

20 Questions & Mutual Destruction in Elevator 2T

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20 Questions & Mutual Destruction in Elevator 2T

by [fringe_problems](#)

Summary

Ilya takes out his phone and swipes to *Jane* and types quickly, eyes on Hunter: *I am trapped in elevator. With Scott Hunter. I am coming soon as I can.*

While Ilya is typing, Hunter has been staring at his phone as his eyebrows slowly move closer and closer together. Ilya is tempted to make a joke about Hunter getting wrinkles.

“Does your phone work?” Hunter says, looking up from his own phone. For a brief, panicked moment, Ilya is worried, but then, the three dots of Shane typing, and then Shane has responded: *Are you joking??*

Ilya types back quickly: *No. Elevator stopped. They say 20 minutes.*

Shane responds immediately: *Please don't kill Scott Hunter*

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Ilya Rozanov and Scott Hunter get stuck in an elevator during the Tampa Bay All-Stars.

Notes

Thank you to [woodenducks](#) for beta-ing and improving this. Any mistakes are from me, futzing too much.

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

Scott Hunter is distracted, trying to keep his jacket from sliding off the handle of his rolling suitcase, when someone calls, “Wait!” Scott is a good guy who always holds elevator doors open. This time, however, he immediately regrets it as Ilya Rozanov steps onto the elevator.

Rozanov is wearing an obnoxiously loud red Hawaiian shirt; the expression on his face is the usual fiendish delight. Everything about Rozanov—the cavalier way he is off the ice, his intensity on it—is an affront to Scott.

“Rozanov,” Scott says, diplomatically.

“Hunter, is good to see you,” Rozanov says, leaning across him to hit the number 4. For historical purposes, Scott is relieved to be two floors up, on the sixth floor.

“Good to see you, too?” Scott answers; it comes out as a question, as he braces himself for whatever joke Rozanov has up his ugly shirt.

“We are on same team this year. Your experience will be good to destroy the West,” Ilya says with a nod.

The way he says ‘the West’ has a jovially menacing tone; a cheerful threat rather than the division of the teams this year.

Scott sighs and says, “I’m assuming *experience* is a joke about my age. You should get some new material, Rozanov.”

Scott is staring pointedly ahead. He has just arrived. He is looking forward to playing hockey that doesn’t really matter. If he’s honest, he *is* sort of looking forward to playing with Rozanov. Just not talking to him. He’s also looking forward to the trip itself: Scott has extended his stay in Florida for the two empty days before his next home game. He has better plans for those days, which do not involve annoying Russians.

The elevator dings for the fourth floor.

“Ah, but, just like you, it is joke that does not age,” Ilya calls over his shoulder as he bounces out of the elevator.

Scott is left, as usual, wondering if he was just complimented or insulted. He closes his eyes to compose himself and then feels the buzz of his phone in his pocket and smiles.

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Ilya Rozanov is in the hotel lobby in a good mood. Nothing can stop him. A shark could jump out of the ocean, and he could fight it, probably. He likes learning new words, and “not compatible” is now his new favourite word.

He taps his beer gently on the counter, he feels—hard to place. Like there’s a bubble of emotion in his chest that can’t escape. Like there’s been a shift in the game, and the opening for the next goal has cleared up.

Ilya has been grabbing a drink to kill time. Shane told him 9 o'clock. At precisely 9:01, Ilya saunters to the elevator. At the exact same time, Scott Hunter appears. He looks, as always, like a man focused on winning a game that is *extremely* boring and important to no one but him. Chess, maybe.

Hunter nods in acknowledgment, says, "We meet again, Rozanov."

"We are on same schedule," Ilya answers cheerfully.

Hunter makes a grunt of agreement, staring down at his phone as the elevator arrives.

Ilya presses the button for the ninth floor. He's restless, tapping his thighs as the elevator doors close. He is zoned out completely, thinking mainly of the depraved things he would like to do to Shane Hollander tonight, if things go how he thinks they will. Depraved daydreams like the tickle of Shane's hair under his mouth when Shane rests on his chest. Or the little smile Shane gets when no one is looking, the smile that feels to Ilya like he's been zapped straight in the brain by Zeus. Normal sex stuff if anyone were to ask.

Somewhere between floors 5 and 6, Ilya is shaken from these thoughts by a distinct crunching noise. The upward momentum of the moving elevator, the lifting feeling that's easy to ignore after a lifetime of riding in them without a second thought, comes to an abrupt halt. Both Ilya and Scott are thrown momentarily off balance, stumbling sideways.

The elevator has stopped moving. The lights are on, thankfully, and the floor numbers they hit are still lit up on the panel. Both men pause, arrested in space.

Finally, stating the obvious, Ilya says, "We are not moving."

"No. We aren't," says Hunter. The silence—no whirr of the elevator, neither of them speaking—lengthens nervously.

Finally, Hunter steps forward and presses the red Emergency button. There is a long, loud ringing noise, followed by a brief pause. Ilya lets out a breath of relief when a staticky voice says, "Hello, Building Maintenance?"

It takes a second to figure out he has to hold the button to speak. Ilya rolls his eyes. Hunter finally answers: "Uh, Hello. We're—the elevator has stopped moving."

"*Oh, shi— sorry. Are you in Tower 2, Elevator B?*" answers the voice, which Ilya can now tell belongs to a teenager who has stopped himself from swearing.

They both glance around, and there, above the door, it says: T2EB. Hunter presses the button to speak and answers, "Yes? I think so."

"*My apologies, sir, we've been having some maintenance issues with that elevator. Please hold.*"

There is a brief back-and-forth between Hunter and the teenager before they are promised 20 minutes. Maximum.

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“Does your phone work?” Hunter says, looking up from his own phone. For a brief, panicked moment, Ilya is worried, but then, the three dots of Shane typing, and then Shane has responded: *Are you joking??*

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Shane responds immediately: *Please don't kill Scott Hunter*

Ilya types: *I do not promise.* Out loud, he says, “Yes, my phone works. Yours?”

Hunter has more emotion on his face than his usual noble captain stare: he looks a little panicked, annoyed. He is holding his phone up, walking to each corner, trying to catch a connection.

“You have someone waiting for you, uh?” Ilya says, half joking. He can't help himself. It's like being shown candy and told not to eat it.

Hunter does not respond, but the glare surprises Ilya. Huh: Ilya is onto something. Hunter is standing on his tip-toes, holding his phone higher in the opposite corner.

“Hot hookup can wait twenty minutes,” Ilya adds, crossing his arms.

“I do not have a *hookup* waiting,” Hunter says, taking the bait.

“No hookup, huh?” Ilya distracts himself by looking at his phone. Shane has not said anything further. Ilya is antsy, desperate to know what Shane wanted to talk about, and those nerves need an outlet, so he adds, “No. Secret hookup does not seem like Scott Hunter. Maybe secret wife? Waiting nicely in room?”

Scott sighs deeply. “Rozanov, I do not have a secret wife.”

His annoyance makes Hunter stop pacing, which is good. Ilya asks, “Okay, no secret wife. Very important delivery then?”

“We are not playing twenty questions,” Hunter says definitively, and leans against the back wall.

“Twenty? I only ask three questions.”

“No, twenty questions—the game?” Hunter says, a satisfying exasperation in his voice.

Rozanov's eyebrows shoot up: “You play a game of just asking questions? This is boring, even for you.”

“No, it’s—I didn’t make it up. It’s just a game you play to pass the time. Like on a long drive.”

“Sounds very American,” Ilya sniffs. “Needing car games.”

Hunter sighs. This is his third deep sigh in just a few minutes. Ilya wonders if he can get to twenty sighs. He looks at the time. It has barely been two minutes. He sinks to sit on the floor, knees up, drumming on the ground between his legs impatiently. Hunter stands over him for a beat and then joins him on the floor, sitting wide-legged on the other side of the elevator. Ilya watches as he leans his head back against the mirrored wall and closes his eyes.

The silence stretches too long, rattling in Ilya’s ears. He tries to look at his phone, but all it contains for him is Shane’s waiting text. He opens Twitter, closes it, and then finally looks back up at Hunter, who looks *miserable*.

The silence is turning into an energy that is zipping across Ilya’s skin with no outlet. Annoying Hunter seems like a better bet. Ilya asks, “How does it work, this game of twenty questions?”

Hunter opens his eyes and says, “You just think of ... anything. A person, an object, a place. And then the other person has twenty questions to figure out what it is.”

Ilya looks up at the silent Emergency panel and then says, “Okay, what are you thinking of?”

“You have to ask yes or no questions.”

“Okay, are you thinking of person?”

“No,” Hunter answers, crossing his arms.

“Object?”

“Yes.”

They go back and forth, and Ilya eliminates a wide range of things: it’s not sexy and it is bigger than a dildo. Finally, Ilya narrows his eyes and asks, “Is it hockey object?”

“What does that mean?”

“Object, is it related to hockey?”

“Yes,” Scott admits.

“Predictable. Hm,” Ilya taps a finger against his lips. “Do you use it to play hockey?”

“No. You’re at fifteen.”

“Hockey but not equipment,” Ilya says. Then he rolls his eyes. “Is it trophy?”

“Yes.”

“Is it the Cup?”

“Closer,” Hunter admits, an annoying look on his face.

“The Hart?”

“No.”

Ilya pauses and says, “2014 Stanley Cup with my name on it.”

“So close. 2016-2017 Stanley Cup engraved with the New York Admirals,” Scott answers, leaning back from where he’d been slowly leaning into Ilya’s space.

Ilya groans, “Oh so made up fantasy objects are okay in twenty questions?”

Hunter shakes his head and says, “No. Oh, well, yeah I guess you could do something fictional.” His voice returns to the normal, challenging edginess that Ilya associates with Hunter, “But that one’s real.”

Ilya rolls his eyes. He checks his phone, it has been less than ten minutes. He sends an update and apology to Shane, who responds *No worries*. When he looks up, Hunter is watching him, an unreadable expression on his face.

“Okay, my turn,” Ilya says.

They play another round, and Hunter fails to guess Ilya’s selection of *Cliff Marlow’s jock strap*. Ilya fails to guess *Jean Claude Van Damme* because Ilya is not one million years old and the only movies he watches are whatever recent movie is on the airplane.

A staticky voice cuts in on the intercom and informs them that someone will be there in ten minutes.

According to Ilya’s phone, it has already been ten minutes. This is the longest time he has spoken with Hunter one-on-one.

Ilya likes it when people pay attention to him. It makes him feel solid and real because provoking people is the easiest way to control a room. But making fun of Shane is different. When Ilya *needs* to use a joke to build a moat between himself and the world, between himself and the truth, Shane responds by collapsing under the provocation in a way that makes Ilya’s brain melt. With Hunter, it is easy. He falls for it every time, like swatting a bee and getting stung. A hot, boring bee.

Ilya counters with Russian superstar, Alla Pugacheva, which Scott also doesn’t guess within 20 questions, and Ilya says, “See, we can both say famous people.”

Ilya gets lucky and figures out Hunter’s next choice—a palm tree—in just 10 guesses.

The staticky voice returns, informing them it’ll be five minutes.

Ilya says, “Okay. I have a new one.”

“Is it a person again?” Hunter asks.

“Yes.”

“Are they famous?”

Ilya hesitates, and then decides: “No, I don’t think so.”

“You don’t *think* so? That’s not how it works,” Hunter says, exasperated.

Ilya smiles wide: “Next question?”

“Fine. Do I know them?”

“Yes, definitely,” Ilya says, pleased.

“Is it a woman?” Scott asks.

Ilya thinks for a long minute. That insatiable need to wheedle, to provoke and test the response, feels like a marble he’s rolling around in his mouth, ready to spit out. *Bad idea*, the better version of himself thinks. *This is a bad idea*. Finally, he says, “I do not know. Maybe no.”

Hunter’s eyes narrow. Confusion. He glances up at the ceiling, considering. Hunter looks down at his lap and flips his phone over, clicking it on and off again, like he can’t help himself. Ilya says, “Ah, closer.”

Scott’s eyes go wide. He opens his mouth and then shuts it again. He looks at the elevator panel, where the numbers are lit up, and says, not looking at Ilya but at the floor numbers, “Is Shane Hollander staying on the ninth floor?”

Instinctively, without even realizing he’s going to do it, Ilya stands up in one quick movement from where he was sitting. Hunter doesn’t react, just looks up from the floor.

“I guess that answers my question. Rozanov. I know you’re staying on the fourth floor. I paid attention to this because you were,” he pauses and cranes up to look Ilya in the eyes, “*Not quiet*, when Hollander was my neighbour back in Nashville.”

Ilya shifts his weight. The joke of before, of wheedling Hunter, has drained out of him.

“You do not know anything,” Rozanov says, defiantly.

“No, I don’t,” Hunter says. “And I haven’t *known anything* for six fucking years. If I did know something, I haven’t told anyone. In six years.”

Ilya sits back down, crossed-legged this time. He catches his breath and considers the man across from him, “Okay. So what. Who is waiting for you on the sixth floor?”

Scott sighs, deeply. They’ve hit sigh number five, at least, and then he continues, “Someone who doesn’t get to fly a lot and had never been to Florida. Someone who doesn’t have a card

to a room because they ... couldn't ask at the lobby."

"Very dangerous, Hunter," Ilya tuts.

"I'm acting dangerous?" Scott laughs. "How's your game in Montreal next month going to go?"

Ilya glares at him, "Dangerous for Mr. America. I did not know you live so on edge to bring someone all the way to hotel full of hockey players."

Scott rubs his eyes, "Yeah. Well. It feels like a worse idea every passing minute."

Ilya's emotions unspool from him unexpectedly. He cannot remember the last time someone got on a plane to see him. His dad, almost ten years ago, maybe.

"It is nice. That h—this person comes to see you. Even if it is secret."

Scott has been staring at a point just over Ilya's shoulder for a minute. His eyes lock in on him, like he's looking for the joke. He says, slowly, "Yeah. It is nice."

"I will not say anything. I assume you will also not," Ilya tests.

Scott taps his own chest and says, "America," and points to Ilya, "Russia. Mutually assured destruction," and then laughs dryly.

"What is this?"

"In the Cold War. Neither side would do anything ... bad, because the other side could do something equally as bad in response. It cancelled each other out, no nukes."

"Ah. Cold War," Ilya says in response, considering. "Well—"

Whatever he was about to say is cut off by the crunch of static, and the intercom voice says: *Hello? We're about to move the elevator manually and pry the doors. We recommend you sit on the floor in case of any—sudden movements.*

They look at each other, already sitting on the floor. Ilya does not like the sounds of "sudden movements." He does not want to die in an elevator with Scott Hunter and whatever shared secret now sits between them like a time bomb.

Scott presses the button to answer and says, "Okay, we're ready."

Slowly, sickeningly, the elevator begins to move. It is not the smooth, automatic feeling of an elevator. It feels like being in a basket someone is cranking by hand. Ilya feels a little green. After a moment, the elevator stops moving. He looks at Hunter, who looks like he's holding in a fart.

Ilya opens his mouth to say as much when there's a loud scraping sound by the door. They turn and watch as the doors slowly, painstakingly part, revealing a solid wall on the bottom third and an opening in the top, hotel carpet at about chest height. Ilya stands first.

A member of hotel staff is looking down at him and says, “Do you need a hand?”

Ilya, desperate to be free, ignores him, placing both palms on the ground and hoisting himself up, similar to getting out of a pool. He rights himself in one fluid motion. Relief of being somewhere *not* an elevator lets his chest finally unclasp from the tightness he wasn’t even aware of. Hunter is behind him, and Ilya says to the hotel staff, “Old man may need help getting it up.”

“Fuck you, Rozanov,” says Hunter without effort or anger, as he easily hoists himself out.

Ilya smooths his shirt and then turns to Scott and clamps a hand on his shoulder, “Okay. Have nice time. No destruction.”

They stare at each other. Something like a truce passes between them.

A woman in a hotel uniform steps forward and opens her mouth to speak. Ilya shakes his head, he doesn’t have time for this. No time to think about what he now knows about Scott Hunter. No time to think about what Scott Hunter knows—what he has known this whole time—what it means to share a secret. Ilya cuts the woman off before she can speak, “Where are stairs?”

“Oh, just that way. Make a left,” she answers, pointing.

Ilya stalks off, leaving Hunter to deal with the polite part, the staff who probably want to make a big apologetic speech. For reasons he has never understood, mid to high-end hotels, the kind the MLH is always sending him to, always seem to have random, uncomfortable chairs in the middle of every hall. Evidently, he now sees, one purpose for these chairs is for someone’s discreet hookup to hide. In the corner of a hall, looking anxious, is a handsome, buff man Ilya does not recognize, clutching a duffel bag on his lap.

Making an educated guess, Ilya says without breaking a stride, “Hunter is on his way.”

“What—?” he hears the man say, but Ilya has somewhere he needs to be.

—

Once Scott has placated the nervous woman, made it clear he will not sue, and that he was not worried, he makes his own swift exit, just as Rozanov did moments before. At the end of the hallway, to his great relief, is Kip, sitting wide-eyed. Kip stands when he sees him. Scott does not say anything—he just beckons as he reaches his door, inviting Kip to follow. He unlocks his door and leaves it open.

He heads directly to the minibar, opens the tiny scotch, and takes a swig. He is somehow in a new reality where he and Ilya Rozanov share a secret. For six years, he has *pointedly* ignored whatever Shane Hollander and Rozanov were up to, with the exception of one notable incident that he smoothed over within a day. His own secrets are enough to carry. And now, the result of letting go of some of his secrecy, proof that hiding was never enough: Kip quietly closes the door behind him as he walks in. He puts his duffel bag on the neatly made

hotel bed and looks profoundly confused. Scott crosses to him and kisses him with whisky still on his tongue.

“Sorry I didn’t answer your text. I have had the most insane fucking evening,” Scott says. He curls an arm around Kip’s waist to pull him in close and stoops to rest his head on Kip’s shoulder.

Scott feels a strange stab of jealousy in this moment. With Kip, he is constantly explaining and justifying the iron box he has built around himself. It’s stupid because Kip is *right* to question it. But he does not think Rozanov has to do the same with Hollander, whatever they have.

“Hey, so, why did Ilya Rozanov tell me you were on your way?” Kip says into his hair.

“Jesus Christ. That man is going to kill me,” is all Scott can think to say.

“More than usual?” Kip asks.

“He knows about us. The elevator broke down, and I freaked out when I couldn’t text you. And he guessed, somehow, that someone was waiting for me,” Scott says, breathing it all out like a confession. “Someone secret.”

Kip pulls back, looking at his face, “Are you worried he’ll say something? He seems like a loudmouth.”

Scott shakes his head and says, “That’s just an act,” and then he laughs, rubbing his head against his boyfriend’s shoulder. “One that I fall for every time. But he’s very good at keeping things to himself.”

The whole point of this trip has turned on its head: he has played some very good hockey, and now he is supposed to prove to Kip that he can invite him into his world, take him somewhere new. He reminds himself that, actually, nothing has changed: he and Kip are going to spend two days in a beachside rental, and everything happening outside this room has nothing to do with him. He breathes a sigh. Sharing a secret does not mean he *has* to be friends with Ilya fucking Rozanov.

End Notes

scott does in fact sigh deeply five times in this story.

i'm on tumblr talking nonsense at [fringe-problems](#). comments always appreciated.

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