

Where There's Water, There's Ilya Rozanov Playing Mermaids

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Where There's Water, There's Ilya Rozanov Playing Mermaids

by [prataipartai](#)

Summary

Ilya and Shane enjoy a lake-side afternoon at the cottage with their daughters. Ilya simply must play mermaids anytime he is next to a body of water this is canon now.

Notes

Hello everyone! This was written in the span of two-ish hours and barely edited/not beta'd. I have been consumed by HR non-stop and have so many fic ideas, but feel very out of practice writing in this way, so I am using one shots as creative exercises to figure out how to get back into this level of obsession. I am inspired by the TikTok edit to the H2O theme song with Ilya swimming in the lake and the pool at All Stars weekend, and this is set sometime in the future after the events of TLG and HR.

This is definitely not my best work and I never really know how to end one shots, but I hope someone likes it! I have notes at the end for the Russian transliteration I used, and I think a lot of it is very familiar to anyone who has read more than a few HR fanfics, but just in case it's there for you. I used google translate and a few baby name sites to get a sense of pet names in general and pet names for their daughters, Maria and Alina, used in Russian, and I sprinkled them throughout since we know Ilya is a fan of pet names and Russian diminutives. I am very open to any feedback from people with a better grasp of Russian/Slavic languages than me! All feedback is welcome I am very out of practice with creative writing and fic writing but I miss it a lot and this fandom makes me want to get back into it in the big 2026.

I have more ideas for one shots and longer fics, connected to them as parents and totally separate from it. Here's to continuing my little writing exercises and sharing in this beautiful group psychosis with all the gay people in my phone and computer <3

****NO AI WAS USED TO WRITE THIS FIC, I JUST LIKE USING EM DASHES!****

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

“Papa, play mermaids with me!” called a sing-songy voice from the lake’s edge, tinged with the higher pitch of the beginnings of a petulant whine if Ilya didn’t comply. At five years old, little Masha knew with absolute certainty that she had her Papa and Daddy at her beck and call for most things, but that she had her Papa especially wrapped around her little finger for all her silliest ideas and impulses. She wouldn’t really need to whine or pout to get Ilya to join her.

“Of course Masha, I will be right there to play. I will make sure Daddy and Alya are okay first, then I come to you, *moya zajushka*.”

Ilya squatted down next to his husband and younger daughter, watching as Shane carefully spread more sunscreen across Alina’s nose, cheeks and ears. Shane was meticulous about sunscreen for both girls, but little Alina always seemed to get pinker more easily than her sister, so he always fussed over her whenever they got to any body of water to ensure the most exposed parts were well and truly protected. Ilya felt a tender squeezing in his chest watching this beautiful man he had been loved by for so many years turn that lovely, neurotic affection towards their youngest with that careful dedication he showed all the most precious people and things in his life. Ilya just had to smile and duck down to kiss his cheek, it was only right.

“I will be a mermaid now. Are you okay sitting with Alya and watching, *solynshko*?”

He felt the lift of Shane’s cheek into a smile just beyond his lips, as if Shane was seeking them out for another kiss of his own volition.

“Most definitely. She and I have plenty to keep us busy right here. We’ll so much have fun, keep an eye out on you and Masha. Make sure she knows I have smoothie melts and Babybels in the bag, and make sure she comes back out in an hour for more sunscreen and water, you know she will just keep going until she is sunburnt and dehydrated and—”

As lovely and his husband’s concern and care was, Ilya had to cut him off before he worked himself up in a frenzy.

“*Da, moya lyubov*, I will be right there with her. You let me know if you or Alinushka need anything, okay” Ilya said to Shane. He turned his attention toward Alina and smoothed his hand over her thick, dark hair that was already slipping out of the careful ponytail he had done no more than fifteen minutes ago in the cottage, brushing his thumb with some soothing pressure behind her ear. “You be a good listener for Daddy, yes? If you want to go swim, you tell him and he will help you *moya malyshka*.”

“*Da Papa*. I knowed that already,” she replied, turning her chubby, freckled cheeks and perfect little nose in Ilya’s direction. “I like play here with Daddy, we find rocks to show you and Masha.” Ilya grinned at her and stood to join Maria in the water, letting his hand briefly linger on Shane’s shoulder and gently squeeze the muscle there.

“I would love to look for rocks with you baby girl, we can save the special ones to show Papa and Masha when they take a break.” Shane said while gently running his hand up the back of

Ilya's thigh and squeezing in turn.

Wading out into the water to follow Maria, Ilya couldn't help but remember his first times swimming in this lake with Shane, when their relationship wasn't really new, but the possibility of a future was still a new, trembling thing unfurling between them. It had grown and taken root in the form of a marriage, and two daughters who knew the serenity and playful joy of summers at the very same cottage with none of the fears for the security of their futures with those same men as their devoted fathers.

"Papa, get in for reeeeeeealllll!" Maria squealed as Ilya made a show of stretching his arms over his head, rolling his shoulders and neck with great gusto.

"*Da zolotse*, okay we play now. What will Papa do and what will Masha do?" Ilya asked with one hand gently skimming the lake's surface, the other perched on his hip as he fondly looked down at his eldest, who inherited the compulsion to let others know when they were not doing what they were supposed to and that they better *get to it* from her other father.

Maria hummed for a second while she thought, crouching down so just her head and shoulders remained above the shallow edge of the lake.

"We swim like just mermaids, and we're both princesses. No, wait — I'm the princess and you're the...the...ummm..." she petered off, chewing her lip as she did when she lost a word or a train of thought. Their pediatrician assured them that raising their daughters largely bilingual, with a splash of Canadian French, did not cause speech delay or challenges, and rather that Maria in particular was at an age where she was trying to recall more specific and varied vocabulary. Ilya and Shane usually let the girls try to say what they wanted, waiting to jump in to try to help them strengthen their language skills and communication.

"Is okay Masha, what are you thinking of? You can describe if you don't remember word." Ilya encouraged with a soft smile.

"Ummm...you know the ones that hide treasure, and *u nikh yest' popugay*, remember Papa?"

"Ahhh, you mean *pirat*, pirate. Like Spongebob man, yes?" Ilya felt his eyes and the corners of his mouth crinkle further as he smiled at his girl.

"*Da*, but you're still a mermaid! And you took my treasure, and now I have to get it back from you, okay!" In theory, that was a question, but the excitement and finality of Maria's direction made it more of a command. Luckily, she had a Papa who loved to play with her and saved most of his playful arguing for her Dad.

"Okay *zolotse*, but you will have to get me first!" Ilya winked and then dramatically flopped on his back towards the deeper side of the water, arms out and creating a rippling series of waves, though not so dramatically that he couldn't still see Maria and ensure she was safe.

Maria spluttered and laughed before making a show of putting her hands together over her head, keeping her legs together as she dove to swim after her Papa. Ilya kept his long legs under him and feet planted so he would be ready to move toward her or maneuver her if

needed. Maria was definitely the stronger swimmer out of his two daughters, and while not as anxious as Shane, both men had a healthy respect for water safety when it came to their girls.

Ilya took a deep breath in and crouched down in the water, letting bubbles escape from his mouth to the surface for Masha to search for, watching as she valiantly kept her legs together as she kicked like she really did have a fish tail propelling her forward.

He felt her little hand reach down and rustle his submerged hair, and rose up dramatically while scooping her under her armpits.

“Arrrrrghhhhh I have you now *printsessa!*” he roared in his best approximation of a pirate’s voice, while gently tossing Masha up, who squealed with indignant delight as Ilya hugged her close to him, relishing their play and her warm little body against his.

“Ahhhhh! Let me go! I will get my treasure!” she wiggled against his hold and kicked her feet into the water vigorously, peals of laughter bubbling up from her belly. She was so carefree and irreverent in her joy, exuberant with the sounds of whimsy and delight. Her little sister was equally happy, though released it more carefully, like Shane. Much like her Papa, Maria was a bit of a ham and had a flair for effusive expression.

Ilya let her slip out of his grip and they continued to play and chase one another, father taking great care to meet his daughter’s enthusiasm for swimming like a mermaid and chasing her while also giving her space to swim safely and confidently. They took turns swimming toward the bottom of the lake to see what treasure they could uncover (mostly rocks, wet clumps of plant life, and one lucky toonie), floating on their backs, and humming songs from *The Little Mermaid*. Eventually, Ilya sensed that while it hadn’t yet been an hour, he could tell that Maria was breathing with a bit more effort and showing signs of being tired, but not feeling ready to say for herself that she needed a break.

“Oh my goodness, *moya dorogoya zajushka*, I need water! Let’s go get some. I think Daddy has snacks for you and Linoshka. We take break then we can play more, *da?*” Ilya breathed out as he finished his suggestion. While he still loved to tease Shane for being an old man with barely a month on him—and the likes of Eric Bennett and Scott Hunter for being dinosaurs—Ilya never felt more his age than when playing with his daughters. Somehow a career as a professional athlete couldn’t prepare him for the bone deep, joyous exhaustion of playing mermaids for forty uninterrupted minutes with one Maria Ilyinichna Hollander.

Once again, he scooped up his daughter and held her with one arm, propped against his hip. She and her sister got bigger everyday, and Ilya hoped he and Shane still had many good hears left to carry and hold them in their arms, but he wouldn’t turn down opportunities while they were in front of him to hold his girls close. He trudged through the water with Masha towards his husband and youngest, who were contentedly sorting through a pile of smooth, flat rocks collected from the lakes edge, worn down with time in the water. A wave of tender affection rolled through the very center of him watching Shane in their littlest girl’s world. She was quiet and prone to day dreams, a quality that both men understood and recognized in themselves, but in different ways. Ilya was so grateful to Shane for understanding the way that this could be a sign of something unique and special about their daughter, rather than a sign to be worried as Ilya would have fretted it might be on his own.

“What did you find with Daddy, Linochka?” he cooed toward Alina, conscious of the volume and pitch of his voice toward their toddler’s more sensitive ears.

“I find this one, Papa. *Krasnyy kamen’*.” She replied with sincerity as she held up a slightly reddish-brown stone as high as she could.

“*Da, ochen’ khorosho lyubov’ moya*, it is a little red. Your sister and I need water and snack, are you ready to eat too?”

Alina nodded and clambered to sit in Shane’s lap as Masha hopped down from Ilya’s hip, her pink and black water shoes sinking into a soft patch of sand next to Shane’s large mesh tote that had seen many family trips to the lake, and many other family trips and outings.

Shane pulled out a bottle of SPF 50 sunscreen in a large orange squeeze tube, flicking the cap open and squeezing a dollop into one of Ilya’s large, waiting hands. Much like their easy chemistry on the ice when they played together for the Centaurs, some parenting maneuvers between them required nothing but instinct and anticipation of the others’ moves, without any verbal confirmation.

“Okay, everyone has to put a bit more sunscreen on, then we can have snacks—deal?”

Despite the many ways the two sisters were distinct in personality and preference, both groaned at their Dad’s insistence on rubbing more sticky sunscreen on with identical dramatic inflection.

“Tsk, tsk, none of that. Your Dad is boring yes, but he wants you to be safe from sun.” Ilya gently chided with no heat as he began dotting sunscreen on Masha’s face, neck and ears while Shane took care of Alina’s shoulders and neck. Efficiency was the key to safe and happy lake days with children, not unlike a power play.

Ilya sat on a large, flat rock next to Shane and barely contained a grunt of brief pain when he felt the small but concentrated weight of his toddler transferring herself from Shane’s lap to Ilya’s. She tended to seek him out to help her with opening packages and containers despite the fact that any adult in her vicinity would likely be perfectly capable of opening whatever it was. He took the baggie of smoothie melts anyway, like he would take anything—Ilya loved doing things for his daughter, and hoped she would always seek him out.

“*Moya zolotse*, are you ready to eat?” Ilya asked gently to the little girl sitting on his thigh. She nodded very seriously and held her hands open. Ilya tore the little packet open and dumped out a few melts to start, and in that darling way he remembered Masha eating snacks just a few years ago, Alya deliberately transferred each piece all the way into her mouth before starting to chew and swallow. This usually meant she also put her fingers in her mouth over and over again, but luckily his beloved and chronically over-prepared husband had wet wipes, hand sanitizer and a hand towel in his mesh tote for clean-ups.

He looked over to Shane, his thick curtain of black fringe peppered with silvery strands flopping forward as he dug out the Babybel cheese and Bluey waterbottle for Maria, who was insisting as a certified Big Girl, that she did *not* need Daddy or Papa’s help to open her “bay-bull” cheese or her bottle.

“Okay sweet girl, it’s ok if you still need help but I am proud of you for wanting to try so much by yourself,” Shane gently reminder her. Ilya’s heart warmed at that, loving the tender way his husband pushed back on any pressure to perform or be perfect he saw in either of their daughters. He had healed so much from the boy and young man who felt the weight of expectation on his shoulders, real and imagined, and he channeled that into parenting their girls with a conscientiousness and genuine sweetness that sometimes made Ilya’s eyes sting a bit with emotion.

Ilya gently rubbed Alya’s back, his large hand nearly eclipsing her yellow swimsuit, and he caught Shane’s smiling gaze as the later afternoon sun glinted off the lake’s surface and onto his perfect freckled cheekbones.

“You looked good out there, Mr. Mermaid,” he said with a cheeky wink.

“*Nyet, solynshko*—that is Captain *Pirat* to you,” Ilya replied with a laugh.

“Yeah Daddy were you even paying any attention?” quipped Maria from Shane’s side, where she was leaning with her water bottle.

Shane playfully rolled his eyes and nudged their eldest, softening his gaze as he turned his head from his husband toward Maria. “Oh of course, silly me. I will have to pay better attention to the director next time.”

Eventually, possibly because of the scent of cheese emerging from the opened waxy red capsules, a quiet “uff” came from Anya behind Shane and Masha, who had finally ambled from her warm spot on the deck to see what all the fuss was. In her old age she spent more of the day snoozing and relaxing within ear shot of her beloved family, but cheese could still get her up and moving like no other incentive.

Like a sixth sense for animals of any kind, little Alya tumbled back such that her father had to reflexively shoot his arm out to brace her from falling backwards in her effort to get to Anya as quickly as possible.

“Anushka! Anushka!” Alina called excitedly, flailing her little arms back toward the elderly dog. Ilya carefully spun her around so she was sitting on his leg facing out towards Anya, and gently took back the remaining two smoothie melts from her little fist so she could run both her hands through Anya’s fur. Despite her young age, neither Ilya or Shane had to remind Alina to be gentle with animals too often. She had taken quite easily to the concept of gentle, slow hands with cats and dogs, and truly seemed to have a natural reverence for and connection to animals beyond general enjoyment like that of her sister. Ilya wouldn’t be surprised if his youngest became a vet, or a dog trainer who could reach out to the most skittish dogs and build a bridge.

Masha loved animals the way that most little kids did, but she often needed reminders or coaching for how to be careful and gentle, not always realizing her fast pace didn’t translate well to all pets, especially after a learning opportunity with Luca’s skittish cat swiping at her for her enthusiastic attempts to include the creature in her play during their last visit to his condo in Ottawa.

Shane was rubbing small circles on Maria's back as she snacked on her cheese and sipped her water, resting his cheek on his bent knees as he gazed at his daughter. Ilya was sure Shane's heart must have the same full contentedness as his in that moment with their girls, human and canine, all together enjoying the late summer afternoon at the place where they had found their center and the next steps as a family for each stage of their lives so far—from becoming committed boyfriends, to fiancées, to deciding they were ready for children.

"Ya tebya lyublyu, solnyshko." Ilya called softly, because he always would, and always would have to. It was actually a little crazy he had gone nearly an hour now without saying it to Shane, especially on such a perfect day. But that feeling lived on the edges of his skin, the deepest points of his eyes, the marrow of his bones, the foundation of his heart. It was all the most visible parts of himself and the softest, squishiest parts of himself only really known to Shane, the feeling that coated all these things—love, for his family, and for Shane in that particular way as a life partner and coparent.

"I love you, too. So much." Shane breathed out as he turned his gaze back toward Ilya, a resplendent smile on his face. Those freckly cheekbones would always remind Ilya of that soft teenager he met all those years ago, who stole his heart before he really knew that he would be in love with that same person for the rest of his life.

Later on, after a little more time in the water—this time with Shane cheering Masha on as she swam various laps in the lake with him, and Ilya softly chatting with little Alya on the shore as she tried naming various things she found in the shallowest first inches of water in Russian and English—they would bundle up both girls in Barbie towels, and shuffle them inside for dinner and baths before stories and bedtime. Ilya and Shane would lean together as they cleaned up for the evening and settled down for a grown up movie, knowing they would fall asleep thirty minutes in and then grumblingly get up and take themselves to their real bed an hour later, but with the most satisfied, sleepy smiles on their faces, ready for the next day of quiet summer adventure with their girls.

It was a good life, well-earned. There may not be endless summers ahead with their girls still little, but there was still a lifetime left together as a family, and that was all either man could ask for. Everything started at this lake, this cottage, and it would continue there as long as they did.

"I am a tired pirate mermaid, *moy lyubimyy*." Ilya grumbled without any real complaint.

"It was very sweet watching you play with her. Sometimes I wish I was as natural to her creativity the way you are. You've always been that way with kids, it was one of the things that made me realize I wanted to pursue a future with you, watching how you created magic playing with those kids at the pool for All Stars Weekend in Tampa," Shane replied with a quiet, sweet sincerity that took Ilya's breath away.

"You are wonderful with children Shane, especially our girls. You always know when to push them to go for something new and when to step in and do for them. Both our girls seek you out for comfort and security. You know this, I am not better dad than you, you are not better dad than me. We are best dads together." Ilya hadn't expected to get so sentimental tonight in particular, but he could never pass an opportunity to praise his husband and assuage any of his worries.

“I know, I didn’t mean I thought I wasn’t as good of a dad as you. I guess I just admire the ways you connect with them as a dad that are different than how I do. I suppose sometimes I worry that I miss certain things, but I’m so happy and I know Masha and Alya are so happy and cared for that it doesn’t really linger.” Shane gave a little shrug before settling fully into bed, plastered against Ilya’s side.

Ilya swallowed and touched his crucifix, then gently laid his head atop Shane’s and inhaled the remaining citrusy scent of his shampoo.

“I can’t believe how you still remind me all the ways I can still fall in love with you, *solynshko*, even after all this time. I am not done learning how to fall in love with you again and again.” Ilya said quietly into Shane’s scalp, who shifted to rest his arm over his husband’s chest and his leg over his hips, squeezing a little as Ilya’s profession sank in.

“I hope I never stop appreciating the ways I am better for knowing and loving you. Good night, Ilya.”

“Good night Shane. Let’s play mermaids again tomorrow.”

End Notes

moya zajushka -- my little bunny
solynskyo -- little sunshine, as a pet name
Da, moya lyubov -- yes, my love
moya malyshka -- my baby/little one (f.)
Da zolotse -- yes precious/golden one
u nikh yest' popugay -- (he) has a parrot
printsessa -- princess
moya dorogoya zajushka -- my darling little bunny
Krasnyy kamen' -- red rock
Da, ochen' khorosho lyubov' moya -- yes, that is right my love
Ya tebya lyublyu -- I love you
moy lyubimyy -- my beloved

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