

when I miss the snow (you are on my mind)

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when I miss the snow (you are on my mind)

by [AmaranthusCaudatus](#)

Summary

"All I do is skate all year. Why should I go skate on your weird lake now?"

"It's not weird."

Ilya looked down at the ice like it had personally offended him. "It's bumpy."

Shane's mouth curved, slow and knowing. "So you've never skated on a lake before."

Ilya scoffed immediately. "Of course I skated on lake before."

"Sure."

That did it. Ilya straightened, chin lifting just a little. "In Russia, we have lakes", he said flatly.

or

Shane is skating on the lake at his cottage in the morning and has some thoughts about the good kind of snow.

Notes

title are a slightly adjusted lyrics from Lizzy McAlpine's Same Boat.

It's winter, it's cold and I have been obsessing over Heated Rivalry. I guess this fic was unavoidable!

¡Feliz Día de Reyes! to my dear friend quel who send me down the Heated Rivalry rabbit hole! THANK YOU FOR THE SUFFERING KING!!!!!!

little disclaimer: I don't speak russian and so everything was translated with Google Translator. If you noticed something very wrong, let me know!! I tried to double-check but I had to trust Google Translator here.

Shane claimed he hated snow.

That was the easiest way to explain it. Snow was annoying. Snow made everything slower. Snow got into his boots and soaked the cuffs of his jeans and made his hands ache if he forgot his gloves. Snow made people complain, and complaining was a script he understood. You were cold, you were miserable, you wanted winter to be over. He could repeat all of that without thinking too hard about it.

He'd lived in cities cold enough that it hurt to breathe. Ottawa. Montreal. Places where winter wasn't a novelty and definitely wasn't gentle. He knew what real cold felt like. He knew snow could be crisp there too, sharp enough that it squeaked underfoot, cold enough that it stayed clean for a while. That wasn't the problem.

The problem was that city snow never stayed itself.

It got crushed and salted and shoved into corners. It turned grey. It got loud. Snowploughs scaped. Cars hissed. People swore and hurried and acted like the snow was something done *to* them. City snow meant slippery pavements and cold air and places you were expected to be, no matter how your body felt about it.

The good snow didn't do that.

The good snow happened when it was cold enough – minus ten degrees, at least. Colder was better. Cold enough that the air felt solid in his lungs and his thoughts lined up neatly behind it. Cold enough that snow stayed dry and honest. One step, one sound. Crunch. Crunch. Crunch. The sound never surprised him.

The good snow also lived on the lake.

Shane had learned to skate there, before skating meant anything else. Before it meant drills and whistles and ice shaved down until it was perfectly smooth and unforgiving. On the lake, the ice wasn't perfect. It dipped and shifted and remembered where it had frozen first. You had to pay attention out there, and nobody judged you for it.

As a kid, that lake had been quiet in a way nothing else was. No voices from the sideline telling him to hurry up. No one correcting his posture or his timing. Just the sound of blades and breath and the good kind of snow. Just movement for the sake of movement.

When he got older, he took walks around the lake near his grandparent's house during snowy days. Long walks. Longer than he meant to take. The cold pressed against his face and numbed everything in a good way, like turning the volume down on the world. He walked until his legs burned, and the forest stopped changing and time slipped away without him noticing.

Once, Shane walked too long. The light faded faster than he expected. The paths blurred together. He stood still for a while, heart beating too fast, trying to make the trees rearrange themselves into something familiar. He found his way home eventually. Slowly. Carefully.

Everyone had been worried. His grandmother angry. His parents relieved and upset at the same time.

Shane had stood there, snow melting off his clothes, knowing he'd done something wrong without knowing how to explain that it hadn't felt wrong at all while he was out there. That it had felt quiet. That it had felt like breathing.

After that, he learned to come back sooner. He learned to check the time. He learned how long he was allowed to be alone before it became a problem.

He never learned how to stop loving snow.

The good kind.

For a long time, he thought that meant he loved snow the wrong way. Or not at all. It was easier to say he hated it. Easier to let snow be another thing he tolerated instead of something he wanted. Easier to just say the words everyone else said so he wouldn't have to explain something he lacked the words to do so.

But standing next to a frozen lake, when the cold was sharp and the snow made the right sound and nobody asked anything of him, Shane knew better.

He didn't hate snow.

He just loved it differently. He loved it when it was just him and the snow. Alone.

Shane woke before the alarm.

For a few seconds, he didn't move. The room was still and grey, the kind of morning where the light existed without committing to anything. The mood was snow-muted and quiet. It felt like the world had paused and forgotten to start again.

Ilya was asleep beside him.

He lay on his stomach, face turned toward Shane, one arm bent under the pillow. Shane traced him with his eyes, slowly and carefully, the way he always did when he woke first. He took inventory without meaning to. The shape of Ilya's mouth, the faint line between his brows, moles splattered across his face in familiar constellations. His lips were parted, breath warm and even, a soft snore slipping out on the inhale.

It had bothered Shane at first. New sounds usually did. He'd spent the first few nights awake, cataloguing it, waiting for it to change or stop. It hadn't. Eventually, his body learned the rhythm of it. Learned when it meant Ilya was deeply asleep and when it meant he was close to waking.

Now the sound felt necessary.

There were nights when Shane felt too lonely in his apartment 200 kilometres away from where he needed to be. Nights when he called Ilya and didn't explain why. He never outright

said what he wanted. He wasn't sure Ilya really noticed, that Shane called only for the conversations to trail off, just so he can wait and lay on his back quietly while the other man breathed on the line. Calming his beating heart and making his heavy eyes drop. Shane suspected he knew. Ilya noticed most things. Just didn't always comment on them.

Shane lifted his hand and rested it against Ilya's cheek. The skin there was warm. Familiar. He pressed his thumb lightly against Ilya's cheek, a small, grounding touch. Ilya shifted, made a low sound in his throat, and turned his face into the pillow.

Shane leaned in and kissed his temple.

Ilya mumbled something in Russian, thick with sleep and impossible to parse. Shane didn't even try. He smiled instead. Russian was like that for him – sometimes words came easily, settled into place like they'd been waiting for him. Other times they stayed just out of reach no matter how hard he tried. This was certainly part of the latter category.

When Shane moved to get up, Ilya frowned, his hand flexing blindly against the sheets like he was reaching for something he'd lost. Shane paused, waited until his breath evened out again, until the crease in his brow smoothed just a little.

Then he slipped out of bed.

Before he left the room, Shane glanced back once more.

Ilya had turned onto his side, hair a mess, mouth slightly open. He looked younger like this. Softer. Unguarded.

Shane shut the door quietly behind him.

For once, everything felt exactly where it was supposed to be.

Shane got dressed without thinking too much about it, movements practised and exact. Base layers first. Compression leggings, long-sleeve top. He adjusted the fabric until it lay flat against his skin, no twists, no pulling. The repetition helped. It always did. When his body knew what came next, his mind followed more easily. Outside, the light grew slowly brighter, the grey shifting but not quite lifting yet. Snow covering the whole ground, patient and waiting.

Christmas had been sitting in the back of his mind for weeks.

Not looming exactly. Just... present. Persistent. Like a low-level hum he couldn't tune out.

This was Ilya's first Christmas here. Not just in Canada but *here*, with Shane, with Shane's family, in a place that mattered. Ilya had talked about Christmas in Russia once, casually, like it was trivia rather than something personal. Different dates. Different traditions. More food than gifts. More emphasis on New Year's. He'd shrugged when Shane invited him, like it wasn't a big deal either way. Like he didn't have any expectations.

That made it harder.

Shane wanted it to be good. Not impressive. Not overwhelming. Just right. Something Ilya could enjoy without having to feign interest or gratitude or amusement. Something that didn't feel forced.

He'd talked to his mom. Asked her opinions. About food. About what mattered and what didn't. He'd wondered if they should include some Russian traditions, then worried that doing so might feel like forcing something Ilya hadn't asked for. Ilya had said he didn't really care what they did, he just wanted to spend the break with Shane.

Shane had nodded and stored this away, tried to ignore the pressure to be perfect. It didn't work, he kept thinking about it anyway.

The thoughts had been sitting with him all December. Probably half of November too, if he was being honest. Wanting to get it right and not knowing how to define what *right* meant.

He pulled on his sweatpants, his hoodie, his jacket. Normal socks, then wool socks. Boots. Everything lined up the way it was supposed to.

As he passed past the couch, his mind caught on a memory it hadn't finished processing.

His dad, earlier that week, had clapped Ilya on the shoulder after he won against Shane's mom in cards. Laughing. Saying, *Gob job, son*.

Just like that.

Shane had frozen for half a second too long on his own seat on the couch. His book in hand, his glasses on and his brain snagging on the word *Son*. They didn't make sense. Ilya wasn't his dad's son. That wasn't the category he fit into. The logic didn't work. Ilya had fucked Shane into the very couch his father now sat down on just last night. Ilya couldn't be his parent's son, it would be wrong. Shane knew – intellectually – that it was one of those things people said without meaning it literally. He knew that. But his mind kept circling back to it anyway.

Later, he'd mentioned it to Ilya, trying to sound casual. Like it was nothing. Like he was just making conversation.

"Did it feel weird", he'd asked, eyes fixed very deliberately on his phone, "when my dad called you son?"

"Huh?" Ilya had looked at him and Shane was too curious not to check. His gaze went up to meet Ilya's eyes. Ilya looked like he was about to make a joke. Eyebrow raised. Mouth titled, ready. Then his eyes narrowed. Seeing something in Shane's face. Maybe noticing the slight frown. The pause. The way Shane bit his lip nervously. And something had shifted. Ilya's expression softened, he shrugged.

"No", he'd said easily, unbothered. "In Russian, it's just family."

Then, after a second, like an afterthought: "Zyat'."

Son-in-law.

The word had settled differently. It still had *son* in it. But it made room for something else too. It explained the shape of it without breaking the rules Shane's brain insisted on. Shane nodded, his mind feeling lighter.

Shane shook his head and stepped outside before he could linger on that thought.

The cold hit him clean and immediate, cutting through everything else. He breathed in deeply, feeling his lungs expand fully. Snow crunched under his boots in a steady, familiar rhythm as he crossed the yard toward the lake. Each step sounded the same. Reliable. Predictable.

The lake stretched out ahead of him, pale and solid, snow dusted evenly across the surface. The treeline in the far distance was blurred in the low light, far enough away to feel separate from everything else.

He knelt near the edge and started to lace his skates. Left skate first. Always. His hands moved without hesitation, fingers knowing the work better than his thoughts did. He stood carefully, tested his weight, then stepped onto the ice.

The snow crunched under his blades.

The sound went straight through him, settling something deep in his chest.

As he pushed off, slowly at first, the pressure he'd been carrying loosened. The questions about Christmas. About expectations. About wanting Ilya to be happy and not knowing how to guarantee it. They drifted out of reach, dulled by cold and motion.

The lake didn't ask him to get anything right.

Shane skated until his thoughts thinned and the world narrowed to edges and balance and sound. Until the cold pressed against his skin in a way that felt grounding instead of demanding.

Out here, everything made sense.

And for the first time in weeks, he let himself believe that might be enough.

The light shifted while Shane was skating.

It was subtle at first, just a thinning of the grey, but then the sun broke through and everything changed at once. The snow caught the light and turned soft gold. The ice reflected it back in uneven patches. The lake looked awake in a way it hadn't a minute ago.

Shane slowed without meaning to.

That was when he saw Ilya.

He was standing at the edge of the lake, just past where the snow thickened again, wrapped in the wool blanket from the couch. Shane recognized the frayed corner, the darker stripe along

the edge, immediately. He skated closer and realised Ilya was wearing only sweatpants, a T-shirt and running shoes. His arms were crossed tight across his chest. The blanket was pulled high, almost to his chin.

The rising sun sat behind him, outlining him in light. His hair was messy, sticking up at the crown like he had dragged a hand through it once and given up. His face was still soft with sleep, eyes narrowed against the brightness as he watched Shane on the ice.

He wasn't calling out. He wasn't waving. He was just standing there, looking.

Shane skated toward the shore, slower now, more deliberate. The closer he got, the more details came into focus: the red at the tip of Ilya's nose, the way his jaw was set like he was pretending the cold wasn't bothering him, the faint crease between his brows when the wind hit just right.

Shane came to a stop in front of Ilya. Up close, Ilya's eyes flicked over him quickly. Shane wondered what he saw. Maybe flushed cheeks and fogging breath. Maybe he even noticed the way Shane looked settled in his body in a way he rarely did anywhere else.

"Come join me", Shane said, smiling. "It's so nice."

Ilya snorted, tucking the blanket tighter around himself. "You are not sane", he said. "It's freezing. Also, I did not eat breakfast yet."

"I'll make you breakfast after."

Ilya lifted an eyebrow, unimpressed. "All I do is skate all year. Why should I go skate on your weird lake now?"

"It's not weird."

Ilya looked down at the ice like it had personally offended him. "It's bumpy."

Shane's mouth curved, slow and knowing. "So you've never skated on a lake before."

Ilya scoffed immediately. "Of course I skated on lake before."

"Sure."

That did it. Ilya straightened, chin lifting just a little. "In Russia, we have lakes", he said flatly.

Shane's gaze flicked over him, over the blanket, the bare arms peeking out, the thin T-shirt and sweatpants. He noticed the way Ilya shifted his weight. "You didn't even get dressed for the cold."

"That's because I come outside for five seconds", Ilya said. "Not for expedition."

"You're freezing."

"That's temporary."

Shane hummed, amused. "You just hate putting on winter gear."

"That's not relevant", Ilya answered.

Shane tilted his head. "It kind of is."

Ilya clicked his tongue. "I'm from Moscow", he said. "Cold there is civilized. You put on coat, you go inside. Here", he gestured vaguely at the lake, the trees, the endless white, "cold is lifestyle."

Shane smiled wider at that, fond and a little victorious, like he had learned something important and filed it away. He slid closer without really deciding to. Noticing the way, Ilya's gaze dropped to his mouth for half a second before snapping back up again and the way his shoulders relaxed despite the cold.

"I'll show you how fast I can really go", Shane said. "You can race me."

Ilya hummed, unconvinced. "On this ... nature ice?"

Shane closed the last bit of distance between them and stepped fully off the ice. He pulled his gloves off and slid his hands under Ilya's shirt, palms flat against his skin. Ilya inhaled sharply.

"Blyad'", he muttered. *Fuck*, Shane's brain translated automatically.

"You see", Ilya said, breath hitching. "It's very cold."

Shane pressed closer, warming his hands deliberately. "Please", he said, quieter now. "Join me. I wanna do this with you."

Ilya shook his head, but he was grinning. "You're very convincing when you beg."

Shane met his eyes and carefully chose words he knew would work.

"Pozhaluysta", he said with wide eyes. *Please*. "YA khochu sdelat' eto vmeste s toboy." *I want to do this with you.*

Ilya's expression shifted, focused, intent. His eyes were warm, dark and shiny in a way that made something pull tight in Shane's chest.

"Yesli vy tak mnogo prosite", Ilya said, voice low, amused. *If you ask like that*. "Kak ya mogu otkazat'?" *How can I say no?*

He crowded into Shane's space on purpose, one hand catching at the front of Shane's jacket as he kissed him. Quick at first, then slower, deliberate, like he was proving a point. Shane exhaled into it before he could stop himself.

When Ilya pulled back, he stayed close, forehead brushing Shane's, breath warm against the cold air.

"You are a very dangerous man, Shane Hollander", he said lightly. "I shouldn't reward this."

He did anyway. Shane smiled.

Another brief kiss, softer this time, then Ilya straightened, already turning away with a dramatic sigh.

"I'm going to dress more warm", he added over his shoulder. "You don't run away."

Shane watched his familiar figure walk back towards the cottage.

Shane watched him go, chest full and steady, the snow beneath his skates waiting exactly where it always had.

Ilya came back bundled up properly this time.

Shane heard the door first, the soft thud, the crunch of boots on snow. When he turned, Ilya was already halfway down to the lake, breath puffing in the cold. He was wearing Shane's hat – the dark blue one that covered your ears and that Ilya had made fun of ever since he saw it. It looked good on him. Shane hated it. The jacket was Shane's too. He'd gotten it from a brand deal and it looked better on Ilya than it ever had on him.

Ilya stepped onto the ice carefully. One foot, then the other. His skates scraped, uncertain, an unusual wobble running through him before he stilled.

Shane smirked.

Ilya shot him a look. "Fuck off", he said easily. "It's been while since I stood on lake."

He pushed off again, slower now, knees bending, centre finding itself piece by piece. Shane watched the way Ilya's body remembered, corrected, settled. It took seconds. By the time he reached Shane, he was steady enough to lift his chin like he had never been anything else.

"You said race", Ilya said. "To where?"

Shane glanced out over the frozen lake. The small island sat quiet in the middle, trees dusted white. "There", he said. "To the island."

Ilya nodded once. Sharp. Confident.

They skated to a free area that worked well as a starting point. Shane scanned the ice, noting the ridges and thin spots. This lake was his, in a way, the quiet understanding of how it moved under skates was his advantage. Ilya wasn't used to natural ice the way Shane was. He set his feet carefully, lining up, thinking that if he took the cleanest lines and kept his balance tight, he could reduce speed and still win. It would make the race a little fairer. Not easier. Fair.

"Three", Shane said.

"Two."

"One."

They pushed off.

Shane started steady, measured, letting the ice guide him. He expected a little struggle behind him, but Ilya... Ilya blew past him. Clean. Effortless. Laughing. Wild.

"Oh, fuck you", Shane shouted, realisation hitting too late that he had been played. That he had been lulled into a false sense of security.

He dug in, legs burning, the cold slicing through his lungs. "You're an asshole, Rozanov!"

Ilya's laughter rang across the frozen lake, bright and unstoppable, bouncing off the trees, trailing behind him as Shane chased toward the island, the morning golden light catching every movement, every sparkle of snow and ice beneath their skates.

End Notes

Kudos and comments always make me very happy! 💕

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