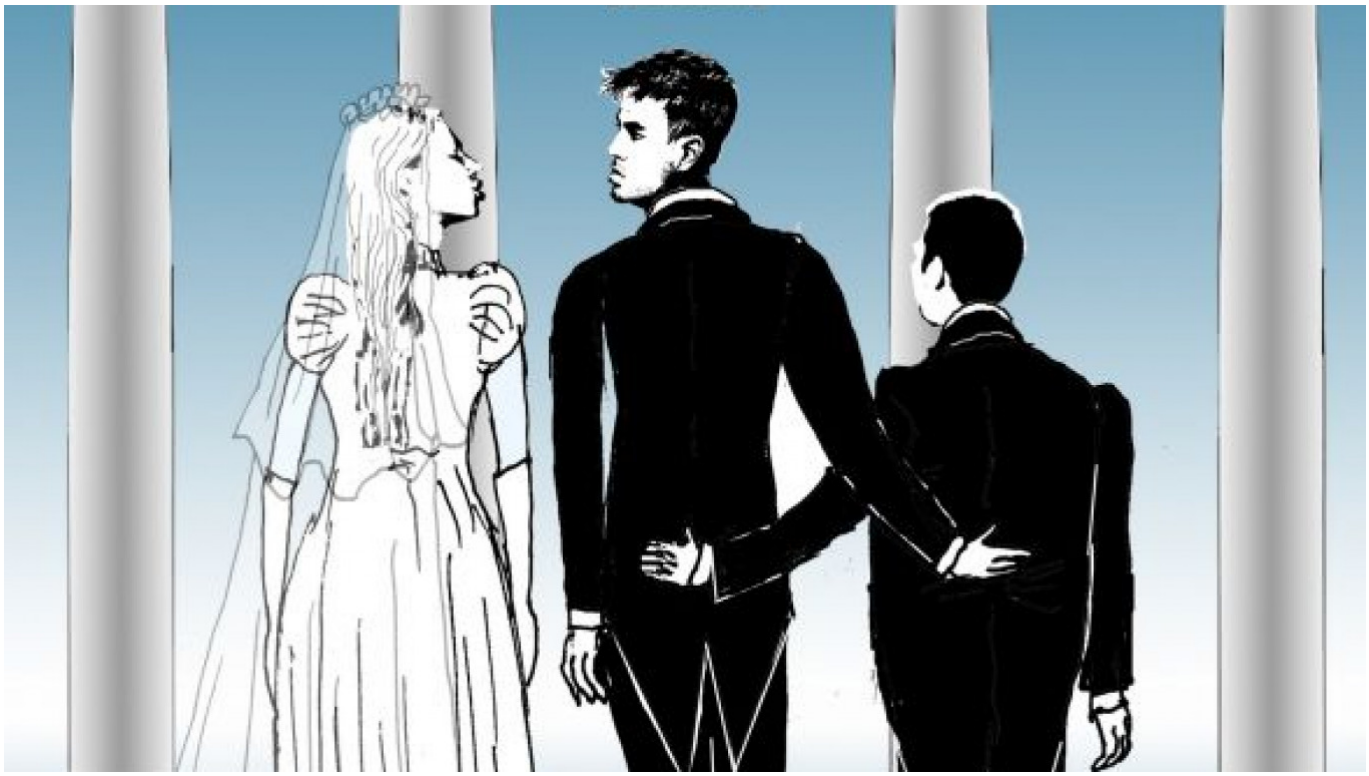
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# In the Spotlight

By Anna Malpas

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This week, Moskovsky Komsomolets published a bizarre kiss-and-tell story about Spanish pop singer Enrique Iglesias, alleging that his long-term romance with the delectable blonde tennis player Anna Kournikova is not the real thing.

The story is told by a 23-year-old Russian, whose name is given as Ivan Irbis, and is memorably headlined: "Iglesias loves Vanya not Anya."

The journalist describes how Irbis met for an interview in a courtyard at the Belorusskaya metro station, wearing a T-shirt saying "I am the most beautiful" and holding a can of beer.

The key — or rather the only — piece of evidence in the article is a photo showing Iglesias in a nightclub with his arm around Ivan's shoulder and kissing him on the cheek — not exactly super-injunction territory.

Irbis alleges that Iglesias initially pretended to have a relationship with Kournikova so he could break Russia and make lots of money from performing at private parties.

Their romance "is all PR dreamed up by Iglesias," Irbis alleges and hints that he himself is Iglesias' partner.

"Now I can say openly, I love him," he says. He alleges that Iglesias bought him cars and an apartment in Moscow.

The journalist writes that Irbis even showed off what he called an "engagement ring," alleging it was from Iglesias.

Enrique decided to promote his love affair with Kournikova because he "needed to conquer not only America and Europe but also the Russian market. It was easier to do it as a couple with Anya," Irbis alleges.

The strategy worked out, Irbis claimed, with Iglesias getting paid about a million dollars for performing at parties on the Rublyovka billionaire strip. Apparently he usually sings at the birthday parties of oligarchs' daughters.

Iglesias' legendary crooner father, Julio, is also a regular visitor, recently including Russia in a "world" tour that otherwise only included the United States, Canada, Spain and Portugal.

The idea that having a relationship with Kournikova would increase the younger Iglesias' popularity in Russia is somewhat strange, though. Long retired from tennis, she is rarely seen in public here and has clearly made her home in the United States — something that hardly makes for mass popularity.

And it is even more improbable that Kournikova, who at the peak of her fame topped all the sexiest woman ratings and is hardly past it at 30, would stay in a fake relationship.

The interview comes across as an act of revenge. Irbis talks of his strained relations with Kournikova, saying she "hates" him.

He says they quarreled when Iglesias last played in Moscow because Kournikova wanted him to arrange paid appearances for the couple at nightclubs and he only managed to arrange one gig.

He claims that Kournikova's financial affairs are not going too well, citing the fact that she is selling a villa in Miami. To put that financial penury in proportion, she is reportedly asking for $9.4 million for the house.

Kournikova also recently announced a breakthrough into reality television. She is going to be a trainer on "The Biggest Loser," an NBC show where obese contestants compete to lose the most weight. I could see her being an ultra-strict dominatrix type, based on her Russian tennis training.

Everything has to be taken with a large pinch of salt, however, because Irbis sounds like a poisonous type, biting the hand that fed him.

He says he got a job working with Iglesias through Kournikova's family, after he became friends with her stepmother. He says he spent more than a year in Miami before returning to Moscow three months ago.

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