

5 Times Ilya Was Confused by a Canadianism

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5 Times Ilya Was Confused by a Canadianism

by [ARustySpork](#)

Summary

+ 1 time he completely understood

Notes

Welcome to my first time writing for Heated Rivalry!

As a Canadian, watching this show blow up has made me the most patriotic I've ever felt in my life. I feel the need to spread the gospel to everyone I've ever met to tell them that this is 100% government funded CanCon. This is also one of the only chances I've had to sprinkle my culture into fic writing like this, so I figured there's no better way to start my first fic than making it the most Canadian thing you've ever read.

For my credentials, I am originally from Manitoba, I go to school in BC, I've lived in Alberta for a year, and my parents live in Saskatchewan. I've also travelled to most provinces and one territory. Some of the things in this fic are pretty prairie specific, but don't you worry, I've consulted several east coasters and Quebecois, as well as some Russian associates to ensure accuracy.

For the purposes of this fic, all Russian dialogue is highlighted in italics :)

Chapter 1: Winner, Winner, Perogy Dinner

Chapter Summary

“Is vareniki?” Ilya asked, watching as the lady in front of him scooped a pile of dumplings onto his plate.

“I think so, yes! Here we call them perogies, or pyrohy, very common to eat around Christmas time.”

Chapter Notes

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

Regina, 2008

For the life of him, Ilya Rozanov could not understand who had ever let the World Juniors be hosted in Regina.

It wasn't even that he hated Saskatchewan, he had respect for any place that could rival Russia in coldness and flatness. What he couldn't respect was Regina. For one, when he was first told how to pronounce the name of the city, he was pretty sure that his teammates had been playing a joke on him. His English was weak, but not that weak. The population of the city must have doubled in size just for hosting the tournament, but considering that the city was 50% roads, it probably didn't make a difference.

At least every building in this country seemed to be heated like a sauna. Minus 40 had never felt so warm before.

“Is this really mandatory?” Ilya asked, sulking as he slumped down in his seat in the back of the motorcoach, shrouded in darkness as they drove through the slush covered streets. *“We are Russian, surely they are not expecting us to be polite.”*

“Just let the Canadians take their boring pictures and eat their boring food. We'll be out in an hour and find some decent vodka,” replied Ivlev, one of the older players on the team.

At least that was one benefit to the juniors being hosted in Canada, they didn't have to worry about getting their hands on liquor, even if all he could find was watery beer.

“Are you not excited?” Said a voice, emerging from the seat in front of him. It was Pugachev, one of their goalies from the east who was significantly stranger than any goalie Ilya had met before. He had an unrelenting passion for juggling. *“I was hoping they will have poutine. It is all I have wanted when I learned I was coming to Canada. There is cheese and fries and gravy. Another thing to thank the French for.”*

"I don't think they have French people in Sesa-too-kawn" replied Ivlev. He hadn't quite figured out the pronunciation yet.

Ilya raised an eyebrow. *"You think they will have poutine at a dinner for athletes?"* he asked.

Pugachev shrugged. *"I don't know what else they eat here. I saw the store named after the hockey player in the airport but I think that is just donuts."*

Ilya slumped back down. After flying for a day and a half straight, the last thing he wanted was to be dragged to some community dinner where he would be forced to be polite to a bunch of hockey players who could barely understand him, and who also probably hated his guts.

A smile crept onto Ilya's face. Maybe it actually wouldn't be a bad idea for him to get a jump start on getting into his opponent's heads.

Their bus finally pulled up to the venue. A community hall that looked like it had seen better days. Ilya had thought that the World Juniors were meant to be high class, but he supposed there was no such thing as a high class establishment in Regina. The Russian team was one of the last to arrive, only being given a few hours to settle in their (admittedly nice) hotel before being carted off to this dinner. Despite his complaints of boring Canadian food, he was starving, and he'd happily take whatever was offered. He was secretly dying to try poutine too.

They filed out of the bus, only exposed to the crisp cold air and squeak of snow beneath their shoes for a short moment before being hit by a wave of heat as they opened the door to the hall. They were immediately hit with warmth, noise, and the smell of good food. The hall was packed, hockey players milling about every corner of the room carrying plates to their tables. Ilya could hardly hear himself think as they were ushered to sit down at one of the few open tables.

The walls were still plastered with paper Christmas decorations that looked like they'd been made by 5-year-olds, and a large banner was strung across the center of the room reading "World Juniors Regina Perogy Dinner."

Before anyone even had a chance to take off their coats, a short, plump woman with a lopsided haircut appeared next to their coach, holding a clipboard. She said something in rapidfire English, too quick for Ilya to catch most of it. There was a "welcome" in there, as well as "Russia," but that was all he could gather.

At the blank looks on their faces, she started again slowly and deliberately.

"Welcome everyone! We're so glad you could make it today. We've got plenty of food to go around for you growing boys, here in Saskatchewan we love our slavic food, so we've got a full spread out for you all. Feel free to help yourself, make sure you get to meet some of the other players, and have fun!"

She waited for a moment, for a response, but was met with the blank looks of two dozen Russians.

“Alright well...let us know if you need anything.” And with that she disappeared back into the crowd, slightly less confident than when she emerged.

Ilya dropped his coat on the back of his chair, already on the verge of sweating surrounded by so many bodies.

“These Canadians love to pretend they are European” Ivlev complained, “they don’t want to admit that it is boring just to be from Canada.”

Ilya chuckled. *“Their only culture is moose and beavers.”*

Pugachev blinked. *“Don’t you have a giant bear tattoo?”*

“Let’s go eat, I am starving for this fake Canadian food.”

The three of them were the first to take off, squeezing through the hoards around them to make their way to the serving table. Dozens of different languages poked through around him, Ilya able to pick up a few words here and there. A lot of Scandinavians, some German, too much English for his taste.

They filed into the line for food, which was fairly short now that most of the other teams had been here for some time. The back of the table was lined with a row of middle aged ladies in aprons, wearing smiles far too big for this late into the evening, wielding serving spoons like swords.

“Is vareniki?” Ilya asked, watching as the lady in front of him scooped a pile of dumplings onto his plate.

“I think so, yes! Here we call them perogies, or pyrohy, very common to eat around Christmas time.”

“They are potato?” he followed up, looking at his plate quizzically. He had to admit, they smelled good.

“Potato and cheddar cheese.”

At that, Ilya could feel the two boys beside him freeze in their tracks.

“Cheddar cheese?” he asked.

“Yes!” she confirmed.

Ilya blinked slowly. “Why would you do this?”

Now it was the lady’s turn to look shocked. “I...well it’s not real cheddar cheese, it’s actually cheese whiz.”

“What is this whiz?”

By the time Ilya had made it to the end of the line, his plate had been assaulted by cheddar cheese vareniki, saskatoon berry vareniki, sausage made from bison, and shishliki that had been un-shished.

He sat back at the table, poking at the offensive dumpling, slicing it open with the side of his fork to investigate further.

"Vareniki should not be orange," Ilya muttered, mostly to himself.

"I was suspicious at first but this is actually quite nice" Pugachev said around a mouthful of cabbage rolls. He had nearly cleared out his first plate and was bound to go for a second.

"Have you tried the saskatoon berries? I think they have a pie too."

Ilya grimaced. *"I think you were wrong, Ivlev, this is not slavic food. The Canadians have created something terrible of their own and they can keep it. I fear what this poutine truly is."*

Ivlev looked equally skeptical. *"These Canadians are trying to poison us because they know they cannot beat us."*

Pugachev reached across the table to spear a perogy for himself off of Ilya's plate, the mixture of cheese(?) and potato spilling onto the plate.

"I think I may starve here."

Chapter End Notes

So my dad grew up in Saskatchewan, and our parents live there now. Saskatchewan is a VERY slavic place full of Russians, Poles, and Ukrainians. My dad's side of the family does Ukrainian dinner where we make perogies, cabbage rolls, borscht, the works, all with a distinctly Canadian variation to it. We also call perogies "pyrohy" (pronounced peh-deh-heh), which when I was little I thought was the Ukrainian word for perogy (it is not). It turns out it is a very specifically Saskatchewanian term that derives from the polish term.

As for these cheddar cheese and potato perogies, they are kind of the default perogy in Canada. I thought it was the default perogy everywhere, until I did a semester abroad and learned that not only is it difficult to find any kind of perogies anywhere in the UK, but cheddar cheese perogies are not even a concept. This reaction Ilya had to them is directly from a real life interaction I had in Krakow, Poland when I visited this summer. I was chatting with a lady at a store and she was asking me about Canada. I told her I was from a very slavic place where we eat perogies a lot, but it was strange that I couldn't find any perogies with cheddar in Poland. She looked at me in pure horror, and kept asking me why we would do that.

As far as I know, the origin of cheddar cheese in perogies comes from the fact that cheddar is very British, and also the poor man's cheese, so it was popular to use for new immigrants back in the day. My family, as well as all of the notorious church ladies that sell bags of perogies, use cheese whiz in the recipe. Trust me, it's delicious.

Some other things I mentioned here are everything made with saskatoon berries, bison sausage, and shisliki, which is a Russian shish-kebab popular in eastern Saskatchewan, but for some reason everyone just eats it as a pile of meat rather than keeping it on the stick.

Lastly, it should be known that Regina the city is pronounced as "Ree-Ji-Na." When I informed my British friend of this, she thought I was playing a joke on her.

Chapter 2: Please Don't Eat the Currency

Chapter Summary

Ilya scrunched up his face, picking up one of the offending coins as it clattered onto the table. “Canadian money is so stupid. ‘Loonie and toonie’ sounds like it was made up by foreigner with worse English than me.”

Chapter Notes

Happy Ilya and Shane first meeting day!

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

Edmonton, 2016

“I don’t understand how anything can survive in a city like this” Marleau whines, peering out the window of the Tim Hortons. “4 P.M. sunsets. How does this whole city not have a Vitamin D deficiency?”

“Wow, deficiency,” Ilya drawled. “Big word, who taught you this one?”

Cliff rolled his eyes, taking another swig of his coffee. They had flown into Edmonton last night, their morning practice completed before the game this evening. Ilya had wanted to go back to the hotel for a nap or to jerk-off before heading to the stadium, but Cliff had recently adopted a habit of going out for a coffee before away games, and had dragged Ilya along with him. Ilya also knew that Cliff made an effort to visit Tim Horton’s anytime they were in Canada, deciding it was the closest substitution for Dunkin’s in this part of the world.

Cliff was awfully brave to be lingering in a Tim Hortons near Rogers Place right now. Edmonton fans were another breed, he once saw a sidewalk bench that had been turned into a Connor McDavid shrine. At least being in Canada, they probably wouldn’t get their kneecaps bashed in, maybe just a few chirps in the street.

Secretly, Ilya liked the passion. He’d take this over playing in Dallas. Nobody cares about hockey in Dallas.

“Fuck off, Rozanov,” Marleau replied.

Ilya shrugged. “You are being baby, Marly, in Moscow we get hour of sun in winter. This is basically Florida. The light burns my eyes.”

Cliff was from Fargo, North Dakota, something he never shut up about. In an attempt to be a decent friend, Ilya had once googled the city. It was some tiny city to the south of Winnipeg. He didn't look too closely, but the main gist he got was that there had been a lot of murders there.

"Let me guess, you also walked uphill to and from school through a blizzard everyday and fought bears for gym class?"

"This is only in St. Petersburg. In Moscow it is Siberian Tiger. Each school has one."

Ilya swiped around on his phone below the table. There were a few messages from Svetlana to make plans for when he got back, and another from his agent about some or the other brand deal.

Nothing from Jane, of course. Why would there be? Surely Hollander was busy with his movie star girlfriend.

Ilya sighed, tossing his phone onto the table. "We should go out after game," he suggested. "There must be pretty girls in Edmonton."

Cliff's eyebrows rose. "I'm sure there are loads. But I'm not so sure there are many who aren't also hockey fans that would bite off your dick if they got the chance."

"You don't know what I like, Marly."

"Why are you so keen to go out anyway? I thought things were getting serious with your Montreal girl?"

Ilya scowled. "Well, you have never been very good at thinking."

Cliff rolled his eyes, seemingly realizing that he wasn't going to get much out of his friend today. "Well, I'm finished. Ready to head out?"

"Give me second. I'm going to get some munchkins to go, fuel for between periods."

"Don't let Newf hear you call 'em that. He'd have a stroke."

Kehoe was one of the few Canadians on the Bears. Ilya honestly didn't talk to him much, mostly because he could hardly understand the guy. He was from Gander, Newfoundland, but he might as well be Irish with a southern accent. The point was, he'd never shut up about Tim Hortons, claiming it was far superior to Boston's Dunkin Donuts. In Ilya's opinion, they were both mediocre, but it was not a hill he was willing to die on.

"Do you have any Canadian money?" he asked, patting around his own pockets, only to emerge with a few stray dollar bills, a lighter, and a condom. "I left my cards at the hotel."

Marleau stood up to reach into his own pockets, pulling out a small wad of bright coloured bills, tossing it onto the table. Ilya reached out, thumbing across the plastic monopoly money.

“Actually, hold on...” Marleau trailed off, his hand dipping back into his pocket. It emerged with a few stray coins. “I think I’ve got some loonies and toonies in here.”

Ilya scrunched up his face, picking up one of the offending coins as it clattered onto the table. “Canadian money is so stupid. ‘Loonie and toonie’ sounds like it was made up by foreigner with worse English than me.”

“I think it’s fun.” Clint shrugged. “Dollar bills are the worst. And look! There’s a polar bear on this one.”

“Okay, but why is this money plastic? It looks like child’s. This whole country was invented by child.” He picked up the five-dollar bill, bright blue apart from the strips of clear plastic. He squinted as he looked closer at the image. “There is astronaut on the money. Why is there astronaut? Have Canadians even been to space?”

Cliff leaned over to look at the bill. “Oh, I’ve heard of that actually. The space arm or something, my little sister used to be really into space. Canada actually has loads of astronauts.”

“If anyone should have space on their money it should be Russia. We basically invented space, America just copied us. We sent dog to space.”

“Didn’t that dog die?”

Ilya frowned. “Laika did not deserve this.”

“You know my friend from Sudbury told me that if you scratch the little leaf on the plastic bills, it smells like maple syrup.”

Ilya blinked, looking at Cliff for a moment to see if he was laughing. His face was thoughtful.

“Marly. You are fucking with me.”

Cliff looked up at Ilya, a spark of confusion in his eyes.

“No, I’m pretty sure it’s true.”

“Your friend is fucking with you.”

“No, I don’t think so. Besides, Sudbury is, like, where they make all the nickels for the country, so I think he would know something like this.”

Ilya paused. “Right. Okay. Well please do not show me anymore Canadian money or else we will be stuck here all day when I find out they have picture of Gretsky riding a moose on the twenty.”

Ilya stood, swiping up the offending space bill to use to buy his box of “timbits.” He and Cliff emerged from the Tim Hortons, immediately hit with a wall of air so cold he could feel it as he took his first breath.

“Maybe we should go out tonight,” Cliff suggested as they began their trek towards the stadium.

“Maybe if you find a woman you will stop sending me so many porn videos,” Ilya interjected. “Maybe you should just stop sending them to my Boston Bears email, I think it is monitored.”

“You make fun, but I know you appreciated that one where she was doing a headstand. That was just plain impressive.”

As the pair approached Rogers Center, the mob of fans in orange and blue Oilers jerseys began to thicken. The crowd was impressive, considering it was a regular season game. He even saw a few Boston jerseys in the mix, and at least one with his own name plastered across the back.

As they waited for a crosswalk to turn, a little girl approached, tugging on Ilya’s jacket.

“Are you Ee-ya Rozanov?” she asked, her nose scrunched up.

Ilya raised an eyebrow, “I am.”

Her expression spread into a large, toothless grin. “Will you have a fight tonight?”

Ilya paused, before allowing his own smirk to spread onto his face. “Just for you kid? I’ll see what I can do.”

Chapter End Notes

We are back baby! Special delivery courtesy of your resident Canadian.

This is set in Edmonton, a city that I love even though everyone tells me a shouldn't. I lived there for a year for work (and I'm moving back soon) and it's where I became a hockey fan! This was during the incredibly devastating 2024 playoff run, which ended in heartbreak, but educated me along the way. As a dedicated Oilers fan, this is the only team I know lots about (in case anyone is wondering, my favourite player is Hyman). I can confirm that Edmonton has the very best hockey culture, and everyone in that city would die for Connor McDavid. The altar I mentioned is very real, located on Whyte Ave, and is a bench that reads "The Church of Connor McJesus." This is located just down the street from another bench labelled the "Nathan Fillion Civilian Pavilion." I love Edmonton. I was at a drag show during a playoff game and between sets the emcee would come out to update us on the Oilers score. The little girl is my self insert, because my favourite part of hockey is the fights. God bless 4 nations faceoff.

For the money stuff, the maple syrup thing is a very real myth (or is it???). The maple syrup smell is probably because the money itself lowkey smells nice, so it's really just placebo, but I say live your truth. The 5 dollar bill currently houses a depiction of the

Canadarm, one of our great space innovations! It's true we have loads of astronauts, shout out to my man Chris Hadfield. The bills are all plastic as of 2011, which is really convenient except for when your car gets so hot they melt together. But!!!! The plastic bills have braille!!

In case anyone is confused about the Sudbury thing, their claim to fame is that there is a giant statue of a nickel (the big nickel) because of their nickel mines. They do not make nickels. Or any other coins. The Royal Canadian Mint is in Winnipeg and I'm sad I never got to go on a field trip there :(

Lastly...I couldn't find a way to fit it in here but for the every Canadian Olympics, we mint a series of Olympic coins! The 2010 Olympics produced quarters with every single winter Olympic sport on the tail side, I used to have this little book to collect all the different sports. I think the 2010 Olympics was actually the highlight of my life.

Chapter 3: That Looked Real, Didn't It?

Chapter Summary

A creature runs across the screen, making pitter patter sounds.

The North American House Hippo is found across Canada and the Eastern United States, House Hippos are very timid creatures and are rarely seen, but will defend their territory if provoked.

Chapter Notes

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

*July, 2017
Quebec*

The cottage was nice.

Ilya remembered watching that documentary that came out all those years ago, showing Shane doing yoga on his dock. It described it as a “fortress of solitude.” Fortress was certainly a good descriptor, this place could hardly be called a cottage. Was this what Canadians always meant when they talked about cottages? It was like how in America, their small fountain drinks were actually extra large.

But it was isolated, aside from the sound of the (non terrifying) birds and the crickets echoing into the night, but he enjoyed it. He enjoyed sitting out on the deck with Shane, looking up at the stars. It had been so long since he'd seen stars, the light pollution of Boston clouding the night sky. The air felt crisp and clean here, and he felt content here in the middle of nowhere Quebec, his arm hooked around Shane's shoulders.

He enjoyed being outdoors with Shane almost as much as he enjoyed being indoors. He had dragged Shane back to the bedroom at least four times already today.

“Can we make cookies?” Ilya asked, spinning back and forth on his stool, tucked up against the kitchen island. Shane was wiping down the counter—again, as if there had ever been a mess in the first place.

Shane looked up, peering through his dark lashes. “Now? It's nearly eleven.”

Ilya shrugged, finishing a full rotation before catching himself on the counter and turning back to Shane. “I'm not tired. I would like to eat the dough. Raw eggs do not scare me.”

“You know, it's actually the raw flour that's more dangerous when eating—”

“Shaaaaane. Please. You are killing me. Is off season. Let me make you beautiful treats and watch you enjoy it. I will even let you pick the film we watch.”

Shane scrunched up his face, his freckles twisting in place. “What kind of cookies?”

Ilya smirked. He knew this was a battle that had already been won. “Chocolate chip.”

Shane exhaled a sigh of defeat. “Fine. If I get to choose the movie.”

It took longer than expected to make the cookies, despite the fact that Shane had a fancy stand mixer at his cottage. This was mostly due to Shane’s constant hovering anytime Ilya caused a spill, and repeated interludes to wipe down the counters. He even made Ilya crack the eggs into a separate bowl. Ilya got his revenge by peppering Shane with puffs of flour until his shirt was covered in a white halo.

“I have to change this now,” he frowned, flour billowing off of him everytime he moved.

“Is fashion statement. Trust me, I am much better at fashion than you.” Ilya declared, pouring in his bag of chocolate chips.

“Hey, not so many, you’re making chocolate chips with a side of dough.”

“You ask me to make chocolate chip cookies with no chocolate chips? Hollander you cannot ask this of me.”

Shane rolled his eyes. “Has anyone ever told you you can be such a drama queen?”

“Nyet. I am drama Tsar.” With that, he dumped in the rest of the bag before Shane could think of stopping him.

Ilya settled on the couch with the mixing bowl, wrapping himself up in a soft flannel throw. Shane crouched below the television, where he had stacks of DVDs and tapes. He had a vendetta against Netflix, claiming it was much better to own everything rather than trust a streamer.

“You know that actually could make you really sick,” Shane reminded him for the dozenth time.

“Luckily I have incredibly handsome second best hockey player in the world here to drive me to hospital.”

Shane rolled his eyes, turning back to the cabinet, making a sound of satisfaction as he pulled out a dusty VHS tape. “I know what we’re watching.”

“Vietnam war footage? Is this tape one thousand years old?”

“Fuck off. This, is the greatest game of hockey of our generation.”

“My Stanley Cup win?”

Shane shot him a glare. “No. Gold medal game, 2010 Olympics, the golden goal.” At that, his lips curled up in a grin.

“Right. I forgot of your crush on Sidney Crosby.”

“Shut up.” He stood, popping the tape into the VCR and switching on the television.

“Hollander. We are on vacation from hockey, and you want to watch old hockey game?”

“I let you make cookie dough, you don’t get to complain about my choice. Have you ever seen it before?”

“Of course! Who do you think I am? I was hoping for Canada to lose.”

“Well now I’m extra incentivized to watch it now.”

“What is in-centi-vized?”

“Like persuaded. I have more reason to want to.”

“Ah. I see. Like how I am incentivized to suck your dick when you wear your glasses.”

“Exactly.”

Ilya held out the bowl of dough, waving it in front of Shane. He could see the hesitance in the other man's eyes. "Please Shane? It would make me very happy."

Shane dropped down on the couch next to Ilya, knowing he had run out of excuses considering he had eaten clean all day, and reached into the bowl to scoop up a dollop of cookie dough, licking his finger clean.

“Careful Hollander, or else we will never get to watch this game. You tempt me.”

The screen flickered on, stats filling the screen as both teams took to the ice.

“Did they not have DVDs in 2010?” Ilya inquired.

“Shut up. It was easy this way, to just tape it straight off the TV.”

“But now we are stuck with commercials.”

“I like the commercials. I used to love the Marineland jingle.”

“What is this?”

“It’s like Seaworld, it’s in Niagara falls.”

Ilya frowned. “I wish they would let the whales go.”

For most of the game, Shane and Ilya watched lazily, snuggling up against each other as they dipped their fingers into the mixing bowl. A few times when Shane announced he was full,

Ilya tempted him by feeding Shane a few more scoops, which he licked off Ilya's finger eagerly.

That in turn did cause a temporary distraction from the game, a USA goal being missed by both men.

They were finally resettled with their attention back on the screen just before the pre-overtime commercial break started.

The screen faded in, panning across kitchen cabinets.

It's nighttime in a kitchen just like yours. All is quiet. Or is it?

A creature runs across the screen, making pitter patter sounds.

The North American House Hippo is found across Canada and the Eastern United States, House Hippos are very timid creatures and are rarely seen, but will defend their territory if provoked.

Shane nuzzled his head deeper into Ilya's stomach. He could probably fall asleep right here.

They come out at night to search for food, water, and material for their nests. The favourite foods of the house hippos are chips, raisins, and the crumbs from peanut butter on toast.

Shane felt Ilya's hand still from where it was caressing his scalp.

They build their nests in bedroom closets using lost mittens, dryer lint, and bits of string. The nests have to be very soft and warm. House hippos sleep about 16 hours a day.

Ilya cocked his head down, a look of concern turning to Shane. "You have one of these? Are they in the cottage?"

Shane blinked. "What?"

"You have hippo here?"

Shane sat up, his alertness coming back to him. "Huh?"

"On TV. In the closets."

"The house hippos?"

"Are there outside hippos here too?" Ilya looked actively concerned.

"Ilya the house hippos aren't real."

"Why are they lying to me on national television?"

"Well it's a PSA! It's about how you shouldn't believe everything you see on TV!"

"Why didn't they say that? Is very misleading."

“They did say that, you were too busy talking over it asking me if we had any house hippos.”

“You are telling me government is telling you not to believe them? In Russia they make PSA to say believe everything we tell you. How do they ever convince you to pay taxes?”

Shane blinked, unsure how to respond to that.

“So does this mean there are hippos outside of the house?”

“No. No hippos, house or otherwise.”

Ilya frowned, slumping down in his seat. “I think I am disappointed. I was excited.”

“Well, I’m sorry. But hey, if you’re convinced this easily, maybe I should get you to watch one of the anti-smoking commercials.”

“If I cannot have house hippo then you should let me get dog.”

Shane raised his eyebrows. “You need my permission now?”

Ilya shrugged. “Is important for dogs to have two parents. This way I can be the favourite.”

Shane laughed, snuggling back into Ilya’s chest as he watched Sidney Crosby race across the screen. “It’s good to know you’ve got this all thought out.”

Ilya resumed raking his hands through Shane’s hair, and Shane felt the clutches of sleep reaching out to grasp him again.

“Yes” Ilya whispered. “I am very smart and responsible about these things. You should know this by now.”

“I do” Shane smiled, letting his thumb trace back and forth against Ilya’s hand.

A cheer broke out from the speakers and Crosby scored the game winning goal in overtime.

Ilya leaned down, so his lips brushed Shane’s ear in his lap. “Will you take me to bed now, Hollander?”

Shane sent him a lazy smile. “Only because you asked so nicely.”

Chapter End Notes

If you haven't seen it, I highly recommend you look up the PSA. It ran all the time when I was a kid, and I remember genuinely believing that the house hippo was real, even though that was against the entire point of the commercial. Nowadays, the house hippo is a part of canadian heritage. Alongside marineland commercials.

Happy heated rivalry day! I got a Hyman Jersey for Xmas, so I'm doing fantastic. Hope you guys enjoy this installment!

Chapter 4: Just Out for a Rip are Ya Bud?

Chapter Summary

One thing about moving to the Centaurs, was that Ilya had never before been on a team with so many Canadians. With the Bears, there had been the Newfie, as well as a guy from Toronto, but other than that, it was mostly Americans. One thing Ilya was learning was that he had absolutely no idea what they were saying half the time.

Chapter Notes

As a disclaimer, I would like it to be known that while I am a hockey fan, I never actually played hockey, and therefore my play descriptions may not be up to par. I guess I've always been into the hockey more for the emotional storytelling, and because I love it when they fight.

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

Ottawa, 2020

“Did you change your tape?”

Ilya looked his right, where Wyatt had glided up to him.

“What?”

“Your tape. It’s different, right? You usually use Howies, but this looks like Renfrews.”

Ilya blinked. “You can tell this just from looking at it?”

Wyatt shrugged, tapping his stick against the ice. “Is it?”

Ilya nodded. “I am trying something new. Hollander uses Renfrews.”

“Right, I forget you guys are actually friends now. It’s weird.”

“Is it?”

“I guess not. I’ve been at this too long really, rivalries aren’t as fun as they used to be.”

“Now that I disagree with. One of the best parts of hockey is being better than everyone I hate. And I never let Dallas Kent forget it.”

Wyatt laughed. “You don’t have to tell me twice. I actually had to play with the guy.”

Ilya cocked his head to the side, watching Troy Barrett glide across the ice. There was a lull in practice while they set up pylons for the next drill. It was one of Barrett’s first practices with the team, and everyone was still giving him a wide berth. While Ilya acknowledged that Troy had been brave in calling out his former friend, he couldn’t excuse his behaviour before that. Even Ilya, one of the most legendary pests of this decade, never crossed the lines Troy did. He never used slurs, he never participated in locker room homophobia, not even to cover up the truth about himself.

It would take a lot more than one moment of bravery to change Ilya’s mind about Troy Barrett.

“Honestly,” Wyatt continued, “My favourite part of playin’ the Bears was seein’ yous get into your Donnys out there. Think I once saw you chin-check Houde so hard up the noggin’ his chicklets were halfway to Saskatoon.”

One thing about moving to the Centaurs, was that Ilya had never before been on a team with so many Canadians. With the Bears, there had been the Newfie, as well as a guy from Toronto, but other than that, it was mostly Americans. One thing Ilya was learning was that he had absolutely no idea what they were saying half the time.

It wasn’t like Newf, where he couldn’t understand the accent, but some of these guys used some phrases so outlandish he was sure they had to be making them up on the spot. That being said, the accent was still ridiculous. These Westerners talked like their words were all on a lean, and their consonants were optional. Ilya liked to make fun of the way Shane talked, but he hadn’t realized how lucky he was in comparison.

Hazy was from one of the territories, somewhere far enough north that they didn’t have Tim Hortons.

“Inuvik” he had said. “The sun never fully goes down in the summer. You need blackout curtains to get any sleep.”

Ilya wondered if everyone from the north spoke as weird as Hazy. Or had such an affinity for superheroes. He supposed there wasn’t much else to do up there.

Ilya paused for a moment, trying to figure out what the hell Hazy had just said to him. When he couldn’t come up with anything, he replied simply, “yes.” That seemed to be enough to satisfy the goalie, who skated off to resume his drills with his backup.

Ilya had determined that the move to Canada was going to be more of an adjustment than he anticipated.

* * *

Harris fumbled with the tripod as he pointed the camera over the boards, onto the ice just across from the tunnel.

As the newest social media manager for the Centaurs, Harris had big plans. It was important to build a brand, and the fans had shown that what they really wanted was to see more of the players' personalities. Several other teams had posted videos like this, interacting with the players and getting them to answer questions, just for fun.

And Harris knew this was a good idea, the Centaurs were filled with good people with personalities worth knowing.

"Harris!" Rozanov exclaimed, noticing the camera setup as he was the first to barrel onto the ice. He rounded back in an extravagant twirl, stopping quickly against the boards where Harris was situated.

"What is this?"

"I'm setting up to make a video for our TikTok! I'm asking everyone questions before they go on for practice."

Ilya nodded, looking serious as he tucked his stick under his arm and adjusted his gloves.

"Yes, well you must ask me first. I am captain."

"Of course, just give me a quick sec."

"Peet-er patt-er let us get at her."

Harris froze, hand on the record button. "Who taught you that phrase?"

"Cassie said it once. I thought it would be fun to try. Is it not working?"

"No, I like it. Are you ready for the question?"

"Shoot."

"Alright Roz, today we're asking, if you had your own entrance song, what would it be?"

Ilya cocked his head to the side thoughtfully. "I think I will choose 'All the Things She Said.' It is by Russian artists, very good song. Very angsty, will strike fear into the hearts of my opponents, I think."

"Very nice choice!" Harris grinned. "Queer anthem too, very iconic."

Ilya nodded, before taking off back to center ice. Troy was just heading down the tunnel as Harris caught him, forcing him to shyly turn to the camera. Harris wasn't sure if it was just the light, but Troy always seemed to have a blush on his face when he talked to Harris. Maybe he was just like that all the time.

"Troy hold on! Will you help film something for our social media?"

Troy looked from side to side hesitantly, but nodded.

"If you had an entrance song, what would it be?"

“Um...that’s a hard one. Maybe something by the Hip? My mom loves them. I’ll go with ‘Bobcaygeon.’”

“Nice, very Canadian!”

Dykstra was up next.

“Easy. ‘Chicken Fried.’ Zac Brown. Absolute classic.”

“I expected nothing less.”

Hayes was close behind.

“‘Man! I Feel Like a Woman!’ By Shania Twain.”

Harris blinked. “I can’t say I was expecting that.”

Wyatt shrugged. “It makes me feel powerful. My sister loves that song, it was the last song she played at her wedding and I just remember that as a great night. And who doesn’t love Shania? She’s Canadian, too, did you know she’s from Windsor? I think if we made it to the cup finals and we got to have a concert we should get her to play. I think I might actually throw up if I met Shania Twain.”

“I will keep that in mind,” Harris smiled. “Thank you Wyatt.”

Bood and Dillion joined side-by-side.

“I think I’ll go with Thunderstruck. The Cowboys use it for a reason,” Dillion said.

“What? No, that’s so boring,” Bood scoffed. “I choose ‘Operator’ by Shiloh.”

“I have never heard of that song in my life.”

“I guarantee you, you have. They used to play it on Family channel all the time.”

“That is an insane pull,” Harris interjected, impressed.

“Thanks.”

“What’s your pick, Harris?”

“I think something Avril Lavigne. Maybe ‘Complicated.’”

“Nice choice.”

Chouinard approached, for some reason juggling three sticks at once.

“Ooh, ‘Whatta Man’ by Salt N Pepa. Maybe someone will make a fan edit of me to it.”

“No one will ever make fan edit of you!” Ilya shouted from the ice.

Boyle was close behind.

“Hips Don’t Lie.”

“Really? Like, Shakira?” Harris asked.

“It’s the only thing that gets my twins to sleep. It’s grown on me.”

Lapointe flies into frame, nearly attached at the hip with Young.

“Springsteen, for sure” Young says enthusiastically. “‘Glory Days.’ Imagine that guitar hitting the speakers. Absolute beauty.”

“I feel obligated to choose something Quebecois,” Lapointe said. “I think ‘Montreal -40’ by Malajube.”

Luca Haas, a rookie and one of the cutest people Harris had ever seen, skated up politely to the camera, if it was possible to skate politely.

“My favourite song?” He asked.

“It could be, or just a song that you think reflects who you are.”

“Well, I think I have been trying to listen to more Canadian music since living here, there are actually a lot of Canadian artists.”

“There are! Shania, Drake, Justin, Jonie, Alanis.”

“Yes, Alanis Morissette. I will choose ‘You Learn’ by Alanis.”

As Luca skates away to join the fray, “You Learn” by Alanis Morissette fades in to play over practice footage. The camera focuses on shots between plays, when players talk and laugh with one another, played in slow motion in such a way that’s reminiscent of the credits of a movie from the early 2000s.

* * *

Evan Dykstra, Ottawa’s best defenceman, was a 6’3, 250 pounds, and had terrible taste in music.

He was from Neepawa, Manitoba, which also meant that he was a bush man from the middle of nowhere. When he wasn’t on the rink, he was wrapped in camo. His hair flowed out of the back of his hat in a shaggy mullet, something he referred to exclusively as “lettuce,” and he talked like he was straight out of Shoresy.

(Dykstra was actually the one that made Ilya watch Shoresy in the first place. He made Ilya and the rookies pile up in his room on the last road trip every night just to watch it. Ilya had to admit, it was helpful in understanding all this new slang he hadn’t been exposed to in Boston.)

Now, standing in the locker room following their game against the Jets—which they had just scraped by to win in overtime—Dykstra had been given control of the speaker. They always let him control the music in Winnipeg, else they had to listen to him complain about how it was wrong to deprive him while in his home province.

Ilya couldn't complain too much. He had been in a good mood lately, since they started their winning streak. Even the twang of Brad Paisley echoing through the room couldn't stifle that.

"You up for an interview, Rozanov?" the PR director asked, poking her head into the room.

"Can you make sure no one asks me about the plane again?" Ilya whined. He even let his lip jut out a bit for dramatic effect. Sue him, the Centaurs were on a winning streak, and yet every postgame interviewer had only been interested in a plane that had never even crashed. Ilya really did not want to think about it anymore.

"No yeah, oh yeah no for sure, don't worry about it," she replied, before ducking back out.

Ilya blinked, looking around at his teammates, who were not as confused as him.

"Was this a yes or a no? She said both many times."

"It's a yes" Dykstra confirmed.

"Yes they will ask?"

"Yes they won't ask."

"I am confused."

"I would like to second that" chimed in Boyle, one of the Americans on the team. "That's gotta be a Canadian thing, because I've never heard anyone talk like that back home. You all add in extra words everywhere."

"Wouldn'tcha know bud? Do they even have schools in Philly or do they just have you watch Sesame Street 'til you've hit grade 12?" Dykstra beaked from where he was pulling off his pads.

"Fuck right off" Boyle laughed, "I didn't realize they even had Sesame Street in Manitoba, I figured you just played in grain bins for entertainment."

"Alrighty there bud, I'll have you know I never played in grain bins. That's unsafe. However I did go rippin' down the ditch on a tractor tube towed by my dad's sled until he ran me into a hydro pole."

"The more stories you tell about your childhood, the more I think you've been making it up this whole time," Chouinard chimed in.

"What? You didn't like the story about the time my dad and I went carp shooting in the ditch after Lake Manitoba flooded?"

“See this is what I mean. Even Hazy’s not this big a redneck and he’s from the north.”

“I don’t do well outdoors, I was an inside kid. I played a lotta Chel” Hayes admitted, looking thoughtfully towards Chouinard. “I never got the hang of telling the difference between a grizzly bear and a black bear and I’m sure I’d end up doing the wrong thing.”

“Do they have polar bears where you’re from?” Bood asked.

“Only if you go to the coast. Which I do not. For obvious reasons. Also, Lisa told me once about a kid who came into the ER with his fingers sliced off by fishing line, so I really didn’t need any more deterrence from trying fishing.”

“But you’re totally cool with playing a sport with knife shoes?” Dykstra chimed in.

“Hazy, have you ever heard of CTE?” Ilya interjected.

“Fuck off, I know, okay, just let me choose my battles. I’m fighting for my life over here. Aren’t we supposed to be making fun of Dykstra? Or let’s make fun of Chouinard, he’s from Quebec. That’s worth making fun of alone.”

“What is crazy is that you are from Quebec and I speak more French than you,” Ilya added. “How is this even allowed?”

“I definitely didn’t sign up for this,” Chouinard squealed. “Would you like me to give you a history on the anglo regions of Quebec while we’re here?”

“I would hate that,” Ilya said solemnly. “The reason I am best player in league is because I know as little as possible about Quebec. Maybe you should try it, then we win the cup.”

“Do you ever wonder if he reuses material from roasting Hollander on us?” Bood asked, leaning casually against his locker. “Because this feels a little too practiced.”

“Hollander only gets my second best,” Ilya smirked as he headed out to the hallway where the press lay in wait. “Second best chirps for second best player.”

Ilya waltzed down the hallway towards the familiar sound of chatter and camera shutters. At this point he was shirtless, towel wrapped around his neck. It never hurt to give a show when cameras were in the room.

The volume only increased as Ilya entered the room, a grouping of about a dozen reporters clambering to hear him speak.

The questions were typical. What went right tonight, how does it feel to be four games into a win streak, what’s the mood of the locker room lately, and thank god, no questions about the plane crash.

“Mr. Rozanov, during your heated altercation on the ice with Friesen, what was said between the two of you to start a scuffle?”

Ilya blinked. Honestly, he had nearly forgotten about that scrap. It was hardly even a scrap, just a couple of shoves that were intercepted by the linesmen before anything could come of it.

“Freisen was just chirping me. He had called me a...what is the word? A hoser? I did not know what this means. I think he gets upset when his chirps do not land, his feelings get hurt.”

This was not completely true. Yes, Friesen had called him a hoser, but Ilya did know what this stupid Canadian insult meant, because it was a favourite of Dykstra’s to throw around. What he hadn’t mentioned, was that Friesen had followed up with:

“Maybe if you weren’t so busy cocksucking Barrett over there you wouldna’ given up two goals by now.”

Ilya had turned, calmly, cocking his head to the side as they waited for play to resume. “Friesen, if you are jealous you only needed to ask. But I must tell you that you are far too ugly for me. Have you ever read Cosmopolitan? They have great advice for dressing for your weird pear shaped body. Just because you have no shoulders does not mean you should give up.”

That seemed to make Friesen irrationally angry. Ilya might’ve given in and dropped his gloves, just for the fun of it, but they were already down by one, he didn’t want to give the Jets any advantages.

The press seemed unsatisfied with Ilya’s answer, but there wasn’t much more that they could push, especially when he ended his interview by stating. “I like your funny Canadian words. Perhaps I will start using them. Thank you for your time, hosers, I’ll see you at next game.”

* * *

Boston

Ilya hadn’t played a game against Boston that he hadn’t lost.

But this year was different. The Cens were on a streak, winning six straight games in a row, with hopes to make it seven. Ilya really needed this. Ever since he left the Bears, he hadn’t heard the end of it every time they played each other. The rookies especially seemed to take great pleasure in chirping Ilya, treating him as if he’d had a grand fall from grace, which, in a way, he had.

But that wasn’t the case anymore. Ottawa was doing well, they had a real shot at making the playoffs this year. And crushing the Bears on the way there would make it that much sweeter.

“Don’t you miss this, Marly?” Ilya said, sidling up to his old friend. Holmber and Svennson were caught up in a messy brawl, giving Ilya the chance to partner up and stay out of the fray.

“Which part?” Marleau asked, tapping his helmet against Ilya’s.

Even though they didn't talk all that often these days, Cliff had still been a good friend since Ilya had left. He had been confused, sure, but he hadn't held it against him. Honestly, Ilya was sure he had his theories about his "Montreal Girl," but the two had never been the type to talk much about feelings.

"The part where you get to look at my beautiful face while you play. I know it inspires you."

"Fuck off, Roz, if anything I'm blinded by all your fake-ass teeth."

"Of course, of course, my blinding smile, please I cannot handle all these compliments. You make me blush."

The fight was broken, and the play resumed with two five minute majors in the books.

Ilya shot his gaze up to the board, where two giant goose eggs stared back at him halfway through the third period. No one could seem to punch through, and the game had been a physical one, they just needed to keep it moving.

Ilya sidled up next to his line on the bench, gesturing for Barrett and Bood to lean in close. "Listen boys," he said, speaking up to be heard over the roar of the crowd. "Defense are like snails, okay? Once we get possession we don't let it go, take it coast-to-coast."

"He's right, we're bein' a buncha fuckin' Pantene Pros out there, but if we just start givin'er past the blue then the pylons won't know what hit 'em."

Ilya blinked. "Give her what? Do not give them anything, no, we score on them."

"Giv'er means, like, go really fast. Like, book it," Troy explained.

"Oh. Yes, do this."

"Keep your eyes on the 5-hole," Troy added. "If defense can sauce it outta our zone we should be golden. Once we're up we're in there like a dirty shirt."

Okay, Ilya wasn't going to even bother with that one.

Once their line was back on, they were moving. Or, as Ilya had now learnt, they were givin'er. The faceoff was won by Boston, but after an easy stop by Hazy, the puck went straight to Dykstra, then to Bood, and then they were off. He sauced the puck right over Marleau, tape to tape with Ilya, who flew past Boston's defense in a breakaway that was almost laughable.

There was nothing between Ilya and the goal—besides that pesky goalie. But that was no problem for him. Ilya glided up the ice, the scrape of his blade like the sound of sweet music. He carried the puck into the crease, flipping to his backhand, and to his forehand again, lighting the lamp straight through the five-hole.

When the rest of his team surrounded him for his celly, Ilya just about felt like he had won the cup for the first time.

“Fuck yes Roz!” Bood shouted, planting him with a helmet kiss. “You fuckin’ beaut!”

“Ah was not fair to them,” Ilya said, an uneven grin spreading across his face. “They did not have crowd of Canadians shouting ‘giv’er’ at them, how could they compete?”

Chapter End Notes

Unfortunately, a lot of this is taken from very real hockey speak that I was subject to from my classmates all throughout high school. If you'd like to experience a true Canadian accent, I do highly recommend Shoresy. As I've been at home in the prairies for Christmas, I have really reverted to a ridiculous country accent, only exacerbated by all the hockey content I have been consuming. Another example I love to reference is Leon Draisaitl, who is a German hockey player that has played in Edmonton for so long that he has developed a full blown Albertan accent. Proud of him.

Of course, Dykstra's stories are all real stories of my own childhood. When I was in daycare we used to have safety demonstrations teaching us not to climb into grain bins, and also how to survive tornadoes.

I have been working every single connection I have in this god forsaken country. Here Chouinard is based off a friend I have from Anglo quebec, though it should be stated that my friend DOES speak French as well, but there are some people around there that have awful french.

Edit: In this chapter, I accidentally used two different spellings of the name Freisen. My Mennonite friend pointed this out to me, but advised that I don't change it, because apparently even Friesens have no idea how to spell Freisen. Because of this, I will keep this unedited for cultural accuracy. Fun fact, Freisen is the most common last name in all of Manitoba due to the high Mennonite population.

Chapter 5: It Sounds Bigger in Centimeters

Chapter Summary

“This is Fahrenheit?”

“Yes.”

“I thought you use Celsius in Canada. I thought I was free of Fahrenheit when I left Boston.”

Chapter Notes

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

April, 2022

“I told you we shouldn’t have driven this stupid fucking car.”

Ilya gasped. “Do not talk about her like that!” he wailed, rubbing his hand lovingly across the dashboard of his bright orange Porche 718 Cayman, which rode so low to the ground that Shane thought they had to be scraping the pavement. “She has treated me so well.”

“Is she gonna be treating us well when we book it into the ditch?”

“Is April! I drove her week ago no problem! How was I meant to know that God would drop a foot of snow on me?”

“Did you read the forecast?”

“Why would I do that when you always tell it to me?”

Shane reached out to brace himself against the door as the car drifted around a painfully slow right turn.

“Jesus Christ.”

“Relax, we are almost there, then we will leave car and ask for ride home.”

They were on their way to Shane’s parent’s house. They usually tried to make it over once a week now that they were both living in Ottawa, but with the playoffs looming, this would be the last chance to be all together for (hopefully) a few weeks.

“Slow, slow, slow,” Shane said through clenched teeth as they finally slid up into David and Yuna’s driveway.

“So strange, Hollander. Usually to me you are saying ‘faster.’”

“Fuck off.”

Shane hopped out of the car, pulling out the bag that Ilya had stored in the backseat. It contained a new puzzle that he had found at a Chapters, it was Anne of Green Gables themed. Shane wasn't aware that Ilya even knew who Anne of Green Gables was.

“David wants to do book club,” Ilya explained as they approached the front stoop. “We will read together and discuss. Then we must watch CBC show. I am looking forward to it, I have heard very good things about Gilbert Blythe.”

“Please don't leave me for fictional Gilbert Blythe.”

“I cannot promise this.”

They didn't bother knocking, Ilya having visited enough that he would probably be happy barging in unannounced whenever he wanted.

“David!” Ilya exclaimed, quickly kicking off his shoes and advancing into the living room. “I come bearing gifts.”

Shane watched his husband walk through the house like he owned it, plunking down in his favourite armchair right next to Shane's dad, as he began to show off this new puzzle.

Shane headed for the kitchen, where his mother was stirring the pot full of fettuccine.

“Do you ever get sick of chicken parm?” He asked, appearing over her shoulder.

“I never get sick of the look on Ilya's face when he sees I've made it.”

Shane smiled, continuing to hover around his mother in the kitchen. He and his therapist had been working on his relationship with food, trying to reshape it. He had a lot of hard days, but it helped to associate his good days with good food. He made a point of partaking in these dinners, when he was with family. It made it easier to get out of his head and enjoy his meal without worrying about everything else that came with it.

“Do you need any help?” Shane asked.

“I'm just watching the chicken finish up in the oven, but if you want you can put together a salad.”

Shane got to work, working silently side-by-side with his mother, listening in on the chatter coming from the living room.

The sound stopped abruptly, followed quickly by the thunder of Ilya traipsing into the kitchen.

“Yuna, will we still make these cinnamon rolls you have promised me?”

She smiled. “Yes I think we can make that happen. But I’m not doing it myself, you have to help.”

“Of course. Yes, chef. I will follow your every order.”

“What are you two getting up to over there?” Shane asked, stopping briefly from his task of chopping tomatoes. “Starting on your puzzle yet?”

“No, no, we are not allowed until we have finished the book. Very strict. I have been teaching David how to use TikTok.”

“What?”

“Relax, Hollander, he is mostly just following beekeepers and cake decorators.”

“Now when I comment, can everyone see it, or is it just you?” Shane’s dad asked as he wandered into the kitchen. His glasses were low on his nose, his eyes heavily focused on his enormous phone screen.

“Everyone can see it, and they can reply too. But if you click the share button you can send things directly to me,” Ilya replied, looking over David’s shoulder.

“Is this really such a good idea?” Shane asked. “Are you maybe creating an iPad kid?”

“Ah, Shane, give your father more credit. I am sure he has very important thoughts to share with world.”

“Is 2.4 million likes a lot?” David asked, tilting his phone to Ilya.

“Yes. Why?”

Ilya scrunched up his face, reaching over to take the phone, watching it intently. Shane could hear a familiar Russian drawl echoing out from the phone’s speakers.

That was enough for Shane to drop his work and round the island to join the fray that was crouched over his dad’s phone. He looked at the screen, where clips of his husband played, quickly edited together. At the top of the screen read the words “Ilya Rozanov Being Canadian for 5 Minutes Straight.”

Cut

Ilya sits at a press table, hands clasped in front of him. Shane sits to his right, Wyatt to his left.

“Ilya, now that you’ve had a few years to settle into Ottawa, it seems like your team is really finding their groove. As captain, how do you think you’re able to contribute to the gel of the

team?”

“Well Sarah, I have learnt that a team does not work if there is not trust, but what makes a team even better is friendship. To guarantee this I ensure that we go on team bonding activity twice a season.”

The camera cut to Shane, who was rolling his eyes.

Sarah chuckled, encouraging Ilya on. “Like what?”

“Well, just this last month we all went to Byward Market and ate Beavertails. Have you heard of this?”

A general murmur of agreement echoed through the room.

“Would you believe my shock when I learned that Canadians eat this? And not only this, but they are not actually the tails of beavers. It is just dough. And you can get them covered in maple syrup. I tried a...what is it called Hollander?”

Shane sighed, leaning into his own mic. “A poutail.”

“Yes!” Ilya exclaimed, slamming his hand down on the table. “I had this poutail. They put poutine on the beavertail. It was so delicious it must be illegal. I may never skate again if I eat this once more, I think my stomach will fall out.”

The camera cut back to Shane, who was looking exasperatedly at his husband.

Cut

Video taken from a distance of Ilya on the ice, being guided backwards by a ref as he shouts at one of the Minnesota players.

“What are you doing buddy? You are hosing all over the place!”

“Va chier!” Someone shouts back.

Cut

The video changes to a vertical video, as a teenage girl moves to stand beside Ilya. Ilya puts his arm over her shoulder and they strike a pose, smiling towards the camera. The girl steps out from his side, turning to him.

“Thank-you so much, I’m such a big fan.”

“Of course, of course, was nice to speak to you both.”

The girl behind the camera chimes in, shyly. “I love your shirt.”

The camera pans back to Ilya, who’s wearing a Cow’s Creamery shirt. On it is a cartoon cow, dressed in a Cen’s jersey playing hockey. The caption reads: “Shane Holl-udder.”

“Ah, thank-you, I got it myself. When I become citizen they will have to make one for me.”

“Maybe Ilya Moo-zanov?” She suggested.

“Brilliant!”

Cut

Footage from Wyatt’s instagram. Somehow, he and Ilya have ended up outside, building a snow fort. Ilya is working diligently to reinforce the walls, though he does not move smoothly wrapped up in a large coat, a great fur hat, and intricately beaded mukluks.

“We will call this kingdom Ilyaland, and I am the Tsar.”

“What about me?”

“You are court jester.”

Ilya stands up, moving to collect fresh snow. He steps into fresh powder, only for his entire leg to sink into the snowbank, up to mid thigh. Ilya freezes, looking down at his leg, then back up to Wyatt.

“I have a booter.”

Cut

Footage from the Centaur’s official instagram. Ilya and Shane model some of the team merch available in the shop for a photographer. Shane strikes sweet, but professional poses, showing off hoodies and t-shirts.

When it’s Ilya’s turn, he spins across the backdrop like a spit of donair. He waved his hands dramatically around his body.

“Hello Centaurs fans, you know what you need? A beautiful toque. Perfect for those harsh Canadian winters. Buy the toque.”

“Ilya these are just pictures, there is no sound,” the photographer clarified.

Cut

The next section of the video are very short cuts, all focusing on moments of different instances in interviews where Ilya said the word “about.” He pronounced it the Canadian way, “a-boat.”

Cut

Video of Ilya receiving his Canadian citizenship. He’s dressed in Shane’s Team Canada fleece, grinning ear to ear as he shakes the hand of the official.

Cut

Ilya in a Roots commercial he had done, just after getting his Canadian citizenship. He models a sweater set, surrounded by animated moose, black bears, beavers, and loons.

Cut

Shane looked at his husband, who was sporting the world's biggest grin on his face. "Shane do you see this? I am biggest Canadian in the world!"

"I don't think you've quite figured out how to use the term 'hoser' yet."

"Is unimportant. It is all about the spirit. Two million people agree"

"I'm already scared for when you try to use 'tabarnak' on the ice for the first time."

"How do I like this video?" David asked, nudging his glasses even further down his face.

"Just press the heart button, dad."

"Chicken is done!" Yuna exclaimed, switching off the oven and bringing out the plates. "You know boys, I've been saying you should really be trying to capitalize more off of your social media presence. You two are very popular among some specific groups."

"Yes," Ilya nodded. "The girls and the gays and the theys."

"I am already stressed out as it is trying to monitor Ilya's impulsive instagram posts," Shane replied, carrying the plates out to the dining table.

"You do not like photos of you sleeping? But you look so cute!"

"The comments are all people talking about my shoulders."

"Very cute and very sexy."

"Shut up."

As dinner finished up, Shane and his dad were in charge of the dishes as Ilya and his mom started on the cinnamon rolls.

"Alright Ilya," Yuna started, reading through the recipe on her phone. "Preheat the oven to 375 while we roll out the dough."

Ilya paused, then sighed dramatically.

"What?"

"This is Fahrenheit?"

“Yes.”

“I thought you use Celsius in Canada. I thought I was free of Fahrenheit when I left Boston.”

“Well we do normally use Celsius, but the ovens are in Fahrenheit since they’re usually made in the states.”

“Wait,” Shane interjected, looking at Ilya quizzically. “Why are you acting so surprised? Are you telling me you haven’t used your oven in Ottawa once?”

“This is what air fryer is for. Much faster.”

“I need to hide that thing from you.”

“But everything else is metric, yes? Distances?”

“Yeah, no for sure,” Shane responded, then paused. “But sometimes we talk about things in inches, like snow. But rain is usually in centimeters.”

“And a lot of contractors use feet and inches,” David interjected. “Or if you’re talking about the height of a person it’s usually in feet and inches. Unless it’s on my licence.”

Ilya blinked. “But the cars are all in kilometers per hour, yes? Or is that another thing Quebec likes to change?”

“Yes, but a lot of them list both in case you need to drive in the states. Sometimes people measure distance in miles when you’re in the prairies though since that’s how the roads are sectioned.”

“But we measure everything in grams and kilograms!” Yuna offered. “Or, actually, people are usually measured in pounds.”

“Maybe you should write me a list so that I can keep track. Who came up with these rules?” Ilya whined.

“Well actually, when I was a kid we learned the imperial system for everything. We only switched to metric back in the 70s.”

“Blame America,” Shane said simply.

“Well I was already going to do that,” Ilya replied. “But I blame Canada too for not being able to make up their mind.”

“You’re totally right, Ilya,” Shane replied, drying off his hands. “We should start a totally new measurement system. Everything is measured in maple syrup jugs.”

“I know you are joking, but yesterday I did see a sticker in a Tim Hortons that used the length of 46 timbits to measure distance.”

Chapter End Notes

Some explanations of this one:

Beavertails are literally my favourite treat in this world. They're really common in Quebec, but harder to come by in the west :(usually you get them topped with cinnamon sugar, or nutella. You can usually find them in national parks like Whistler, Banff, Riding Mountain.

The shirt Ilya wears is from Cow's Creamery, which is an ice cream shop based out of PEI. What they're really known for is their iconic cow themed merch. They often do cow pun shirts for hockey players, like Cow-nor McDavid and Sidney Cowsby.

The term booter is very common in the prairies, it literally just means that you're in snow so deep that it falls in and fills your boot. Ilya is wearing mukluks because he slays.

Toque is simply the Canadian word for a knitted hat (a beanie).

Tabarnak is an incredibly iconic Quebecois swear word, it basically just means fuck or holy shit.

As for the second half of this chapter, yes, Canada is notorious for being all over the place with our units of measurement. Formally, we use metric, but since we're so heavily influenced by the United States, informally we often will use imperial units of measurement, especially when referring to people, like for height and weight. Things like our groceries will typically be in kilograms and liters however.

It's true that Canada switched to the metric system in the 70s, as my dad always reminds me. He says he's bilingual since he understands imperial and metric, and never lets us forget it. He always says that they only switched to metric since it made gas seem cheaper.

Also when I wrote this, I was worried because I wasn't sure the typical treatment when discussing Shane's eating disorder. I asked my sister because she goes to a lot of therapy and she said "I don't know, I don't go to that kind of therapy." Then I said "well I don't know how eating disorders are treated." She replied "op, you are the one who has a diagnosed eating disorder." Unfortunately my therapist is useless and basically just tells me that sucks for me. Anywho, this is what mayo clinic said.

During the pandemic, tims had stickers saying to stay 46 timbits apart at all times. I think I also saw versions measured in bears. I know the pandemic didn't happen in this fic, but I don't care :)

Anyway, thank you for the love on this fic! I love seeing all the Canadians talking about their experiences and things that they've never even heard of. Please let me know if there's anything you'd like to see, I've got one more chapter in this fic to go but I'm

hoping to write some more in the future :) I've been enjoying messaging my friends across Canada and interrogating my dad for research for this fic a little too much.

Chapter 6: Just Winnie. The. Pooh.

Chapter Summary

“Winnie-the-Pooh and the Wrong Bees,” he announced.

He flipped the book around, staring quizzically at the author notes.

Shane raised an eyebrow. “What’s wrong?”

Chapter Notes

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

September, 2022

Montreal

“Ruby! I will give you one star review on Yelp if you do not finish my nails! I have paid good money for this!” Ilya yelled across the room at the 9 year-old girl who seemed to be distracted by whatever her sister was scribbling into her notebook.

“You didn’t actually pay her did you?” Shane inquired.

“I promised I would make her Kraft Dinner for supper.” Ilya blew on his nails, each one painted a different jewel tone. “She was supposed to add sparkles to my thumbs.”

“Here,” Shane said, sitting across from his husband. “Do mine. But I just want the purple.”

Hayden and Jackie were out for the evening, one last date night before the season started back up in October. Ilya thought they were going to see a play of some sort, which made sense, if he were Jackie, he would want to take Hayden somewhere he was forced to stay silent for three hours.

Ilya liked that he and Shane had become go-to babysitters, even though they now lived three hours away. He’d take them up on it anytime they had the chance. He loved to see Shane with the kids. Shane thought he wasn’t good with them, he often deferred to his husband, but Ilya could see the softness he held for the kids. Arthur especially gravitated towards him, on the quiet side, whispering into Shane’s leg when he felt overwhelmed by the noise going on around him.

“Are you next?” Ilya asked, turning to the seven year-old boy that was now sitting to Shane’s right.

Arthur frowned. “I don’t know. What if I get made fun of at school?”

Shane's eyebrows knit together. "Has someone made fun of you like that before?"

"No...but what if they do? None of the other boys wear nail polish."

"Well you know what, Arthur? You go to school with your very beautiful and fashionable nails, and if anyone says anything, you punch them in the face," Ilya interjected.

"No! Do not do that--"

"Tell them your Uncle Ilya had the most fights in the NHL last season, and he taught you to punch, okay? Here."

Ilya held up both hands in front of his chest.

"Give me your best shot, Arthur."

Arthur raised both his fists like a boxer, throwing punches back and forth against Ilya's palms. A pained look crossed Ilya's face as he let each punch push him further back.

"Arthur, Arthur, please! I give up, you've got an impressive cross, kid. Now you know you've got what it takes if anyone in grade two tries to give you trouble, okay?"

Shane looked concerned. "Hayden will kill us if he found out we gave his kid permission to throw hands in an elementary school."

"Ah, you can blame me. Besides, didn't you tell me your mom took you out for ice cream once when you punched a kid for calling you a slur?"

"Yes, technically, but I was in grade six at that point, which was a much more acceptable punching age."

"It is fine, we can trust you Arthur, yes?" Arthur nodded. "Reasonable use of force. Anyway, what colour for you today?" Ilya noted that Arthur still looked a bit wary.

"If you're worried about school, we can do black. Very cool. Very punk," Shane tried.

Arthur looked thoughtful for a moment, before nodding. "I think black is okay,"

"Let's do it."

After Ilya finished up Shane's nails, Shane started on Arthur's, while Ilya put on water for the Kraft Dinner. Shane, in all his complaints for how overprocessed it was, and how the cheese wasn't even real, still asked for a serving for himself. It was a Canadian comfort food after all.

Ilya rummaged around the kitchen for a few minutes, before realizing that the Pikes did not own an electric kettle. He had run into this dilemma the first time he had tried to make pasta at Shane's house, when he asked for an electric kettle to boil the water.

Shane had raised an eyebrow. "Why would you need a kettle?"

Ilya blinked at him. “To boil the water.”

“Just boil it on the stove.”

Ilya looked at Shane like he’d just been shot. “But that will take forever.”

Shane shrugged. “Are we on a time limit?”

Shane could not seem to understand why the kettle was necessary. Didn’t he realize it was faster? That it used less energy? Ilya almost had a stroke when after inquiring as to how Shane heated water for tea, he was informed that he placed a mug of water in the microwave.

Against his will, Ilya filled a pot with room temperature water and placed it directly on the stove. Maybe it would finally start boiling in three hours or so.

He made the mac n cheese just like the girls liked it. Margarine, no milk. He placed all their servings, even his and Shane’s, in pink plastic bowls, and poured cups of chocolate milk for himself and the kids.

The six of them gathered around the table, eating in silence other than the slurping mainly coming from Amber, who was having a challenging time getting the noodles to stay on her fork. Shane leant over periodically with a napkin to clean her up.

“Alright guys, eight o’clock, you know what that means,” Shane said, slapping his hands on his thighs as he stood up.

A chorus of whines echoed through the room, Jade slamming her head dramatically down on the table top.

“Why are we so upset?” Ilya asked. “Are you really dreading hearing me read a bedtime story?”

“You’re reading us a story?” Arthur asked hopefully. “Will you do the voices.”

“Of course I will do the voices, who do you think you are talking to?”

“Two stories!” Ruby squealed, jumping up excitedly. “Please?”

Amber jutted out her bottom lip dramatically. “Please?”

“Fine,” Ilya relented. “Two, but only if you all brush your teeth without me asking!”

The kids scurried off to the bathroom, elbows up fighting to be the first ones in. Amber sidled up to Ilya, tugging on his pant legs.

“Will you help me?” she asked.

Ilya looked to Shane, who gestured for him to go on. “I’ll clean up. You go get them ready for bed.”

Ilya let himself be led to the bathroom, holding Amber's hand. He hoisted her onto a stool so she could see herself as she brushed her teeth, Ilya helping her to reach any spots she missed. The rest of the kids chattered excitedly around him, all of them vigorously brushing their teeth and making pointed looks at Ilya to ensure he noticed them.

Within ten minutes, the kids had squeaky clean teeth, and were all piled into Jade's bed. Shane entered the room, two books in hand, and settled into the open space reserved for him between Ilya and Arthur.

"Alright," Shane said, handing over the first book to Ilya. "Let's settle in."

Ilya passed his hand over the book, furrowing his brow as he read the title.

"Winnie-the-Pooh and the Wrong Bees," he announced.

He flipped the book around, staring quizzically at the author notes.

Shane raised an eyebrow. "What's wrong?"

"This is Vinni Pukh rip-off."

"What?"

"Vinni Pukh. You have copied this."

Shane just looked at his husband in disbelief. "What the fuck is Vinni Pukh?" he asked, so confused that he didn't even notice that he had just cursed in a room full of children.

"Soviet cartoon. Bear and his forest friends."

Shane blinked. "Ilya, Winnie-the-Pooh is the original. It was written by a British author."

Ilya scoffed, looking at Shane like he had hit his head a little too hard. "No, no, I know Vinni Pukh. He is Soviet, from the sixties. He is on post stamps."

"Okay but, the book was originally written by a British guy after the First World War. It's based on a real bear, from Canada actually. Winnie is *named* after Winnipeg."

Ilya frowned, opening the cover of the book and reading through all the publishing jargon.

"Are you seriously looking for proof that they stole this from Russia?"

"Surely if this were the work of stupid English I would have heard of this. Why would anyone name beloved character after city of Winnipeg? Ridiculous."

"Because the guy who adopted the bear was from Winnipeg."

"So now you are telling me Canada had army bear? Now you are joking me, Hollander. You are stealing from Poland now. You all wish to be Slavic so bad you are stealing best stuff."

“I’m serious! Just google it, whatever weird Soviet cartoon you watched was *based off* of this.”

Ilya frowned, crossing his arms over his chest. He looked a bit like Amber before she had one of her tantrums.

That is how Shane and four sleepy children ended up back in the living room far past bedtime, with Ilya queuing up Vinni Pukh on the television.

“Watch, watch Hollander.”

The picture was grainy, considering it was from 1969, but the children were captivated as they watched this plump bear waddle across the screen. The background looked like it was drawn by school children, and the bear exuded a strange, high pitched stream of thick Russian.

“What is he saying?” Arthur asked.

“He is saying that he hears a buzz, and if the tree cannot buzz then it must be something else. But why would you buzz if you are not a bee?”

Shane watched as “Vinni Pukh” collected piglet to come aid him in his retrieval of the honey.

“This is fun!” Jade exclaimed. “I like how they talk.”

“Vinni Pukh is best,” Ilya nodded.

“Can we learn Russian?” Ruby asked.

“Yes, I will teach you Russian, and we will talk in secret language in front of your dad.”

He turned back to the screen thoughtfully, watching as the film continued to run through.

“You say this bear is Canadian?” Ilya asked, looking back to his husband.

“I mean, yeah, technically.”

Ilya nodded. “Hm. This one thing Canada has done right,” he said, so softly it couldn’t have been for anyone but himself.

The front door to the house swung open, and six heads turned simultaneously to watch the two remaining Pikes walk through the door.

“You guys are still up?” Hayden asked, as he walked into the living room, dropping his bag on the couch. He didn’t seem upset, but his expression turned to one of confusion as he looked from his children, to Shane, to the television, and to Ilya, who was standing pointing at the screen as if he was conducting a TED talk.

“What the fuck are you showing my children?” He asked.

“Hayden! Language!” Jackie scolded, as she entered the room. She too paused, squinting her eyes and examining the scene in front of her.

“I am educating,” Ilya explained. “Vinni Puhk. Soviet bear.”

“Rozanov, please do not show my children your weird Russian cartoons.”

“Pike, that is very racist. You think because it is Russian it is communist propaganda?” Ilya shook his head.

Hayden sputtered, looking to his wife, who was hiding her laugh behind her hands.

“Cultural appru-priation,” Ruby nodded.

“Who taught you that word? And that is not what that means.”

“Alright guys,” Shane announced, standing up from where he was situated on the floor.

“Bedtime for real now.”

The kids got up with little complaint, having been properly tired out from an evening of play, and a night of Russian media. Amber waddled straight to her mom, begging to be picked up.

“Thanks for taking them again tonight,” Hayden said, watching the kids retreat into the hallway. He then turned back to Ilya. “At least, I think. Please tell me they’re not gonna start whispering Russian to me while I sleep.”

“No promises,” Ilya said, beginning to gather his and Shane’s things.

“Are you sure you guys don’t want to stay the night?” Hayden asked. “Don’t want you driving in the dark.”

Ilya shrugged. “Is not so bad. Besides, I have plans for him still tonight.”

“Ilya,” Shane scolded.

Ilya held up his hands in surrender. “I mean we must still watch the rest of the Vinni Pukh films. You are married to Russian now, you must learn my culture, Hollander.”

Shane rolled his eyes, giving Hayden and Jackie hugs goodbye before piling into Shane’s car. He paused for a moment after shifting into drive. “You were joking about watching more Winnie-the-Pooh, right?”

“Oh, I am serious, Hollander. You forced me to watch Telefrancais, is only fair.”

Chapter End Notes

One last author's note!

Kraft Dinner is just the Canadian Kraft mac n cheese, but anyone will tell you its 10x better than any American version. The cheese is equally fake.

As for the thing about the kettles, this is based off of a very real experience I had at a hostel in Istanbul. Here I was, trying to boil some pasta, when I start getting accosted by one of the staff. Our conversation goes very similar to Shane and Ilya's, where he keeps insisting that I boil it in the kettle first, and I keep saying that no, it's okay, I'll just wait for it to boil on the stove. He got so upset that he forcibly took the pot of water and transferred it into the kettle. I don't understand, why make it a whole extra thing and put it into the kettle first? Why are we rushing? I guess the acceptable explanation I got from my family in Ireland is that energy is a lot cheaper in Canada, so for us it doesn't really make a difference compared to Europe. Also, most Canadians generally don't own a kettle in the first place. My sister wants you to know that she owns a kettle (but she only uses it for tea, not for boiling pasta).

Edit: I'M SORRY TO THE CANADIAN KETTLE OWNERS IN THE COMMENTS. I am wrong, lots of Canadians own kettles for tea and whatnot. However I standby the fact that no one is boiling pasta water with them.

Now, for Vinni Pukh. I know what you're thinking, author, isn't it a bit of a stretch that a Russian guy would genuinely believe that Winnie the Pooh is a rip off of a Soviet cartoon from the 60s? Well I can tell you this, no it is not, because this is directly a story from my sister's best friend's fiance.

The story goes, he grew up in Russia, and moved to the US when he was an adult. Before this, he came to visit his now fiance in Canada. At some point during his visit, he came across some Winnie-the-Pooh books. He then refused to believe that Winnie-the-Pooh was the original, he had only ever heard of the Russian version and was SURE that Winnie was a rip-off. This man currently works for NASA. I highly encourage you guys to look up the Vinni Pukh film, I watched it and it's literally so charming. His voice is so goddamn cute. The animators of the original Winnie-the-Pooh films stated that he likes the Soviet version better and I might have to agree. Ilya Rozanov requires absolutely no explanation when it comes to that bear he has been in the trenches.

The Winnie backstory is my favourite Canadian fun fact. Winnie was a bear that was adopted by a Canadian soldier that came abroad with him in WW1. He named her after his hometown of Winnipeg. Winnie survived the war and was donated to the London Zoo. A. A. Milne and his son used to visit the bear at the zoo, and Christopher Robin renamed his stuffed bear after her because he loved her so much.

One last easter egg is the mention of Telefrancais. It's a French Canadian TV show that's used to teach French, they played it for us in elementary school since none of my teachers actually spoke any french. It has the world's most terrifying pineapple puppet you've ever seen. Pretty sick theme song though.

That's all for this one! Thank you for all the support and love for Canada as I've been able to write this! Stay tuned since I've got another oneshot planned for Hollanov :) Have a very Canadian New Years!

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