

by any other name

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by [Celira](#)

Summary

This wide-eyed slip of all-American femininity in front of him does not paint a picture of intimidation. She is probably half his size. She is 70 percent leg but 100 percent petite and—
She grins.

—120 percent trouble. He looks away, then cuts his eyes toward her warily.

[or: Rose has decided she and Ilya shall be friends. maybe. this depends on Ilya's ability to Communicate]

Notes

soooo hooooow's everybody doing out there? still feeling completely batshit? yeehaw me too
– i do not look forward to attempting any kind of coherent small talk with coworkers. shout
out to the heated rivalry derangement syndrome squad, u sustain me <33

this takes place *mumble* time after *passing car honks loudly* – eh let's call it vaguely post-episode 6/the HR book. it's *hand wave o'clock* & canon is our sandbox!! HAPPY NEW YEAR

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

“Please behave today.”

Shane isn't quite pacing, but it's a near thing. He's on his third slow lap of the rental's kitchen, ostensibly fussing with the morning's breakfast cleanup.

They'd finished eating two hours ago.

Ilya leans in, eyebrows furrowed in a very convincing show of earnestness. “I am always behaved.”

Shane's eyebrows suggest that he is unconvinced.

“I am the best at behaving. Just like I am best at everything—”

Shane shoves a palm against the side of Ilya's face. Ilya grabs his wrist, not missing a beat. “—best in league, best boyfriend, best at sucking—”

“I am going to smother you with—”

“Ooh, sexy suggestion, Hollander. Are you offering—”

Shane struggles half-heartedly against his grip. “—a pillow. On second thought, you deserve anything that happens to you.”

“I do! You are right. I deserve the best. Is why you are setting up meeting with one of the best movie stars of our time.”

“Fuck off, I—”

“She will forget she ever met you. She will love me.” Ilya reels Shane in by the wrist, leering.

Something in Shane's face has softened, though, and the tension has gone out of his arms. “She will. She's good at seeing people.”

Ilya ignores the jump in his pulse and wrinkles his nose. “Yeah, is how she knew you are—”

Shane resumes his flailing, twice as insistent. “Shut up shut *up*—”

He relents, briefly, and swoops in to kiss Shane lightly on his downturned lips. “I will be nice with your friend. She has been good friend to you.”

“Thank you. I appreciate it.” Shane sighs, close enough to him for the air to wind through tousled curls, grazing Ilya's scalp.

Ilya shivers despite himself, and regroups.

“...Even if she has seen you naked, and so I should challenge her to, uh, fight for your—”

“*Ilya*. You are not challenging Rose to single combat.”

“What, are you afraid I would crush—”

“She would *destroy* you.”

“*I* am not afraid.”

—

Ilya has not blinked in what feels like minutes. It’s probably been less than a handful of seconds, but he feels disconcerted. He doesn’t entirely understand why.

This wide-eyed slip of all-American femininity in front of him does not paint a picture of intimidation. She is probably half his size. She is 70 percent leg but 100 percent petite and—

She grins.

—120 percent trouble. He looks away, then cuts his eyes toward her warily.

They’re on the roof of Rose Landry’s New York pied-à-terre, lofted high above cameras and onlookers. It’s not the first time he’s met Rose, but he can count on one hand the number of times they’d exchanged words before today. Every other time, they’ve crossed paths in some public fishbowl. Some fundraiser or opening or carefully-structured brand event.

Every other time, tabloid buzz follows them when they catch Shane within 100 meters of her, so they try to make themselves scarce, fast. This means Ilya’s always been able to make his excuses and duck away from her searching gaze.

He looks down at the random beer he pulled from the drinks she offered. This time, they’re alone and on her turf; she’s in town to open a new production of some quirky indie play. None of them want to make more headlines, much less ones that overshadow her show or their game.

Shane says she’s trying to do more of what she wants and less of what the movie studios expect from her. Ilya can sympathize with that, at least.

He casts a glance toward Shane, who is too far away, leaning against the railing overlooking Sixth Avenue. For the past half hour, the three of them have been chatting about everything and nothing of consequence, mostly hockey and film; but now he’s on the phone with Yuna, who has time-sensitive opinions about negotiations with the latest boring activewear team eager to get Shane plastered across their promotional material.

Ilya does like seeing Shane larger-than-life in retail storefronts. The resolution on the photos is very good. They get the stretch of fabric across his chest very nicely.

But he did not expect to be alone in the line of fire for long.

A drop of sweat rolls down the back of his neck.

Rose interrupts his scrabbling thoughts. “How have things been going in Ottawa?”

Ilya reflexively wrinkles his nose at the small talk, then—with considerable effort—reins himself in. “Why do you ask?”

She shrugs. The gesture looks careless. Ilya has a lot of practice looking careless, and clocks it instantly. “It’s a big change. You were in Boston for a while.”

“Team is shittier. People are nicer.” On autopilot, he smirks and says, “They need a captain that can save their asses.”

She laughs, but it doesn’t extend to her eyes. He doesn’t understand why it bothers him that she looks unimpressed. “That’s nice. What do you actually think?”

He bristles. “What do you mean?”

She waves a hand. “That’s such a press room line.”

Ilya’s fought some of the finest athletes in his field and won. He is beginning to suspect this fight might be worse. “It is true. What do you want to hear?”

“Something real.”

“That is real.”

“Real fluffy.” She widens her eyes innocently, oddly piercing slate blue, and he frowns. Many things ride on his ability to fend people off with the public layer of patented Ilya Rozanov charm. She isn’t playing along.

“Funny.”

“I know.” She sighs, and drops the expression. “I’m being a hypocrite. How about this? I’ve heard some of it from Shane’s perspective, but I’m curious to hear yours.”

He squints at her, but the curiosity sounds sincere enough. Well. Shane did ask him to play nice. Maybe this is her version of that. He can make an effort.

He realizes he is very uncomfortable.

Ilya takes a long pull of his beer, then offers, “It is good being closer to Shane.”

Rose nods slowly. “Big move to make for him, isn’t it? Also a big risk?”

“Mm.” Playing nice does not mean he feels like handing Rose a flashlight and letting her peer into the corners of his psyche.

“He’s worth it, though.”

Something green and sour twists inside of him, and he remembers that once, Shane looked at this woman and saw a way out. He doesn’t even notice that he’s shaking his head until, misunderstanding, she tilts her head in response. “He’s not?”

“Of course he is.”

“What made you finally decide that?”

The continued questioning is starting to get under his skin, and he can't help but wonder if she's trying to scare him off. Ilya gives her an incredulous look. “Is this my interview?”

Rose is unflustered, even as she parrots, “Is this a conversation?” She purses her lips. “I want to hear your perspective, remember? I'm not going to go read your press kits.”

He grants her that, but the churning in his gut is rising, and he feels restless in ways he doesn't want to look at closely. Playing nice also doesn't, to be fair, come easily to him. He huffs, and runs a hand through his hair. “This—” He gestures between them. “—matters to Shane. I do not need to be friends with you, but you matter to him. So.”

“So?”

“So what does this matter to you?”

“It's not enough for me to want to get to know you better?”

“Why? Are you his mother?” He feels like he's waiting for the puck to drop, all live-wire faceoff tension.

“God. You're just as bad as he can be.” She blows a strand of her hair out of her face, but it doesn't completely cover the sigh underneath the exhale.

After a moment, Rose props her chin on one hand, leaning toward him. Despite himself, Ilya finds himself mirroring her, bending in until their heads nearly touch. From a distance, they probably look like confidants.

“Ilya. Let me be clear. I am choosing to trust Shane to decide what he wants for himself. I'm not here asking—” she slips into a truly uncanny impression of Yuna— ““well, Mr. Rozanov, what are your intentions for our Shane?” But I do care for him, you know. As a *friend*,” she says emphatically, holding up a hand, and Ilya feels a dull heat creeping up his neck. Whether he's being painfully obvious or he's not giving her enough credit for reading him, he can't say, but he doesn't like it.

“And you know he thinks too much all the time, and sometimes he says very little about it.” She leans back. “Sometimes, knowing what he's not saying helps me help him. He's still shy when it comes to you—”

His brow furrows. “He does not talk about me?”

“Well, it's not like he's a huge talker to begin with. And old habits die hard.” She pauses, and says half to herself, “Years! You've been hiding it for literal years! That must have been shit for you both.”

The understatement tastes bitter to Ilya, but before he gets the chance to interject with something biting, she continues, “So, yes. I mean it when I say I want to get to know you

better. He sees something in you, and I think I can see it, but I want you to tell me on your terms. You can either help me do that or let me assume that you're just a giant asshole, like everyone else thinks."

"This is not—good bargain? Bad deal."

"I think it's a great deal. We can be friends, too, Ilya Rozanov. You'll like it."

He hums noncommittally. Ilya is starting to understand how other people feel when he charges through their attempts at steering a conversation. "What do we have in common?" He knows the question is feeble; Rose gives him an unimpressed look.

"Plenty." She ticks off her fingers. "We're both at the top of our games, so to speak. We're both prioritizing the game over the rest of our lives, except for a couple of connections we try to maintain across timezones and insane schedules, like that guy over there." She looks over at the figure on the phone. "Who we're also both worried about all the time. Don't act like you're not."

He's also starting to understand what Shane saw in Rose, and is both impressed and mildly annoyed, the way catching your reflection in an unexpected surface makes you briefly notice everything uncanny about your own face.

He consoles himself that this means Shane's taste might be forgivable. At least she, too, has a pretty face. He says as much. She rolls her eyes. "Sure. We're both hot. Does it still bother you?"

"No," Ilya says in a completely believable tone.

"There's nothing to be bothered about. Here's the thing. Whether or not either of you knew, he made you a..." She absently twirls a piece of hair, thinking. "A load-bearing corner of his happiness. He doesn't really care about people easily—doesn't really register a lot outside of hockey, yeah?"

"He noticed you," Ilya counters, and it sounds petulant to even his own ears.

She graciously sidesteps this. "I made him notice me, really. But when he also cares, he goes all in, and he doesn't really know how to stop." She raises an eyebrow at Ilya meaningfully. "You might know this."

Ilya looks away, lips pressed into a thin line. He doesn't know if he wants her to hear more, but he finds he might want to answer her implicit question anyway. He is tired of revisiting the phantom weight of memories piling up behind a mental dam over years until his actual chest aches with the figurative pressure.

"I did not know, for many years. I did not—" he exhales, and stops.

Rose waits. He gets the feeling Rose is good at waiting.

Ilya tries to outlast her, but a rattling sound interrupts his focus. His foot has been tapping until the glasses on the table next to them wobble dangerously. He stills.

Finally, he says. "I did not want to see. This felt...dangerous. Too much." He tastes metal and realizes that he's chewed off the cracked skin on the edge of his bottom lip. "I wanted to be free, I think. Easier for us both to not see. I wanted to not have more...responsibility?"

She nods slowly. "Were you responsible for a lot in your life?"

He lets out a short, humorless laugh. "Well. You know. Captain of old and important NHL team, answering shitty press questions in second language. Bitchy teammates. Supporting my family in Russia. Representing all of Russia, some say. Everyone waiting to see if I would fail." He gestures too jerkily for it to come off as careless, and kicks himself for being transparent. But her gaze is even and unpredatory.

"That's already a lot. And then there was Shane."

"Then there was Shane. Same year, always on the same level. Very skilled. Very smart and also very dumb."

"So dumb!" Rose bangs her drink down on the table. "He's so good at hockey, and so good at strategy, and also *mindblowingly* dumb in other ways." It occurs to Ilya for the first time that it's nice to have someone immediately understand him on this front. "Absolutely can't talk about himself. And that's part of what makes him so lovable. But it also means you need, like, a translator sometimes. Even when you're speaking the same language."

"Try second language."

"Must be hard. Especially when everyone's expecting you to maintain the public act."

Ilya holds up a finger. "Let me be clear. I am not *not* asshole."

She raises an eyebrow.

"But some of it is performance. Sometimes, back then, I think Shane could tell. Other times, he cannot." He pauses. "I did not always make it easy."

"And he wants to believe what you're showing him."

"Right. He's very..." Ilya trails off, looking at Rose. "You said before."

"Literal?"

"Literal, yes."

"Another thing to love about him, though." Rose shakes her head. "He's very, very real. I can't believe you two hid this for so long."

"Well, you know. I am great actor, too."

"He's got a type." He finds the suggestion less annoying than before, especially since she follows that up with, "You're definitely more of the necessary type, though." She tosses her hair, then settles again. "Did you have anywhere you could stop performing? With anyone?"

“My best friend, sometimes. But she is Russian too. She is also performing. And I was still—performing that I did not care about Shane.”

“Seeing how you two are, that might have been the hardest part.”

“Might be.”

She puts a hand on his arm. He expects to feel put off, but he feels strangely assured. “It’s easier with friends who can understand. Even when it’s behind the scenes.”

Ilya realizes she probably knows plenty about maintaining an airtight media facade. Rose is their age but has been in a wider public eye for longer. Media empires rise and fall in the orbit of the film industry, far more mainstream than hockey, which often flies under the North American sports radar.

“Like you?”

“Sure.”

“Friend on—” he tries to remember— “speed dial?”

“I mean, I’m not going to stay on call. But it’s hard, keeping things like this under wraps. Walking that balance. It’s very easy to feel like you have to hide everything you’re doing from everyone forever.” She shrugs. “So don’t. At least not with me. I know you two don’t have a ton of people who you’re open to. Even one more, especially someone who’s a little further from the hockey world, could be nice.”

Having said that, Rose’s eyes flick downward, subtly bashful. She crosses and then uncrosses her legs. It’s a strange shift from the assertiveness that Ilya recognized earlier.

He considers: the offer sounds altruistic on the surface, but he could easily say no. She’s just said how important Ilya is to Shane; if he decides that he doesn’t want to let her any closer, that doesn’t keep her from being friends with Shane, necessarily, but Rose will know there’s a line in the sand on the periphery of their relationship.

So she’s left herself open to rejection, willingly, even though—no, *because* she cares about Shane. She’ll step back if he decides he’s not comfortable with her there, and take another step away from—possibly *her* only friend who’s a little further from the *entertainment* world.

But first, she—who understands why Shane is special in some of the same ways Ilya does, who keeps seeing special things in people to her own detriment, who has some right to the kind of bitterness that comes so easily to Ilya—has decided to try offering her allegiance to them instead.

And seeing Rose backlit in the golden hour sun, shifting in her seat, Ilya finally acknowledges that she probably knows as much as either Shane or Ilya about being lonely by necessity.

He’s not sure he would be so generous in her shoes. But in this, in the aftermath of Shane’s choices and trust, and knowing that—in some light, in some small part—it’s because of her

that Shane has figured things out—

He can find it in himself to be magnanimous.

“So, does that mean we will be friends, Miss Landry?”

She grins up at him, just a touch too widely to be media-perfect. It feels all the more genuine for that. He releases a breath he didn't know was caught. “It’s a good deal, Mr. Rozanov.”

The silence stretches, still too new to entirely be comfortable. Before he can do something heinous like confide in her further, she grabs his phone and waves it at him.

He pulls up a new contact entry obligingly, and she taps out her number and sends herself a text, lightning-fast. “Also, I want to be able to hear both sides of what you idiots are doing. Shane downplays everything or misses it entirely, but he makes it sound like you’re the life of the party—”

“I am.”

“—and so I want to hear the hot goss, Ilya. I’m terminally single, and the industry keeps making my gaydar worse, and I’m *bored*.”

A slow smile spreads across Ilya’s face. “I have solution.”

“What’s that?”

“You remind me of my best friend. She is successful businesswoman in Boston.”

Rose cocks her head to one side.

“Also smart. Gorgeous. Good taste in hockey players. Terrible taste in partners.” He pretends to think it over. “Boston is short flight from here, no?”

She elbows him in the side just as Shane drops heavily onto the seat next to Ilya and tosses his phone onto the table. “Ugh. Sorry, that took longer than I expected.” He finally notices Ilya physically holding Rose at arm’s length as she mock-struggles, and looks back and forth between them. “Uh. Having fun?”

Rose sits back and beams cheesily at him. “We’re behaving.”

“More than behaving,” Ilya puts in, not to be outdone. “We now are—what do you say? Besties?”

“What?” She drops the face and shoves him again. “Like you weren’t making me work for it.” To Shane, who is clearly relaxing as he watches their antics, she says, “He’s a punk. But that’s just to hide that he’s a big softie, so he can stay.”

“You take this back.”

Shane casts his eyes heavenward, even as his shoulders drop away from his ears and lose their remaining tension. “I’ve done this to myself, haven’t I.”

“*You* can’t take this back. I still need to introduce Rose to Sveta.”

Shane makes a show of pondering this, then shrugs. “I don’t see it, but I guess I don’t know Svetlana that well. This would help you with your big lesbian secret, though,” this last part addressed to Rose, who rolls her eyes.

“Not so fast, mister. You can’t get rid of me that easily.”

“I don’t want to get rid of you ever. Did you make Ilya have any crises?”

Ilya gasps. “This was your plan? You make Rose interview me until I talk about feelings?”

“I warned you she was going to wreck you. I just didn’t say how.”

“You can pay therapists for that, you know,” Rose says, leaning back and attempting to drape her legs over Ilya so she can dig her toes into Shane’s leg.

This is only half-successful because Ilya does not, in fact, skip leg day; Shane grabs her ankle easily. “Children...”

“Nope. We’re all adults here, definitely.” She kicks his hand off of her, and straightens back up. “We had a very adult conversation just now.”

“I’m not sure I like the sound of that.”

“Oh, I’m not blowing up your spot—oh! Wait! Ilya!” Rose brings the full force of her attention to bear.

Shane drops his forehead onto Ilya’s shoulder. “Oh no.”

“I heard a report of nine—”

“Don’t you fucking *dare*.” Shane lunges across Ilya’s lap.

Ilya clamps an arm across his back, pinning him in place. “No, let her finish, Hollander. I want to hear what she has to say. Sounds very interesting.”

Shane is squirming prettily and cursing up a storm but can’t hide the goofy expression on his face, and Rose is shrieking with laughter, and not a shred of adult behavior can be detected on the roof.

Ilya decides that playing nice might be worth it sometimes.

End Notes

i'ma be real here, this story had two initial goals:

- make rose & ilya gang up on shane
- get ilya to set up rose with sveta

anything else is because the characters ran with it. im love them your honour

also while i was checking when the word “bestie” started sliding into common usage, i found [this](#) very funny blog post. happy hol(lander)idays!!!!

sometimes yelling on [tumblr](#)

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