

Moscow Calling

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Moscow Calling

by [fromagessefatale](#)

Summary

“Hello. Ilya Rozanov here. Be fast, or I will drop call.”

“Dyadya Ilya? It is you, isn’t it?” a scratchy, nasal voice said. She had the tiniest sliver of an accent, one Ilya wouldn’t have noticed, had it not mirrored his own, that he had spent a good decade trying to eradicate.

Ilya had long since given up any hope of having a connection to his family back home in russia. His new family in canada, his marriage to Shane is enough. So he doesn't quite know what to feel when hope comes calling (in the form of his little niece, who is not quite so little anymore)

Notes

This is set at some point in the future where Ilya and Shane are both out and married. I have watched the show and read some of the books, but am, at best, shaky with canon.

Also I did some minor research into russian pet names, but still sorry to anyone who is russian. If they're are egregious mistakes, please let me know ;(

the cursive text is meant to be russian

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

MOSCOW CALLING

On a cold and miserable Wednesday, an hour or so after practice ended, Ilya received a call to his private cell phone.

It would have been innocuous, had it not been from an unknown caller. He hadn't given out this number to many people, since the scrutiny he'd been facing had increased over the last few years.

Ilya scratched the back of his hair, where his unruly locks had been pressed down by the helmet. Shane, he supposed, would tell him not to pick up, since anyone who'd have the right to call him on his private phone already had his number. An unnamed caller was most indicative of some sort of scam. Ilya, on the other hand, had about fifteen minutes to kill before his better half would meet him for dinner at the small vietnamese restaurant Shane's parents kept recommending to him.

He was bored and felt whiny in a way he knew Shane wouldn't appreciate. He knew if he dragged his weird mood into their date he would bicker and then they might fight. That certainly made for good make-up sex, but he'd rather not upset Shane when the two of them were both still so high strung from their last loss two weeks ago.

Still, Ilya felt a little reckless.

"Hello. Ilya Rozanov here. Be fast, or I will drop call."

"*Dyadya* Ilya? It is you, isn't it?" a scratchy, nasal voice said. She had the tiniest sliver of an accent, one Ilya wouldn't have noticed, had it not mirrored his own, that he had spent a good decade trying to eradicate.

He should have said something back, but just the two sentences in that unfamiliar voice had his teeth grinded against each other and a sensation that could have very well been fear, if he'd been in the mood to investigate it, settling heavy and uncomfortable across his shoulders like the old ratty blanket his mother used to put on him after he'd been outside in the snow as a little boy.

"What is it you want?" he bit out, perhaps more aggressive than he should have. If this was truly his niece calling, there was really only one answer and Iliya knew it, deep down, even as a treacherous sliver of hope formed inside him. Pathetic.

"You have a trust fund for me, yes? Like, money I get when I turn eighteen?"

Right. Of course. That. Always that. The weight on Ilya's shoulders seemed to grow and he could almost feel the scratchy wool of the blanket, was almost shivering from the feeling of having played in the snow for way longer than he should have.

"Yes. Why."

“I want access to it now. I need to get out of Moscow, maybe I will go to St. Petersburg, maybe somewhere else, I don’t know, but I can’t – ergh. I need to leave. So. I need the money. Now.”

“If you are in danger, I will help, but I will not send money.” he sighed and paced the length of the parking lot in front of the restaurant. He’d told himself. No more sending anything. Not to Alexei and not to whatever was possibly left from their family. That included little Alexandra, named after her good for nothing father. Early on Alexei would attempt to use Ilya’s soft spot for his baby niece to try and ply him into sending money in order to receive pictures of “*little Sashenka*”. Her christening. Her first day at school. Her first time on ice – the last one hurt especially, knowing those pictures most likely had been staged specifically to appeal to Ilya. Nonetheless, he wished he’d seen them. Any of them. But he’d decided, no more. Every little inch he gave, Alexei and his pack would take a mile. And it hurt, but his therapist had said, it’d been like trying to heal a wound while he kept ripping off the scab, to see if there was anything of worth to be found in the injury. Like playing while injured – you were only making things worse by putting pressure on fractured bones.

So, no putting it past Alexei to be next to Sashenka right now, telling her what to do, to say. No caring, even if that wasn’t the case. He’d decided: his family now lived in Canada and anyone back in Russia, even his niece had been cut off. He’d left the trust fund, which was plenty, a shamefully, treacherously high number. And little Sashenka was probably not so little, anymore, at all. How old would she be now? Fifteen? Sixteen? That was old enough to take care of herself. After all, Ilya had been independent even earlier. He’d been supporting the entire family by seventeen.

“But you shouldn’t have had to. It wasn’t fair, you would have deserved to be supported and cared for.” for a voice that sounded suspiciously like Ilya’s sweet, wonderful and annoyingly smart husband, whispered in his mind.

“How you get this number?” he hated how his accent came out now, how it always returned when he felt scared or too emotional, no matter how good his English had gotten and how long he’d worked on it.

“Tch. How will you help me without money? Will you fly over and rent a car and help me move? No, that’s useless. I need it, now.”

“I ask first. How – did – you – get – this – number.” Ilya repeated, making sure to speak slow and enunciate right this time around. It sounded better, but he still felt ridiculous.

“Fine. I snooped through *Papa’s* phone and copied your number. You have him blocked, yes? But not me, I didn’t have number to block yet, when you decided to abandon us. So, I called you from my number, where I knew there was a chance you’d pick up. And you did. On a complete stranger, instead of your family.”

“You are not being a nice person, even though you ask me for money. Not polite. Bad manners to do this.” Ilya said, because if he reacted to anything Sashenka had said, he would combust and his very sexy husband would have to eat delicious pho, recommended by Yuna Hollander, all by his grieving, hot, smart, blowjob-capable mouth possessing, self.

“You are not a nice person, either. Pot calling kettle black, do you not think?” Sashinka shot back, unperturbed.

It was just like being chirped, Ilya told himself. He wouldn’t start crying on the ice either if Sashinka was playing for the stupid Admirals, or the fucking Guardians.

“What? Which pot? You are not making sense. Using stupid idioms like an American.” Or a Canadian, his mind supplied, “How much?”

“Fivethousand.”, she didn’t even ask, she demanded. She sounded confident that he would give in. That was precisely what gave Ilya the strength not to.

“No. That’s a lot. Too much. No.”

“But you are rich!”

“Doesn’t matter. Too much. You are bad negotiator.”

“Five-hundred?” this time her voice was frailer, more worried. She was starting to catch on that Ilya really meant it. Good, even though the waver in her voice broke his heart a little bit. Ilya wished, not for the first time, that he would have been allowed to see her grow up, to know what she liked, whether she played a sport, what she cared about. That he would have gotten to be the kind of uncle, she could call whenever she needed help, big or small, who she could have depended on, without a second thought. He wasn’t, though. The years had gone by and she was right: they were as good as strangers. Maybe that’s why she was speaking to him in English now. Maybe she didn’t even know whether he’d understand Russian. Ilya felt himself filled with a strange, desperate longing. It had been so long since he’d had a proper conversation in his mother tongue. Shane had been learning Russian, sweet as he was, but it was not an easy language to learn and he spoke it clumsily (if, nonetheless, endearingly).

Ilya swallowed down the familiar bitterness. Most people in his life would never know just how well-spoken, how clever Ilya was, seeing that they only ever experienced him spitting out simple hollow phrases in a language that was familiar, but not natural or easy to him.

“You can be quite sweet.” Shan had said once, early on in their relationship and he had sounded surprised about it, even though Ilya had just finished making him come twice, once without touching his dick, which he felt was rather sweet of him.

“In my mind,” Ilya had replied, “I am sweet all the time. Big, soft teddy, yes?” And Shane had scoffed with the memory of Ilya checking him into the board only a few hours ago.

“No.” Ilya could see a car entering the parking lot and for a second, he thought it might be his husband, coming to save him. Shane hated stress, but he always felt it in one way or another, and he worked well under pressure. He would know, would tell him what to do about this unprecedented, horrible situation.

It wasn't Shane. Instead, a different practical, ugly, Canadian car pulled into the lot, out of which several children and two adults stumbled. Ilya made sure to smile at the kids. "No, no. No money." He continued, "What kind of trouble do you have? Maybe I can help. Maybe *Dyadya* Ilya can fix for you, huh?"

She snorted derisively. Ilya was reminded why he preferred interacting with small children to testy teenagers, even though the latter was closer to him in communication style.

"*Papa* has kicked me out. Says I need to learn lesson. I'm done learning lesson. I'm done. I need to leave. If you do not send me the money to, I will get it otherwise."

Five-hundred dollars was not a lot of money to Ilya, these days. He could have send it right then and not even notice its absence. Maybe Sashenka would really just use it for herself.

Maybe she'd even be grateful, call him again, sometime. Send him pictures of her graduation, meet his husband, invite him to her wedding someday, like Ilya couldn't allow himself to invite her to his.

But Ilya couldn't shake his bitterness, the ever-growing fear that Alexei would get the money in the end, would find out he had sent it, maybe even put her up to it.

"If you need to get away so bad I will send you ticket. You can come here, we talk. I don't send money. If you want, you get money here. In person."

He shouldn't have offered; he should just have send the money. The full fifteen, not the five-hundred, or no, better yet, make that thirty and then block her number, too and never pick up again when it was an unknown caller.

Too late. The offer was out.

"No. *Papa* was right about you."

She ended the call.

He hadn't noticed how much he had wanted her to say yes, before she had declined and now that sliver of hope, crawling steadily up his throat and settling into his voice, making it sound all shaky and emotional, had started to choke him.

She'd be okay, he told himself. He did the right thing. His therapist would be proud.

Fifteen minutes later his husband found him sitting outside the restaurant, crying silently and Ilya was ashamed of his emotions and ashamed of the fact that he felt shame, even now, even

in front of his understanding, sweet husband, who took him in his arms and kissed his head and didn't push at all. Instead, Shane made him climb into the car and took him home. The reservation had gone by anyways at that point and Shane said he wasn't mad about that, that he couldn't stomach any soup, no matter how delicious his mother thought it was, anyways. Not while Ilya still had that haunted look on his face.

Ilya felt grateful and wondered, not for the first time, what he'd done to deserve someone so caring and understanding and lovely.

Shane usually was a safe driver, but now he swerved, constantly checking for Ilya. Ilya made sure to grin at him, joke about the almost run over red light.

"Mr. Danger. You wanna leave hockey, go into Formula One, right?"

"As if. I'm gonna be playing hockey years after you have retired. Your're not winning that one this easy."

Shane managed to smooth his expression, lure out a laugh out of Ilya, but it took him a bit longer than it usually would have. Ilya skirted around telling him what happened and so Shane, foolishly, ended up drawing his own conclusions, assisted by Ilya's lacklustre comments. It was the depression, nothing else, he said. It just got especially bad, all of the sudden.

"No reason. Stop apologizing, come over. If you really feel so bad, you can kiss it better." Ilya went on and Shane did as he was asked, doing them both the mercy of distracting them.

Just a small lie, he told himself. He'd let Shane know by the end of the week, but this secret, this interaction needed to be kept close to his chest, just his, for a little while more.

Three days later he received another call by an unknown number. He had not learned from last time, quite the opposite. This time he picked up even faster.

"I am at airport." Sashenka said instead of a greeting, "You will send ticket, yes?"

"Da." Ilya answered, because he had offered, hadn't he? What else was he meant to say. "Moscow airport? When do you need ticket?"

"Of course, Moscow, idiot. Soon as possible."

Ilya undressed mechanically. Everything had to go. As always, the game had left him drenched in sweat everywhere and now he could feel it cooling his skin past where it was comfortable. He peeled his socks off, crumbled them up and threw them vaguely in the direction of his cubby. One of the other players complained, but they were used to his antics, and he did not feel the need to apologize (he almost never felt the need to apologize in general, which was great because at this point no one, but Shane ever expected him to). The socks had left red pilling, stuck in the creases of his feet.

Ilya felt like he might puke. He'd played well out there, because he was a pro. The best (the second best, but shhhh, he wouldn't say, not out loud. He had the best and that was the same as being the best in a way. Shhhhhh. Don't you tell anyone!) there ever was.

The rink, the game, the shoulder-checking, the familiar slide of the ice under his blades, the predictable angles and curves of the puck, more instinct than knowledge, but god did he know it – all of that was like breathing to him. Natural. On the ice, he felt safe. As long as he played, he was okay, because he couldn't form a thought that wasn't related to "yes, here, just right, goalie on the other side, pass now, evade, shoot, score!"

But soon he had prolonged getting dressed as much as he could. Shane was waiting for him, holding the socks he'd thrown, because of course he did. His fingers were cramped together, folding and unfolding the smelly thick cotton blend, over and over.

Because of course this was as nerve-wracking for him as it had been for Ilya.

He hadn't told him yet, there hadn't been time, but Shane was sensitive to the charge in the air, nonetheless. He knew something was wrong, something important had changed.

He didn't protest when they skipped the post-game celebrations, instead piling into his car. Here, Ilya kissed him, just once, desperate and intense. It was as close as he would get to asking permission, to try and gather reassurance. They would be okay, he knew, even though Ilya hadn't been talking to him about his plans. He felt guilty, of course, but it was faded, hidden behind the nervousness, the hope, the fear.

The radio played a series of Canadian pop hits, nothing Ilya knew, but Shane hummed along to a few of them and that managed to sooth him after all. He played a drum solo with his knuckles on the dashboard to coax a hesitant smile from his partner.

Yes, Ilya was safe on ice, but he shouldn't have forgotten – on the ice or of it – he was safest with Shane to ground him.

The car took the familiar path back home, until Ilya realized the exit towards the airport was coming up.

"You drive us to the airport." he said.

Shane raised his eyebrows.

"Will I now?" he said, testily, as he took the exit.

“You are doing so right now.” Ilya replied.

“And why is that?” his patient husband, whose patience was quickly running out, asked.

“Because you love me.” Ilya shot back, hopeful that his declaration of love would derail the conversation. No such luck. Shane was suspicious and the power of love had failed him.

“I do. But you know that’s not what I’m asking, don’t you. What’s at the airport, Iliya? Are you going somewhere? Because I hope you are aware of the fact that we have a planning meeting to attend tomorrow and two separate press releases next week and also practice every single day in between.”

“Mmh. You are sharp. You miss nothing. Clever perfect Shane.” Ilya needled. It had the intended effect.

“Oh fuck off!” Shane snorted, bumping his knee into Ilya’s.

The radio went to commercials and Ilya switched it off. The car fell silent, except for his husband still grumbling under his breath in outrage.

Ilya sighed. He was safe.

“I have niece in Russia, right? You remember.” he said quietly, eyes affixed to the road in front of them.

“I, I do, yeah. Is this-“

“She is at airport. We get her, she and I talk. We see what happens.”

Now Shane was the one sighing. It was a sign of how well the two of them knew each other when those few words were enough for him to immediately understand.

“Oh, Ilya.” he said and he sounded worried. “You don’t have to be alone with it. Any of it. If you’re hurting, I want to know.”

One of his arms left the steering wheel and slid down to the armrest, where it rested, palm opened. Ilya took it as the invitation that it was. His hand joined. He squeezed.

Shane was, of course, right.

Sashenka had the sullen, sunk in eyes and puffy cheeks of her father and a no-nonsense line in the setting of her nose and her drawn together, bushy eyebrows that could have been taken straight from her grandfather's face. There was a safety pin in her ear.

She had recognized him, at the airport, but Ilya hadn't been able to pick her out from the crowd. It smarted more than it should have. She was tall for how young she was, and she spoke with a lisp that was more apparent in person, than over the phone.

"Who is this?" she said and pointed towards Shane.

"That is Shane. Shane Hollander. He is the second-best hockey player in the world and he is my-"

"-Teammate!" Shane interjected.

"Husband." Ilya finished.

"And also, I am not the second best. Don't listen to him. You're Alexandra, right? Are you hungry? We could go out to eat."

Sashenka hadn't brought much in the way of luggage, but Shane took it from her hands anyway, putting it away in the trunk of the car.

She turned to Ilya, a challenging glint in her eyes.

"He looks soft." she said, "And the car is ugly. Ugly car and pretty boy husband. What is wrong with you."

"How is your father?" Ilya responded. Two could play that game, "Still good for nothing gambler?"

"*Idi nahui*. He is bad, rotting." she responded, a broad smile on her lips.

Then, when Shane had returned and held the car door open for her – he was so nervous, it was adorable, Ilya thought -, she murmured in Russian: "*Better this way. Just imagine how pathetic it would be if you had ruined your life for a beautiful car and an ugly man. Bad enough that you are stuck in dreary, sad Canada.*"

It sounded like an attack, the way she was barking it out, but Ilya couldn't be sure if he only imagined the tension. On the ice, he'd take any provocation, no matter how small to force an altercation. It was a good strategy to rile up. Ilya had always been able to keep thinking, even when drenched in a cloud of anger, thanks to a formidable instinct, honed through discipline. Other players mostly didn't share that skill. And if you weren't thinking and you didn't have an instinct trained in, the way Ilya and Shane and maybe a handful of other players had, well then you'd just be playing bad hockey as soon as you got riled up. And Iliya was really good at riling people up. But here? He ignored the underlying anger in her tone and answered in English, so Shane would be able to understand it.

"Is not so bad. I like it here. I like-" he made sure to lock eyes with Shane, send a reassuring, sappy smile his way, "-Canada. Has funny loud bird and Tim Hortons coffee and bad weather

every day. Is good, you'll see."

When Ilya considered that Shane had not met any of his family before and had lived under the impression he would never get to, it made sense that he was so desperate to make a good impression on Sashenka. Nonetheless, it was a bit funny (and very adorable) to see him tripping over himself to impress her.

"Shane. *Moy Luchik*. She is sixteen-year-old niece. She does not need Michelin star. Just go to anyplace. Doesn't matter where. She probably only eats gum and vape and alcohol, like all teens."

"Not true!" Sashenka protested, "*Dyadya* Iliya, you are so old. Maybe when you were young you only had gum and vape and alcohol, but I am not so lame like you."

"She got you there." Shane said, amused.

Ilya stuck his tongue out at him.

"No, really." Shane went on and then raised his voice so that Sashenka, who was stretched across the backseat swiping away at her phone could better hear, "The very first time I met your uncle he was smoking with his hoody pulled up all edgy. And he was smoking under a 'no smoking' sign."

"Really?!" Sashenka replied, phone forgotten.

"Is lie." Ilya said, "Shane is liar. He is just sad, cause all he eats is sad kale and fish. He is allergic to fun!"

"I'm allergic to nonsense!" Shane replied and knocked their shoulders together.

Sashenka's phone chimed and her face fell.

"Is it Alexei?" Ilya asked.

Sashenka looked up, outraged.

"*Not in front of him.*" she screeched in Russian, pointing at Shane.

"He is family." Ilya replied in English and it sounded like a threat. He is family. More than you. Don't overplay your hand, he seemed to say.

Sashenka looked outside the window, chided. Her head was red.

“So. Alexei. My brother dearest. Does he know you are here?” Ilya asked as a peace offering.

“Yes.”

“Is he very angry?”

“Not at you.” A pause, “He says ‘hi’ and wants you to know he is grateful you take care of me.”

Ilya bristled.

“He does not.”

Sashenka drew herself up, switching her phone off and chucking it somewhere to her side.

“He does, not in so many words, but he does.”

After an awkward, but not unpleasant dinner at a very nice upscale restaurant they drove home. Sashenka hid her awe well, but later, when Shane had excused himself (It was fifty/fifty if he simply had no more social battery left or if he wanted to give Ilya and Sashenka time to talk on their own), she was sat on the big sofa in their living room, rigid, with a straight back and her arms not touching anything.

Clenched in her hand like a lifeline was a vape, that Ilya allowed her to smoke inside, because he wasn't Shane and it amused him to no end.

“So you do vape. Like classic teen? I was right!!! Classic teen right here, huh.”

For a while, it was almost comfortable. She flicked through the channels and landed on the one non-sports channel they had. It was a Russian news show that Ilya sometimes let drone on in the background, when he couldn't sleep and got homesick. He felt wrong-footed with it playing. Like it was a secret no one was supposed to know about and now Sashenka had stumbled upon it.

But she didn't make fun of him. Instead she curled up, tension running through her entire small body like she was a bow about to snap.

Ilya didn't know what to do, to help her (or himself, he didn't feel much more at ease than she was), so he turned off the TV and gave her space.

Her eyes were wet and she'd been silent for a long time, when she all of the sudden exploded.

“So now you live here. In mansion, in Canada, with your husband and dog and everyone applauds, yes? You get to be happy. You don't visit us. You forget where you came from. You

don't care if-" She spewed and then, almost shyly, with something like jealousy or maybe admiration in her voice, she tacked on "Is everything you ever wanted, yes?"

"Sashenka." He said, "You are young. Is good this way- ". He stopped. The words wouldn't come out right. Usually he shouldered through anyway, since he had to and it was okay if he ruffled a few feathers – it was, in fact, expected of him- but this felt important. He really, really, really wanted to get the words right. He needed Sashenka to understand. Irritated he switched to Russian, and it was as if the dam finally broke, "*You have your own mistakes to make. I've made mine. And I like them. Scratch that. They're not mistakes, more like decisions. It's not bad to make decisions. Even if not everybody approves. Even if they make things harder. Even if some of it might hurt.*"

She looked scared. Her eyes flickered over the living room, the shared space, where Ilya's stinky socks were scattered across and under the couch, where books in French and English and Russian stood stacked on the glass coffee table and on top of it all a book of "Advanced Hockey Strategy and Defensive Manoeuvres", spread with a cracked spine where Shane, because he did not really have hobbies plural as much as just one, singular big hobby that might as well be better described as a purpose, had left it a night ago. She glanced at the rows of pictures on the wall – all hung as straight and perfect as possible.

The wedding.

Anya's first day at home.

All the different cup wins.

Shane as a kid, gap-toothed and holding some Canadian kids' trophy that Ilya had never heard about but had been assured was very impressive.

The selfie from when they were presenting the award together.

Yuna, David, Rose, Svetlana. All teams they had ever been on.

A constellation of love and support and care and at the centre of it, naturally Shane and inconceivably, Ilya.

"*Is it worth it?*" she asked. For a second, she looked less tough, more her age. Closer to little, gap-toothed Shane than to Iliya at either their ages.

"*Those are mine.*" he said, as kind as he could and he really hoped that Sashenka could see beyond whatever Alexeia had told her to poison her against him, beyond the scary face and the many, many articles nicknaming him something crude like "Ilya the Destroyer" or "the Boston Warlord", or even, ridiculously, "The Red Menace". He really hoped she could see him for who he was. For whom he would like to be. *Dyadya* Ilya. Shane's husband. A living legend, if he may be so humble.

"*You have to make your own. I can't tell you if they will be worth it.*"

"*I know*", she replied tersely, "*But I'm asking about you. Was it worth it?*"

She was looking at him like his answer mattered a lot. Like it might change something for her.

She was looking like she might actually see him.

Not for the first time Ilya wondered what she had gotten kicked out for. He had his suspicions. There were not many sins that Alexei did not like to indulge in himself. There also was the way she hadn't even flinched when he called Shane his husband in front of her. The way she wasn't prettied up like most girls, but ratty and edgy like the bulked-up butches Ilya had seen on his few outings to actual gay clubs.

Maybe he'd take Sashenka someday. But for now, he had to answer her. Soothe the anger and sow some hope. Show her, that he saw her, too.

It hurt, of course. Russia was his home, in all but passport, Alexei had been his brother once, before the booze and their father's habit of pitting against each other and that one time where Ilya had slept with his girlfriend had turned them against each other. There was no more normalcy and there never again would be. But was it worth it?

"More than anything."

End Notes

Thanks for reading!

I'll most likely leave this one as a one-shot, since I have a bunch of long fics in a different fandom cooking right now, but I do kind of want to know how this would continue... 😊💕

so mayhaps I will someday add a second chapter

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!