

knighthood

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/76541591) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/76541591>.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warnings:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings , No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Heated Rivalry (TV)
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - Fantasy , Alpha/Beta/Omega Dynamics , Alternate Universe - Medieval , Alpha Ilya Rozanov , Omega Shane Hollander , Masturbation , Eavesdropping , Minor Original Character(s) , One Shot , Sexual Tension , Mild Sexual Content
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2025-12-27 Words: 4,800 Chapters: 1/1

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Summary

Ilya hadn't realized when he had started stroking his erection through his dusty, wax-covered pants. It had been instinctive. A strong urge that made his cheeks flush and made him hard as a rock as he stood there, crouched with his ear pressed against the cupboard door, listening to the sweet voice and filling his lungs with the most delicious aroma he could imagine.

or

what happens when you put two horndogs in a medieval fantasy setting close enough to develop a very serious case of sexual tension

Notes

if you find this familiar, it is a reused concept from an old discarded and unfinished fic i had going on for another ship. I tried to change it enough so it would work for this two but you actually don't need that much of a context. use ur imagination to fill in the gaps, pls. i just wanted to be a freak with the rest of y'all.

In the training yard it was common to hear the sound of wooden swords clashing against each other, the groans of apprentices hit by poorly aimed blows, and the jokes made by the higher-ranking knights to prick pride and create provocations that cause some commotion.

One could smell the straw that had fallen from the practice dummies, the sour sweat, and the wet earth furrowed with thousands of footprints that left their mark from the friendly matches.

Ilya recognized the sounds and smells as his home.

The Order of the Dawn began feeling like a prison for the alpha sons of noble houses who did not have the joy of being the great heirs of their parents but who had the opportunity to be anointed as knights and be selected to one day belong to the Royal Guard or even become sworn swords of some member of the royal family.

The promises of honor and glory felt distant when noble titles were lost behind high limestone walls and all young men became mere apprentices who had to start training morning, noon and night, dedicating themselves solely to the sword, archery and combat.

Ilya had tried to escape twice and, on both occasions, Ser Hunter had dragged him back and forced him to pick up all the straw from the training yard with one hand while his teammates continued practicing and destroying the stuffed dummies, causing more yellow wisps to scatter across the ground.

It was either that or plunge his hands into buckets of ice-cold water for hours, clean the stables with a shovel riddled with holes, or be relegated to washing dishes and pots in the kitchen alongside the members of the Brotherhood of Silence, a religious order dedicated to silence and modesty whose members devoted themselves entirely to a life of service to others. He'd heard it was a never-ending and unbearable task due to the lack of conversation and because they were, for the most part, very old omegas who smelled bad and had puffy, fleshy eyes that judged everyone and everything without a word. They also were allowed to hit any boy who would defy them with a wooden stick that hurt like hell. Ilya believed that the so called benevolent brothers enjoyed giving away those punishments as a way of letting out their resentment with their own lives.

Ilya wiped the sweat from his brow and returned to the courtyard to face Eric and Alan. Eric Bennett was tall for his age. He was also thick and heavy as a mountain, making shields and swords look like toys in his enormous hands. Alan Swann was the opposite. Agile and light on his feet, no one could land a single blow on him, no matter how much they tried.

Both had arrived at the Order about two months after Ilya and he couldn't exactly say they were his friends.

Actually, he couldn't say that anyone was his friend.

Eric lunged forward to attack directly, forgetting that he was supposed to be using his sword. He liked fighting bare-knuckled, just like he did at his hometown and as it should be. Ilya managed to dodge the first punch by ducking and taking a step to the left, letting the momentum overwhelm Bennett, though he barely managed to stop Alan's thrust with his back, which had been less than a foot away from striking his temple.

He was at a clear disadvantage, although his lord commander, Ser Hunter, was a firm believer that no real battle would give anyone an advantage and that all members of his Order had to know how to fight all kinds of enemies.

He had already forced Alan back, taking advantage of Swann's inability to defend himself, but Eric came up behind him, placing one of his heavy hands on his shoulder to pull him down and make him lose his balance. Ilya took a step back to face the giant when he felt a sharp pain shoot up his back where Alan had struck him with the flat of his sword, right in the lower back, using it like a club.

He didn't have time to react before Eric had already punched him in the face, hitting the bullseye right in the center of his nose, causing his eyes to fill with tears and him to finally fall to the dusty ground.

"You're dead, Rozanov!" he heard Ser Hunter shout.

"Eat shit" Ilya muttered under his breath, bringing a hand to his nose to check if it was bleeding. He spat the mixture of saliva and blood onto the floor as he stood up and heard Alan and Eric's mocking laughter.

"Go clean yourself up and do something useful. You've already embarrassed yourself enough in my yard!" Ilya shot Ser Hunter a venomous glare, though the latter didn't seem to notice. He was used to teenage hatred; what some kid thought of him couldn't matter less, and his attention was already focused on other fighters.

He laid the sword on a table where other weapons awaited cleaning and storage and headed inside the fortress, wiping the blood that still trickled from his nose with the hem of his shirt. It was already dirty anyway.

He passed by other teammates who were going to and from training until he reached the barracks that he had to share with ten other equally bloody, sweaty and dirty alphas.

He couldn't remember the last time he'd seen someone who wasn't covered in hair, grime, or both. He hadn't even seen a woman, not even an alpha, because they weren't allowed in the Order. Seeing his comrades naked no longer shocked him, but that didn't make it any less repulsive. He wished vows of chastity also included not having to see cocks at all hours of the day and night.

"Eric again?" Troy Barrett asked. Ilya glared at him. "You'll never beat him. Nobody ever has."

"Everyone can be beaten" Ilya replied. "You, for example, can be beaten by pinching your milkmaid's tits."

The others laughed, and Troy turned almost as red as his hair and covered his chest to avoid the hands of those closest to him.

With that distraction, Ilya was finally able to reach his bed, although he noticed that the sheets and dirty clothes hadn't been taken. He looked around, and it seemed to be a common occurrence.

"Haven't they washed our clothes?" he asked aloud.

"Didn't you know? The brother who did our laundry died like two days ago" a Swift boy replied disinterestedly. "They barely found a replacement, but he's clearly overwhelmed. You'd almost be better off going to the backyard and washing your shit stained underwear yourself, Rozanov."

Ilya made a face and looked at his dirty sheets and his own shirt. While he didn't mind getting dirty, he couldn't just go to sleep like that. At the very least, he washed every three days and made sure to be clean to be comfortable, unlike most of his companions. He clicked his tongue and ripped the sheets off the straw mattress.

"Are you going?" Swift asked. "If you go, take mine."

"And mine!" Troy shouted, and suddenly Ilya had his hands full of sheets and dirty clothes that he couldn't leave lying around or they would all be punished for making a mess and forced to sleep in the stable.

He went back out into the corridor muttering obscenities against his colleagues, the Order, Eric Bennett, and even his father, who was surely gloating about not having him at home so he could devote his attention to other matters such as gambling and feasting.

The yard where all the clothes used in the fortress were washed was at the very back, near the well and the exit that led to the market, small and hidden behind bushes and which only the Brothers of Silence could cross although Ilya knew that some of his colleagues sneaked through there at midnight to go to the nearest brothel.

Certainly, the vow of chastity wasn't widely respected, and he knew that ser Hunter turned a blind eye most of the time, though if they caught someone or if scandalous rumors started to circulate, the punishment was severe. Ilya didn't want to find out, nor did he have any interest in seeking out prostitutes. Drinking his medicine to control his heat was enough for him, and he spent his energy in the training yard.

He passed by the dining room, close to the wall, because several Brothers were scrubbing the floor and could become violent if someone stepped on where they had already cleaned.

He went down some stairs, crossed the cupboards and went back up to finally go out to where the washing fountain was.

It was a square courtyard enclosed by high walls covered in vines. Several ropes hung from the columns, serving as clotheslines where a good number of sheets, rags, and garments were drying in the sun.

Ilya walked among the sheets, his injured nose filled with the smell of bleach and ash used to wash cotton and linen. He followed the sound of the sloshing water until he finally saw the fountain and the omega washing another sheet, scrubbing over a wooden washbasin.

His wet sleeves were rolled up to his elbows, and Ilya could see his dark hair sticking to his forehead with sweat.

"Hey" was all he could think to say to get his attention. The omega raised his head, and Ilya knew immediately that this was no ordinary Brother of Silence.

To begin with, he was young. Perhaps his own age. He was so used to wrinkled, weathered, and weary faces that it took him aback to see smooth skin, marked only by constellations of freckles caused by the sun. His eyes were slightly almond-shaped and a certain color... Ilya had only ever seen that color in the countryside, during the mild days of autumn. They were the color of tree bark, of fresh, fertile earth. Brown like the fragrant cinnamon used to bake bread and flavor drinks. Everything about him seemed exotic, distant... And it had to be. A face like that wasn't common in the kingdom. An unfamiliar feeling washed over him, and he only moved a little closer to leave the soiled sheets on the floor. He struggled to find the right words. It was as if his brain had suddenly gone numb, but he forced himself to regain his composure.

"These should be clean before nightfall," he said, but received no response. The boy continued to stare at him. Ilya cleared his throat and looked down for a few seconds. He noticed his own dirty shirt and decided to take it off and throw it on the pile on the floor as well. "This one too. It has blood on it, but don't use too much bleach. The smell is overwhelming."

He waited a few seconds, although he realized he wasn't going to get a response, so he turned his back and went back the way he had come to the barracks where, surprisingly, his

companions were still trying to grope Troy's chest, and this time he felt confident enough to try it too amid laughter and curses, leaving the silent omega behind in his mind.

Ilya stretched and some of his joints made a sound as they settled into place.

The morning training sessions were always the hardest, though he much preferred them to the interminable mandatory services the cleric gave all members of the Order at dawn. Ilya was surprised that the old man only had clarity when it came to reading the endless passages of the "Knight of the Dawn," a sacred book written hundreds of years ago by the Order's first brother, who supposedly attained enlightened purity through fifty-seven precepts –all of them very long and confusing– but only the first five were fundamental for any knight joining the Order.

Ilya still hadn't gotten used to this religion. It wasn't common in his home. When people spoke to him about prayers, he always thought of the marble obelisk around which his ancestral home in Rúrik was built, the one his father would kneel before dawn and ask for offerings to be left for the crows to feed on, as if the birds were the face of his cold, invisible god.

Ilya understood that the deity of the obelisk always answered questions and requests and that it was only necessary to understand its whispers... But he couldn't understand how statues and paintings of unknown figures, to whom the people of Aurica dedicated countless confusing rituals and long masses, could be so indifferent and never answer anything that was asked of them.

Even so, like everyone else, he bowed his head and tried not to fall asleep during the sermon.

When the breakfast bell rang, the noise and laughter grew louder. They were talking about who had messed up during training, about bruises, about cocks; there were pinches and shoves.

Ilya always hoped to be among the last to enter the fortress to avoid the stampede of hungry alphas. He didn't mind being served last. What was at the bottom of the pots always tasted better, according to him.

He stood aside as his companions passed by and saw that, as soon as the courtyard emptied a little more, some Brothers of Silence came out to wet the ground and collect the straw to leave the ground ready once again for the next round of training.

He recognized the new one. He was smaller than the others and moved quickly, dipping a hand in a bucket of water and then splashing dirt as he went.

When the bucket was empty, the omega approached one of his elders to tell him. Ilya didn't hear the conversation, but it seemed to him that they were sending him to the well to fetch more water.

The boy walked purposefully toward him, and Ilya stepped aside to let him pass. They didn't exchange glances, and the pace had been too quick for them to even exchange a word. Still, the faintest scent of fresh lemon and bergamot, as if just picked, reached the alpha's nose.

He followed him with his eyes and the smell quickly faded among the wet earth, sweat, and hot porridge.

Ilya couldn't return to the barracks after breakfast. Ser Hunter had assigned him and four of his colleagues to clean the battlements of the fortress and scrape the wax off the altar candles at the small altar where morning services were held. Sometimes ordinary chores were worse than punishments, and the alpha wondered what lesson in discipline there was in cleaning pigeon droppings and getting sick of the smell of burnt candles and incense. His nose always ached from the saturation of smells, and his hands lingered with the stench for days, no matter how much he washed and scrubbed them. He would spend the entire day cleaning the battlements because the pigeons never stopped defecating on the stone he had just scrubbed clean, and sometimes he had wanted to catch them and snap their necks, but he knew, sadly, that wouldn't end his torment, and Ser Hunter would likely punish him even more severely for killing the poor animals.

The night was well advanced when it ended.

His only comfort would be sleeping in clean sheets, wearing clothes that smelled nice. Ilya knew that, by that time, the brother would surely have already returned everything he had left in the fountain the previous afternoon.

When he entered the barracks, he did so silently and slowly so as not to disturb his companions' sleep, although it was clear they were all fast asleep. Ser Hunter had beaten them to a pulp with one-on-one fights from midday until well into the afternoon. His cautious steps were drowned out by the loud snores of the other alphas.

Ilya just wanted to lie down, he wanted to sleep. He was so tired and fed up that he hardly cared about not being able to take a bath. It would have been ideal, but there wasn't enough time, and the nights weren't warm enough for a dip in the fountain.

He undressed to put on his shirt, and again his nose hurt from the strong smell of bleach emanating from the garment. Not only the shirt, but also the pants, the sheets, and the pillow. Everything was permeated with that pungent, dry aroma, and that was all it took to feel overwhelmed by an overwhelming rage.

He picked up the clothes as if they were a pile of garbage, holding them as far away from his nose as possible as he walked back out into the hallway.

The Brothers of Silence slept near the courtyard where they did the laundry. Ilya resolved to take everything to that foolish omega and force him to scrub the sheets again until they lost that nauseating smell. He wondered if the rest of his companions could smell it, if their shirts stank too, or if he was the only one unlucky enough to have given the specific order.

He crossed the silent dining room and the dark hallway.

There was no sound other than that of his bare footsteps.

He went down the stone steps to pass between the cupboards and then stopped.

In the confined space, he perceived a scent like no other.

It was sweet, light, and fresh. Like lying on a bed of green grass in summer. It was so strong that it far surpassed the bleach on his clothes. He even forgot his discomfort for a moment.

He looked around for the source. There was nothing but the narrow hallway and the heavy wooden doors on either side.

Spices and herbs were stored on the right, and meats and cheeses on the left.

Ilya stood there, mesmerized by the scent, for a few seconds, and then he thought he heard a sigh. It was subtle, but in the silence of the night, it wasn't hard to hear. He waited. He counted the seconds in his mind and heard it again, a little louder. A shiver ran through him, accompanied by a feeling he had never experienced before.

First he took a stealthy step to the left.

He pressed his ear to the wood, but there was no sound except the beating of his heart. He frowned and then turned to his right.

Only then did he notice a faint glimmer seeping in from under the door.

There was someone in there.

A thief, he thought, despite the impossibility. There was no way to enter that fortress as an intruder. There were guards posted at all the entrances and on the walls, all of them always vigilant and ready to shoot arrows first and ask questions later.

Another sweet sigh reached his ears, and Ilya pressed his ear to the door. It was lighter than the other, less thick. The scent of spices wafted through the wood, and... there was that delicious perfume too, which seemed to call to him like a soft, alluring voice. It seemed to be whispering his name, as if it had been created especially for him.

The door was closed.

He tried to push it, but it seemed stuck from the inside.

There was someone there.

It had to be a miracle, a divine apparition among the spices stored in jars.

He was overcome by a very strong despair.

He wanted to see. He needed to see for himself what called to him like a siren's song.

The sighs were continuous and soon turned into gasps. *Into moans*. Ilya hadn't realized when he'd let go of the sheets and his hand was caressing his erection through his trousers, which were dirty with dust and wax. It had been instinctive. A strong call that warmed his cheeks and made him as hard as a rock as he stayed there, crouching with his ear pressed against the cupboard door, listening to the sweet voice and filling his lungs with the most delicious aroma he could imagine.

He had never been with an omega, male or female. He didn't really know what they looked like naked, but that wasn't what came to mind. Ilya thought of the freckles of a girl he had seen one day back at his hometown, of a boy's laughter that sounded like music. He imagined slender, tanned hands, lips like rosebuds, hair that moved in the wind, and finally, his hand became covered in warm, viscous fluid as the image of hazel eyes framed by thick, expressive eyebrows and accompanied by a constellation of freckles appeared in his mind.

The market stretched along the entire length of the River Walk and its busiest point was the Fish Square, where the voices and smells of merchants with their goods for sale mingled almost to the point of becoming unintelligible.

Ilya deeply detested being assigned the tedious task of accompanying the Brothers on shopping trips. These were usually long journeys in which his only participation was limited to carrying bags and baskets full of fruit, fabrics, and herbs.

Even so, it was a far more merciful punishment than making him clean battlements, and he had to be grateful that Ser Hunter hadn't been inflexible. Being out of the barracks late at night wasn't allowed, and he'd been caught just as he was heading back to his bed. He'd excused himself by saying he'd heard suspicious noises, and in the morning, they'd checked the cupboards only to find a couple of mice, which quickly fell prey to the fat cat the Brothers kept in the kitchen.

Part of him felt relieved that they hadn't found anything, although another, much more impatient part hoped that there was something divine there that would call his name and say that it belonged to him.

He stopped when the Brother in front of him did.

His companion was the same young man who had soaked his clothes in bleach and who had those striking brown eyes. He hadn't said a word to him (nor would he), although Ilya could sense his discomfort at having him so close behind.

"Oranges," said a shopkeeper. "A dozen for five copper coins..."

Ilya didn't know anything about prices. It had never been a concern of his... although, in his mind, the fact that an hour in the brothel cost three times as much flashed by. He chuckled at the comparison of a prostitute to three dozen oranges. What was better? Satisfying his cock or his belly?

He snapped back to reality when he felt the wicker basket he was carrying being taken from his hands. He noticed the Brother give him a disapproving look before turning his back on him and starting to pick oranges. Ilya stood to one side, looking around.

At the neighboring stall they were selling fish, and Ilya cautiously moved away to get a look at the merchandise.

There were crabs and fish of different sizes. Some were still moving, dying on the wooden board, while the vendor called out his prices and offers.

Ilya wrinkled his nose and his attention shifted to a mackerel whose eyes were already glazed over. He thought for a second before giving in to the temptation to poke it, plunging his finger into the eye socket until he felt the gelatinous texture of the eye flatten beneath his fingertip.

He couldn't help but laugh. It was something he used to do as a child in Rúrik, when he and his brother would sneak into kitchens to steal bread or cookies.

"Hey!" the vendor called to him. Ilya still had his finger stuck in the fish's head. "You have to pay for it!"

"What?" he blurted out, his voice coming out off-key with surprise. Ilya felt his ears burning, but then he straightened up to look down at him, puffing out his chest. "I don't have to pay anything, this fish clearly attacked me."

"You stuck your dirty finger in my merchandise, boy," the man said, pointing at him and then at the fish. "Who do you think is going to buy that mackerel now? It has your filth inside now"

"My filth is nowhere near the fish, I can assure you that" Ilya said, raising a brow. "If it were, you could sell this fish for twice the price, old man," Ilya placed a hand to the hilt of his sword. "Don't you know who I am...? Maybe I should teach you about respect..."

The threat was interrupted when he felt a hand on his. Soft and warm. Ilya forgot for a second what he was doing and just watched the Brother step in, signaling to the vendor, whose frown relaxed and, in a much less aggressive tone, apologized before cutting the fish's head off, then wrapping it in paper and handing it over in exchange for a coin.

The omega spun around and handed the bundle to Ilya, using a bit more force than necessary, almost pressing the smelly little package to his chest with some annoyance before returning to the orange vendor. Ilya glanced at the fish head and then at the fishmonger, who had also been somewhat perplexed, though he soon resumed shouting in the street to sell his wares.

Ilya silently returned to his place beside the omega and carried the fruit-filled basket. He could still feel the warmth of their brief touch in his hand and couldn't help but think about what he had overheard in the cupboard the night before.

The walk back to the Order's stronghold was silent.

Ilya carried almost all the weight, but the Brother carried another basket full of yellow plums in his hands.

The smell was pleasant.

Ilya was still thinking about the touch of his hands, the power of his gaze.

"It would have been disastrous to fight with that vendor," he said, breaking the silence. They were already far from the market. "Sir Hunter would have punished me."

There was no response. Only quick footsteps. Some children ran past them, and Ilya almost tripped while dodging them.

"You're too young to be a Silent Brother," he continued. "Almost all of them are old and smell stale... Why did you join?" Again, silence. Though now there was a fleeting glance over his shoulder. "I won't tell anyone if you talk. It must be difficult. Especially for an omega. That's what you are, isn't it?" Ilya took a couple of steps forward to be at the Brother's eye level. "I know how much they like to talk. My sisters cluck like hens. They couldn't take a vow of silence like you unless their tongues were cut out..."

The road continued. The fortress was still a few minutes away.

"I thought only omegas who never married joined the Brotherhood... Though you could still do it, couldn't you?" Ilya persisted. One could always persist with omegas. That was what he knew. "Or did you join to be near alphas? I don't think you need to. I suppose your family could have eventually made a fair deal for you." The lack of response became frustrating. Ilya gestured and, without thinking, reached out to stop him by the shoulder.

The plums rolled across the ground, and a few drops of blood fell onto the path. The alpha felt the metallic taste fill his mouth, and his face burned where he had been punched.

The Brother was breathing heavily and his whole body was trembling.

"Don't you dare touch me" he said before picking up the basket with the remaining plums and walking away quickly.

Ilya stood frozen in place, processing what had just happened.

Any other time, such a blow would have been enough to start a fight. He was volatile by nature. But he couldn't find that impulse within himself. His mind was focused on something far more interesting: the boy's voice.

It had taken him by surprise; it was clear and gentle, like the calm current of a lake. It was almost melodious, even when it was meant to be threatening. He had never heard anyone speak like that. It was like a caress on his ears. He inevitably thought of the creature in the cupboard. The sensation had been the same. A shiver ran through him, and he swallowed.

Despite everything, he gathered the remaining plums from the ground and put them with the tangerines in the basket he was carrying. The fish head fell out and rolled down the road.

His face ached, his lip began to swell, and blood filled his mouth, but he didn't spit it out. In fact, he simply found himself smiling.

Ilya stood up, leaving the fish head behind as he started walking again.

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