in this life and the next

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at https://archiveofourown.org/works/77462976.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Categories:	F/M, M/M
Fandoms:	Heated Rivalry (TV), Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid
Relationships:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov, Ilya Rozanov & Svetlana Vetrova, Ilya Rozanov/Svetlana Vetrova
Characters:	Svetlana Vetrova, Ilya Rozanov, Irina Rozanova, Grigori Rozanov, Shane Hollander, Sasha | Ilya Rozanov's Coach's Son, Alexei Rozanov | Andrei Rozanov
Additional Tags:	POV Outsider, Kind Of, Ilya Rozanov is Obsessed With Shane Hollander, Ilya Rozanov Needs A Hug, Ilya Rozanov Loves Shane Hollander, Ilya Rozanov & Svetlana Vetrova Friendship, POV Svetlana Vetrova, Childhood Friends, Childhood Trauma, References to Depression, Implied/Referenced Suicide, Svetlana kind of suspects but not really
Language:	English
Series:	Part 2 of hollanov from the outside
Stats:	Published: 2026-01-11 Words: 7,176 Chapters: 1/1

in this life and the next

by lisa6

Summary

> “Why do you think it’s the same person every time?” Ilya asked, smiling. His phone disappeared back in his jeans pocket. “I’m hot. Lots of women want me to fuck them.”
>
> Svetlana leaned in close to his ear. “And men?”

Or: ever since they were children, Svetlana Vetrova has always been there for Ilya Rozanov, her best friend in the world.

Notes

I can't stop writing about hollanov. help!!!!

also, thank you for reading and have fun <3

See the end of the work for more notes

Svetlana Vetrova leaned against a shiny black Mercedes on Stoleshnikov Pereulok. She was tapping her foot impatiently as she watched hundreds of people pass her by and ignored the appreciative looks her knee-high Chanel boots and fake fur coat attracted.

Moscow twinkled with decorated shop windows, fairy lights that spanned the streets and headlights that reflected off the wet asphalt. Annoyed, she fished her phone out of her small shoulder bag and typed a message.

If you're not here in 3 minutes I'm leaving.

She slipped her phone back into her bag and crossed her arms, huffing out her irritation.

"Looking for me?"

Svetlana raised her eyebrows, just a millimetre. Her heels were high enough that she didn't have to tip her head back much to meet Ilya's sparkling eyes. She jutted out her chin and followed the motion of his hand as it lifted to his mouth, a cigarette held loosely between his index and middle finger.

"You're lucky it's not raining anymore."

Ilya turned his head away from her to blow out the smoke into the chilly air, then dropped his cigarette on the ground. "I'm sorry for keeping you waiting," he said and stepped close enough to gently bump his forehead against hers, "You look beautiful."

Svetlana's indignation dissolved at once. She cupped his cheeks and tilted her head to kiss him, short and sweet, then brought her arms around his neck. She sighed when his strong arms wrapped around her waist a bit tighter than usual, which was never a good sign. Pulling away an inch, she searched his eyes.

"What kept you?"

Ilya smiled. "Guess."

Svetlana brought her hand up between them; they were still so close that the back of her hand rested against his chest as she counted on perfectly manicured fingers. "Your father, your brother, or your coach?"

"Father," Ilya said, no longer smiling. "He's stressed out about the draft."

"And you're not?"

"Not for the same reason he is."

Svetlana hummed in understanding. For the past two years, Ilya's father had tried to convince him to give up on his dream of playing in the NHL and stay in Moscow instead. He'd brought KHL scouts to Ilya's practice sessions on his own initiative and introduced Ilya to

billionaire oligarchs who promised to sponsor his career if he chose to play for their favorite Russian teams.

It didn't take much to figure out why Ilya's father wanted to keep him around. He'd always been controlling to such an extend that it made Svetlana uncomfortable, especially because Ilya — for all his bravado — tended to cave in to his father most times and rebelled in secret. Imagining that Ilya could comply with him now, shortly before the draft, had given Svetlana more sleepless nights than she could remember.

Moscow, she knew, would kill Ilya.

***

Svetlana glared at the blond boy standing across from her. He was clad in hockey gear, only taller than her because he was wearing skates, and red in the face.

"This is Ilya," Grigori Rozanov said, squeezing his son's shoulder. He wasn't talking to Svetlana; his beady eyes were firmly set on her father.

"Nice to meet you, young man," said Sergei Vetrov, smiling warmly. "I hear you're going to be a household name soon."

"Yes," Ilya said, lifting his chin. He was Svetlana's age, only two months older, her father had mentioned in the car on their way to the rink. Talent scouts had already taken notice of him even though he was only eleven years old, so he had been shipped off to training camps across the country and introduced to many of Russia's most successful hockey players, which was why Sergei Vetrov had been looking forward to meeting him today. Being talked about as a future hockey star at such a young age came with a lot of pressure, as Sergei knew from firsthand experience.

"Should we play a little?" Sergei asked, nodding towards the goal, and Svetlana watched the blush deepen on Ilya's face. For someone who spent most of his time at indoor ice rinks, he had surprisingly golden skin; it made his blueish-green eyes stand out even more. Svetlana frowned. She'd never noticed that about a boy.

"Do you play as well?"

It took her a moment to realize Grigori had addressed his question to her. When she didn't immediately respond, he asked, "Or do you prefer figure-skating? That's more for girls."

"My mom won't let me play hockey," she said, jutting her chin forward, and kept quiet about the figure-skating lessons she was taking. "But I know everything about it."

Grigori's mouth twitched. He was an imposing man, even though he was several inches shorter than her father. He was bald, his skin pale, and he had hard features that, even when

he smiled, intimidated Svetlana. Ilya didn't bear a strong resemblance to his father; the only thing they had in common was the striking color of their eyes.

"Do you?" Grigori asked as his focus drifted towards the ice, where Ilya was showing off his skills for Svetlana's father. "You could teach Ilya a thing or two, then. His playmaking isn't good enough."

Svetlana tucked an unruly curl behind her ear. She looked at Ilya, who was glaring hard at a puck that hadn't made its way into the goal, and blushed at the thought of getting to see him again.

***

"You're too slow," Svetlana told Ilya as she watched him glide across the ice two weeks later. Her father had dropped her off at the rink on his way to work so she could spend more time with her new friend.

"That's because I barely slept last night," Ilya said, coming to a stop in front of her. "Do you have any siblings?"

"No, it's just me. Do you?"

"Lucky." Ilya bent down to tighten the laces on his right skate. "I have an older brother. Alexei."

"Would you rather be an only child?" Svetlana asked, surprised. She'd always wished she could have a sibling to stay up late with and talk to about anything — school, clothes, boys.

"Yes," Ilya said, standing up again. He gave her a lofty look. "I know you're a figure skater but I could outskate you any day."

Svetlana rolled her eyes at him and swung her legs off the boards. "Find someone else to compete with."

***

Ilya didn't have many friends, Svetlana learned, because most of his time was spent on hockey. For five days a week he went to a private school and, from there, headed straight to the rink. His father paid several coaches to train him and they all shared the notion that shouting at their protégé would hone his skills. Ilya never talked back, just grit his teeth and accepted whatever words were thrown at him. It bothered Svetlana, who couldn't imagine her own father letting anyone talk to her this way.

“Am I your best friend?” she asked one day, when they’d known each other for five months and were waiting outside of the arena for their respective rides home. She’d watched Ilya practice, as she often did nowadays.

Ilya shrugged. “I think so.”

“Then why haven’t you invited me to your house yet? You’ve been to my place a million times.”

Ilya scowled at his feet. “Father doesn’t like it when I invite people over.”

“But I’m your best friend,” Svetlana argued. “How can I be your best friend when I haven’t even seen your bedroom? You could be a weirdo and sleep with, like, stuffed animals still, and I’d never know. It’d be so embarrassing to tell my other friends about you and *then* find out you’re lame.”

“I’ve never had a stuffed animal,” Ilya said, as if that was any less weird. Svetlana gave him a pitying look.

A few days later, Ilya invited her to his house.

***

Unsurprisingly, Ilya’s family lived in an ostentatious building in one of Moscow’s most expensive neighborhoods. The only reason Svetlana wasn’t awed by all the splendor was because she, due to her own upbringing, was used to it.

Ilya’s mother was a gorgeous woman several years younger than her husband. She welcomed Svetlana into the apartment with a warm smile and called for Ilya as she shut the door behind her.

“Ilya has told me so much about you. You really are very pretty,” Irina said, which made Svetlana blush. If Irina noticed, she didn’t say anything, just placed an elegant hand on Svetlana’s back and guided her into the kitchen. She smelled like vanilla and had flawless, golden skin. Her hair was dyed a lighter blonde than her son’s, but her eyebrows were the same color as Ilya’s hair. “Are you hungry? Ilya and I made pelmeni for lunch and they should be eaten before his father comes home.”

That struck Svetlana as odd. “Why?”

“Oh, he just prefers to order in,” she explained with a shrug, then turned in the direction of the large hallway and Svetlana noticed how thin she was. “Ilyusha! Your friend is here.” She turned back to Svetlana. “I don’t know if he heard. He’s been watching hockey all day. You can just go to his room, if you’d like. It’s upstairs, the second room to the right.”

Svetlana smiled, and went to find Ilya.

***

Ever since she'd met Irina, Svetlana couldn't stop seeing her not only in the way Ilya looked, but also in everything he did. She carefully catalogued the speed with which Ilya's smile fell sometimes, how he bit his tongue and stood up a little straighter whenever he was with his father, and the silence that seemed to fall over him when it was just the two of them and there was no one to pretend for.

"I love your mother," Svetlana told him because she thought Ilya would like hearing it. "She gave me this gorgeous vintage Armani dress of hers the other day, because she thinks she's too old to wear it, even though *I* think she'd still look beautiful in it."

"Father says there's something wrong with her," Ilya said and shrugged off his pads. Then, slower, quieter, he added, "I'm worried he's right."

Svetlana frowned. "Your father shouldn't be talking about his wife this way. And he shouldn't be saying it to you."

"Why?" Ilya bit out. "I'm not stupid. I notice how she, just, like, disappears sometimes."

"Does she go to therapy?" Svetlana asked. "My aunt does. She's schizophrenic."

While pulling off his socks, Ilya glared up at her through his eyelashes. "My mom isn't *crazy*. She just needs to find something to do."

Those were Grigori's words, Svetlana knew. Ilya loved his mother and the way she doted on him. He never shut up about how funny and how smart she was, and always looked for her first every time he won a trophy or a medal, which she would then ceremoniously put in the quickly-filling trophy cabinet that they'd built together in Ilya's room.

So Svetlana raised her brows at Ilya, uncaring of how bitchy she knew she looked.

"Whatever. I've got to shower."

Svetlana got up from the bench she'd been sitting on. "Sure. Talk to you later."

***

A few months later, Svetlana woke up to muffled crying in the middle of the night.

"I just can't believe it," her mother was saying in accented Russian — after thirty years of being married to a Russian man and living in Moscow, far away from New York, her native

language still softened her words. “Those poor boys. How could she do this to them?”

“Grigori said she’d always been unstable,” came her father’s quiet murmur, which made Svetlana sit up. Her heart beat all the way up to her throat, making it impossible to swallow.

“Yes, that much as obvious, but… my God.” A pause. “And Ilya found her? That must’ve been… He’s *twelve years old*, he shouldn’t—”

Their voices cut off abruptly with the click of a shutting door.

Irina Rozanova was buried the following Friday. Svetlana made sure to stand close to Ilya during the ceremony. She didn’t hold his hand because then surely Ilya’s father would admonish her and she didn’t want to cause Ilya any more trouble, but she pressed her shoulder to his arm and, as the casket was lowered into the ground, hooked her pinky with his.

Ilya didn’t cry until later that night, after the funeral party had moved to a restaurant downtown and Svetlana discreetly ushered him away from everyone else to pull him into a tight embrace.

***

One night, when Ilya slept over at Svetlana’s house, he turned around in her bed and poked her forehead with the tip of his index finger. They’re both fourteen and for the first time, when Svetlana had asked her parents if Ilya could stay the night, they had ordered her to leave her bedroom door open.

“What?” she mumbled through a sleepy haze.

“I’m not a virgin anymore.”

Svetlana’s eyes shot open in an instant. “What?”

“You know Nastia, right?” Ilya asked. “Her brother smokes weed and we stole some of it and then had sex.”

Svetlana made a face at him but didn’t know what kind of face it was, exactly. She at least hoped it didn’t reflect the sickness tying her stomach into knots. “But you’re… wow. Okay.”

“It was weird,” Ilya mused. “I mean, it felt good and it was fun. But also really awkward.”

“I haven’t…” Svetlana started but drifted off to let the words hang between them. She knew Ilya understood what she couldn’t say. “Was it her first time, too?”

Ilya nodded, and Svetlana pursed her lips in thought. For some reason, she didn’t like that Ilya had wandered off and experienced so many new things with someone else. He’d gotten

high, undressed in front of some other girl and had sex with her, while Svetlana had gone shopping with her mother like a *child*. She swallowed the bitter taste that thought left in her mouth.

“And how do you feel about it?” she asked.

Ilya contemplated her question for a moment, then smiled. His teeth glinted in the bit of light that poured in through the curtains. “Like I want to do it again.”

***

The first time they kissed, it was out of boredom. They were fifteen and Ilya had recently broken up with the girl he’d been seeing, and they were home alone and drunk after they’d secretly stolen one of the expensive bottles of vodka Svetlana’s father kept in the living room cupboard.

Svetlana wasn’t even sure how it happened. One moment they were talking about Ilya’s dream of one day signing with a team in the NHL and Svetlana following him to whatever city he’d live in, the next Ilya had her face between his hands and his tongue in her mouth. But Ilya was gorgeous and her best friend and, with every second that passed, becoming really good at kissing her, so Svetlana kissed him back and ignored the butterflies in her stomach.

***

Days later, Ilya took Svetlana’s virginity.

***

It kept happening after that first time.

They grew up, but never apart; Svetlana wouldn’t let them. Ilya grew taller, wider, stronger, and Svetlana stood by to bring him back down to earth whenever he lost himself in the endorphins that came with endless hours of physical exertion, desperate for an NHL contract and the concomitant chance to finally get out of Moscow.

A few months before the draft, when they were lying naked next to each other in bed, Ilya propped his head up on his bicep and said, “I fucked my coach’s son.”

Svetlana laughed. “You did what?”

Ilya wasn’t the only guy she had sex with, just as she *definitely* wasn’t the only girl he slept with. Luckily, she’d grown out of whatever childish feelings she might’ve once harbored for him because, at the rate he was going, it seemed that Ilya wanted to be done fucking half of Moscow’s population by the time he inevitably left to play hockey in North America.

“He’s hot,” Ilya explained, turning to lie on his side and face her. His eyes kept flickering over her face, searching. Svetlana wondered if he’d expected her to be surprised; she’d noticed him look at boys the same way he looked at girls years ago. “You know him. Aleksandr Medvedev.”

Svetlana did know him and she agreed that he was hot. “Did he sleep with you to piss off his father?”

“He slept with me because I’m also hot,” Ilya said and Svetlana agreed with that, too. “Like you.”

“Well, you are hot, but you’re also incredibly fucking stupid if you really did fuck Sasha.”

“He’s not going to tell anyone.” Ilya snorted and pressed his foot against Svetlana’s ankle. “Are you jealous? Because he’s bi, too. I’m sure he wouldn’t be against a threesome.”

Svetlana levelled him with a look. “You’re going to make yourself hard again if you’ll keep talking about this and I don’t have time for a second round, because I—“ she leaned in close, smiling against Ilya’s mouth “—have a date.”

Ilya kissed her.

***

In October, Svetlana’s phone chimed with an incoming text. It was a link to an American luxury real estate website. A minute later, a second text followed:

start looking for places in Boston :)

***

The NHL loved Ilya. They loved his big mouth and his cockiness and the fact that he had the talent to back it up. They loved that he always gave them something to talk about — a fight he picked on the ice, a quarrel with a ref, a girl he was caught kissing in a luxury nightclub.

They also loved pitting him against Shane Hollander, who was, in Svetlana's humble opinion, the only center in the entire league who was on a par with him.

"He's so cute," she breathed into Ilya's ear, and his hands tightened on her hips. "What'd he say to you today before face-off?"

"That he'd hate to be the subject of conversation while I'm fucking my best friend," Ilya said, and Svetlana laughed against his sweat-damp neck.

"Admit it," she moaned when his fingers brushed over her clit, "you also think he's hot."

Ilya flipped them over and narrowed his eyes at her. "Are you trying to kill my boner?"

It didn't feel to Svetlana as if talking about Shane Hollander was killing Ilya's boner. In fact, she was pretty sure she'd felt his dick twitch inside of her at the mention of his rival. She regarded him for a moment, and let her lips pull into a playful smile.

"He's so nice," she said. "Such a good boy."

"Stop."

"I think he'd cry," she continued, "if you fucked him as hard as you're fucking me right now."

Ilya's mouth went slack. He pushed her left leg up and to the side, thrust harder, and Svetlana smiled around a moan as he brought her close to orgasm.

"You know he'd be so good for you," Svetlana panted, closing her eyes. Ilya made a wounded noise and, when she opened her mouth again, pressed his hand down over it.

"Shut up," he hissed, and Svetlana laughed breathlessly against his palm before he finally made her come and all she could do was moan his name.

***

"Surprise!" Svetlana said when Ilya finally arrived home. He jumped, which made her laugh, and didn't immediately push her down onto whatever suitable surface to fuck her, which was not what she had expected, especially because all she was wearing was a Rozanov jersey and a red lace thong.

"I thought you were back in Moscow," he said, still catching his breath. "What the fuck are you doing here?"

Svetlana frowned at him. "Being nice, but I already regret it."

"Sounds like you."

“Go fuck yourself, Ilya,” she said, and watched him approach her as she told him about how she’d heard about the cancelled game. What she didn’t say was that she’d missed him and that she’d been stealing longing glances at the key to his house for over two weeks, because Ilya was being a dick and didn’t deserve to hear how much she loved him. Ilya seemed to have finally caught up with the situation because he stepped close and leaned in for a kiss; Svetlana stopped him with a hand on his chest. “You don’t deserve me. I should go,” she pouted, playful and flirty, and fought off her smile.

Ilya kept advancing toward her until he had her crowded against his ridiculously large dinner table. But then, suddenly, his phone lit up in his hand and drew all of his attention away from her to it. As if that wasn’t rude enough, he had the audacity to point his index finger at her when she scoffed at him, signaling to her to wait a second while he read the text message.

“Okay, now I’m really leaving, you piece of shit,” she said, and quickly leaned close to get a sneak peek at his phone, curious about who could be important enough to delay sex. “Have fun with Jane.”

She pushed his phone down and Ilya let her. He grinned at her, pushed her down onto the table and stepped into the space she’d made for him between her spread legs.

***

Russia losing to Latvia was embarrassing, but not Ilya’s fault, no matter what the media claimed. The Olympics were a huge deal, obviously, especially with them taking place in Russia this year, but they also had players who weren’t used to playing with each other play on the same team. Ilya had been named captain, not coach. But Russia needed a scapegoat.

Svetlana found him standing with both of their fathers, gorgeous in his well-tailored suit, and zoned out. He was nodding along to whatever Grigori Rozanov was saying and Svetlana’s heart lurched in her chest.

“But there was no leadership,” she heard Ilya’s father complain as she walked up to them. Ilya nodded, still staring at nothing. “That’s always the problem. Leadership.”

“Too much confidence?” Her own father suggested, and Svetlana frowned. “Ilya? Or too much pressure maybe?”

“Too much talking to Mr. Minister, probably,” Svetlana butted in, leaning into her father. Upon hearing her voice, Ilya shook himself out of his thoughts and blinked at her.

“But you love talking about hockey, my angel,” her father said.

“Only when we’re winning. I’m taking Ilya with me to the bar.” She reached for his hand and curled her fingers tightly around his. “He clearly needs another drink.”

And something else to take his mind off things, Svetlana thought, but she'd already arranged for that.

Ilya followed her downstairs, away from their fathers. "Thank you."

"I am an angel," she said, and let go of his hand. He looked like one, too, in the golden light of the opulent building, with his blond curls slicked-back and his disarming blue eyes. Because she knew there was a slight possibility that Ilya would be upset with her in a minute, she added, "It'd be great if you could remember that."

Ilya groaned. "I want a drink."

"But I have something more fun in mind."

She led him across the hall, past a snake statue — which she thought was fitting considering who they were about to meet — and into the washroom at the end of a corridor.

Sasha was snorting a line of coke when they entered. He looked up, a soft smile on his face, and ran his thumb across the skin under his nose. "Long time, Ilya."

Ilya, who had moved across the room to lean against the other, coke-free sink cabinet, looked back. "Long time, Sasha."

Sasha played nice, at least. Svetlana knew he'd been pissed at Ilya for going radio silent on him ever since he'd moved to Boston — especially because he knew Ilya had kept in touch with her — but to be fair, all Sasha had been up to lately was burning through his hefty allowance and doing drugs in luxury nightclubs across the globe. His lifestyle didn't match well with that of a pro athlete.

"Ilya's become boring," Sascha had told her once. "He did a line of coke off my dick once. Can you imagine him doing that now?" Svetlana hadn't been able to imagine Ilya doing that now, but Ilya and Sasha had had a very different relationship to the one she had with Ilya. All they had ever done was fuck.

They discussed hockey for a bit. Well, Svetlana did, because she knew more about it than the two of them combined, and Ilya listened. Sasha pretended to listen; he only started paying attention when Ilya gave a slow, appreciative clap, and offered her his small plastic bag of cocaine.

"No, thanks. It's bedtime for me," she said, getting up from where she'd perched on the other sink cabinet, across from Ilya. She rounded the bathtub with Sasha in it and brushed his shoulder with her hand. "I have to look perfect tomorrow."

Sasha leered at her. "You always look perfect."

"True, but you boys also need to catch up," she smiled, and stepped into Ilya's space. She ignored the look he gave her and kissed his cheek. This would be good for him; Sasha was handsome, shameless and obviously still into Ilya. A perfect distraction. "See you in Boston, Ilya."

She left the washroom, got herself a drink from the bar and stayed close to the door in case she had to stop anyone from entering. But Sasha exited the room two minutes later and made a beeline for her. He leaned over the bar, just grabbed a bottle of vodka and ignored the sour look one of the bartenders shot him for it.

“What happened? I thought you guys would,” she lowered her voice, “fuck.”

“I told you,” he said in a peeved tone, “Ilya’s boring.”

***

“I saw your brother today,” Svetlana told Ilya over the phone. In a few hours, he’ll be on the ice playing an important game against Washington, so she was apprehensive about bringing his family up, but she’d never been particularly good at holding her tongue. “He was coked up, buying a Ferrari. Ilya, you have got to stop sending him money.”

Ilya sighed. They’d had this conversation many times over the course of the past few years.

“I bet he’s barely even looking after your father,” she went on. “You don’t owe him—“

“Yeah, I do,” Ilya hissed. “I’m in fucking Boston. It’s not like I can do anything else to help.”

Svetlana pressed her fingers to her forehead. “He’s an asshole and you’re letting him use you. Have you thought about hiring a—“

“Father would never accept a stranger caring for him. It’d freak him out. He barely even fucking recognizes Alexei anymore.”

“I know,” Svetlana said quietly, leaning her hip against the kitchen island. “I’m sorry. I know this is hard. I’m just… worried about you.”

Ilya had been born with Russia sinking its claws into his flesh. It was never letting go. Svetlana wished she could feel guilty for hoping Grigori would die soon.

***

Ilya won Boston the Stanley Cup, and Svetlana watched through tears in her eyes as he lifted the trophy over his head, shouted, “For you, mama!”, and kissed it.

***

Most of Ilya's summers were spent in Moscow.

He kept working out tirelessly, trained for countless hours at the rink just like he always had, and went out with Svetlana and their friends. If Svetlana didn't intervene and remind him that they were all making their own money, he paid for most of their nights, like good Russian boys did. Sasha joined them sometimes but Ilya seemed to have gotten over whatever attraction he'd once felt toward him, choosing instead to either fuck Svetlana or pick up any other girls he found hot.

Every time Ilya came home, things were just like they always were. Except… Ilya was still texting Jane. Often.

One Saturday night, they were at a club, and Svetlana waited until Ilya had downed his seventh shot of vodka until she finally asked, "Do you have a girlfriend?"

"Me?"

"Yes, you," she said. "You're always on your phone."

"Why do you think it's the same person every time?" Ilya asked, smiling. His phone disappeared back in his jeans pocket. "I'm hot. Lots of women want me to fuck them."

Svetlana leaned in close to his ear. "And men?"

"Just one. Sometimes."

Svetlana wrapped her arms around Ilya's neck. "Does he know you get off to the thought of Shane Hollander's ass?"

Ilya gave her a strange look, then. Had he forgotten that one time they'd had sex and Svetlana had teased him about Shane Hollander? Surely not. Ilya had come hard that night, shuddering in her arms and clenching his jaw.

"I do not do that."

"Okay," Svetlana said mildly. "But is he hot? That guy you fuck sometimes?"

Ilya grinned, eyes twinkling. "What do you think?"

***

Everything got worse; Ilya's father, his brother, and his screen time.

Grigori Rozanov's dementia loomed over Ilya like a fat, dark cloud. It weighed on him as much as his brother's drug and gambling addictions that, without meaning to, Ilya was financing.

"You've got to stop giving Alexei money," Svetlana said again; she'd repeated those words so often they were beginning to feel dull in her mouth. "You're enabling him."

She watched as Ilya brought a pill organizer over to his father, who sat on the far end of the leather couch in his living room. Grigori Rozanov looked smaller than Svetlana had ever thought possible; there was nothing left of the soldierly, formal-looking man she'd once known. Because he didn't leave his apartment anymore, there was no reason for him to wear his jacket decked with military decorations; instead, he wore T-shirts and track pants that flapped on his shrinking frame.

"Ilya," his father said, staring at the pills in confusion, and Ilya kneeled down in front of him. He held out a glass of water, and pointed to the pills in his father's open hand.

"Take them. They help."

"Liar," Grigori growled.

"Father," Ilya tried. His voice was gentle the way it never was toward his family members anymore. "You have to—"

"You're a liar. You've disappointed me your entire life and now—"

Svetlana looked away.

Later that night, when they were drunk and back home, spread out on Ilya's bed in the apartment he owned in Moscow, she combed her hands through his hair. They hadn't had sex; Ilya had spent most of the time they were at the club sitting at his bar, staring at his phone, and blowing people off. A pretty girl in a skimpy leopard print dress had tried her luck but Ilya had just given her a look that, had it been directed at Svetlana, would've made even her self-conscious.

Ilya's phone lit up while he was in the bathroom brushing his teeth. Svetlana stared at it long enough for the display to go black again, and then she crawled over Ilya's side of the bed. Because of Ilya's privacy settings, she couldn't see the actual text, but what she could see was who had texted him.

Jane.

***

Svetlana visited Ilya in Boston three weeks later. When she was done putting on her makeup, she found him in his living room, watching Shane Hollander do yoga on a deck in the middle of nowhere.

“I’m ready,” she announced, her high heels dangling from her fingers, and turned to look at the TV. Shane Hollander was talking about how close his cottage was to his parents’ house. Feeling her lips twitch, she added, “Unless you’ve decided we should stay in and watch… whatever this is.”

It took Ilya a long moment to drag his gaze away from Shane Hollander in a warrior pose. “Sorry. It's so fucking boring I almost fell into a coma.”

Because Svetlana had a good heart and loved her best friend very much, she didn’t point out that the familiar heat in Ilya’s eyes didn’t suggest he’d been bored. Maybe she could revisit the Shane Hollander dirty talk next time Ilya fucked her. Or, maybe, she could finally coax an admission out of him.

“He’s fucking hot, though.”

Ilya switched the TV off without another word and led Svetlana out of his house with his hand warm against the small of her back. The taxi she’d called was waiting at the curb when they stepped outside, and Ilya offered her his hand as she got into it.

She managed to stay quiet until they were halfway across the city and both texting on their phones. “Are you seeing anyone these days?”

Not even looking up from his phone, Ilya asked, “Are you jealous?”

“No,” she snorted. “I think you know me better than that.” When she didn’t get another response, she decided to press him on. “So there’s no one serious?”

“Nope.”

This was getting ridiculous. He’d been texting Jane for *years*. There was no one he’d ever kept around for so long, except Svetlana, but she didn’t count because — more than anything else — they were friends. The sex was just the cherry on top but they could stop fucking today and nothing about their relationship would change; Svetlana would still text him every day, show up at his house to hang out and cuddle him in bed.

Jane, however, seemed serious, and Svetlana was growing tired of being kept in the dark. “Not even Jane?”

Ilya snapped his head around to stare at her. “What?”

“You’ve been texting for years,” she explained, and continued typing out a text to Sasha. *Miss you. Come visit me in Boston.* ”I thought maybe it was serious or something.”

Sasha’s response was immediate: *you or ilya?*

“It’s not serious.” Ilya frowned back down at his phone. “Or anything.”

Us both. We’re heading to a club tonight. He’s wearing a sheer black shirt — you’d love it.

Svetlana pursed her lips. “Okay.”

yeah he's so hot it's annoying. not sure i'm in the mood to have blue balls again though. tell him hi.

"Sasha says hi."

Ilya didn't look like he cared very much.

***

I'm having someone over today, Ilya texted her a few days later. *So don't show up announced again or I'm changing my code.*

Asshole, she wrote back. *Have fun<3*

***

"Oh my God, Ilya. Have you heard?" Svetlana asked the second Ilya picked up. She put her phone on speaker and continued folding clothes into her suitcase; she and some of her best friends would spend the next two weeks in Italy, drinking wine, eating pasta and picking up cute Italian men. "Shane Hollander is dating Rose Landry."

"Yeah," Ilya said. "Who the fuck cares?"

Svetlana rolled her eyes. "Um, pretty much everyone. Have you been on the internet today?"

"I don't give a fuck about Hollander's love life."

"People give a fuck about Rose Landry's love life, though. She's, like, one of the biggest actresses in the world," she said. "And so pretty. She has great style."

"Maybe you should date her," Ilya suggested. He sounded annoyed.

"I wish I was lesbian," Svetlana whined. "Men are so fucking dumb."

Ilya snorted. "Okay."

"They always complain about women being complicated, but that's such bullshit," Svetlana continued emphatically. "Men can never just say what they feel and then expect you to just, like, magically know what's going on, you know?"

There was a long moment of silence on the other end of the line. Then, Ilya asked, "Is there a point to this conversation? Because I've got practice in half an hour."

Svetlana groaned into her phone and hung up. Nine minutes later, her phone lit up with a text from Ilya.

Sorry, I'm in a bad mood. Call you later.

***

Svetlana swung by Ilya's house two days before he had to leave for Tampa. He took her apart with his mouth, fucked her into the mattress and, afterwards, asked her to stay the night and gave her a shirt of his to sleep in.

For the first time in a while, she watched him light a cigarette as they discussed the All-Star game over the low hum of the TV.

"You're playing on the same team as Hollander this year, right?"

Ilya made an affirmative sound and blew out smoke into his living room. Svetlana wondered what Good Boy Hollander would have to say about that. "Is he also mediocre?"

"No, he's amazing. Those hands," she gushed, watching Ilya out of the corner of her eye. "And he's gorgeous."

"If you say so," Ilya said, keeping his own eyes on the TV. He caught the sly look Svetlana gave him, though. "What?"

"You know he's gorgeous," she said, because she was sick of Ilya pretending like his rivalry with Shane Hollander somehow meant that he couldn't admit to finding him attractive. "And you know he's good."

"He is very good."

"I'd love to see you on a line with him."

Ilya shrugged. His toes flexed. "Not sure he can play wing."

"But you can," she said, and Ilya looked at her like she'd known he would. He pushed himself up onto his elbow and Svetlana watched the curve of his bicep appreciatively until her attention was snagged by Ilya pointing at his own chest indignantly.

"You'd have him center me?"

Svetlana laughed at him.

"Me?"

“The people would love it,” she said, egging him on, and laughed when he threw himself half on top of her as if they were children again. The playfulness seeped out of him a few moments later; he laid down on her thighs, and Svetlana ran her hands through his curls the same way she knew his mother used to do it. “I wonder how many outfits Rose Landry will bring. She has such good style.”

Ilya stayed quiet after that.

***

Watching Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov play on the same team was as exhilarating as Svetlana had expected it to be. They passed the puck back and forth like they were the only two players on the ice; not a single opponent stood a chance, which was saying a lot considering this was an All-Star game and only the best players had been invited.

Svetlana knew Ilya and Hollander were better than everybody else but actually seeing it, the way they played with instead of against each other, was… beautiful. It was beautiful hockey. There was no other word for it.

And Ilya was smiling. Not taunting or mocking or leering — just smiling. After another stunning goal, he skated up to Hollander and kissed the side of his helmet. Svetlana raised her eyebrows at the way they both paused, staring at each other, before Ilya gave Shane’s shoulder a firm push and the moment was broken.

Well. Okay.

She grabbed her phone and typed out a text.

Ask Hollander to sign with Boston. You’d win the Cup every season.

***

Ilya’s father died a few weeks later.

Svetlana traveled to Moscow for the funeral and sat next to Ilya at the far end of the table, as far away from Alexei as possible. She tried not to scowl at the way Alexei kept glaring at Ilya, who had taken care of everything — he’d picked out a casket, made sure his father was buried with his parents, terminated bank accounts and rented out a fancy restaurant for the funeral reception.

In the meantime, Alexei had snorted coke and crashed his car on the way to work. Not that it mattered; he had enough of Ilya’s money to just buy a new one.

It wasn’t just Alexei who kept darting withering glances at Ilya, though. It was everyone. His uncles, cousins, people Svetlana didn’t know but assumed Grigori had worked with, and his sister-in-law.

Svetlana ground her teeth and made herself focus on the warmth of Ilya’s thigh pressed to hers. He leaned in, then, to tell her he’d be right back, and got up to leave the room. Alexei followed him a beat later.

It didn’t take long until she heard them arguing with each other; Svetlana could imagine what about. She didn’t bother excusing herself as she left the table, too.

“—And me, I've spent the last five months taking care of our dying father every fucking day,” Alexei was saying when she rounded the corner. He was taller than Ilya, but less muscular, and his face resembled that of their father, while Ilya had inherited their mother’s beauty.

“I thought I heard singing.”

Alexei scoffed. “Great. Now we have to listen to this whore run her mouth.”

Ilya lunged at him. He got one good punch in before Svetlana urging him to stop calmed him down enough to take a step back, breathing heavily.

Svetlana’s heart hammered in her chest as she listened to Ilya rattle off a list of offerings to his brother — including his own apartment — and, finally, threaten him. She heard the words but they refused to register in her brain. Ilya was cutting ties with his last remaining family member. He was cutting ties with Moscow. He didn’t plan on returning here, maybe ever.

Svetlana strongly wished he wouldn’t.

Alexei fixed himself in the mirror before he headed back to the funeral party.

“I don’t deserve you,” Ilya said, which was the dumbest thing Svetlana had ever heard. She reached out to smooth his shirt across his firm chest, her fingers grazing the cool metal of his mother’s cross pendant.

“Yes, you do,” she said quietly. “But you don't want me.”

Ilya breathed out, his eyes darting all over her face. “You know I love you.”

“I know you do,” she confirmed, and gave him a soft smile. “But it's not the same as it is with Jane, is it?” When Ilya didn’t respond, she continued, “I love you too. And whatever you need, I'll be here. I’m not going anywhere.” She cupped his cheeks and looked at him, feeling her heartbeat against her ribcage, in her throat, in the tips of her fingers. “I just hope Jane knows how lucky he is.”

***

Ilya?

***

Ilya, it's been two weeks. Can you at least reply to let me know you're still alive?

***

Fuck you.

***

You signed with Ottawa????? Are you crazy??????

***

Ilya, you're my best friend, and I miss you.

***

Hope you're doing well, wherever you are, you fucking asshole.

***

It's embarrassing watching you lose every game. Your new team sucks ass.

Actually, that's a lie. There are some good players on your roster. Your goalie is good.

Also, fuck you.

***

I'm dying here. I miss my best friend.

***

You're the worst best friend ever, actually, and I fucking hate you.

***

Ilya texted her months later.

I'm so sorry. I'll be in Boston later this week. Are you free?

Although she should probably leave him on read for at least a few hours, she typed out a reply immediately, the words blurry on her phone. *Fuck you. Yes. I miss you so much.*

End Notes

please leave me a comment to let me know what you think. it'd mean a lot. thank you so much!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!