

Ilyushenka

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Ilyushenka

by [JustGettingBy](#)

Summary

In episode 1, Ilya and Yuna almost get to know each other in a hotel elevator.

A month after episode 6, Ilya and Yuna do get to know each other in a hotel elevator.

Notes

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

Sometimes—often, really—people are surprised to learn David is Shane’s father. They hide the surprise well, but Yuna can always tell. The slight raise of the brow. The thinned lips. The glances they share with each other.

Long ago, she learned to swallow it back with whatever drinks the event is serving and nod politely. Picking fights doesn’t get brand deals. But once, just once, she would like someone to see what she sees: the twinning in their stature, the way they both go quiet when overwhelmed, their care and attention to detail. The way they love without abandon.

But Shane is clearly Asian and David is clearly not. When she looks at them, all she sees are the similarities. Without knowing them, no one in the MHL would pick David out of the crowd as Shane’s dad. Especially not in rooms where, more often than not, men and sons are told again and again they are each other’s spitting image. Especially now, where more and more of the new rookies are the sons of former players.

Shane isn’t a rookie anymore (he hasn’t been one for a while) and these days it’s rarer that Yuna and David are the ones with him at the galas and parties and awards shows.

She should get over it. Really. But it’s extra infuriating when the connection is so, so glaringly obvious.

Like today: both David and Shane are about to squirm out of their skin in the Montreal hotel hallway. They were supposed to leave ten minutes ago and the elevator is taking forever to arrive. Ilya, meanwhile, is looking very intensely at the art above the decorative table.

When it finally dings and the right doors open, Yuna freezes. “My phone. It’s in the suite.”

David glances down at his watch at the same time that Shane checks his phone.

They are supposed to be at the restaurant by now. Even if they don’t say it, she knows what they’re both thinking. She doesn’t like to be later either, but her and David hit the most god awful traffic on the 417—they’d only barely gotten into their room when Shane and Ilya arrived.

It was only dinner, but Shane had made a reservation at one of the new, hot restaurants that booked out months in advance. Either the owner or the chef was a friend of a friend, she understood, and he didn’t want to leave the table sitting empty. Yuna understood that, too. With the announcement of the foundation, Ilya and Shane were able to do things in public for the first time in their lives. She wouldn’t want to waste time either if she were in their place.

“You can head down and get the car from valet, yes?” Ilya suggests. “I will go with Yuna.”

Shane, all set to sweat through his shirt, glances over to David. David nods in agreement and Yuna tells them it’s fine, really, and so David and Shane catch the elevator down before the doors close. It surprises her a bit, the fact Ilya suggested the plan. Not because it’s a bad plan: the very opposite. He knows Shane, very very well. And yet she hardly knows Ilya at all.

It really does only take her an extra minute to grab her phone. Since she's up there, anyway, she also fixes her lipstick. It's easier without the nervous energy radiating from her boys. Ilya, meanwhile, mills near the window. She catches him, once, glancing at the chair in the corner but he doesn't take the seat.

"I'm ready," she says, and Ilya nods. Together, they head out to the hallway.

Yuna doesn't hate him. Obviously not anymore, and honestly, really, not ever. It had never been that deep. For the most part, she likes Ilya. He is polite and charming and clearly cares about Shane so much, more than anything else in his world. Which, maybe, is the last thorn of apprehension in her side—he has the power to hurt Shane so much. He could destroy him, if he ever wanted to. When she catches Shane looking at him with that glimmer in his eyes and the half-smile fixed on his face, it's a wonder she ever missed it.

While they wait for the elevator—which takes a million years again—the silence between them sits heavy. "So," Yuna starts, at the same time as Ilya says, "Hot day."

"Sorry," Ilya mutters.

"No, no, go ahead."

"I was just saying, hot weather here."

"Yeah. Gets muggy here. David and I had talked about moving here for a while, but we stayed in Ottawa for his work. Glad we did, though the summers aren't that different."

The bell beeps and the left elevator doors open and they both step forward at the same time.

"Now is my turn to tell you to go ahead," Ilya says. He offers an awkward smile.

Yuna shuffles around him and presses the button for the lobby. The doors roll closed and it starts with a jerky movement. It hums along slowly and without music.

"Shane tells me you are starting a garden?"

"Yes. I do one every year."

The elevator continues to chug along.

"And you, ah, grow flowers? Or is it vegetables?"

Then, the whole damn box lurches. Yuna almost trips, but Ilya grabs her bicep to steady her. A loud, whining buzz rings through the elevator and the slow descent grinds to an abrupt halt.

"Oh. This is not good." Ilya looks up at the floor number, but the numbers on the screen are replaced with two dashes. A moment ago, it showed 11.

She jams her finger again and again into the emergency call button. Nothing—not even a buzz.

Ilya says something in Russian that she assumes must be a swear. “Do you have service?” he asks. “My texts are not sending.”

Yuna yanks her phone out of her purse. No bars. She punches in David’s number, but it doesn’t ring either.

"Hello?" she calls through the door. Ilya knocks on the metal. There is, of course, no answer.

“Well,” Ilya says. He leans against back against the bar and crosses his arms over his chest. “Which team is winning next year? Shane tells me you are a witch.”

Some time later, they’ve moved to the floor. It’s clean enough. They’ve covered who will win the next cup, and who will go first round in the draft, and even looped back around to her garden. They still can’t get through on the phones or with the call button, but Shane and David must have noticed by now and even though Yuna is normally calm, even under pressure, something in her gut is getting a bit squirrely. It’s warm in the elevator without the AC running, and the air is stale.

“Montreal is bad city,” Ilya mutters. He wipes the sweat off his forehead with a tissue from his pocket. “Terrible roads. Terrible bridges. Terrible elevators.”

Without warning, the elevator jerks. The lights flicker and the whole thing lurches, moving them sharply. Yuna grips her fingers into the floor and closes her eyes, but the lights snap back on again, and they don’t go plummeting to their death.

Ilya sighs and, with it, lets out a string of something in Russian. He wipes his hand on his forehead. “Sorry,” he mutters. “Sometimes, English is very hard.”

“Maybe don’t insult Montreal next time. It’s listening.”

Ilya raises his brows and shakes his head.

“It’s a difficult language,” Yuna agrees. “But you always do well.”

“Too many irregular conjugations and exceptions to rules.”

He sits there, turning his fingers around the band of his watch. The lighting on his face is harsh, and he looks tired, even though it’s the off-season. Yuna purses her lips as she tries to read his face, but it’s difficult at times, especially when he shuts himself off. She finds herself wondering, from time to time, what language he thinks in. Russian, maybe. If it is, it must be exhausting for him to translate everything all the time, overthink each phrase, stumble and correct and shoulder through all the frustration.

“I like languages,” Yuna says, because they need something to talk about and they’ve already covered the weather, the league prospects for next year, and traffic. So why the hell not

languages?

Ilya nods. “You grow up here in Montreal, yes?”

“Yes. My parents came from Japan in the 60s, then had me here. So English and French, I’m fluent. My Japanese is a bit rusty but I can manage alright.”

Ilya nods.

“I, um, looked at Russian, just a little bit. It’s terrible, and beautiful, and complicated. But what actually struck me is that there are some similarities with Japanese. Some of the sounds are the same. But mostly it was the levels of formality.”

“Hmm.” Ilya spins his hand on his watch. “Yes?”

“Yes. I guess that there are different levels of formality in French, too, but it’s more for the person you’re addressing. Like: be polite to your boss and be casual with your friend. But both in Japanese and Russian, there are things that people call *you* based on how they know *you*.”

“None of that in English.”

“Nope.” Yuna pulls her legs toward her chest.

“People think Russian is formal. Stiff. And maybe it is, I see that. But English is... stiff, also. In different way.”

Yuna nods. “It’s more familiar with strangers, but the downside is there’s less capacity for intimacy. Less space, I guess, to move closer to a person in language.”

Ilya’s eyes spark to life. “Yes, exactly. Is like, your lover and your boss call you same thing.” His nose wrinkles. “Sorry. Bad comparison.”

Yuna can’t help but laugh. “No, no. You’re not wrong.”

“Is weird.”

“Japanese use honorifics on names. ‘San’ is like mister or missues, for example, and ‘chan’ is for close friends. It’s not exactly the same, but I read that Russian has more diminutives.”

“Yes, we do. A lot of them.” He chuckles. “A close friend will call you different name than your grandmother, yes.”

“Yours would be Ilyushenka?” She had looked it up, once, out of curiosity.

Ilya’s face falls instantly and his head wavers back. He blinks once, then twice, and then in quick succession as he turns his gaze to the floor and the laces of his shoes.

Yuna bites her lip. “Sorry,” she says. She hadn’t meant it to be that way, to push her way in to his life. Ilya is rather stuck with them—her and David, she means. He may have chosen

Shane, but they came with the package, and she knows they can be intense. The least she can do is give him space.

“Mostly, Ilyusha is what people use.”

“What kind of people?”

“Sveta. Some aunts. And, when we were younger, my brother.”

“Oh.”

The apple of Ilya’s throat bobs. “Ilyushenka is... more sweet. What a mother uses for her child.”

“Oh, sweetheart.” Yuna reaches forward and pats his leg. It breaks her heart—almost literally snaps it in two—to think of Ilya, young and scared and alone in Moscow. Sometimes, when it’s late at night and her thoughts drift heavy, her stomach and chest start to ache when she thinks about how lonely Shane was for all those years and he was just down the hall, across town, a city over.

Ilya hides the hurt well. But she is a mother, and she can see he is also a boy who has lost so unfathomably much.

He sniffs and angles his head away and Yuna can’t stand it, but if Shane cries easily he comes by it earnestly, because both her and David are the same. She pulls it back, though, because this is Ilya’s grief not hers and the last thing she wants is for this to turn into a situation where he’s trying to tell her it’s alright and she doesn’t have to worry.

Just then, a grinding metal sound splits her and the doors pry open. Yuna nearly jumps out of her skin.

A whole team of firefighters stands on the hotel floor, about four feet offset from the elevator landing. “Been in there long enough?”

Yuna glances at her watch. It’s been almost an hour. So much for being on time, or close to on time, for dinner. “More than long enough.” The blast of cool, air-conditioned air is such a relief on her damp skin.

“Go ahead,” Ilya says.

Yuna steps forward, toward the firefighter who holds out his hand. Behind him, she catches a glimpse of David and Shane, both looking more stressed than Ilya and her.

“I would not mind it, you know,” Ilya says from behind her.

“What?” Yuna asks as she steps forward.

“If you called me Ilyushenka.”

She doesn't get to reply; the firefighters haul her up like a child, even though the step to the floor is only a little past her waist and she could manage on her own.

"Yuna!" David pulls her into a hug and kisses her cheek the moment she's on the floor.

Yuna nods and turns back to look at Ilya, who is stepping out on his own while waving away the firefighters. Shane stands against the wall, one hand buried deep in his pocket and the other resting on the side of his face. He nods, and nods again, and Yuna doesn't miss the way the corners of his eyes dampen.

"Rozanov," he says, "glad you're alright." His voice is very flat.

"Yes, yes." Ilya straightens his shirt. "No tower of terror this time. Montreal wishes it was that easy to get rid of me."

Shane lets out a puff of a laugh and shakes his head. The firefighters are still working on something with the door, and in the chaos of it all Yuna realizes one of them is asking her if she's alright.

"Yes, yes," she says, and before she can get pulled into another conversation, she has something important to do.

"Ilya," she says and meets him directly with her gaze. "Of course."

Ilya's eyes flicker with warmth and nods once, curtly. Then, he claps his hands together.

"Then let's get this going, yes?" Then he moves closer to Yuna and lowers his voice until it's no more than a whisper. "I know the restaurant does not mind and also I know Shane minds, very much. David is same way, I think. They are so very similar."

Yuna pauses and smiles. "You know, they really are."

End Notes

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