

Us until You

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/78818736) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/78818736>.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Categories:	F/M , M/M , F/F
Fandom:	Heated Rivalry (TV)
Relationships:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov , Ilya Rozanov/Svetlana Vetrova , Ilya Rozanov & Svetlana Vetrova , Svetlana Vetrova/Original Female Character(s)
Additional Tags:	Implied/Referenced Underage Sex , Unhealthy Coping Mechanisms , Friends With Benefits Ilya Rozanov/Svetlana Vetrova , Character Study , Past Ilya Rozanov/Sasha , Ilya Rozanov's Coach's Son , Growing Up Together
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2026-02-03 Words: 10,422 Chapters: 1/1

Us until You

by [chaentics](#)

Summary

you, plural.

or: Svetlana has Ilya, and then she does not.

Notes

to kris, who shares my language, and thank you one-thousand to salad for your wonderful insight and edits.

inspired by [this tumblr post](#) by wtf-is-hockey.

this is very much in line with the show, not the books, for svetlana's backstory. i have also never been to boston, but i have internet access.

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

She's sitting across from Ilya at Mooncusser when he excuses himself and leaves his phone on the table, screen up. This is commonplace.

Jane

You're such a dick
See you in two days

In two days, Ilya is leaving Boston for Montreal. These messages, too, are frequent.

And Svetlana is neither an idiot nor close-minded. This is why, when Ilya returns some minutes later, eyes darting to the messages before turning his phone over, she tells him, "Ilya, I could care less who you are fucking," then, "Or who you're obsessing over, frankly. But I don't like secrets. Is she going to stay a secret?"

Ilya, her sweet man, has his hand over his phone. He looks at her as if she has asked him a much different question. She probably has, she realizes. She has jeopardized something sacred that can only stay that way because she isn't privy to it. It shifts ugly inside of her, nauseating.

"It's nothing," Ilya insists.

For a moment, they are in Moscow. Are twenty-somethings enjoying the summer before he is swept away to Boston again, eating a nice dinner before they will return to Svetlana's apartment, where they will indulge further. Will sleep side by side, performing routine, comfort. His t-shirt on her body, his arm over her waist. His steady breaths, the furrow in his brow from sleep. Yes, Ilya, I love you. I have loved you and I will love you, as you love me.

She thinks about romance movies and soulmates and a not-so-quiet married life where he is mostly gone, but mostly hers, too. As things have been. She thinks of how he mouths *my Sveta* into her pulse where it thrums at the base of her throat. Many times over she has thought: am I in love with you? And had no answer. She thinks Ilya could answer it if he were to ask himself that same question right now.

"You must be much better at sex these days if a Montreal girl is willing to fuck you, Boston's beloved Rozanov," Svetlana says, no bite. "She should thank me for the wisdom I've imparted on you. You can give her my number."

Ilya smiles. He looks tired. "I think you would like her too much."

"Oh?"

"Yes. But maybe in the future." Ilya reaches for his wine.

This is his way of telling her she will never see this woman in the flesh. There are no “future” women for Ilya Rozanov. They are transient. But these women are also not calling him a dick. Are not the ones saying, *see you in two days*. They send him text messages, city marked by parentheses to signal what stop Ilya must get off on to see them. She will ask about Emilié and three months after Ilya mentions her offhandedly he has forgotten her. Her profile raked from his Instagram following and her phone number similarly scrubbed. He does not keep trophies like little digits, notes on his phone. This is the easiest and worst part about him.

“If you say so.”

“How is the food?” Ilya asks, gesturing at the plates between them. It’s cod, her favorite. Lemon, butter, rosemary. A perfect portion for sharing.

“Delicious.”

“And the wine?”

She looks down at her glass, swirls it against the table, even though she has already picked the notes, and says, “Terrible,” if only to give him something to stew on. He rolls his eyes, takes another sip from his own glass, and slips his phone into his nice suit pocket. This finely groomed well-put together boy of hers no longer twisting his hands in her presence. How nice and comfortable he is. How much he loves her. How much he has clearly come to love someone else, more.

Svetlana expects heartbreak for herself. Ilya is like an organ to her. He sits right underneath her pulse.

“You remember Tatjana?” she asks. Tatjana is of a new generation of models, the type who pose prettily on Instagram and for magazines only when inquired, who don’t have agents but who move in Svetlana’s circles, anyway. And Ilya’s. Tatjana is particularly gorgeous; tall and slender with dark hair and darker eyes, always flushed a little red, a mole on her chin. “She is quite the good kisser.”

Ilya nods, as if he knows. They do this, occasionally—sharing. Svetlana cannot remember all the women she has taken from Ilya’s arms, the ones who seemed more interested in bodies than anything specific. Svetlana is beautiful, too. Sometimes beautiful wants beautiful, nothing else. Every now and then they are there at the same time. But usually it is weeks separate, months, years.

“How is Jane?” she asks. “Good?”

She cuts the cod in half for them, picks it apart with her knife and fork, that gorgeous piece of fish flaking at the simplest prods. Sauce spills everywhere. Svetlana eats and wipes the corner of her mouth with her napkin, as is appropriate. Her golden necklace clings tight to her neck, more a choker.

“No,” Ilya tells her, going in for a bite. “She is terrible at everything except her job.”

“How sexy,” Svetlana says. “Sometimes that *is* the appeal.”

“You’re right,” Ilya says, mid-slice, looking up from the plate. Then, “You cannot fuck her, Svetlana. Let’s enjoy dinner and have a good evening together, yes? No more discussing other people.”

“Okay,” she agrees. She focuses on the way the overhead light catches on the knife. “I think I’ll speak to them about the wine pairing.”

Dinner ends. He walks her out with her hand on his arm, fetches her coat for her, holds her stupid bag. Is perfectly gentlemanly in the way she has instructed him to be, at least in public. There are greater weights tied to them than the last name Rozanov; Svetlana is not just anyone’s daughter. No one bothers them, perhaps only because it is so late. Dark streets, even with the shop lights on. Would not be the first time someone papped a photo of them, dissecting their relationship, their ties to each other and to Moscow, asking: is Boston’s favorite goalscorer finally aiming for the net of married life? Or something similarly stupid. But it is on her mind, often. Maybe more often nowadays, with her parents in her ear.

Svetlana is only twenty-two. Ilya, too. What are they supposed to do with a family at this age? Ilya is barely home, and Svetlana is content with her nice penthouse and her steady job. Her father visits her often, and in the summers she returns to Moscow alongside Ilya and sees her mother. It is a straightforward, well-structured life. Enough to keep her content, and then some. There are handsome men who will call before she has to bother reaching out, and fun women who will dance with her at bars. Might follow her home, a gleam of intrigue in their eyes once she places her hand on their lower backs. Sometimes she wonders if any of them fuck her only to get in Rozanov’s circle, if they know her face from being seen next to his.

The sex is fine. Svetlana can’t remember when *great* sex turned into *fine* sex. In the technical sense, it is fantastic. Ilya is, after all, good with his hands in any sense that matters, and they have had lots of time to practice. He is also exceptionally nice to look at, and when he comes he shivers, holds her down against the bed, hips stuttering. His brow furrows, sweat caught on his cupid’s bow. She plays with his hair and he kisses her sternum, her collarbone, her throat, calls her, “My lovely Svetochka,” while grasping her breast. But he is not particularly passionate.

She wonders what kind of sex he is having with Jane. If, as he comes, he calls her something sweet. If Jane giggles into his shoulder, calls him an asshole, and riles a laughter out of him.

Every now and then, Svetlana and Ilya will pass the word *jealous* between them, to test it. See if it has any bite. Her answer is always: jealous of what? Who do they think taught you to fuck like that? You don’t even know their last names. And he will always say: Jealous of who? Men who can’t do more for you than make you come? Not even wealthy, just pretty faces. Don’t know shit about hockey, either. The short answer is no. The long answer is, there is no point.

So it is not heartbreak, no, when Ilya rests his head on Svetlana's chest as they lie in her bed. She pets his cheek. Windows open, airing out the cigarette smoke and damp scent of sex. Svetlana has shared Ilya for their entire lives. She does not need him all the time. With her thumb she pushes down on each mole on his back.

"You should sleep," she tells him. "If you play terribly, do not blame it on me."

He smiles and closes his eyes. Looks young, like the boy who came back from his first International Prospect Cup with a gold medal and kissed her on the cheek before he turned to anyone else.

"I never play terribly," he says.

"Yes, you do," she tells him. "But you are sharper against the Metros, so perhaps it will not go too badly."

Ilya stiffens. Exhales. She has worked his sore spot. His little Montreal girl must be needling him about the games, too. What kind of woman is she, fucking the enemy? Ilya is surely treating her well if she's shacking up with him on the regular.

Good. It's the least he can do, Svetlana thinks, if he is going to make her watch the Metros lose, first.

When Svetlana and Ilya are young, they have a lot of sex. A lot of very bad sex, at least to begin with. She is not his first girl, and that's fine. He's not her first, either. They are drunk and fifteen, giggling into each other, stumbling through Svetlana's grand, empty house. Her parents are out enjoying dinner, and Svetlana is learning the intricacies of Ilya's tongue.

As a girl, Svetlana is much more intrigued by the possibility of being Ilya's girlfriend. That thought dies some six weeks after their first time together, when she watches him wash up after by simply turning the bathroom faucet on and scrubbing down that way. Hand soap in his pits, one wet towel—a nice one, the ones she uses for her face—and then he's throwing his t-shirt back on. Going for a run. See you later, dinner? Stay the night?

So Svetlana does not want to be Ilya's girlfriend, but she is fine being his girl. She is fine pawning his number off when aspiring models and semi-talented singers and wealthy glamour girls come asking for it. It happens more often as they hit their teens: seventeen, eighteen. Ilya's body settles into itself, reflecting the man he might one day become. Once, they had soft flesh in the same spots. The inner thighs, the swell leading into the armpit, the very center of the waist. Now, Ilya is carved for hockey. He's wiry muscles, tall, with a face that should earn him magazine covers, all of that and the ego to match it. Always bruised-up, jittery. Like something's itching to get out. Or go *somewhere*.

She kind of wishes he'd grown up ugly.

She loves him and she misses him when he is gone. Her stays in Boston extend, because Moscow without Ilya is just that: Moscow without Ilya. Almost boring. Ilya doesn't use the word boring for Moscow, but he uses it for Montreal. Boring Montreal. Boring Canada.

They watch every game Montreal plays whenever she is at his house in Boston, and the look in his eyes is too close to that jitter for her not to notice. She says, "Hollander is playing well," and he distracts her with his mouth.

They go weeks without seeing each other, even when Svetlana is in Boston. To her, Boston is, after all, simply home away from home. She's not so sure Ilya has reached that point in his life, yet. And it is not that Boston does not love him—but that it does. He is always Rozanov there. He is never just Ilya, tucked away into her arms. He is never just eighteen, nineteen, twenty, twenty-one.

But Svetlana can go to a cafe and sit in peace and read her book and know that no one who wanders in there will recognize her. Nor do they care what she does, what she says. Perhaps a stranger will remember the bright red of her scarf as they pick through their memories of the day.

Ilya has been Rozanov from the moment he stepped off that plane.

And he needs her for this, she thinks. He grounds himself in her even though he does not know it. Seeks her out for sex, yes, because it is typically good sex and they already know each other well, are discreet about it. She won't hound him after. But every time, she has to be his Sveta. She has to be Svetlana from Moscow, has to be his tie back to Russia, the one thing. Outside of her body, Ilya demands a lot of her heart. And she is fine giving it to him.

Ilya doesn't have anyone else who understands why his shoulders tense up when his father calls him. Why he hates his brother; why he doesn't hate him. She's the only person in his life he cares about who was there when his mother killed herself, when, later on, they pretended she had not. The kind of things you do not bring up with teammates. Especially not if you are Ilya Rozanov, who is a wink and a mischievous smile away from pissing you off, even when he's in your room. He is so bare, all of the time. People just aren't looking.

Often, they talk about hockey. This is a common language that is easier than grief, which Svetlana has found is best handled wordlessly.

She has friends who are not Ilya. Svetlana is not so sure Ilya has many friends.

When she meets Mila and Nyusha for brunch, she sits comfortably among them. They huddle together over drinks with dried fruit toppings and sugared rims, speaking of new businesses, of where they might go for the weekend to get away from the weather and the traffic, of plans even further down the line. Are you returning to school, you think? Next semester? How

delightful. What about the coast, father owns a nice house there, we could sit by the lake and visit downtown. I can't deal with this cold anymore. I need sunshine! Are you going back to Moscow again this summer? Stay with us for a bit!

She meets Nyusha's boyfriend, is there when he becomes her fiancé. Celebrates Mila's graduation with her family. Get so drunk with them that they fall over mid-street in March and some strangers have to help pry them off the ground as they laugh, laugh, until their sides ache. They know nothing about hockey or Moscow. And Nyusha has never even set foot in Russia,, even though her family insist she should come along to visit. She says she has no interest.

They meet Ilya only once. Then, in a moment of selfishness, she folds them out of his reach. She likes her dinners with them alone. They don't forget his name, but they do not bring him up. If they do, they call him "Sveta's boy." Move on quickly to other, more pressing topics. She is usually Svetlana to them, in her entirety. But Ilya had called her Sveta.

Ilya asks her about her friends and she says they are sweet. One of them, married. The other pursuing other joys in life, like a sommelier certificate and a second bachelor's degree.

Mila sets her up with one of her friends, a clean-shaven guy who won't stop talking about moving to New York. He talks at her, then interrupts himself to make sure she understands he is already "essentially" part of New York, because he goes there for work, sometimes. Like at least six times a year, but he'll stay the weekend after the conferences. He makes sure to mention his favorite spots, and she's supposed to be impressed, she's sure.

She asks him about the New York Admirals, and he says he doesn't go to hockey very often. Does she like hockey? He believes Mila mentioned that she likes hockey.

Mila apologizes after. Svetlana says it's fine. At least he was nice to look at, even if nothing very interesting came out of his mouth. But this is the case with many men. Mila agrees with this, and does not make excuses for her own boyfriend, who is thinking about moving to New York, too, so he can pursue a career in "the creative field." Which field specifically seems to elude him.

Svetlana likes it best when they return to her penthouse together and watch a movie. They drink wine and sometimes they cook dinner, simple dishes that feel like an accomplishment all the same. When they fuck the leek quiche, the carbonara pasta, the dish-of-the-day up, they order pizza. She feels no need to check her phone until the morning after.

Ilya's messages will be there in the morning.

Ilya loves pretending he does not have a type. Svetlana is fine pretending she has not noticed when it changes. Montreal Jane is touching him even when it is not her hands on Ilya, it seems. He is seeking her out in the summers, in Moscow. Dark hair; dark eyes; birthmarks on the peaks of cheekbones; freckles (everywhere); tall, fit; athletes, often. Montreal Jane must be one for sports. Must love her hair kept short and neat, must enjoy pursuit rather than approach.

Ilya holds his phone in one hand and keeps the other on Svetlana's waist. When she slips away to order drinks, he does not follow her to the bar. She finds him nestled in a corner, the blue light of his screen washing his face out.

She puts her hand on his shoulder, hands him his vodka soda. "Now?"

Ilya turns his head to face her. His phone is in full view.

Jane

If you spent half the time you do
practicing as you do talking nonsense
maybe you could beat me for once

Ilya's reply reads:

do you have cup i do not know about? congratulations.

Then:

if i win first game against montreal, i want to tie your hands to my bed. watch you come
hands free.

Svetlana is not interested in knowing how Ilya is fucking his roster of women, what he does to them, what they ask of him.

Montreal Jane, however, is not a woman.

"Ilya," she says, mouth on his ear. Her hand slides from his shoulder to his chest, down to his stomach, back up to the base of his throat. He leans into her. "You don't have to be here if you don't want to be."

She pulls back enough for him to look her in the eye. He stares back at her, strokes her jaw and kisses the corner of her mouth before slipping his phone into his back pocket. For the rest of the light, he does not take it out. Is this victory? She hadn't asked him not to respond. Just reminded him of the fact that if he doesn't want to go and get drunk with her, dance with all the people who want him now more than ever, people adjacent to her, to what they have, he doesn't have to. He can go home alone and sleep in his luxury apartment.

It's only later that she realizes she has hurt him. She tests that word again: jealousy. Not quite right. Svetlana doesn't think she wants to be in Jane's position. The uncertainty of it is not what she is after. With how she and Ilya are now, this is the better phrase for it: they are certainty. And Jane is prying at the hinges of it. Perhaps she doesn't even know.

Is that possible? To live in ignorance of Svetlana while fucking Ilya Rozanov? Maybe it's more like deliberate avoidance.

She thinks that if Jane met her, they could be friends. If she liked Jane enough, she wouldn't fuck Ilya ever again. It wouldn't be the first time she had abstained from him in order to let him pursue something prickly. To break up the routine of things, she tells herself.

Svetlana imagines a world in which this is her last night with Ilya and she does not know it yet. That some years from now, she wakes up in Moscow, hungover and cold and opens the window even though the air is fresh, makes herself a cortado and puts on the morning news, and Ilya has not texted her yet. When not-real-Ilya texts her, he says: *sorry, not going to moscow this summer; we are visiting jane's family*, and the Svetlana of that reality does not heave with disappointment because it has happened before.

It sits sour in her, the idea of not knowing the blade until after the cut. A bit powerless. Blindsided. That's what she doesn't like about it, probably. Feeling out of the loop.

For someone who has moved through the years knowing everything about Ilya's life and keeping him out of so much of her own, she shouldn't gripe at the possibility he has made space for himself where she is not welcome. Or maybe she would be welcome, if she asked about it. The prideful part of her does not want to ask. It wants to be invited.

She wonders if Jane knows about her and Ilya.

Svetlana knows all of Ilya's women. He shows them to her on his phone: professional dressage rider—laughs at Svetlana's quirked brow, it's true!—and this one's a model, yes, yes, I know. A lawyer, no nonsense, which is nice. An up-and-coming singer who prefers places where they are seen together, annoying, not quite worth the sex. Svetlana lies on her stomach and listens to him talk about women like they are ideas. She doesn't love this part, but it is more tolerable only because she is not on the list, and because Ilya so willingly divulges details about them when asked.

Svetlana doesn't even know Jane's hair color.

When Svetlana is fifteen, one of Ilya's stupid hockey teammates tries to hit on her. Unfortunately for him, he does not know how to wash his hair, and so he stinks pretty badly, and he has terribly ugly knees that look even worse in shorts. She keeps thinking about his knees and his ankles because he is also an awful skater. His daddy has deep pockets, though.

He says, if Rozanov is fucking you, why can't I? And she says, you can have my number if you can figure out which side of the rink the goal's on next time. When he raises his hand, she slaps him.

The next day she attends Ilya's practice, and she makes sure to sit close enough to the ice to see the bruise.

"I'll fucking kill him," Ilya promises, and Svetlana says, "No need, he's not going to be on this team for very long."

She's right, of course. And she doesn't tell Ilya about the other boys. That she wears his jersey because, for a couple of hours a day, it acts like a shield against the rest of the world. In this little bubble, she is as much part of Ilya's team as anyone else is. She probably knows their plays better than they do, even if they will hear of it only through Ilya's comments the day after. She is aware he doesn't tell them *Svetlana says try this*, because using her name like that in the room is akin to lighting something on fire.

She still believes, for many years, that they are good at hockey together.

Realizes, later, he is also good at hockey on his own. Good enough to win at the International Prospect Cup; to be first draft; to win the Cup.

That hurts worse than anything else. She drinks over it only once, before deciding she should lay off on liquor. At least in private. To drink with friends is delightful. Is very fun and social of her, very attractive, even. To drink alone is a sad and scary thing. Is unregulated. She has better ways of dealing with herself, like buying new earrings and sitting on benches outside listening to strangers build lives together.

Mila talks about her life's purpose while they are walking. She says it casually, like she has thought about this so often it is no more remarkable to her than her grocery list. To read one thousand books, to start with, she says. I think it'll take me a long time, but that's the point I guess, to have something that demands I stick around. Beautiful Mila who talks of needing purpose in order to justify being around—what then, if there is nothing? Is joy enough? Is merely trudging along for flashes of happiness along the road a sort of purpose?

"Are you tired of them yet? The women," she asks, early on in Ilya's career. He has made Boston a home as much as he ever will, she thinks. Might begin to love it, even. "I haven't heard anything for a while."

She crosses her legs behind her. Ilya's shirt is on the floor, eyes on the ceiling. It is summer. He keeps his phone on him at all times, and she has stopped reading his text messages. Always Jane. These days, Ilya takes minutes to send a single text message back. He worries his lip with his teeth as he writes, backspaces, retypes, tries again. As if he has forgotten how to pursue someone he wants.

"Not possible," Ilya says, half-heartedly. "You know me."

I know you, Svetlana agrees. This is why I am asking.

"You are still seeing that Montreal girl?"

Ilya turns to her. "Seeing is a strong word for it. We are fucking."

"Okay," Svetlana says, rolling her eyes. "And so do we. You can be doing many things at once, can't you?"

"I don't really want to talk about Jane," Ilya tells her. His hand rubs his hipbone, pinky finger sliding beneath the hem of the waistband. "How is work?"

She folds her arms beneath her, wanting to say: I want to know about Jane. I want you to tell me about her so that I can picture her, this woman who has you worrying. Who stresses you out, who keeps you on your toes. I want her to be known to me so that when she is gone, I can remember who changed you. Is she for the list? Is she separate, like me? If so, are we different? How are we the same? Do you have a language for all your sadness, or have you not told her about it? Would she care?

Svetlana says, instead, "I might look for something different, but they quite like me there, and it is not terribly difficult. But it's not very exciting, either. I think I would do much better in a sales job than in these office positions, you understand? I want to see people."

"You're good with people." Ilya strokes her wrist, tangling their fingers together. He pulls her hand to his mouth to kiss it. "You will do great anywhere."

"I might stay in Boston more permanently," she adds. "Do summers in Moscow, like you, stay in Boston for the rest of the year. This back-and-forth is tiring."

"And you always miss me," Ilya says, grinning wide, boyish. He reaches out to grab her waist and she evades him, letting him laugh it out as they wrestle, him between her legs, his unchanging hold on her waist. "You cannot stay away from me!"

"You are so self-absorbed you'd hear the crown princess of Sweden was coming to Boston and believe she was there to see you," Svetlana tells him. "This is why women fuck you and then leave."

Ilya's mouth tightens into a thin line. "That's not true. I'm also great at dancing."

Svetlana rolls her eyes. "Did Jane tell you this? Did you go dancing? How cute."

“Again with Jane.” Ilya moves away. She reaches out for him, strokes his hip with her fingertips. “Jane would never go dancing with me. That’s not what we do.”

And Svetlana is kind enough to pretend she does not hear how his tone shifts. How his voice rasps at her name, around the J, like it shouldn’t be there. He sounds tired. Sounds sad.

“What *do* you do?”

She needs to leave it be, but she can’t stop prodding the bruise. Has not had an Ilya this somber in her grasp for so long and, she admits to herself, misses it. Ilya is her sore muscle. She kneads into it. Winces. They come out better on the other end. He is untangling himself.

“We fuck,” Ilya says, looking her dead in the eyes. “That’s all we do.”

She nudges him again. “Is it good?”

“Yes,” Ilya says. “It’s the best I’ve ever had. Is that what you want to hear? Better than anything I think I’ll ever have. It’s so stupid fucking good I feel crazy.”

He fumbles with his cigarette pack, rips it open, fumbles for his lighter, says, “I’m ending it.”

At fourteen, Ilya dislocates his shoulder and racks up his first concussion. Medical won’t let him play even after being discharged from the hospital. Needs time to heal, or he’ll just make things worse for himself. What do you want—pop some pills and be back in three weeks, only to fuck yourself over and be out for months? Or do you want to sit your ass down and let your body do its healing? For the first time in their lives, Svetlana asks him, “What will you do if you can’t play hockey?”

She hasn’t seen Ilya that terrified in a long time. But she thinks she understands: it’s not just hockey he’d be losing.

“Run away,” he tells her, and she believes him. “Would you come with me? Maybe we take the train across Europe. We can use fake names. I think it’d take a while for anyone to find us. I want to see Rome. Maybe Germany.”

She touches the indent on the side of her knee, legs pulled to her chest. They’re outside. It’s spring.

“You’ll recover,” she says. Eases his mind for him. “Doctor said it would be fine, no?”

They don’t talk about it again. Ilya heals, but he is not fine. She can tell that her question has burrowed into him: what if you could never play hockey again? What would you do? Who would you be, then?

Boyhood rendered him invincible, but Ilya is growing up. Has the scars for it, the seething, undeniable anger at the world, chokes it back with a vodka shot in her bedroom, kisses her after, like she's meant to help him chase it, make sense of it. She strokes his back and says, "I am thinking of staying in Boston more often. I miss America, sometimes."

He laughs at this, like the idea is inconceivable. But something shifts in him. She follows the knobs of his spine to his hair.

"What even is there in America?"

Sometimes, Svetlana imagines herself in Sasha's body.

They're watching Ilya's practice, which means only one thing: tonight, Ilya is Sasha's. There's no other reason Sasha would ever show his face at the rink, no matter how appreciatively he is studying the players on the ice. He leaves twice to smoke, sliding back into the plastic seat, his gangly legs folded up. He always ends up putting his feet on the backrest in front of him.

Ever since they turned sixteen, it is as if Sasha is growing twice as fast as anyone else. He is lanky and tall, skinny in a modelesque way: magazine-skinny, as Svetlana's mother says. Certainly pretty enough for a spread, maybe. Not the cover, though, because like Ilya he cannot seem to stop picking at his face. These days, he puts so much styling mousse in his hair it always looks wet. Svetlana finds it rather brave.

He told her he was gay when they were thirteen. Ilya wasn't with them that night, so Sasha laid on the floor of his bedroom, spread his arms out, and said, Sveta, do you think my father would hate me if I was a homosexual? And Sveta couldn't possibly answer, so she asked why it would matter, and that night she slept in his bed and held his hand. As though that would protect them from everything in the world.

When they are fifteen, Svetlana finds out that Ilya doesn't mind kissing boys. He doesn't mind fucking them, either. Her first thought is: did he not want to sleep with me all those times, then? And her second is: why Sasha?

He drops it like any other fact. I slept with Sasha. No, more than once. Yes, probably again. Then he kisses her thigh and Svetlana imagines herself as Sasha, wondering if one is better than the other. She wonders if Ilya touches Sasha's flat chest and sees himself in there, a little. A simpler body to deal with. Something closer to his own.

But Svetlana is closer to Ilya, she thinks. They gravitate around the same center of the universe.

Sasha couldn't care less about hockey. The moment he turned ten, he started throwing tantrums when his dad tried to bring him in for practice. Sasha had been good, but not so good that his dad didn't eventually give up.

He could've had that over her, too. Could've shared that language with Ilya. But boyhood weighs heavy on that scale, she thinks. What could bring two people closer together than knowing what the world expects from and bestows upon one another? Ilya will never know what it is like to be a woman, but he could probably imagine what it would be like to be Sasha, if only in body. Must make the sex much better, Svetlana thinks, more to hurt herself than anything else. She buries that guilty thought.

She has lost nothing, she knows this. Ilya doesn't exist in a finite amount. She has never been bothered that he sleeps with other girls, because it will not undo everything they share.

But maybe lying next to Sasha is easier, as if it comes with less expectations. At that moment, Svetlana's body is burdensome.

"Don't do anything too stupid," is what she tells him. "Now tell me, is being a sloppy skater a new bit you're trying? Because today was embarrassing."

And Ilya grabs her ankle, reaching for her foot to tickle her, and asks which one of them is out there on the ice every day of the week. She yelps into laughter. It's a simpler answer.

Svetlana quite likes Shane Hollander. She likes him in the sense she does every other exceptional hockey player: pure appreciation for his craftsmanship, so to speak. And his nice ass, and his pretty face, too. She brings it up with Ilya before one of his games against Montreal, and he promises her that Boston will win that night, and to not worry about Hollander or whoever the fuck else she is eyeing.

She doesn't think it's because he is worried she's going to go fuck Hollander, or something.

Jane texts him as they're sitting on the couch:

key under doormat. will not be able to get there first since we're winning.

Ilya tells her:

very funny. i will meet you outside after celebration drinks with my team. get yourself ready for me.

So no, Svetlana is not going to fuck Shane Hollander.

She goes to Sam Adams to watch the Raiders lose over beers. Then she wanders until she finds a decent looking bar with cocktails that don't taste like shit, and she hangs out at the bar

in her Raiders jersey and her black dress until a woman approaches her. She is Svetlana's type: strong features, deer-like, startled eyes, but built out, nice muscles and long hair. She's got brown curls that fall over her shoulder, and when Svetlana tucks her hair behind her ears, the woman reddens. Asks her if she's also a Raiders fan, as if the jersey didn't give it away. Svetlana almost says, yes, I used to fuck their captain, which is what I think you're asking me, and instead she leans in and tells this woman, "Do you want to lick our wounds after the loss?" And this woman, Hallie, she thinks, stumbles over herself in her eagerness.

Svetlana likes that, too. She misses the eagerness, the wanting-her. They wander arm-in-arm until she can hail them a cab. In the elevator up to Svetlana's penthouse, Hallie musters enough courage to kiss her. It is not her first time kissing a woman, Svetlana guesses, because once inside the bedroom her hands are eager and steady. She eats Svetlana out like she's been dying to do so, and Svetlana is only too happy to return the favor.

"I don't usually do one night stands," Hallie starts, eyes wide and wet at the corners. She is very sweet in that sense. Clearly experienced, but not enough to have confidence. How many women, before Svetlana? "Or have a lot of sex, honestly. I don't think I'll blow your mind or anything."

"That's okay," Svetlana tells her. She pets Hallie's cheek, squeezes her shoulder. "We're just having fun. You don't have to impress me. I'm not your boss."

I'm not even your friend.

Hallie laughs. "I'd be in big trouble if you were. But maybe I'd like coming in to work more."

"Yes, and I'm going to assume you don't like trouble," Svetlana agrees, smiling thinly.

Hallie is mouthing at her jaw, stroking her waist. She keeps stroking Svetlana's thighs, putting her legs around her waist, covering Svetlana's body with her own. The weight of her is nice, their tits pushed together, making Svetlana's nipples harden.

"I'm just trying to make it to the end of the week," Hallie says. "And sometimes I get a push like this to remind me of the extra good things in life."

She calls Svetlana beautiful, and it is charming; enough so that Svetlana will not mind being Hallie's *extra good thing in life*. Hallie kisses her throat, the bend of her arm, her knuckles. Svetlana finds her hair easy to grip. Ilya's short hockey cut made things difficult recently.

They manage another orgasm after, tit-for-tat, in a sense, and Svetlana spends an hour just kissing her, rubbing her muscular stomach and squeezing her waist, getting her fill. Hallie has calloused fingers. She used to do mixed martial arts, she says. Now it's woodworking. There are scars on her hands that Svetlana drags the sharp tip of her fingernail over. Svetlana makes sure to compliment her, kissing each of her fingertips before nudging Hallie's hand between her lips, asking if she can show again just how well that hand can do. Allows herself the indulgence.

She is never really in a rush to urge her lovers out of her home. Especially not the women, especially not at this hour. Hallie accepts the tea and they sit on Svetlana's couch, Hallie's back to her chest, and watch some movie Svetlana remembers nothing of come the next day. She gives Hallie her number, says she is welcome to call any time, and kisses her goodbye.

It is easier to be with women in Boston. This is one of the advantages. Not that she ever pictured herself settling down with a woman. They were something, at first, that she and Ilya shared, as they shared everything else: friends, money, alcohol, youth. Hockey.

She could bring Ilya Rozanov to her parents. He would be acceptable. Even though one time Svetlana's mother had, to her face, called him a manwhore. He has a good enough name, and he is wealthy. It would make sense to them. Their summers in Moscow would continue, even though Ilya drags his feet now. They fly home in the summer and he looks West. No way to live, like a dog. Waiting, waiting. Sitting at Jane's doorstep.

Bark, Ilya. And he does.

He's not ending anything—but she's not so sure he's realized yet.

So she will never marry Ilya, but she did imagine it, she did. Even after she grew out of her childhood affections and they built something more robust. A kind of bond meant to last the ages, through other people's bodies and other people's persistence. Flings. The roster. Distance; Moscow, Boston. They wouldn't have a white picket fence. She doesn't want that, either. But there would be children, she thinks. Ilya would want a family, and she would be happy to give him one.

He is already settled into America, he plays for the MLH, is wealthy and admired. And they'd be married.

They could stay in Boston, because he plays well there and loyalty matters. The city loves him, as they should, and Svetlana really does not mind it as much as she had at first. There are airplanes. She can go anywhere she wants, any time. So in Boston they'd stay, unless bigger opportunities spoke elsewhere. Because she understands, if married, that they would go where Ilya's contract demands.

As teenagers, marriage was only discussed casually. Like something that would likely happen, but too far into the future to consider concretely. Ilya was a boy through and through, as his father had made sure of, so he likely didn't care, she thought, about the intricacies of what the wedding would look like.

That was fine even back then, because he shared Svetlana's other interests: hockey, power.

But Svetlana has a mother who cares for these things, and Svetlana has watched her flit between fashion and the arts her entire life, and so she *has* thought about her wedding dress before: ivory, lace, mermaid. Emerald cut stones have grown on her, but her mother's diamond was marquise cut, and she's always adored that one, too. Ilya's taste in women's jewelry is not horrendous, mostly thanks to her, but she would be there when they shop for rings. He would keep his hand on her lower back, listening while she speaks to the salesperson. It would be a private viewing. They would laugh and drink champagne.

She would have her mother fly in from Moscow to attend the dress fittings, of course, and she would tune out all of her comments because her being there matters more than her thoughts on Svetlana's figure. Mila and Nyusha would be her only bridesmaids. In her imagination, they scream when she tells them, and then scold her for letting them think there was nothing between her and Ilya for all these years.

And she would say, there wasn't until there was, knowing that she and Ilya were not in love, but that they loved each other nonetheless. That the line has been so indistinguishable for so long that it has started not to matter to her whether they will cross it. They can perform all things expected of a traditional wedding. If she asked, he would not see anyone else. If she let him, he might not, anyways.

She gets very drunk in LA. She fucks some up-and-coming actor who has brown curly hair and says he did sports as a kid. Soccer, at his insistence, when she says football. So his thighs and quads are still nice and thick, because, he tells her, he's been keeping up with the gym. She draws a line down the groove of his muscles, over the small, silvery scars from eating shit on turf.

They hook up a few more times. She even goes to one of his games, which she finds fairly boring only because the players are much more careful about space than they would be in hockey. And she can only watch a grown man throw himself on the ground and wail, clutching his knee, so many times in one afternoon before she needs a smoke. Okay, so maybe she's not cut out to be a soccer girl.

She stays in LA for a few weeks, late spring. Typically she wouldn't mind the sunshine, but somehow it is as grating as the people that year. At least the people are simpler to deal with. They are hot, available, and certainly willing to reciprocate when she offers up—and easier to escape from when she's had enough. Ilya asks when she's returning to Boston. She says, I'm not quite sure, books the flight ticket because she misses the architecture, or something.

She lets Ilya know she's back only a week after returning. He is already on the road again.

“He didn’t want to fuck me,” Sasha says, touching the side of his nose.

Svetlana finds him outside the bathroom, blinking rapidly. He’s always had dry eyes. Svetlana used to be jealous of how easily he could make himself cry on purpose. Sasha fixes the cuffs of his shirt. His collar is still wrinkled, and Svetlana reaches out to adjust it for him. After, she puts her hand against his cheek.

Sasha narrows his eyes at her for a moment, then presses his tongue against the corner of his mouth. “Is he fucking *you*?”

Hasn’t for months, she wants to say, but for a moment she has something over him. How would Sasha feel if he thought Ilya simply didn’t find Sasha all that attractive anymore? Too complicated?

“No,” Svetlana says, and nothing else.

Sasha nods, sniffing again, and turns his eyes to the ceiling. When he finally looks at her again, he asks, “Are you as stiff as Ilya these days, or do you still know how to enjoy yourself? You both need to get out of that place. Europe would do you good.”

“Boston is not too bad,” Svetlana says. “Is Paris not lonely?”

“Lonely? I have never known so many people in my life,” Sasha says, a little incredulous. “I’m never leaving.”

She strokes her thumb right below his eye. “And what do they know about you?”

Because at least in Boston there is one person who will call her Svetochka, even if he’s not warming her bed.

Sasha stares right back at her. Sniffs. “I feel terrible for you both, to live like this before you’re even twenty-three. All the life sucked out of you already.”

She lowers her hand to his shoulder and tells him, “I think you would look very good in Boston colors. Black always made you look so gaunt. Very Paris chic.” She kisses his cheek.

“Ilya must be so excited to finally be able to fuck women who don’t sound like his hockey coach,” Sasha says in turn, roping his arm around her waist.

She pinches the soft skin on the inside of his arm so hard he squeals, and then he smiles at her.

“You are such a bitch,” he tells her. “I can’t believe he is letting you out of his grasp.”

She rolls her eyes. “He has a girl in Montreal.”

“He has girls everywhere.”

“Yes,” she agrees. “But no one stays.”

“Well, it wouldn’t be the first time he had a favorite,” Sasha says. “I need another drink. And maybe another line.”

And he is right, it would not be the first time Ilya has had a favorite.

But usually it was her.

Nyusha’s family is Russian, but she speaks none and understands only half, and often they speak English in Mila’s company, anyway. Unlike Svetlana, Nyusha is not a dual citizen. It is a hassle to travel back and forth, but should Svetlana ask her, she is sure that both of them would fly to Moscow to spend a few weeks enjoying June away from the routine of Boston.

She goes to Brookline, alone. To Washington Square. Her favorite restaurant closes its doors and she mourns it for months. Svetlana makes up things she needs to buy at the deli if only to hear someone speak Russian around the corner of a shelf. She dresses up like she has urgent errands and acquires a cheap, black coffee and wanders around, alone. When Ilya sees her, they are at high-end restaurants, luxury stores.

He talks about becoming an American citizen. Svetlana hears: I am done with Russia, even though that is not what he says. There are many important things in Moscow Ilya cannot leave behind.

“You would retire in Boston?” she asks, and Ilya pauses, as if he has never considered retirement at all.

“I would not go back home,” he tells her, says *home* like a splinter under his fingernail. “Visit, maybe. But what is there left for me in Moscow?”

She nods.

In Moscow, they used to lie on the grass, feet touching. Svetlana’s sunglasses would slide down her nose from her sweat, and she would do her best to keep her hair out of her face, to no avail. Ilya tanned, sometimes, and when he’d undress later she would poke at his neck where he always forgot sunscreen. They would sneak out at night, more so for the thrill of it than because they had anywhere in particular to go. Get really drunk while sitting on a street corner if they couldn’t be bothered to find a city party. One night he carried her home on his back, and they made such a ruckus opening the front door that Svetlana wasn’t allowed to see Ilya for a week, and she threw the first fit of her life. This is no way for a lady to act, Svetlana. She hears her mother’s voice in her ear sometimes when she drinks.

It’s the same voice that said no to her playing hockey. Svetlana doesn’t think her father would have been so opposed, but there was a reluctance in him, anyway. A rigidity. Maybe this is

why he is more interested in the prospect of having Ilya as a son-in-law than his wife is; there will be a boy in his family who plays hockey. *Excellent* hockey. Even if the is hockey in America.

Even though it was Svetlana who would sit with Ilya after practice, long past the hours his coach kept him, and told him everything he had done wrong that day. She would scour old forums and videos and photos and she would learn that language when Ilya did not, and she would foist it upon him until he learned how to speak it through his body. Until he was better than all the other boys his age. And kept getting better.

She didn't think he had anyone who spoke to him that way.

2009, Team Russia loses to Team Canada, and Svetlana is proven wrong for the first time in years.

"If only he wasn't so..." Svetlana's mother says one time over drinks. Perhaps remembering the last time she called Ilya a manwhore, and subsequently ended their dinner early.

It is so dark out that lights outside could be stars.

Svetlana's mother is a wonder, to use her father's words; she is tall and lithe and dark skinned, always pristine, always done up. Svetlana has never seen her wear anything more casual than designer jeans and blouses. Her mother wouldn't be caught dead in sweatpants. One time, she had thrown out Svetlana's hockey branded t-shirts with the excuse they were dirty. Svetlana had bought five more.

"If he wasn't so *promiscuous*, he would make an excellent husband," her mother continues. "But it is not enough to sleep with every woman in Moscow! He must fuck them overseas, too! He is lucky he is so talented and has a good name to him, or else who knows what would become of him. All we can hope is that he takes after his father more than he does his mother. This is why I worry for you. There is no reason to stick to this one man for the rest of your life simply because you have known him for many years. You tell me and I will help. I cannot imagine he would keep clean even while married to you, though I'm sure he understands your father would kill him if he did anything else, so perhaps..."

"Ilya is doing very well in America," Svetlana says, wondering if they would add another shot of liquor to her cocktail if she were to bring it back to the bar and claim it wasn't strong enough. "He is a good man."

She doesn't really want to talk about Ilya, anymore. She wants to tell her mother about her upcoming promotion, the sleek, new Porsche which she has managed to get one of her primary clients to sign on for, and what that means for her upcoming check. So that her mother knows she is making money without her father's involvement, which is nice.

She wants her mother to know that she runs every morning. That she can cook her own food, even if she has not quite managed any advanced dishes, but enough to please her own tastes and the occasional partner. Look at me, mom. I'm grown, and I'm being grown away from you. Away from dad.

All the way on the other side of the world, I am managing to remain a person, all on my own. An adult. I have separated myself from you, but I love you. I will be here for you when you call for me and listen to you.

"I am sure he is," Svetlana's mother says, her lips puckered. She does not hate Ilya, Svetlana knows this, but she loves Svetlana more. "Grigori still cannot believe he left for America. That boy has wounded him deeply. These are things you cannot undo, Sveta. You understand this, I know, but Ilya has no sense for family matters like this, we have come to understand. He is fortunate to have you."

Svetlana excuses herself and takes her drink with her. She asks nicely for something stronger, and the bartender is only too happy to oblige. She offers him a smile.

"Shall we toast to your new gallery opening?" she asks her mother, who is only too eager to discuss it.

The evening mulls on. Svetlana makes a promise to visit the new art installation—someone her mother has put her eye on recently, as she often does with talented painters—tomorrow, after lunch. Her mother introduces her to a young man who is very eager and somehow manages to make her feel old in the face of his enthusiasm. He wears a crisp, salmon-pink dress shirt and a leather jacket. He talks with his hands. Maybe spent a summer abroad somewhere and brought back with him a whole lot of qualities to set him aside from all the other men in Moscow.

But he's a Moscow man, and Svetlana is returning to Boston soon.

Shane Hollander starts dating Rose Landry. Svetlana and Ilya go out for dinner.

He does not touch his phone. He is crawling out of his skin.

And she doesn't comfort him, thinks, is this my job? Is it my job to comfort you through this, Ilya, like I held you when we were much younger? She touches her pointed shoe to his ankle to stop his heel from bouncing off the floor taptaptaptaptap. They each have their own plate. The wine is delicious. Svetlana wishes she was horrendously drunk and at home and not with this version of Ilya who is intent on being hers without being here.

But she holds his hand when they walk home, and she tells him, "I'm going nowhere," even though, at that moment.

“What’s this about?” he asks, even though his jaw is set so tense he might as well pop those fake teeth out. He’s going to ruin them.

“You play stupid all you want,” she says. “I’m just telling you. I am going nowhere.”

Ilya Rozanov is a coward. He doesn’t even look her in the eyes when he says, “I hate it when you talk around things. Just give it to me.”

Svetlana tells him, “I’m going home. I don’t deal with children, not even you. Call me when you’ve calmed down.”

She goes home alone and calls Hallie, who is available and kisses her neck but doesn’t seem too disappointed when Svetlana doesn’t take her to the bedroom. They sit half-naked on the sofa and watch TV, and Svetlana does her laundry, moving about her apartment slowly, stroking Hallie’s hair each time she passes. Hallie’s legs dangle off the edge of the couch. Not pushy enough with her, Svetlana thinks. But she is a pleasant distraction. The moment the word distraction rings, she realizes she has to see Hallie out, and she must delete her number.

Did all other people become distractions, Svetlana wonders, when Ilya started fucking Shane Hollander?

She considers telling him that she has him figured out. But Ilya is not the type of person where that would ease his mind. He would not seek her out to air his grievances. He would feel like a trapped animal, and he would never speak of Hollander ever again. Does he know that he’s in love?

The answer takes some time. Takes until grief is back, again. This time it is less wordless and more angry, and Svetlana doesn’t speak Ilya’s language when he raises his fist to Alexei’s face. She remembers that angry boy from their youth, in the years after Irina’s passing. The only years it ever spilled out of the rink.

“I hope Jane knows how lucky he is,” Svetlana tells him, and she can’t take it back. She strokes Ilya’s chest, over the gold cross.

But before that, when Jane is not Hollander, when she is not even a face in the books, only a *you’re a dick* text message interrupting their evening out, Svetlana says to Ilya:

“I’m thinking about marriage.”

He runs his hands over his thighs, straightening his posture. The furrow of his brow there even as he tries to relax himself into nonchalance. He is handsome, tonight. More so than usual. Hair short-cropped, slicked back, a singular curl astray on his forehead. Fresh in from Montreal, she expects the Ilya who is still nursing his ego after a loss. Hollander had swiped the puck right from him and scored. She'd watched from Ilya's couch. Caught his smile, thought no more of it that evening.

"Already?" Ilya asks, which is neither the answer she expected nor wants, but is not unsurprising.

"My *mother* is thinking, more so," she clarifies, and Ilya says, "Ah."

Svetlana folds her arms on the table, elbows off the edge. "Are you enjoying the bachelor life?"

"Everything I have ever dreamed of. But I will take another cup, I think." Ilya grins, shrugging. "No lovers worth keeping around for you? Do they not know how to appreciate my lovely Sveta? I will deal with them if you let me."

"Nothing particularly exciting," Svetlana admits. No excitement, or anything that comes close to this simplicity. "Perhaps I will get my real estate license and move to New York."

"You would never do that—the Admirals? You would leave me?"

"You can complain about this when you beat Montreal again. I can only take so much."

They laugh; she loves him. Ilya's phone buzzes. He is so quick with it; she watches him catch himself in the act, pausing with the messages already pulled open.

It is not easy to watch him go, but she has never dealt in easy. And if she must pretend that he is not one foot out the door for his own sake, she will do so. He can walk this little bit alone. The central pull between them shifts, tugs off-balance. Away from Moscow. Away from Boston.

Ilya walks her to her car, holds her door for her, kisses her goodbye on the cheek, and tells her that he loves her before closing the door. When she pulls out of the valet parking, she catches him in the rearview mirror, phone pressed to his ear. It is not a vision of her future because they have already arrived here.

She sinks back against the leather seat. Ilya's cologne on her collar.

Svetlana rolls the window down enough for fresh air.

When Svetlana and Ilya are young, they have a lot of bad sex. They kiss with tongue and Svetlana has to force Ilya to pull back because he is a bit too sloppy and eager. He puffs himself up like a showboat, as if the sex is about looking hot to an imagined audience, and not about feeling good with each other. He offers her his body, currency between her hands. They say I love you because this is the most direct equivalency. The one that makes most sense for the people around them, and for two teenagers with little to no other means of describing themselves, it will do. If someone assumes they are a couple, Svetlana doesn't bother clearing up the facts. They laugh about it later.

The All Stars game is in Florida that year. Ilya would never miss an opportunity to be in the same room as Shane Hollander.

The most direct equivalency, she thinks again.

Ilya, missed call (3).

So he knows.

That he's in love, that is. But, Ottawa—really?

Maybe *home* comes out a little softer when he is thinking of Ottawa, somehow. Thinking of Shane Hollander.

She scrunches her nose, pours a glass of wine, texts a friend, several of them, to make busy plans. Drinks out, a play, the MFA. Dinner party, tell me about your life. What are you doing next? Oh, wonderful, congratulations. Calls her father and mother to listen to them complain about the state of the world, watches hockey at a bar without a jersey, walks home alone.

And then, only when she is certain that this feeling is not betrayal, she calls Ilya back.

End Notes

this is my pitch for more svetlana screen time in season two.

i am [on twitter](#) and [on tumblr](#).

thanks to everyone who has read this! i like hearing your thoughts about svetlana!! whether for this little piece or from the tv show itself. personally, while i don't think show svetlana is in love with ilya, i find there's a fun wedge of possibility for possessiveness there to explore. or if she was, then that ended some time ago. not sure there will be a part two to this, but who knows with me.

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