

Year of the Dog

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/76875156) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/76875156>.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Heated Rivalry (TV) , Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov , Yuna Hollander , David Hollander
Additional Tags:	POV Ilya Rozanov , Japanese Culture , In-Laws , Shane Hollander our hafu king , Helpful son-in-law Ilya Rozanov
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2026-01-01 Words: 1,052 Chapters: 1/1

Year of the Dog

by [SewSewDef](#)

Summary

Ilya's first Oshōgatsu with the Hollanders.

Notes

I got inspired and walked away from my own family's Oshōgatsu to write this. It's not beta'd and barely proofread. I will go back to my mochi now.

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

Ilya knows, theoretically, that his life has been full of out-of-the-ordinary occurrences, this year being no exception. But nothing, nothing in his short fast life thus far has prepared him for this moment, trailing alone behind Yuna Hollander up and down the aisles of Miyamoto Épicerie, carrying a shopping basket for her as she fills it up, his G-Wagon (which he drove her here in) parked out front.

The woman is on a mission: he sees all sorts of little packages of things fall into the cart. He thinks he recognises mochi, a tube of fishcakes that look like the ones on top of ramen, and a whole fish, the only name he knows for it is *morskoy lesch*.

“What is name of that fish?” he asks, for lack of anything better to say.

“*Tai*,” she answers, eyes laser-focused on the cooler-shelves in search of what she needs.

“And English?”

“Porgy.”

“Ah. Porgy.” he nods. “*Tai* sounds more delicious.”

Yuna laughs, and they make their way through the store, gathering what they need.

If the cashier recognizes Ilya on checkout, or has any questions about why a rival team’s star player is carrying Montreal’s star player’s mom’s shopping basket, she doesn’t say anything beyond a polite “*Akemashite omedetou!*”

After they’re done, Ilya loads their shopping, carefully packed into cooler bags with ice, into the trunk, walking around to the passenger side to open Yuna’s door for her. She pats his massive shoulder affectionately as she climbs up into the car, and Ilya wonders how on earth he got here.

It’s only a 15 minute drive to Centre Bell, and they park and wait for the familiar figure with dark hair and an irritatingly sensible down parka to emerge from the stadium side exit. Ilya pops the trunk and Shane carefully slides the cooler bags over to make room for his practice bag.

He slides himself into the back seat, and Yuna turns as if to try to switch seats. Shane and Ilya stop her at the same time, an “It’s fine, mom,” and a “Is long drive, front seat is more comfortable,” and Yuna huffs affectionately and re-buckles her seat belt.

It’s a two-hour drive back to Ottawa: it would have been easier for Shane to have made the trip back last night, but the Voyageurs had a sadistically-timed New Year’s Day morning practice. Anyway, Yuna insisted that Montreal had better Japanese groceries than Ottawa, so Ilya enlisted himself and his most practical vehicle to help chauffeur the Hollanders around.

When they arrive at Shane's parents' house, David is puttering around busily cleaning. "I can't cook, so my job is *osouji*, cleaning the house," he explains cheerfully.

Ilya and Shane each carry in one cooler bag from the car, and unload their contents on the kitchen counter. Yuna is shuffling around, pulling a large black and red lacquer box down from a high cabinet. "Traditionally we make all these dishes from scratch, Ilya," Yuna says down at him from the top of a step ladder, gesturing to all the little shrink-wrapped trays of pre-made food. "But I don't have time for that! I'll just make *ozoni* and grill the *tai* and call it a day. Shane, plate the *osechi* please", she says, handing him the lacquer box.

Shane gets to work, carefully opening each package and using an extra-long pair of chopsticks to perfectly place little bits of the side dishes into the box. It's a great task for him, Ilya thinks. Detail-oriented.

"Ilya, you can take a seat and relax," Yuna says, but Ilya stays standing awkwardly in the kitchen.

"I can help," he says. "I...cook."

"He actually does," Shane nods, not looking up from his bento.

Yuna pauses, and turns to look at Ilya. After a moment, a very small smile hits her face. "That would be lovely, thank you," she says, sounding fond. "Can you grill fish?"

Ilya cleans, prepares, and cooks the porgy, carefully monitoring the cast iron pan, the fish browning in its parchment paper wrapping, while Shane sets the table and Yuna stirs hunks of mochi and a green leafy vegetable Ilya doesn't recognize into a fragrant chicken-scented broth. The kitchen isn't large, not compared to Shane's palatial Montreal duplex or his own very nicely-sized townhouse, but the three of them move smoothly and efficiently around in it, laughing when they bump into each other and admiring each others' handiwork.

The finished product, when they all finally sit down to the table to eat, is a meal that Ilya can safely say he has never witnessed in his life. The fish, that he recognizes, red and crispy and taking center stage. The big lacquer box Shane carefully filled is bursting with side dishes: a golden scoop of mashed sweet potatoes dotted with chestnuts, tiny glazed rolls of sweet seaweed, perfectly round shiny black beans, spiral rolls of spongy omelette. At each seat is a steaming little bowl of clear soup with chunks of chicken, mochi and that green mystery vegetable.

"Is...cilantro?" Ilya asks, interest peaked.

"*Mitsuba*," Yuna answers. "Close, though!"

They all take a seat and Ilya follows along as the Hollanders take out their chopsticks from fancy white and red envelopes. He pauses before eating, waiting to see what everyone else does.

"*Akemashite omedetou gozaimasu*," Yuna leads them. Shane and his dad echo her, stumbling over the words but making it through. He remembers the cashier saying the same thing, and

figures it must be ‘Happy New Year.’

“*Kotoshi mo yoroshiku onegaishimasu,*” Yuna says, and Shane says it after her, stumbling through it a little, rusty.

“It means, like, ‘please take care of me this year, too,’” Shane leans over and says, quietly.

“I have never heard you speak Japanese,” is all Ilya can think to say back.

“Because I *don’t*,” Shane hisses back.

Ilya chuckles. He looks across the table at Yuna. “Could you repeat it so I can say it too?” he asks.

“*Kotoshi mo,*” Yuna says slowly, and Ilya turns to face Shane.

“*Kotoshi mo,*” Ilya repeats.

“*Yoroshiku,*”

“*Yoroshiku,*”

“*Onegaishimasu.*”

“*Onegaishimasu.* Please take care of me this year too.”

Shane is blushing furiously, staring a hole into his bowl. “*Kotoshi mo yoroshiku,*” he mumbles back. Ilya smiles a full-toothed smile, and shoves an entire block of mochi into his mouth.

End Notes

I'm not explaining any of the dishes or traditions mentioned here sorry! Also idk if everyone makes the same osechi I'm just writing what's in front of me rn 🙄

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