

your cab is definitely here

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your cab is definitely here

by [you-cant-spell-subtext-without \(ayreisha\)](#)

Summary

“Did you have...an interesting night?” She offers it up hesitantly, a part of her hoping that Ilya won’t even take the ‘in.’

There’s a half-laugh from the backseat, the sound slightly self-deprecating.

“Yes. You could say.” Allie can hear the tap-tap-tap of Ilya’s fingers on the seat before he adds, “It was supposed to be boring.”

Allie chews on her lip for a moment because it’s clear some part of the guy wants to talk about - whatever is swirling around in his head, but if Allie knows one thing about men it’s that generally getting them to a place of open, honest communication is the literal epitome of leading a horse to water and getting it to drink.

She goes with - “What’s her name?” saying it lightly, then after a pause, adding: “Or his? Theirs? I don’t make assumptions.”

“Mmm.” Ilya says in response, and for a minute Allie worries she may have taken it a step too far just by using the inclusive language, and that Ilya is very much aware of how deeply she accidentally invaded his privacy. She readies herself to apologize profusely - but then Ilya says:

“Let’s say it is ‘Jane.’”

Notes

this is set after that stairwell kiss, because I needed Ilya to spiral about that and Shane kissing him so fondly on the forehead in Russian - and I needed someone else to hear him do so.

people of Montreal, I promise I am not disparaging your beautiful city. blame the location on Shane (Mr. Landlord. Mr. Real Estate).

all my kisses to @DoctorProfessorSong for the beta <3

Allie drums her fingertips on the steering wheel of her cab car, watching the meter tick.

She hopes that the Russian man who called her for a ride at least fifteen minutes ago is aware that being this late is going to cost him a pretty penny.

At least Allie's pretty sure he's Russian - the accent is as familiar to her as apple pie would be to your average American citizen. Which - is something Allie also is, in addition to being a Canadian resident - though she wasn't born in either of those countries.

And the guy on the other end of the line has a speech pattern that's a dead ringer for the ones she grew up with as a first-generation immigrant from a small Russian town.

This is a fact Allie prefers to forget - down to the tiny choice of eschewing both her full legal name of 'Alexandra' and the typical Slavic diminutives associated therewith for the most American-sounding shortened version. Even this minute decision is one both of her parents struggle to understand, making that very clear during the handful of days she travels to see them in the U.S. for a terse, obligatory holiday visit at each of their respective separate homes.

Sovsem glupo, Sashenka. You are throwing away your heritage. Not to mention the American dream. Why live in Canada?

Allie is all of her grown twenty-six years of age, but her mother's little barbs still make her feel like she's fourteen again.

No matter. She's made her own big girl choices - and survived all of the associated consequences. When the divorce lawyer fees drained her parents' accounts and neither could help financially support her dreams of being a singer, Allie started waiting tables. And when an opportunity arose across the Canadian border giving her a chance to make money using her craft *and* to get away from the nuclear fallout of her parents' shattered relationship? Well - she took it.

And she's never looked back. Not as far as her tarnished childhood home on American soil, and certainly not as far as her native homeland. When she does share her heritage, and the fact that she can still speak and read Russian fluently - most people are surprised. Typically, if anyone were to guess where Allie's from, their money is on sunny California - which is exactly how Allie has positioned herself to be perceived. So yeah, no regrets. No backwards glances.

That train of thought has Allie immediately and boisterously humming the rest of the song 'Point of No Return' from *Phantom of the Opera* and - okay, well - that's somewhat of a harsh reminder that not every dream she's been chasing has been realized. Allie is not a famous pop star. She's not even off-Broadway. But hey - she does regular stints as a lounge singer at some of the local Montreal bars and even has what you could call a 'following.'

Okay, it's a *small* following that she's single-handedly amassed by being her own unpaid PR person, social media influencer, and professional hype-woman. But as Mimi from *Rent* would

say - it's a living! So what if Allie has to work multiple jobs to keep the lights on - 'I'm too busy' is actually a very plausible excuse in response to her mother's annual query of whether she's bringing someone 'special' home for Thanksgiving.

It's certainly a better explanation than the real reason Allie divides her twenty-four hours a day solely between eat, sleep, and work - but the underlying root of why she stays too booked to have much of a social life is for her therapist to unpack at their standing monthly appointment - and that's not until Tuesday, brother.

Anyway, driving a yellow cab a few days a week isn't the worst way to make the rest of Allie's ends meet while also justifying staying off of the dating apps and away from singles mixers.

If anything, it's at the very least an interesting living - well, at least on days *not* like today, when her customers are actually punctual.

Allie's gaze takes in her present surroundings again, and she shudders slightly. Her cab idles in front of a nondescript brick building with dark windows, not a soul to be seen outside of it. The actual street lighting surrounding the area could also certainly be improved. Where are those Canadian tax dollars going, anyway? Certainly not to this particular corner of Montreal.

A corner that could absolutely be described as a murder alley.

And what Allie definitely isn't is a horror flick 'final girl.' She's way too loud and a little too clumsy to escape any serial killer's clutches. Heck, even a spree killer would probably do away with her first.

Allie's pretty sure of that, actually - she took a quiz on BuzzFeed.

Despite the knowledge that the likelihood of a spree killer being her in near vicinity is statistically low, she hits the red button on her work phone, and it auto-dials the number of the most recent incoming call.

"Hello. This is Ilya. I will never listen to your voicemail."

The automated message clicks on without even a single ring preceding it, and Allie loosens a sigh.

What if dude was actually freaking murdered? And now the serial (or spree, pick your poison) killer's coming for Allie next, and she is definitely not going to be able to outrun him when he inevitably breaks her driver's side window while simultaneously slashing her tires.

Allie's 'dogs' are still barking from the ridiculous high heels she made the error of wearing at a jazz club show the other night without the knowledge that the club was lacking - well, chairs. Three sets in six-inch stilettos means there's no way Allie's sprinting down the streets of Montreal at anything faster than a snail's lowly pace.

A large, hulking form materializes from the side of one of the buildings, emerging out of a door Allie didn't even realize existed, because it's so camouflaged by the cover of night that it

could be almost invisible. The overworking of her imagination having had their usual reality-altering effects, Allie fumbles for her pepper spray, just in case - clutching it tightly in her right hand as the human-shaped shadow approaches her cab.

She rolls down the window one tiny sliver, hoping the apparition won't go for the tires first. The figure leans closer to the car.

"Hello?"

It's the heavily accented voice from the ride request call.

And it's *definitely* Russian - as are the man's features, coming into focus under the dim glow of the one single working streetlight above them - he has a prominent brow ridge and a strong, square jaw, which present a sharp contrast to the soft dusting of curls falling over his brow. He must have showered recently because a few spiraling tendrils still look damp.

Okay, Allie. Maybe don't think about the still-possible-spree-or-serial-killer's shower habits.

Though from what Allie can see of this guy's physique, he wouldn't look too bad glistening under a rushing stream of water sporting nothing but a suit of the birthday variety.

She frowns at her brain in self-admonishment as the man clears his throat lightly.

"Um, Mr. - "

"Ilya, please." The man responds, pronouncing the name in proper Russian just like he did in the voicemail message Allie listened to moments before. Satisfied with this corroborative evidence that 'Ilya' is definitely a customer and not a homicidal freak, she loosens her grip on the pepper spray and unlocks the back seat of the cab.

"Ready to go?"

This question oddly seems to give Ilya some pause. His gaze darts back to the door from which he just emerged, tension gathering in the corded muscles of his neck.

It's a very nice neck, too.

Allie shakes her head to dislodge these pesky, horny thoughts. Maybe her therapist *is* right and she would benefit from getting out more for 'play' instead of just for work.

"Um. Just to let you know, there's no rush but - the meter *is* running."

Ilya's eyes linger on what Allie has definitely termed 'the murder building' just a moment longer before he turns around and opens the back door of the cab.

"*Izvinite* - ah, I mean sorry - to keep you waiting." He gestures to the meter, expression growing slightly flirtatious, all sly smile and twinkling eyes. "I will pay the extra, of course."

Allie recognizes the mask of charm sliding over Ilya's face for what it is - an act.

Because that accidental slip into native tongue? It's an almost painfully familiar gesture.

Allie's father tended to do it often when he was lost in his more emotional thoughts, especially when facing the stress of assimilating into a new country. Even decades later, in the midst of the nuclear explosion that became her parents' nasty divorce, he still had his moments when English was that much harder to attempt.

That pinch of nostalgia is more bitter than sweet, and Allie decides to focus on the more positive fact that not only is this customer not a serial killer, she also won't have to argue with him over the drastically higher fare his lateness has incurred.

"Thanks and good evening," she says pertly. "Where to?"

The Montreal hotel address is such a familiar one that Allie doesn't even have to plug it into her GPS.

Ilya doesn't offer anything further, which is just fine with Allie. She can hang with the chatty clientele - in fact she has a whole group of post-bar regulars she secretly and affectionately calls 'the drunk loons in the bathroom' simply based on the amount of yapping they do whenever she picks them up, but she's never going to turn her nose up at the gift of a quiet passenger.

She turns on the radio. Unfortunately the signal is so bad in this murder district that it only picks up one solitary station - a station that appears to solely be playing t.a.t.u.'s 'All the Things She Said' on a continuous loop.

Ugh, no thank you.

Allie turns it off entirely, and makes a small show of closing the sliding sound barrier behind her head - something she does so her customers can have some semblance of privacy if they so desire. The gesture is more for the illusion of separation between the driver and the driven, since the barricade itself isn't even close to being soundproof - it's just a clear plastic insert Allie grabbed at the dollar store on a whim. Still, the insinuation of privacy can often be as comforting as the real thing, and she likes to think that it makes the passengers more at ease having it there.

Plus she's had more than one drunk rider comment that it makes her cab look "*soooooo fancy*," so she's decided to stick with it.

They sit in silence for a moment - until the man in the back begins to softly mutter something to himself. Allie's ears perk up on instinct, catching the words.

They aren't in English.

Chert vozmi, Ilya says again. Allie's quick brain begins to translate the syllables on auto pilot. Russian is always like riding a bike, after a few initial words her very thoughts switch over to the language and it's as natural as if Ilya was speaking English.

Which Ilya certainly doesn't realize and - maybe Allie should say something, but that would open an entire can of worms about why she understands him to begin with and - that's probably going to get them on the topic of her parents, and well, if it's between Allie having to dissect her own complicated feelings about all of *that* and this man babbling to himself, sorry to him - she's taking the 'selfish.'

It should be easy to just ignore whatever this Ilya guy is on about, anyway. There's another set of bar crawlers out here that Allie isn't quite as fond of, ones that are always spilling shrill drunken gossip in her backseat, so she's got practice tuning out unnecessary information that's none of her business.

But whether it's the t.a.t.u.-less silence, or some innate biological yearning to hear her own native tongue - Allie's ears decide that instead of muting whatever Ilya is saying, they're going to hit 'volume up' as if they have a mind of their own.

The Russian words are a complete sonic turnaround to Ilya's clipped English, flowing almost melodiously out of his mouth.

The song is an anxious one.

"Fucking hell. That was incredibly stupid. Irresponsible, even. Fuck, this is bad. This is very, very bad. All those stupid pillows. It wasn't supposed to happen like this. It was supposed to be casual. Fun."

Must be some back slide with an ex-girlfriend, Allie decides.

She looks up at the rearview mirror in order to change lanes and inadvertently catches a glimpse of Ilya's face. What she sees practically cracks something inside of her - because this is not the same person with the sultry smile full of charm from minutes before. It's not even the same cautious, closed-off dude who exited the 'murder building' and greeted Allie through the window of her cab.

This man? Seems on the verge of breaking wide open.

Ilya's pupils are darting back and forth in the greyish-blue pool of his eyes as he chews on his lower lip. Allie can hear a staccato of his fingers tapping the leather of the seat, and he's rocking back and forth slightly, almost like he's self-soothing - similar to how one would rock a fussy child in the middle of the night.

Shit. Maybe the insinuation of privacy is working better than Allie expected.

Because it certainly seems like she's suddenly intruding on what is a very not-for-the-public moment.

Ilya begins his soft lament again, like he can't bear to keep it in.

"Idiot, I'm a complete idiot. I can't believe I - fuck, I should have left sooner. Why did I get back in bed? I can't fucking do this. But god, I want to - I want to so badly. I think I like him - a little too much. I think I like him so much it scares me. And that is an impossible thing."

Allie's chest clenches - because she catches it, the word 'him' instead of 'her' - and realizes that she can certainly come up with a few very serious reasons as to why this Russian man is presently scared, and many of them have to do with much more than just an onslaught of very abruptly realized feelings.

"What am I going to do?" The whisper is forlorn. Allie catches a movement in the rearview mirror - Ilya's hand is going to something around his neck - a thin gold chain. Then, his intonation changes slightly, like Ilya isn't talking to himself anymore, but to someone else.

Almost like he's praying.

"Mama." His breath catches on the second syllable." If you were here you would help me. I know you would know what to do. But you're not, and - I'm just really scared. Please tell me what to do. Please."

The sudden, much louder noise from the back of the cab can't be anything other than a quickly swallowed sob.

Unfortunately the sound is too loud for Allie to even pretend to ignore properly. Ilya seems to realize it too, because he immediately says:

"Sorry," louder, and in English this time. "I must have - allergies to Canada."

"No worries," Allie offers politely, her own heart racing because clearly whatever is happening with this man - well, he's very, very upset.

Also possibly very much in love.

And clearly very much alone.

Shit.

Before Allie started this job, she made herself a promise, for purposes of self-preservation. No matter who got in her cab, no matter what trouble they were in - Allie wasn't getting involved. Her sole purpose? Get the people from point A to point B. It's an iron-clad mantra, and sticking to it has saved her again and again, because the majority of the late-night revelers she picks up tend to pour themselves in her back seat with all sorts of problems that aren't Allie's to solve.

Her heart is a barricade and all that jazz which apparently should be worked through in that one self-help book her therapist keeps telling her to order on Amazon, one that Allie keeps forgetting to buy - or perhaps chooses not to, because let's be honest, it's simpler to stay disengaged.

But she can't help herself this time.

She takes a small breath and tugs the barrier open with one hand, the other remaining on the wheel. Ilya looks up at the movement but doesn't object.

“Did you have...an interesting night?” She offers it up hesitantly, a part of her hoping that Ilya won’t even take the ‘in.’

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“Let’s say it is ‘Jane.’”

Okay, well - Allie can work with this. She dials up her tone to ‘easy conversational.’ “Love that name. Reminds me of my favorite Maroon 5 album.”

She catches the wrinkling of Ilya’s brow in confusion in the rearview mirror, and clarifies quickly: “It’s called Songs About Jane.”

“Ah,” Ilya nods, shoulders relaxing at the subject change. “It’s good? Maybe I will buy.”

Immediate need to purchase an album of music he’s never heard because his lover’s fake name is in the title? Oh, this boy is gone, gone.

“Cool,” Allie says nonchalantly. “‘Sunday Morning’ is my favorite song on there, I do a cover of it.”

Ilya seems to perk up even more. “You sing?”

“I sing,” Allie replies, smoothly making a right-hand turn.

“Sing it for me.” Ilya says, though the tone is less command than question - either way it catches Allie off-guard.

“I’m sorry?”

“You said you sing. Sing song for me, I can decide if I want to buy album.” Ilya replies like it’s the most logical request in the world to ask your cab driver to give you a live, iTunes-style try-before-you-buy preview of a random song in the middle of the night.

Still, if Allie's anything at heart, it's a performer. Her Leo sun and moon demand it.

She clears her throat, takes a sip of water, and begins.

*Sunday morning rain is falling
Steal some covers shed some skin
Clouds are shrouding us in moments unforgettable
You twist to fit the mold that I am in*

She pauses to glance at Ilya from the rearview and he gestures for her to keep going.

*But things just get so crazy
Living life gets hard to do
And I would gladly hit the road, get up and go if I knew
That someday it would lead me back to you*

*That may be all I need
In darkness she is all I see
Come and rest your bones with me
Driving slow on Sunday morning
And I never want to leave*

She stops there, cheeks flushed lightly and a warm, comforting glow simmering in her chest that always accompanies any performance, no matter how big or small. A smattering of clapping arises behind her.

"You are very good," Ilya says appreciatively. "And yes, title of the album is right. That is - a song about Jane." The way he says the name is slightly wistful, and Allie can hear the tap of his fingers resuming.

"That must be nice," Allie offers carefully. "Having someone you care about like that."

Ilya coughs tensely. "I don't know. Maybe."

Allie tries to think of something more profound. "Nice and - a little bit terrifying?"

That gets her another laugh. Ilya's curls bob up and down as he nods his head in affirmation. "Yes - terrifying. That is a good word for it."

"That's okay," Allie says softly. "It's normal, even. I bet she feels the same way."

“*Chert*,” Ilya mutters the curse word lightly. “I hope not.” He sighs, stretching his arms over his head. “I should not be bothering you, ehrrm -”

“Allie,” Allie supplies. “It’s okay. You seemed like you needed an ear.”

They drive in silence for a minute before Ilya asks: “What about you? Do you have someone that is terrifying? Who listens to you sing?”

“Oh, no -” Allie brushes the personal question off with a small frown. “I don’t really have time,” she begins her practiced response. “I work a lot. The - singing and the - ” she gestures around the inside of the cab “the - this.”

Her very plausible and excellent excuse feels flat under Ilya’s discerning gaze from the small rectangle of mirrored glass above her head.

“Well, you are very pretty.” The charisma is back across Ilya’s face, though it’s more genuine this time. “You have eyes like my mother. And a very good voice.”

He pauses, and says - more to himself than to Allie:

"She used to sing, too."

Allie feels the flush creeping up her neck, because while she adores attention, direct personal compliments happen to be her Achilles heel. “Um. Thank you.”

Since apparently Ilya isn’t finished flagellating Allie with praise, he adds: “And you are very caring person. Someone would be lucky, with you caring for them.”

“Oh, I...um,” Allie sputters. “That’s very nice, but you don’t even know me.”

Ilya shrugs. “You let me have panic attack in your backseat and you were kind. After I was fifteen minutes late for the cab. What else is there to know?”

Allie’s chest grows tighter, her head suddenly feeling a little bit buzzy. “I’m too scared,” she blurts out to her own shock and surprise. “To find my - um, terrifying.” Her face flushes at the admission, and an immediate bolt of what Ilya termed as ‘panic attack’ suffuses her body. “Yikes, sorry - I don’t know where -” Words fail her as she attempts to steady her suddenly shaking hands.

There’s a light touch on her right shoulder. “Is ok?” Ilya asks, and Allie nods because now there are tears in her eyes, and she’s focusing all of her mental willpower to keep them from falling down her actual face in the most mortifying non-Allie moment possible, while also trying to fucking *drive*, goddammit.

Ilya’s hand applies gentle pressure to her shoulder. He doesn’t ask questions or push her to say more.

Allie takes a few deep breaths, willing the tears back to whence they came. Her hands steady. “Jesus. I’m sorry, I don’t know what got into me - I’ve been working with my therapist - wait, sorry again. That’s oversharing.”

Ilya gives her shoulder one final squeeze before removing his hand. "It is okay to share. I - what is phrase? Owe you one, I think. Therapy is good? From what I hear."

Allie swallows, nodding. "Um, yeah. No, it's good - I just - my parents had a really bad divorce? Like super bad, right before I moved here. So, I'm - kind of fucked up."

"I see," Ilya says quietly. He pauses. "My parents did not divorce but - they had - they were not good for each other." Allie can see a movement in the back seat as Ilya's thumb and forefinger casually drifts to his earlobe, and he begins to rub it in the same cadence as he was rubbing her shoulder. "Maybe it's why this is all - so uh, terrifying."

A tear slips, disobeying strict mental orders in its escape down Allie's cheek, and she quickly wipes it off with one finger. "Yeah, but you're trying, you know? You're already doing better than me."

"Mmm. I do not know. But -" Ilya's head tilts slightly, his eyes growing more pensive, "maybe when you meet the right person, you will also try," he surmises with a small smile.

Allie grins at him from the rearview mirror. "Awwww."

"What?" Ilya says, looking taken aback.

"You just admitted that this 'Jane' is the right person. That's so cute."

"*Blyat*. Shut up," Ilya mumbles, and Allie can see the tips of his ears going pink as he ducks his head down.

She glances out the window. "Um, that's the hotel - I can drop you out front?"

"Ok." Ilya says, digging out his wallet. He counts the bills out, going way past the number on the meter. Allie opens her mouth to stop him and he cuts her off.

"No, no. Tip. For the singing." He leans forward and gently touches his index finger to her right earlobe. "And the ear." He gets out of the cab.

Allie suddenly realizes with great certainty that she's going to miss this endearing stranger. She rolls her window all the way down. "Um, Ilya?" He turns around, looking at her with eyebrows raised curiously. "Thanks," Allie says. "I think I feel better about - uh," she looks around the interior of the cab helplessly, searching for the word, but the enormity of the weight she's carried on her shoulders since moving to Montreal feels difficult to describe.

Ilya places a hand on the top of the car, leaning against it jauntily. That mischievous smile drifts across his features. "Let's make a deal. I will buy the Marvin Five -

"*Maroon* Five!"

"Okay, okay, yes - Maroon Five. I will buy album. And you -" he leans closer to the open window, and tucks a finger under Allie's chin, lifting it, "- will try to be brave."

Allie looks up at him and nods, her heart somehow lighter than it's been in a decade. She thinks about the mysterious 'Jane.' "Will you try to be less terrified?"

Ilya wrinkles his nose. "Fine. It's fair. I will also try." He pauses, looking down at the stack of business cards Allie keeps in the cab that display all of her socials, and his arm darts in to snag one. "And next time I am in Montreal, I will come hear you sing."

"Okay," Allie says. "Deal." She holds out her hand to shake Ilya's, and he plants a tiny kiss on the back of it instead, winking at her again. As he turns away, Allie adds:

"Ilya? I hope 'Jane' knows how lucky she is."

End Notes

Allie is not a full self-insert, but there are some similarities between us (including some very tall emotional walls). this story is for anyone working hard to be authentically themselves. i hope you will try to be brave in chasing the thing that terrifies you.

The Maroon 5 bit of this fic was inspired by this beautiful art on twitter, please show the artist some love!

https://x.com/mocha_mitsu/status/2009514060656857470?s=20

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