

Saturdays These Days

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/77894271) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/77894271>.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Heated Rivalry (TV)
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Ilya Rozanov , Shane Hollander , Original Children of Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov
Additional Tags:	Post-Canon , Slice of Life , Fluff , Kid Fic , Domestic Fluff , i can't stop thinking about the scene where ilya is in the pool playing with all the kids so here we are
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2026-01-18 Words: 3,099 Chapters: 1/1

Saturdays These Days

by [goodmorningeveryone](#)

Summary

“Okay,” Ilya announces, clapping his hands as he steps into the one room in the house Shane’s designer wasn’t allowed to touch. “Your father is abandoning us today. What do you want to do, dochen’ka?”

From a tangle of hot pink sheets and butterfly-shaped pillows, his eight-year-old daughter looks up at him with more sass than any one person should be allowed to hold.

“Dad has work,” Nina points out, just as Shane yells from the kitchen, “I am not abandoning you! I am going to my job!”

-OR-

Ilya and his daughter go to the Science Museum and learn that Ilya might be a little bit scared of butterflies.

Notes

NEW FANDOM WHO DIS??????????????

Listennnnn, I have been plagued by thoughts of hollanov girl dads, particularly Ilya girl dad, so *drops plate in front of you* here

A huge THANK YOU to [capricorntears](#) for the sensitivity reading of Ilya's accent. I love you and appreciate you and I am sorry for making you read fluff <3

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

“Okay,” Ilya announces, clapping his hands as he steps into the one room in the house Shane’s designer wasn’t allowed to touch. “Your father is abandoning us today. What do you want to do, *dochen’ka*?”

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“Dad has work,” Nina points out, just as Shane yells from the kitchen, “I am not abandoning you! I am going to my job!”

“He loves job more than he loves us,” Ilya points out. “Or else he would quit job to hang out today.”

Nina rolls her eyes as Shane’s voice ricochets down the hallway – “Oh my god, shut up!” – and returns to her book.

“So that is what you want?” Ilya asks, hands on his hips. “To read all day?”

Nina purses her lips as she turns the page and doesn’t bother looking up at her father. “Most parents would love to have a kid that enjoys reading.”

Ilya pinches the bridge of his nose. “You are boring like your father,” he sighs, loud and dramatic. “Okay, fine, we have reading day today. You find me book to read?”

Nina giggles, unable to keep up her annoyance. “Papa, you aren’t going to read all day.”

“You want to read so we read!” Ilya retorts and stomps over to her bookshelf. “Let me see, *The Time Garden*, *Half Magic*, oh maybe this — *A Kni*—“

“Papa,” Nina interrupts. “Let’s go to the Science Museum.”

“Science Museum?” Ilya turns from the bookshelf to look down at his daughter in mock horror. “You want to be more boring than your father? Is competition?”

She ignores him. “There’s a butterfly exhibit where you get to go into a room with butterflies and sometimes they land on you and you can be a walking butterfly person and they tickle and it’s so great!”

The thing about Ilya that everyone in their family knows is that Ilya would do anything for them. As soon as Nina said “Let’s go to the Science Museum,” everyone in the entire house knows Ilya will take her, but not before he puts up his usual performative stink. And Nina lets him because she loves him. And because she thinks it’s silly.

“You want me to pay money to have butterfly pretend we are tree for them?”

She tries not to giggle as she slides off her bed and pads to her father in her pajamas and hugs him around the middle. For emphasis, she switches to Russian. “*Please, Papa? I really, really, really want to see the butterflies.*”

“Okay,” he sighs, placing a hand on top of her head, petting her gently. “Only because you cannot have two fathers abandon you today.”

“I will literally be back in time for dinner!” Shane yells.

Nina squeezes Ilya around the waist, and as he runs a hand over her head, all he thinks is that he’d do anything to give her the world.

Ilya and Shane retired years ago. Their backs hurt, their knees were fucked, they were slower and couldn't recover as fast. It was time.

Shane, with his inability to not constantly think about hockey, almost immediately started work as a commentator. It wasn't a hard job for him to find. Within hours of them announcing their retirements, the two of them were inundated with requests for different jobs – commentator and journalist and podcaster. Shane carefully weighed his options, negotiated contracts, spent hours on the phone with Yuna talking through the different possibilities, until he picked his favorite.

Ilya, on the other hand, scowled at every email, every phone call. He hated all of it.

“What if you took a break?” Shane had suggested one night after he'd put Nina down and joined Ilya on the couch.

“Break?” Ilya repeated as though he'd never heard the word before. “What do you mean break?”

“Like a break,” Shane repeated as he snuggled up to Ilya's side, tucking himself under his husband's arm. “Take some time off, hang out with Nina, sleep a little, and then see what you want to do.”

It turns out that what Ilya wanted to do was exactly that. He packed lunches and did drop off and pick up and hosted playdates and played at the park and built snowmen and, sure, sometimes napped while Nina was at day care, but mostly he spent time with his daughter and his husband.

He didn't raise Nina alone. Shane's job afforded him weeks at a time where he'd be home, or he'd be around during the day and gone briefly at night. The flip-side to that was there were also times where he'd travel for days on end, and it would just be Ilya and Nina battling it out over bath time.

After the first year, Ilya decided to look for a job. They didn't need the money, years in the league meant they had enough money to last them a lifetime, but maybe just to have something to do. But everything he looked at, every job he thought of, every proposal that came his way, all of it paled to hanging out with his kid.

He decided he'd wait another year.

It's been six.

Ilya hasn't had any interest in doing anything else.

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It takes over two hours to leave the house. Nina requests fishtail braids ("But Papa, can you do it like a French braid?"), Ilya decides he needs a shower, Shane insists on packing them snacks, and when they finally think they're ready to leave, Nina can't find one of her purple sneakers.

Shane finds it hidden behind a plant pot ("Of course," he says, so fond as he hands it to Nina with a kiss to her forehead. "Here you go, cuteness."), and once they're saddled with the appropriate clothing and food, Shane kisses his daughter and then his husband goodbye.

"Gross," Nina says as she watches her dads kiss, which only causes Ilya to swoop Shane into a dip and kiss him deeply. "Ew! Ew! Ew!" she chants as her dads ignore her and hold each other tighter.

When Ilya puts Shane back on his feet, his heart swells. He takes in the man in front of him as he cups his cheek. Soft lines around the eyes, parenthesis around his mouth showing years of smiles and laughter, freckles that never fade, not even in the depths of the Canadian winters.

"I love you," he whispers in Russian, running a thumb against his cheek.

"I love you too," Shane repeats back to him in Russian. Ilya is annoyed at how good Shane has gotten at Russian. His accent isn't perfect, he wouldn't say he's fluent (mostly because he hates the idea that Shane is fluent in more languages than he is), but certainly enough.

Nina grabs the back of Ilya's jacket. "Papa, let's goooooo," she insists, tugging. "You can make out with Dad later!"

Laughing, Shane lets him go, and with a final farewell, Ilya and Nina leave.

—

They detour on the way because Nina announces that she is "starving, Papa!" and the snacks Shane packed will not suffice. They stop and get burgers, Nina gooping a mix of mustard and ketchup onto her burger that inevitably winds up on her pant leg and requires a significant amount of hand soap and scrubbing on Ilya's part to get out.

Once fully fed and mostly dry, the two of them pack back into the car and resume their route to the museum.

When they approach the ticketing counter in the museum, they are informed that there's nearly two hours until the next available ticket to see the butterflies.

As he pays, Ilya turns to his daughter and, in Russian, gripes about the timing. *"Ridiculous that you need a time slot to visit some butterflies. What? Are they going to get overwhelmed? They're butterflies."*

They are handed a map to the museum, which Nina takes and opens with the precociousness afforded to an eight-year-old only-child with doting parents. “Oooh!” she squeals. “I wanna look at the dinosaurs!”

“They are not dinosaurs,” he says. “They are bones.”

“Who’s boring now?” Nina asks, hands on her hips.

“I am not boring!” Ilya retorts. “You are boring like your father!”

“You are!”

Ilya huffs. “Is okay you are boring. We go look at science.”

The two of them make their way through the dinosaur exhibits. Nina reads the placards aloud to her father, who listens patiently. Ilya makes loud dinosaur noises when they reach the carnivores and pretends to be a Tyrannosaurus Rex as he chases after Nina, who squeals and sprints headlong into a window display.

Tears are shed and hugs are needed, but within a few minutes, the two of them are back on their feet, debating which herbivore would win in a fight.

Nina pulls out her map as Ilya continues on about how a Brachiosaurus could destroy a Stegosaurus and announces their next destination.

“Birds?” he repeats. “You want to look at birds? We have birds at home.”

In this exhibition too, he listens carefully as Nina reads him all of the curated information about each bird. When they stop by a stuffed loon, Ilya scowls at it. “Eyes are fucked up,” he mutters under his breath.

Nina gasps, pointing an accusatory finger up at her father. "I'm telling Dad you swore!"

"I do no such thing," Ilya protests.

"Yes you did!" Nina shrieks in delight. "You are going to be in so much trouble!"

"Me?" Ilya asks. "In trouble?"

"Yes!" Nina squeals.

Ilya pauses brings a hand thoughtfully to his chin. "I do not think it is me who is in trouble," he muses. His eyes sparkle and he looks down at Nina who is a second too late to realize what is about to happen. "I think it is *you* who are in trouble!" Ilya shouts as he scoops Nina up and throws her over his shoulder.

She screams and laughs and hammers her fists on his back, barely able to get out the words "Put me down!" between giggles.

"I cannot do that," he says, calmly. "We have ticket appointment with butterflies."

Nina stops fidgeting and perks up, hands pushing against Ilya's shoulder to prop herself up. "It's time!?"

Nina's excitement knows no bounds. She practically skips her way over, dragging Ilya by the hand and telling him to hurry, hurry.

Ilya hands Nina her ticket so she can proudly show it to the museum attendant at the door.

“When you go in,” they are told, “the room is very warm. You’ll want to move slowly. Let the butterflies come to you, okay?”

Nina attempts to quell her wiggles of excitement as they cross the threshold.

“Papa, look!” she whisper-squeals, pointing to the nearest batch of leaves. “It’s a Painted Lady!”

“It is what?” Ilya asks as he tries to see what his daughter is looking at.

“Wow!” Nina breathes, walking close, eyes wide in reverence. “It’s beautiful!”

Ilya looks around the faux forest they’re in. Large tropical plants bloom out of beds of dirt that line a winding walkway through a room maybe a dozen meters in length. Kids and adults alike stand gawping at butterflies. Ilya doesn’t dislike butterflies. He adores his daughter’s fascination with them, always happy to buy a new butterfly pillow or a new glittery clip for her hair. But all he feels as he stands and looks around is hot. Sweaty, even.

Something tickles his cheek and he looks to the side. “Fuck! Shit!” he exclaims at the giant butterfly that had landed on his shoulder, its wing brushing against his face, takes off at the noise.

“Sir,” a museum attendant says. “Please, voices down.”

“Papa!” Nina stage whispers. “What is wrong with you? I am telling Dad you keep swearing!”

He switches to Russian after apologizing quietly to the attendant. *“That butterfly tried to bite my face!”* he tells his daughter.

"No, it didn't!" she counters. "It landed on you! You should be honored! I want one to land on me!"

Ilya sulks. *"Fine."*

Not a single butterfly lands on Nina. Two more land on Ilya by the time they can see the exit a few steps from where they stand, and Ilya is over it. With the first, he managed not to scream but batted at it so forcefully that another family ushered their children away from him, and when the second landed on his shirt, he squawked at a truly embarrassing pitch.

He is fully prepared to leave this hellish sauna and never come back when he feels a tug on his sleeve. Nina looks up at him, eyes wide with sorrow.

"Papa, do you think they hate me and that's why they won't land on me?"

Ilya quells the urge to burn this institution to the ground for making his daughter sad. *"No, dochen'ka,"* he says softly. *"Here, look."* And because this is his daughter and because he knows she deserves the world, Ilya squats down in front of a giant Monarch and holds out a finger.

The Monarch's antennae twitch in thought, and though Ilya would rather run screaming than have its spindly little legs touch his bare skin, he waits patiently until the Monarch moves itself onto his finger. Ever so slowly, he turns towards his daughter, finger steady.

"Put out your finger," he instructs, nodding encouragingly.

Nina's eyes are wide with delight and she enthusiastically holds her pointer finger out as steady as she can. Ilya thinks she might be holding her breath. He brings the Monarch to her outstretched hand and silently encourages it to move onto his daughter's finger. Yet again, the Monarch's antennae waggle as though testing the air, and then the butterfly steps from Ilya's finger onto Nina's.

One look at Nina's face and Ilya cannot fathom having ever tried to leave this magical place. His daughter's expression lights up, her eyes as big as her smile as she examines the butterfly up close. He wonders if he can buy her a butterfly. Can you keep them as pets in Canada? He makes a mental note to look it up later. He could talk Shane into it. Does he particularly want one in his own house? No. But does he want to bring his daughter that level of joy every single day? Obviously.

When the Monarch flies off, Nina isn't sad, she remains elated. They exit the butterfly room, and Ilya is blasted with cool air.

"Papa, did you *see?*!" she squeals. "Did you see it?! It sat on my finger for soooooooo long! It was soooooooo cool!"

Ilya smiles at her, his whole body filled with her happiness. He reaches a hand for her and she takes it, skipping alongside him with excitement. She babbles all the way to the car, recounting every butterfly she saw, the colors, the patterns, the way each one moved. Ilya listens, content to hear her so happy.

He checks his phone as they get to the car and holds the door open for Nina to climb into the back seat. He has a text from Shane.

Boring Husband

I should be home by 6:30. Ask Nina what kind of takeout she wants.

He slides into the driver's seat and looks in the rear view mirror. "What do you want for dinner?" he asks Nina's reflection. "Your father will bring home food."

"Burgers!" she shouts.

"We ate burgers for lunch," he points out as though he wouldn't eat burgers for every single meal if that's what Nina wanted.

“Oh,” she responds. “Pizza! Cheese! And pepperoni!”

“Okay.”

Best Husband

Pizza. Cheese and pepperoni.

Ilya hits send and puts his phone away, navigating them out of the crowded parking lot. As they turn out onto the road, Nina smiles cheekily.

“Papa?” she says. “You never told me you were afraid of butterflies.”

“I am not *afraid*.”

Nina ignores his comment. “You always seem to like my butterflies at home.”

“Yeah, your butterflies do not have –” Ilya mimics antennas growing out of his skull “ – weird, fuzzy, big things!”

“Antenna?” Nina asks. “You’re scared of the antenna?”

“I am not *scared*,” Ilya scoffs. “I do not *like* them.”

He sneaks a peak at his daughter in the rearview. She’s smirking at him. “Sure, Papa,” she says.

Shane comes home to Ilya and Nina sprawled out over the couch, watching a movie the whole family has seen at least a dozen times. He kisses each of them on the head, balancing pizza boxes carefully as he does.

Nina fills her dad in on the adventures she and her papa went on that day, tattling on Ilya for cursing (“I did not!” “*Three* times, Dad! He did it *three* times!”), and making fun of him for being scared of the butterflies (“You should have seen him, Dad! He was like –” and she shakes her whole body, hands and arms flailing as she mimics Ilya trying to get a butterfly off his shirt).

Clean up is a rush job so everyone can pile back on the couch to finish the movie together. Then a shower for Nina who comes out dressed in matching pajamas to kiss Ilya goodnight and give him a bone-crushing hug with an “I love you, Papa,” and Shane tucks her into bed.

When done, Shane gently shuts her bedroom door and rejoins Ilya on the couch.

Ilya ushers him in close, laying back so Shane can lay his head on his chest. Petting Shane’s hair, Ilya asks, “How was work?”

Shane shrugs against him, eyes closed in contentment. “Fine. Uneventful game. 1-1.”

Ilya hums in acknowledgment, and the two return to silence for a moment.

“Did you have fun with Nina today?” Shane asks.

“Of course,” Ilya answers. “We always have fun.”

There’s a pause.

“Even though you’re afraid of butterflies?”

“I am not –!”

But he’s cut off because Shane is kissing him, a smile apparent in the feel of his mouth, and Ilya wants to argue, wants to remind Shane exactly who Ilya Rozanov is, but Shane’s mouth is soft and his hands are warm around his middle, and even after all these years, their bodies still slot in together perfectly, unglued joinery made for one another.

And at the end of the day, Ilya can let it go. He can let it go because this is exactly where Ilya wants to be: in his home with his family, his daughter safely tucked into bed and his husband safely tucked in his arms.

End Notes

Thank you for reading my brain worms! If you'd like to scream about hollanov with me, you can find me on [bluesky](#).

Go drink some water ily! <3

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