

Dear Sons and Daughters of Hungry Ghosts

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Dear Sons and Daughters of Hungry Ghosts

by [pine_cedar_maple](#)

Summary

Ilya had used the flight wifi to google “how to plan a funeral” and “checklist when family member dies.” The results were as fun as you would think.

now we'll say, "it's in god's hands"
but god doesn't always have the best goddamn plans, does he?

Notes

Edit: decided to make this into a series instead of a multi-chapter fic!

This is inspired by and named after one of my ultimate favorite Wolf Parade songs, give it a listen :)

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

“Alexei.”

“Ilya.”

They nod at each other. They sit.

Of course the first time they see each other in months (years? Ilya can’t even remember) would be at a funeral home.

It’s a cold, windy day in Moscow and Ilya is jet lagged, sore from his last game (thanks to Shane, which gave Ilya the only sliver of joy he’d experienced this week), and empty. Just completely empty. He thought there would be more grief, or anger, or guilt, but maybe that will come later. For now he should enjoy the blissful numbness wrapped around him, he thinks.

“I’m glad you could join us, and I’m sorry for your loss, Mr. Rozanov.” The funeral home director greets Alexei and puts out his hand to shake, and Alexei takes it firmly, just leaning into being aggressive, as if trying to prove something.

Alexei has been trying to assert himself as a serious individual his entire adult life. He’s got his work fooled, his friends, maybe his wife, but Ilya sees right through it. If he wanted to be serious, he would’ve gotten here on time rather than worried about the strength of his handshake.

“Let’s begin.” Ilya moves to sit, leaving the director to clamber into his chair on the opposite side of a garish, polished wood desk, and Alexei takes his sweet time taking off his coat and easing into the other leather visitor’s chair.

The building around them is appropriately somber and dark. The wood-paneled walls and dated velvet-and-lace-trimmed curtains make Ilya feel as though his babushka, long gone now, will come through the door any moment and scold him for not eating enough, and his dedushka will follow her with a glass clinking in his hand and a lecture on manliness and maturity ready for anyone who will listen.

The funeral home director shuffles some papers and begins reading out options, prices, and styles of items Ilya never would’ve thought could be relevant. Ilya does his best to follow, but his best is not very good.

Ilya had come straight from the airport. He even has his bag with him. He’d used the flight wifi to google “how to plan a funeral” and “checklist when family member dies,” and the results were somehow both clinical and heartbreaking. This is life, he thinks, just one thing to do after another. One check to write and bill to pay after another. Not even the death of his father could save him from tedious emails and more and more bills to pay.

After collecting a list of the essential to-dos, he sent Alexei a text with a short list of all the things he couldn’t manage alone or felt that Alexei would want to participate in. The list was

short, but the initial planning visit to a funeral home felt like something Alexei would want to do. He always loved feeling important, after all. Ilya also simply didn't think he'd be able to manage to care enough to complete the task to Alexei's liking. Somehow his brother always found a way to accuse him of being cheap, despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

At least he could look forward to bothering Shane tonight. He may even treat himself to a Skype rather than their usual texts and brief calls. Ilya knew Shane must be worried, and that he would be glad for the update, but Ilya would find a way to press his buttons and make him blush anyway. It was one of Ilya's most beloved activities.

But for now he's here, trying his hardest to listen to all the options before him. The funeral director pauses and looks at him, and Ilya realizes he missed a question somewhere in there.

He turns to Alexei rather than try to come up with an answer. "Whatever you think he would have liked best," he says to a spot somewhere on the floor between his and Alexei's chair, with only the faintest hint of a sigh. He lets his eyes flick up for only a second.

Alexei looks pleased at being delegated to. "The first option is good. We wouldn't want to cut corners for our father." Alexei looks back at the funeral home director, then side eyes Ilya, as if to see if he'll challenge him.

Blyat. It was about the pricing. Ilya should've listened.

He closes his eyes for a moment to squash his annoyance at himself, and his brother, and this old man sitting across from them, and then pulls himself together. He sits up straighter, does his best to listen in (the price could've been worse, in all honesty, but he still regrets that even in death, his father can prevent from spending his own money as he likes, living his own life like other players can), and he signs whatever papers are pushed in front of him.

A half hour later, Ilya finds himself in the lobby with Alexei, squinting at a rare ray of sunlight streaming in the window and doing his best not to break the silence first.

Alexei caves.

"I am going to Father's apartment this evening. My wife would like to look over the furniture, decide if she would like to keep it. If there is anything you want..."

Alexei drifts off and looks at his feet. It was unlike him, and Ilya wasn't sure what to do. Alexei, looking shy? Even if only a little, it was the first thing about the whole situation that unnerved Ilya. His brother, shy? Ashamed?

Ilya realizes suddenly what Alexei is implying.

He and his family may move into his father's apartment. The one that Polina, their stepmother, is still living in.

He must be even worse with his finances now than Ilya thought. He didn't think it could even get worse.

Ilya also looks at his feet, takes a breath, and decides that he doesn't want to take the bait. He also doesn't want to deal with Alexei a moment longer than necessary, or look into his wife's sad eyes tonight, or answer his stepmother's polite, vapid questions, so he shakes his head while still looking at the floor.

"No, thank you. I am going to my apartment to rest. I will see you tomorrow at the lawyer's office." *10:30 am, please be on time for once*, he thinks, but doesn't voice. He'd said it once already over text.

They look up at each other at the same time, and Alexei looks almost disappointed. He must have been expecting a fight, or at least a jab, but then his face shutters. Alexei pulls himself up straighter and turns to the door. "See you tomorrow," he says as he walks out without looking back, pulling his coat closed and leaving Ilya alone.

Ilya picks up his bag. He sighs, again, and follows.

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Ilya hangs up the phone. He tilts his head back against the cold concrete behind him, closes his eyes, and lets a few tears fall. *Shit*.

He's so completely fucked.

He's just told Shane he loves him, and granted, Shane doesn't know that, but now Ilya knows. He put it into words and said them aloud, and it feels as though he can't come back from it. He's missed his exit and there's no turnaround. He has no idea where it will lead him.

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On another plane, months later, now on his way home from Ottawa, from the best two weeks of his life, Ilya does some realizing.

Ilya had never spoken about his mother as much as he did at the cottage. He had told Shane how she died, what she was like, everything Ilya has never let himself think about.

Grigori Rozanov didn't approve of that kind of talk of course, and as a result, Ilya had let the pieces of his mother slip away, the ones she had tried so hard to nurture. He knows what people think of him, of this persona he has adopted only semi-intentionally. A womanizer, an asshole, a posturing and swaggering pain in the ass. Except maybe the posturing wasn't really posturing, he at least had real talent to back it up.

And he thinks he's gotten better lately. Not so brusque. Still showy, but not so derisive.

If she were alive, she would call him her sweet boy and tell him she knew the real him, that he didn't mean any of that. And Ilya would kiss her on the cheek like people do to their mom, when they're adults and taller than her and still trying to be a momma's boy anyway. Because they miss the nagging, and being taken care of, and not having to be someone else.

Shane says the same things. Shane tells him that he knows the real Ilya. And Ilya gets all the love in his head confused when Shane does things like say they can name the foundation after Irina.

Obviously he loves Shane completely differently from how he loved his mother. Loving his mother was as necessary as breathing, he's never tried not to do it, and Ilya had tried very hard not to love Shane for a long time.

But the result was the same. A person who loves him so much, unconditionally (Ilya doesn't know why Shane loves him unconditionally, asshole that he is, but he'll take him at his word), and who Ilya gets to love back, as easy as breathing.

Wrapped up in all of this is the realization that Ilya doesn't really care about his success as much as he used to. He can only imagine how he would have felt if he'd been drafted to Ottawa at eighteen, thinking he was god's gift to hockey. Now it just feels convenient to transfer there.

He still wants to win, that's for certain. He's confident enough in his own abilities that he knows he can whip the Centaurs into shape if the trade goes through. But the old Ilya might have felt something like shame at being attached to a team like Ottawa. Now the thought leaves his mind as soon as it enters. It will bring him closer to Shane. So who cares what else may come.

So Ilya unlocks his phone, gets on the plane wifi, and googles "MLH free agent trade" and "Ottawa Centaurs current roster."

The results are encouraging. He texts Shane what he learns.

End Notes

I'm not good at checking or responding to comments but thank you so much for reading and I love you. Thank you to @mostlymacbeth for getting high and rewatching the whole show with me, we're in this together babe.

If you catch me editing after posting no you didn't.

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