

Parenthood: A Horror Story - Or Shane and Ilya babysit the Pike Children

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Parenthood: A Horror Story - Or Shane and Ilya babysit the Pike Children

by [AkselAksel](#)

Summary

Shane discovers that surviving four kids is harder than any playoff game and that Ilya is unfairly good at it. Hayden, meanwhile, comes home to a peaceful house, sleeping children, and the unsettling realization that his long-time on-ice rival has somehow charmed his entire family.

Ilya has won a Stanley Cup, League MVP, has stared down a full arena booing him, survived a thousand chirps, and has survived Shane's endless complains about his occasional smoking habit. None of that prepared him for bedtime at the Pike house. Why did he agree to this again? Oh right he loves Shane.

Shane, admittedly didn't look as confident in the situation either and was filled with additional dread when he felt his phone buzz in his pocket.

HAYDEN: *Running late. Pls don't let them eat anything that comes in a spray can.*

SHANE: ???

HAYDEN: *Arthur found whipped cream once. Jackie says it was a dark time.*

Shane stares at the message until his brain stops buffering. Then he looks up and sees the four Pike children arranged across the living room like a staged photo shoot for "Parenthood: A Horror Story."

Ruby was is sitting cross-legged on the rug with a book open, reading with the calm confidence of someone who has already accepted that adults are unreliable. Jade is standing on an ottoman, wearing what appears to be a plastic tiara and a superhero cape at the same time at least he hopes that's Jade, otherwise the twins had a personality swap. Amber is on the couch upside down, hair hanging toward the floor like a bat. Arthur is... not visible.

Shane's blood turns cold. "Where's Arthur?"

A small giggle comes from behind the curtains. Shane lunges and yanks them aside. Arthur is crouched there like a tiny gremlin, clutching Ilya's phone, proudly smearing his fingerprints across the screen.

"Buddy," Shane says in a voice that is *too calm*, "why are you in the curtains?"

Arthur grins and holds up the phone as if he's accomplished something incredible. "Mine."

"No," Shane says. "Absolutely not"

A shadow falls over Shane's shoulder. Ilya leans in, towering, relaxed, and infuriatingly amused. "He is practicing stealth," he says, like Arthur is training for special ops and not currently attempting to drool on his smartphone.

"He's practicing identity theft," Shane hisses, snatching the phone away trying to give it back.

Arthur's face collapses. His lip trembles.

Shane freezes. "Oh no."

Arthur's inhale is deep, dramatic, and unmistakably pre-scream.

“Ilya,” Shane says, warningly, “do something.”

Ilya looks down at Arthur with the solemn seriousness of a man defusing a bomb. Then he lowers himself into a crouch and says softly, “Arthur. You are brave soldier. But now you must surrender.”

Arthur sniffles.

Ilya puts a hand over his own chest. “I am also sad when phone is taken. Shane is just trying to help be but is misguided. We make treaty instead.”

Arthur’s eyes widen, suspicious and hopeful. Ilya opens his other hand and reveals, somehow, a small, shiny sticker. A hockey sticker. It’s a Centaur wearing skates. Arthur stops crying mid-breath like someone hit pause.

Shane stares. “Where did you get that.”

Ilya shrugs. “I always have stickers.”

“You just...carry stickers.”

“For children,” Ilya says, like Shane is the dumbest person alive. “Also for Shane when he is being difficult.”

“I am not a child.”

Ilya leans closer, murmurs so only Shane can hear: “Debatable.”

Arthur snatches the sticker with reverence and slaps it directly onto his own forehead. Ruby doesn’t even look up from her book. “Dad says not to put stickers on your face.”

Arthur beams. “Face!”

Amber pops upright from the couch like a sprung trap. “Can I have one?”

Jade bounces. “Me too! Me too! I want sparkly!”

Shane points at Ilya. “Why would you do this.”

Ilya smiles, pleased. “They asked nicely.”

They have not, Shane thinks. They have asked like a mob. How does Hayden manage so many of them?

But then because the universe hates him, Amber climbs right over Shane and clings to Ilya’s arm like a koala.

“Ilya,” she says, earnest and bold, “Uncle Shane says ‘no’ a lot.”

Shane sputters. “I do not—”

“Ilya says yes,” Jade adds.

Ruby, without looking up, supplies: “Uncle Shane is the ‘rules’ guy. Dad is the ‘tired’ guy. Uncle Ilya is... unknown.”

Ilya brightens. “I’m not unknown, I’m chaos.”

Shane drags a hand down his face. “Okay. Great. Love that for us.”

It’s after dinner, after Shane has successfully prevented Jade from “helping” wash dishes by filling a pot with bubbles and dumping it on the floor, that Amber tilts her head, squints at Ilya, and says: “Do you know how to paint nails?”

Shane, is ready to say no automatically, because no is safe, no is controlled, no is the only thing keeping civilization from collapsing, and from him spiraling because how to do get nail polish out of clothes, or the carpet or hair, or... his train of thought was cut off by Ilya.

But Ilya says, “Yes.”

Shane’s head whips around. “You do?”

Ilya looks slightly offended. “Team mates have children,” he says. “Also I have been on long flights with Sveta.”

“That explains nothing.”

Ilya sets Arthur down gently on the ground, and rolls his shoulders like he’s about to play Game 7. “Where is nail paint.”

Amber squeals and sprints down the hall and Jade follows after her.

Ruby closes her book. “It’s in Mom’s bathroom. Second drawer. If it’s glitter, it never comes off and doesn’t come off of anything. Dad was a little upset when we painted one of his sticks”

Ilya raises his eyebrows. “You are wise.”

Ruby’s mouth twitches. “I know.”

Shane makes a last-ditch effort. “We... do not have to do this.”

Ilya turns to him, smiling in that soft way that makes Shane’s stomach do something treacherous. “It will be fun. You will relax.”

“Relax?” Shane repeats, as if the word is fictional.

Amber barrels back into the living room carrying a zippered pouch like it contains state secrets. She drops it on the table quickly meanwhile Jade drags a stool over and sits down,

presenting her hands like a princess.

Ilya rummages through the bag, inside had nail polish bottles in every color known to humankind, plus two colors that look like they were invented by a mermaid.

Ilya nods approvingly. “Lots of options.”

Ruby moves closer, “Mom says the pink one smells like strawberries but it’s a trick.”

“I am not fooled by strawberry lies,” Ilya assures her.

Amber gently shoves Jade out of her seat, “Do mine first! Do mine first!”

Jade shouts and she pushes her sister back, “NO, ME!”

Shane watches Ilya, completely unbothered, somehow calm in the eye of this tiny hurricane, and thinks, with horror: *Oh my God. He’s good at this.*

Ilya taps the nail polish on the table thinking. “ Okay everyone to the couch, hands clean. We make a salon.”

Amber and Jade scramble onto the couch immediately. Arthur attempts to do the same and faceplants into a cushion.

Shane instinctively steps forward.

Ilya grabs Arthur by the back of his shirt and Arthur giggles.

Shane’s mouth opens. Nothing comes out.

Ruby tilts her head. “He likes you.”

Shane points a finger at his own chest. “He likes me.”

Ruby considers him. “He likes you because you’re you and dad’s best friend. He likes Ilya because Ilya is fun.”

Shane looks personally betrayed by the concept of “fun.”

Ilya chooses a bottle, bright red, and holds it up. “Who wants red?”

Amber bounces. “I want red like a vampire!”

Jade gasps. “I want blue like Elsa!”

Arthur slaps both hands on Ilya’s knee. “Green!”

Shane leans in. “Why does Arthur want green.”

Arthur beams. “Hulk.” Shane can’t argue with that.

Ilya begins painting with steady hands, and more concentration than Shane thought possible for painting fingernails. Amber holds her fingers stiffly, face twisted in concentration, as if any movement will cause catastrophe.

“Do not breathe on them,” Ruby says.

Amber freezes, looking at Ilya in a panic. “I can’t breathe?!”

“You can breathe,” Ruby explains “Just don’t... exhale... on them.”

Amber inhales so deeply she looks like she’s trying to absorb oxygen for the next ten minutes.

Ilya smiles to himself and says softly to Amber, “Normal breathing is allowed. You are not submarine.”

Amber releases her breath in a relieved whoosh. “Okay.”

Jade shoves her hands forward. “Me next! Me next! Make them sparkly!”

Ilya picks a blue polish with shimmer. “Elsa colour, good choice,” he says as he gets to work.

Shane watches the scene unfold like it’s an alternate universe where Ilya Rozanov is a gentle, competent childcare wizard instead of his sometimes an asshole boyfriend, it melts Shane a little bit.

When Ilya was finished with both Jade and Arthur, Ruby edges closer and quietly offers her hands too. Ruby’s entire personality is “I did not ask for this” and yet her hands are held out with a sheepish look on her face.

Ilya doesn’t comment. He just chooses a deep purple and starts painting.

“You don’t mess up,” she says finally, wonder slipping through.

Ilya shrugs like it’s nothing. “I have practiced.”

Ruby glances at Shane. “Uncle Shane messed up once.”

Shane blinks. “When did I—”

Ruby’s eyes narrow. “At Christmas. You tried painted my nails with the set mommy got me and you got it on my dress and then you tried to scrub it off but it just got worse.

Shane has no defense. He points weakly. “That was one time.”

Jade clutches her chest dramatically. “He is villain!”

Arthur throws both fists into the air. “Villain!”

Shane looks at Ilya. “Fix this.”

Ilya smiles, unrepentant. “No.”

Shane sputters. “You’re enjoying this.”

Ilya’s eyes glitter. “Yes.”

When Hayden finally texts again, it’s worse.

HAYDEN: *Running even later. Traffic. We owe you. Bedtime at 8:30. Please. For the love of God. 8:30.*

Shane reads it out loud like a prophecy.

Ruby checks the clock. “It’s 8:12.”

Shane straightens. “Okay. Everyone. Bedtime routine. Let’s go.”

Amber bolts upright. “But we didn’t do story time!”

Jade squeals, “And bath! And teeth!”

Arthur announces, “NO.”

Shane spreads his arms. “Bath, teeth, pajamas, story. It’s not complicated.”

Ruby laughs once, “Yes It is.”

Shane narrows his eyes. “You’re eight.”

Ruby shrugs. “That’s old enough to know adults lie.”

Shane opens his mouth. Closes it. “Okay. Fine. Bath first”

Amber and Jade race down the hall like it’s the Olympics. Arthur runs after them yelling “NO!” as if that’s his chosen sport.

After the baths, after the argument about whether Jade can wear her tiara to bed (no) and whether Amber can sleep in her towel like a “spa vampire” (also no), Shane lines them up at the sink like a drill sergeant.

“Teeth. Two minutes. Everyone brushes. we are already just past when you’re supposed to be in bed”

Amber begins immediately, aggressive and foamy.

Jade brushes exactly three teeth and then starts humming.

Arthur puts the toothbrush in his mouth sideways like a corn cob.

Ruby brushes like she's trying to remove her skeleton.

Shane nods, proud. "Okay. Great. We're doing it. We're..."

Arthur spits toothpaste directly into the sink with the force of a fire hose.

Shane flinches. "Buddy no"

Arthur looks thrilled. "Again!"

Shane lifts a hand. "No"

Arthur does it again.

Amber laughs so hard she accidentally drools toothpaste on her shirt.

Jade decides this is now a game and makes a noise like a tiny dragon.

Shane stares into the mirror at his own face, which looks exhausted.

Ilya appears behind him and rests his hands lightly on Shane's waist, steadying.

"You are doing well," Ilya murmurs.

Shane almost chokes on air. "I am not."

"You are alive, they are alive" Ilya says. "This is success."

Shane just glares at him in the mirror.

Instead, he mutters, "Don't be supportive. It makes it worse."

Ilya's mouth curves. "I cannot help being charming."

Ruby spits and says, "He is."

Shane whips around. "Ruby."

Ruby lifts her chin. "What? It's true."

Amber points her toothbrush. "Ilya is nice!"

Jade nods emphatically. "Ilya is like a teddy bear!"

Arthur raises both hands. "Ilya!"

Shane feels the betrayal like a physical blow.

Ilya leans down, kisses Shane's temple quickly, so quick Shane almost thinks he imagined it, and says in a voice that is way too smug for someone holding a toddler's attention span together with string:

"See? They love me."

Shane hisses, "Stop winning at my best friend's children."

Ilya whispers back, delighted, "No."

Shane is attempting to impose bedtime like it is a reasonable, achievable goal.

Shane claps his hands once, firm. "Okay. Bedtime. Amber, in bed. Jade and Ruby, in bed. Arthur"

"No," says Arthur immediately, from the floor, where he is laying flat on his stomach for no apparent reason.

Shane takes a breath. "Arthur, you need to go to bed bud."

Arthur rolls onto his back. "No."

Shane points down the hall. "Bed. Please?"

Arthur kicks one foot experimentally. "No."

Before Shane can escalate, Ruby appears in the doorway of her and Jade's room with a stuffed animal tucked under one arm.

"I want Ilya to read," she says.

Shane freezes mid-gesture. "What."

Ruby looks him dead in the eye. "I want Ilya to read."

Shane blinks. "I can read."

Ruby nods politely, like she's acknowledging a volunteer who showed up with the wrong clipboard. "Yes. But I want Ilya."

Amber pops up in her doorway like she's been waiting for this moment. "Ilya reads funny voices!"

Jade gasps from behind Ruby. "And he does accents!"

Arthur, sensing momentum, yells from the floor, "Ilya!"

Shane slowly turns his head toward Ilya with a look that clearly says *Please don't*.

Ilya meets his gaze with one that very clearly says *I absolutely will*.

Shane tries one last time, voice strained but hopeful. “Guys. Uncle Shane can read too I read all the time, Ilya can’t read to all of you at once.”

Ruby considers this. Tilts her head.

“Uncle Shane reads... like a powerpoint.”

Ilya’s shoulders shake with silent laughter.

Shane points at him. “Don’t laugh.”

Ilya doesn’t even try to stop smiling. “It is accurate.”

Shane throws his hands up. “Fine. You read.”

The reaction is immediate and disproportionate.

Amber cheers like Shane has just announced a field trip.

Jade bounces on her toes.

Arthur claps once and falls over.

Ilya follows Ruby and Jade into their shared room and settles onto the edge of Ruby’s bed with the book Ruby hands him, carefully, like this matters. Arthur toddles in after them and climbs straight into Ilya’s lap as if this has always been the arrangement.

Jade wedges herself against Ilya’s side. Ruby sits cross-legged near the foot of the bed, close enough to hear every word, far enough to pretend she doesn’t care.

Shane leans against the doorframe, arms crossed, feeling deeply, personally replaced. It’s rude.

Ilya opens the book.

And yes, he does voices. And yes, they are good even if all of them are tinged with a Russian accent. He reads slowly, deliberately, giving every character weight and rhythm, but also because it is an English children’s book to make Jade giggle and Arthur stare in awe.

Halfway through the story, Jade yawns and rests her head on Ilya’s shoulder without asking. Arthur traces the bear sticker on his forehead like it’s a talisman. Amber’s eyes droop.

Shane sees it, the moment Ruby’s shoulders relax, the way her fingers stop worrying the edge of her blanket. The way she goes still like she’s decided this is safe.

It hits Shane, sharp and unexpected.

Ilya isn’t just “fun.”

He's gentle with them in a way he doesn't advertise, in a way the world doesn't usually get to see, at least not anyone other than Shane usually gets to see.

Shane swallows, throat tight for stupid reasons.

He stays where he is and watches.

Ilya finishes the story and closes the book softly. He doesn't rush them. He doesn't tell anyone to lie down or close their eyes. He just waits, letting the quiet settle naturally.

Amber whispers from the doorway, already half-asleep, "Can we paint nails again tomorrow?"

Shane says instantly, "No."

Ilya says, without looking at him, "Maybe."

Shane whips around. "You don't live here."

Ilya smiles, serene. "I am visiting."

Ruby's mouth twitches. "Dad's going to be mad."

Shane murmurs, resigned, "He's going to be furious."

Hayden and Jackie get home just after **10:00 p.m.**, moving carefully, like people who know the house is finally, miraculously quiet and do not want to anger whatever gods made that happen.

Jackie slips her shoes off at the door and immediately starts whispering. "Okay, are they..."

"All asleep," Shane murmurs from the hallway before she can finish.

Jackie visibly deflates with relief. "Oh thank God."

She heads down the hall without another word, peeking into rooms with the practiced stealth of someone who has done this a thousand times. Hayden lingers by the door, setting his keys into the bowl and rolling his shoulders like he's shedding the day.

"So," he whispers, careful. "How bad was it?"

Shane steps into the light, looking tired but intact. He's holding a mostly-empty paper towel roll.

Hayden squints at it. "Why is that empty?"

Shane considers him for a second. "Arthur discovered the toilet paper during bath time."

Hayden exhales through his nose. "Of course he did."

From the living room, Ilya is quietly gathering things, lining up a few small bottles, zipping a pouch, straightening the coffee table like he actually lives there. He looks calm. Unbothered. Entirely too comfortable in Hayden's house.

Hayden's gaze drifts toward him, then narrows slightly.

"...Why do I smell nail polish?"

Shane jerks his chin in Ilya's direction. "That was his call."

Ilya looks up, unapologetic. "They wanted colors."

Hayden stares at him for a long beat, then lowers his voice. "You painted their nails."

"Yes."

He runs a hand over his face. "Okay. Sure. Fine."

Jackie reappears from the hallway, smiling softly. "They're all out. Not even Arthur stirred."

She finally takes in the scene properly: the paper towel roll, the faint chemical-sweet smell of nail polish, Shane's slightly shell-shocked expression, and Ilya tidying with quiet purpose.

Her smile widens. "You two survived."

Shane huffs quietly. "Barely."

Jackie walks over and gives Shane a quick squeeze on the arm. "Thank you. Seriously."

Then she turns to Ilya, warm and sincere. "Both of you. It means a lot."

Ilya inclines his head, polite but clearly pleased. "They are good kids. I'm now Uncle Ilya"

The words hang there.

Hayden stares at him. Blinks once. Then again. "They did *what*."

Jackie's eyebrows lift, delighted. "Oh?"

Shane presses his lips together and looks at the ceiling like this is none of his business and also entirely his fault.

Ilya shrugs, maddeningly casual. "Arthur said it first. The others copied."

"You've been here one night," Hayden says, not angry, just deeply offended on principle.

"Yes."

"They don't even call Shane Uncle Shane consistently."

Shane mutters, "Wow. Okay. Cool. Great."

Jackie laughs softly. “I mean, that tracks.”

Hayden turns to her. “No, it does *not* track.”

She gestures at Ilya. “He’s good with them. He listens. He doesn’t rush them. And apparently he brings contraband.”

Hayden’s head snaps back to Ilya. “You brought them things.”

“Stickers,” Shane supplies. “It was a whole strategy.”

Hayden squints. “You corrupted them with stickers.”

Ilya’s mouth curves. “They were willing participants.”

Hayden exhales and folds his arms. “Unbelievable.”

Shane rubs his face. “Can we not start a new rivalry over bedtime?”

Hayden ignores him and looks at Ilya. “You know this doesn’t mean I like you now, right?”

Ilya tilts his head. “I am aware.”

“You’re still an asshole,” Hayden adds, conversational. “Just... an asshole who reads stories.”

Ilya nods, accepting. “Multifaceted.”

Jackie squeezes Hayden’s hand. “They felt comfortable. That’s good.”

“I know,” Hayden says. “I get that.” He sighs, then looks back at Ilya. “I just don’t love the ‘Uncle Ilya’ thing.”

Ilya’s eyes gleam. “Too late.”

Shane groans. “Oh my God.”

Hayden points accusingly. “You corrupted them.”

Ilya considers this. “They now like hockey. This is improvement.”

“They already liked hockey.”

“Yes,” Ilya agrees. “But now they like the Centaurs.”

Hayden straightens. “Absolutely not.”

Shane groans louder. “Do *not* bring teams into this.”

Ilya smiles, serene and infuriating. “Arthur clapped when I mentioned them.”

“That’s because Arthur claps at *everything*,” Hayden snaps. “He clapped at a toaster this morning.”

Jackie is chuckling openly now but still trying to be quiet. “You’re being dramatic.”

“I am being replaced,” Hayden says flatly.

Shane snorts. “You’re their father. Relax.”

Hayden glances at him. “Easy for you to say. They didn’t call you Uncle Ilya.”

“That is *not* helping,” Shane says.

Ilya looks genuinely pleased. “They also asked when I come back.”

Hayden closes his eyes. “Of course they did.”

Jackie grins. “So... next time?”

Hayden peeks at her. “You’re enjoying this.”

She shrugs. “A little.”

Hayden exhales and nods once. “Fine. I can live with Uncle Ilya.”

Ilya smiles. “Good.”

Hayden points at him. “Don’t push it.”

Ilya’s eyes sparkle. “No promises.”

Jackie checks the time. “Okay. You two should head out. Early morning.”

Shane grabs their coats immediately. “Yep. We’re going.”

They move toward the door, careful and quiet. As Shane opens it, Hayden adds, softer now, “Seriously. Thank you.”

Shane nods. “Anytime.”

Ilya pauses, then says simply, “I love the best Pikes.”

Hayden looks at him with annoyance but also agreement because, his kids are the best.

The door clicks shut behind Shane and Ilya.

Hayden stands there for a moment, then mutters, mostly to himself, “Uncle Ilya.”

Jackie bumps his shoulder. “You’ll survive.”

He sighs. “...Probably.”

She smiles.

Outside, the air is cold and quiet. The world feels peaceful in a way it never did inside the Pike house.

Shane exhales like he's been holding it all day.

Ilya slips his hand into Shane's coat pocket and laces their fingers together. Shane pretends not to like it. He fails.

"You were good," Shane admits grudgingly, staring at the sidewalk.

Ilya hums. "I know."

Shane squeezes his hand. "Don't get cocky."

Ilya turns his head, eyes soft and pleased. "Too late."

Shane glances sideways. "Hayden's going to be mad for weeks."

Ilya smiles like that is a gift. "Yes."

Shane shakes his head, fondness creeping in where irritation used to live. "You really like this."

Ilya shrugs. "Children are honest. They like you, they hate you, they cry, they laugh. It is... simple."

Shane's chest tightens unexpectedly. He watches Ilya's profile, the calm, the softness.

Shane murmurs, almost to himself, "You're... good."

Ilya looks at him then, eyes bright. "You are also good."

Shane scoffs, automatic defense. "They think I read like a powerpoint."

Ilya's mouth twitches. "You do."

Shane shoves him. "Shut up."

Ilya laughs, low and warm, and pulls Shane closer as they walk to the car.

Behind them, in the Pike house, Hayden Pike is probably staring at the ceiling contemplating his life choices.

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