

Ilyushenka

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Ilyushenka

by [LeafyGreenQueen773](#)

Summary

Ilya Rozanov wants to come out as Shane Hollander's boyfriend, and that means he needs to sacrifice his homeland, Russia. He brings Shane on a farewell tour of Moscow and comes face-to-face with more emotion than he bargained for.

Excerpt:

“I want to do something that means a lot to you, today,” Shane said.

Ilya looked up at him over their breakfast. They had room service deliver kasha with blueberries and milk for Ilya, and fish and rice for Shane. They had made a little spread at the table in the hotel room, the gauzy curtains beside them making the view of Revolution Square look ghostly behind it. The tourism book was on the bed, bookmarked as before, but Shane wasn't looking at it – he was searching Ilya's eyes.

“It means a lot that you are here.”

“I know, and I am so excited to keep doing things on our list. But I want to make sure that you get a chance to just...live? I guess? To say goodbye to the things that make Russia home? You know, in case you can't...” He trailed off, but Ilya heard the rest of the sentence in his head, in Shane's voice. “In case you can't...come back?”

Notes

Wow, I didn't think I'd find a piece of work that would get me back into fanfiction, but here we are. Heated Rivalry has been an inspiration to all of us queer folks, I think.

Here I am, laid up with COVID on New Year's Eve, and I feel like writing about our two sexy besties. I'm a big Russophile (yes, I lived there), so Ilya is like, all the fodder.

Quick disclaimer: I have not read the books, but I have heard a little of the lore outside the show. I don't know Rachel Reid's writing style at all so I'm not going to try to copy it. I'm calling Ilya's brother Alexei because that's his name in the show, even though he's Andrei in the books.

Ilya had told Shane, over a tearful phone call, that he never wanted to go back to Russia. That he hated it there.

But, that wasn't quite true.

There were a few places he didn't hate. He didn't hate Red Square, where he and Svetlana had gotten ice cream many times at the GUM and eaten it on the cobblestones stretched between St. Basil's Cathedral and the Voskresensky Gates; he didn't hate the Bolshoi Theater, where he occasionally enjoyed watching incredibly talented dancers – both women and men – show off their athletic and artistic talent; he didn't hate the Tretyakov Gallery, where his favorite painting in the world was on display.

And he didn't hate his mother's grave.

In fact, he couldn't bear to say goodbye to Russia without seeing it one last time. He had barely been able to get his father interred into his tomb when he had last been in the country, and with Alexei breathing down his neck until their ultimate blow-up at the restaurant, he hadn't been able to dedicate the time and gravitas he would have liked to at his mother's gravesite. He needed to go back again before he cut off that part of the world forever. And, he didn't want to do it alone.

Getting a visa for Shane took several weeks and some true finessing with the season schedule, especially since they had to ship Shane's Canadian passport off to a Russian embassy in order to get the visa printed in it. But they had managed to time it just right and sort out a couple of weeks for them to fly to Moscow and back just before MLH would own their asses (and their calendars) once more.

They were discreet about their flight stateside; they met up in Newark and made sure they were not sitting too near each other. The moment they made it off the plane in Amsterdam, however, Ilya couldn't resist reaching out and touching his boyfriend a little more. He let his fingers brush down Shane's arm and relished the goosebumps that he felt blossom there. He wanted, badly, to kiss Shane's pouty lips, but settled for squeezing the back of his boyfriend's neck instead.

On the next flight, they weren't as shy about sitting next to each other. Shane had a Russia tourism book propped open on his tray table, with various pages bookmarked in the Moscow section. It was adorably organized of him to be so invested in learning about landmarks ahead of time, especially when he had a built-in tour guide. As Shane nodded off next to him, Ilya gently took the book from his boyfriend's tray and thumbed through the bookmarked pages. He felt warm seeing that Shane had marked off Red Square, the Tretyakov Gallery, and the Bolshoi – but there were some more obscure things he had also included, and even Post-It notes with scribbled sentiments like, *Try "bliny" and "sashliki" and Ask about Ivan the Terrible ("Grozniy")*.

By the time they landed at Sheremetyevo Airport, they were both tired and Ilya felt the familiar irritability that he'd experienced the last several times he'd come home to visit. As they stood by the car rental waiting for their Nissan, he reminded himself that this time, it

was different. He wasn't going to see Alexei and he wasn't here to appease some diplomats or be a poster boy for Russian hockey. He was here with the man he loved to see the places he loved, possibly for the last time.

When they got to their hotel, the Metropol, Ilya felt like he could finally breathe.

Shane flopped down on the bed, staring up at the flashy chandelier like he had stars in his eyes. "This place feels like a palace. Definitely one of the better hotels I've stayed in, and I feel like that's saying something. Do you remember Vegas?"

Ilya raised his eyebrows and sank down on the bed next to his boyfriend. "Is it possible NOT to remember Vegas? I will be offended if you forgot Vegas."

One moment, Shane was giggling, and then, he had rolled on top of Ilya and was kissing him. Ilya let their mouths crush together, let himself relish this moment. They were in a hotel in Russia, together, and some part of him wished it could be like this without all the secrecy.

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The Metropol was so centrally located that they didn't have to go far to start checking off their tourism list. It was a pleasant day, just under 20 degrees Celsius, and the sun was peeking out between fluffy clouds. Shane followed Ilya around with the kind of implicit trust that gave Ilya both a sense of wonder and a little thrill of power. They took a selfie with ice cream cones in front of St. Basil's Cathedral, then paid 2,100 rubles to go on a tour inside. Shane got the audioguide in English, and Ilya enjoyed watching him stare at the vividly painted walls and ceilings with parted lips, listening to the descriptions through his headset. There were several times that Ilya had to duck under low arches as they weaved through most of the nine chapels inside. Every time he had to bend down more than Shane, he'd wink at his boyfriend as if to say, "It's not easy being this tall and good-looking."

After St. Basil's, they went to see Lenin's tomb ("He is even shorter than you," Ilya had said to Shane as they exited), and then went back to the GUM to get lunch.

Although both Ilya and Shane were used to traveling over different time zones, the time difference still hit Shane mid-afternoon and they went back to the Metropol to (mostly) sleep. Of course, when Shane was still groggy after an hour nap, Ilya made him fully awake by taking his warm, firm cock into his mouth and sucking him until he could taste Shane's release.

An hour later, as they took their seats for Swan Lake at the Bolshoi, Ilya could still taste the salt of Shane's sweat on the edges of his lips.

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“I know, and I am so excited to keep doing things on our list. But I want to make sure that you get a chance to just...live? I guess? To say goodbye to the things that make Russia home? You know, in case you can’t...” He trailed off, but Ilya heard the rest of the sentence in his head, in Shane’s voice. *“In case you can’t...come back?”*

Ilya reached out across the table and took Shane’s hand. He could feel Shane’s knee pressed against his, grounding him. “Let’s see Tretyakov Gallery.”

Shane’s eyebrows scrunched. “Isn’t that on the list, though? I...”

“Yes, it is. But I promise you, Tretyakov means a lot to me.”

The Tretyakov Gallery was about three kilometers away, and with more mild weather, they decided to walk. They strode through the Red Square again, keeping their hands in their jacket pockets. Ilya wanted to reach out and hold Shane’s hand more than anything, even as they passed within a few hundred feet of the Kremlin. His heart seemed to squeeze every time they saw a couple intertwined.

The Tretyakov was on the other side of the Moscow River and down a long pedestrian-only street. Ilya felt a glimmer of excitement as they approached the familiar facade. Somewhere behind him, he heard children laughing, and suddenly, he was back on the same street, but he was 10 years old. His mother, Irina, was holding his hand, and she was looking down at Ilya excitedly. *“Smotri, Ilyushenka! Moy lyubimiy muzey.”* He couldn’t help but grin, looking up at his mother’s flushed face. He knew it was her favorite museum – they had been many times together. But she was always as exhilarated as the first –

“–Ilya, are you okay?”

Ilya blinked and realized he was stopped in the middle of the sidewalk. Shane was close – as close as he dared to get without drawing looks – and his brow was furrowed. Ilya felt his cheeks get hot with embarrassment. “I’m sorry, I...I was just thinking.”

Shane didn’t move even an inch further from Ilya, but kept as close as he could while maintaining a gap between them. “Remembering?”

“Yes. Remembering something good,” he said quickly, hoping not to alarm Shane any further. He took a quick breath, mastered his expression, and gently nodded, signaling for

Shane to continue walking. He wanted to hold him, breathe him in.

They made their way to the ticket counter and Ilya paid the two fees, and then they entered inside one of Ilya's favorite memories. The staircase inside the Tretyakov Gallery was carved marble, set between walls painted spring green; a darker green carpet lined the center of the stairs heading up to a landing. They entered a hall of portraits, many by Borovikovskiy, depicting Russian and adjacent royalty, all hung over polished parquet floors. They were stunning, of course, illuminated by the natural light coming from the glass ceiling. But there was one painting in particular that Ilya wanted to get to. He wanted to grab Shane's hand and lead him there. Instead, they took their time, and Ilya let Shane take in the various paintings. He wasn't actually sure how much Shane liked art in particular – he had heard that Scott Hunter's boyfriend was definitely more of an art guy – but Shane's methodical pace of looking at each piece and reading the plaque reminded Ilya to slow down and appreciate being here, especially if it was for the last time. They saw countless more portraits, paintings that depicted Russian history, religious motifs, and famous works such as "The Unequal Marriage" by Pukirev, a painting that Ilya had always felt was somehow a spot-on depiction of his father and mother.

Finally, after climbing more stairs, Ilya saw the painting he came for. The painting that his mother loved the most.

It hung dauntingly on the wall, massive at over eight feet in height. Lush, wet-looking green hues and cold browns made up the forest that was painted around the subjects, and in the middle, a wild wolf was racing, legs outstretched, through the brush, a prince and princess on his back.

"Ivan Tsarevich Riding the Grey Wolf," Ilya murmured reverently. He could feel Shane beside him. He hadn't told Shane that this was the painting he came for, but Shane had taken his hands out of his pockets, and somehow, that was enough to know that Shane knew.

"It's beautiful, Ilya."

"Eto krasivaya, da, Ilyushka?" Irina was saying to him. He could hear his mother's voice as clearly as if she were here. *"V moikh snyakh, ya – printsessa, i Ivan Tsarevich uvozt menya s soboy."*

In my dreams, I am the princess, and Ivan Tsarevich is taking me away.

He could almost feel her touch on the back of his hand, until his mind caught up with his imagination and he realized that it wasn't his mother's soft skin he was feeling. It was Shane's.

Shane had closed the gap between them by just a few millimeters, just enough so that the backs of their hands could rest against each other. In that touch, Ilya felt the weight of the moment on him, as if the entire eight-foot painting had fallen forward to crush him where he stood. His eyes burned and blurred.

It took several minutes for him to pull his emotions back inside. All the while, Shane stood as close as he could, their hands just barely touching. It was all they could risk, and while it was

far from what Ilya wanted, it helped. Ilya blinked down the tears and swallowed.

All his childhood, he had thought maybe he could be Ivan Tsarevich. He could find something he was good enough at – hockey, maybe – to use like a weapon to get her out of her sadness. He could strap his talent on his back like Ivan Tsarevich's sword and whisk her away.

Now, he realized he felt more like the grey wolf, carrying the weight of his mother's failed rescue on his shoulders, with only a dark forest around and no end in sight.

None of this was anything he could explain to his boyfriend, at least not now, and certainly not in English. Instead, he managed, "It was my mother's favorite."

Out of the corner of his eyes, Ilya saw Shane give a small nod of understanding. It was enough.

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They got lunch at a small eatery a little further from the beaten path. Ilya navigated the menu for them both. Shane, to his credit, left his comfort zone and tried *bliny* ("It's literally just a crepe?" Shane had asked, and Ilya promptly told him to go fuck himself), and traded his normal ginger ale for *kompot* ("If you say it's Kool-Aid, I will throw you in Moscow River," Ilya had growled).

Although they hadn't planned to visit Irina's grave so early in the trip, Ilya couldn't help but feel the need to go. He and Shane walked back to the hotel, got the rental car from the valet, and drove to the cemetery.

She was buried not far from Smolenskiy Cathedral. Ilya often wished his father had chosen somewhere more private. So many famous people were buried in this cemetery that there were always tourists milling about. Still, she was slightly off the main pathways. Her headstone was a dark granite, with the depiction of the Russian Orthodox cross on it. The short walls outlining her plot kept the begonias and impatiens planted on top of her from overflowing onto the next grave.

She was quite alone.

His father's tomb was near his parents' burial plots, and a spot was left for Polina, his more recent wife. So Ilya's mother was here. By herself.

Ilya knelt down and touched the granite with his fingertips. He didn't want the tears to come – he had already cried today – but they came, regardless.

And even more unbidden was what came out of his mouth. "Shane," he sobbed.

In that moment, Ilya realized that he had never cried at his mother's grave before. Not when he was twelve, not any time he and Alexei had visited afterwards. In fact, he had rarely been able to cry *ever* when thinking about his mother, except when he'd won the Cup and yelled, on national television, that his victory was for her. His father had wanted Irina's death sterilized, classified as "an accident" – made to be as dry as a page in a history book. Tears didn't conform with sterilization. Tears made it real and awful. So Ilya couldn't cry.

But now, here, with Shane, the only person he'd ever visited this grave with who might actually *comfort* him, the tears fell hot and fast onto the flowers planted all over her decaying body.

And, as though speaking his name gave Shane resolve, Ilya felt his boyfriend crouch down next to him, put his arm around his shoulders, and press his nose against Ilya's cheek.

It was a beautiful day in Moscow, the kind that should have had the tourists overrunning the cemetery near Smolenskiy Cathedral. But, as if by a miracle, no one walked nearby the two men who were huddled over the grave of Irina Rozanova. No one saw the man with the tan jacket and black hair reach up and tenderly kiss the tousled blonde with the severe jawline. No one saw them quietly whisper their love for each other, over the grave of Irina Rozanova, said with the kind of seriousness that suggested they were asking for Irina's very blessing.

No one saw how that small moment brought some life back to the Russian man's eyes.

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The rest of the trip was simultaneously too fast and too slow. They somehow made their way through everything on Shane's list, thanks to his meticulous attention to detail and Ilya's penchant for finding the shortest routes in the city, and Ilya still managed to bring Shane to some of the less-touristy places. Shane even convinced Ilya to let him ride the metro a few times, despite the fact that they had rented a luxury car. Ilya had indulged him, mostly so he could see Shane's dark eyes reflecting the sparkle of the gilded ceilings and mosaics.

The closer they got to the end of the trip, and the closer Ilya got to possibly saying goodbye to Russia forever, the more that he realized that he was at peace with it. Shane was his future, and he was overwriting years of painful memories with ones that included Shane in them. He would always miss Russia on some level, as much as he tried to convince himself he hated it. But it no longer seemed like a wholly painful prospect to let it go. After all, he could have a new home. In Canada. With Shane. And the Hollanders.

When they boarded the plane out of Sheremetyevo towards their layover in Helsinki, Ilya racked his overhead luggage and sat down beside his boyfriend. He knew there were plenty of Russians on the plane – plenty of people who could see them and maybe, even, recognize them.

But, as they took off and the wheels left the ground of his childhood, Ilya threaded his fingers between Shane's. His boyfriend startled, looking over at Ilya with a questioning expression.

Ilya shrugged and looked out the window, watching Moscow grow smaller beneath them. It suddenly seemed distant in more ways than one.

“Don't you want to wait until we're in Finland, at least?” Shane whispered incredulously, nodding to their intertwined hands.

For once, Ilya felt nothing but calm. “No. I am ready to love you bravely.”

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