

a plane with the silver wing

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by [SingingGuy](#)

Summary

"You okay?" Shane asks when they stop at the first red light some thirty minutes later.

Ilya looks straight ahead, fingers restless on the steering wheel. Excitement? Anxiety? "Yes. Maybe. Not sure yet," he replies.

Ilya returns to Russia one last time to say goodbye and introduce Shane to his mother.

Notes

a missing scene I wish we had in the books where shane also gets to meet his mother-in-law (she would've loved him!! like ilya loves him!!)

this song has done numbers in ilya's room, believe you me. *kinó* is pretty much the soviet beatles, so if you wondered what true russian toská sounds like:

[song](#)
[eng translation](#)

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

Against all odds, Russia greets them with warmth.

Shane watches Ilya squint behind his sunglasses. It's early August, and the sun is, for once, a given, but still. Nice.

Domodédovo Airport shrinks in the rearview mirror as their rented Porsche navigates the Moscow suburbs. It's not that different from Ottawa, really — trees, roadsigns, an ocean of unkempt grass with funny-looking houses poking out here and there.

"You okay?" Shane asks when they stop at the first red light some thirty minutes later.

Ilya looks straight ahead, fingers restless on the steering wheel. Excitement? Anxiety? "Yes. Maybe. Not sure yet," he replies. "Will you check our reservation, please?"

It must be weird having to stay at a hotel in your hometown, Shane thinks as he opens his email app. It's Four Seasons, of course, which has cost them a small fortune even with two NHL star salaries. So much for keeping low, Ilya.

"All good," Shane says. "We might even be a little early." A silent, *will you show me around?*

"Believe me, we won't be," Ilya says. "It might be noon, but all time in Moscow is traffic time."

Shane hums in response and wonders if that is the reason behind his boyfriend's love for ridiculous fast cars. He doesn't quite mind sitting in one right now, though his ass would certainly object.

Fourteen *fucking* hours.

"Look," Ilya taps his arm and points ahead.

"What?"

"This one is called MKAD," Ilya says like it's supposed to mean something to Shane. "Is, how would you—a highway? But, like, circular and really big." He grins. Shane can almost see his eyes sparkle through the tinted glass.

"Cool," comes out more like a question. "Wouldn't it be boring, though?"

"Yes!" Ilya sits back, shoulders visibly more relaxed as the car picks up speed. Shane says nothing, just catches Ilya's right hand in his own and lets them rest on his bare thigh.

"So it's really just... a square." Ilya shrugs, watching Shane watch the bricked black hole that is the Red Square. He doesn't remember his own first impression very well, although he's sure it was much more enthusiastic than that.

"Don't let go of my hand," Mama said, swallowing his view with her bright yellow dress. "We're going to go buy you ice cream now, alright, Ilyushen'ka?"

"Do you want ice cream?" Ilya asks. Shane's face now rivals the Kremlin in redness from all the walking they've done today.

"And a few gallons of water, yes please," Shane nods, grateful. Ilya shoves his hands in the pockets of his shorts before he does something stupid.

The woman behind the stand doesn't recognize either of them, just smiles as she hands them their cones. Ilya watches Shane take small licks, chocolate staining the corners of his lips just enough to be visible.

He asks the woman for an extra napkin.

Refreshed and somewhat soothed, Shane looks ready to resume sightseeing, but asks noticeably less and less questions, hides behind his cap and glasses instead and keeps his distance. They've done it dozens of times now that the world knows about the charity and their *'friendship'*; yet still seeing him surrounded by stupid souvenir shops and familiar skies, with his beautiful freckles all freshly tanned, smiling at Ilya when he turns to make sure he's near—

it's a lot.

Ilya doesn't know if he likes the view.

The thing is, he knows Moscow suits him. It's rough around the edges, cold, and sharp, and bold on the outside, like the Red Square, and Nikólskaya, and St. Basil's. You need it to warm up to you enough, spend weeks upon weeks discovering its soul that is there in all the color and noise, learning where exactly to look.

"You're so beautiful, mama, even more so than Moscow!" little Ilya once said, clinging to her arm as they strolled through the Gor'ky Park one summer afternoon.

Mama looked down at him, and her sad eyes were smiling. "Thank you, synóchek," she ruffled his curls. Her hands were always so warm, so gentle.

Shane's hand is warm, too, when they accidentally link fingers for half a second.

"Shane?" They're spooning on the fanciest couch Shane has probably ever touched, and that's saying something.

"Yeah?"

Ilya's tone is bored, but not the usual kind. Shane tenses up a notch. "How do you like Moscow?"

"Ugh, well enough, I guess?" he stares ahead, gears now turning a hundred miles an hour. "Crowdy, but I expected that. Lots of color, so that's nice. Very clean? Even better than Ottawa, maybe."

Was it the right thing to say? *Is there one, anyway?*

Ilya hums in response, snuggles up closer. "Would you like to live here?"

Shane blinks. "What?"

There's a long pause, a decision being made. Shane's fingertips brush over the mole he loves to kiss so much.

"I thought about calling my brother today," Ilya finally admits. "I know I would never do it, but the thought was there. I could introduce you as my friend, show you the house I grew up in. You would hate it, and probably tell me how ridiculous and pompous it is. My father loved showing off, you see."

Shane presses a kiss right to the top of Ilya's head. "Tell me about your room? Did you have posters on the wall, or medals? Plushies?"

"One poster, yes. Valery Kharlámov, have you heard?" Shane nods. "Of course you have. I was big fan of the Red Machine. Svetlana's father was their goalie."

"Ilyusha, synochek, come meet Uncle Sergey and little Svétotchka," Mama cooed at him from the hallway. Ilya had never run faster in his life.

Sergéy Vétrov was so big, and tall, and exactly how Ilya had pictured him in his head. Sveta, on the other hand, was a whirlwind of curls, laughter, and color as she raced him to the playground.

Mama watched them play all evening, and Ilya ran to her often to take a sip of water or show her a pretty flower he'd found. Mama's eyes were so kind that day, and Ilya didn't want to go back to their apartment, to his huge yet empty room. He wanted to crawl into Mama's eyes and stay there and make her laugh always.

Because home was Mama's eyes.

"That's so cool," Shane says with a smile, even though Ilya can't see him right now. "How about... anything not hockey-related?"

"Of course. Books, a few toy cars, disks. You know. Normal stuff."

"You read?!"

"Shut up, Hollander. How do you think I learned English?"

"By accident!"

The fancy couch leather squeaks under them as they laugh.

"I couldn't live on the ice, could I? No matter how much I wanted to sometimes. All the time, after mom died," Ilya says, quieter now. "Books were nice distraction. And music, too."

"What'd you listen to? The same shit you do now?"

"Your opinion doesn't count, you think all music is shit," Ilya pulls out his phone and opens Spotify, then scrolls down. The playlist's name is in Cyrillic, and Shane isn't nearly fluent enough to be able to read on command. "Check this out."

He presses play.

The cemetery is, quite literally, dead quiet.

The air flows thick, sticky with heat and freshly mowed lawn, soil and metal paint.

"*Zdrávstvuy*, mama."

Ilya falls to his knees. He doesn't cry, although he would love to. The tears choke him, weigh his head down to the ground. He forces himself to straighten up. On his right, Shane shifts from one foot to another, unsure of what to do as if Irina Rozanova could rise from the dead and scold him for bad manners.

"I'm sorry for not visiting for so long," Ilya starts, in wobbly Russian. "But you know why, *da*? You saw me winning the Cup for you, I know you did, mama. You were there with me." He squeezes the crucifix in his palm so hard it breaches the skin, and thin red streaks bleed out into the parched ground. Ilya doesn't notice.

"I like it there, mama, you know? It's easier there, and I can do whatever I want. And you know what? You were right, now I don't really want anything. So much for wanting longer than being able to. I'll win more Cups, if you want me to. It's not that hard, turns out." He smirks, nose snotty. "But I know you'd never make me do it. You were never... like *otets*. He kept pushing me till the day he died, you know, mama? And Lyósha, he... does he even visit you anymore? I want to believe he still has some *sóvyest'* in him left."

Something heavy drops next to Ilya.

"*Da*, mama, this... this is Shane." At the sound of his name, Shane waves at the tombstone. Ilya has not seen him so shy since the day they hooked up for the first time. "I love him. And he loves me, can you imagine? We've been through so much, and now we... we're starting a family, I think. Or something. His parents accepted me so easily, and I never... never..." Ilya pants, choked up, struggling to take another breath. Shane's hand comes to rest on his shoulder in silent offering of comfort but not pushing — and Ilya goes instantly, nothing more than a two-hundred-pound sack of snot and tears now.

"Ilya is in good hands," Shane says for him, in English. "And will be for the rest of my life." That earns him another wave of silent sobs.

The grave and the tombstone stay unmoving, the same. Ilya stumbles back on his feet and takes a step to rearrange the fake flowers and add more fresh ones. Lilies, her favorite.

How ironic.

Shane kneels again at the tombstone and whispers something to Irina's slightly faded picture. Ilya can't eavesdrop, but Shane's eyes are clearly wet and dead serious.

Mama would have loved him so fucking much.

On the plane that night, as they're speeding up for takeoff, Shane's hand brushes his arm.

"You okay?"

Ilya grips the armrest and watches the city lights shrink in the window. A cigarette would be nice.

"I will be. Let's go home, Shane."

End Notes

synóchek — son (endearment)

zdrávstvuy – hello, formal singular

otets — father, formal

sóvyest' — conscience, one's moral compass

so much for wanting longer than being able to — a modified quote from a classic soviet comedy "kidnapping, caucasian style"

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