

The Ski Trip

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The Ski Trip

by [D_Scully](#)

Summary

Yuna arranges a fancy ski trip for The Hollander-Rozanov family. Everyone learns something about themselves and some family members are more successful than others.

OR

Is winter sport genetic?

Notes

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

It's the day after Christmas and Shane is exhausted. The creation of merriment has sapped him and he wants to lay on the couch. The living room looks like a locker room has exploded: warm layers, hats, gloves, most of it polyester black and smearing together on the couch. Even the little chaotic Christmas tree seems to have a red hat stuck on a branch.

"Ilya, can you please keep your gear to one side so I can keep straight what we're taking and what we don't need?" Shane barely masks his irritation. Ilya is wearing black tights and a nearly threadbare black turtleneck. His curls are damp from a shower and he seems to be making more mess than he's helping, picking up items and putting them back down in different places.

"I will pack hockey pads for you. In case you fall. You will fall. Probably a lot." Shane rolls his eyes.

"It's not my fault that my parents never let me ski." Shane was never allowed to ski, not even on the school trips. His mom was always so sure he'd get injured. Not like many 14-year-olds blow out their knees on bunny slopes, but the trips his classmates invited him on usually conflicted with a game or a tournament anyway.

"I plan to take many videos of you falling," Ilya laughs "I will be doing the black diamonds with your mom. Then cocktails with your dad while we wait for you." Ilya has assured him every Russian can ski.

"Sure, Ilya. Please, can you not mess up that pile? That's the stuff we're taking. My mom said she would rent us helmets and skis and everything, but we'll need the warm gear."

"We are bringing our hockey bags to carry all this? So much for a low profile in the airport."

"I'm not sure what else to do. I don't even have Ivy's stuff yet." Shane starts to unpack Ivy's skates and helmet from today's skating lesson bag. Pulling out the tights and snowpants she'll need for the trip, he frowns. "She'll get better at it, right?"

"I don't know Shane," Ilya says quickly. After a moment, he continues with little confidence in his voice. "I mean, yes. She will get better." Shane looks up from the little pink gloves he's now holding. Ilya holds his gaze for a moment and abruptly looks away.

Their perfect little girl is asleep upstairs. She's five with long dark hair. She reports playground social dynamics like sports headlines. "River threw a rock at Sebastian and Ava reported it to Madame Mayer and then River had to sit on the naughty bench." She is starting to read in French and a little in English. She repeats her Papa's riddles in Russian. She knows she's smart and is proud to be the fastest runner and best at the monkey bars on the playground.

Shane works from home most days, scheduling meetings and media events around pick up. After school, they go to the pool for swim lessons, piano practice, or gymnastics class. Ilya joins them at home in the evenings – most days the practices he runs are late but he's almost always there for bedtime.

Saturdays, they bundle her into snowpants and skates. Ivy is an obliging child, and weekend after weekend she lets them lace her up, stuff her hands into gloves and buckle her helmet. They have tried teaching her themselves: Ilya bent over holding one of her tiny hands in each of his, skating backwards, smiling reassuringly at her. They've paid for private lessons and put her in group lessons with her closest friends. They started her in unicorn-covered hockey skates and then pivoted to figure skates, hoping that would help. And yet, three years in, she's still a baby deer on ice. She teeters, hobbles, wavers, falls, and graciously gets back up to try again.

"But should we . . . should we stop trying?" Shane asks, brows furrowed. He was confident on skates by age three. Ilya claims to have had a hockey stick in hand at age two. By Ivy's age they were both on rec teams, being talked about for selective ones.

Ilya sighs. "We don't have to decide now. Right now, we need to get these bags packed so we can go to the airport at a terrible time tomorrow morning." Ilya never says anything aloud, but Shane wonders if Ilya blames him and his genetics somehow. The surrogate and egg donor was athletic, but not a hockey player.

"Okay," Shane obliges. "Can you get all the crap we're not taking and put it in the basement?"

"Yes, sir." Ilya gathers everything up in his arms. He plants a messy kiss on Shane's lips, and makes his way to the stairs.

The alarm blares. 5:30am. Shane is disoriented and sweaty. Ilya is draped over him. "Turn it off," Ilya slurs. Ivy is usually their alarm, running in and jumping on the bed, kneeling them in their stomachs or chins with her enthusiasm. They've not slept naked in years.

"I'll get Ivy. Can you make some coffee?" Shane croaks.

They make it to the airport on time. In the end, Shane managed to fit everything into three large but normal-looking hard-sided suitcases. They check their bags at the premiere counter, having racked up a lifetime of travel points. Both men are wearing hoodies, sweats, and baseball hats, while Ivy is a kaleidoscope of color in a teal dress, pink leggings, and light up unicorn boots.

The woman at the counter takes their IDs and asks for Ivy's information. "Ivy Irina Rozanov, age 5." The woman doesn't look twice, doesn't smile at them, keeps it moving. Either she's amazingly coy or has no idea who they are.

"To Vancouver then? First class?" Shane nods and takes the IDs back. He hands Ilya his Ontario license. Ilya pockets it and puts his hand out for Ivy. She skips along with them as they walk through the Ottawa airport. They've not traveled much since becoming parents. Shane feels that he's spent enough hours in airport lounges, uncomfortable seats, and watching bad movies to never want to travel again. But when his mom asked if they'd join her and his dad at Whistler, wanting to avoid travel didn't seem like enough of a reason to decline. One of their legacy sponsors had offered the trip, Shane couldn't keep track of which

one. The lodging, rentals, and lessons were all included. He or Ilya might have to smile for a photo or shake someone's hand at some point during the week trip, but he didn't mind as long as Ivy was out of the frame.

On the plane, Ivy claims the window and sets herself up with her stuffies. A rainbow triceratops, a pink sloth, and a purple leopard have made the cut for this trip. She looks tiny in the huge seat. She pulls a notebook and colored pencils from her backpack and Shane helps her pull out the tray table. Ilya, across the aisle, smiles mildly, casually, at them.

"Papa! Daddy! Look!" Shane represses a reflex to quiet her. "They're loading our bags!"

"Oh, I see them too," he replies instead. Ilya's smile gets a little broader when Shane glances at him, but Ivy is oblivious. She returns to her notebook and busies herself drawing a house for her future children.

Ivy draws and watches hours of TV for the long flight. Shane reads. Ilya sleeps. When they land it's just 2 in the afternoon, but it feels much later. They find the rental Jeep Wrangler Ilya had requested and Shane is not surprised to find that it is an obnoxious red. Ilya is delighted. "Look Ivy – this is a proper car for the mountains. We should have one like this at home." He winks at Shane and opens the door to position her booster.

For the first hour of the drive Ilya sits in the back with Ivy. He tells her stories, some in Russian and some in English. They sing some songs and she eventually starts to nod off. In the rearview mirror Shane sees her cheek pressed against the side of the booster seat, her mouth open. He pulls over and gestures for Ilya to move to the front seat.

"Shane – why are we stopping?" Ilya asks in a regular and non-hushed voice.

"Do you want to come sit with me? Now that she's asleep?" Shane's whisper is exasperated.

"Oh, okay. Why didn't you say so?" Ilya climbs into the passenger seat, buckles, and rests his hand on the back of Shane's neck. Shane feels his body relax. He hadn't realized he was clenching his jaw. "You okay?" Ilya asks.

"Yeah – glad to be just the three of us again. Too many people at the airport."

"Don't forget about stuffies. She would be offended if you didn't include them." Shane smiles, looks at Ilya, then at Ivy in the back seat.

"Okay, six of us."

"Now let's go so we don't freeze on this mountain road."

The highway is snowy and Shane distrusts the Jeep's capabilities, so they slowly crawl their way over the mountain passes for a little over two hours. The valet at the hotel takes the car and someone whisks away their luggage. Shane has a satisfyingly snuggly, half awake Ivy draped around his front. Ilya is carrying three backpacks and an armful of colorful plush. Shane loves this version of Ilya, the soft, sweet papa in juxtaposition with his public persona.

The doors to the hotel shush open and Shane's parents rush out, exclaiming and fussing over their two sons and their beloved granddaughter "Hi! Hi Ivy!" His mom's eager energy doesn't match their travel-day weariness, but Ivy obliges her Sobo with a shy half smile.

"Hi Sobo, hi Grandpa." Shane and Ilya get hugs from Yuna and handshakes from David. Yuna has reserved them a table at the hotel restaurant and they settle Ivy into a booth between Shane and Ilya, propped upright by their shoulders.

They order variations on seafood. Ivy devours tuna maki and salmon and avocado rolls. Her little frame does not reflect the volume of food she consumes. "How was your piano recital Ivy? I'm sorry we missed it. There was a gala that we couldn't skip," Shane's dad says with a frown.

"Great – I played better than the other kids," Ivy beams. All four adults smother giggles. Ivy's competitive spirit is not lacking. Shane wishes Ivy did a better job of chewing with her mouth closed, speaking only when she's done eating, but her Papa doesn't model that very well, to Shane's dismay.

"And your skating lesson yesterday?" Yuna probes.

"Um, it was okay. Fine?" Three years ago, when the PWWL was just getting off the ground and Ivy was two years old, Yuna joined the advisory board for the new women's league. She was so sure of her granddaughter's future in the sport. This line of questioning makes Shane's stomach churn, and he tries to cut the conversation short.

"It's been a long travel day, I think we'll head up to bed."

"Plus, you have a big day tomorrow! Ivy, are you excited to try skiing?"

"Papa says Daddy is going to fall down a lot. So, I'm excited about that." Shane frowns at Ilya.

"Did you put her in a private or a group lesson?" Yuna asks.

"Group. She'll be happier with other kids. She's been stuck at home with just us since winter break started."

"I see. I booked a private lesson for you two – they offered it as part of the package. I think they all start at nine. You'll come down here at eight to get gear and the staff will get you to the base area. The snow is great, we had a lovely day today."

"Thank you, Yuna. But I don't think I need lesson," Ilya says.

"Maybe just a refresher? Shane said you hadn't done it since you were a child."

"Mm, yes. Some reminders of how to ski very quickly past Shane."

The hotel suite has a separate room for Shane and Ilya, but annoyingly Ivy's bed is right in the middle of the main living area. Shane unpacks and gets gear ready while Ilya sings her

songs and tucks her in. Shane brushes his teeth and gets into bed with his phone, looking at the weather for tomorrow.

Ilya comes in quietly and crawls in next to him, his hand immediately on Shane's thigh. "You know what will make good skiing tomorrow?"

"Quietly, Ilya." Shane puts his phone down, wrapping his arms around Ilya's broad shoulders.

"Yes, yes, I know Shane."

In the morning, Ivy is awake earlier than usual because of the time change. It's not even sunrise and she bounds into their room. "There's new snow! Come look!" And indeed, there is about six inches of new fluffy white snow on the balcony railing.

They make it down to the extravagant buffet breakfast by seven. Ivy is permitted a croissant with her yogurt and Yuna puts whipped cream on Ivy's lukewarm hot chocolate. After eating, they return to their rooms to put on their ski clothes. Shane manages a mediocre braid. Ivy insists on wearing a dress tucked into her snowpants, per usual. They are met in the lobby by a short young man whose name tag reads Spencer.

"Hello Mr. Hollander and Mr. Rozanov, follow me to the boot room and we'll get you fitted."

"Shane and Ilya is fine," Shane says.

"And I'm Ivy!"

"I'm sorry, of course. Hi Ivy, we have skis and boots for you too," Spencer apologizes. "I heard you like rainbow. I hope you like the skis I picked out for you."

Spencer has outdone himself. In the heated boot room adjacent to the lobby he presents rainbow skis. Ivy's name is written across the top, as if they could easily be lost. Spencer prompts Ivy to sit on the bench so he can fit her boots. As he does so he gestures to Shane and Ilya. "Your boots are here, you can each try yours on too. Make sure they fit before you head out to your lesson."

"The large ones are mine, yes?" Ilya glances at Shane with a smirk. Spencer does not register this as anything, Shane hopes.

"Yes, the silver ones are yours, sir. The black ones are for Mr. Holla- I mean Shane." Spencer is opening buckles and prompting Ivy to push her heel down.

Shane sits on the bench and contemplates these. No laces. Hard plastic with metal buckles. Reminds him of something from a space film. Or motorcycle boots? Not that he'd ever allowed himself that risk either. He bends and undoes each of the buckles and pushes his heel down, as Spencer had instructed Ivy. He pulls, pushes, and grunts. He checks again that all the buckles are undone as Spencer approaches. "May I?" Shane is mystified, embarrassed, and grateful.

"Yes, thank you." Spencer pulls the tongue of the boot towards him and opens the sides. Shane's foot slides in. Ivy is clomping like an elephant on the warm stone floor. Her braid

bounces around her shoulders and she is grinning. Spencer assists with Shane's second boot and leaves him to do up the buckles.

"Mr. Roz- um, Ilya. Would you also like some assistance?"

"Yes – there is something, something wrong with these Canadian boots. Not like Russian boots." Ilya has neither of his boots on. Shane hadn't heard any swearing in Russian, but Ilya looks a little uncharacteristically defeated as Spencer assists him.

Spencer stands and pulls two sets of skis away from where they'd been resting on the wall. Similar in length and style. They look like skis. Shane has no idea what he's looking at, if he's honest. Spencer hands one pair to each man and then adds poles, eyeballing the length against their torsos to ensure a good fit. "Looks good. You can rest them against the wall here again. Here are your helmets and goggles. Here Ivy, let me help you with yours."

The helmet feels heavy, clunky on Shane's head. The goggles tint the room yellow. Ilya pulls his goggles down and turns to Shane. He bursts out laughing. "Wow, what a look."

"We look the same, Ilya." Shane frowns and laughs.

"Of course, very sexy outfits for skiing. I'm glad your mom made you hockey player instead of skier."

"Dad! Papa! Can we go! I want to try it." Spencer laid Ivy's skis across her outstretched arms, like she's carrying a pizza. She trots off toward the door where a snowy hill awaits, undeterred by the heavy boots or skis.

"Yes, let's go. I'll just get these skis." Shane reaches for his skis and poles and stumbles in his boots. Each step forward is a battle to not fall on his ass. He looks up, expecting Ilya to be far ahead with Ivy but instead Ilya is moving even more slowly, if that's possible.

Eventually they reach the door and are greeted by Stacy, Ivy's cheerful instructor.

"Any food allergies? I'll take her to meet the other kids in the group. We'll see you at 3:30 pm! I'll bring her back here," she says in a continuous stream.

"Bye, Ivy!" Ilya says, worry barely hidden in his voice.

"Bye Papa!" Ivy barely turns her head. "Bye Dad!"

Spencer has been spotting them from behind. He's already handed Shane a dropped pole and Ilya a dropped glove. Now, they've gotten just out the door into the cold and he wishes them luck before hustling back into the warmth of the hotel.

"Now what, we walk with all this? This is worse than carrying hockey gear." Ilya whines.

"I thought you skied in Russia?" Shane prods.

"Um, yes. There was school trip. Once. I went. I don't remember carrying anything anywhere and I don't remember being unable to walk like normal person."

“Hi gentlemen! I’m sorry I’m a bit late. I’m Flora. I’ll be your instructor today. Mr. Hollander and Mr. Rozanov, right?” Flora’s cheeks are rosy with curly dark hair tumbling out of her helmet. Her goggles are iridescent, propped up on her helmet. She’s wearing a black uniform jacket with a nametag and her hometown: Crested Butte, CO.

“Ilya and Shane is fine, yes. Nice to meet you,” Ilya says. They don’t shake hands, but offer hopefully welcoming smiles. Shane feels that the effort to remove a glove while holding this gear would potentially lead to him toppling over here right outside the hotel entrance.

“Great – I understand that Ilya, you’ve skied before?”

“Yes.” Shane raises an eyebrow at him, then looks back at Flora.

“Okay and Shane, you’re what we call a ‘never-ever.’” Shane is reminded of a middle school party where he was exposed for having never ever done anything interesting.

“Um, yes. I’ve never, ever been skiing. Is that what you mean?”

“That’s right! We’ll get started with the basics and then we’ll ensure Ilya is on the right track as we go. Let’s walk over to the base area, shall we? Can I help carry anything?” Shane has come a long way in his assumptions about gender and who should do what, but he still hesitates before responding. Reluctantly, he admits that yes, he would love help carrying some of this nonsense.

Near the entrance to the lift Flora shows them how to put on their skis. “I’m hoping it’ll feel a little like hockey skates. I don’t skate, but they’re just longer and wider blades, right? We could think about them that way.” The boots lock in with a smack and Shane instantly feels trapped. He cannot move his feet and his knees cannot bend and why does his mom like this sport? Shane doesn’t want to make eye contact with Ilya, sure that he’ll feel even more ridiculous.

“Okay, skiing is all about edges. We’ll take some time at the top of this lift learning about how to control your speed with edges. Let’s get on the lift together and we can talk more as we ride up.” The lift is a gargantuan machine, gears whirring and creaking in a discomfoting way. Is Ivy safe? Will she get on one of these things? Shane is quickly doubting their decision to try this new sport at all.

“Shane and Ilya, follow me.” Shane grasps the poles and pokes holes in the snow as he tries to push himself forward. Ilya, next to him, shuffles his skis back and forth but moves nowhere.

“Ah, okay,” Flora is gentle now, coming to the realization of how terrible her day is going to be. “Little steps, you can move your weight from ski to ski. Like skates?”

“Not like skates,” Ilya grumbles.

They manage to get on the lift and Flora talks at them the entire ride up. Shane responds to some of her questions, small talk about Ivy and their travel. Ilya is quiet, looking at what

Shane realizes is an incredible view. There are snowy mountain ranges in all directions. Dramatic peaks. The hotels and restaurants and shops at the base area fade into miniature.

“Wait,” Shane hears himself saying with panic in his voice. “We are skiing this far down?”

Flora laughs. “Oh, you’ll be fine. I’ll be right with you the entire time.”

“I’ll help you too,” Ilya says quietly to him. Pats him gently on the shoulder. The goggles, helmet, gloves, Flora’s presence, and the terror of the drop to the ground below make it impossible, but all Shane wants right now is to melt into Ilya.

“Okay, time to get off! We’ll put up this bar, heads up,” Flora is cheerful. The bar goes up and Flora tells them to just stand and stay steady over the center of their skis. They awkwardly careen down the little hill at the top of the lift. Shane regrets the skis on his feet but does enjoy the view. He glides and uses his poles to stop himself.

He looks for Ilya and sees that he’s sprawled below the lift, one ski off. They’ve even stopped the lift so no one runs him over. Is he hurt? Shane would go to him but has no idea how to do that. Flora is there, talking to him about how to get up. After what feels like quite a few minutes, Ilya and Flora make their way over to Shane.

“You okay?” Shane asks.

“Yes.” Ilya’s curt, looking at his skis. His cheeks are flushed. Shane wants to comfort him but knows that he probably would prefer to be left alone.

Flora squares up in front of them. Shane feels like he’s barely managing to stay still, pushing into his poles. Ilya has his skis in a big triangle, pointing downhill. Flora models the triangle; she calls it a wedge. She says that’s how they’ll start out controlling their speed. She has them practice the wedge a few times, moving between the wedge and making their skis parallel. This reminds Shane of some of the earliest hockey drills, almost like a swizzle.

“Ready to try it?” Flora asks. “I’ll start and you follow me, just leave like fifteen meters in between. Shane first, and then Ilya.”

“Got it,” Ilya says, impatiently.

Flora slides forward at an angle across the hill, moving her skis in and out of the wedge.

“Go Shane, try it,” Ilya says with surprising gentleness. Shane obeys. He pushes his heels out like Flora described and sees the skis follow. He pulls his heels back in and the skis are straight. Okay, not impossible. He pushes his heels out again and feels himself slow as the edges dig into the snow. With horror he then sees that his left ski has crossed on top of his right. Shit shit shit. What happens now? He tries to pull his heels back in but he’s lost control. The skis are in charge.

“Shane!” he hears Ilya yell somewhere behind him. Shane is picking up speed and there are trees not terribly far away. In desperation he shifts his body weight all to the left and flops on the ground. Fuck, that’s going to leave some bruises tomorrow. At least he’s no longer

moving. How will he get up? Flora is twenty meters away yelling something about getting his skis perpendicular to the hill. He lays his head back on the snow, arms splayed, poles somewhere.

“Okay, enough rest. Time to get up.” Ilya has appeared just below him. Shane lifts his head up.

“What the fuck are we doing?”

“I don’t know but the only way now is down. And not in the medic sled. Give me your hand.” Ilya puts both poles in one hand and leans down to offer Shane the other. Shane reaches up and grasps Ilya through their gloves. His weight moves forward and the skis slide. Ilya slides with him and now they are both slowly, so awkwardly, sliding down the snowy hill, Shane’s ass hovering inches from the ground. Ilya’s skis cross Shane’s and now they’re stopped, Ilya across Shane, legs and skis in a tangle. Shane loses it first then they’re both laughing hysterically.

Flora makes her way up the hill to them and coaches them through it. They make it down the hill each only falling seven or eight more times, but at least they fall separately. The lunch is overpriced and not delicious, but Shane feels he’s earned every calorie. Flora takes her break over lunch.

“So, do you want to clarify how much skiing you’ve actually done?” Shane teases.

“Look, I ski. I am a skier today.”

“Right.”

“Well, do you think we ever have to do it again?” Ilya asks.

“I do like the views. It’s beautiful here.”

“I would rather see beautiful things in our hotel room.” Ilya raises his eyebrows, and Shane knows exactly what Ilya would rather be doing in their room.

“Ilya, we’ll at least finish the day. My mom arranged it and everything.”

“Okay, okay, if you insist. You like spending the day with your ass on the ground?” They finish eating and spend another two hours in the cold learning to manage their skis. At one point Flora models a “hockey stop” and both men try it. Ilya is moderately successful, Shane crashes into him.

“Not like hockey.”

“Nope.”

They convince Flora to let them end the day a bit early. They tip her excessively, hoping she’ll not tell everyone she knows about her day, and return their equipment to Spencer. A few minutes later Stacy returns with Ivy.

“Papa! Dad! I LOVE SKIING!” Ivy shouts. She is red-cheeked and has the biggest grin Shane has ever seen on her.

“Hello Mr. Hollander and Mr. Rozanov,” Stacy is saying. “I wanted to make sure I had this right. Ivy said she’s never skied before and her grandmother who signed her up said the same. Is that right? This was her first day?”

“Yes, this was her first day,” Ilya says as he lifts Ivy easily into his arms, the boots catching his stomach.

“Wow. Okay – I just wanted to be sure. She is, I mean . . . I’ve never seen anything like it. She’s a natural. She mastered all of the basic skills in a few hours that typically take children at least a few days. I ended up moving her to a group of much more experienced kids and they spent the afternoon riding the chairlift. We really never see that with a never-ever 5 year old. She is already working on parallel turns and we should probably get her some poles for tomorrow if she skis again.”

“I love it! I really love it,” Ivy says to Ilya with a grin “I get to go so fast. I was the fastest. They kept moving me into different groups and I was the fastest in each one of them. Can we ski every day? Can we move to a mountain so I can ski every day?”

Shane opens his mouth, but nothing comes out. Ilya kisses Ivy on the cheek. “Great! We are so proud of you. I don’t know about moving. But if you like it, we’ll do more of it.”

“So, I can work with her again tomorrow or you can get her a private lesson,” Stacy continues “We have a few folks who teach lessons and also do developmental ski racing. Might be a good fit? Here’s a card for my friend Lauren.”

“Thank you, thank you so much. We’ll talk about tomorrow and be in touch. I think my mom knows how to reach you.”

“She does, thanks. Bye Ivy!”

“Bye, Stacy!”

Ilya moves Ivy to his front in a bear hug, her head over his shoulder. He looks directly at Shane and mouths, “Holy shit!”

“Guess we’ll be doing some more skiing. Less skating.”

End Notes

I was texting with a friend about my Heartstopper fics and how I only write about parenting. I said I felt like Shane and Ilya would be chaotic parents. Then I spent a day skiing behind my own kids. Realized that maybe they wouldn't be that chaotic after all - but the skiing itself might be.

Appreciation to L for the HR chats and the beta read!!!

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