**Cold Days In Canada (the perfect way to warm a frozen heart)**

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at https://archiveofourown.org/works/81466451.

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|---|---|
| Rating: | Not Rated |
| Archive Warning: | No Archive Warnings Apply |
| Category: | M/M |
| Fandom: | Heated Rivalry (TV) |
| Relationship: | Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov |
| Characters: | Ilya Rozanov, Shane Hollander, Yuna Hollander, David Hollander, Grigori Rozanov |
| Additional Tags: | Found Family, Meet-Cute, Ilya meets the Hollanders years earlier, Ilya dad is a bitch, Ilya Rozanov Loves Shane Hollander's Freckles, Fluff, Ilya hates subway, POV Ilya Rozanov, The Hollanders love Ilya cuz I said so |
| Language: | English |
| Stats: | Published: 2026-03-19 Words: 4,244 Chapters: 1/1 |

# Cold Days In Canada (the perfect way to warm a frozen heart)

by Panpan37


Summary

Ilya’s dad has to go on his yearly work trip to Canada. That’s nothing new, except for the fact that Ilya’s mom just died, and he’s not trusted to stay home alone. So, to Canada he goes.

Ilya’s expecting to hate every second of Canada. And he does.

Until he meets Shane Hollander

Or: 12 year old Ilya finds himself in Canada, sees a boy with freckles on a frozen lake, and now has a life mission to become a Hollander. (He succeeds)


Notes

See the end of the work for notes

“Я вернусь через несколько часов. Оставайся здесь .”

*I’ll be back in a few hours. Stay here.*

Despite being in what his father was calling a ‘rebellious phase,’ Ilya wasn’t going to disobey his father’s orders this time.

If he did leave and do who knows what to pass the time, where would he even go? He’s stuck in godforsaken *Canada*, which he has never been to before. Back in Russia, he knew his way around; the best places to sneak off to and shortcuts that’ll get him back home before his father gets back.

He doesn’t know that here. Stuck at this frozen lake with a pair of skates and a paper bag containing a sandwich bought hastily at some fast food place Ilya couldn’t read the name of, Ilya can very easily get lost.

All Ilya wants to do is go home.

He regrets his actions now.

Ever since…that happened, six months ago, Ilya has been running away during the day. It’s nothing serious, just going to the park two blocks down his mom used to take him to.

In the familiar place, he can still feel her presence without being suffocated by it.

But all good things have to come to an end. His father returned early from work one day, and Alexei snitched when asked where his younger brother was. His father dragged him all the way back home, and he’s been grounded ever since.

*And* it was decided he couldn’t be home alone anymore.

So, for this stupid business meeting in Canada his dad has to go to every year, Ilya was dragged along. Typically, their mom would watch them. But now…

Alexei was deemed responsible enough to stay home alone. At almost thirteen, Ilya still didn’t get that luxury. It was so stupid!

As a small mercy, Ilya’s father also brought his skates from home, dropping him off at a frozen over lake. There was a couple kids already playing on the lake when they arrived, so it was safe to skate on. He’ll just skate until he’s too exhausted to feel anything. Like he’s been doing lately.

Leaving his bag with his food behind on a bench and hoping no one steals it, Ilya gets up and walks over to the ice.

Stepping onto the frozen lake, the pit in Ilya’s stomach—derived mostly from being left behind in a foreign country and partly from a sadness that hasn’t left since his mom did—finally started to lessen.

No matter the country, the ice always felt the same.

Ilya skated around for a while, but there was a bit too many kids for him to go as fast as he wanted. So instead of using the younger kids as cones to get better at his skating accuracy, he slides off the ice and back to his bench where his sandwich sits. Thankfully, the world doesn't hate him that much, since the sad food still sits in the bag.

Ilya takes small bites, not even tasting the Subway sandwich. It's too bland for his tastes even if he was in the headspace to acknowledge any of his senses besides sight.

The moment he entered Canada, his hearing failed him. He didn't know French or English, or any of the variations of the languages spoken here. Paying attention to people's confusing words only overwhelmed him, so he'd taken to tuning out the world.

He'd been doing that a lot lately. He'd been tuning out his brother and his father any time he was home.

He'd especially been ignoring his father ever since he started mentioning a new girlfriend.

Shaking his head, Ilya tried to force that thought away.

Eventually, Ilya finished his sandwich, and people were beginning to take their little kids home. School must've just gotten out, because kids Ilya's age and older were now starting to pile onto the ice. These kids had actual experience, so Ilya was finally able to slink back into the frozen lake and skate without worrying he'll accidentally take out some three year old.

Looking around, Ilya spotted quite a few parents hovering still, so best not to get in any fights, whether on accident or not.

Ilya skated around and observed everyone at the rink, watching as over time it eventually split into two groups: the skaters and the people simply hanging out with friends. The non-serious kids were clustered at the front of the lake, while the serious ones were in the back. Two boys looked like they were probably hockey players, while a girl and boy were practicing some figure skating techniques. Even then, there was a divide on the ice between hockey and figure skating.

Ilya naturally began to gravitate towards the hockey section of the ice, glancing at the other two boys.

The first boy had sandy blonde hair and hazel eyes. His form was a bit sloppy, and it was clear he was newer to hockey.

The other boy, looking Asian but also not quite, was moving around the ice like he owned it.

Ilya skated closer to the dark haired competent boy rather than the blonde. He didn't want anyone crashing into him. His day was already going bad enough.

Seriously, when would his dad's meeting be done? It's getting cold out.

A sudden tap on Ilya's shoulder pulls him out of his thoughts. Turning his head, Ilya is met with dark brown eyes shining in interest. And freckles. For some reason, Ilya's eyes stare a second too long at those freckles.

"Hi, I'm Shane! You're good at skating. Do you wanna race?" The boy asks him with a friendly smile.

Ilya blinks back.

What had he said? Was it English? Or French maybe? He thinks it sounded more like english, but he wasn't too sure of the difference.

The boys face is slowly started to turn nervous. He's not sure what was said, but he feels a little bad seeing the boys bright eyes dim because he wasn't responding.

"Извини, я не говорю по-английски." Even though he just said he didn't know English and there's no way the boy understood *him*, just hearing Ilya respond in Russian will probably get the point across well enough. Ilya has half a mind to look apologetic about this fact.

The boys eyes light up in understanding. Nodding, he starts thinking hard. It's a bit amusing just how *loud* the boy thinks. Ilya can't take his eyes off him.

"Shane," the boy repeats, pointing to himself.

His name. Straightforward.

"Ilya," he responds, pointing to himself in turn.

Shane nods with a bright smile.

Shane puts out his finger, signaling for Ilya to wait. He has nothing better to do, so he stays put. Shane skates up to an older man that was standing around. Frankly, Ilya had thought the old white guy was the blonde kids dad, but this actually makes more sense. Shane's mixed.

Shane's dad hands over four cones. Ilya's still not sure what's happening, but he's getting an idea. Something hockey related, that's for sure. Did Shane notice his skills and want to practice together?

Shane sets up the cones like two goals. Then he circled around and stood in the middle of one set. He waves to his dad, who pulled out a stop watch.

"Three…two…one!" Shane's dad called out. At one, Shane exploded.

Reaching the end, marked by the cones, Shane slowed down.

"6.24," Shane's dad told him.

Why was Ilya watching this?

As if reading his mind, Shane waves Ilya over, putting him at the starting point.

Finally, Ilya understands. Shane wants to race him.

A grin quickly creeps onto Ilya's face. Oh he can race. He'll make this kid regret ever choosing him to go up against.

With a new competitive fire, Ilya waits for Shane's dad to call out 'one.' Ilya can count to ten in English, being one of the first things he's learned from his newly started English classes. Sixth grade is annoying.

When Shane's dad calls one, Ilya is off. He slows to a stop with a smug smile, looking at Shane's dad expectantly.

"5.96!" The man calls out with a laugh.

Ilya may not fully comprehend why two other numbers have been tacked onto his score, but Ilya is certain five comes before six. Meaning he's won.

Ilya turns around to gloat to Shane. He doesn't have the language to do it, but he thinks his face does plenty enough talking.

Shane looks like him like he's calculating, stubbornly not accepting this loss.

"Again," Shane says.

Ilya looks at him curiously. He's not really sure what that means, but the face Shane's giving him has 'sore loser' written all over it. It's a natural assumption that he wants another try.

'*Fine then. Let's go again. You won't win*.'

With the newfound goal of making Shane cry, Ilya gets himself ready to race one more time.

It's not one more time. It's twelve, until both boys are panting and sitting on the bench, their legs turned to mush.

Ilya wins 7 of their 13 races, including the first one. Shane wins 6. Six more than Ilya thought he would. After the second win, Ilya started to see Shane in a new light. Suddenly, Ilya was skating till his legs burned with exertion, because even the slightest millisecond could mean a loss.

No one's ever challenged Ilya like this before. He should maybe feel frustrated, or even threatened by that many losses. His father certainly wouldn't be happy to hear about it.

Instead, Ilya's excited. Even without shared language, he and Shane are laughing together and sharing thoughts with simple looks. Ilya's hasn't been this happy since his mother died. The weight of her death seemed to lift when he stood next to Shane, lighting bumping into the boy so he could get ahead. Shane shoving him back only made the game that much more fun.

Someone clearing their throat behind him makes Ilya's smile Instantly dissipate, the pit in his stomach returning.

"папа," he greeted, looking at his father.

His father nodded in response, flicking his eyes over to Shane and his dad. A silent question in his eyes.

Suddenly, the conversation switched to English.

"I hope my son didn't cause any trouble," his dad told Shane's dad, pulling Ilya close to him.

"Oh no, he was great! My son wanted to race so he and Ilya were just skating around together," Shane's dad responded. Then, holding out his hand, he said, "this is my son Shane, and I'm David. Hollander."

Ilya's take took David's outstretched hand. "Grigori Rozanov," he responded. "My son Ilya."

"Are you two from Russia?" David asked.

"Yes. I am here for meeting."

Ilya could hear his father's accent getting thicker the longer this conversation went on. He could also see his father getting annoyed.

"Thank you for watching my son," his dad said, hoping to close the conversation.

"It was no problem! Bye Ilya." Mr. Hollander waved Ilya off as the son and father turned around, leaving Shane and David behind.

Ilya gave a quick wave back. They were nice, after all.

His father didn't ask him anymore questions about the boy with the kind eyes and freckles on their way back to the hotel. He was perfectly content to ignore Ilya, as usual.

Ilya tried not to let his father completely sour his mood. He'd had a good day, today.

The next day, Ilya is once again dropped off at the rink, Subway and skates in hand. It's about noon, and once again it's really only toddlers at the park. Ilya huffs and gnaws at his sandwich. It's still just as gross as the first time.

Ilya hopes that Shane comes back again today. His dad's meeting went on until about dinner yesterday, and was supposed to be just as long today. With Shane, the hours didn't seem so long.

Alone, Ilya felt like he'd been sitting here for years.

Apparently taking pity on Ilya sitting desolate on the bench, a mother came over and handed Ilya a coloring page and a couple crayons. Bored out of his mind, Ilya didn't refuse.

Once he was done coloring Snow White and her seven dwarves, Ilya handed the crayons back. The mother complimented his work in some melodic sounding French that he understood zero of. But the happy smile on the woman's face made Ilya's chest ache for his own mother.

Ilya sat back down on the bench with his drawing, now even more upset than before.

Some kids were starting to leave the ice and go home, so Ilya decided to slip on his skates and hopefully take his mind off everything.

After an hour of sliding down the ice listlessly and racing as fast as he could, a car pulled up to the rink, and a voice called out.

"Ilya!" A boy shouted.

Ilya turned to see Shane, in his huge coat that seemed to engulf him and his smattering of freckles.

Ilya couldn't bite back his smile.

This time, both Shane's parents got out of the car, his mother looking a lot more stern than his dad. She looked curiously at Ilya, then urged Shane onto the ice.

To Ilya's surprise, Shane hugged him when they met on the ice. After a second of shock, Ilya hugged back.

Ilya and Shane skated around so Shane could warm up, while Shane's parents set up some more cones similar to yesterday. Today, however, seemed to be more complicated. Ilya hoped he would be able to understand what he was supposed to do. He didn't really think the drills would be useful, per se, he just wanted to pass the time skating with Shane.

Shane's mom seemed to be explaining the drill to Shane, handing my a hockey stick and putting a puck on the ice. Shane looked back before he started to make sure Ilya was watching before he demonstrated.

Ilya watched closely as Shane expertly skated through the cones, keeping the puck close as he slid it between the cones. Then he hit the puck against a little cardboard box on the floor, going to where it bounced and shooting it between the two cones representing the goal.

Shane skated over and handed the hockey stick over, signaling that it was Ilya's turn to try the drill. Maybe it would be better to watch Shane one more time for full understanding, but he thinks he's got it.

Ilya skates carefully with the puck, scoring the goal at the end just like Shane. He grinned and looked at Shane with pride.

Shane smiled back.

Shane's dad cleared his throat as Ilya slid the stick back into Shane's hand, both boys turning.

In his hand was the beloved timer. It seemed that was just the warmup round.

This time, the grin Shane and Ilya shared was much more heated, full of completive fire. No words were needed for both boys to declare themselves the winner.

'*You're going down, Shane*.'

Today, Shane won their game. After another thirteen rounds, Shane won eight while Ilya won five. Shane was clearly more technical while Ilya was faster. Normally, his slight favoring of speed never mattered, since no one could even match his slightly under par pick handling.

It seems now Ilya really does have to practice. He *will* beat Shane next time.

Just as David Hollander pats Ilya on the shoulder after his loss, Ilya's father appears to break up the fun once more.

"Ah, Mr. Rozanov! Hello again," Shane's dad greets, holding out his hand for Ilya's father to shake. The man does, with barely hidden disdain that Shane's mother most definitely does not miss, based on her tight smile.

"Hello," his father greets, grabbing Ilya's hand rather roughly. "Thank you again." Then his father is tugging him along, and Ilya is sneaking a glance back to wave at the Hollanders once more.

When Ilya arrives at the lake for the third day, his sandwich and skates in hand, he is both surprised and excited to find Shane and his parents already on the ice. It was a Saturday, so no school.

Shane spotted Ilya at the same time, abandoning the drill he was running to come rushing off the ice and over to Ilya. His parents, hastily grabbing the cones left on the ice, followed close behind.

"Ilya!" Shane greeted with a hug. Shane wasn't very touchy at first, but then Ilya slammed him for the first time, and all of a sudden Shane seemed to have no problem with hugging or holding hands or high fives or bumps. Shane was a little weird, Ilya had noticed. But he was good at hockey, so Ilya ignore it.

Ilya hugged back then let go, ready to rush onto the ice with Shane in tow, before his father interrupted.

"Помни, сегодня я приеду за тобой пораньше," his father reminded.

"да, я помню," Ilya responded. He frowned a bit. Shane was finally here early and now he would be the one leaving!

“Is there a problem, Mr. Rozanov?” Shane’s mom asked, noticing the sudden mood.

“I will be picked up Ilya in an hour. I have short meeting then long. I need to bring him back to hotel room,” his dad explained in accented English.

What his dad meant was that he had a normal meeting, then a break. The after the thirty minute break, a second, much more serious meeting would take place that would require lots of drinking afterwords to solve. His father would not return to the hotel room until early morning, likely, and will be drunk off the walls.

Ilya kept that truth to himself, of course.

“If you’re busy, we wouldn’t mind watching Ilya for the afternoon,” Yuna Hollander offered. Ilya didn’t understand her words, but clearly his dad wasn’t expecting whatever she just said. Or it could be that his father still wasn’t so used to women actually being authoritative around him.

“You don’t have to.”

“It would be no trouble! Ilya’s a sweat heart. You both deserve to enjoy your day without worrying about the other. We’ll drive him back to your hotel after dinner.” Yuna smiled at Ilya’s dad, one that reminded Ilya of when his dad talks to ‘important people.’ The kind that means calculation.

Instead of gracing Shane’s mom with an answer, Ilya’s dad turns to David Hollander, for his opinion.

“We wouldn’t mind at all,” David agrees.

Ilya’s dad sighs deeply, then he turns to his son.

“Илья, сегодня за тобой будут присматривать Холландеры. Позже они отвезут тебя обратно в отель. Веди себя хорошо, не позорь меня.” His father explains the plan to him, and Ilya nods dumbly in response.

The Hollanders agreed to watch him today? They barely know him!

Ilya gives the Hollanders a wide eyed look he *knows* is way too vulnerable, which they return with a bright smile, collectively. Ilya feels blinded.

That’s probably why he lets Shane drag him back to the ice without even thinking about his father’s judgmental gaze.

For dinner, the Hollanders take Ilya to a restaurant. The very first thing Ilya notices is that it’s Russian. The place is small and see homey, in a way. It smells like the his kitchen, back when his mother was still alive. That thought is quickly discarded.

“Hello, for four, please,” David tells the lady at the counter. This wasn’t a big restaurant with a hostess. She appeared to be the only waitress while there was probably only two or three cooks. Maybe one and she helped. There was only one other couple in this place, an elderly man and woman speaking in hushed Russian.

The restaurant itself was simple, defiantly a hole in the wall. It was red brick with family photos lining the walls. There was one TV playing a hockey game in the corner.

The lady at the front lead them to an open table, which wasn’t too hard considering how dead it was in here. She handed them all menus, which Ilya glanced at worriedly.

“Ah, do you have any in Russian? Ilya can’t read English,” Yuna told the woman. “Or speak it,” she added.

“Of course I do, one moment.” And she was right. Within a flash, the woman returned. She replaced Ilya’s menu with one in Russian, which made Ilya light up. He hadn’t known what they were discussing, but this must have been it.

“You people speak Russian, then?” The old woman asked. It was a fair question, if Ilya couldn’t speak a lick of English.

“Ah no, actually. His father couldn’t watch him tonight so we offered. My Shane and him get along quite well despite not understanding each other,” Yuna explained.

The woman nodded at this, the turned to Ilya. “Они ведь тебя не похитили, правда?”

Ilya snorted at this. No, he hadn’t been kidnapped. If he had, he honestly doesn’t think he would mind all that much. As long as they keep feeding food that isn’t Subway.

“Нет, за мной присматривают,” Ilya confirmed with a grin.

“If any of you need anything, let me know. If you want to tell each other something, I can translate. Call out for Tatyana if you need something,” she told them. Then she tuned to Ilya and repeated herself. He nodded.

David pulled out a blank piece of paper and pen, sliding it between the two boys. Ilya stared at it curiously, whereas Shane lit up. Clearly he knew what this paper was supposed to mean.

Shane drew boxes quickly, and Ilya realized what was happening. Tic tac toe. Another game that didn’t require language.

Ilya snatched the pen with a wolfish grin. He took the middle box first.

Tatyana came back with two waters for Shane and Ilya, vodka for David, and dr. Pepper for Yuna. Ilya barely noticed. He was too intent on outsmarting Shane; something he was beginning to realize was a much harder challenge than outracing him. It just made Ilya all the more competitive.

“What would you all like to eat?” Tatyana asked, finally returning again. Ilya and Shane’s snapped up, realizing neither of them had yet looked at the menu, too investing in beating the

other. Ilya swept over the words quickly, finding what sounded good quickly. It was easy when he knew what of these options was his favorite. Shane seemed to be struggled to decide which was the Russian dishes he would like.

When Tatyana turned to him, Ilya had a plan.

“Можно мне пельмени?” Ilya requested. Tatyana nodded and wrote it down, then turned to Shane, who still looked a bit panicked.

“Скажите ему, чтобы он попробовал пельмени!” Ilya told her, pointing to Shane.

“Ilya thinks you should try the pelmeni. How does that sound?” Tatyana relayed. Shane glanced at the dumplings and calmed, nodding as he handed her the menu. Ilya smiled, feeling accomplished. And he wanted to know what Shane thought of his favorite food. His mother used to make it for him when he had a bad day.

A couple more heated rounds of tic tac toe ensued before the food came out. Ilya had to repeatedly tell himself the food was still hot and to not drink too fast. But it smelled so good.

Shane had been eyeing Ilya, as if waiting for him to take the first bite to see if it was safe.

Ilya took a bite. It was amazing. Of course, nothing could actually match his mother pelmeni, but it was damn close.

Watching his face light up, Shane took a tentative bite. Then his eyes widened and he took another bite in a much quicker succession. Just to spite him, Ilya ate a bit quicker too.

“Don’t you boys make a competition out of eating, too! Chew your food carefully,” Yuna chided. Shane stopped at his mother’s words, making Ilya stop, despite not understanding.

“Она велела тебе тщательно пережевывать пищу, мальчик,” Tatyana translated the scolding for him. Ilya ducked his head in a blush, similar to Shane.

Yuna laughed at the sight of the two of them. David smiled fondly.

Ilya thinks this is the nicest family dinner he’s had since his mom died.

Saskatchewan 2008

“You can’t smoke here,” a boy says, interrupting Ilya’s smoke session rudely.

“And what are you gonna go about it?” He asks, a mischievous lilt to his voice as he grinned at the boy.

“I’ll call my mom and she’ll lecture you in Russian for five minutes. You know she only learned how to berate you,” Shane responds with a grin, taking a step closer.

Ilya took the cigarette out of his mouth and put his hands up in surrender. “Alright, alright, don’t bring out Yuna. I cannot lose my favorite child status.”

Shane shoved him at that. “You know nothing less than murder will lose you that title. Anyways my parents were looking at this sushi place to go out to after this. You like…”

Shane went on about the sushi, but Ilya wasn’t paying attention. He just kept looking at the boy he met when he was twelve, at the lowest point of his life. The one who he came back to see every year, because it was the only time he got to experience a family after his mother’s death.

And, even though he’s too scared to admit it yet, but because Ilya can’t ever get Shane and his freckles out of his mind.

End Notes

Don’t ask me why Ilya’s dad would need to go to Canada for work. I don’t know. 😓

All Russian is Google Translated, so please let me know if there are any mistakes!

Hope you all enjoyed this! Let me know your thoughts in the comments! ❤️

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