

nighty night, papa's mama

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/78031196) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/78031196>.

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 , Original Children of Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov
Additional Tags:	POV Shane Hollander , POV Ilya Rozanov , Kid Fic , Married Life , Slice of Life , Mentioned Irina Rozanova , Grief/Mourning , ilya is healing his inner child through parenting xoxo , Ilya Rozanov Loves Shane Hollander , Shane Hollander Loves Ilya Rozanov , Hollanov Girl Dads , but they also have two sons in this lil universe of mine hehe but theyre not really mentioned , Past Mpreg , Male Pregnancy , but like just briefly mentioned , also this is my first fic i hope i'm tagging this right , i'm very sorry if i'm not , Domestic Fluff , Parenthood , but like its not really sad i promise , Married Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov , Soft Ilya Rozanov , Post-Book 6: The Long Game (Game Changers) , Girl Dads , Soft Shane Hollander , Family Feels , Parent Shane Hollander , Parent Ilya Rozanov , Ilya Rozanov is Good With Children , One Shot , Domestic , Good Parent Ilya Rozanov , Good Parent Shane Hollander
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of Our House
Stats:	Published: 2026-01-21 Words: 4,022 Chapters: 1/1

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by [hollanov_1410](#)

Summary

Shane and Ilya are living the domestic, married life they've always envisioned for themselves. But when their 3-year-old daughter experiences loss for the first time, in the form of a little bumblebee she befriended, Ilya finds himself guiding her through grief.

Notes

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

Shane's children had half of Ilya's DNA. They were 50% Rozanov, down to the bone. In theory, Shane had always known this would be the case, obviously. He knew this long before there was artwork covering every square inch of their fridge or sticky fingerprints smudged into the windows that seemed to multiply overnight no matter how often he cleaned them.

And he *had* looked forward to it. The idea of unmistakable little pieces of Ilya everywhere—their children with his moles and his curls and his stupidly contagious grin—had lived inside Shane long before they had ever talked seriously about kids. But what had definitely never made it into those hazy rose-colored daydreams was *this*.

The predicament he found himself in now. And, if he was being completely honest, most mornings.

Where he was sitting on the deck in the already blistering summer heat at seven a.m. on a Saturday, watching their 3-year-old daughter half-caked in dirt run around the backyard without a shirt on. She had ruined the one she had been wearing within five minutes of stepping outside, and Shane had made the executive decision to let the shirt go. Some battles were simply not worth the fallout, and he knew with absolute certainty that trying to haul her back inside and wrestle her into a clean shirt would inevitably end in a full-blown toddler meltdown.

So here he was. Sleep-crusted eyes, lukewarm tea, watching his tiny Rozanov tornado sprint in crooked circles across the grass.

Ilya and Shane both knew their daughter was...*busy*. That was the diplomatic word they used. Keeping her occupied inside the house only did so much, especially on mornings like these when her brothers weren't awake yet. Mila had gotten up earlier than usual, and if left inside, it was only a matter of time before she made a noise too loud, opened a forbidden drawer, or barged into a bedroom as soon as boredom hit her.

So Shane often found it easiest to just let her run outside to her heart's desire until her energy burned off.

Tiny gremlin mode.

"Daddy! Daddy, look!" She called as she skidded to a stop in the middle of the yard, with a grin too big for her little face.

Shane smiled into his tea. "I'm looking, baby."

She proceeded to do a very lopsided, very earnest somersault. She landed on her bottom, blinking a few times before popping back up to her feet like a spring, holding her arms out triumphantly. "Daddy! Daddy, did you see?"

Shane indulged her with a big nod, widening his smile. "I certainly did. Very impressive, honey."

She preened like he handed her the Stanley Cup. Then promptly took off running again, giggling.

After a few more minutes of manic laps, Mila spots something in the grass and immediately halted to a stop. She crouches, her long dark waves fall forward like a curtain as she does so.

Shane's stomach dropped. Mila going quiet was never good. Yesterday, when she was quiet at her little table in the living room while Shane finished dinner, it was because she had decided to taste-test the different colors of Play-Doh. He'd spent the next few minutes prying neon chunks out of her mouth, negotiating with a toddler who found it absolutely *hilarious* that her dad was panicking about this. She did not find it hilarious when he banned Play-Doh from the house for the rest of the week.

"Mila," Shane calls, immediately standing. "What are you doing?"

Mila doesn't hear him. Or, at least, pretends not to. Most likely the latter. She had a knack for doing that. Shane couldn't completely blame that one on Ilya's genes.

Sighing, Shane puts his mug on the deck banister and walks over to her in the patch of grass. Preparing himself for...well, anything.

She looked up at him only when he was beside her, her expression solemn. Big blue eyes so unmistakably Ilya's, her selective hearing suddenly intact again.

"Daddy," she squeaks. "Look." She points between her sneakered feet—her pink light-up sneakers that Ilya had caved in on and bought her earlier that week, despite the trip being strictly for toilet paper and batteries. Mila had refused to wear any other shoes since then. They were already scuffed in dirt, lights dulled under the grime. Shane made a mental note to scrub them clean today before they got any worse.

Shane diverts his attention from her shoes and looks.

And sees a little bumblebee right between her shoes.

It's wiggling a little, but not much. It clearly can't fly.

Mila goes to reach for it with her chubby little toddler finger, but Shane immediately intercepts. "No touching, baby. Bees can hurt."

She freezes, then nods seriously, not taking her eyes off the bee. The bee twitches. But not in a healthy way. Its wings lift weakly and then fall again. Shane knows what that probably means. But Mila is mesmerized by it. She loved playing in the dirt, and any time she came across a worm or a roly-poly or some other crawling insect, she always tried to pick it up. Or at the very least crouch close enough to study it. It made Shane's skin crawl. Not only was she entirely unbothered by dirt caked under her fingernails (which alone sent Shane into a quiet spiral), but there also wasn't a single wiggly little creature she seemed afraid of.

She lies down on her stomach, elbows in the dirt, and rests her chin in her hands as she watches the bee. "Bumba bee," she says reverently.

Shane smiles fondly and crouches beside her. He smooths his hand over her hair and she automatically leans into his touch. "It is a bumblebee," he says. "You're doing a very good job being gentle with it."

She smiles at that, but doesn't divert her eyes. She kicks her feet rhythmically against the grass, starting to hum a little under her breath. She can never stay silent or still for too long. "Daddy, he's my friend."

"I can tell," Shane tells her softly, brushing some of her dark hair out of her face and tracing a finger over her freckled cheek. "Just remember, no touching, okay?"

He probably didn't need to remind her again, but toddlers were unpredictable. Particularly his toddler. And besides, she had never been stung by a bee before. What if she was allergic and he didn't even know? He had an emergency EpiPen in the house, but now that he was thinking about it, it was probably expired by now—

"Okay," she mumbled into the palm of her hand, not taking her eyes off the bee.

Shane smiled and kissed her head as he rose to his feet. He went back to his seat on the porch, where his now-cold tea was waiting for him.

He expected Mila to lose interest in about three minutes. That's normally how her brain worked.

But three turns into ten.

Ten turns into twenty.

And she barely moves.

A few minutes later, the sliding door opened and Shane felt an arm wrap around his waist. A kiss to his cheek and then Ilya's sleepy voice: "Has our little tornado caused more grey hairs for Daddy?"

Shane huffed, but leaned into his embrace as they watched Mila. "She's been entranced by a bee for the past twenty minutes," Shane explains. "A dying bee."

Ilya lifts a brow. "Dying?"

"I saw it. It's, like, twitching. About-to-die twitching."

Ilya frowns at that and follows Shane's gaze. Mila's still kicking her feet up in the air as she lies on her belly in the grass, murmuring something.

"Our daughter has been keeping vigil for dead bee?"

Shane huffs. "Well, I don't think she knows it's dead."

"Maybe it is doing that thing bears do. Habitating?"

"Hibernating," Shane supplies with a sigh. "But no. Bees don't do that."

Ilya hums, giving Shane's hip a gentle squeeze. His eyes linger on Mila a moment longer. "I am more concerned that she's been in one spot for so long. New record for her."

"I know."

Ilya plants another kiss on the side of Shane's head, his dark hair warm from standing in the sun. Then gives his ass a quick smack as he peeled away, relishing at Shane's reaction, before walking over to their daughter.

Ilya crouches down beside her, his knees cracking audibly, and plants a kiss on her cheek. "Who is this friend, *malyshka*?"

She breaks her contact with the bee and looks at Ilya, her eyes bright. She grins, and her nose—Shane's nose—does that little crinkle it always does when she was practically bursting with happiness. It reminded Ilya *so* much of Shane. The scatter of freckles over it seals the deal. Ilya had won the jackpot. All three of their kids had inherited Shane's freckles, the same freckles that Ilya had fallen in love with at 17. And now he got to fall in love with them all over again every time he looked at his children. What more could he possibly ask for.

"Bumba bee, Papa!" she exclaims. "I love him."

"Ah! A bumblebee," he exclaims. He smiles and lies down right next to her, mirroring her—on his stomach, chin in his hands.

He looks at the bee with her. Shane was right. The bee was dying. Like, soon. It was barely moving. "Are you keeping Mr. Bumblebee company?"

Mila nods, resting her head against his arm now that he's beside her. He rested his head on top of hers and inhales deeply. She smells like her watermelon scented shampoo. The expensive, organic, animal-cruelty-free shampoo that Shane had researched diligently.

Shane had made spreadsheets for everything when the kids were babies. Actual spreadsheets. Ingredient lists, recall histories, side-by-side comparisons. Entire brands were eliminated because of one angry Yelp review from a parent who claimed the shampoo had stung their kid's eyes, which Shane took as incontrovertible evidence of corporate negligence rather than, say, an inattentive adult with a phone in their hand during bath time. Ilya had found it all so endearing.

"Is he not flying?" Ilya asks softly.

She frowns. "No flying."

He turns his head so he can look at her face, but she's still looking at the bee. Her bottom lip juts out slightly. Her little brows are furrowed. He kissed the top of her head and hummed. "Mr. Bumblebee is probably tired. Very hard worker, this one. Sniffing flowers. Making honey. Buzzing, buzzing." He punctuated that with a loud *Bzzz*, which made her giggle.

She instinctively stretches her hand toward the bee again, but Ilya gently takes her wrist and kisses her fingers. "Let him rest, *solnyshko*. You don't like when Max or Niko wake you from nap, yes?"

She scrunches her nose—the same exact way Shane does, so easy to read—at the thought of her brothers waking her and the grumpy meltdown that inevitably follows. She shakes her head, then looks up at him earnestly. "When's he gonna *bzz* again?"

Ilya hesitates. Just for half a second. Toddlers had this way of asking such loaded questions as if they were pointing out the weather. He glances up at Shane, whose eyebrows are furrowed, just like his daughter's. He had been watching the whole interaction.

Ilya reaches out and tucks one of her curls behind her ear. "I don't know, *malyshka*."

Mila frowns at that. "I stay until he *bzz* again." Because that's what good friends do. And Mila Hollander-Rozanov is a good friend to all. Even to a dead bumblebee at seven a.m. in 35-degree heat.

Ilya is glad she wasn't looking at him when she says that, because she might've seen the way his face cracked a little. He didn't want her waiting here until sunset, looking at the bee and waiting for something that wasn't coming.

He lifted his eyes to Shane, who had come to stand beside them, and they exchanged a look.

"Mila," Ilya begins carefully, keeping his voice light as he runs his finger through her dark hair. "You are being such a good friend. But maybe it is best to let Mr. Bumblebee sleep. He seems very, very tired."

She thinks about that for a moment. She leans a little closer to the bee. "I nap with him."

Ilya cracks a small smile at that. Mila *never* voluntarily offers to nap. She fights it every single day. Much to Shane's dismay, no routine had ever succeeded in making her like getting ready for a nap. Not even the sticker charts he'd spent an entire weekend designing. Still, the routine they had now was the best compromise they were going to get. Two books, warm milk, then one song.

"We're not going to nap in the grass, honey," Shane speaks up. "It's already getting too hot."

"Noo Daddy," she immediately whines, kicking her foot once into the grass for punctuation.

Shane let out a slow breath at the rising tone. Ilya knew he meant well. It was just that Shane sometimes got frustrated when kid logic didn't line up with his own. In Shane's mind, it was perfectly reasonable. It was hot. She's half-naked in the dirt. She hasn't even had breakfast yet. *Obviously* she can't nap in the grass.

"Daddy is right. You would melt like popsicle out here," Ilya supplies, keeping his tone lighthearted and tickling under her chin. "Five more minutes, and then we make Saturday morning pancakes."

Mila can't help but giggle at the tickling, hunching her shoulders and scooting back from him. But she had inherited both of their stubbornness, so she was holding firm even at the promise of her beloved pancakes. "Noo pancakes."

"No pancakes?" Ilya gasps dramatically. "Where is my Mila? You cannot be her. My Mila *loves* her papa's pancakes."

"No pancakes," she repeats, fighting the smile creeping her lips.

He brushes his thumb over her cheek. "He may be sleepy for long time, Mila."

"Long? How long?"

His mouth curved into a small smile. "Very long, *malyshka*."

"By dinner?"

"I think maybe a lot longer."

Mila thinks for a moment. "Tomorrow?"

"Mila," he said gently. "He is strong bee, remember? And sometimes strong, strong bees are all done with their jobs. And they sleep...forever."

Mila's lower lip trembles. And then her little face starts to crumple. "No sleep...no sleep forever," she says miserably, her voice cracking halfway through.

Ilya gently gathered her into his lap, grounding her with the familiar weight of his arms. One wrapped securely around her waist, the other cradled the back of her head like muscle memory. He pressed a soft kiss into her hair as she folded into him, face tucked against his neck as her little body shakes with hiccups.

"I know, sweetheart, I know," he murmurs into her hair as he rocks her. "This isn't what you wanted, and that's very tough."

Shane rubs his hand in soothing circles on her back as he kneels beside them. Her skin is warm from the summer heat, and probably now from her crying, too. Every instinct in him told him to scoop her up himself, pull her close, whisper to her soothingly as she clutched the collar of his shirt. But Ilya had this. He doesn't need to step in. That was the part of their parenting Shane had always been proud of, the quiet understanding that one of them stepped forward while the other held back when needed. It was how it had always been.

"You were so nice to him," Shane commented, voice hushed. "Laying down beside him and talking to him. He really liked that. You are such a sweet girl."

She responds with something that gets muffled by Ilya's shoulder, but it would've been incomprehensible anyway. She's in that terrible hiccupy cry state that breaks his heart in two every time.

Ilya shushes her gently as he continues rocking her. "You love things very big, Mila," he murmurs. "That is why this hurts."

She makes a noise that might be an agreement. Ilya didn't say anything else for a few beats, just kept rocking her, whispering soft Russian words into her hair until her cries slowly began to quiet.

He waited a few minutes, until her breathing went from hiccups to more of little whines, before he spoke again. He lifted his head and tried to make eye contact. "Can Papa show you something?"

She blinks at him, big tears filling at the bottom of her eyes. Just like Shane—so expressive. She breathes shakily but gives a little nod.

Ilya kissed her damp cheek and held his crucifix between his fingers. He put it closer to her line of vision.

"This belonged to my mama," he murmured. "She had a...very long sleep too. Just like Mr. Bumblebee."

Mila's little brows furrowed in concentration, sniffing loudly as she touched the crucifix between her fingers. She turned it slowly between her fingers. It wasn't like this was her first time seeing it—Ilya had worn it every day since he was 12, after all—but she was looking at it with a different expression. Absorbed.

"Your mama," she whispers.

"Mhmm. I loved her very much. Just like you love Mr. Bumblebee. When I feel sad, and I'm missing her, I hold this," he puts his hand over hers on the pendant. "And I feel her love, and it helps Papa feel better."

The moment stretched, tender and heavy. He continued rocking Mila as she sniffled in his lap, rubbing her eye with the back of her hand.

Eventually, Ilya exhaled softly and brushed his thumb over her knuckles. "What did Mr. Bumblebee like, hm?"

Mila takes a shuddery breath, and Ilya wipes a stray tear off her cheek with his thumb and kisses the spot. She looks at the bee from his shoulder. "Fl...Flowers," she manages shakily.

Ilya gives a little gasp and smiles big for her at that. "Flowers. What color flowers were his favorite?"

She sniffled. "Pink."

"Just like you," he said, pinching her cheek softly, which earned a small shadow of a smile from her, though her chin was still wobbly. He adjusts her in his arms so she can get a better look at his face. "Papa has an idea."

She looks at him, her eyes redrimmed, her cheeks blotchy.

He points over to a patch of pink peonies in the garden. "We can make Mr. Bumblebee a nice bed by his favorite flowers. So he can sleep with them every night, thanks to his best friend. And you can visit him whenever you want."

Shane, who had been beside them this whole time trying not to break down himself, feels his eyes burn.

Twenty minutes ago, he would've laughed at the idea of himself crying over a bee in the backyard. It would've sounded absurd. But his heart couldn't take it. He loved Ilya so much. He loved seeing him be the perfect dad, the kind of dad he knew Ilya always deserved to have but never actually got to experience.

Shane remembered how worried Ilya had been before their firstborn, Niko, was born. He'd noticed the red-rimmed eyes one night after he had showered, the way Ilya kept his head down just a second too long. Shane had known immediately. Ilya never cried loudly. He hid it, turned his face away and hoped it would pass unnoticed.

As soon as Shane had cupped his cheek, everything had spilled over. The tears, the words, the fear he'd been holding together with sheer will. His voice had cracked as he told Shane he was terrified of screwing up their son. That he had no idea what a good dad was supposed to look like growing up. That he was his father's son after all, and maybe even if he spent his entire life trying to be the opposite of that man, it still wouldn't be enough.

Ilya had wanted kids *so* badly. Shane did too, but up until that moment, during the family planning period and pregnancy, Shane had been the outwardly anxious one. Worrying about everything that came with becoming a parent, how different their life was going to be, everything that could possibly go wrong. Ilya would reassure him constantly. But Ilya's own fears, that he had been bottling up and fermenting for who knows how long, had reached its breaking point that night after his shower.

And now here he was. All these years later. Kneeling by the pink flowers in their beautiful backyard with their beautiful daughter, miraculously navigating the concept of grief to their three-year-old with more grace and gentleness than Shane could ever imagine.

While Ilya carried the bee over to the flowers and helped Mila tuck him gently into the dirt, Shane went to grab her little watering can. It was customized just for her, her name and tiny painted flowers along the side. It had been a gift from Yuna, who knew Mila loved having a job to do. *Busy*.

"Do you want to help the flowers grow for bumblebee's new home?" Shane asked gently as he crouches down beside her.

Mila nods excitedly. Her mood had completely shifted. Shane helps her by settling his hands over her small ones on the watering can to guide it. "Good job, Mils," he cooed as he helped guide her. "Just like that."

She stands up a little straighter with the praise. When all the peonies are adequately dampened, she turns to Ilya with her cheeky smile, the spark back in her eyes. "Papa, I like it."

Ilya grins. He opens his arms and gathers her into a hug, rocking her and planting a big kiss on the top of her head. "I'm so glad."

She turns in Ilya's arms and waves at the flowers. "Nighty night, bumbabee."

"Nighty night, bumblebee," Ilya repeats, mirroring her wave.

She then takes Ilya's crucifix back into her hands, turning it carefully. She studied it for a long second before lifting it toward his chest again.

"Nighty night, Papa's Mama."

Ilya's breath caught. Not sharply. Just enough to notice. He swallows the lump forming in his throat and smiles down at his daughter. He bends his head, pressing a kiss to her hair.

"Nighty night, Papa's Mama," he echoed quietly.

Shane felt it land in his chest all at once. He leans over Mila's head and kisses Ilya. He gives a watery smile as he breaks away, his eyes still burning. "I love you. So much."

Ilya lifts a hand to wipe at the corner of Shane's eye, smiling tenderly. "I love you. My pretty, crybaby husband."

"Shut up," Shane muttered without heat, batting his hand away.

After a few moments, Mila squirms in Ilya's embrace until she's looking up at him, glassy eyes wide and expectant. "Papa," she gasps out, as if remembering something life-altering. "Pancakes?"

Ilya's grin splits his face wide open. "Da! *There's* my daughter Mila." He pulls her into a hug, squeezing tightly and blowing a raspberry on her cheek. "Of course. Chocolate chips or blueberries?"

It's always the same question. And it's always the same answer: "Both!" she exclaimed with her cheeky grin. Ilya's grin.

"Of course," he kisses her one more time before releasing her from his hug. "Always so predictable with your food choices, just like your daddy."

Mila stands up gleefully, bouncing on the balls of her feet. Shane brushes some dirt off her cheek and cups her chin. "Let's get your hands washed, and then you can help Papa make them, okay?"

She nods, long hair bouncing, and hugs his legs. He lifts her easily onto his hip, peppering her cheek with two quick kisses. She squeals when he does it, then leans her head on his shoulder as they make their way back inside.

As they crossed the yard, Mila humming softly into his shoulder, Shane let out a quiet breath.

Ilya grinned as he opened the sliding patio door for them. "Well," he said lightly, "you were right, Hollander. Bees do not hibernate."

End Notes

Hey hey :) This is my first fic! Been reading fics since I was 14, but Heated Rivalry ignited something in me, haha! This is a little self indulgent, but I just can't stop thinking about Shane and Ilya as dads.

I have a whole little universe in my head of what I imagine their family to be like, and this is just a little snippet of it. So maybe I'll end up making this into some kind of series. Thanks for reading!!

Update: It is a series now, haha! Thank you all so much for the love and support! It truly means so much to me. Feel free to follow along with the Hollander-Rozanov family at [Our House](#) 🍷

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