

## Face of an Angel

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# Face of an Angel

by [Opallene](#)

## Summary

Yuri Plisetsky's mother has always been a little bit eccentric. There's one piece of family history that he'd rather keep hidden, because it messes with his image, darn it! Otayuri.

Yuri Plisetsky impatiently taps at his iPhone's screen. Louder. Louder. He drums both thumbs as if playing a two-fingered symphony, then neatly taps the send button and casts the device irritably onto the couch beside him.

Otabek Altin's phone buzzes. He lifts it, opens the Instagram alert and smiles. It's Yuri, very bored-looking (perhaps exaggeratedly so), frowning into the camera with eyes of sharp glass. In the photo behind him is a curio cabinet full of glittering keepsakes, and a Soviet-era floral wallpaper pattern. The caption reads: "GET ME OUT OF HERE PLZ. Smells like old perfume. Need air. #Rawrrr."

Otabek brings his phone screen parallel to his line of vision. It perfectly overlays the scene in front of him, except Yuri has now flopped onto his back and kicked his feet up over the back of the couch in lackadaisical indignation.

Otabek chuckles. "It's barely been 10 minutes, Yura."

Yuri taps his foot in the air. "If you invite someone over, you should be ready to see 'em." He looks around rather nervously. "The sooner this gets started, the sooner we can leave, you know."

Otabek shrugs. "I don't have any particular plans after this."

Yuri sits up suddenly and glares.

Otabek starts. "Other than the ones with you, of course." He sighs good-naturedly and puts on an indulgent grin as if to tell Yuri that he's on his side, but certainly not ready to voice any complaints into the still, unfamiliar air of this space he's been graciously invited into.

"Ma has always been like this," Yuri quips. "She's probably having her hair styled all special right now, just so she can say 'hey' to us and guzzle some stupid flavored water."

Otabek can't really laugh. Should he smile? He doesn't know a whole lot yet about Yuri's relationship with his mother, and he doesn't wish to offend. He becomes aware of some sweat building up in his palm and removes it from the surface of the antique velvet couch cushion. He wipes his palm on his knee. It is a little bit stuffy in here, after all.

Something catches his eye on the wall to his left. He stands and walks tentatively in its direction. Yuri hasn't noticed, because he's on his phone again, replying to sympathy notes.

Otabek stares into a small framed portrait on the wall. A very young blonde child, a baby even, in a stylized *kokoshnik* stares back. "Yura..."

"Huh?" He murmurs, still glued to his phone.

“Do you have a sister?”

“No.....Wait, what? Why??” Yuri abandons the phone, leaps to his feet and pads over to the wall to see what Otabek is looking at. “Oh god – This –” Yuri stares into the portrait, transfixed yet horrified. A blush falls quickly over his face and neck. He looks like he wants to spit and hiss like a cat. Or run. Run far.

Otabek puts a hand on his shoulder in an effort calm his instincts. “What? What’s the matter?” He takes in the flustered, helpless visage of the young man in front of him, looks at the portrait again, and does a double take. “...That’s you, isn’t it?”

Yuri swallows. He closes his eyes. He’s trying hard to pretend it’s not a big deal and that he was never bothered by it in the first place. Otabek knows that expression too well.

“Yeah,” says Yuri, unable to look him in the eye. “So what?”

Otabek smiles. He genuinely can’t help himself. “It’s really cute.”

The blush creeps back and Yuri becomes stiff again. “Yeah, well...Pretty much all baby pictures are. I guess,” he states lamely. “Can we just – not look at that anymore? Let’s go back over there,” he tries.

Otabek obliges, but the cat, as they say, has already been let out of the bag.

Yuri sits in his original spot, but this time Otabek tries to sit beside him. He tentatively puts one arm around his shoulders. Yuri lets him, but he just stares, disgruntled and uneasy, toward the opposite wall.

“I guess you’re wondering why they put me in girl clothes,” Yuri mutters.

“Well, um.... – yes?” Otabek replies. It’s uncharacteristic of Yuri to offer information like this, especially when he’s agitated. “I mean, if you’d like to tell me about it.”

“Nmryly,” Yuri mumbles inaudibly.

“What was that?”

“Not REALLY,” Yuri starts shortly. But then he lets go of some of his tension and sighs airily. “...I can’t believe you don’t know about that already. It’s practically ‘Yuri’s Angels 101.’”

Otabek rolls his eyes with a smirk. Yuri constantly suspects him of being a longtime member, but he has no evidence. “Well, if you’d like to tell me about it, I’ll listen.”

Yuri lets out another sigh that is a little bit more like a tortured hiss. “It was gonna come up sometime anyway,” he concedes. “I already told you, my mom is kind of a psycho. I mean, she’s nice and whatever, bought me all the shit I could ever want, is fine with my skating and everything. But yeah, here’s the deal...” Yuri unconsciously knots his hands between his knees.

“Mom wanted a girl. Well, she thought I was going to be a girl. Everyone did. There was some kind of...something...error that the doctor made, or something like that.”

Otabek nods, eyes widening almost imperceptibly.

“Anyway, everyone was all ready for me to be a girl. My mom, my grandpa, the press, the fans...” Yuri stretches into the back of the couch, raising his arms. “So they went ahead and did the baby pictures that they’d already planned, anyway.”

Otabek finds himself staring. “And that’s it?”

Yuri shrugs. “Yeah. For months, only the doctor and my mom and grandpa knew I was—n’t a girl. Then it eventually became public and people were scandalized and my mom was just all like—“ Yuri performs air quotes and pushes his hair back dramatically, imitating her. “*La la la, I can do whatever I want to do, dear public, for I am rich and I am famous.*”

“Um...” Otabek begins. “Wow.”

“Yeah.” Yuri cracks his knuckles. “That’s really all I ever have to say about it, anymore.”

Otabek shifts his posture to face Yuri more squarely. It hasn’t gone unnoticed that Yuri has been unable to look him in the eye this whole time. He’s distracted. Upset. “Yuri,” he says. “Look at me.”

Yuri turns his head slightly but then decides to look at the ceiling instead. “I’m good. Huh, I wonder if those cracks were always there.”

“Yuri.”

“She should be down here any minute now. Aaaaany minute.”

“Yura, look at me.” He reaches out with his left hand and brushes back some strands of blonde hair. Leaves his palm by his cheek, lingering.

Yuri freezes and searches for his companion’s eyes. Then he stares rather intently, looking a little afraid.

“I don’t care about it,” Otabek assures. “And I don’t think of you as a girl, if that’s what you’re worried about.”

Yuri stiffens and tries not to tremble. Tries very hard not to turn crimson red. Tries not to feel angry and defeated and yet so very understood, all at the same time. Tries and fails at all of those things. Now he can’t look away, even though a hot tear is welling and he’ll be god-damned if he starts crying just like a girl right here and right now.

“Yuuuuuuuuratchkaaa!!” A sing-songy voice bellows from the stairway across the room.

Yuri panics, pushes Otabek’s hand away, shakes his head to try and rid himself of the telltale signs of emotion on his face. And sits on his own hands for good measure.

“You’re looking well, my precious kitten~!” Yuri’s mother proclaims as she enters the room with grandiose flair. She leaps over to him (quite spry and elegant, for a woman of her maturity) and pets his hair back. “But your nose is red, my little bee! Are you coming down with something?”

“Hello, ma,” Yuri states plainly. “Uh, no. Nope. Just some seasonal allergies, I guess. Or something.”

“Well, that’s wonderful, dear! Well, no, not wonderful – horrible in its own accursed way! I suppose—Ah-chuu!” she sneezes delicately into a laced kerchief. “It does run in the family.”

“That’s great, ma.” Yuri surreptitiously tries to weasel away from the used kerchief that is still in her outstretched hands.

Otabek, meanwhile, has been a casual observer throughout this exchange. He tries to be respectful, but a small grin tugs at the corner of his mouth as he makes eye contact with Yuri and becomes immediately complicit in his struggle for a germ-free space.

*“I don’t have allergies,”* Yuri mouths silently.

A chuckle escapes involuntarily. But Otabek quickly screws his face back to a neutral expression, reaches into an oddly-shaped bag and produces a neat bouquet of summer flowers. He stands and offers them politely.

Yuri’s mother takes them and gasps with delight. “A gentleman! A true gentleman!” she swoons. She offers her hand and Otabek extends his in return. She grabs his palm and pulls him into a swift kiss on both cheeks.

Yuri, still lolling on the couch, rolls his eyes. “Ah-choo, Ah-choo,” he mocks. “It’s those stupid flowers I must be allergic to.”

“Oh, hush, darling,” his mother chides. “And get up off that couch, please. Tea is in 5.”

“5 what? Hours?”

“He’s always been supremely incorrigible, my Yuratchka,” she explains apologetically to her guest. But she doesn’t seem distressed. She giggles lightly to herself and busies herself finding a vase for the flowers.

“Your son is an incredible talent, ma’am,” Otabek offers. He smiles at Yuri. Yuri notices, and sits up a little bit straighter.

“Oh, but don’t I know it, dear!” she spins around and kisses Yuri on the head. Yuri recoils a little, but mostly endures it. “I’m very proud of you, you know,” she says to her son sincerely.

Yuri blinks. “Thanks.”

When his mother’s back is turned, he shrugs in Otabek’s direction. Then, “Has it been 5 hours yet?” he calls to his mom.

“As a matter of fact, dear, let’s head for the tea room right now. I’ll have it brought out when it’s ready.”

Yuri finally peels himself off the couch. “Yes, yes,” he mumbles quietly to Otabek after joining him at his side. “She has a room just for tea.”

“It seems nice. If you’re into that sort of thing,” Otabek replies.

“Well. She is,” he gestures with his thumb toward his mother’s back.

They arrive at the specified room. Ms. Plisetsky draws back an Indian-style curtain for her guests, and reveals a Japanese-style kotatsu surrounded by plush beanbag chairs and an assortment of decorative oddities from various parts of the world.

“It’s nice,” Otabek nods in approval. “Very...eclectic.”

Yuri’s mother wheels around as if she’s just had an epiphany. “Yes! That is exactly the word for it! And why shouldn’t we have the best of everything, my dears?”

Suddenly, Yuri has gone pale. Now in full view, a supersized portrait hangs on the back wall. It’s another entry from his baby picture shoot. It’s been stylized to look just like a painting, with accentuated rosy cheeks and small droplets of sparkle on the tips of his baby eyelashes.

“Moth-ERR! What IS that!!” he screeches.

“Oh, do you like it, *lapushka*? It really brings out your simply divine angelic beauty, don’t you think?”

“How could—What is—WHY??” Yuri buries his face in his hands helplessly.

“Ohhh, dear,” his mother brings a delicate hand to her mouth and widens her eyes in sudden comprehension. She turns to look at them both. “Are you embarrassed in front of your handsome friend, my dearest?”

Yuri, still hiding his face, becomes red and shakes with tension.

“Ohh, my. I *do* apologize.” She pauses and turns back to look at the picture again. “I just couldn’t be prouder of this miracle child of mine. The face of an angel...” she trails off, lost in the portrait’s visage.

Otabek takes Yuri’s right hand, pulls it away from his face and grips it firmly at his side. One horrible, accusatory eyeball lolls in its socket to stare out through sweaty plates of hair from behind where his hand used to be. “I couldn’t agree more, Ms. Plisetsky,” says Otabek simply. He winks at Yuri.

“It’s nothing to be ashamed of,” Otabek continues evenly. “I look like a scrappy little marmot in most of my childhood pictures,” he chuckles, clearly thinking about this for the first time in a long while. “In fact, my parents said I looked so strained all the time that I would’ve benefited from a good, long hibernation just like the ground rodents, in order to

refresh my perspective.” He pauses. Tries to get Yuri to uncover the rest of his face and look at him. “Oops. I guess that was pretty personal,” he chuckles. “I was a serious kid,” he explains.

Yuri loosens up a bit. “You’re kidding,” he finally utters. He uncovers his face, possessed with a newfound confidence now that he has this nugget of information to seize upon. “You’re NOT. Dude.” He appraises Otabek’s stoic expression anew. “I can totally see that.”

Yuri’s mother breathes a sigh of relief now that the level of tension has been lowered. “We all have our quirky likenesses...I, for example, have had my hair compared to a mermaid’s gossamer strands on more than one occasion.”

Yuri, much more like himself again, rolls his eyes. “Jeez, here we go...”

But to his relief, the tea promptly arrives and becomes the new focus in the room. And the conversation among those now seated around the low table turns pleasantly banal. Otabek talks about his career and family. Ms. Plisetsky listens delightedly (or at least manages to pretend to – Yuri can never be quite sure, but he’s always had his doubts about her attention span). Yuri is smothered in gooey praise about his Grand Prix win late last year, and simultaneously chided for not coming to visit much sooner. They hear all about the former idol’s latest offbeat solo endeavor: Marketing edible cosmetics imbued with global flavors. (Yuri is about to suggest “Katsudon,” but catches himself before betraying some modicum of actual enthusiasm.)

And then the conversation abruptly shifts to Yuri and Otabek’s relationship. After a brief lull in the conversation, Yuri’s mother suddenly laughs pointedly and leans across the table.

“What? Get out of my face, mom.”

“Oh please. Just know that I know, honey, and I am SO happy for you.”

“What?? Know what? Stop being...what is the word...”

“Cryptic?” Otabek offers.

“Yes. That.”

Ms. Plisetsky’s face positively glows. “Your father never finished my sentences like that,” she coos wistfully.

Otabek smiles, because he knows what she knows, and he’s extremely relieved to be granted explicit approval so freely. He grabs Yuri’s hand on the floor beside him and squeezes.

“...Oh,” says Yuri, feeling the blush creep back again. He needs to learn how to control this. To play it cool. Damn it. No denying anything now. “How the f—“

“Language, Yuratchka!” his mother warns.

“How did you friggin’ even tell...” Yuri mutters, trailing off.



“How could I not?” His mother laughs. “I’ve been a girl in love before.”

Yuri bristles. “I’m not a—“

“Of course, of course, I know, dear!” she places a hand to her lips apologetically. “You’re my strong and fierce young tiger prince!”

Yuri grumbles.

“Oh, cheer him up, won’t you?” Ms. Plisetsky implores of Otabek.

So Otabek obliges. He swiftly cups Yuri’s face in his hand, leans in at an angle and kisses him on the lips.

Yuri’s eyes widen and he feels the temperature rising. He desperately pushes Otabek off, stands up and searches for the nearest exit. There’s either the window, or the curtained doorway through which they entered the room.

His mother is nearly in joyful hysterics. “Sit back down, my little one!” She laughs.

“N-no, I think we’ll be going now,” her son announces. He drags Otabek to his feet and toward the curtain. But he looks back one more time and manages to put on a semi-pleased-looking face. “Thank you for the tea, ma. It was...”

“...Interesting,” Otabek laughs. He makes a display of placing his arm firmly around Yuri’s shoulder and making eye contact with Yuri’s mother. His expression says, *I’ve got this*. Hers says tenderly in return, *I know*.

Ms. Plisetsky, now alone in the room, sips at her remaining dregs of tea and ponders their absence. *He’s not what I expected, that boy of mine*, she thinks to herself and smiles. *He’s a handful...and a whole lot more*.

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*Author’s note: I’m sorry I made Yuri’s idol mom so eccentric. I don’t know where any of this came from, I swear. But I love embarrassing fictional characters just like my darling Yuratchkaaaa. ::hides::*

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