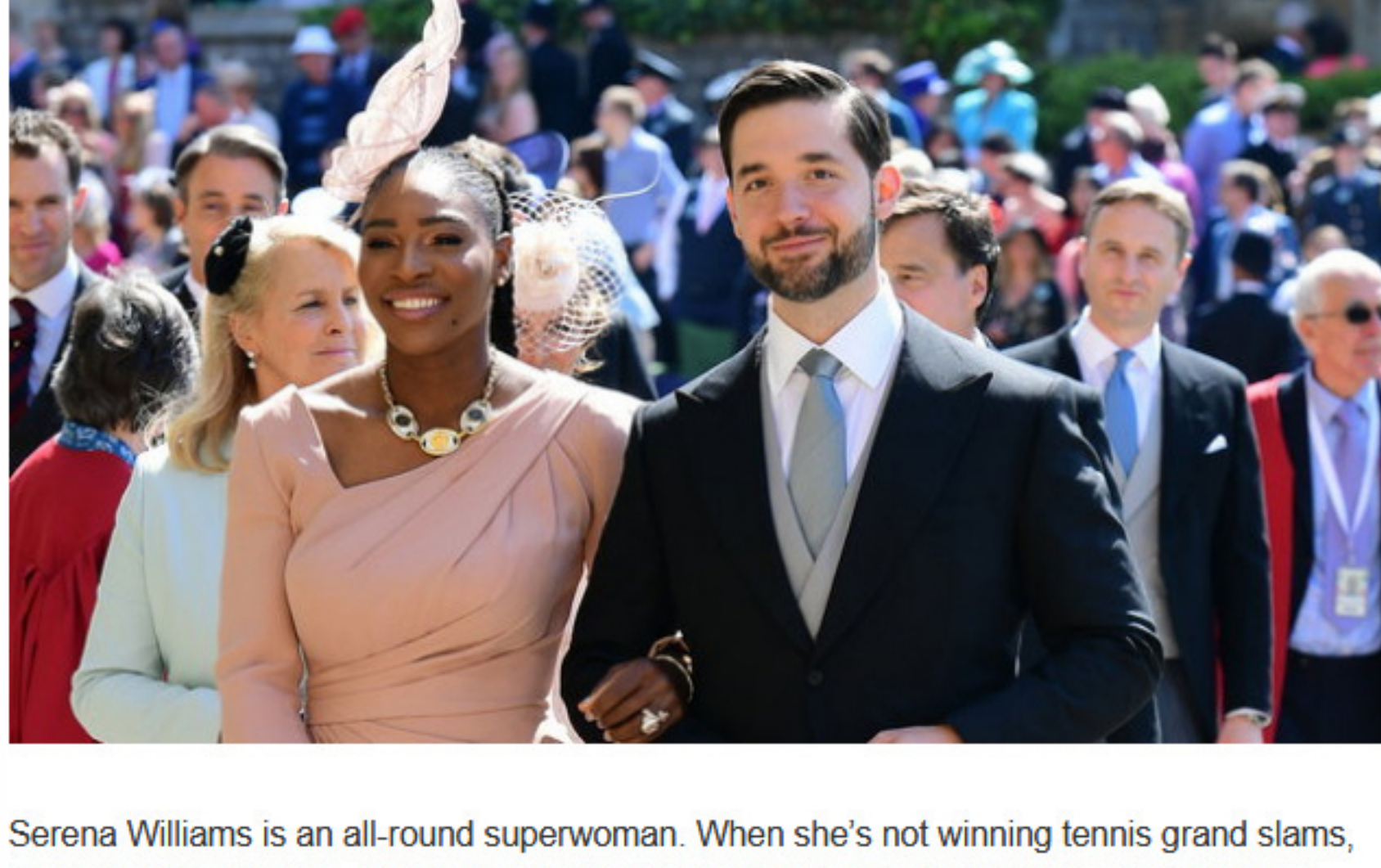


Oprah told Serena Williams 'never let anyone dim your light': Here's how to follow that advice

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It's relationship advice we should all adhere to - but how? Jenny Stallard asks experts.



Serena Williams is an all-round superwoman. When she's not winning tennis grand slams, she's mum to Olympia, wife to Alexis Ohanian and flying the flag for women's rights and equality.



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And she's opened up in her usual candid way in an interview with Allure magazine, talking about her marriage to Reddit co-founder Ohanian.

In the interview, Williams revealed: "Oprah said, 'Never let anyone dim your light.' That really stuck with me. Alexis doesn't dim my light. He doesn't try to dim my light. He puts me in the light, even if I don't want to be. He pushes me to further points I never thought about.

"It always was something that I could see in some relationships — my light would be dimmer. Now I feel like I can shine really bright and still do everything that I want to do."

It's advice we should all take — but what if you fear your own light is being dimmed? Here's how to work out if your partner is letting you shine.

Make sure your partner sees your relationship as a team



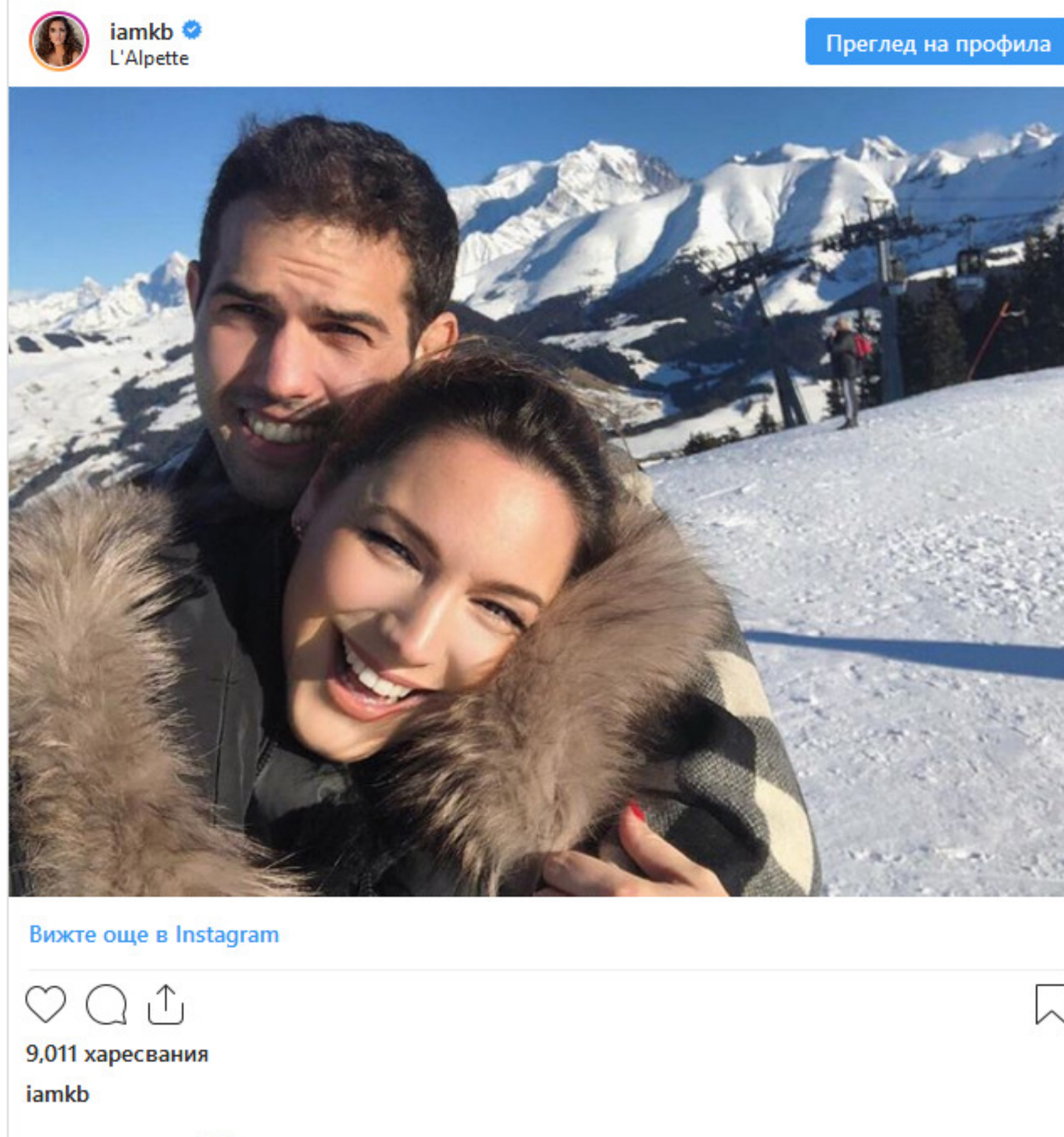
We're not saying your other half should constantly put themselves second, but there's something to be said for a level of self-awareness that means he or she recognises you are an equal.

Relationship psychologist Susan Quilliam says it's about them letting you be the light in the room, because they are so proud of you and to be with you.

"There's an expression: 'Would you rather be the rabbit or the headlights?' Do they put you as the rabbit, or the headlights?" she says.

Think about whether your other half lets you *shine* like the headlights, or whether they put you in a position of fear and shock — like the rabbit.

When they make negative comments about you

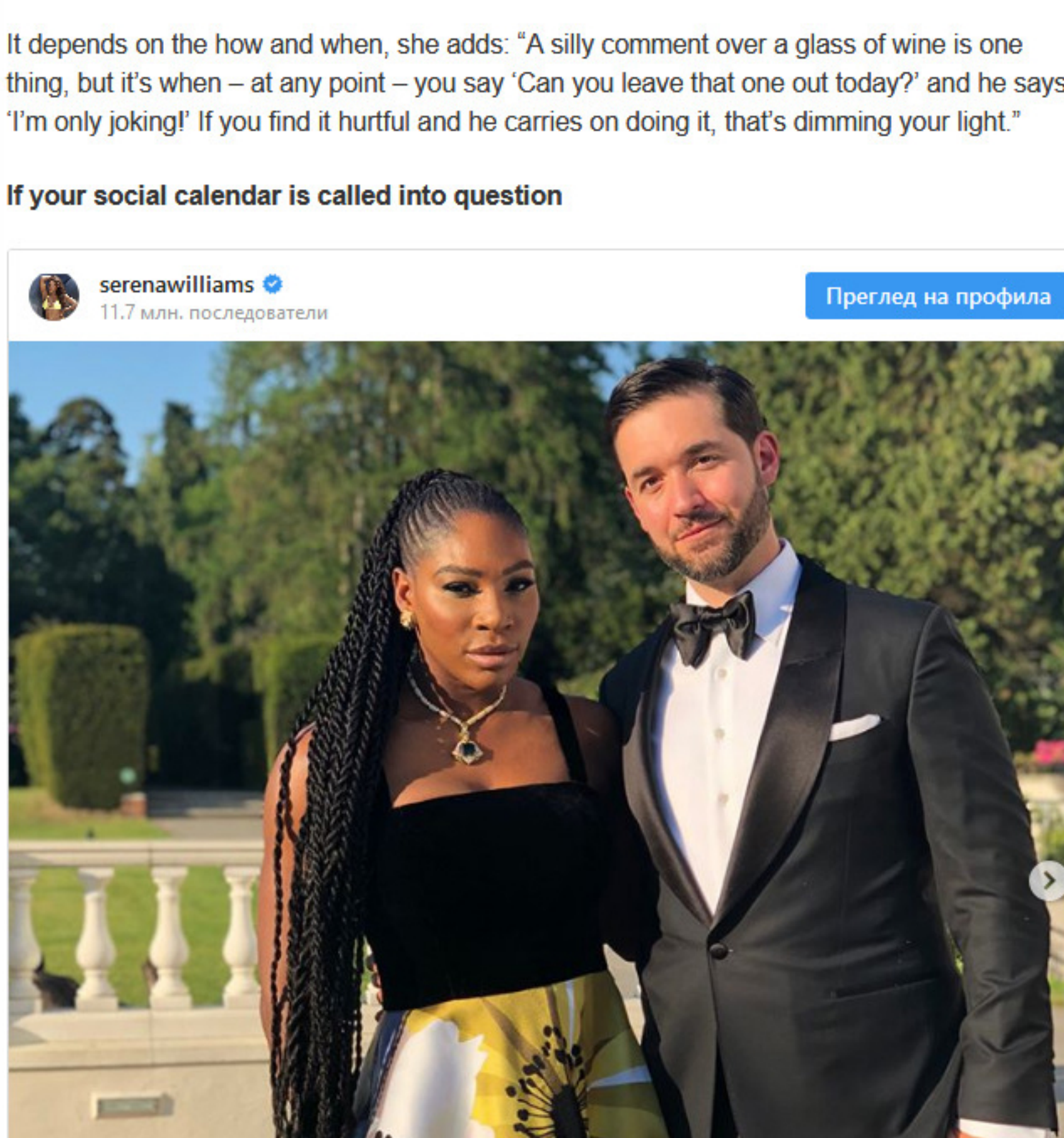


Kelly Brook has said she finds it 'cute' that boyfriend Jeremy Parisi nicknamed her 'Balloon' when she was a size 16 and has also said she first referred to herself as feeling 'like a balloon' and he got the word from her. But is a negative nickname ever ok?

A loving partner saying they don't like what you're wearing in a caring way (eg they prefer you in outfit a rather than outfit b) is "very different to 'oh, you're wearing that again,'" says Quilliam.

It depends on the how and when, she adds: "A silly comment over a glass of wine is one thing, but it's when — at any point — you say 'Can you leave that one out today?' and he says: 'I'm only joking!' If you find it hurtful and he carries on doing it, that's dimming your light."

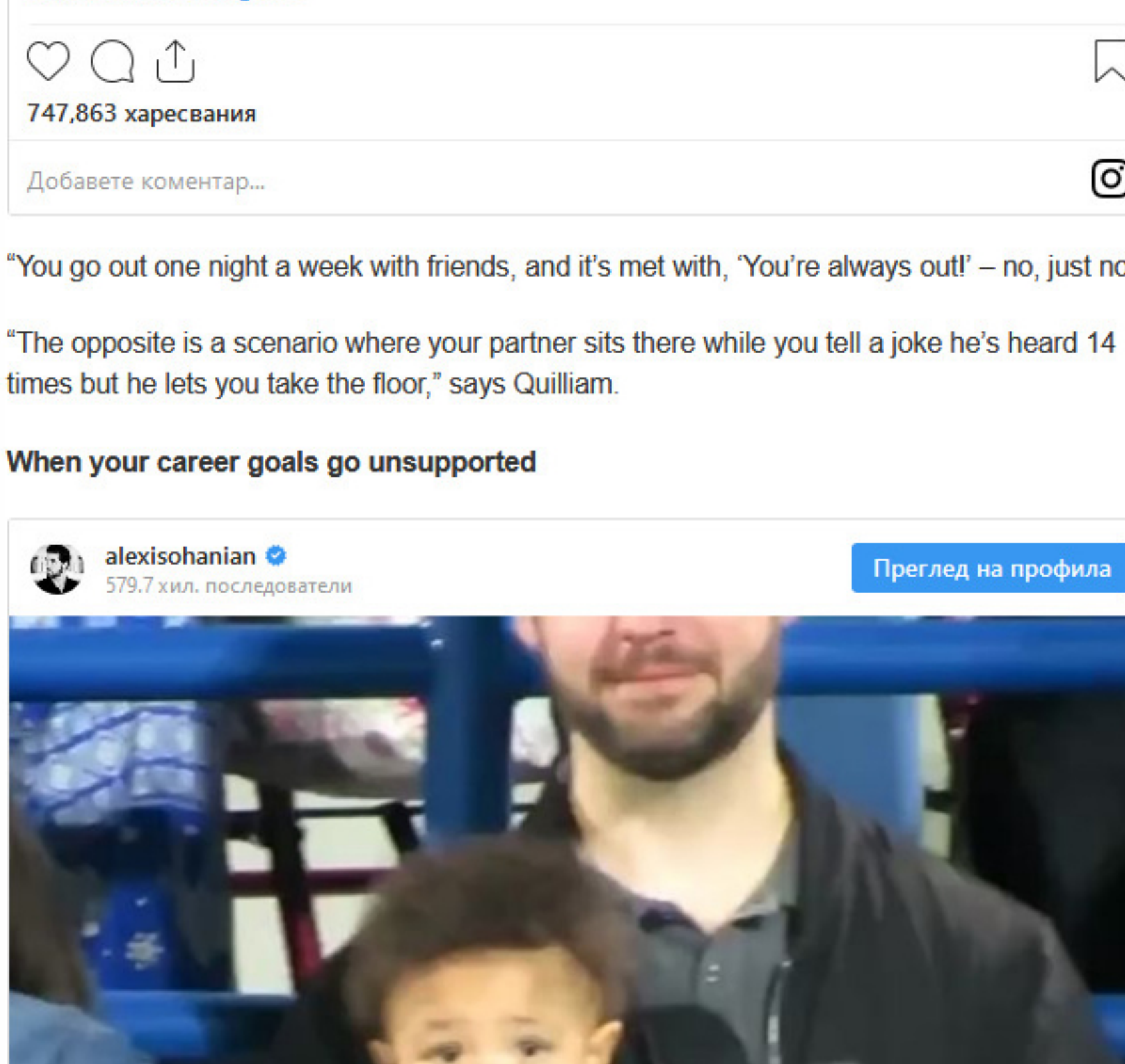
If your social calendar is called into question



"You go out one night a week with friends, and it's met with, 'You're always out!' — no, just no.

"The opposite is a scenario where your partner sits there while you tell a joke he's heard 14 times but he lets you take the floor," says Quilliam.

When your career goals go unsupported



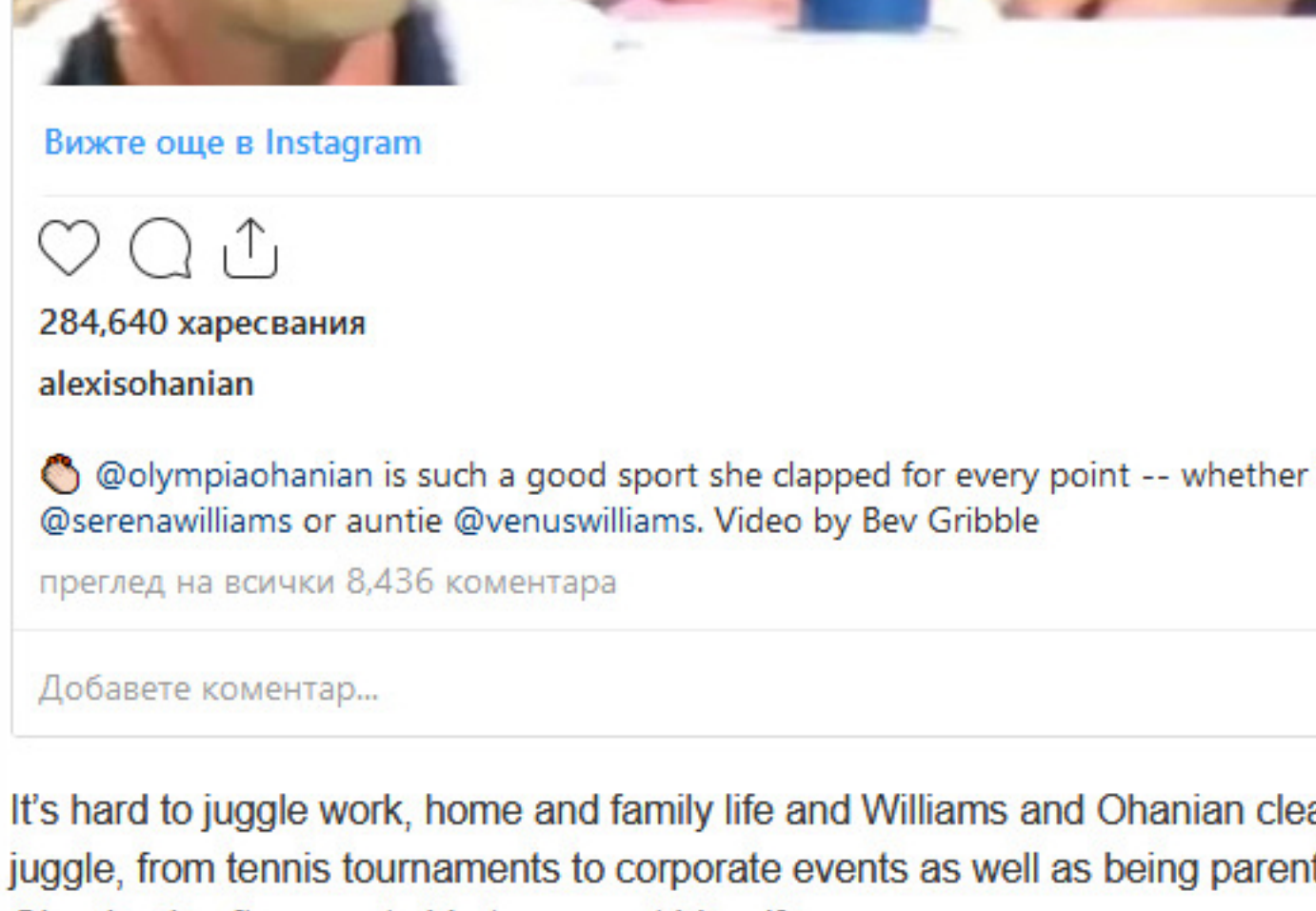
It's hard to juggle work, home and family life and Williams clearly has a lot to juggle, from tennis tournaments to corporate events as well as being parents to Olympia. But Ohanian is often court side to support his wife.

"Saying, 'What do you want a promotion for — we have a good life, don't we?' but it's important to you. That's dimming your light," says Quilliam.

Kate Mansfield is a relationship expert and dating coach and says any partner who makes you feel guilty about wanting space to do your work as opposed to time with them is dimming your light.

And she adds: "Sometimes it's subtle — monitoring your phone and where you're going, using guilt and manipulation."

More extreme dimming (AKA gaslighting)



In more extreme cases, some partners can well and truly turn off the light with their behaviour, says Mansfield.

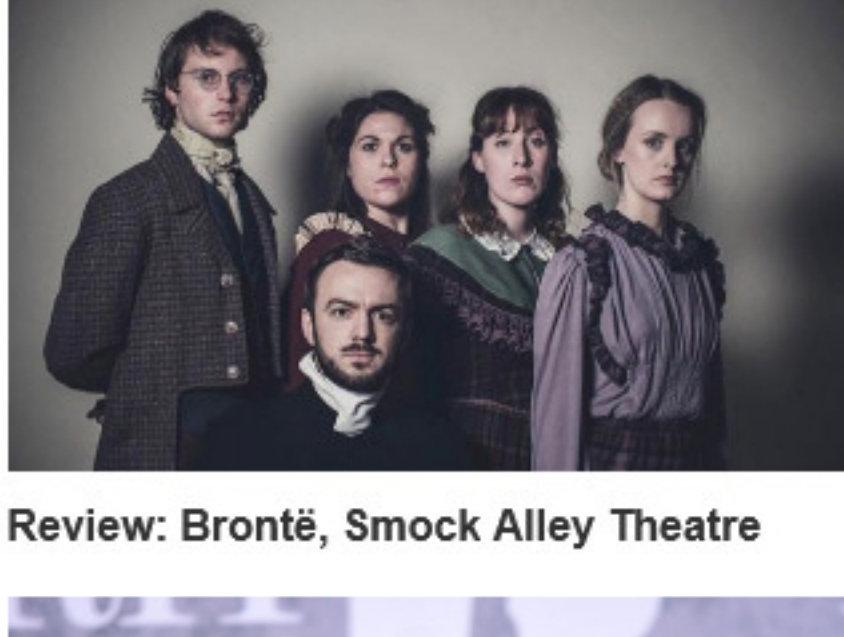
"They might pretend that they're ill, or threaten to leave. Some have affairs or make passive-aggressive comments. They might 'emotionally cheat' to make you paranoid. Insecurity is the same for men and women — there's a fear of abandonment."

Remember it's a two-way street

Finally, keep in mind that light shining can work both ways. Serena Williams certainly does.



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