

Ilya's Wag Shenanigans

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/76736536) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/76736536>.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Heated Rivalry (TV) , Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov , Yuna Hollander , David Hollander , Hayden Pike
Additional Tags:	ilya Rozanov as a wag , WAG , wag ilya , Post-Canon , Domestic Fluff , Ilya Rozanov is a Trophy Husband
Language:	English
Series:	Part 3 of Ilya and Shane as WAGs
Stats:	Published: 2025-12-30 Words: 5,053 Chapters: 1/1

Ilya's Wag Shenanigans

by [peiceabread](#)

Summary

I have made a discord server as a way to talk to more people from the fandom, along with that beta reader applications can be found in the announcements chat if you are interested - <https://discord.gg/e3SvBaeSZp>

After winning their third consecutive Stanley Cup, Ilya Rozanov decides to hang up his skates while Shane Hollander stays on the ice. Retirement isn't just about resting his knees, though—it's about navigating his new role as the First Lady of the Ottawa.

OR

More of play being a trophy husband and a wag

Notes

Y'all love the wag fics and so do I, any suggestions pls comment them I am open to trying to write almost anything love you

database of all my fics -

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1K05xfC0cJCv7ujHKqze_KhG5l0KMbPKriZjNNvM4EWI/edit?usp=sharing

The final buzzer didn't just sound; it vibrated through the ice, up through Ilya's skates, and settled deep in his bones.

The roar of the arena was deafening, a physical force that seemed to shake the very foundations of the building. But Ilya didn't look at the crowd. He didn't look at the score clock that read *Ottawa 4, Tampa Bay 1*.

He looked for Shane.

Shane was already skating toward him, gloves thrown to the ice, his face a mask of pure, unadulterated euphoria. They collided near the blue line, a crash of pads and sweat and adrenaline.

Ilya wrapped his arms around his husband, burying his face in Shane's neck. Shane didn't just hold him; he lifted him, spinning them around in a delirious, clumsy circle on the scarred ice. The world blurred into a wash of red and black and screaming fans until the only thing in focus was Shane's wild, shining eyes. Shane pulled him in, crashing their lips together in a kiss that tasted of sweat and victory and absolute relief. It was messy, it was desperate, and it was perfect.

Just as they broke apart, breathless and grinning like idiots, the rest of the team piled on.

"Three!" Shane was screaming, his voice cracking. "Three in a row, II! We did it!"

A dynasty. They had officially cemented it. Three Stanley Cups in three years.

When the chaos settled and the handshakes were done, Gary Bettman made his speech, but Ilya barely heard it. He only focused when Shane, the Captain, hoisted the silver chalice above his head. The light caught the metal, blinding and beautiful. Shane kissed the Cup, his eyes finding Ilya's instantly.

He didn't skate a lap. He didn't pass it to the veterans who were waiting. He skated directly to Ilya.

"Together," Shane said, breathless.

They had started as enemies. They had spent years trying to destroy each other. And now, at the end of the road, they were standing here. Ilya placed his hands on the Cup beside Shane's.

"Together," Ilya echoed.

They lifted it simultaneously, the weight familiar and perfect, screaming their joy into the rafters as the flashbulbs exploded around them. The Hollander-Rozanov era was etched in silver forever.

The adrenaline crash came two days later.

The euphoria was still there, buzzing in the background, but the silence of their living room felt heavy. Shane was nursing a bruised rib on the couch, while Ilya sat on the floor, methodically unlacing a brace from his knee.

"My contract is up on the first," Ilya said quietly. He didn't look up.

Shane paused, the ice pack on his side shifting. "I know. Management is going to offer you whatever you want, Ilya. A blank check. One year, two years. You know they will."

Ilya finished with the brace and set it aside. He looked at his hands—scarred, battered, ringless for the moment because his wedding band was safe in the box upstairs. "I cannot take it, Shane."

Shane sat up straighter, wincing. "What?"

"My body," Ilya said, tapping his knee. "My back. The fire... it is different now. I have won everything. Gold. Cups. Conn Smythe. I have nothing left to chase." He looked up, meeting Shane's gaze. "I am ready to stop."

The silence stretched. Shane looked devastated for a split second, before he masked it. "You're retiring."

"Yes." Ilya watched him carefully. "Are you?"

Shane looked down at his own hands. He flexed his fingers. "I... I don't think I'm there yet, Il. I feel like I've got more in the tank. Maybe one more year. Maybe two. I'm not ready to let go."

Ilya smiled, soft and genuine. He crawled over to the couch, resting his head on Shane's uninjured thigh. "Then you play. You play until you cannot skate. And I will be there for every game, cheering louder than anyone. I support you, *Solnyshko*. Always."

Shane threaded his fingers through Ilya's hair. "It won't be the same without you on the ice."

"No," Ilya agreed. "It will be quieter. And the refs will be happier."

The press conference room was packed to capacity. Every major sports network, every local beat writer, everyone was there. The cameras clicked incessantly as Ilya walked to the podium. He wasn't wearing a jersey today. He was in a sharp, bespoke navy suit, looking every inch the star he was.

Shane sat in the front row, right next to Ilya's agent and the GM.

Ilya adjusted the microphone, took a deep breath, and looked out at the sea of faces.

"Thank you all for coming," Ilya began, his voice steady, though his accent seemed thicker with the emotion he was holding back. "I will keep this brief, because I have a parade to attend on Tuesday."

Laughter rippled through the room. Ilya waited for it to die down, his expression sobering.

"When I came to this league, I was a kid with a lot of skill and, admittedly, a very big mouth." He smirked. "Some things do not change. But today, I am announcing my official retirement from the National Hockey League."

The shutters clicked furiously, a wall of sound. Ilya looked down at the podium, gathering his thoughts.

"I need to start at the beginning. I want to thank the Boston organization. You drafted a wild, arrogant Russian kid who thought he knew everything. You gave me my start. You taught me that talent is nothing without discipline, even if it took me a long time to learn that lesson. I was not always easy to love back then, but you gave me a chance."

He looked up, his gaze sweeping the room before landing on the cameras.

"And to Ottawa. My home. When I came here, I was... let's say, 'complicated.' I was the villain in your story for so long. But this city... you embraced me. You let me be myself, loud and aggressive and passionate. You gave me a city that breathes hockey, that lives and dies with every shift. Winning one Stanley Cup is a dream. Winning three, here, creating a dynasty in this city? It is not just a dream. It is a miracle. To the fans: you are the heartbeat of this team. Thank you for cheering for me, even when I was in the penalty box."

Ilya took a breath, his hands gripping the sides of the podium tightly.

"To my teammates, past and present. We have bled together. We have broken bones and lost teeth together. You are my brothers. But..."

Ilya's eyes drifted to the front row, locking onto Shane. Shane, whose eyes were red-rimmed and shining.

"I have lifted many trophies. I have gold medals. I have awards. But the greatest championships were not just the ones I won for Ottawa. They were the ones I won with my husband."

The room went completely silent.

"We started as enemies," Ilya said, a small, fond smile touching his lips. "Fire and ice. We hated each other because we were the only ones who understood each other. To go from wanting to check him through the glass to standing beside him, passing him the Cup... that is the journey of my life. Shane, you pushed me to be better. You demanded greatness from me every single day. To play beside the love of my life, to go to battle with him every night... that has been the greatest honor of my career. You are the best captain I have ever known, and the best man I have ever loved."

Shane ducked his head, rubbing his nose, clearly fighting tears. Ilya's voice wavered slightly, but he pushed on.

"I also must thank two people who are not my blood, but who are my family. Yuna and David Hollander."

He looked directly at the camera, his face open and vulnerable.

"When I was traded here, I was lost. I was angry. You did not have to open your door to me. You did not have to feed me, or listen to me, or treat me like I belonged. You took me in. You treated me like a son, even when I was driving your actual son crazy. You gave me a home when I felt I didn't have one. You taught me that family is not just who you are born to, but who you choose. I love you both, Mom and Dad."

Ilya stepped back from the microphone, looking out one last time.

"I gave everything I had to this game. My knees, my back, my heart. I have nothing left to give on the ice, and that is how it should be. I leave with no regrets. It is time for the next chapter. Thank you."

The master bedroom was quiet, save for the low, rhythmic hum of Shane's voice and the occasional rustle of sheets as Ilya tried—and failed—to find a comfortable position that didn't involve kicking his husband off the bed.

"No, Hayden. I know," Shane said, his voice dropping into that serious, furrowed-brow register that Ilya used to find annoying but now found overwhelmingly attractive. "Look, we just won the third. The parade isn't even until Tuesday. Can we talk about the media junket later?"

Ilya sighed, loud and dramatic. He flopped onto his back, staring up at the ceiling fan.

Shane didn't even flinch. He just reached out a hand blindly, his fingers finding Ilya's bare shoulder and squeezing gently, even as he continued arguing with his agent. "I get that it's history. I know. 'The Centaurs Dynasty.' It sounds great. But I'm exhausted, and my—" Shane paused, glancing down at Ilya, "—my family needs me."

Ilya smirked. *Family*. He liked that.

It had been seventy-two hours since they had lifted the Stanley Cup for the third consecutive year. The Dynasty. That was what the papers were calling it. The Hollander-Rozanov Era. They had done the impossible. They had turned Ottawa into a city of champions.

And twenty-four hours ago, Ilya had stood at that podium and made the announcement.

He was done. He was hanging up the skates. He was going out on top—the absolute, undisputed peak—before his knees turned to complete dust or his back gave out for good. It was the perfect ending.

But now, lying in the dark while Shane remained very much *active* roster, the reality was setting in. Shane was negotiating press tours and training camps. Ilya was negotiating... how long he could sleep in tomorrow.

Ilya rolled onto his side, draping an arm heavily over Shane's waist, his fingers toying with the elastic of Shane's boxers. Shane caught his wrist, brought Ilya's hand to his mouth to kiss the knuckles, but kept talking. "Thursday. I'll give you Thursday. Okay. Bye."

Shane lowered the phone but didn't put it away. He was scrolling through emails.

"Pay attention to me," Ilya grumbled, pressing his face into Shane's side. "I am a retired legend. I require worship."

"You require a handler," Shane murmured, though he smiled. "Give me two minutes, Il. Hayden is freaking out about the *Sports Illustrated* cover shoot."

"Tell him I will do it only if I can be naked holding the Cup."

"He wants *me* on the cover, Ilya. You're retired. You're old news."

Ilya gasped, biting Shane's oblique lightly. "Rude. I am iconic. I am eternal."

Shane laughed, the sound vibrating through his chest against Ilya's cheek. It was a good sound. The sound of a man who had won everything there was to win.

Suddenly, the phone on the nightstand—Ilya's phone—buzzed. Then it dinged. Then it buzzed three times in rapid succession.

Ilya groaned, reaching over Shane to grab it. "Who is bothering me? If it is reporters, I am throwing this phone in the toilet."

He unlocked the screen. His eyebrows shot up.

You have been added to "Centaur's Partner Support 🍷🍷"

Ilya blinked. He sat up, the sheet pooling at his waist. "Shane."

"Mmm?" Shane was still typing a text to Hayden.

"Look."

Ilya opened the chat.

Admin (Sarah - Goalie Wife): *Added Ilya Rozanov*

Sarah: *OMG WELCOME!!!*

Jessica (Rookie GF): *Is this real? Hi Ilya!!*

Maddie (Defense Wife): *About time lol. Now that you aren't officially on the roster, you belong to us.*

Ilya stared at the screen, a mixture of horror and amusement curling in his gut. For years, he had been the teammate. The rival. The co-captain. The legend.

Now? He was the spouse.

"What is it?" Shane asked, finally putting his own phone down and sensing Ilya's frozen state.

"I have been summoned," Ilya whispered. "I am in the WAGs chat."

Shane snorted, sitting up to look over Ilya's shoulder. "No way."

"Yes way. Look."

The messages were flying in fast now.

Sarah: *Wait, guys. We have a problem.*

Jessica: *What?*

Sarah: *The group name. It's 'Centaur's Wives and Girlfriends'. WAGs. Ilya is... neither.*

Maddie: *He's a HAB. Husband and Boyfriend.*

Sarah: *But 'WAGs and HABs' sounds like a disease.*

Ilya didn't type anything. He just watched, fascinated, as the council of Ottawa partners deliberated his fate.

Jessica: *What about 'Centaur's Partners'?*

Maddie: *Too corporate. Sounds like a law firm.*

Sarah: *We need to keep the WAG brand. It's iconic.*

Unknown Number: *Just call it 'The Real Housewives of Ottawa + Ilya'.*

Ilya laughed aloud. "Who is that?"

"That's probably Tarasov's wife," Shane said, grinning, his chin resting on Ilya's shoulder. "She's funny."

Sarah: *Okay, I'm making an executive decision.*

Maddie: *Do it.*

The screen flickered as the group chat name was updated.

Group Name changed to: WAGs + Ilya 🏆🏆

Ilya stared at the name. *WAGs + Ilya.*

"Unbelievable," Ilya muttered, trying to sound offended but failing. "I am a three-time Stanley Cup Champion. I am a Conn Smythe winner. I am an Olympic Gold Medalist."

"And now," Shane said, kissing the side of his neck, "you are the First Lady of the Ottawa Centaurs."

Ilya typed his first message into the group.

Ilya: *I expect the gossip to be top tier. And if anyone plans a knitting circle, I am out.*

Sarah: *Honey, we're planning the parade after-party. You bringing the vodka?*

Ilya: *I am Russian. What do you think?*

Maddie: *ONE OF US. ONE OF US.*

Ilya locked the phone and set it back on the nightstand. He turned to look at Shane. Shane, who looked tired and happy and so incredibly in love.

"So," Ilya said, sliding his arms around Shane's neck. "WAGs plus Ilya."

"It has a ring to it," Shane teased.

"I suppose," Ilya mused. "Being a WAG is hard work, Shane. I will need to be pampered. I will need spa days while you are at practice. I will need your credit card."

Shane laughed, pulling Ilya down into the pillows. "You have your own millions, you asshole."

"It's the principle of the thing," Ilya whispered against Shane's lips. "Now, hang up on Hayden. Your WAG needs attention."

Shane didn't need to be told twice.

Three weeks later, retirement looked a lot like scrambled eggs and expensive coffee at 10:00 AM.

Shane was already dressed for a workout, sitting opposite Ilya at their kitchen island, scrolling through his tablet. Ilya was in his silk robe—because he was a retired legend and he could wear silk robes until noon if he wanted to—picking at a croissant.

His phone, sitting next to the butter dish, lit up. Then it vibrated. Then it dinged.

Ilya took a sip of coffee, ignoring it. It dinged again. A long, sustained vibration followed.

"Your fan club is active this morning," Shane commented without looking up.

"It is the group chat," Ilya said, finally picking up the device. "Probably Sarah complaining about the venue for the charity gala again. She thinks the lighting washes out her..."

Ilya's voice trailed off. He squinted at the screen. His eyes widened slightly, then narrowed. He looked up at Shane.

"Did Miller say anything to you this morning? At the gym?"

Shane looked up, blinking. "Miller? No. We just did legs. He was complaining about his hamstrings. Why?"

"He did not mention... a life-changing event?"

"No," Shane said, frowning. "Did he get traded? Is he hurt?"

Ilya smirked, tapping his phone screen with a manicured nail. "No. He is going to be a father."

Shane dropped his fork. "What?"

"Jessica just posted a picture of a positive test," Ilya said, turning the phone around so Shane could see. "And tiny socks. Why do they always post the tiny socks?"

Shane leaned in, squinting at the photo. "Holy shit. Benny's having a kid? He's twenty-two. He can barely take care of his dog."

"Well, tell him to learn fast," Ilya said, pulling the phone back as it started vibrating continuously. "Because the council has convened."

"The council?"

"The WAGs," Ilya corrected. "Look at this."

He shoved the phone into Shane's hand. Shane scrolled through the rapid-fire messages.

Jessica: *IMG_4920.jpg (Positive Test)* **Jessica:** *IMG_4921.jpg (Socks)* **Jessica:** *Guys we are literally shaking right now!!! Benny is still asleep lol*

Sarah: *AHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!* **Maddie:** *OH MY GOD JESS!!! CONGRATS AUNTIE MADDIE IS READY* **Sarah:** *I am literally crying at Starbucks.* **Unknown (Tarasov's Wife):** *Welcome to hell. Just kidding. Sort of.*

Ilya: *Congratulations. Do not name him after a hockey player. It is tacky.*

Jessica: *OMG Ilya!!! Thank you!!*

Sarah: *Okay we need to plan the shower ASAP.* **Maddie:** *Theme??* **Sarah:** *Winter Wonderland? Since the baby is due in Feb?* **Maddie:** *Cute!! Or 'Rookie of the Year'?*

Shane handed the phone back, shaking his head in disbelief. "Benny is asleep. He doesn't even know she posted this yet."

"He will know when he wakes up and sees three hundred notifications," Ilya said, buttering a piece of croissant calmly. "This is the power of the WAGs, Shane. We know everything before the beat writers. Before the coaches. Sometimes before the husbands."

Shane chuckled, picking up his coffee. "Remind me never to piss off your group chat."

"Wise choice," Ilya agreed. "Now, excuse me. Sarah is asking for opinions on gender reveal cakes, and if I do not intervene, they will choose something with blue fondant that stains everyone's teeth."

Shane watched him type furiously, a soft smile playing on his lips. "You love this."

"I tolerate it," Ilya corrected, not looking up. "I am the voice of reason. It is a burden, but I carry it."

"Sure, Il. Sure."

The locker room smelled of ozone-cleaned gear and stale coffee, a scent Shane had associated with home for fifteen years. But today, it felt... louder. Not the usual pre-practice chirping, but a weird, vibrating energy.

Shane walked in, tossing his bag into his stall. Most of the guys were already half-dressed. Benny Miller was sitting at his stall, looking a little shell-shocked, staring at his phone with wide eyes.

Shane grinned, grabbing a roll of tape. He walked over and slapped Miller on the shoulder pad.

"Congrats, Benny," Shane said, loud enough for the guys nearby to hear. "Big news."

Miller jumped about a foot in the air. He whipped his head around, looking at Shane like he was a wizard. "What? How... I literally just..." He stammered, looking down at his phone, then back at Shane. "Jess only told me two hours ago. We haven't told anyone. I haven't even told my parents yet."

A few of the other guys stopped taping their sticks. Tarasov looked over, raising an eyebrow. "Congrats on what?"

"Benny's having a kid," Shane announced, beaming.

The room exploded.

"No way!" "Baby Benny having a baby?" "Does he know how to hold a baby?"

Miller was turning a deep shade of crimson, but he was smiling. He accepted the headlocks and the fist bumps, but his eyes were still locked on Shane.

"Seriously, Cap," Miller asked, wiping his face after Tarasov let him go. "How did you know? Did Jess call you?"

Shane sat down on the bench, beginning to lace his skates. He chuckled, a low, knowing sound. "No. Jess didn't call me."

"Then who?"

"Ilya told me over breakfast."

The room went quiet. Even the equipment manager stopped sharpening skates in the back.

Miller blinked. "Ilya? How does Ilya know? He's... he's retired. Is he talking to Jess?"

Shane looked up, enjoying this moment immensely. He saw the genuine confusion on the faces of his teammates. They still thought of Ilya as the terrifying Russian sniper who broke sticks over his knee when he missed a shot. They didn't know *WAG Ilya*.

"Boys," Shane said, tying his laces tight. "You're forgetting something important."

"What?" Tarasov asked.

Shane stood up, grabbing his helmet. "Ilya isn't just a retired legend anymore. He has a new title."

He looked at Miller, whose mouth was hanging open.

"He's in the group chat, Benny," Shane said, flashing a grin. "WAGs plus Ilya. Nothing stays secret anymore. Nothing."

A week later, the soft glow of an iPad screen illuminated Ilya's face in the dark bedroom. It was past midnight, but he was scrolling with the intensity of a man breaking down game tape.

"Il?" Shane's voice was thick with sleep. He rolled over, draping a heavy arm across Ilya's chest. "What are you doing? It's late."

"Research," Ilya muttered, not looking away from the screen. "Jess posted the registry link an hour ago. I need to get the good stuff before Sarah sees it. She has terrible taste, but she is fast."

Shane cracked one eye open, squinting at the bright screen. "Registry? For the baby?"

"Yes. Do you think a baby needs a wipe warmer? It seems excessive. But also... luxurious." Ilya tapped the screen. "Added to cart."

Shane chuckled, burying his face in the pillow again. "You're obsessed."

"I am competitive," Ilya corrected. "I need to win the baby shower."

"Can I come?" Shane asked, his voice muffled. "I like Benny. I should probably get him something."

Ilya scoffed, a soft, dismissive sound. "Absolutely not. It is WAGs only. Besides, you will be in Detroit playing a back-to-back. You are not invited."

"Harsh," Shane mumbled.

"It is the rules. No husbands. No boyfriends. Just champagne—sparkling cider for Jess—and tiny sandwiches." Ilya scrolled further down. "Look at this stroller, Shane. It has suspension. It costs more than my first car."

Shane propped himself up on one elbow, looking at the price tag. He whistled low. "Jesus. Benny is on an entry-level contract. He's gonna have a heart attack if he sees that."

"He will not see it," Ilya said firmly. "Because we are buying it."

"We are?"

"Yes. And the high-tech bassinet. And this... what is this? A 'Snoo'?" Ilya tapped it. "It sounds ridiculous. We are buying it."

Shane laughed, fully awake now, shifting to look at the list with him. "You're just going to clear out the whole registry?"

"Not the whole thing," Ilya said, his finger hovering over the 'Buy Now' button. "Just half. The expensive half. I will leave the bibs and the pacifiers for the others. But the big things? The things that matter?" He looked at Shane, a mischievous glint in his eyes. "The Hollander-Rozanovs provide."

Shane kissed his temple, settling back down. "Go for it. Get the wipe warmer too. Warm ass is important."

Ilya smirked, tapping the screen furiously. "Done. Benny Miller will have the best-equipped nursery in Ottawa. Now, go to sleep. You have practice in six hours."

"Yes, *mom*," Shane teased, earning him a sharp elbow to the ribs before Ilya turned off the iPad and settled into his husband's arms.

On the morning of the next home game, the "WAGs + Ilya" chat was already vibrating off the marble countertop of the kitchen island. Ilya was trying to enjoy his espresso, but his phone was having a seizure.

Sarah: *Okay, roll call for tonight! Who's coming?*

Maddie: *We'll be there. Bringing the gremlins.*

Jessica: *Me!! I'm wearing the new jersey Benny got me.*

Sarah: *Ilya? You coming? Or are you doing the Phantom of the Opera thing in your suite again?*

Ilya picked up the phone, typing with one hand.

Ilya: *I have a suite for a reason, Sarah. It is quiet. It has sushi. It does not smell like hot dogs and toddlers.*

Maddie: *Wow. Rude. We have wine.*

Sarah: *Seriously, Il. You're part of the family now. Stop acting like a Bond villain up there in your glass tower. Come down to the family room!*

Tarasov's Wife: *Leo keeps asking where the 'Giant Man' is. He wants to show you his new stick.*

Maddie: *Yeah, stop hiding! It's lonely at the top. Come mix with the commoners.*

Ilya rolled his eyes, but a small smile tugged at the corner of his mouth. He typed back.

Ilya: *I am not hiding. I am spectating with dignity. But... if the first period is boring, I might consider a visit.*

Sarah: *We'll save you a juice box.*

Ilya set the phone down, shaking his head. "Relentless," he muttered to himself. But as he went upstairs to pick out his outfit—something monochromatic and intimidating, obviously—he found himself considering which sunglasses would be best for indoor wear.

The following Tuesday night, the arena was buzzing. It was a rivalry game against Toronto, and the energy was electric.

Usually, Ilya Rozanov would be in Suite 204—the private box he and Shane had split the cost on so Ilya would have a "dignified" place to watch the games. It was stocked with his favorite vodka, high-end sushi, and zero annoying people asking for selfies.

But by the end of the first period, Ilya was bored. And Sarah's text about being a Bond villain was nagging at him.

He missed the noise. He missed the chaos. And honestly, drinking alone in a glass box felt a little too much like... well, like hiding.

So, during the intermission, Ilya adjusted his cashmere turtleneck, put on his sunglasses (indoors, because he could), and took the elevator down to the "Family Room"—the designated lounge for the players' wives and children.

He opened the door and was immediately hit with a wall of sound. Screaming toddlers, a TV blaring replays, and the chatter of a dozen women.

The room went quiet for exactly one second as everyone registered the six-foot-three Russian in the doorway.

"Ilya!" Sarah squealed, waving from a table where she was nursing a glass of white wine. "You actually came down!"

"The suite was... sterile," Ilya said, gliding into the room. He nodded at Maddie, who was trying to wipe ketchup off a four-year-old's face. "Hello, ladies. The officiating is atrocious tonight, yes?"

"Tell me about it," Maddie sighed. "That slashing call on Tarasov was a joke."

Ilya grabbed a bottle of water from the cooler and leaned against the wall, looking like a runway model who had taken a wrong turn into a daycare.

"Uncle Ilya!"

A small projectile launched itself at his legs. It was Leo, Tarasov's five-year-old son. Ilya looked down, his expression softening as he patted the kid's head.

"Hello, little bear. Why are you not watching the game?"

"Mom says we have to stay in here because we're too loud," Leo grumbled, looking up with big, sad eyes. Behind him, three other kids—a mix of defensemen's and wingers' offspring—nodded solemnly.

Ilya looked around the room. It was a nice room, sure. But it was small. And it smelled like apple juice and despair.

"This is unacceptable," Ilya declared. He looked at Sarah and Maddie. "You are keeping the next generation of talent in a cage."

"Ilya, they run into the aisles," Maddie said, exhausted. "Security gets mad."

Ilya scoffed. "I am security. I am Ilya Rozanov." He looked down at the kids. "Who wants to go on an adventure?"

Five hands shot up instantly.

"Ilya, are you sure?" Jess asked, looking up from her phone where she was likely adding more socks to her registry.

"I will return them," Ilya promised. "Eventually."

Five minutes later, the concourse of the arena witnessed a strange sight. A retired NHL legend, dressed in all black designer clothing, striding purposefully through the crowd, followed by a duckling-line of five children wearing miniature Centaurs jerseys.

"Stay close," Ilya commanded over his shoulder. "If anyone gets lost, you have to play for the Leafs."

The kids gasped in horror and huddled closer.

Ilya led them not to the seats, but on a grand tour. They ran down the long hallways, weaving through the concession lines. Ilya bought them all cotton candy—the blue kind that stained everything—and popcorn. He high-fived confused fans as he passed, the kids mimicking him with sticky hands.

"Can we see Shane?" Leo asked, his mouth full of sugar.

"Uncle Shane is working," Ilya said. "But we can go watch him from the sky."

He ushered the gaggle into the VIP elevator. The attendant looked at Ilya, then at the sugar-fueled mob.

"Suite level," Ilya said smoothly. "They are with me."

When the doors to Suite 204 opened, the kids' jaws dropped. It was massive. There were leather couches. There was a dessert cart. There was a view of the ice that made you feel like you were flying.

"Okay," Ilya said, clapping his hands. "Shoes off if you are going on the couch. Do not touch the vodka. Everything else is fair game."

For the next two periods, Ilya Rozanov held court. He didn't just let them run wild; he coached them.

"Look," Ilya said, pointing at the ice below as the kids pressed their faces against the glass. "See what Uncle Shane did there? He drew the defender to the left. Smart. But he should have shot sooner."

"My dad is faster," Leo argued.

"Your dad is a pylon tonight," Ilya corrected gently. "But we love him anyway."

When Shane looked up at the suite during a TV timeout in the third period, he expected to see Ilya sitting alone, maybe brooding. Instead, he saw his husband standing at the glass, holding a half-eaten bag of popcorn, surrounded by five jumping children who were all banging on the glass in unison.

Shane smiled, shaking his head as he skated back to the faceoff circle.

Back in the suite, Ilya raised his water bottle to the ice.

"See?" he told the kids. "He saw us. Now, who wants ice cream?"

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