What a Catch

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What a Catch

by Apropos_of_Nothing

Summary

David takes Shane and Ilya fishing during their week at the cottage.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

It had been less than 24 hours since Shane had unexpectedly and dramatically come out to his parents. And now his parents were sitting at his dining room table, swapping stories with his boyfriend while casually sipping Labatt Blues. Shane's head spun; he might have felt more anxious if not for the occasional tap of Ilya's shoe against his foot.

The evening was going better than Shane expected. His parents had been polite, making small talk with them both about hockey and the cottage's architecture and more ideas about their charity plan. And Ilya reciprocated in conversation as best he could when not stuffing his face with food.

In between one bout of awkward silence, his dad had filled it with another question. "So what do you plan to do with the rest of your time here?"

Ilya smirked, seemingly already envisioning the honest response. Before he could verbalize those ideas, Shane jumped in. "Uh probably just more swimming and campfires. Just going to relax around here."

His dad picked at the remainder of his salad. "Are you going to take him out on the boat? Do a little angling?"

"Ang-el-ing?", Ilya tilted his head. "What is this?"

"It's just fishing", Shane responded, and tried not to comment on how adorable Ilya looked when he turned his head like a confused puppy. He directed his attention to his dad. "I don't think Ilya wants to spend his week off sitting on an old boat and catching nothing, dad."

"Hey, you know your old man catches something every time we go out there. Ever since you were a kid, Shane," his dad pronounced. "Have you ever fished Roz… Ilya?"

Ilya swallowed the large bite he had just taken. "Mmm no. This is not something you do living in city. My father did not take us on trips unless it was for hockey."

A silence fell over them again as they continued to eat. Then, Yuna piped in. "Well maybe David should take you both out on the lake tomorrow. It's supposed to be a nice day, and I'm sure it would be more interesting than doing the same thing for a week straight."

Shane immediately went to protest that they were in fact *very happy* doing the same thing for a week straight. And also that he was very sure that the last thing Ilya would want to do is be stuck on a boat with his dad for multiple hours. But before he could say anything, Ilya spoke. "Okay."

Shane choked. "Okay? No no. I really don't think you want to do this."

"Ah so you are nervous because I will catch more fish than you?"

"No! It's just hard to catch trout this time of year and the–"

"Already making excuses, Hollander?"

Ilya grinned smugly in that infuriatingly adorable way. Shane just glared as his dad clapped his hands together. “Alright well it's settled. We will meet at the dock. 6am tomorrow. And don’t worry boys. We all know who will be doing the most catching.”

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The sun had not even risen yet and the two were already loading the boat alongside his dad. Shane had spent the better part of the early morning and the late night trying to convince Ilya that they should cancel their fishing plans.

Shane had even tried convincing Ilya by keeping him awake into the late hours of the night with some not-so-innocent activities. But alas, Ilya Rozanov is a stubborn man.

After wearied greetings and following David’s instructions on where to place all of the bait and equipment, they were on the boat and set to ride into the middle of the lake. The aluminum boat was just big enough to fit the three of them and their gear. As David drove the boat, Ilya and Shane sat knee to knee across the back bench. Shane rested his head on Ilya’s shoulder, already tired and ready to go home before the day had even started.

Shane had never been the biggest fan of fishing. He had done it often with his dad growing up, and yet it was one of the few things he had never excelled in. Although it irked Shane, he would still tag along anytime his dad suggested it. It was one of the few activities he and his dad did just the two of them. Although hockey had been their primary activity of choice, the sport rarely allowed for casual conversation. Their fishing expeditions were some of the few times they could have long meaningful and meaningless conversations, or sit in complete silence for hours on end.

But adding Rozanov into the mix felt…well he wasn’t sure how it felt. All he really felt was nauseous at the moment. He wasn’t sure if that was because of the swaying of the small boat, or the idea of being stuck on the water for many hours with his dad and his boyfriend.

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Ilya hadn’t a clue what he was doing. Or how this week had gone from fucking Hollander to professing his love to coming out to his lover’s parents to… fishing. He felt more whiplash here than he did getting a concussion on the ice. Regardless, he listened carefully as David handed him a fishing rod. And just like everything Ilya did, he planned to be the best at it.

Ilya watched intently as David demonstrated the simple knot he created on his line. He contemplated pretending to make the knot and just splice a simple one he already knew. Ilya had never grown up learning outdoorsy activities or survival skills. Growing up in his family was a survivalist activity in itself. For a second, he contemplated asking David to just do the knot for him on his own line. David must have sensed his hesitation. “Here. We can do it step by step using Shane’s line.”

Shane tossed his rod over to his dad. David readjusted so he sat side-by-side with Ilya, allowing him to see each movement his hands made while making the knot. “Okay so you first want to pass the line through the hook end.”

Ilya watched carefully as David continued to give him the verbal and visual cues to make the knot. It really wasn't that difficult but Ilya appreciated his patience nonetheless. "Okay and lastly you want to bring that loose end through the large second loop. Yup- that's the one. Now slowly pull on it and tighten the knot. Perfect! Very good, Ilya."

Ilya couldn't explain why it felt like the knot had a direct line to his own chest, tightening at his insides. He just nodded at David and waited for the next instructions.

David showed him how to attach the bait, explaining the different types and what fish they would attract. Ilya knew he probably would not need this information again, but he still found himself paying close attention to David's passionately explained knowledge.

David then demonstrated how to smoothly and carefully cast the line out into the dark lake.

Shane grasped his own reel and flung it out into the waters.

"Maybe is why you don't catch fish, Hollander? Your toss is almost as weak as your backhand."

"Fuck you", Shane snorted.

Even with the lack of experience, Ilya cast the line like he had been doing it forever.

David beamed, "Wow great work. Now next time I want you to try putting more of the flicking movement through your wrist, rather than your forearm, alright?"

Ilya nodded and stored the knowledge for the next time.

"And for now… we wait," David said matter-of-factly.

The three sat quietly, watching their individual lines. The sun was finally starting to peak over the unwavering lake's edge. The colors cast a gold and purple glow to the surface and the surrounding trees in the distance. The light reflected onto Shane, who looked effervescent in the tranquil setting. He wasn't sure if he had ever seen Shane's serene face basked in so much warmth before. Ilya wished he had brought a cigarette to further enjoy the sight. But alas, he had begrudgingly decided it was best to not smoke in front of his partner's father considering Shane's distaste for it.

Ilya was so distracted by the beautiful sight in front of him, he almost missed the slight shake of his line. He felt a small tug on his rod and the line dipped again. David commented on it before Ilya could. "You got something there, Ilya. Alright we are going to take it nice and slow. Start by pulling up on the rod- yup. And now you are going to reel as you lower it back down- yes just like that. Now do it a little smoother. Up and pull back a bit. Now down and reel it in. Keep going- nice and steady."

Determined, Ilya followed David's instructions exactly as he stated them.

"Okay almost at the surface now so do a big lean backwards to create some slack. And now big lean forward and reel it reel it - nice!"

The fish came popping out of the water. It was large and speckled, flopping around at the edge of the boat.

“Okay now grab it and bring it in. Let’s see what we got!”

David reached over to help Ilya with his hand placement on the big fish. Ilya had never held a fish before. And despite the slimy texture under his fingers, he felt delighted to be holding the creature.

“A lake trout… your first time fishing and you catch a trout,” Shane said with mouth slightly agape, making him look much like the fish in Ilya’s hands. “I hate you.”

“Mmm you love me,” Ilya beamed. “Almost as much as I love this fish.” He held it high as David insisted on taking a picture on his phone. Ilya felt himself beaming with a smile often only reserved for hockey and Shane. Ilya kissed the fish on the side of its gills.

David helped show him how to un-do the hook and release the large fish back into the water.

“Come on Hollander, where is my reward? Do I not deserve big kiss from you as well?” He teased as he leaned over to now try and kiss Shane on the lips.

“Ew no get off me! You’re disgusting. I am never kissing your fishy lips again.”

Despite his protests and laughs, Shane rolled his eyes and gave Ilya a swift, smiling kiss.

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The three men tiredly brought the boat in and secured it to the dock. Shane’s dad babbled on to Ilya about the types of fish they had encountered that day, the best season and locations to catch Salmon, and some other tidbit about Trout that Ilya definitely had not asked about.

Despite himself, Ilya didn’t come across as… bored or annoyed. Instead, he reciprocated about Russian wildlife and something about a bird he saw in Boston.

Shane was really only half paying attention to the actual words the two were speaking as he unloaded the supplies from the boat. He didn’t think it would be possible to feel so relaxed in this specific social scenario. And yet, he felt no need to insert himself between the two all day. Shane had let them do most of the talking throughout the morning. He would occasionally quip with Ilya just to get on his nerves and chat with his dad about the latest article he read in the New Yorker. But ultimately he let the two of them do the majority of the talking.

Ilya and Shane did the heavy lifting to throw all the equipment into his dad’s car parked near the dock. Once the car was stacked with all the equipment, Shane was eager to get back to the cottage. It had been far too long of a day with far too little touching of his boyfriend. “Alright dad, well thanks for taking us out.”

“Hey yeah anytime. I hope you boys enjoyed it. That was probably the biggest catch I’ve seen you get in a while, Shane”. He patted him on the back proudly.

Ilya frowned. “Ah but it was only one fish. I don’t think you can win when you only catch one.”

“You’re such an asshole. It’s not a competition.”

It was definitely a competition.

Ilya smirked knowingly.

Shane’s dad had a small smile on his face, watching the two banter back and forth. Shane felt like he should be embarrassed, but honestly couldn’t find it in himself to feel a negative emotion in this moment. “Ilya got quite a few lunkers as well. What was it- six fish, right? That is a lot for your first time. Very impressive.”

Was Ilya…blushing? Shane had never seen his face look like that before.

His dad continued. “Maybe next time we get out to the river and use some live bait. What do you say?”

Again with that look Shane had never seen worn by Ilya before. He couldn’t determine what it meant. Ilya nodded. “That would be uh very fun, Mr. Hollander.”

“You can just call me David.”

“Thank you, David”. He politely nodded.

Shane stared at Ilya like he was an alien.

Shane’s dad started to turn towards his car, but hesitated and turned back around. He leaned forward and patted Shane on the back. And then Ilya. “Bye boys. Have a good night.”

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The two hiked back up to the cottage, smelling badly of sweat and fish. Ilya held Shane’s hand, pulling him up the path back home.

Ilya felt at ease. An emotion he almost always felt around Shane. But there was something else there as well that he couldn’t quite put his finger on. An emotion he wasn’t sure he had ever felt before. He sifted through the day’s events to try and pinpoint what was causing this thrumming in his chest.

He didn’t even realize he hadn’t spoken the last few minutes until Shane spoke up. “So…” .

Ilya quirked his eyebrow. “So?”

“Was that weird?”

“Weird?”

“Yeah like was that strange to just be on a boat all day with my dad?”

Ilya considered the question but already knew his answer. “It was not bad.”

“Raving review.” Shane bumped his elbow and laughed softly. “I’m sorry that took up one of our days together. I know you probably found it boring.”

Ilya stayed silent for a few seconds, thinking about the peaceful waters and the calm words passed between the three of them and that damned look of pride on David’s face. “Not at all.”

Thankfully, instead of jabbing at the comment or asking more questions, Shane gripped his hand tighter. They walked the rest of the way up the slope and opened the doors into the house. Shane immediately began to strip out of his sun-drenched, sweat-filled clothes, throwing them across the room as they both clambered towards the shower.

Under the hot stream of water, Ilya held Shane’s face and kissed him slowly. He wrapped his other arm around his back and pulled him in tight. He rested his head in the crook of Shane’s neck, pondering whether to let any of the words floating around in his head slip out of his guarded lips.

Shane seemed to be able to read minds- one of his many talents. “Are you okay?”

Ilya simply nodded into his neck. They stayed like that for a few minutes- arms wrapped around one another, water flowing over and between them. Ilya let it assuage his racing thoughts.

Shane didn’t press him. Instead, he ran a hand up and down Ilya’s back and whispered “I love you” into the shell of his ear.

Ilya smiled into his neck and allowed just one small thought to slip out. “I think I am going to like being a part of your family.”

End Notes

Hope you enjoyed reading this! I haven't written in forever, but these two are bringing me back to life haha <3

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