5 times Ilya Rozanov understood English and 1 time he didn't

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5 times Ilya Rozanov understood English and 1 time he didn't

by frog_key_12

Summary

Ilya learns a bunch of hockey slang in the first few years of his career and he thinks he's got English down pretty well, unfortunately, you never stop learning

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Ilya skated back to the bench frustrated. The stick had snapped in his hands just as he lined up the shot. Instead of hitting Montreal's goalie right in the logo, or better yet, going into the net, his stick broke and the traitorous puck went straight to Shane Hollander.

"Here, new twig," the equipment manager handed him another.

"Twig?" Ilya hadn't heard that word before. Didn't know what it meant. English had so many words for everything. He thought it was called a stick, he knew he wasn't wrong, but new vocab always made him doubt a little bit. Maybe stick was the Canadian word and these Americans said something else.

Ilya kept thinking about that word the whole day. After the Raiders won and Ilya had gotten home, he pulled out his phone, typed in 'twig definition.'

A slender woody shoot growing from a branch or stem of a tree or shrub.

Ilya didn't know what 'slender' meant, or 'shoot.' Not in this context. After another ten minutes or so of googling, Ilya realized he had gotten wildly off track. Time for another trick. When he didn't know an English word, sometimes he looked up synonyms.

It had been something one of his Russian teammates had told him. "English has so many words for same things, even English have to look them up."

Stick was a synonym of twig. That's why the equipment guy used it. They both are wood things from trees. It clicked for Ilya.

"Rozy, nice celly." Marlow patted him on the helmet as he climbed back onto the bench. The game was basically over, Rozanov's empty netter had just secured it. He was rubbing it in the other team's faces at this point.

Back in the locker room after the game, Ilya was only half paying attention to his teammates' chatter. It was difficult to fully comprehend so many voices talking at once.

"Whatcha doin' for your birthday celebration?" Marlow was talking again. "It's the big 21 yeah? Gonna go to a bar? I've got suggestions."

At that moment, Ilya realized, 'celly' short for 'celebration.' He'd never connected the two before. For a moment he felt like a bit of a fool. Hockey loved to shorten words, he could've picked up that pattern.

Fuck, Ilya's blood was on the ice. He had caught a stick over the eye. He could feel and see the blood pouring down. The pain didn't register quite yet, he heard the whistle blow. He knew he had to get up, so he did, it was a high stick, no big deal. His helmet was on the ice. He skated toward the bench. A trainer held out a towel, pressed it over his eye, walked with him down the tunnel. There was only a minute or so left in the period anyway.

After the game, he picked up his phone and saw a message from Jane. "Saw Hunter knocked off your bucket, you good?"

Bucket. What the fuck did that mean? Ilya reached up to the cut. The trainers had bandaged him up pretty well. He went back in the game, why was Hollander so worried?

"Yes, good."

Bucket, that was English for the thing you carried water in. What did that mean in context? Head? Maybe bucket was head because the brains and stuff inside were like water? What else had happened during the hit? Ilya had a vision flash of his helmet standing upturned on the ice, straps facing up. Bucket meant helmet. A helmet looks like a bucket. That was it. He grinned like an idiot at his phone.

There was a new kid on the team. He was Russian too. Ilya had to look out for him, he was captain. Captains looked out for the rookies, for everyone on their team. And if Ilya did more than was strictly necessary, if Ilya slipped a list of good Russian restaurants and grocery stores into the kid's bag before he left, that was because Ilya was a good captain.

The new kid was bold. He had barely been playing with the Raiders for two months and he was already getting involved after whistles. Ilya couldn't be too upset, he had done the very same.

"Saw you barking at Pike back there. No penalties, keep your head on." The coach was right. They were down two goals already, they didn't need a setback.

The rookie climbed onto the bench next to Ilya. He said in Russian, "*What did he mean? Haven't heard* barking *before.*"

Ilya helped him understand sometimes, English was a hard language and this kid didn't have a good aptitude for it, only for hockey. Which was all that really mattered in Ilya's mind. "Barking *means yelling. Is also sound dogs make. Is hockey slang. Coach is right, no penalties*" And then it was Ilya's shift, he hopped over the boards.

Shane's cottage was so peaceful. Ilya was used to the hustle and bustle of Boston. He rarely slept without the rattle of trains or the scream of sirens outside his windows. But here, in the woods, it was so quiet. He heard only Hollander's breathing, still asleep. Ilya stroked his hair absently. What did Hollander do to make it so soft? Probably he had thirty steps in his shower routine. Special soap or maybe a supplement. Svetlana had once told him she brushed her hair for a hundred strokes every morning, that sounded like something Hollander would do.

Hollander's eyes fluttered open, groaning at the light that came through the massive windows. He pulled the blanket up farther. Ilya scoffed, he already had every shred of blanket on their bed surrounding him. Ilya reached down and flicked the blanket away from Shane's face.

"Fuck you Rozanov."

"Has barely been eight hours, but if you insist." Ilya couldn't help but smirk. He loved frustrating Shane.

"No, fuck you, you know that's not what I meant."

"You say no, but you also keep saying fuck me."

"Shut up." Shane rolled over, taking the little bits of blanket Ilya had with him.

An hour later, they were both in the kitchen, Ilya was making eggs and Shane had a disgusting green smoothie. Sunlight came through the windows. Ilya heard birds in the trees.

"God I love mornings like this. Sun shining, birds chirping." Shane took another sip of his monstrosity.

"Birds chirping? That is good?" Ilya could only think of hockey chirping. How could birds insult? Why would they? What was Shane talking about.

"Yeah, chirping, y'know like 'tweet tweet,'" Shane's eyebrows were furrowed.

Ilya was still half asleep. "Like Twitter?"

"I mean yeah, that's what Twitter was named for." Shane's brain started whirring. "Wait Ilya, you do know that birds chirp, right? Like dogs bark and cats meow?"

Ilya stirred his eggs aggressively. "No. You tell me that stupid wolf-bird thing chirps?"

"Well, no. I don't think I'd call a loon's noises chirping."

"Then what is chirping? Is not insults like hockey?"

"Chirping is a sound that birds make. Like a quick little noise. Loon calls are too long to be chirps."

"I hate your stupid language." Ilya didn't want to admit that it made sense. He understood now. That's why it was called chirping instead of just insulting people. It had to be quick, punchy little quips. Like the sparrows and chickadees outside.

They were in Shane's car. Pulling into what Ilya could only assume was Shane's parents' driveway. Ilya could almost hear Shane's heart beating out of his chest. He had been clutching the steering wheel so hard his knuckles had been white. Ilya was nervous too, but he couldn't let Shane see that. One of them had to have some confidence here. Shane took a breath and headed inside. Ilya followed him.

He didn't remember much of the conversation after it happened. Shane said he was gay, he apologized a lot, Ilya didn't remember the specifics. Except one moment. Shane was searching for words, trying to explain their relationship.

"We're lovers." Ilya said, putting a hand on Shane's shoulder, wanting to remind him that he wasn't alone.

"No Ilya, that's gross." Shane shook his head.

Ilya was glad in this moment that he was good at keeping a straight face. He took his hand off of Shane's shoulder. They really hadn't talked specifically about their feelings. Maybe Ilya made a mistake. What were they if not lovers? He loved Hollander. He hadn't said it to him yet, but he thought Hollander knew. What was gross about his love?

And then Shane was speaking again. Ilya didn't catch much once again, but he heard Shane say he loved him. Again, a straight face came in handy. Ilya didn't want Shane's parents to know the glow he felt at those words. That was something private. Something he wanted only Shane to see. Only Hollander deserved to see him melt.

End Notes

I love language so much guys, this fic was inspired by ticketyboo00's The Interview

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