

want you to know who i am

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/76782131) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/76782131>.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Categories:	Gen , M/M
Fandoms:	Heated Rivalry (TV) , Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid
Relationships:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov , Ilya Rozanov & Svetlana Vetrova , Yuna Hollander & Ilya Rozanov , David Hollander & Ilya Rozanov , Shane Hollander & Yuna Hollander , David Hollander & Shane Hollander
Characters:	Yuna Hollander , David Hollander , Andrei Rozanov , Svetlana Vetrova , Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov , Original Child Character(s)
Additional Tags:	Post-Book 2: Heated Rivalry (Game Changers) , Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence , Domestic Fluff , Hurt/Comfort , Ilya Rozanov Loves Shane Hollander , Shane Hollander Loves Ilya Rozanov , Married Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov , Kidfic , Death by Bratva - Freeform , Eventual Happy Ending , Ilya Rozanov's Niece - Freeform , Fluff , Good Friend Svetlana Vetrova , Andrei Rozanov Dies , womp womp , Government Bribery , Girl Dad Ilya Rozanov , Girl Dad Shane Hollander , no beta we die like men , Found Family
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2025-12-31 Words: 7,656 Chapters: 1/1

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by [byulelle](#)

Summary

Ilya couldn't help it, gently collecting the small girl into his arms as she easily wrapped her arms around his neck. She was so light, lighter than she should be for a five year old, and yet the burden she carried had nearly weighed her down just as easily. Ilya swears he'd carve out a future where she would never shy away from the sunshine, where she would never question or second guess whether she deserves the calm, the warmth, the love that she receives.

Their deaths weren't her fault, never was, never would be.

"Uncle Ilyushka is here now."

Svetlana calls the Hollander-Rosanovs to inform them Andrei and Alexia have been killed. And that Katarina, his niece, has less than a week before she's officially filed in foster care.

Nobody wants to grow up in Russia's foster system. And Uncle Ilyushka of all people, would not allow it.

Notes

hi, so its been *checks notes* TOO DAMN LONG since ive last written something.

Warning: a LOT of google translated russian (so sorry russian literate readers cause i dont speak a lick of the language, i know i know ur culture is not my costume), if you DO speak russian and want to go yell at me for notes, please do

i have played hot and fast with logistics here, so please just let me get away with it \ (●'ε` ●) /

a few things before we start: i have read the first two chapters of tlg, and have made some adjustments for that, the show, and the book.

canon divergence - Shane and Ilya get married waaaaay earlier. Around the first year Ilya starts for the Centaurs (city hall wedding) + I pushed back Katya's age to five years old currently + the pair have not yet been outed

anyways, enough of me. hope you enjoy!!

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

April, Ottawa

The sky of Ottawa is pitch black, soft sounds of snoring fill the room, darkest hour cloaking the peaceful home with silence and sleep.

The faint, red glow of the clock ticks at 3:04AM, the pair barely getting two hours of sleep in, not with their naked bodies cuddled together in rumpled sheets.

Then vibrations break the monotonous sound, a groan coming from Shane, a light sleeper through and through as he groans and blinks, easily roused from his sleep as he peers over to see Ilya's phone glowing on his side of the night stand.

He shakes his husband awake, much to great effort. Ilya Rozanov slept like a goddamn bear, unbowed and unyielding. "Ilya," Shane grumbles, jostling his shoulder. "Rozanov!" he says with exasperation as the Russian gives him a petulant groan.

Rolling his eyes, Shane reaches across and his brows immediately raise, annoyance turning into concern. "Ilya. Ilya, it's Svetlana," he says, now worried.

"Ilya!"

"What?" the Russian finally budes, groaning as he blindly feels for his phone. Shane hands him the vibrating device, the call ending as silence fills the room again.

"Must be wrong dial," Ilya grumbles but then his phone comes to life again.

He rubs his eyes and blearily swipes on the green button, pressing the phone to his ear, yawning. "Надеюсь, это что-то важное, Светик."

"Андрей мертв." is the sentence that greets him. *Andrei is dead.*

Ilya's eyes fly open as he immediately straightens up, like a bucket of cold water is poured on him. "Что...?"

"Перестрелка с братвой. Алексия тоже была в машине." *The bratva got him and Alexia in a shootout.*

Shane is looking at him with worried and curious eyes, barely able to grasp anything from the conversation as he sits at a distance from Ilya before his husband jumps off the bed, hurriedly wearing boxers.

“Катя? С ней все в порядке? Что с ней случилось? Где она была?” he asks in rapid succession. *Katya? Is she okay? What happened to her? Where was she?*

Katarina Rozanova was five. Roughly just a few months when Ilya had cut ties with that family. But amongst his ire, only precious little Katya was free from it. He sent gifts annually through Svetlana, making sure she got them. He put a lot of money on a trust for her high school and college studies, was contemplating on a travel fund for her as well.

And now...

“С ней все в порядке, она жива. За ней присматривала няня, ничего плохого с ней не случилось.” Svetlana assures as he feels his legs turn into jelly, ducking down to try and hold back the emotions welling into him. “...Good,” he sighs in English. *She's fine, she's alive. A nanny was looking after her, and nothing bad happened to her.*

“Ей предстоит провести неделю под стражей, после чего её передадут в систему опеки —”

“Нет!” Ilya nearly shouts through the phone and she has to flinch and distance it from her ear due to the sheer volume of his distress, startling Shane as well.

Nobody wants to grow up in Russia's foster system. And Dyadya Ilyushka of all people, would not allow it. Not with the shitty cell-like bunks, the less than nutritious food, the overloading of children, the mistreatment, the malnourishment. He could not allow it. Not on his conscience.

Andrei was a shitty brother. Grigori a horrible father. Russia was everything he despised and never wanted to go back to except her. And Irina would certainly be upset if he allowed her granddaughter to be stowed away like cheap garbage.

“Слушай. Я забронирую билет на самолет в Москву. Я позову Катю, ты должна мне помочь.” *Listen. I'll book a flight to Moscow. I'll get Katya, you have to help me.*

“Обязательно. Встретимся в аэропорту имени Кеннеди, но ради бога, хотя бы Расскажи своему мужу, что происходит.” *Absolutely. We'll meet at Kennedy Airport, but for fucks*

sake, at least tell your husband what's going on.

Right.

Ilya ends the call abruptly and swallows down the lump on his throat. "...My brother got killed," he says, and Shane knows that's not the part that had upset him. "And they're throwing my baby niece in...in," he struggles through English, not knowing what they called it. "Child prison. Like orphanage, but not,"

"Foster care?" Shane supplies helpfully as Ilya frantically nods.

"Shane," he breathlessly says, collapsing by his husband's side of the bed, knees on the carpet. "I cannot let her."

"Okay," Shane sucks in a deep breath, "Then bring her here."

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"Ilya!" Yuna's breath clouds up as she rushes to him, giving him a firm hug as he shakily wraps his arms around her. It was at the asscrack of dawn, clocks striking 4:30.

"You take care out there, okay?" David's voice comes from behind him handing Ilya a steaming cup of Timmy's coffee, one for the road before he had to go through immigration for the earliest flight he could book to New York.

"We'll hold the fort down here," he assures Ilya, rubbing his shoulder and giving him a firm hug while Shane unloads Ilya's bag from the car.

Ilya is trembling, and English is currently lost on him. Jaw sewn taut, the coffee barely nipping at the cold dread that seeped into his bones, but he was grateful. That his Hollanders would always have his back as Shane steps in and gently rubs Ilya's arm. "I'll have dad help you in," he softly says as he glances at his parents to look away momentarily.

"Ilya," he softly says. A voice that had always been good at tearing him away from the crutches of his own thoughts. "Ilya, look at me," Shane softly urges, knowing he himself

didn't hold eye contact just as long. But he had to see Ilya before he goes.

"I love you," he mumbles, lips cold and slightly dry as Shane inches closer. And Ilya is careful to nurse the cup of coffee behind his husband as he desperately reaches across, his kiss scared and fervent. "I love you too," Ilya whispers against Shane's lips.

"Thank you, Shane," he sighs and closes his eyes, brows knit tightly. "I do not know why I am terrified," he says, accent thicker than usual, "I am, Shane,"

"Shh, shhh," Shane envelopes him in a hug, extending the hope that nobody that could recognize them in the dark car park would. "I know you are," he sighs and rubs Ilya's back, "But I'll always be back here. You'll be with Svetlana, yes? And before you know it, you're back," he assures with a soft smile, "And with Katya in tow,"

"With Katya," Ilya nods and takes a deep breath, steeling himself as he presses one last kiss to Shane's lips. "Wait for me,"

"I will," Shane nods with a smile, waving as David helps Ilya with his bags, walking towards the desolate and quiet airport.

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"Извините, что прерываю ваш медовый месяц." *Sorry to snap you out of your honeymoon,* Svetlana apologizes when Ilya settles to the airplane seat next to her. "He understands," he responds with a hint of sarcasm. They'd been married for a year now.

"Мне кажется, он всегда так делает." she hums. *I feel he always does.*

It had been a while since Ilya and Svetlana had been alone together. If he had to be honest, she might've replaced him with Shane altogether, her fondness for him now channeled towards his husband. The nerve of her.

"Можно ли ускорить этот процесс? Вообще?" *Can we expedite the process? At all?*

"У тебя есть деньги?" *Do you have money?*

Ilya scoffs at the question. "Что за чушь?" *What kind of bullshit question is that?*

"Уделяйте больше внимания другим вопросам." Svetlana looks at him sternly, "Катя тебя почти не знает. Хотя я сомневаюсь, что она вообще знает своих покойных родителей." *Be more concerned about other matters. Katya barely knows you. Though I doubt she knows*

her dead parents much either.

“Да, да, она этого не делает.” Ilya sighs, his leg uncharacteristically bouncing as he leans back and closes his eyes, taking in a deep breath. “Но я постараюсь. Я не могу просто бросить её, Светик.” *Yes, yes she doesn't. But I will try. I cannot just abandon her, Svetik.*

Ilya taps his fingers against the arm rest. He should've gotten a business class seat, but with the heat of the moment, Shane had clicked on New York to Moscow and sent it.

"Вы знаете, какая она?" *Do you know what she's like?*

"У неё кудри как у твоей матери. Андрей уже лысел ещё до её зачатия, но у неё выросли такие красивые кудри, К счастью." she smiles fondly at the memory, baby Ilya and his clumsy little self, so untainted by the world whenever their families came together for optics. "Как Маша," *She has your mother's golden curls. Andrei had already been balding when she got conceived so thankfully, her hair came out thick and healthy. Like Masha,*

"У Маши нет золотистых локонов." *Masha does not have golden curls.*

"Американская Маша... как её там называют? Goldilocks." *The American Masha...what do they call her?*

Ilya nods. He hadn't seen many pictures of Katya, regrettable as it was. He didn't want to outwardly show Andrei he cared, not in the way it could be exploited. He kept his distance, and now he feared it would be his undoing when it came to taking care of Katya.

"Думаю... ты ей понравишься." she ponders, "Вы всегда отличались добротой в общении с детьми." *I think she'd like you. You've always had a kindness to you whenever you interact with children.*

And he could hardly convince himself so. He'd babysat for Pike on more than one occasion with Shane, baby Amber easy to take care of, but he already had half a mind to consider the fact that not all children were the same. Especially this one. One who had probably spoke Russian exclusively, raised by her nanny and with parents now dead as if fulfilling some sick absentee clause to being a Russian parent.

He couldn't deny he was nervous. The most tender spaces of his heart, one thawed and thoroughly tenderized by the Hollanders—by Shane—was scared that this little girl would hate him. That being taken from one country to another would fuck her up more than letting her stay in Russia.

He shakes his head.

That was stupid. People in Russia wouldn't treat her well. It was a dog eat dog in that desolate place, and she would be passed on from one upper class family to another like a pitiful game of hot potato until she turns eighteen and is left to fend for herself.

If she even makes it that long, Ilya's intrusive thoughts supply. And Svetlana's hand finds his.

"Нет смысла думать об этом в таком катастрофическом ключе." she assures, "Подумайте. Что бы почувствовал Шейн в этот момент?" *There's no point in thinking about it this catastrophically. Think. What would Shane feel at this moment?*

That there was a girl, small and barely even six years old, now alone in the prison Ilya grew up in. That there was someone who needed love, needed sunlight, needed someone who remotely gave a shit. And that even in his fears, the anxiety that grips him, he would take a chance in this little girl. To give her a future just as warm and bright as growing up with Yuna and David Hollander. And Ilya wanted that for Katya too.

Whether it was to vicariously live through his niece or to genuinely break generational cycles—he wanted her to live a good life. A future where she would never shy away from the sunshine, where she would never question or second guess whether she deserves the calm, the warmth, the love that she receives.

"Постарайся выспаться, Илья." Svetlana cajoles, sighing as she allows him to rest his head on her shoulders. "Нам необходимо быть внимательными и бдительными после приземления." *Try to get some sleep, Ilya. We need to be present and alert when we land.*



"Pink?" Shane suggests as Yuna shakes her head. "No, no, that's too cliché for a girl room," she mumbles under her breath while looking at the color samples of hypoallergenic and fast drying paint.

"David..." Yuna raises a questioning brow at the color her husband is holding up, bright, Barbie pink. "We're trying not to give a child epilepsy. You know what— you go and look for a carseat for five year olds and up," she shoos her husband away.

Shane simply stands next to his mother. "I can't speak Russian," he suddenly blurts out.

Yuna raises a brow, though not quite looking at him while busily perusing through the samples, "Aren't you currently taking lessons?"

"Well, yes. But of course speaking to a five year old who grew up in Russia isn't the same thing," Shane rubs his face with his hand, slightly catastrophizing. As he always did and would.

His head is rife with questions—Would their hastily applied overhead fan fall off from the living room? Maybe he and Ilya should just move to the bedrooms right beside the guest bedroom they were making Katya's room? Was the room last checked for asbestos? What did Russian children even eat?

It didn't help that the pit in his stomach was also full of worry for Ilya's trip. Hoping that their marriage wouldn't deny him entry or worse, detain him.

"Here," Yuna holds a color sample in front of Shane, snapping him out of the cold and foreboding worry seeping into his bones, "What do you think?" she softly asks, knowing her own son like the back of her hand.

The color sample was a calm, cool-toned and faint yellow. It didn't look off-white, nor a millennial landlord's white, but the yellow wasn't too striking. Like the gradient pulled from the middle of dawn, when the sun starts to rise, but the darkness of the sky is still evident in a calm contrast.

"Yeah... this is good," Shane gives his mother a small, half-hearted smile as Yuna gently steers him with her, grabbing a tin from the employee.

"Assemble the montessori bed with your dad later, then we'll buy her sheets and throw pillows," she delegates, knowing that giving Shane something to do could ground him back to earth.

"I think she'll like Jellycats. And for her clothes, I think the standard sizing could work on her, but let's get a set smaller and larger just to be sure, whatever she doesn't use, we can donate to the Pikes,"

"Mom, why yellow?" Shane softly asks as Yuna hums and glances down at the sample card.

"Just so that it's a little brighter for her. I could only imagine how devastating it must be for such a young girl to lose both parents in a night," Yuna explains pragmatically, "I read from an Architect's Digest that color could really change a room's energy,"

By the time they're in line for check-out, Shane couldn't help but be surprised at how few they really bought for their newest addition.

"Shouldn't we buy more decorations?" he asks, knowing that he himself would rather keep things minimalistic. Though, he wasn't a six year old either, and Ruby and Jade Pike had very well-decorated rooms. "We wouldn't want to overwhelm her," David explains, his arm draped over Yuna's shoulder.

"She could pick out what she wants when she's acclimated with the both of you. Just, for now, some essentials,"

Shane just nods, picking apart what he could see one by one. A dresser, a montessori bed, a small rooftop shelf, sheets with yellow flowers dotted throughout the white, pillowcases that had off-white and yellow in two variants, a mattress, a rug, and a lamp.

All for Katarina Rozanova.

If he was being honest with himself, he didn't even know what she would look like. Have not pressed Ilya for pictures or information, not knowing that eventually, she'd fall into Ilya's care. Their care. God, it was nerve-wracking.

He knew that Ilya had more time in his hands. He had yet to shape the Centaurs into a team worthy of play-offs, but he couldn't help but worry how the both of them would manage parenthood. Regardless if their status was just Katya's uncles, they were still her guardians. Would they immediately enroll her in a primary school? Where would they put her in? Did Shane need a pediatric therapist on hold?

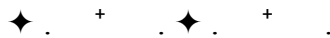
Taking care of a child was always in Shane's prerogative, but not now. He had always imagined, when he and Ilya were more than ready to retire, with him having more Stanley Cups under his belt than three, and when they were out. To the world, and not just in their small bubble.

That expedited process was already freaking him out. Scared that he'd somehow fuck up.

And ultimately, it scared him that he had been already so concerned for this little girl he had never met, the phantom of her existence somehow so real to him. Because whether he wanted to admit it or not, Shane had this way of being attuned to his husband's feelings whenever Ilya showed his soft underbelly. He knew Ilya cared for her, and in turn, he cared for Katya too.

So much so that he'd do everything to make her stay a fraction of bearable.

Starting with stripping down an entire room to make hers.



Ilya's heart breaks.

She was so *tiny*.

What exactly did Andrei feed this little girl?

She was seated so primly, so properly at the Women and Children's Safety Department waiting room, the sterile white nearly swallowing her whole. Her hands were placed perfectly on her lap, eyes looking down at the floor, and her legs scarcely swinging. Ilya could tell she wanted to, to break the monotony and regulate herself but she had been stiff as a board.

She looked a touch like Irina with golden curls that were tied into twin ponytails, her pouty little lips so Andrei it made Ilya's heart clench. And of course, the blue eyes that defined a Rozanov child. She looked nothing like her mother.

He slowly approaches her, immediately shrinking down to her level as she startles a little when he comes into view. And for the first time in Russia, his voice is soft.

“Привет, Катарина.” he offers her a gentle smile, “Ты помнишь меня?” *Hello, Katarina. Do you remember me?*

The little girl shakes her head with a small pout.

“А может, дядя Илюшка поможет?” he offers as she finally looks up, seemingly scanning such a familiar yet strange face. *Ah, maybe Uncle Ilyushka would help?*

“Дядя Илюшка?” she mumbled and repeats. “Из рассказов??” *Uncle Ilyushka? From the stories?*

Ilya smiles, gently placing a hand on her knee, looking for a negative reaction. “Да. Да, это я.” *Yes. Yes, that's me.*

“Ты брат папы?” she tilts her head. Smart girl, and Ilya could only assume Andrei has not talked bad about him. Probably couldn't due to Katya's money from him. *You're papa's brother?*

“Да, брат папы.” *Yes, papa's brother* he softly says.

Steering himself, he takes her small hands into his, a hidden little sweetie now slipped onto her hand as a peace offering of sorts. “Ты знаешь, куда ушли твои мама и папа?” he asks, trying to grasp the situation. *Do you know where your mama and papa went?*

And her response splits his heart into two. “Небеса,” Katya softly says, looking down at her lap. *Heaven.*

Ilya couldn't help it, gently collecting the small girl into his arms as she easily wrapped her arms around his neck. She was so light, lighter than she should be for a five year old, and yet the burden she carried had nearly weighed her down just as easily.

And within his arms, a dam breaks, her lips quivering as Ilya rubs her back, the very first comfort she had received since watching her parent's coffins get lowered down the cold earth. “Это не твоя вина, Катя.” Ilya assures her, hearing the small, broken sob tear through her lungs as he shuts his eyes tightly. *It wasn't her fault; never was, never would be.*

“Дядя Илюшка сейчас здесь.” *Uncle Ilyushka is here now.*

After a while, the door to the processing room swings open, Ilya looking over his shoulder when the clerk finally calls their names as Svetlana motions her head towards the door. Ilya sighs and gently takes her hands. “Дядя позаботится о том, чтобы с Катей все было в порядке, да? Пойдем.” he beckons her as she stands and fluffs her dress off before heading inside the office hand in hand. *Uncle would make sure Katya is okay, yes? Come.*

“All handled?” Ilya subtly asks in English, and Svetlana gives him a subdued but certain nod. The both of them know this is just a formality, that ultimately—with 11 million Russian rubles, Katya was going to go home with Ilya. Money moved things ahead, that much Ilya knew.

Ilya gently guides Katya out the shower of his hotel room, not bothering to stay at his old home. He didn't know what he was doing, and he would've done it with Svetlana's help, but if he was going to raise Katya, he had to know how to do it himself.

He gently pats her hair dry with a soft towel, small head so delicate and nearly gets engulfed by his hand as she closes her eyes and lets him. Growing up with a nanny has made her acclimated to strangers and it scares him just how easily he had been able to take her home, his only obstacle the Canadian immigration when they finally obtain Katya's passport from the police.

And once he pulls over some jammies on Katya, his phone buzzes and they both look at the device. Is it the police? she softly asks as Ilya grabs it and he softly smiles.

Jane. All these years, and he hadn't changed it. Like an inside joke, rather than an actual secret.

"Sweetheart," he greets, the FaceTime shifting to Shane as he tiredly beams at Ilya, glasses perched on his nose. "Hey, how is it there?" he asks before Ilya angles the camera down, facing it to Katya.

The little girl looks up at him with uncertainty. "Кто это?" *Who is that?*

"Мой муж." *My husband.*

Katya blinks, eyes scanning Ilya, clearly calculating the arrangement laid in front of her. "Значит, ты жена?"

Ilya could only laugh. Soft and gentle. "She thinks I am wife," he explains to Shane who he could see is already smiling.

"She's not wrong,"

"Yeah? So confident about it now, *Hollander,*"

"Introduce me properly to her, asshole," Shane bites back a grin.

"Hey, watch language, there is a child!" Ilya immediately protests as he sees Shane chuckle before he places the phone properly against the bathroom counter, hoisting Katya on his lap.

"Катя, это Шейн. Он мой муж и тот, кто ждет тебя дома." *Katya, this is Shane. He is my husband and the one who is waiting for you at home.*

"Дом?" Katya asks, worried "А как же ваш дом, дядя Ильюшка?" *Home? What about home here, Uncle Ilyushka?*

Shane quiets, glancing at his husband through the screen as Ilya takes a deep breath. He could

not find himself to lie to her, he had to have more faith in Katya's abilities to process certain things, underestimating Katya now wouldn't do her any good and he knows to a certain extent, she knows her parents are never coming back.

"Катя, раз мама и папа теперь на небесах, кто-то должен о тебе позаботиться." he whispers and gently caresses her face. "Катя должна поехать с дядей Ильей и дядей Шейном, чтобы быть в безопасности." *Katya, since mama and papa are in heaven now, someone has to look after you. You have to come to Uncle Ilya and Uncle Shane to be safe.*

"Значит, я пойду с тобой? К тебе домой?" *So I'm gonna come with you? To your house?*

"Да, Катя. В дом дяди Ильи." *Yes, Katya. To Uncle Ilya's home.*

"Чтобы Катя была в безопасности?" *So that Katya would be safe?*

"Чтобы Катя была в безопасности." *So that Katya would be safe.*



"My, my, crying already?" Svetlana pushes through Ilya's hotel room, the piercing cries of Katya ringing through the hallway.

Ilya gives her a tired, pained smile as he soothingly rubs Katya's back. "Do you think the hotel staff could be discreet about this?" he softly tells her in English to spare Katya the additional toll on her pride and Svetlana's gaze drifts through the soaked sheets where Katya had slept.

"Катя — плохая девочка. Прости, дядя Илюшка." she sobs, clinging to his shirt as her eyes grow puffy and red, terrified of the repercussions she might face and it makes his heart crumble to bits by the base of his stomach. *Katya is a bad girl. I'm sorry Uncle Ilyushka.*

He knows exactly what it was like, to soil the bed and be hit as a punishment in turn. By age six, he'd known how to hide wet and soiled sheets from his father, the first of his many lessons in hiding. And he decides that Katya was not about to suffer the same fate as other Slavic children. She had just witnessed her parents get buried six feet deep and now some strange man she could only recognize from stories had come to take her away from her home, Ilya could justified soiled sheets just as readily.

"Нет, нет... Катя, послушай дядюшку," he soothes, "Ты не плохая девочка, понятно? Да, ты попала в аварию, но дядя не собирается причинять тебе вред." he placates and wipes her tears from her thin cheek, skin smooth and warm to his huge, calloused touch. *You're not a bad girl, okay? Yeah, you had an accident, but Uncle isn't going to hurt you.*

Her lower lip trembles, hiccupping so hard she's turning red and breathless as Ilya blows on her face to try and calm her down, rubbing her thin arms with a firm yet painless grasp.

"Теперь дядя меня ненавидит?" she asks heartbreakingly. *Does uncle hate me now?*

Ilya shakes his head, pressing a gentle kiss on her forehead. "Дядя никогда не смог бы тебя ненавидеть." he shakes his head, "Uncle could never hate you," he reaffirms in English before taking her hand, guiding her to the bathroom as he takes a deep breath.

"Давай приведём тебя в порядок, а потом поедem в аэропорт."

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"Hi," Shane breathlessly greets, immediately engulfing Ilya into a hug, relieved and nervous all the same as Ilya groans and presses a kiss on Shane's temple, then his nose, then his lips, tongue immediately slipping through as he holds his husband close. It had been too long.

"Hi, Моя любовь," Ilya smiles, caressing his husband's face before breathing in his scent, nose pressed to Shane's crown. "I'm home," he mumbles against the soft, black tufts. "Mhm, welcome home."

Ilya steps back just a little, gently lowering the pink bag by the entryway and finally moving aside as Svetlana gently guides Katya up the steps to their front steps with a smile to match her touch. "Meet Katarina," she smooths her hair down and Shane is positive he could have a heart attack right there, on their porch. Squatting down to the little girl's level, Shane sticks his hand out with a safe distance with an accommodating smile.

"Привет, Катя." *Hello, Katya.* "My name is Shane," he softly greets. Katya looks up at Ilya with wariness in her eyes but her uncle simply nods, and she shyly takes Shane's hand, the strange man shaking hers gently. Not too long, but the touch was friendly. Welcoming. Warm.

"Добро пожаловать домой," he tries, looking up at Svetlana hopefully, receiving an approving nod for his pronunciation. *Welcome home.*

With her small hand encased in Ilya's, they guide her to the guestroom right beside theirs, Shane opening the door as the scent of vanilla diffuser greets them. Her name was carved out in wood with English letters, Katya.

"This is your room now," *Это теперь ваша комната.* Shane and Ilya speak in tandem, one after the other.

"If you need anything, you tell Shane or Ilya," *Если вам что-нибудь понадобится, скажите Шейну или Илье.*

Katya has a deathgrip on the hem of her grey dress, still unsure of the offer as Ilya softly chuckles and grabs Shane's hand, guiding his husband to sit on the lowered montessori bed, before beckoning her closer.

She pouts, lower lip wobbling while approaching them with gingerly taken steps as Ilya welcomes her into his arms and whispers, “В этом доме можно плакать, Золотце,” *It's okay to cry in this house, precious.*

And she does, sobbing quietly and clambering up into Ilya's arms, she cries her tiny heart out. Shane couldn't pin whether its the pressure of being in a foreign land with strange people, or the relief of finding a home after a devastating tragedy for her.

What mattered is that she could cry into Uncle Ilyushka's arms, safe at long last and never going back to Russia. Ever.

After a tumultuous afternoon of barely touched food and acclimating her to the home like a skittish kitten, Katya has finally gone to bed.

“Do you think we'd be...okay at this?” Shane asks, head now resting on Ilya's chest as he sighs and traces his husband's skin. “We're basically like, her parents now,”

“We have to try, sweetheart,” Ilya presses a kiss to his crown, missing him so much after a week of being apart. “I think I have to talk to Coach Wiebe for an extra time off,”

“But you just started,” Shane lifts his head with a small frown. “We can think of something else,”

“Shane,” Ilya chuckles softly, “Is okay, my love. Centaurs still at early stages of thawing,” he assures him, “Won't make it to play-offs this season, I am sure,”

“Thawing huh, big word,” Shane smiles with amusement.

“I am learning,” Ilya simply beams and settles into their sheets further. “I think you keep speaking to Katya in English. She is watching the English kid shows, downloaded some before flying,”

“I will. Not like I have much of a choice, her Russian is more advanced than mine,”

“And I heard uh...children's brains are like sponge, Yuna said. Fast at processing information at that age,”

“And it would take her a while to unlearn a few things from Russia,” Shane adds, which makes Ilya freeze a little before nodding. “Yes. The faster she grows out of those, the better,”

Shane pulls the covers over them with a ponderous, far-away glance. And Ilya just watches with a fond smile, waiting for his husband to give his sale's pitch. He always did, especially for situations like these. “When Katya is ready to integrate into school, I have looked into Elmwood. They're international and have a few Russian students among them,” he starts.

“But for now, if she can handle it with the stress of moving here, we can hire her an English tutor. I highly doubt she'd be comfortable left with me just yet,” Shane starts compartmentalizing while Ilya just stares and watches his husband like he had hung the stars.

“I don't know how she's going to be with doctors, but I have a pediatrician's number on standby, closest we have from here but also with glowing reviews, of course,” he mumbles with a focused furrow between his eyes, “She’s so thin, Ilya...what could we make to have her eat more? I do have a nutritionist's contact saved but I think what matters most is her preference for food,”

“...You really thought about it, huh?”

“How could I not?! Ilya, there's a whole kid right next door,” Shane looks at him like he had grown a third head, “You haven't?”

“Honestly? My only thought was getting her out of Russia,” Ilya sheepishly admits, “My plan would've...what's the word, come and go,” he shoots his husband with a boyish, almost apologetic smile.

“But that's why I'm grateful to have you, yes? Boring logistics and all that,”

“You're lucky to have me, asshole,” Shane couldn't hide the quirk of his lips while shoving Ilya's shoulder away playfully.

Suddenly, they hear the small patters of feet against the wooden floor and Katya finds their door ajar. Peering inside, she immediately starts to retreat when she sees her new uncles now in bed, resting.

But Ilya calls out to her, soft and gentle. “Katya,”

She peers through again, and he is getting out of bed before ducking to her level, “Да, Зайка?” *Yes, bunny?*

Katya shakes her head, “Неважно, дядя. Со мной все в порядке.” *Nevermind, uncle. I'm okay.*

“Нет, нет, скажите. Что вам нужно?” *No, no, tell me. What do you need?*

Katya fidgets with her small jammies, still hanging off her thin frame as she presses her lips together and finally caves, tiptoeing to whisper in Ilya's ear, still shy with Shane in the room. “Я не могу уснуть. Мне страшно.” *I can't sleep, I'm scared.*

“Ты хочешь, чтобы дядя спал рядом с тобой?” *Do you want uncle to sleep next to you?* Ilya asks as she shakes her head, clearly cognizant enough to not want to pull her uncle away from his husband.

But Shane just smiles and approaches the both of them, rubbing Ilya's back. “You can have Uncle Ilyushka,” *Вы можете взять с собой дядю Ильюшку* he assures her. “When Uncle

Shane couldn't sleep, I also look for Uncle Ilya to help me,” *Когда дядя Шейн не мог уснуть, я тоже обращался за помощью к дяде Илье.*

Katya blinks, still hesitant but ultimately relaxing her grip on her now wrinkled pajamas. Both Ilya and Shane wait patiently for a response.

Shane doesn't take it personally, already expecting as much that Katya would prefer Ilya over her. The familiarity and family ties are right there, and he was foolish to be jealous of a struggling five-year old. And he knows Katya could feel that.

So before they both know it, Ilya is crammed with Katya in her bed, now fast asleep as she cuddles in close, drifting off to dreamland.



June, Ottawa

“More please,” Katya lifts up her plate to Shane as he and Ilya shuffle around the kitchen, accent still thick on her tongue, but trying nonetheless.

“How many do you want, princess?” asks Shane, glancing sideways to check how many were left of the tuna melts Ilya had made. It was one of the few things Katya could actually finish, and exploring her palate was not their number one priority.

Not when she had night terrors, or threw up occasionally, or made accidents on her bed. Their priority was trying to improve her quality of life.

Which Shane could only hope was working for Katya as she shows two fingers. “Here you go, princess,” he softly says, serving up two small slices of tuna melt. Katya gives him a small, shy smile, “Thank you,” she says.

Her English had improved significantly. With basic words such as ‘*hello*’, ‘*thank you*’, and ‘*may i have*’, and ‘*need potty*’, the understanding of the language easy for her impressionable mind. Her hesitance towards Shane had whittled down into instinctive shyness, but nonetheless, her acceptance of her current situation was steady. And that much was enough to relieve Shane.

In turn, Shane's understanding and reception to Russian had improved. He could keep up slow sentences and few words Ilya would use regularly.

“Как тебе на вкус, Зайка?” Ilya asks while wiping his hands on a kitchen towel. *How do you like it, bunny?*

“Всё хорошо, дядя Ильюшка.” *It's good, uncle Ilyushka*, she says, while swinging her legs from the high stool of the kitchen counter.

“That's good,” Shane sighs and gently caresses Katya's cheek, unable to help himself. It had been filling out nicely, since she got here despite the off chance she expelled her food.

“If you need anything more, just tell us,” he says, now a regular mantra, an assurance for the young girl they could only hope she would never forget.

“Any plans today?” Shane asks Ilya, hands snaking into the back pocket of his husband's shorts.

“I was thinking...” Ilya says, draping the kitchen counter cleaner on the handle of the dishwasher. “Maybe its time we start to try taking her to the supermarket?”

“Both of us? Wouldn't that be risky if someone spots us? You take her, I'll stay home,” Shane frets. Being outed was one thing, but being swarmed with paparazzi would be a match made in hell for Katya's adjustment.

“Right,” Ilya sighs and squeezes Shane's free hand, “I'm sorry if there aren't opportunities for her to...bond with you outside,” he apologizes but his husband just gives him an assuring smile.

“We'll have our time, what's important is she gets to spend some time outside too,” Shane caresses Ilya's face. “I'll go prepare her clothes, have her finish her food,” Shane gently presses a kiss on Ilya's lips, unabashed in his love, especially in front of Katya. Ilya gives his butt a love tap, garnering a playful glare from Shane as he retreats to Katya's room.

“Кролик,” he addresses her, leaning against the other side of the counter, “Сегодня ты пойдешь в продуктовый магазин с дядей.” *Bunny, you're coming with me to the supermarket today.*

And a twenty minute journey later, with a very cute ensemble of denim overalls and a frilly blouse beneath, the pair had arrived.

“Me-tro,” Ilya pronounces as Katya parrots while they walk small hand in a calloused one towards the entrance from the parking lot.

“Meh-tro,”

“Close enough,” Ilya shrugs and smiles as he grabs a cart and gently deposits her into the child seat. “You tell uncle what you want, yes? We will practice English while buying things lunch,” Ilya says and taps her nose as she softly chuckles and nods.

He adjusts his shades and ballcap of the Phoenix Suns, trying to be as inconspicuous as possible because ESPN would have a field day if they spotted thee Ilya Rozanov with a child. But he could never hide Katya away, his heart wouldn't be able to take it.

Rolling the cart in, he could see Katya looking around, taking in everything as she blinks and nearly short circuits at the sights and smells of a Canadian supermarket. Not like the small

grocery stores back in Moscow.

“What that?” Katya immediately points once they get to the meats section and Ilya sees the sign ‘**Moose**’. Good lord, Canada.

“Is moose,” Ilya says, “Something like *Лось*,”

“Здесь продают лосей?” Katya's eyes widen and Ilya couldn't determine if it was wonder or disgust as he shrugs. “Well, yes,”

“Try?” Katya looks up at him all amazed and awe-struck, Ilya's resolve immediately crumbling. He doesn't think Shane would partake, and if Katya decides she doesn't like it? Well, Ilya Rozanov's diet would be moose for a whole day. And that was a gamble he was willing to take, always.

“Okay, let's try,” Ilya chuckles. It was dangerous—unable to say no to his pretty little niece.

Shane was going to kill him for not sticking to the list.

Then again, if it was for Katya? He knows he'd get away with it.

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Shane and Ilya immediately avert their gaze when Katya looks up. They don't mean to hawk over her while she tries seared moose meat, but every reaction was one they didn't want to miss. They hear the cutlery scrape against the plate and the pair look back when Katya takes a bite. Then chews, then sticks her tongue out when she spits the gamey meat back out.

“Ah, figured,” Shane softly chuckles, a little relieved that Katya didn't force herself to eat just about anything anymore. The first week she had arrived to them, she would force herself to keep everything down and be sick afterwards.

At least now, she wasn't scared to be honest.

“I don't like it,” she frowns as Ilya nods and takes the plate. “At least you tried it, princess,” Shane pats her head. “Now, would spaghetti be alright for dinner?”

“Yes, uncle Shane,” she nods, now a little shy but once she sees Ilya taking her spoils down the house, the calmness seeps into her with a warmth she couldn't explain. The safety these two men provide her.

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Ilya, for the most part, slept like he was constantly hibernating. Save for the fact that he had edged Shane the night before six ways to Sunday, he was knocked out cold.

As compared to his husband who couldn't wake up any later than his body clock allows. No matter how tired, how spent he was.

And with ritualistic care, Shane has always started his Sundays swiffing, cleaning, and tidying up. He fondly smiles when he straightens the askew bunny Jellycat on the couch, Katya's presence making this house brighter. Her toys had been tucked neatly in the box by the edge of the couch, always so perfectly kept by the little girl, a poncho for summer showers hanging by the coat rack beside the foyer's console, tiny shoes beside their much bigger ones.

A full house.

Once Shane shuts the cleaning closet, he could feel a pair of eyes on him right by the stairs as he turns and sees Katya hide behind the wall. Chuckling, he faces the stairs and calls out to her, "Come, Katya. It's okay, you can come down here with me,"

And a beat later, the fluffy blonde curls peek out followed by baby blue eyes.

"Are you hungry? I can make you breakfast," he offers, waiting for her by the base of the stairs as she shakes her head but ultimately takes his opened hand, just standing there all shy but wanting to somehow have his attention. And she had it.

"What do you want to do then? While we wait for our Ilyushka to wake up?" he smiles and bends to her level.

"Watch Blue's Clues? With uncle Shane?" she suggests and truly, who was Shane to say no to such a sweet request.

He nods, guiding her to the living room and putting on Blue's Clues from the hard drive Yuna had found while rifling through Shane's childhood things in hopes of finding something for Katya. He readies the couch for her and sits down, patting the space next to him while Katya stands in her jammies, curls unruly and still smelling like sleep.

She takes the spot, closer to Shane than he had expected and his heart just melts when she slumps down by his side. He hums and adjusts his arm, making sure she's comfortable.

He could cry. She was small, and warm, and so lovely. His and Ilya's baby girl.

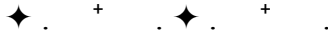
She lays her head on his lap, an attempt at closeness while her show plays. And Shane finds himself digging through her small hair care pouch on the coffee table while brushing and carding through her curls, always looking for negative reactions. But the buzz of the television and Steve's voice simply fills the silence between them, the comforting caress of his hands and the brush lulling Katya into a sense of security.

Her uncle Ilya was clumsy, and didn't know much what to do with her hair, but her uncle Shane was good and nice at it. Katya liked uncle Shane, how he didn't hover but somehow

was always a steady presence for her. She could see how much he loved her uncle Ilyushka, and that much was enough for her to love him too.

She likes it here. In this strange country, in this strange place, with her two uncles who would always catch her when she falls.

Ottawa had a more different smell than Moscow. But when the kitchen smells of tomatoes, or maple syrup, or when the sounds of laughter ring from the hallways, or the warmth of the water laps up her skin during bathtime – she knew she was home.



A year later – March, Ottawa

Katya blinks, the sliver of sun escaping her blinds as she groans and flops over her bed, rubbing her face into the pillow. After a while, she raises her head up, fleece blanket pooling beneath her while she rubs her eyes and wipes off the drool that she could feel on her cheek.

After the sleep wears off, she's one foot out the bed when she hears the usual bickering voices of her uncles before her door swings open, making her jolt as Ilya tugs the popper string, confetti flying through the door way, “Hey!”

“Happy birthday to you,” Shane starts singing as Katya blinks in surprise when he walks in with a cake and a lit up candle nestled into the frosting, “Happy birthday to you,” now Ilya joins as they crouch to the level of her low bed, “Happy birthday dear Katya,” they beam at her.

“Happy birthday to you! Happy birthday princess!” Shane presses a gentle kiss on her forehead as she beams up at him before Ilya caresses her cheek.

“С днем рождения, зайчик!” he doubles the kiss before helping Shane stabilize the cake. “Загадать желание!” he beckons as she giggles and clasps her hands, closing her eyes before blowing out her candle, the two men cheering once she does.

“What did you wish for, princess?” Shane asks as she beams and giggles. “Not telling! Won't come true!” she pouts and Shane sets the cake aside when Ilya starts tickling her sides, “Ah, so you're keeping secret now? Katya is keeping secret from her uncles now?”

“Uncle Ilyushka!” she squeals, crumpling and laughing gleefully before Shane joins in the teasing. “Noo! Not uncle Shane too!”

Her smile beams, birthday wish ruminating with her. *‘I wish I could stay happy with my uncles forever.’*

End Notes

does the ending read as a prologue more than a one-shot, PROBABLY. but i have few more hollanov fics lined up so hopefully i dont get pummeled by college before i could birth those out.

did i name katya after our queen yekaterina petrovna zamolodchikova? yes i did. katya is such a pretty name tho, i couldn't help myself.

also, knowing connor calls his sister bunny as an endearment is so cute to me. live laugh bunny.

finally taking requests on [tumblr](#)

BONUS CONTENT: [playmate](#)

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