

Sunshine in Snow

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Sunshine in Snow

by [RoseGoldCrystal](#)

Summary

“Did Irina like the holidays, or were they hard for her?”

Shane had been using Ilya’s mother’s name often since he’d learned it. It had been so long since Ilya had let himself say it aloud, even let himself think it. It sounded sweeter on Shane’s tongue.

“She liked it, mostly. Some years were harder than others, but...” He let the thought die and picked another. “I was the only one who went to mass with her, after my father told us we didn’t have to anymore.”

Shane’s own fingers danced up Ilya’s chest, stopping over his heart for a beat before climbing to his throat. He zipped Ilya’s cross back and forth over the gold chain. “I’m sure she loved that time with you.”

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or, Ilya and Shane spend their first Christmas together as a couple. | Canon-compliant with show and books

Notes

I know based on the books the Metros turn out to be very uncool! But for now Ilya would love nothing more than to support his man.

"You said this car was good in snow," Ilya said, tightening his grip on the door handle as he and Shane barreled over the white-covered road. "If it is so good, why are we not already there?"

They were supposed to be at Shane's parents' house an hour ago, well before the heavy snow and freezing rain started, but Ilya had wanted to give Shane one of his Christmas presents early. It was the kind of gift that came with moans and fingers pressed into creases of hips. The kind of gift Shane would rather die than receive under the same roof as his parents. Ilya had known that. Knew what he needed at all times, in any situation.

Shane only hoped he could return the favor this weekend. He was nervous enough for both of them.

"It is," Shane snapped, then sighed as guilt flooded his stomach. "Sorry. It is good in the snow, I promise. We're safe. I just want to be there already. We're so behind schedule."

They only had three days together before their hockey schedules pulled them to different rinks, different jerseys and cities and teams. Shane was already sick of it, the separation. They still snuck around like before; they just called it what it was now. They haven't called it forever, not yet, but subsisting on these little teases and tastes, borrowed nights and early mornings was killing them slowly.

"I know, *moya gusenitsa*." Ilya slipped his hand under the rim of Shane's toque. "I want to be there also." Ilya squeezed a ridiculously delicious pattern into the base of his skull. "David is making sugar pie for me. Is my first time."

Shane smiled, nodded. Leaned his head back into Ilya's palm. This weekend would feature a lot of firsts for Ilya Rozanov: his first Christmas in Canada, their first Christmas together, as—as boyfriends.

Then Shane tilted his head. "Did you just call me a caterpillar?"

When he glanced at Ilya, Ilya was already staring back at him, smiling widely. "Was wondering if you would notice. The little owl in your phone has not threatened your murder today?"

"I have a reminder set for nine tonight," Shane grumbled. "*Moye raz—razdrazheniye*."

"Mmm, no. Is not right." Ilya squeezed Shane's neck again, knocked his toque off his head. "I am your biggest annoyance."

"Asshole." Shane threw the hat at him, then returned both hands to the wheel. That sugar pie was sounding really damn good right now, even if he wouldn't let himself eat any.

Ilya never stopped kneading his neck.

An hour later, they rolled to a stop in front of Shane's parents' house. Snow clung to the windshield, the trees, the front porch steps. Through the front window, the glowing Christmas

tree was a lighthouse. Home.

Shane's shoulders finally unclenched. An entire three days full of Christmas with his parents. With his parents and Ilya Rozanov. His boyfriend.

What a fucking year.

Shane grinned at his lap, then pulled his toque back over his head and opened the car door.

They shuffled inside, laden with suitcases, presents, winter gear.

"Boys!" Yuna poked her head around the corner, wiping her hand on a dish rag. She smiled warmly at them. She went in for a hug, but Shane was bent over, unlacing his winter boots.

"Sorry we're late," Shane said, stepping out of his shoes. "The roads were starting to ice. I would have texted, but—"

"I did," Ilya interrupted, wrapping his arms around Yuna when she turned to him instead.

"Did what?" Shane's fingers froze where they straightened the seam of his sock.

"He texted," Yuna mumbled over Ilya's shoulder. "So I wouldn't worry."

Shane was glad no one could see him right now. His stomach flipped upside down, both at the gesture by his boyfriend and the sight of him hugging his mother now. Cheeks hot, he tugged his coat off and hooked it by the door.

Ilya and Yuna pulled apart, and Yuna stepped in to embrace Shane. "Now?"

He nodded and pulled his mother in for a hug. When David appeared from the kitchen seconds later, the hugging started again.

"Smells amazing," Ilya said, rubbing his hands together. "Can I help?"

Yuna smiled. "It's pretty casual tonight, just some chicken parm. But I've got a salad you can help me with after you settle in. We'll do our big Christmas dinner tomorrow."

Shane led Ilya down the hall to his childhood bedroom.

"Do we share?" Ilya said, lingering in the doorway. He sniffed, but Shane could see his throat bob. "I don't want to—not be respectful to your parents."

"Yes, Ilya." Shane's stomach fluttered. "We share."

A mischievous smile stretched Ilya's plump lips before he skulked across the room.

Shane's breath hitched as Ilya came within touching distance. "That doesn't mean you get to"—those lips landed on the hinge of Shane's jaw—"distract me."

"But it's so fun," Ilya murmured. "Is my favorite hobby."

“How do you say ‘menace’ in Russian?” Shane’s eyes fluttered closed. Shane had experienced many types of Ilya’s kisses in the near-decade they’d been seeing each other, more gentle ones since this summer when things changed. More innocent ones, with no ulterior motives. Shane knew this one wouldn’t go anywhere.

He still had to will his body not to harden.

Ilya’s mouth curved against Shane’s jaw. “*Moye solnyshko.*”

Shane smiled into Ilya’s neck, too. “Liar.”

“Yours,” Ilya countered.

Ilya, as usual, was enamored with the idea of chicken parmesan. Carbs, protein, a flavorful homemade sauce. The parmesan especially, was a favorite of his.

David scooted the bowl closer to him. It was much fuller than it had been that day this summer, when Shane had come out to his parents. Something in Ilya’s chest tightened. His heart, maybe, or his lungs.

“To Chicago for you next, right, Ilya?” David asked.

“Ah, yes.” He washed down his bite with a swallow of vodka. Everything in this house was just so fucking good. “Should be good show.”

Yuna snorted. “Not with McMaster out on concussion protocol. They’ve only got one full-power line, and the Raiders are too strong for Chicago to make that matter.”

Mouth full, Ilya shrugged, then nodded. Even so early in the season, he could tell Yuna had a sixth sense about these things. She and Svetlana could talk hockey for hours, should they ever meet.

Ilya wondered what occasion that might be.

Shane scoffed, his fork speared with dark, leafy greens. “Did you just compliment Boston?”

Yuna waved her fork. “I complimented Ilya’s team.”

“And when he plays for Ottawa? Will you compliment them too? Where’s your loyalty, Mom?” Shane was grinning so hard, some of his freckles shifted.

Yuna let out a sharp, surprised laugh.

Ilya cracked a smile too, if only because he knew those freckles by heart. Had memorized each and every one of them with his eyes, his mouth, his fingertips.

His heart.

He wasn't used to such openness, such joyful teasing. When he dreamed of this day, this trip, he tried to compare it to holidays back home in Russia. How his chest would tighten, his shoulders would creep near his ears. How he'd never fully relax because he just never fucking knew when or where the next punch would come from.

Now, though, these jokes and jabs were traded with love.

"So Ottawa's still your plan, then, Ilya?" David said, looking at him.

Ilya's vodka went down roughly, and he traded a look with Shane, who smiled encouragingly. Ilya cleared his throat. "Yes. My agent has been quietly talking. To Ottawa. Nothing secure yet, but..." He waved a hand.

"It's too early for negotiations," David agreed. "But talking is good. They'll take you."

"Of course they'll take him." Yuna nodded. "If they ever want to look at the Cup again, they need to get some real talent in there."

"Aw, you think I am talented?" Ilya pressed a hand to his chest. He tried to add a joking tone to his words. He wasn't sure he managed it.

Maybe Yuna read between the lines, because her smile was soft, and just for him. "One of the best, Ilya."

"Mom! Don't inflate his ego any more than it already is." Shane was smiling, though, as he took Ilya's hand and rested their twined fingers. Right on top of the table.

"More bread, Ilya?" David said. "Or are you saving space for sugar pie?"

Ilya felt like he was standing in bright summer sunshine. His heart was so, so warm.

After dinner, as they sat around the living room coffee table, the Hollanders introduced Ilya to Monopoly.

"I thought you'd think this is boring," Shane murmured. His cheeks were red from the fireplace and dinner and the sips of vodka he'd snuck from his boyfriend's glass. He loved Ilya so much it didn't fit inside his body, had to spill out onto his skin like ink leaking across a page.

"Why? It lets me pretend I am you." Ilya's foot tapped Shane's under the coffee table. "Mr. Real Estate."

Shane tapped Ilya back. His heart was so, so warm.

Later that night, after they'd cleaned up dinner and readied for bed, the men lay side by side, tangled in sheets and each other. They hadn't had sex; despite Ilya's wandering hands and mouth, Shane was steadfast in his dedication not to fuck under Yuna Hollander's roof.

And Ilya was steadfast in his dedication to Yuna Hollander's son.

"What were Christmases like when you were younger?" Shane whispered.

Ilya's throat bobbed. It was harder this year. He never realized the presence of something—love, acceptance—made the absence of that same thing so much louder.

"We don't have to talk about it," Shane continued, mistaking his silence for reluctance. "We can just—"

"No, is okay," Ilya said slowly, fingertips tracing Shane's sternum. "Christmas is not such a big thing in Russia. All the lights, trees, baking, dinners... Sometimes is hard to tell what was normal because of culture and what was normal because of my family. I don't know what I missed."

"Did Irina like the holidays, or were they hard for her?"

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"She did." Tears stung Ilya's eyes, and he let them fall. There were so many times in his life when he wouldn't, when he'd suppress his deep cuts so they sliced his insides instead. But there was so much... warmth in this house. He was seen here. Cared for here. No one under this roof wanted him to hide who he was, and so he wouldn't. It was a gift to them, just like the ones wrapped under the tree in the sitting room. A gift for himself, in a way, too.

"Sometimes, after, she'd take me to, how you say, a *pekarnya*—with sweets and bread?"

"A bakery?"

He nodded, kissed Shane's temple. "—and buy me a *pryanik*. Is a kind of cookie, like... spicy?"

"Spicy cookies?" Shane sat up, kissed away the tears collecting on Ilya's chin. "Like gingerbread?"

Ilya nodded. "She said it was our little secret. I have never told anyone that." Until Shane. The corner of his mouth lifted.

Shane nodded like he knew, eyes soft and glistening.

Ilya steadied his trembling lip by pressing it to Shane's. "I have not thought of those cookies in years." Another slower, more succulent kiss. "Thank you for that, *moy lyubimyy*."

Shane smiled against his mouth. "I know that one."

The next morning, after everyone had steaming coffee mugs in hand, they gathered around the tree. Yuna sat on the ground next to it, passing out presents.

Ilya studied the small pile at his feet with great scrutiny.

"They're presents, Ilya. It's not the dentist." Shane's fingers drew lazy patterns over Ilya's knee. It melted Ilya's bones a bit.

Shane gifted him a new passport holder, the kind where the front and back were tucked in and invisible. "You won't need it as often when you're in Ottawa, but at least this way you don't have to look at the Russian cover."

"Is perfect." Ilya ran his thumb over the engraving on the inside, his name stamped in buttery rich leather next to, Ilya was almost certain, an engraving of a loon. Stupid Canadian wolf bird. He leaned over and kissed Shane on the temple. "Is completely perfect. Like you."

Shane's cheeks filled with color. Ilya didn't know if he'd make it another night without being inside him, without making him whimper into a pillow and clutch the sheets right off the bed.

Yuna and David gave him, unironically, a Shane Hollander Montreal Metros jersey.

"Very funny," Shane said, that color leaching onto his neck. Ilya definitely wouldn't be able to wait much longer.

"I love it," Ilya said, pulling it on over his sleep-rumpled tee.

"When are you even going to wear that?" Shane grumbled.

"Here," Ilya said. "At home."

Shane nodded slowly, watching him. "If you say so."

Once the presents were unwrapped and his fingers were sticky with tape residue, Ilya noticed his stomach gnawing. "Breakfast now, yes?"

"Almost. Your stocking," Yuna said, holding it out for Ilya. An 'I' was hand-stitched onto the deep red fabric. It wasn't an afterthought. He wasn't an afterthought here.

There were a few Canadian candies, some rolls of his favorite stick tape. Some miniatures of Ilya's favorite vodka. Warm socks and gloves. And, at the bottom, something metallic and cold.

He tipped it into his palm.

“What is this key for?” Ilya’s heart was in his throat. He already had a key to Shane’s homes; many more and he’d need a color system to keep them all straight.

“For here.” David wrapped his hands wrapped around his mug. “You are welcome here any time, even if Shane isn’t with you.”

“Especially if Shane isn’t with you,” Yuna quipped.

“Oh my god,” Shane said, but he was laughing. “My bed is not even cold. I’m sitting right here.”

“Yes, good point.” Ilya scooted over, knocking their hips. “Could you leave, please?” Because Ilya wasn’t sure he could.

Finally, David and Yuna made their way to the kitchen to start breakfast, and Shane pulled his phone from his pocket. He smiled at what he saw on the screen.

“Rose?” Ilya asked, far too nonchalant for the murderous look in his eyes.

Shane shook his head. “Hayden. Wishing me a merry Christmas. Sent some pictures of the kids. Wanted to know I’m always welcome at his place if I ever can’t make it home.”

“He is very bad hockey player,” Ilya mused, “but a very good friend.”

“He is,” Shane said, chest tightening.

Shane knew Ilya had tried to warm to Shane’s best friend. Shane also knew the literal only two things they had in common were hockey and him. He’d imagined what a relationship between them might look like, but there were a thousand steps to take before then. He hadn’t even come out to Hayden yet.

He would soon, probably. Maybe next year, before he told the Metros staff and his team. It’d be nice to have someone on his side. And he knew Hayden would be that, would be his fiercest ally.

He stared at Ilya. Ilya, who had been brave first so that Shane could be brave, too.

Laughing under his breath, he pulled out his phone and typed out a quick text back to Hayden: *Thanks, Hay. You too. We should find some time to hang out, just us, once the holidays settle down. I want to talk to you about something.*

Hayden’s response came almost immediately: *Buddy, I am married!*

Another came in right after: *of course. Here for you* ❤️

Ilya rested his chin on Shane’s shoulder. “He will be good about this. I am sure.”

Shane nodded. Turned his head and pressed a light kiss to Ilya’s mouth. “Do you think I can be quiet tonight?”

“Ah, no.” Ilya smiled. “But I have this new jersey that would look great stuffing your mouth.”

After dinner, Ilya was sleepy, sated, and a little drunk. He and David had made their way through a significant amount of vodka, and with a fully belly and heart, he wasn't long for this world. Yuna and David had found an American football game on television, but that put Ilya to sleep more than Hayden Pike did.

“Ilya?” Shane said.

“Sleepy,” Ilya responded, dropping his head on his shoulder.

“Oh.” Shane sounded more than a little disappointed.

That woke Ilya up again. He pulled back. “What is wrong?”

Shane looked down at his hands. “I did some research before you woke up this morning. We have everything we need to make those cookies. The...” His brow furrowed. “Pryanik? I thought you might like to try baking them with me. Obviously we don't have to, but I wanted you to feel—”

The rest of Shane's thought was swallowed by his boyfriend's mouth. It was a searing kiss, one Ilya hadn't indulged in for the whole time they'd been here. Shane's tongue met his, hesitantly, then fervently. Ilya gripped his hips. Every part of him was suddenly wide awake.

He pressed his hips to Shane, who whimpered before biting his lip.

“I've never made cookies while I'm hard,” Ilya murmured. “But you are hard all the time. you will give me pointers, yes?”

“Fuck you,” Shane mumbled, taking a bite out of Ilya's bottom lip and another chunk out of his heart.

“Later, probably.” Ilya squeezed Shane's ass. “For now we are making cookies.”

And they did. He and Shane measured out cardamom, cinnamon, freshly ground cloves, nutmeg. Yuna flitted in occasionally, offering advice and opinions on the dough consistency, but for the most part she was hands off. Shane and Ilya did it themselves, kissing batter off fingers and chins and cheeks.

While the cookies baked, filling the home with warmth and spice, they kissed indulgently, a promise. Not just for tonight but for the future. This was Ilya's future. This home, with these people, making new memories to replace all his ugliest ones.

Shane fed him a *pryanik* while the glaze was still dripping, and he licked the icing off his boyfriend's fingers. The flavors punched him in the heart, brought him back fifteen years in an instant.

The emotion choked his throat. Tears flooded his eyes.

Shane froze, his jaw still working on his own cookie. “Are they that bad?”

“No,” Ilya mumbled, wiping at his eyes. “Opposite.”

Shane nodded, gave him an understanding smile. “I’ll take some to my parents.”

Ilya saw it for what it really was. Giving Ilya a second to catch his breath. To figure out what was wrong, why the emotions wouldn’t leave him alone. It was a perfect day.

Maybe what was wrong was that nothing was wrong. He didn’t know how to operate without fear. Didn’t know how to stop thinking the other shoe would drop.

Ilya grabbed another cookie and slipped out onto the back porch. It was far too cold to spend more than a few minutes out here.

He didn’t need more than a few.

“I miss you, Mom,” he murmured in Russian. Up above, the moon was bright, illuminating the fresh snow. “Every day, I miss you. But I am...I am happy now. Or trying to be. Learning to be. Shane makes me happy. He would have loved you. Like I love you.”

He sat the *pryanik* on the porch railing.

The back door opened. Shane dropped a blanket over his shoulders, rubbed warmth back into his chilled skin. “Come to bed, Ilya.”

Ilya kissed Shane’s hair. “Okay, *moy lyubimyy*.”

It was close to midnight on Christmas day, surrounded by snow, but Ilya Rozanov was standing in sunshine.

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