

Doing The Work

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/77024651) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/77024651>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	Gen
Fandoms:	Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid , Heated Rivalry (TV)
Characters:	Ilya Rozanov , Original Characters
Additional Tags:	Social Networking , allyship , Behind the Scenes , gapfiller , idk all my fic ideas are not sexy , Homophobic Language
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of Doing The Work
Stats:	Published: 2026-01-03 Words: 3,480 Chapters: 1/1

Doing The Work

by [bomberqueen17](#)

Summary

I couldn't stop thinking about the stuff that's offscreen or off the page, so here is an unsexy vignette about Ilya Rozanov's rookie season and some people doing some work on themselves.

also yeah i know enough about hockey to know there's no way a teenaged rookie from a foreign country would have been left to get his own apartment in his first season. no way, he was in somebody's house.
so this is whose house he was in, and what he did there.

Notes

yeah yeah yeah yeah the gay hockey show psychosis comes for us all sooner or later. weirdly i was pre-prepared for this by having had a half-asian* college roommate who was soooo obsessed with the colorado avalanche and patrick roy's weird situationship with alex tanguay in their cup run of 2001 that he used to dance around the house in his underwear chanting "hockeyyyyyy hockeyyyyyyy hockeyyyyyy" and then info-dumping about offsides and icing to me so i already know how hockey works even without ever having dipped my toes into the RPF scene. also when the buffalo beauts existed i used to go to their games. support women's hockey it's mega gay and there's no checking so there's less cte and they actually have to know how to skate good. ~~except they keep dissolving and reforming the leagues and i can't fucking keep track so i don't even know the team names anymore~~

(*his race was fairly immaterial at the time, at least in that context, but yeah he did kind of look like hudson williams if hudson williams were smaller and much weirder, which i know is a big ask but listen he was real weird, i say affectionately, and it's just a strange coincidence given the overall composition of the hockey world)

This is a strange unbeta'd little thing and I'm just trying to get out of the psychosis alive, lol. i don't want to admit how many tabs there are of unpublishable weirdness in my "gay_hockey_shit" doc. I promise I'll get back to my other ongoing projects, I promise. but in the meantime. if you're in here too, let's hold hands. the world is so dark and so cold but at least pretty boys can kiss on television. thank you canadian taxpayers!!!! *sobbing* <3

Maria Jackson had been a hockey wife for fifteen years, and she had mostly figured out the rhythm of it. It helped a lot that her husband Victor had been playing for Boston for ten years now, and she no longer dreaded him being traded. Her kids had settled in here, and she mostly didn't mind it, though she missed her family and wished they could have stayed in California.

The last few seasons, she'd spiced things up a little by taking in rookies. She'd been glad to do it, now that the kids weren't little and she wasn't driven to exhaustion just keeping them alive and the household running. The Jackson household had hosted a handful of young men for several months apiece, helping them adjust to life in the major leagues. Two hadn't lasted with the team, but one had, and his family was friends with the Jacksons now. It had generally been a rewarding experience.

So she had some hopes for this year's rookie. But this one had been a media sensation, and he was foreign. She'd seen him in photographs and on television, but when Ilya Rozanov showed up on her doorstep with a duffel bag and a bouquet of flowers, she was both charmed and surprised.

He was tidier than many boys his age would be, and while he seemed very outgoing, it did not take her long to learn that he was in truth quite reserved. She tried to ask him about his personal life and while he answered politely and seemed very open, he actually told her nothing of any substance.

Some of it was the language barrier, surely. His English was heavily-accented and a little slow, and he often hesitated a beat too long in conversation before answering with something that didn't quite follow. She didn't know anything about Russia, but she wanted to be hospitable. She asked him what he liked to eat, and he told her he liked anything, he wasn't fussy. But she could see that sometimes he had to nerve himself up to take a bite of whatever it was she'd prepared, and there were some dishes he obviously was completely unfamiliar with. It was hard to tell what he liked and did not. He was, despite putting on an elaborate show most of the time of easygoing nonchalance, on-edge and uneasy in her house.

He was always friendly, and was really great with the kids-- Addison was seven and adored him and he would endlessly listen to her talking, would play dolls with her, struggling over the little velcro closures on the dresses but doing his best. Maria caught Victor looking faintly disapproving, and snapped at him through clenched teeth not to *dare* mock Ilya for this, he was being nice. Samatha was ten, and Ilya endeared himself to Maria enormously by taking on some of the duties of picking her up and dropping her off at horseback riding practices, once he'd proven that he was a reasonably sensible driver in the not very sensible first car he bought. But Josh-- Josh was fourteen and not very athletic and had never wanted to practice hockey with his dad, but with Ilya he would kick a soccer ball and run around. He liked Ilya so much. Too much, maybe; Maria caught a slightly uncomfortable edge to his admiration of the older boy, and thought that perhaps she was going to have to adjust her expectations of her son. (To be fair, she'd been continuously adjusting them since his birth.)

Ilya, to his credit, seemed to know exactly how to handle such things, and was very tactful and gracious about paying enough attention, but not too much attention. It was part of how

hard he was to really know, she thought.

Victor would lose his shit if he ever noticed, but Maria felt like there were a lot of things Victor might lose his shit about at any time. She had been preparing herself for a long time, making sure she had her exits. She was fond of him, but the glamor of being a hockey star's wife was long behind her, and the love was less ardent than in her younger days. She'd had to manage a long hard road, and had needed to devote a lot of her life to making space for Victor's needs, without a lot of reciprocation. If he lost his mind at Josh over what their sweet boy was turning out to be, well then, Maria was ready to get out of there and leave him the bill. She very quietly had her own lawyer and everything.

She was hoping not to. Victor might be all right. And she was, even now, still really fond of the guy. But she didn't even know how to broach the topic. And of late, the hazing game they were playing where they debated whether various of Ilya's mannerisms were "Gay, or European?" wasn't filling her with much hope.

But Josh kept growing, and filled out a little, and didn't do anything silly, and got reasonably good at soccer and kept his grades up, and Samantha became the coolest girl at the barn because of the sports car she sometimes arrived in, and Ilya got better at putting the dresses on Barbies, to Addison's delight.

His English improved. He wasn't around enough to do Addison's homework with her-- at her age, it took such a short time-- but he would sometimes have her read aloud to him, and then he would make her laugh by reading aloud to her and having more trouble with it than she did, asking her to help him puzzle out long words. And he had an app on his phone. Maria walked in on him once in the laundry room, sorting the laundry and painstakingly repeating English phrases back to the app. He'd seemed embarrassed, and she'd never caught him at it again.

She watched the games sometimes. She'd attended faithfully in the early years, less so lately. She watched some, and Victor was playing all right, getting his ice time to justify his pay. Ilya played brilliantly, but the shock to her was that he was an asshole on the ice. He showboated, celebrated, gloated, hooked and slashed, tripped, shoved, trash-talked-- all things she'd never seen a single sign of in her home. He'd never even sworn in front of her.

Which one was the act? The polite young man, or the complete asshole? Hard to say. But whatever the truth was, he was doing the work. He was always doing the work. It looked effortless, what he did in games, but she knew enough to know that he was doing the work.

The only time she got him to talk about his family was once when Victor dragged him home from an away game mildly injured *and* with a nasty cold, and he was a pathetic hunched dripping pile on her couch with an ice pack on one leg and a heating pad on his chest. She begged him to at least tell her what comfort food his mother would make him when he was sick, and he'd gone weirdly quiet. "Come on," she said. "Could we call your mom? You could translate for me. She'd know what to do for you."

"We cannot call my mom," he said thickly.

"Russia isn't that far away," she said.

“My mom is not in Russia,” he said, with a strange bitter little laugh. “Unless-- I do not know. Is unknowable mystery how that works.”

“What does that mean?” she asked.

“She is dead, Masha,” he said. (It had taken her some time to get him to call her by her first name, but from there he had explained how Russian names worked. It was like hockey, where nobody was ever called by their formal name. She felt extremely honored that he would use an affectionate name for her, when everywhere else in his life he seemed to have stripped away a lot of the Russianness to fit in.)

“Oh,” she said, horrified. “Oh *Ilya*. I’m so sorry.”

“Was long time ago,” he said dismissively, but he looked gutted. He was so young, it couldn’t have been that long ago.

Maria sat down on the couch next to him, defeated. “Well, I’m sorry I made it worse,” she said. She reached out and took his hand.

“No, don’t touch me,” he said, “you’ll get sick too.” But he didn’t pull his hand away.

“Could we call your dad?” she asked.

Ilya barked out another laugh. “He will call me lazy and tell me to get over it,” he said. He sighed. “Maybe he will be right,” and gathered himself to get up.

“No,” Maria said, “sit there,” and she could not resist putting out a hand and stroking the boy’s tousled curls, dark gold and angelic. He had an angel’s face with a wicked cast, that was the best way to describe him, with wide-set eyes and a Cupid’s-bow mouth that she rather thought pouted whether he intended to or not. She could not entirely blame Josh for being a little infatuated. “What about tea? Green tea, with honey? Black tea, with lemon? Lemon juice with cayenne? I think my mother used to do something heinous with vinegar, but I never did that one for my kids, I hated it.”

“Oh. It is tea with malina...” He paused, frowning, then pulled out his phone and typed into it. “Rasp, how do you say this, a p and b together? That is insane. This language is stupid. Rasp berry. That can’t be right. It’s *malina*, that word is sensible. Rasp. Berry.”

“Raspberry,” Maria said.

“Preserves,” Ilya said. He squinted. “I am sure they are not the same here, I have not seen this kind of thing here.”

“I don’t know if I have any,” Maria said. “I think I have strawberry jam. You put it in tea?”

“The...” Ilya gathered himself. “Rasp berry preserves are a special kind you get from grandmothers.” He laughed, and looked up at her, then had to stop and cough into his elbow. “My father’s father believed you should gargle with. Ah.” He tapped at his phone again, finding out the word. “Kerosene.”

“That can’t be right,” Maria said, and Ilya showed her the translation app, highlighting the words. Sure enough, it said kerosene. “Like fuel oil?” She was horrified.

“You use the pure stuff, like for lamps,” Ilya said. “And I think mix with water. But I never tried it.”

“I think that would kill you,” Maria said dubiously.

He laughed, and coughed, again covering it considerably. “I will not try,” he said. “I am not so desperate.”

“We have Sudafed,” Maria said.

“I think this one has drugs in it that we can’t have,” Ilya said. “I remember the name. Because the team doctor told me not to take it.”

“Well,” Maria said. “I can do tea with honey.” She went to the store after that and bought the nicest raspberry preserves she could find, and they vanished quickly enough that she put them on the list to regularly restock.

That was the most she ever got out of Ilya about his home life or history, except the further tidbit that he was not sorry to not be with his family on Christmas because it wasn’t Christmas for him, and that was how Maria had discovered that the Russian church used a different calendar. New Year’s, he said, was a bigger holiday, and that was on the same day because it wasn’t the church calendar. There was a game on Christmas, of course, as there always was, but on New Year’s there was a party she didn’t have to throw.

He recovered from the cold, eventually recovered from the injury, and moved out of her house in the spring, into a penthouse apartment near downtown, very flashy and close to the clubs and all the things that living with an older teammate had been supposed to keep him away from. But he had survived most of his rookie season, had set several records, had settled in well to the team, and had proven himself to be both cocky and sensible, so off he went.

He gave Maria the address and told her she was welcome to visit any time. She never took him up on it, but she texted him occasionally, little supportive messages. She did that for Claude too, and he came to dinner sometimes. Ilya didn’t, but he would decline politely with sweet messages, and would send heart emojis back to her whenever she sent the supportive ones, so she never stopped the texts. He always greeted her warmly when she attended team functions, always hugged her and spoke to her like an old friend.

Victor retired after they won the Cup, and Ilya attended the retirement party and was his usual sweet self to her. She held him by the hands and looked up into his face, and he stopped for a moment and looked down at her.

“Ilya,” she said. “How come no one but me knows how nice you are?”

He laughed. “I have you fooled, Masha,” he said.

“No,” she said. “I think you have everyone else fooled.”

“Don’t spoil my secret,” he told her.

When Josh was 21 and about to graduate from college he nervously told his mom he was gay. Maria hadn’t not expected it. “Is there somebody special, sweetie?” she asked.

“Maybe,” he said. “I don’t know. I don’t know how to-- I don’t know.”

She hugged him for a bit while he cried, petting his hair, and thought about it. They were in town for his graduation, she and Victor and the girls, staying in a hotel, and here he was in his dorm, and he was staying out here in Ohio after graduation to do an internship someplace local. If Victor had a shit-fit, it would be as good a time as any, as Josh didn’t need to come back under their roof.

“We should tell your dad,” she said. “You don’t have to, but I think now’s a better time than any other.”

“Do you think he’ll flip?” Josh asked, and she hated, *hated* that she had to say she didn’t know.

Victor didn’t flip.

He looked a little disappointed maybe, or resigned, but he just shook his head a little, and said, “I’m so glad you told me.”

Maria stared at him in complete shock. He visibly gathered himself, stood, and held his arms out, and Josh flung himself into them and sobbed. Victor held Josh for a long moment, rubbing a hand along his back.

“I thought you’d be mad,” Josh sobbed.

“I’m sorry you thought that,” Victor said. “I mean-- I should’ve made sure you knew it was okay. I knew, baby. I knew.” His voice was a little thick. “And I should’ve-- I just didn’t know what to say, you know?”

“You knew?” Josh asked, pulling back to stare at him in astonishment.

Victor wiped a hand along his own face, then touched Josh’s cheek gently, cradling his jaw. “Baby, you had such a crush on Ilya Rozanov when he was a rookie.”

Josh flushed. “Dad!”

“And I was oblivious,” Victor said. “And I said something insensitive in the locker room-- you know we all talked like that-- and Rozy gave me this *look*, and later he took me aside. And you know his English wasn’t good then, but he got his point across. He told me I should

think long and hard about saying shit like that, because maybe he didn't mind but I might hurt somebody I loved without even meaning to. And I had no idea what he meant but then later he was playing soccer with you or something, and he looked up and saw me, and you were staring at him, and he was staring at me, and I figured it out then."

"That's so long ago," Maria murmured.

"I didn't know how to talk about it," Victor said. "I still don't know how to talk about it. But I been thinking about it since then, kid. And I'm sorry I never figured out how to talk about it. But you know I haven't said any dumb shit since then."

"You haven't," Maria said reflectively. Truth be told, she hadn't been paying attention. She should pay more attention to Victor.

"I'm an old man," Victor said to Josh, "and I don't understand any of this shit, but you're young and you should live your truth, and just know, I love you anyway, and old people never understand young people so it doesn't even matter."

Two weeks later Scott Hunter kissed his boyfriend on the ice immediately after winning the Cup. Victor was hosting a watch party for it, and there were a handful of the Raiders there, two or three of them, and more of the retired players. The Raiders present were the ones that weren't at Ilya Rozanov's watch party-- older guys, more conservative mostly.

"Oh my God," a current player, Harris, said into the stunned silence, "what is this fag shit? Since when is Scott fucking Hunter a faggot?"

Victor stood up. "Don't talk like that in my house, Fizzy."

Harris stared at him. "What?"

"I said don't talk like that in my house," Victor said.

"What, we can't swear now?"

"You know it's not the swearing," Victor said. "You know what you said."

"Well?" Harris said, gesturing to the screen, where Scott Hunter had gone in for a second kiss. "Is he not?"

"Scott Hunter's an incredible hockey player and the rest isn't my business," Victor said. "There's half a dozen guys on that ice kissing people, I don't give a fuck. You keep those words out of your mouth in my house, John Harris."

"I didn't know you cared so much," Harris said, a little deflated because nobody had backed him up. Maybe some of them would have but not with Jackson on a tear like this.

“I do,” Victor said.

“You always talked like that,” Harris protested.

“I used to,” Victor said. “Like ten years ago, when I didn’t know shit. And then I learned better. And I stopped. It wasn’t that hard.”

“Learned better,” Harris said, stunned.

“Yeah,” Victor said. “I learned better. And I did the fucking work. Now sit down and let’s watch the replays.”

When everyone had gone Maria put her arms around Victor and hung onto him for a while. “I didn’t notice,” she whispered.

“What didn’t you notice?” he asked.

“I didn’t notice you working on yourself,” she said. But he had. And after he’d retired he’d been a whole different person, when he wasn’t recovering from the various surgeries he’d had to have on his battered body. Even then, he’d been better. Not having to constantly manage his pain and figure out ways to play through it freed up a lot of mental space, she was realizing.

“I didn’t do it for you, sweetheart,” he said. “I did it for me. But you can reap the benefits.”

She wriggled a little in his grasp. She’d been resigned to their sex life going a bit stale, what with all his various injuries and pain medications and things, but that had started to perk up again and she’d surprised herself by still being very interested. From the feel of things, it was on the table for tonight too. “Well,” she said. “I think I will.”

She saw Ilya at a pre-season banquet. He was wearing a tuxedo and looked mostly as she remembered, but older and broader, his jawline thicker. He recognized her immediately and lit up, but not with the big overblown cheer he was using on everyone else.

“Ilya,” she said.

He took her arm. “Masha,” he said. “Long time. You look so good!”

“My husband retiring has been fantastic for my sex life,” she said frankly, and he laughed.

“Oh,” he said, “I am so glad to hear it. You should be happy.”

“I have to thank you,” she said.

“Oh?” He tilted his head to look down at her better.

“Josh,” she said, and didn’t know how to say it. Ilya waited patiently, tipping his head in closer. “Came out to me, finally. And we were so scared what Victor might say. But he said he knew already, and he’d been working on himself to be ready.”

“Oh,” Ilya said. “Oh, I am glad it was okay.”

“He says you were the one that told him to fix it,” Maria said.

“Ah,” Ilya said.

“And he did,” Maria said. “So I wanted to thank you.”

He let go of her arm, turned, and hugged her, full-on, a big crushing hug. “I am so glad,” he said fiercely. “I am *so* glad.”

End Notes

I knew about the garlic thing, I have Baltic in-laws, but the rest of the stuff on this page for [Russian folk cold remedies](#) was too good to pass up.

also this is an a/u where they drug test hockey players. hey who knows maybe they do, in Reidverse.

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