

Mother Dearest, Is Your Heart Still Beating?

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by [ItsMayBiTheWay](#)

Summary

“We had a visitor waiting when we got back to the house tonight.” Yuna finally spoke. “It was, of course, alarming to find a stranger in our driveway, a car we didn’t recognize, a person we didn’t recognize.”

“Okay.” Ilya intently listened, nodding at everything.

“She explained that she had found me through the foundation, and wanted to reach out to me before she did anything else.” Her hands reassuringly squeezed around Ilya’s ones, eyes never leaving his even for a second. With a deep breath in, she closed her eyes. “She told us her name is Irina. Irina Sergeevna *Rozanova*.”

OR

Irina Rozanova survives her suicide attempt but goes into hiding. Only after Grigori dies, she feels safe enough to find her son.

OR

Irina lives

Notes

Okay, I posted this on twitter to see if anyone would be interested in reading and got an overwhelming love and support on it. I thought it could be a good warm up, maybe 1k or something but it took me all day, two cans of coke, one tea, and one ginger ale, and ended up being almost 4k

I might re-read and fix any mistakes but for now if you see any NO YOU DID NOT!!! I wrote this in one sitting and I’m TIRED. The timeline is shitty, and I made up a patronymic for Irina so this is a FUCK IT WE BALL type of fic.

This might turn into a whole ass what-if retelling of The Long Game so feel free to subscribe to my ao3 to get notified!!

Also I'm writing a multi-chaptered fic where Ilya gets sucked into a hockey rpf world and starts writing smut of himself and Shane so look out for that!!!

Title from a Sergei Yesenin letter to his mom

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

The Cottage
Late Summer 2018

It was an unassuming Friday, late in the Summer. The denial that this was just a weekend getaway, and both Ilya and Shane would be going back to their hectic lives, Shane back to his seasons with Montreal and Ilya with Ottawa, was an unspoken topic, a secret they both were in on but neither was willing to acknowledge.

They had just come home from an Irina Foundation meeting, enjoying each others' company before heading to bed to *enjoy each others' company*. The fire was burning hot in the pit, red and yellow embers illuminating its closest vicinity in a soft hue. Ilya's head was resting on Shane's lap, absentminded fingers raking through unruly curls. The smell of smoke, and grass, and wet soil from the earlier rain filled all of Ilya's senses. He breathed in deeply, letting it all in, and held his breath a few seconds longer than necessary, hoping the smell of home would seep through his lungs and stay inside of him, tucked under his ribs.

Ilya heard some loons in the distance, flinching as it's the first time, and felt the deep vibrations of Shane's laugh even before hearing it. "After all this time?" He let out in between bouts of laughter.

"You still moan when I enter your tight little asshole. Do I ask"—Ilya cleared his throat, readying for a mock Canadian accent—"after all this time?"

Shane slapped his arms a few times, still laughing. "Shut the fuck up."

They had come to expect the loons, and occasional rustling of the bushes, the wooshing of the leaves in the wind. The doorbell, on the other hand, was unexpected. They weren't expecting Yuna and David either, they'd learned to call or at least text before coming over—David walking in on them twice after in the first incident, and Yuna once.

"Did you forget your phone at my parents'?" Shane asked, already heading towards the door.

Ilya sat up and followed suit, a nagging, insistent part of his brain telling him to follow his boyfriend. Why would Yuna and David come if it weren't for an emergency. He was sure he grabbed his phone and the charger when heading back home, Yuna had given them some more dessert, everything was in order. Was it David? His blood sugar? Yuna? Has something happened to her?

While both of them stood at the door, the expressions on their faces did not soothe the worry bubbling inside Ilya. Schooling his face, and voice into its perfected indifference, he spoke before Shane. "Is everything okay?"

Yuna's hands instinctively held his, Ilya's otherwise enormous hands looking much smaller in the embrace of a mother. She gently moved her hands on his forearms, his shoulders, tears slowly gathering in the corners of her eyes. Her hands finally landed on the nape of Ilya's neck, fingers threading through blond locks—not unlike how Shane had played with them moments before, love in every gentle caress.

“Is everything okay? What is it?” Ilya’s accent has come out thicker than it had in years, worry wrapping around each vowel covering it in the language he’s first worried in.

From the corner of his eye Ilya could see Shane physically buzzing with worry, and David entered his field of vision soon after. He mumbled something to Shane, pulling him further away from Yuna and Ilya, their footsteps getting quieter and quieter as the distance grew.

“Can we talk?” Yuna asked not long after David and Shane moved to the corner of their living room. She knew that Ilya could tell something wasn’t right.

Ilya’s throat bobbed as he swallowed, but he nodded nevertheless. Yuna held his hand, guiding him towards the sectional in the den.

Her overly motherly gestures were hard for Ilya to digest at first. He was so used to being unmoored, untethered after his mother, now having people pulling him down. Someone giving him something to hold on felt disorienting almost. Ilya was finally locked in the orbit of the Hollanders—not held down like a prisoner, but held on by hands that wouldn’t let him float.

“Mom? What’s happening?” *Mom*. That was a fairly new development. Something Ilya was still testing, rolling the word around in his tongue, seeing if he liked the taste of it.

It had happened for the first time when Ilya got hurt during a game. It was his first serious-ish injury while playing for the Centaurs, a mild concussion. Ilya would have brushed it off, perhaps kept playing even, but the collision looked so much worse than it actually was and the Cents medical team insisted he’d be taken to a hospital for a CT scan. When the doctors had brought him to his room, waiting for the results, the door had flung open, Yuna storming in, softly spoken but rapid questions in his ear, gentle hands on his arms.

He had meant for it to come out lighter, a reassuring that was nonchalant and teasing. “I’m fine, mom.” He had even rolled his eyes. He hadn’t thought about the implications of calling his boyfriend’s mother mom.

But to Yuna, who did everything fiercely, with unyielding determination, loving and worrying about Ilya came that way too. Her eyes had welled up with unshed tears, fingers gripping Ilya’s forearm a little tighter, and responded with the same unwavering, gentle ferocity. “You are my son now too. It’s a mother’s job to worry about her sons.”

The word only found Ilya when he was worried, or when something was wrong. When he felt like he wasn’t breathing the way he should, his chest constricted.

When Shane was sick, running a fever, head in the toilet bowl. “*Mom, Shane is burning up.*”

When he burned down the surprise dinner he was making for Shane as an apology after a stupid argument. “*I burnt the salmon, mom.*”

When David’s heart was acting up, blood pressure never returning to the baseline, her sons sitting on either side of Yuna, reassuring him. “*He’ll be okay, mom. Do not worry.*”

Now, he felt the same dread filling him, his blood in his veins icy cold. Shane was gone, David was gone, something was *very wrong*.

“We had a visitor waiting when we got back to the house tonight.” Yuna finally spoke. “It was, of course, alarming to find a stranger in our driveway, a car we didn’t recognize, a person we didn’t recognize. But she didn’t pose any danger, she made it very clear from the start.”

“Okay.” Ilya intently listened, nodding at everything.

“She explained that she had found me through the foundation, and wanted to reach out to me before she did anything else.” Her hands reassuringly squeezed around Ilya’s ones, eyes never leaving his even for a second. With a deep breath in, she closed her eyes. “She told us her name is Irina. Irina Sergeevna *Rozanova*.”

Ilya’s hands flew out of their comfortable home in Yuna’s, his body rushing to his feet on its own accord. “No,” he only let out. His entire world was spinning, the floor under his feet being pulled off. Ilya, who had finally, *finally* found something to orbit around was once again thrown off his axis. A part of him wanted to ask why Yuna was playing such a cruel joke on him, but a stronger part knew she would never. Someone else, someone extremely sick in the head must have been messing with them. “She is lying.” Yes. This cruel, awful, *awful* person must have been playing a joke on them.

“That’s what we thought too,” Yuna said, a pained expression on her face. “But she has proof.”

“Proof?” Ilya asked, the smallest ember of hope bright red in the pitch black of his insides.

“Ilyusha?”

And Ilya was on his knees, tears streaming down his face. The was the same voice who had called him Ilyusha until he was twelve, that was the same voice he heard right before he went down on the ice and everything went black, that was the same voice that soothed him when Marly crashed into Shane. It was rougher around the edges, older, softer, and afraid. But it was the voice of his mother.

“Mama?”

“We’ll give you some space,” Yuna said before retreating to the kitchen, gesturing to David and Shane to follow her.

Ilya’s eyes were on Shane, on his sun, his one solid tether since he was seventeen, Shane’s heart the place he found solitude like the calm eye of the hurricane amidst all the tumultuous uproar in his mind and heart. And Shane was right there, glued to the archway between their living room and kitchen. Ilya could see how he was torn; wanting to give Ilya some time and space with this woman who claimed to be his mother, and staying behind and protecting Ilya from this woman who he still wasn’t sure wasn’t lying.

“It’s okay, *lyubimyy*.” He tried to reassure, voice cracking. A part of him wanted to look at his mother, who was alive and here, see how she reacted to Ilya calling a man my love. A part of him was too afraid to look.

Hesitant yet quick, Shane rushed towards Ilya and bent down beside him, capturing his lips in a kiss that was meant to calm both of them. Then he quickly rushed back, and this time entirely went out of Ilya’s sight.

“Can I-” the woman, Ilya’s mother, hesitantly gestured towards the sectional Ilya and Yuna were sitting previously.

“*Da*,” Ilya instinctively switched to Russian. He hasn’t been speaking much lately, only with Svetlana, and occasionally with Shane when he was practicing. But he knew, neither of them would be able to find their words in English.

They sat down in a mutual, deafening silence. Ilya wanted to put some space between them, protect himself. But the grief of years tied him to her in an unstretchable bond, demanding closeness.

Irina’s hands tentatively reached out for him, a hesitant mirror of Yuna’s earlier actions, before she settled them on the couch between them. She left the choice to Ilya, and Ilya let them sit there. He hadn’t touched her in years, he was unsure he even remembered how to.

Her voice filled the silence eventually, words tumbling out. “*I know you must have a lot of questions, Ilyusha.*”

And the dam inside of Ilya broke. “*Why?*” he could only ask. “*Why, mama?*”

Then Ilya listened, for hours, he listened to his mothers soothing voice explain why she had to do what she did. He learned everything...

“*When he turned sixteen, and your dad hit him, I thought Andrei would understand, help me, help us,*” his mother said. “*But he told your father everything the next day. About the hidden money, about my plans to run away with the two of you, about settling in a small beach town under an alias. I woke up to him rattling me, and...*” her voice tailed off, sentence unfinished.

But Ilya knew what had happened, his mom was at the hospital for three days. An accident. That’s what his dad had said back then too. His mom had accidentally fallen down the stairs. She had to rest in her room for days after coming back from the hospital, he wasn’t allowed to go in to check on her.

“*He locked me in,*” Irina then confessed in a small voice. “*He said he was going to take you boys both, and never let me see you.*” Sobs escaped Irina’s lips, her chest rapidly raising and falling.

Finally Ilya reached for her, pulling her in his arms and engulfing her entire body in a tight hug. He kissed her head, gently rocked her back and forth, he was here, she was here. He wasn’t going to let that asshole Andrei, or the ghost of his father hurt her anymore. When her mother’s hands held his torso, her slender arms too short to wrap around him now, Ilya let it

all out too. They stayed there for a while, entangled, letting their joint tears wash away the last fifteen years.

When Irina continued speaking, her voice muffled in her son's chest, Ilya started stroking her hair. His mama was here. *"When I did... well... what I did, your father had called a doctor he knew. He wanted to keep things under wraps, and keep his image pristine. They took me to a different facility, not a hospital, and pumped my stomach on the way there. Miraculously I survived, but begged the doctor to tell him I died. I told myself I'd get my life together, and then come get you. But only when I read that he died, I found the courage in me."*

Ilya knew his father would finish the job himself, if he found out his mother survived. But a part of him didn't know how to react. He didn't know how to let the relief and the anger, the happiness and all those years he was abandoned exist at the same time.

Releasing herself from the grip of her son, Irina looked at him directly in the eyes. When she spoke, she used English. "I am not expecting you to forgive me. Not overnight. It will take time. And I'm willing to wait. And even if you won't forgive me, ever, I'll die happy knowing you have a family loving you."

"Yes, I do." Ilya said because if there was one thing he was sure it was that he'd found a family in Shane. In Yuna and David. "And you are happy?" He asked.

He knew what he was asking, and she knew what he was asking. Instinctively Ilya's eyes darted to where Shane had disappeared to, and found his boyfriend lingering. Ilya then witnessed something he thought he'd never get to have, something he resolved and only imagined in the back of his mind, in the depths of his dreams.

Irina's eyes followed Ilya's gaze towards the door, to Shane standing by the entry way, unsure if he's welcomed, and her hands instinctively called him in, standing up as Shane came nearer with uncertain steps. Her expression was unreadable, but Ilya's unfaltering faith in her mother told him it'd all be okay. She'd love Ilya no matter what—gay, bi, pan... And she'd love anyone who made Ilya happy this much, giving him so much. "You must be Ilya's..." her voice trailed off.

"Bo-boyfriend," Shane stuttered. Maybe it was only apparent to Ilya who had learned how to read every microexpression of Shane, but Shane, unlike Ilya, was not certain how he'd be received. His precious Shane who had questioned his own worth every single day, who was trying to prove his own worth with statistics and nutritional plans and game plans did not know if his boyfriend's mother would approve of him, *us*.

Irina's lips let out a relieved sigh before she pulled Shane in for a tight hug. "Nice to meet you, son," she spoke to the shell of his ear. Her hand found Shane's, and pulled him down onto the couch with them. With her free hand Irina reached for her son, and she looked like another weight was lifted off of her shoulders. "I'm glad I didn't miss the wedding."

When Yuna and David came back to the living room, they had a pot of coffee, five mugs and some cookies. Yuna had sat next to Ilya, and gave his leg a small reassuring squeeze. Bracketed by these two women who loved him so fiercely, Ilya felt a kind of warmth in him he wasn't sure he ever did before.

“Asylum seeking is the first thing that comes to mind,” Yuna answered an unasked question after some small talk. “But since Grigori is not alive, it’d be a void case. We can always apply for the dependent status, Ilya has a permanent residency which allows him to bring you as a dependent, but I assume in the eyes of the Russian government you are still listed dead.” She looked over Irina for confirmation.

Irina nodded, before adding. “I still have a case, back in Russia. They’re...” her face scrunched for a moment, reaching for her phone. A quick google search later she gave her full response. “Reinstated. If I win my case, my status will be reinstated.”

“And all of this is assuming you want to stay.” Her voice wasn’t unkind but the implication was there. If she planned on leaving, and perhaps not coming back, Yuna Hollander was going to bring out the momma bear.

“More than anything,” Irina reassured, her voice unwavering. “I want to know my son beyond watching his games on the screen. And I want to know the family who accepted my son as their own.”

“Okay,” Yuna shook her head, convinced, a plan clearly forming. “We’re getting there. David, can you find me the number of the immigration lawyer we spoke to last month?”

“Immigration lawyer?” Shane finally joined in on the conversation, his cute confusion making his nose scrunch. Unable to help, Ilya booped it, getting swatted by his boyfriend who looked anything but actually annoyed.

“Yeah,” David responded before he turned to his wife for further explanation.

“Shane, honey. We love you, we love you both so very much. But you guys are not very discreet. So, we”—she gestured between her and her husband—“thought we had to come up with a safety net, a plan. You know, in case you were outed, and...”

“And got kicked out of the league,” Shane finished his mom’s sentence.

“Yes. We just wanted to have a lawyer standing by for Ilya. We will *not* let anything happen to him if something surfaces. You know the risks.”

Yuna’s words made the back of Ilya’s eyes sting, but he clearly wasn’t the only one. “You...” Irina turned towards her. The unspoken words were exchanged between the mothers, the understanding that these boys were both of theirs. “You are very organized.” She let out loud—an understatement.

“We take care of our own.” Yuna said matter of factly.

It was good, even perfect, perhaps. But it was also too much, too much for Ilya to take in, to process. He needed to get out, get some fresh air. “I’ll be right back,” he announced to the room, walking out the sliding doors towards the fire pit.

When footsteps followed him to the patio, Ilya half expected it to be Shane. But a different big and strong hand landed on his shoulder. “Don’t tell Yuna you got this from me.” Then

David handed Ilya a pack of cigarettes and a lighter. “When we were driving up here, I told her we needed gas. I just... I thought you might want to—I didn’t know if you had any here.”

When accepting the package, Ilya thought to himself how many more times he could have cried tonight, a cocktail of emotions swirling inside of him. After a long drag, he let the cigarette hand in between his fingers, and examined the package. “Turkish tobacco,” he read outloud. “You got the good stuff.”

David reached for the cigarette that was hanging loosely, and stole a breath himself. Ilya looked at him with comically big eyes and a mischievous glint. “Don’t tell anyone.” David pointedly gave him a look.

“Is okay, dad. I won’t.”

“That’s my boy.” David clapped him on the shoulder one more time, before heading inside.

Ilya stood there then, by the fire, by the same pit he once told Shane the truth about his mother. The truth he thought he knew. Back then the grief was always ever-consuming, it had not dissipated, it had not even waned. But it was real, it was tangible. Now he felt lost all over again, out in the ocean. The hurt surfaced, drowning fear, then Ilya felt elated, because how could he not, when his mother was right there on the couch. None of these feelings were gonna disappear overnight, but he thought... he had a lifetime to get used to them, accept and move on.

When Ilya walked back in, Irina was showing Shane some of the pictures she brought with her. David and Yuna each had pictures in their own hands, and Yuna was telling Irina that she had the exact same picture of Shane. He leaned in, looking at what everyone had in their hands. Unsurprisingly Yuna had a picture of him in his hockey gear, possibly from one of his first ever practices. David had a picture of him doing a puzzle, around third grade, and Ilya knew a copy of it would be on their gallery wall next time he visited. His mom and Shane were looking at a picture of him around the age of three, naked in the tub.

“Shane, do not look. I am naked. It’s indecent.” He feigned embarrassment.

“Please,” Shane snorted. “You don’t even know what that word means.”

“Yes. I do. I used it correctly.” He objected.

“You once made a joke about my... you know...”—he gestures towards his butt—“in front of my parents, Ilya. You don’t know what is indecent.”

Very pleased with himself, Ilya retorted. “Well now you told my mom I talk about your ass, Mr. Decent.”

Realizing he walked right into a trap, Shane immediately blushed. “You are the worst.”

“You love me.” He leaned in for a kiss.

Turning to Yuna, Irina asked. “Are they always like this?”

“Even worse,” Yuna responded, making both of them blush and Ilya giggle.

Later in the night Yuna and David bid them goodbye, returning back to their house with a promise of dinner tomorrow.

That night as Ilya got into bed, his head on his boyfriend’s chest, he thought about how Shane would be here in the morning. It was not the first time he thought of that even when it felt impossible. But tomorrow, when he woke up, he thought, for the first time since he was twelve, his mom would also be there.

End Notes

Thank you guys so much for reading!! You guys' comments and kudos keep my Tinkerbell spirit alive <3 

And you all know the drill by now I hope

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