



## Poke Check

*R.J. Scott, V.L. Locey*

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*One scorching summer in each other's arms could never be enough.*

Stanislav “Stan” Lyamin is happy playing for the Railers. The towering goalie is well-loved, respected, and making a home for himself even though that home only contains him, his cat, and his growing Pokemon trading card collection. Stan prefers it that way.

He’d given his heart to a man in a secret affair, and that man walked away, leaving Stan shattered. Now Erik is back in his life, and he has the same tumultuous effect he had on Stan’s heart as before. This time it’s not just a kissable mouth and sweet blond curls that Erik has brought to Harrisburg, there’s a soon-to-be ex-wife and a precious baby.

Despite the vow Stan made to hate Erik forever, he’s now finding it harder and harder to turn away.

Erik Gunnarsson’s dream had always been to play in the NHL, he just never imagined he’d land a contract with the Railers. Who would have thought that fate would put him on the same team as Stanislav Lyamin; the man whose heart he’d callously broken?

Secrets and lies had defined their summer relationship, and the choice that Erik made to end it all haunts him still. In the middle of a messy divorce and with a baby in tow, Erik finds himself back in Stan’s life. Now all he has to do is be the best dad he can be, prove to the team that he deserves the chance to stay on the roster and try his hardest to get Stan to forgive him.

*Is it possible to persuade a man who hates you to give love a second chance?*

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## From Reader Review Poke Check for online ebook

### Karen says

*Loved, loved, loved this one!!! So freakin' good!!!*

‘Poke Check’ is the fourth book in the ‘Harrisburg Railers’ series by R.J. Scott & V. L. Locey and without a doubt it’s my favorite book in the series and I’m not even going to say ‘so far’ because this one has totally won a special spot in my heart.

I’ve been a fan of the Railers’ big, dorky, adorable Russian goalie from the start. Honestly, he’s just too sweet to resist. My only concern going into this one was that sometimes in our minds we build things up, we give them so much hype that no matter how hard the poor author(s) try we’ve doomed them to failure and as you can tell by my 5-star rating that was not the case in this story...not even close.

Stanislav ‘Stan’ Lyamin is the Railers goalie and throughout the previous books we’ve seen glimpses of him as he befriended his team-mates giving them help and caring advice when needed. For me, Stan was one of those characters that just worked, from the minute they enter the story you like them and want to read more about them. Previous stories haven’t given us a lot about Stan’s past but there has been a subtle hint or two that Stan’s had some heartbreak in his life, but those stories weren’t Stan’s.

Stan grew up in small village in Russia and he learned really fast that being a gay man in Russia was something that you kept to yourself if you valued your safety...even your life. So he worked hard at what he was good at...at what would hopefully help him escape Russia so he could live a life that allowed him to have his dreams and one of those dreams was to be a goalie in the NHL...this was the dream to that brought him to safety but there are still things that Stan wants...he’s got the big house in a nice neighbourhood and his cat, Lucy and his sister Galina is coming to visit now if he could just have the last two things on that list...his mother, Arina living in his beautiful big home with him and a man that he could love and build a life with, but first he’s going to have to come to terms with that fact that the man that he loves, the man who broke his heart is now one of his teammates.

Erik Gunnarsson’s finally made it...he’s been called from the AHL to play on an NHL team...his dream come true, but of all the teams out there did it have to be the Railers. Walking away from Stan at the end of the summer three years ago was the hardest thing he’d ever done. Not only did it break Stan’s heart but it broke Erik’s heart as well. For Erik it was the only choice to make once he discovered that he was going to be a father. Three years later he finds that even though his priorities have changed, and Noah is his world it hasn’t changed the love that he feels for Stan.

I knew going into this story that I loved Stan and I have to admit I was all set to be angry with Erik but it never happened, from the start with all his insecurities, doubts and the sincerity of his efforts to do right by his son, Noah and give him the best life he could, to earn Stan’s forgiveness and to play hockey...good hockey so that the Railers would want to keep him. I just couldn’t not like him. Erik was a good guy trying to deal with some crappy circumstances the best way that he knew how to.

Stan and Erik’s second chance doesn’t happen over night and it takes time and effort for them to find their way back to each other. From their first tentative conversations to that moment when Stan finally understands and forgives Erik for doing what he felt he had to do and as they get to know each other again reigniting the passion they shared I was totally and absolutely enchanted with this story.

As well as just loving this story in general there were things in specific that added to my overall enjoyment of the story. I loved reading Stan's POV and his Russian/English translations were at times incredibly humorous adding a light touch to the story. The banter between Stan and Erik just worked it felt right and natural and the other thing that really stuck out in my mind was how the author's portrayed Freja, Noah's mother. So often in books we see women portrayed in a less than favorable light because they choose not to have children and I really liked how Freja was portrayed it was different and refreshing. Obviously as a mother myself it wasn't my choice but it's nice to read a story that reminds us we have choices and different choices don't have to be good or bad they can be just what they are different.

While I really loved this story and I can't imagine enjoying whatever comes next more. I'm definitely on board to see if the authors can prove me wrong.

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An ARC of Poke Check was graciously provided by the authors in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Emily Seelye says**

I really enjoyed this second chance romance.

We met Stan in the first book, he Ten's best friend who speaks little English. The previous summer, he went to a pro hockey camp where he met and fell in love with Erik, despite the language barrier. Unfortunately, their relationship ended when Erik found out he'd gotten a previous lover pregnant.

Fast forward 18 months and Erik, who plays for the Railers' AHL feeder team, ends up getting called up when another player is injured.

Sensing the tension between the two, their teammates force them to make nice. After a drunken confession where Erik blurts out the truth of why he left, Stan realizes its time to forgive him, and they do forge a new, healthier relationship, which includes Erik's son.

I could barely put this down and devoured it in just a few short hours. I already liked Stan from the previous books, but after seeing him help take care of Erik's son, and his family, I was in love.

I loved watching their relationship grow from ex lovers to a family that includes Stan's mother and sister, as well as their teammates.

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### **Christelle says**

Back to the Harrisburg hockey player. This time, it's the romance between Stan, the mysterious Russian goalie and Erik, a new recruit not unknown from Stan as they previously had a torrid affair together but with Erik leaving Stan dry.

I might not have been swooned but I liked it well : both MCs are very likable, with Stan such a family man (just as I like) and Erik being such a caring Dad (just as I like). It's an enjoyable second-chance sweet

romance.

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### **Amanda Viecelli says**

With Poke Check, VL Locey and RJ Scott have delivered another fantastic collaboration in the Harrisburg Railers series. I loved Stan from the moment he showed up on the page in an earlier book and could not wait to learn more about the gentle giant Russian goalie. Reading about his struggles with the English language (especially the American sayings - the beeline and birdline conversation is hysterical), and with understanding this country that is so different from Russia was especially profound in today's political and social climate. Stan is sweet and kind yet fierce and protective, a compelling character with a heart so broken it broke my own in sympathy. When Erik, the Swedish hockey player who loved him then left him, shows up as the Railers' newest wingman, Stan's world is shaken again. Erik is a devoted father trying his best to be everything for his son and his team in the midst of a divorce, a move to a new city, and coming face to face with the man he left but never stopped loving. Stan and Erik love each other deeply and their relationship is both sweet and oh-so-steamy! These two men do not have it easy finding their way back to each other, but I enjoyed every minute of the journey. Little Noah is a happy addition to the story, and I loved watching Stan fall in love with his little rabbit just as surely as he loves Erik. The peripheral characters are prominent in this book as well, and I am always excited to see how things are going with the couples from prior books. I also enjoyed the hockey quite a bit and am happy to see the Railers doing so well. I hope we see them achieve their Stanley Cup dreams in future books.

This book is a poignant reminder that sometimes a second chance is all we need to finally get it right. These two authors consistently deliver novels that read so easily and flowing it sounds like one voice rather than two individuals contributing... the mark of a successful collaboration for sure. I cannot wait for more from them and the Railers!

Poke Check can be read as a standalone, but I recommend enjoying the entire series from the beginning as each book is fantastic. Men loving men, friends, family, and hockey - what else could you ask for??

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### **DTM says**

5 feel great stars!!! Poke Check (Harrisburg Railers #4) by Rj Scott and Vicki Locey, is another great edition to the wonderful Harrisburg Railers hockey series. Stan Stan Stan, I'm so in love with Stan. I've been anxiously awaiting his story, and it's even more than I had hoped for. This huge hearted, warm, loving, sexy goalie just stole my heart. I was smitten with Stan's adorable broken English, his fierce love for Erik, his sweet interactions with baby Noah and his deep love for his family. This second chance love story was a fantastic, sexy read that left me with such warm and fuzzy feels. I read it in one sitting, unable to put it down until I got my HEA!!

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### **Cadiva says**

My favourite one so far in this series and absolutely brilliantly done without tumbling into cliche or making Stan, glorious Stan, into a joke.

The big Russian has been on my radar since he first appeared as Ten's best friend on the Railers team and it was a joy to finally get his romance. His broken and mangled English captured my heart and I loved this romance.

I felt so bad for Erik, who was hurting inside over what had happened but who was sure that he'd done what he had to do to secure his son's future.

There's a lot of water under this bridge but in the hands of these two authors we get a proper second chance romance with real communication and heart felt discussions about what had happened.

The sex is joyous and passionate, there's a truly explosive wall sex scene which makes up for all the hurting that's gone before! I loved the family aspect in this too which extends beyond the Railers and their commitment to their teammates to encompass Stan's sister and mother as well as Erik's nanny. All contribute to the success of the setting.

The little hint of book five at the end also left me wanting more and its another fab cover too.

#ARC kindly received from the authors in return for an honest and unbiased review.

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### **Kaje Harper says**

Stan is one of my favorite characters in this series - a big, brilliantly-talented Russian goalie with a heart of equal size. This book presented a real challenge for the authors - Stan is not very good at communicating in English, and his errors have been part of the humor of the series, but here his POV carries half the book. So he has to shift between smooth internal thoughts, presumably translated from Russian, and verbalizing or sub-vocalizing in English, with his stumbles and malapropisms. For the most part, I thought that was well done.

Stan's sweetness, his big heart, his love of hockey and family and protective spirit come through in this story. Erik's struggles to raise his baby and play the game and figure out where he stands with Stan were well done. He made some choices for baby Noah's sake, and they weren't always great ones (and his failure to communicate with Stan at all was not admirable.) But I could understand where he was coming from. The baby is sweet and lets these big guys show their hearts (although the nanny disappeared a bit abruptly from the story, after being substitute mother for so long.)

I had expected a little more angst and drama from the set-up (and the citizenship issues that arose didn't quite click with me in how they played out. And once that issue was brought up, it felt like it deserved a bit more realistic play, especially with both MCs being non-citizens.) But this is sweet and fuzzy and I love Stan.

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### **LeeAnn says**

Ahhh Stan! We have been given little insights into Stan from the beginning of the series. His personality, the way he LOVES Pokemon, the way he completely and utterly destroys the English language in a way that makes us chuckle, yet fall in love with him more every time he speaks so it doesn't really matter. Finally we get to read his story. What makes him tick? Does he have someone to go home to at night? Who

IS Lucy and does she take care of all his needs? What of his family? Are they close? Is he able to take care of them like he tries to take care of those on his team "family" The Railers? We also meet Erik and Noah. Just who are these two to him and will they help complete his life outside the rink?

I just loved every thing about this story! We not only get to see into the way Stan's mind works but his heart as well. It was so incredibly easy to fall in love with Erik and Noah as well...who wouldn't?

Once again the authors created such a wonderful story that not only gave us the love story of Stan and Erik but also, as usual let us visit with some of the men whom we fell in love with from the previous books. The feeling of family amongst this group of men, having each others backs and just being there, whether needed or not is, as always, a wonderful thing to witness and in a not so strange way, be a part of. By the time I get done with one of these books, I feel as if I have gone along on their journey, have experienced their ups and downs and can participate in the celebration when love DOES conquer all because Love Is Love and it should be celebrated always.

So to anyone who hasn't read any of these books I suggest you do so! Rj Scott and V.L. Locey do, to quote Bill and Ted , " a most excellent " job!

I cannot recommend this enough!

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### **namericanwordcat says**

I really liked Stan and Eric. I was super excited about this book and I enjoyed it.

I like everything that is here but to be a really great read, more detail, and more couple time, and more exploration was needed.

The writers are in a tricky spot because Stan's English is not great, he doesn't speak Swedish, and Eric's Russian is basically nil.

However, when we are in Stan's head things work well and this is a lovely alternating point of view book.

I just needed more complexity to really feel the love between these two great heroes.

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### **Natalie says**

I was so happy to finally read Stan's story and see him get a second chance at love! Poor Stan has provided mostly comic relief through the series with his attempts at slang phrases and his love of Pokémon. No one doubts his commitment to the game or team but none know what drove Stan to get to the US, or about his heartbreak, since he's not out to the team. Erik is struggling with being a single dad with a nine-month old baby and with the pressure of fitting in on the Railers team. Stan's attitude towards Erik isn't helping, until baby Noah and the team end up getting involved. Add in Stan's sister Galina, the team's dedicated pursuit of the Cup, and the narrative is fully amusing, interesting and engaging.

Related in a mostly light-hearted way, Stan and Erik do manage to find their way back to each other. Serious subjects are mentioned, but without much angst, and the couple doesn't go through a bunch of needless drama. Reading the dialogue and internal thoughts from both character's POV made things sweet and often funny. It takes some time, but Stan and Erik get pretty hot between the sheets (and against the wall!). Not too much sex though, since the authors focus on romance, while still building the dynamics between them, plus

other team members. There's a nice amount of on-ice hockey action, also showing Stan's ongoing love affair with his "pipes". So cute!

The story felt well balanced and well-paced right up until the epilogue, set a few months in the future. At the point the book ended, I was left looking for just a little more, plus an answer about Galina, to close out that last chapter. Maybe a future book will answer that final question. It didn't change anything about the overall story or for Stan and Eric. Stan was so deserving of having his dreams come true and finding his HEA with Erik. Recommended for the lovely romance, fun characters and strong hockey theme. But I still have no idea what a poke check is!

\*An ARC was provided by the author, publisher or promotional service and I have chosen to publish a fair and honest review for Jessie G Books Reviews blog\*

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### **Elle says**

I have waited so long for this book, I loved Stan from his appearance in book one, and he didn't disappoint. What a great addition to the series. Stan had me laughing out loud, due to some of the things he said. His non grasp of English, is hilarious. I really wanted to dislike Eric, Stan's love interest, (you'll find out why, when you read it), but I couldn't. He's such a sympathetic character, and a lovely dad to Noah. It's also obvious from the beginning that he loves Stan very much, and that he initially was trying to do what he considered the right thing.

It was lovely to see some of the old crew again, and how they always had Stan's back. The story is told from both Stan and Eric's points of view, so you always know what's going on, and where they're coming from. I particularly enjoyed hearing Stan's voice, and actually getting to know him; his insecurities, his hopes and dreams. He's such an adorable character.

This book was so sweet in many ways. The MCs really made me feel for them. Along with Stan and Eric's love of the game, there is also much heat, heart and happiness. The story circumvents many of the usual tropes, there's no great misunderstanding and no real angst, just two perfectly developed characters. The relationship between the two just evolves naturally throughout the story.

It's got lots of humour and warmth, likeable secondary characters, especially Galina and Arvy, and, best of all there's another book to look forward to. Can't wait.

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### **Tanja says**

These authors did it again. They have written another winner in the Harrisburg Railers series. This story is all about Stan and Eric. I have a soft spot for Stan since the first book, and I was so looking forward to his story. And it was everything I hoped for. A delightful book with sexy scenes and funny moments.

Eric and Stan had their secret affair a few years back, but then life happened, and Eric chooses to be a father to his son. And he is exactly that. He is a great dad, who would do anything for his son.

Stan, the Railer's goalie, is such a sweetheart. A big bear of a man with the heart of a marshmallow. A family man who wants nothing more than to get his mother and sister out of Russia and into the US.

That sense of family shines through every time he is with Eric's little son, Noah. Can you picture them? My

heart was melting.

The affair was not a mistake, but Eric was too scared to stay. Now they have to find their way back to one another. It is not a terribly difficult road, but that doesn't mean it is not emotional. They have learned their lesson and do what they should have done the first time: communicate. Stan's English is slightly better than when we first met him, but not much. I loved that the authors kept Stan speaking his stumbling and at times rather awkward English. It makes for hilarious situations, but better yet, it makes it so much more genuine. And how I can see Stan making conversations with his pipes. It is funny and heartwarming at the same time. Goalies really are a weird sort but in the best way possible.

You can only expect to have Eric's ex playing a role in this story, or rather his divorce, but it is not dragged on endlessly and luckily his ex is not portrayed as a total witch as so often is the case.

That is what these authors do so well. They create realistic and endearing characters. They are well developed, even the secondary cast, and you can easily relate to them.

I sure can't get enough of this series, and I am looking forward to the next book.

Once again a highly recommended story by RJ Scott and V.L. Locey.

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### **Nerdy Dirty & Flirty says**

Second chance love... and hockey!

Two of my favourite things – hockey and romance – have come together in a must-read series! The men of the Harrisburg Railers are talented, sexy and, as it turns out, quite complicated. Stan's delightful grasp of the English language, his obsession with Pokemon (which he drags all the guys into) and his sweet, sweet heart made him one of my early on favourite characters. He has lost any desire for love again after he and Erik ended so this second chance made me excited – could they make it work?? I sure hoped so!

And here were all the feels I wanted/needed! Erik should have been easy to dislike as the 'bad guy' given the state he left Stan in but the pain was on both sides. He was back but he was not alone. A beautiful baby means a possible reconciliation has even more at stake. Not only a lover and friend but family...

Their coming together was teeth-gnashing and pings to the heart. Warm, sweet and all the emotion meant Stan and Erik are now my favourites! A great addition to the series.

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### **Amanda says**

I never thought I will say this but I'm totally in love with Stan now. I've met him since Book 1 and he is this weird, Russian goalie who speaks terrible English. Seriously. I wonder how did the authors manage to come up with so many ways for me to laugh at his expenses. I'm so sorry, Stan. And he was weird not because he is Russian or because of his English incompetency, is because he sweet talks his 'pipes'. Okay, that's not euphemism for his penis. Why do they even refer to the goalie post as pipes was lost to me.

Erik is new to Railers and apparently he shared a summer fling with Stan. Oh, that's really scandalous of big, broody Stan. To cut to the chase, they were so in love during the summer but Erik left due to some personal

reason, which is totally understandable and forgivable and now he is back in Stan life again.

I like that this book isn't big on angst despite Stan being angry at Erik at first. Even with his anger, he still sounded funny because everything that came out of his mouth is worth a snort from me. Oh, I shall stop talking about his speech issue. Sorry, Stan. Erik is such a loving dad and he had his hands full of financial worries, but he needs to come clean to Stan about his reason for living, which is very apparent at this point.

Stan and Erik romance just works seamlessly without big flowery words, just a lot of indecipherable, weird sentences and Erik's own creative interpretation. What really touch me was seeing Stan living a life without fear because he is a Russian and we all know how horrible Russian is to their gay citizen. Even living far away from his home country, he is constantly worry about his family. So to finally witness the big happy reunion, it brought tears to my eyes.

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### **JenMcJ says**

I think I've liked this one the best out of the series so far. I liked that there wasn't a ton of dithering and that they just went for what they wanted and made it work despite the language barrier. That said, I did find the language barrier a bit frustrating but surprisingly it didn't lead to the feeling of a lack of *connection* between Stan and Erik which is why I think I've liked this one the best so far. Stan and Erik connected on a heart level completely.

I think there was a glaring issue with never addressing Stan's citizenship that should have been discussed and dealt with that did leave the book with a feeling of unresolved, serious issues.

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