

how the staff likes to be treated

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how the staff likes to be treated

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

Summary

“It’s easy, see? I give you this money. You watch this door.”

Wallace stares at the lean, muscled dude who is standing in the hallway that leads to the hotel gym while grasping a bottle of vodka in one hand and cradling a wad of cash in his outstretched palm.

Working a night shift as gym security at an LA hotel during the MLH draft was certainly bound to be an adventure, but this particular scenario wasn’t exactly what he expected to be handling at two o’clock in the morning.

Notes

thank you to my beloved @DoctorProfessorSong for the lightning fast beta, as always i adore you the most.

also a shout out to @/talula19281926 for this suggestion!

finally, a big 'gimme keeees' to all of the loons on the threads app. you've made this fandom such a delight already.

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

“It’s easy, see? I give you this money. You watch this door.”

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He’s not a hockey fan, *per se*, but there’s been enough chatter around the hotel staff about the rookie class this draft that Wallace is able to discern that this curly-haired man’s first name is Ilya and his last is....a Russian sounding something.

He takes a deep breath, willing his body to grow in the stature he doesn’t actually possess.

“I’m not entirely sure I’m allowed to do that, Mr. uh -”

“Rozanov,” Ilya replies, his lips curling slightly. Wallace recalls hearing the last name a few times now, though Ilya says it with a slightly different intonation on the syllables than he’s used to - *Ro-ZAH-nov*.

The striking athlete is frowning. “No ‘mister.’ I think you are older than me, no?”

Wallace can’t tell if the slightly teasing words are an acknowledgment or an accusation. His cheeks pink just a bit regardless, because Ilya has unwittingly stumbled across a secret that, if disclosed, can and will cost Wallace his livelihood. He searches for a quick rebuttal, but his brain is groggy from the double shift he’s pulled today.

Ilya seems to think the pause requires his own sharing of information, because he adds:

“I am eighteen. Hence why I need place for vodka. Cannot drink in room because my father is there, sleeping. Cannot drink in bar.” He gestures to the gym door with the glass bottle he’s holding and punctuates his heavily accented words with a charming smile. “Stupid American rules, they are no good.”

“Right,” Wallace replies, attempting to deepen the timbre of his voice so it doesn’t betray that he is, in fact, several months younger than the man offering him money to perform tasks entirely out of the scope of the nature of his employment.

The fact of his age is one the night manager of the hotel mercifully overlooked upon hiring him, because without this secondary job, Wallace would have a much harder time making ends meet and even putting food on the table.

And since the loss of his mother and his father’s full and utter descent into the depths of the bottle - and God knows what else, Wallace is the only provider his little brother’s got.

Time to put his acting face on.

“Right,” Wallace repeats. “Yes, Mr. - um - Ilya,” he confirms gruffly. “Very discerning. I am older than you, by a few years.”

“And probably wiser,” Ilya quips. “Wise enough to make a few extra *backsov*.” He winks, and Wallace feels a small curl of warmth in the pit of his stomach, because well - Ilya is *striking* in his mere existence but that wink? Could probably take out a full army. He bats the twisty twinge of heat away internally, steadying his shoulders for the inevitable flicker of shame that always follows to this feeling.

The moment he feels attraction to a member of the same gender as his own.

Even this tiny acknowledgment that he is, in fact, currently attracted to a man causes Wallace to flinch, like he’s ready for the barrage of fists that serve as punishment at home when any inkling arises that Wallace is - well, not on the so-called ‘straight and narrow path’ that his father would love for him to be.

Literally.

Not that Wallace’s dad has been coherent enough in the past year or so to really do much about it, thankfully. The silver lining surrounding John Westchester’s tragic demise into self-medicated addiction after the loss of his wife?

The bruises of his anger no longer pattern the cover of Wallace’s skin.

Certainly, his father’s state of unemployment and permanent substance-induced fog aren’t ideal, but at least those are things Wallace can avoid and/or control. And Wallace has a plan.

When he turns eighteen, he’s taking Seth and they’re leaving. He’s got the way out in his sights.

Part of that plan heavily relies on the money Wallace makes at this shitty, minimum-wage job.

Which, no matter how tempting the easy cash Ilya Rozanov is presently holding in that callused hockey player’s palm, is a job Wallace simply cannot afford to lose for all of the aforementioned reasons and then some.

An extra twenty or thirty bucks isn't worth that risk.

“I’m sorry, Mr. Roza- Ilya,” he says again. Then, without meaning to, he adds:

“I really can’t lose this job.”

His voice comes out smaller and markedly less gruff. Ilya’s eyes seem to soften.

“I see,” he says quietly. His foot is tapping lightly on the carpeted floor of the hotel, the only sound in the eerie night stillness that always accompanies Wallace’s shifts. It’s hard, keeping up with his day job as a bag boy at the local grocery store and this one, and Wallace’s mouth inadvertently drops into a yawn.

“Apologies,” he mutters quickly, dragging a hand across his face to stifle it.

“You do not sleep a lot, working at this time?” Ilya’s voice has lost its prior charismatic lilt. If Wallace didn’t know better, he’d think the words contained an edge of concern - which is, of course, impossible.

There’s no way this hot, up and coming hockey player is actually *concerned* about Wallace’s present lack of shut-eye.

Dammit, Wallace did not mean to think that Ilya Rozanov was hot. Again.

He squirms uncomfortably, realizing that instead of responding he’s just been - *staring* at Ilya, his eyes dragging across the perfect outline of a sharp, sculpted collarbone that peeks out from under Ilya’s black sleeveless workout tank. Wallace quickly raises his gaze to Ilya’s face but it gets trapped in the perfect cupid’s bow dip of Ilya’s upper lip.

Philtrum, Wallace’s anatomical knowledge supplies. He’s dropped out of school but still has a few textbooks he reads here and there, to keep his mental acuity sharpened. Who knows, maybe a GED is in his future someday.

Ilya raises a calculating eyebrow. “Is important to hotel, to have you here this late?”

“I have to make sure very important guests such as yourself can use the gym,” Wallace says, hoping pandering to Ilya’s ego will finally get him off his back. “Which means - I can’t, um. Keep other guests from doing it, either.”

Ilya makes a face. “I do not think there will be many guests at this time of night. Come on, Mr. - ”

“Westchester,” Wallace supplies.

Ilya wrinkles his nose. “You are named after strange English sauce?”

Wallace decides correcting Ilya is a waste of time. “Um, well. My first name is Wallace? If that’s easier?”

Another nose wrinkle.

“Okay, well - my brother calls me Wally?” Wallace isn’t sure why he feels the need to share this information with an eighteen-year-old athlete trying to find a place to drink illegal spirits, but something about this man is oddly compelling him to do so.

“Wally.” Ilya nods. He pronounces it with a hard ‘v’ sound that gives Wallace a small shiver down the center of his spine. “That is easier.” Ilya pauses. “You have brother? How old?”

“Seth, he’s um, he’s ten.” Wallace responds, not entirely sure where this line of questioning is going. Ilya nods slowly.

“Ah. In my family it is me. That is *mladshiy*. Small brother.” He holds up his fingers and thumb as if to demonstrate the word ‘small’ with his hand.

There's something vulnerable in the sharing of that information that Wallace can't quite get a pulse on. They stand there in awkward silence again, and Wallace feels his usual, slightly anxious need to fill it. "That's um, good. I like having a brother," he finally offers.

"Yes," Ilya says. It's clipped and short, like Ilya's holding whatever's behind the syllable tightly to his chest before releasing that one single word in preparation for his next. He doesn't say anything further about his own brother, however. Instead, he cocks his head slightly, peering at Wallace and inquires:

"Does he live here?"

Wallace works hard to keep his face in a pleasant expression, not wanting to reveal more information about his own depressing familial circumstances to this good-looking stranger. His brain starts to churn in a quagmire, because - *should* Wallace be telling Ilya more details in response to this question? Does Ilya actually want to know about Seth? And if Wallace tells Ilya all of the sad little truths that make up the patchwork of his life and all that he does to keep them from unraveling - would Ilya think less of him? Or possibly more?

God, is he trying to - impress Ilya Rozanov? This is ridiculous.

"Yes. He lives with me. Um, and my dad."

Ilya's face grows even more pensive. "And *mama* - ehm, mother?"

The question catches Wallace off-guard, and he tries to think of some roundabout answer that will placate Ilya without revealing too much. But Ilya's keen gaze feels like it's piercing his very soul, and suddenly Wallace's throat feels too tight for elaborate fabrications.

"Dead."

The word drops from his lips unbidden, and he wants to scramble to pick it back up and rephrase.

Ilya's face pinches. "Ah." He twists the bottle of vodka in his hand, looking down at it, then abruptly takes two steps closer and pats Wallace on the arm, a slightly awkward and surprising gesture. Pauses, then says quietly, "Me too."

"Oh," is pretty much all Wallace can manage at this particular point. "That's - I'm sorry."

Ilya shrugs. "*Da*. I was young."

You're young now, Wallace thinks with a frown. Wanting to offer something more comforting than that observation, he mirrors Ilya's prior phrasing:

"Me too."

Ilya makes a little tut-tut noise with his mouth, nodding his head. Wallace notices that he's rubbing one thumb with his index finger. Wallace bites his lip, searching for something else to say. "Um, your father - are you close?"

Ilya's shoulders grow immediately tense at the question. He looks up briefly, mouth a flat line. "It's - um, what is word." He gestures around in the air as if he's trying to pull the vernacular from the stale air-conditioned atmosphere, the sound of the ancient unit buzzing around them.

"Complicated?" Wallace supplies, an image of John darting into his mind. He can feel the corners of his mouth tugging down at the mere thought of his own father.

Ilya examines his face again like he's gathering the definition of the word from Wallace's very expression. "I think, yes. Compli-cated."

Wallace did not expect to be sharing a familial resemblance with a newly drafted Russian hockey player this evening. Still -

"Me too..." he offers again, almost in apology for even bringing it up.

Ilya's expression opens slightly. He taps the bottle in his hand with a forefinger. "Perhaps then we share? Vodka, Wally?"

The idea of drinking vodka in a locked gym with Ilya Rozanov abruptly sounds equally deliciously tempting and deeply terrifying. Wally opens his mouth, not sure if the single syllable he's about to deliver will be one of assent or rejection.

Just then there's a patter of footsteps in the hallway, and Ilya suddenly looks like a deer caught in some proverbial headlights. "I - am going to use restroom," he says quickly.

Wallace doesn't think he's ever seen a man disappear so fast.

Then, another man practically stumbles over Wallace in the dimly lit hallway.

"Oof - so sorry. Good morning! Or is it - still night? I'm not really sure." The dark-haired newcomer says ruefully, face apologetic.

Another hockey player, Wallace surmises, quickly scanning the guy's physique. His face seems a little bit younger than Ilya's, but it's just as recognizable.

"I'm Shane. Shane Hollander," the man offers before Wallace can place the name from his own cerebral recesses, which are still unfortunately muddled due to - whatever Ilya Rozanov's presence has somehow done to him. Shane jerks his head to the closed door down the hall. "Um, the gym is still open, right?"

For a minute, Wallace is tempted to tell him 'no' and send him away - horrifyingly because he possibly wants to drink vodka in a locked hotel gym with Ilya Rozanov - and even more horrifyingly, he's not sure if it's because he thinks Ilya's hot or feels oddly in kinship with him.

Neither reason being a great excuse for practically guaranteed unemployment, Westchester.

"Of course, Mr. Hollander," Wallace says smoothly, adjusting his voice to the deeper, professional timbre he always uses at work. "The gym is open 24-7. There are towels in the

right hand corner of the room. I'm afraid our water machine's out, however." He adds the latter, after astutely noting that Shane's not carrying a water bottle. "I do have water up here but unfortunately it is for purchase only." He gestures to the row of plastic bottles behind them, bracketed by some plain non-disposable options for lovers of the environment, because according to Wallace's boss, 'it's important for capitalism to be inclusive.'

Shane pats his pockets with a frown. "I left my wallet." He seems put off by this omission momentarily but then shrugs in acceptance. "That's all right. I doubt I'll be in there too long. Thank you."

He turns and walks into the gym, and Wallace tells himself he's only doing his job as he follows him with his gaze.

Yup. Absolutely doing his job and absolutely not checking out what appears to be a very good example of some highly quality clappable material.

"He is - hot, yes?"

Wallace practically yelps as Ilya rematerializes next to him out of nowhere. "Jesus fucking Christ!"

Ilya puts a finger to his lips. "Shhhh, it's late. Jesus is sleeping."

"Where the hell did you come from?" Wallace whisper-sputters, glaring at this insufferable man who's clearly intent on ruining what remains of his evening and future career prospects while also somehow continuing to very slightly turn him on with every idiotic move.

"I told you. I had to use restroom. Now I am back." Ilya says plainly, like Wallace is some sort of idiot. "So..."

The wad of money is back in his hand. Wallace stares at it in confusion. "Mr. Rozanov -"

A frown.

"Ilya," Wallace forces it out against his every trained impulse. "I can't require Mr. Hollander to leave the gym so we can drink - um, I mean so *you* can drink vodka in there."

A small smile twinkles in the corner of Ilya's mouth. "Ah. That is problem." He taps his temple with an index finger for a brief moment, his eyes drifting towards the door of the gym.

His expression changes slightly, and Wallace can't help but notice the piqued curiosity in his gaze. Like Ilya is assessing a challenge - his body tenses again for a moment in direct contrast with whatever unnamed struggle is rolling across his face.

Wallace feels like he's interrupting some private conversation of a man at war with himself.

He absolutely does *not* wish that Ilya was looking at him in the way he is at that door. *Not at all. Not a single damn bit.*

“Perhaps I will work out.” Ilya says, slowly, almost as if he’s convincing himself instead of stating his next intention to Wallace.

Wait. Aren’t these two supposed to be on opposite teams or something? Isn’t that - like a big deal in hockey?

Wallace frowns. “Is that why you’re down here so late at night? Did you know that he would be?”

Ilya fucking *flinches*, and his eyes suddenly go wide for a millisecond before contracting back into the cat-eyed gaze that’s been ruining Wallace’s entire constitution all night.

“Of course not.”

Wally doesn’t find the carefully measured words entirely believable. He narrows his own eyes in suspicion.

“You’re not gonna like, murder him - right?”

Ilya rolls his eyes, spreading his arms wide in feigned innocence.

“*Gospodi*. Do I look like murderer to you, Wally?”

Wallace purses his lips slightly, gesturing to the bottle of liquor and the cash Ilya still happens to be grasping. He maybe does it - just a bit dramatically. Maybe in hopes that Ilya will laugh at the joke.

Ilya rewards him with a chuckle, and Wallace absolutely does not decide he likes his laugh because, well - he *doesn’t*. He is working. *Professionally*.

Ilya’s gaze drifts over to the door again, like it’s a magnet, pulling him in. He shakes his head at it, then turns to Wallace again. “So, my offer?”

Wally feels a smidge of exasperation, and he decides he’s not going to unpack whether it’s at Ilya’s insufferable stubbornness or the fact that he’s now seemingly hell-bent on sharing space with Shane Hollander as opposed to with, well - Wallace himself.

“I just explained to you that -”

“*Shhh*. I am not kicking him out. There is door. You watch. Besides, it is late night for team. I do not think you will have other visitors. It is - how you say, before the thing.”

“Precautionary,” Wallace guesses, eyebrows still crinkled in annoyance.

“Yes. That. So - yes?”

Ilya’s eyes are back on the door. Something plaintive is lining his gaze, and once again Wally considers it - just giving Ilya his way.

Stop that. Man up!

He folds his arms across his chest with a huff.

“I can’t watch the door while you underage drink with a witness in there!”

A small smile stretches wider over Ilya’s lips. “Ah, but you thought about it? Without one.”

He pauses. “Okay. I will just work out. I leave vodka here. You watch vodka. Up to you if you watch door. Ok?” He pauses, then juts out a succulent bottom lip, his eyes widening to that of a sad, begging puppy. “Ple-ase?”

Wallace sighs, fighting every urge to relent. “Why do you want to go in there so badly?”

The question causes Ilya’s spine to straighten and his face closes off, a clearly practiced, cool mask dropping over his features. “You know - never mind. I should - go to bed. Is late.”

The coldness that drifts over his expression makes Wallace inexplicably sad. “Okay, wait. Wait. I’ll do it.”

The instant lightness in Ilya’s posture is immediate, and Wallace fights back a smile. Ilya holds up the cash. “I’ll pay.”

Wallace shakes his head no. “I can’t just - take your money. That’s a bribe. I’m not sure what the formal rules are but I *am* pretty sure we can’t just accept bribes.”

Ilya sighs, tapping his fingers on his thigh. “I hear you say earlier you have - water? To buy?”

Wallace nods in the affirmative and Ilya thrusts the wad of cash in his palm. “Great. I buy. Water and bottle.” He points to a white bottle with a black top, a yin to his yang of black tank and shorts and white sneakers.

Wallace can’t think of anything else to do other than pull the bottle from the shelf and fill it with water. “Thank you for supporting the environment,” he says weakly, handing the bottle to Ilya.

Ilya winks at him.

Then he turns and walks into the gym without a single other word.

Wallace is left alone with a wad of what he feels is likely - almost definitely - illicit cash and his silly little thoughts. He starts counting the bills to pass the time.

Holy shit.

Ilya Rozanov just gave Wallace \$1,000.00. For some reason mostly in tens.

Wallace stares at the money, shell-shocked.

If he’s in there murdering Shane Hollander, this definitely qualifies as an accomplice-level transaction.

Wallace considers the change in Ilya's features when he looked at that door. After some careful deliberation, he decides that whatever's going on in there - it's likely not homicide adjacent.

And since Wallace is true to his word, he spends the rest of his night watching the gym door, just like he promised.

Finally, after what seems like hours Shane Hollander stumbles out of the gym, very not murdered - though his eyes dart back and forth in a slightly maniacal way. His neck is noticeably flushed.

"Have a nice evening. I mean - morning?" He mumbles as he passes Wallace in the hallway. Wallace raises a hand groggily in farewell, and absolutely doesn't feel any relief that the man is alive and well - albeit apparently a bit discombobulated.

A relatable response to Ilya Rozanov, actually.

The man in question exits the gym a few minutes later, Shane having already disappeared in the elevator. A small, satisfied smile plays across Ilya's lips.

"You can keep vodka, Wally," he says as he passes Wallace. "I do not want it anymore."

"Um, Mr. Rozanov -"

Ilya turns with a frown.

"Ilya," Wally corrects. He holds up the cash. "This is entirely too much for -"

"It is great water bottle," Ilya retorts, the playful grin flitting over his face before it grows serious again. "I liked talking to you, Wally. I keep water bottle. You keep money. Just - be a good big brother. To Seth."

Wallace nods, speechless, watching him leave.

End Notes

This story will be one in an installment of multiple ones in a collection of third party POVs following Ilya's orchestrations in getting his man. i'll try to stay consistent with updates but y'all know how it be, they will come when it strikes. but they will come! (just like Shane Hollander). tysm for reading my words.

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