane but he always ends up singing along anyway because he just can't help it and ilya is singing so extra 😊😊

anyway, thank you so much for reading!! if you want to check out my other hollanov dad fics, you can read them [here](#)! :)

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