trophy husband

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trophy husband

by PenniesBloom

Summary

Ilya and Shane are thirty-six years old with two kids, and Ilya thinks it's time to retire.

Notes

This is my first fic for Heated Rivalry, but certainly won't be my last, as these two have completely taken over my brain. Like everyone else, I've been obsessed with Ilya as a WAG and wanted to explore how that begins and what it looks like when he tells Shane he wants to retire. Special shoutout to Kay (and Kay's friend) for the hockey help! <3 If you enjoy, leave a kudos and a comment! :)

See the end of the work for more notes

A third heartbeat quietly drums between Ilya and Shane's. Irina, their three-year-old, curls between them, a small fist resting on Ilya's chest, her head bowed low, completely off either pillow. Shane's breath ruffles her curls. His arm stretches over her to rest a hand on Ilya's waist.

Ilya's heart is near to bursting with love, so much so that the stretch will bruise. It's been like this more often than not in the past four years, since their eldest, Theo, was born.

But it's now an ache. Cradling this much love and not being able to release it all the time is contorting Ilya into something that will soon break. Yes, he's now on the same team with Shane and he presses a kiss to his husband's helmet after every goal. And yes, Yuna and David cheer the loudest at every game, Irina and Theo beside them. But that's only at home games.

When Ilya and Shane have to travel, they leave their two precious children behind.

Tomorrow, they must do just that. They'll have to drop off Irina and Theo at Shane's parents' house ten minutes away, where Irina's brow will wrinkle and she'll valiantly hold back tears as she clutches onto her older brother's shirt. Her older brother, who wears his heart on his sleeve and can never seem to wipe away the tears fast enough.

Both of them should be used to it by now. But they're young; they don't remember how many times this has happened in the past three years. It still feels new and wrong, to be separated from their dads time and time again.

Of course, they watch Shane and Ilya on the big screen. Yuna sends a photo every game. The one of Theo pressed up against the TV with a huge grin on his face and his fists in the air because Ottawa's just scored for the third time is Ilya's current phone lockscreen.

And every time he flips it over, catches a glimpse of it in the hotel room or purposefully stares at it in the locker room before they go onto the ice, his chest feels painfully tight. Shane's right beside him, their team has never been more supportive, and he's playing a game he loves, so why has it only gotten harder and harder to breathe when he steps onto the plane?

In bed, Shane's breathing evens out to match their daughter's. His freckles are dark blotches in the night-washed room. The moonlight can't quite reach the wedding band on his finger, where it rests beside his head. Ilya breathes out. As he does, he presses a thumb to his husband's cheek.

He taps there once, twice. Ghosts his fingers over the slope of Shane's nose, drifts down to his palm, pinches the wedding band between his thumb and forefinger. When his hand returns to Shane's face, Shane's eyelids flutter then open.

"Hey…" he mumbles, his voice sleep-soft and unguarded.

“Shane,” Ilya says. It sounds like love. Every time Ilya says his name, he can’t help the way his voice shapes it, carries it like it’s the most precious thing in the world, like he’s in awe he even gets to speak it aloud in the first place.

He murmurs *I love you* in Russian.

Now, Shane blinks, slightly more awake. He squeezes Ilya’s hip before sliding his hand up to cup Ilya’s face, a mirror.

“What is it?” he says. A crinkle appears between his dark eyebrows, so achingly similar to Irina, their daughter. Ilya’s mouth scrunches as his nose prickles.

“I, uh… I have an idea,” Ilya says.

“Okay.” Shane shifts closer, careful not to disturb Irina but just enough to tip his forehead towards Ilya’s. “I’m listening.”

Ilya swallows. He’s not often nervous to tell Shane anything anymore, and he’s not sure if nerves are what he’s feeling. There’s tightness in his throat, but he wonders if it’s from the surety of it all. It feels a bit like when he’d answered Yuna in their kitchen all those years ago, an immediate *Yes* when she’d asked him if he’d move to Ottawa for Shane.

“I want to retire,” he says.

Shane’s breath catches. In the dark, it’s hard to name every emotion that crosses his face, but the one that settles is cautious curiosity.

“Okay,” he says again. His fingers move to scratch at the nape of Ilya’s neck. “Are you… Is it– Is it not making you happy?”

Suddenly, Ilya wants to cry. He’d foolishly thought Shane would ask if it was a passing thought or if he didn’t like them being on the same team or if it was because of some other stupid, hockey-related reason. He’d worried Shane would fear losing him, what that would mean for the team and the Cup. Instead, Shane only cares about *him.*

Of course, he does. Ilya’s stupid to think otherwise.

He heaves out a breath. “I am happy.” He rubs his thumb once over Shane’s cheekbone before gently resting his palm on Irina’s head. “So happy. But… I am more happy with our beautiful kids. We win so much, Shane.”

A shaky laugh curves Shane’s mouth. “Tired of gold, already?”

Ilya smiles. “I do not need another medal. And Ottawa is strong now.” He thinks of Troy and Wyatt and Coach Wiebe and Shane, his beautiful Shane. The team glides on ice like a well-oiled machine. They’ve won the Stanley Cup not once, but twice, and every year, more and more rookies want to join them. “They don’t need me. Not anymore.”

“Ilya–” Shane frowns, concerned with the wrong thing, “We need you. You’re always needed. You–”

“I know,” Ilya interrupts. He lightly slaps his hand on Shane’s forehead and presses his thumb to the space between his eyebrows, where he tries to massage out the divot. “Is not about that. Stop frowning. You will get wrinkles, and I cannot love you with wrinkles.”

Shane huffs a resistant laugh. “Ilya, I’m serious–”

“So am I.” Ilya’s been in therapy for years now. He’s shed the idea that he’s lazy and incompetent and not worth anything. For the most part, at least.

When he and Shane had decided to become parents, he’d had several breakdowns, both in and out of Shane’s watchful eye.

Four years in, he feels a little more confident in his parenting ability. That’s partially because Shane and Yuna and David and Jackie Pike and even the team have been so supportive, have made him strong. But if he really wants to be a good father, he wants to be there for his kids. He wants to smother them with his love. He wants to fill all the holes that his father left in his own life.

He stares at Irina’s round, smooth cheeks, her blond eyelashes long like Shane’s.

“The team does not need me. Our kids do.”

“Oh.” It’s a quiet realization. Shane says, “Ilya.”

Dragging his gaze from his beautiful child to his beautiful husband, Ilya says, “I hate leaving them. And they are getting bigger. They will miss us more. Yes, they stay with their grandparents, but…” Ilya shrugs one shoulder. “I want to stay with them.”

There’s tears in Shane’s eyes, glistening in the dark. For a moment, it scares Ilya. But then he sees the amount of love in Shane’s open expression.

“I want you to, too,” Shane whispers. “I want you to do what makes you happy. I want– I know it’s hard. Leaving them. I hate it, too, but–”

“Do not pretend you are a bad father, Hollander. Is okay to want to play hockey.”

Another trembling smile. “Okay. I know. I know. One of us has to pay for their school–”

“Ah!” Ilya rolls his eyes and flicks his husband’s forehead. “You make too many jokes now.”

“Too much time spent with you,” Shane says.

“I am still the funnier husband.”

“Of course, you are.”

Gibberish quietly sounds between them, and they both pause. Irina nestles herself closer to Ilya, though she stretches out a hand, small fingers searching behind her. Shane slips his hand over her shoulder and hunches closer. Snug between her dads, Irina settles once more. Ilya’s heart melts through his ribs.

“Let’s finish out this season with a bang,” Shane says after they’ve both sniffed enough times to dispel their tears. “And then… then you retire.”

“Really?”
A nod. “Really. It’s your life, Ilya. And I’m really glad you want this. It’ll make things easier on them, I hope.” Shane means their kids. “I’m… really excited at the idea of coming home from games to a full house.” His voice scrapes into something raw, and he shakes his head as if that’ll help. “Though I’ll miss being on the ice with you.”

“Ah, you can hog the spotlight again. You won’t miss sharing.”

Shane pushes him gently. “I’ve *always* shared with you, asshole–”

“Shhh–” Ilya puts a finger to his lips then points down. “Do we need an asshole jar, Hollander?”

“It’s a swear jar, Ilya.”

Ilya shrugs. “Doesn’t matter. You need one.”

“And you need to retire,” Shane whispers.

The feeling of being accepted, of being loved and understood so completely will never not wash over Ilya with such intensity that he feels he will crumble. It feels like the first bloom of winter, the first bite of snow that signals the start of the hockey season. Ilya reaches down to cover Shane’s hand with his own where it rests on Irina.

Together, they breathe as one.

“Thank you,” Ilya says. “I love you.”

“I love you, too.”

The season ends the way it always does when they win a lot. With celebration and hoisting Coach Wiebe up in the locker room and dousing Shane in a spray of champagne and Ilya planting a kiss on his cheek to taste it.

The only difference this year is that Ilya Rozanov announces his retirement.

The Centaurs all knew beforehand, of course, and they threw a retirement party full of cake and laughter. Troy, specifically, bought Ilya a mini centaur figurine, and the team gave him a framed photo of their first time winning the Stanley Cup.

Ilya hadn't been nervous to tell them, but to see their unwavering support did something funny to his insides. He was clapped on the back and told he was their best captain. Shane would be good, but he could never be Ilya.

When the announcement hits the internet, the hockey world explodes. The era of the NHL's most famous dynamic duo, Hollander and Rozanov, is officially over.

Neither Shane nor Ilya check for the world's reaction, and Ilya completely shuts down his social media after posting his agent-approved-and-written farewell. Hayden informs them of tweet after tweet lamenting what will now be referred to as 'The Golden Age.'

Jackie, whose company Ilya enjoys ten times more than her husband's, sends Ilya a text: *Congrats Ilya!!! So excited to be official WAGs together* 😘

Ilya's heart swells. He's excited, too, he realizes.

He quickly types out a response, and they make plans to get together and watch the away games with the kids.

Though he's loved hockey and all it's given him, the most important thing it's given him is obviously Shane. Shane and their family together. A family that's now Ilya's sole purpose.

As Ilya's busy hearting a message from Jackie, Theo comes tottering in. His hands grasp for Ilya's pants.

"All done, Daddy?" he says.

Bending down, Ilya easily scoops up his son with one arm and kisses his cheek. "All done with what, mal'chik-zaichik?"

"Hockey?"

"Yes," Ilya breathes out. "All done with hockey." He sets his phone down to boop Theo's nose. "More time to spend with you."

A smile breaks out over Theo's warm skin, and Ilya doesn't feel an ounce of regret. The whole world has just reopened before him.

☆

"Well, this is weird," Shane says, bending down to lace up his shoes.

He's standing by the doorway, his game-day duffel on the floor beside him, a Centaurs cap pulled over his black hair. Ilya feels strangely empty-handed. This is the first time they're not *both* readying for a game. In just a minute, Ilya is going to watch Shane close the door behind

him and drive off to the rink. In two hours, Ilya will pile Irina and Theo into the car and follow after him.

Throughout the summer, Ilya more or less trained with Shane exactly like he used to. It helped both of them, he thinks, to stick to that normalcy. But now, the season's begun, and tonight's the first home game. There's an odd twinge in Ilya's chest, a plucking of strings too tight.

He's not jealous exactly. It's not the same twinge as when he was injured mid-season or knocked out of the play-offs. It's just… different. An adjustment.

One he's happy to mold himself around, especially when Irina's small hand reaches up to grasp his. Theo leans against his other hip. For once, neither of them are teary-eyed, which nearly makes *Ilya* teary-eyed. He blows out a breath. Maybe he should've done this years ago.

Shane glances between the members of his family. There's a fondness in the shape of his eyes, one that travels down his whole body. He looks ready to dive in between them, drowning in hugs.

"Not as weird as before," Ilya says. Not as weird as when they'd played against each other with feigned resentment and then devoured each other behind closed doors. "Now, I can be in the same rink and tell the whole world you are mine."

Then Shane's huffing a laugh against Ilya's lips and pressing a chaste kiss there. Irina squeals a laugh and Theo splutters when Ilya slaps his hand over his eyes to pull Shane in and deepen the kiss. Shane's lips are soft, his tongue is warm, and they can't really hold it when they're both stupidly smiling.

"I love you," Shane says, resting his forehead against Ilya's. There's so much behind those three words, and Ilya's known Shane long enough to understand what he really means.

I love you, and I'm sorry we waited this long. I love you, and I'm proud to be in the spotlight with you. I love you, and I will always love you.

In response, Ilya switches to Russian to say, "If you don't win, I'll divorce you."

Soon, when Irina and Theo are bigger, he won't be able to hide behind his mother tongue. Already, the two of them switch between Russian and English in a garble of words.

Shane playfully shoves Ilya's chest as he steps away. Ilya immediately misses his warmth.

"Kids, watch your dad for me, okay?" Shane says. He kneels on the floor and spreads his arms. Irina and Theo barrel into him. "Make sure he doesn't get into any fights in the stands." A knowing, sly glance up at Ilya.

Ilya can only offer a crooked grin. Fighting on the ice was easy, natural. It's going to be hard for him to break that habit, especially if someone spews bullshit about his husband.

"We will!" Theo says, all-too serious.

“Dad’s going to win!” Irina says. Well, she actually sort of slurs half the words together, in the way three-year-old’s tend to do, but Ilya gets the meaning.

“Okay, great,” Shane says, beaming. He ruffles their hair, kisses their foreheads, holds them tight tight tight before letting go. Gracefully getting to his feet, he finds Ilya once more. “I’ll see you there?”

“I will be cheering loudest,” Ilya says.

“I know you will.” Shane’s smile softens. “Tell Jackie hello for me.”

In a stroke of luck– or in Ilya’s mother nudging the universe to favor her son– the Centaurs are playing against the Toronto Tornados, which Hayden joined two seasons after Shane left the Metros. According to Shane, Hayden could no longer stand the team culture, his guilt gnawing away at him. That and the fact that they’d been on a losing streak since royally betraying their team captain.

As soon as he’d been a free agent that summer, Hayden had walked away and signed with Toronto. Ilya has to grudgingly respect the choice; not only is it decently close to his family in Montreal, but the Tornados have a healthy streak of partnering with local queer organizations.

He is selfishly glad to still have Jackie close by. Like the angel she is, she promised to be there for Ilya’s first game as a WAG.

“She will not want to hear that when you are beating her husband.”

Shane shakes his head, still smiling. But there’s a sharpness in his eyes, a light coming on. The game’s upcoming competition floats into the hallway. A hunger thins Shane’s smile into something fierce. Ilya can’t help but match it. He *loves* when Shane’s like this.

“Don’t worry, I’m not gonna go easy on him.”

“You’d never.”

The kids cheer below. When Shane’s gaze flickers down to them, some of that razor edge dissipates, replaced by encroaching love. He hoists his duffel onto his shoulder.

“I love you, guys, okay?” he says.

There’s a chorus of *I love you*’s in return, Ilya included.

Ilya can see the hesitation in Shane’s turn, the way he wants to stay with his family but also race to the stadium and win. If Ilya loved him any less, he’d pull him in by the waist and make him wish he were staying. But neither of them want that.

Instead, Ilya tugs the kids close so that Shane can see they’re well-taken care of.

“Hurry up, okay? Haas will not like if you are late.”

The fellow Centaur's name snaps the buckle of Shane's helmet and pushes the mouthguard into his teeth. He grins. "Don't worry. I'll protect our dynasty."

Jackie Pike has always been Ilya's favorite Pike, even though Ruby and Jade officiated his wedding, and even though he spoiled the twins and Arthur and Amber long before he and Shane had kids of their own. She hugs tighter than Ilya thought possible for someone of her size. With her beside him, he can breathe a little deeper when he steps into the Ottawa stadium as a fan, rather than a player.

It's surreal, being on the other side of the ice and the clear wall. After corralling the kids into their seats, he's almost… relaxed. There's only the faintest spark of pregame nerves, but he's pretty sure that's because he's trying not to worry about Shane playing without him for the first time in… god, almost two decades.

Jackie squeezes his hand. The two of them sit on the end of an aisle while their mass of six kids take up half the row.

"You doing okay?" she asks.

"Better than I expected." Being honest with Jackie is strangely easy. Has been ever since the first day they met and Ilya told her her husband needed to improve his footwork. "And, you know–" Ilya tilts his head to the side, sniffs, "I will be great when Hayden loses."

Jackie rolls her eyes and squeezes his hand again, slightly harder than before. "Keep up this ruse, Ilya. I know you and Hayden are friends."

"Ah, no, not true." Ilya shakes his head, vehement. "I like Scott Hunter more than I like him."

"Scott Hunter paved the way for you and Shane. So that's actually quite high up–"

"Mm, no. Scott Hunter is *old* and washed up."

"Are you saying that because he's retired?" Jackie raises an eyebrow. "Because I'm pretty sure as of today, you're officially retired, too."

Ilya sighs. Slumps in his seat dramatically and throws a hand over his face. "Should've been Hayden before me."

When Jackie laughs, bright and sweet, Ilya peers out from under his knuckles, his own lips curling. She never took Ilya seriously when it came to Hayden. And yes, Ilya is still frequently annoyed by Hayden. He's annoyed when Hayden comes over for dinner with Jackie ("What are you doing here? I didn't invite you, only your wife.") and stands outside at the grill beside Ilya. He's annoyed when Hayden joins them for Shane's birthday dinners and

gifts Shane something both useful and utterly stupid. He's annoyed when Hayden tucks Arthur's hair behind his ear and wipes the tears from his eyes when Amber's just stolen his toy and accidentally kicked his shin in the process.

That's what's most annoying of all, actually. That Hayden Pike is the father Ilya thinks of when he worries about parenting his own children.

"You know," Jackie says, "You haven't changed one bit since I met you."

Pulling himself back up in his seat, Ilya immediately tracks Shane as he skates onto the ice for warmup. He answers, "*That's* true. I'm still as in love with Shane as I was then."

An elegant hand barely hides Jackie's melting smile. "Softie."

"What was that?"

Jackie busies herself with readjusting Amber's scarf. "Nothing."

Though Ilya grunts and groans and rolls his eyes, he knows Jackie's right. There's a tender, love-soft heart inside him that beats alongside Shane's. He wouldn't want it any other way. He's glad Jackie sees it. He's glad the whole world can see glimpses of it now.

The two catch up between procuring popcorn for the kids and spilling insider gossip about their husbands' respective teams. But the second the players are on the ice for the first face-off, their mouths snap shut and they zero in.

It's a fierce battle from the get-go. Ilya tries to pay attention to the game as a whole. Sometimes he follows Troy and Bood and Haas but really, more often than not, he's looking at *Shane.*

Their kids, too, don't seem to care all that much about the other players. They scream, shrill and proud, anytime Shane steals the puck and races for the goal.

When he scores, Irina leaps into Ilya's arms and Theo pumps his fists into the air. Jackie, the best sport out of all of them, cheers, too, even if it's one point against her husband.

It's always been exhilarating to watch Shane score. Back when they were rivals– as the media would call it– Ilya was both endlessly exhilarated and infuriated (and turned on). With the Centaurs, of course, he loved when Shane scored for them. Sometimes, he'd make it a competition to see who could score more goals in the game between the two of them. Even on the same team, that competition never died.

Now, sitting in the stands and seeing Shane give them the lead, Ilya's entire body bursts with pride. To see Shane's flawless execution so clearly makes him feel almost dizzy.

God, he loves Shane Hollander.

Shortly after, Toronto scores, which earns excited clapping from the Pike clan beside them.

As soon as Hayden has the puck, Ilya boos. Whenever Hayden skates by, it's a race between Jackie and Ilya for who can scream first. And the score between Ilya's badgering and Jackie's praise is as tight as the game.

But, Ilya must admit, even if his words fall out faster, he sometimes quiets his voice so Jackie can cheer over him.

Not that she needs much help when her shouts are quadrupled by her kids.

The other weird thing about not being on the ice with Shane is seeing him shoved into the wall. Ilya's watched it plenty of times on television, but there's something different about seeing it live before him. Jealousy pricks under Ilya's skin.

He tries to calm himself by thinking about how later, after they've put the kids to bed, when Shane's recounting the game firsthand, Ilya will pin him to the bed.

In the final period, that jealousy flames to anger. One of the Tornado's checks Shane hard enough for him to stumble. Immediately, Ilya's on his feet. He's halfway to shouting obscenities when he remembers Irina and Theo are stomping their small feet beside him.

He can't– he shouldn't lose it in front of them, right?

But he can't sit still with this simmering in his bones, so he settles for a short, "Don't *touch* my husband!"

His hands have curled into fists, and he wants to hop the boards and start swinging. He's always been able to keep his cool on the ice, always been the second to throw the punch after enough goading. But with Shane… he's never been able to think rationally about Shane.

He started more fights than ever before when they were both Centaurs.

Jackie reaches up and touches his arm. He blinks down at her.

"He's not worth it," she says. "And look– he's good."

She's right. Shane's already shaken it off and is back in action, battling to widen their 3-2 lead. Pride flows in as a cooling balm.

In the last minute of the game, Shane scores, bumping the Centaurs up to four points and sealing their win.

The buzzer sounds. Ilya surges to his feet and roars with the crowd.

He piles Irina and Theo in his arms, and the three of them scream together.

"Daddy won!" Theo says.

"Your Dad's the *best* hockey player in the world," Ilya says, smile wide. And he believes it.

After being engulfed by the Centaurs, Troy rattling Shane's head in his helmet and Bood slapping his shoulders, Shane immediately skates over to them.

Irina and Theo crowd at the banister, jumping up and down.

"Yay! Yay!" Irina keeps saying.

"Best in the *world*!" Theo emphasizes.

Shane laughs and scoops them into his arms as much as he can manage. He can barely plant a kiss on their foreheads around his smile.

"Thank you for being here," he says, buried between their heads. "And with your dad." His eyes find Ilya's.

Having Shane flushed and brilliantly bright, sweat glowing from his cheeks, has Ilya's face hurting with the force of his own smile and his heart aching with the overflow of his love. Suddenly, there's tears in his eyes.

When Shane releases their children and turns to Ilya, the audience's noise falls away. Instead, Ilya can hear the crisp cut of skates over ice, and he's catapulted back to when he first wobbled onto a rink. His mother had let go of his hand with gentle encouragement. She'd then skated around him in graceful circles, only a breath away. Maybe that had been the moment Ilya had decided he wanted to do this; he'd wanted to skate as beautifully as his mother and hear the ice make that perfect sound beneath his feet.

Shane cups Ilya's face in his hands.

Ilya fell in love with hockey because of his mother. He fell in love with Shane because of hockey. So, in a way, Irina Rozanov led him here. *Thank you, Mom.*

Before Shane can say anything about the tears nearly spilling, Ilya breathes, "I'm so proud of you," against his lips and presses them together. He swears he can taste Shane's answering love.

"Oh, gross." When Ilya pulls away from Shane, Hayden's there, reaching for his own kids and wife.

Shane rolls his eyes, Jackie shushes him, and Ilya flashes him a barely concealed bird before closing his eyes and kissing his husband again. God, he's going to love being a trophy wife.

End Notes

I'd love more Heated Rivalry friends, so come find me on twitter and chat it up!

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