

you're a beautician

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by [greeniedi](#)

Summary

As he plays his last season with the Raiders, Ilya finds it harder and harder to keep his secret, until he realizes that the one person he can trust has been by his side the entire time.

or, Cliff Marleau finds out because Ilya is so soft that he tells him

Notes

heated rivalry has gotten me out of my writing slump and inspired me to be creative...that being said, i'm a longtime fanfic reader....never actually written it...so bear with me...

i loveeeeeeee ilya and cliff's dynamic and, frankly, wish we got more of it + i doubt we'll get a scene of him finding out about hollanov so I decided to write a quick lil one where we do

also, perhaps there's too much emotional introspection likeeeee if i'm writing introspection and ur reading it...then who's setting the scene???? oh well

also also, idk anything about hockey i fear LMAO

The Raiders landed in New York the night before their first game of the season with the Admirals. Ilya liked playing against them. The flight was short, the city was beautiful, and it only took one chirp to piss off Hunter enough to keep the game interesting.

The team was always flown out the evening before the game, giving Ilya more time in the privacy of his own home before he had to bunk with one of his teammates. He'd grown to love and appreciate most of them more than he'd ever earnestly admit, but spending most of their waking hours together, in locker rooms, on the ice, in airports, made discretion difficult.

Did you get any sleep last night Roz? Fucking beautician you are.

Since the summer, it had gotten harder and harder to lie to them. To make excuses as to why he wasn't picking anyone up at the club. To explain why his teammates were no longer sexiled to the hotel hallways after a night out. To bite his tongue when they'd ask about the mysterious Montreal girl that had come back around recently. Like he'd done for the past almost eight years, Ilya never talked about her, but they could tell. By the way his pre-game speeches riled up the team. The way he was more alive than ever on the ice. The way he was practically glowing at his phone in the locker room. Ilya couldn't help it.

Looks like you and your Montreal girl made up, Cap. When do we get to see the girl that tied you down?

Ilya didn't want to lie, a part of him didn't think it was possible to do so anymore. Not since he had murmured *i love you* in his native tongue into Shane's neck in between kisses and tears and sighs of relief. Saying the words broke a dam within Ilya. He was surprised he had said it first, the words flooding out of him before he could stop himself. He told himself that was what overwhelming, unadulterated love did. The rest of the summer in Shane's cottage had been full of *i love yous*, *i want yous*, *forever*. Of planning for their shared future. Of allowing themselves to imagine a life where they could have more than stolen hours in hotel rooms and hookup texts that they had to hide. Of being out and in love, even if it meant Ilya losing everything that wasn't Shane. He wouldn't mind. He didn't need anything else.

Not saying he had a boyfriend, that he was Shane Hollander, that they were in love, physically pained Ilya. He could feel himself choking on the words every time the locker room talk started. *No, there's no Montreal girl*. But he couldn't say anything, afraid that once he started he could never stop. Denying that there was a girl wasn't enough. He wanted to tell them that it wasn't just women. That he could love men, he loved one man. And he would never love anyone else again. Shane was it for him.

Ilya was prepared to blow up his world for Shane if it meant having him and being his without restriction or fear or looking over his shoulder. But it wasn't just his world anymore. He had seen how Shane reacted to his father seeing them before they were ready. His father, who loved him, supported him. Who had never given Shane a reason to believe that there was anything that could make him love him less.

Despite how much Ilya wanted it, he knew what awaited them on the other side would not be as kind and forgiving as Shane's parents had been when the pair stood in their home like scolded children. Ilya had been fully prepared to be thrown out because they loved Shane, not Ilya, not *Ilya Rozanov*. But they hadn't. They had fed him so much pasta that Shane had to remind him to slow down. And, of course, he hadn't. Vodka, good *Russian* vodka. It was the first homemade meal Ilya had had in years and the first time he had sat down with a family for a meal in, well, ever. During the past few months, Ilya had started to gain a family in Yuna and David Hollander. So no, he couldn't blow up this world. No matter how much he wanted to when his teammates asked about his girl and gave him congratulatory pats on the back before he could even respond, taking his silence as teasing discretion, not pain and restraint.

For now, Ilya would swallow it all, even if it weighed him down so much that he feared he would collapse. He had been doing this for much longer than he realized throughout their escapades. He told himself he could do it for a little bit longer, if that was what Shane needed. The realization enveloping him that there was little Shane could ask of him that he wouldn't do. It should scare him. It doesn't.

Marleau shoved his hand between the hotel elevator doors as Ilya pressed their floor number, giving Ilya a welcome break from the way his mind was spinning. "So Roz, am I gonna get the room to myself tonight or what's the plan?"

Somehow, throughout the years, Ilya and Cliff Marleau had fallen into an accidental friendship, comfortable and in sync. Marleau was a good player, aggressive, fast and quick-thinking on the ice. He was a great teammate, hard-working, focused, and encouraging. He also knew when to shut up and mind his business, teasing Ilya and then leaving him after a simple *Shut up, Marleau*. So Ilya had taken to rooming with Marleau since the beginning of the season. If it meant having the room all to himself when they were in Montreal, Marleau wouldn't question when his teammate would come back with a hoodie that was a size too small.

"Nope, not tonight Marley."

"Ah that's alright. Maybe we can go out, huh? Game's not until the afternoon tomorrow." He nudged Ilya with his elbow. Marley was a good guy, but he was also notorious for getting entirely too crazy on nights out and the smile on his face told Ilya that he'd be dodging women and questions all night if he joined him. Ilya gave him a side eye that said enough.

"Right, sorry Roz. I forgot. You're a taken man now."

Ilya raised his eyebrows at Marleau and said nothing. But he couldn't hold back his smile. It felt nice to have someone say he was taken, that he was someone's boyfriend, even if they had every other detail wrong. It was nice to have someone acknowledge that there was a

person in this world that was Ilya's. That the last few months had not been his imagination. It made a world where Ilya could be Shane's feel less like a fantasy. It was something. It was more than Ilya had ever had and more than he ever thought he would.

The men stepped into the hotel room together, floor 12, room 1224, indistinguishable from every room they had ever been in throughout their careers. For the first few years, Ilya hadn't minded the bland, sterile hotels in which he spent most of the hockey season. If Svetlana wasn't in town, there was nothing for him in Boston. His house wasn't any more of a home than the room he shared with his teammate. But at some point something had changed, a point in time he still hasn't been able to nail down and define. He started chasing something, nights in Montreal, sneaking into Shane's apartment, stealing kisses at events in a city he had already forgotten. Every empty hotel room reminded Ilya that he finally had something he could miss.

That thought lessened the embarrassment of spending his night scrolling through his text thread with Shane, *Jane*, as he waited for a reply. He still wasn't accustomed to being allowed to do this, to want this. To yearn for a message from Shane, knowing that there would always be one and that Shane would be waiting for his reply on the other end. He wasn't used to being able to use any spare second to talk to Shane, to ask about his day, to ask about how he was feeling, to call him *sweetheart*. But god, he loved it. Nothing had ever come more naturally for Ilya, not skating, not hockey, not Russian. Letting himself love Shane felt like breathing. He held his crucifix between his teeth as he read through their texts from earlier in the day.

Jane: Have a safe flight, Ilya.

Lily: Don't miss me too much ;)

Jane: I hate you 🙄

Lily: No you don't. I love you.

Jane: I love you so much.

"Holy shit man, you're not even actually texting her and you're blushing." Ilya didn't even look in his direction. He knew Marleau could see the smile on his face and, evidently, the flush on his cheeks, but looking him in the eyes might make Ilya break.

“Shut your idiot face, Marley.”

Marleau’s tone didn’t respond with the sarcasm and teasing that Ilya expected. In its place, a longing Ilya wasn’t used to. “No man, it’s nice. She clearly makes you happy. You deserve that, Roz. Even though we’ll miss you out there on the streets.”

Ilya finally glanced over at his teammate who looked up from his own screen as he felt Ilya’s gaze on him. Despite knowing each other for years, Ilya and Marleau had never talked too deeply about anything. They had both filled in the gaps left by everything they omitted. Neither talked about long-term girlfriends or close family members in Boston. Ilya knew Marleau had a sister who lived in California? Colorado? But she had started her own family, one Marleau wasn’t particularly a part of. Marleau knew, like everyone else, that Ilya’s father had passed. He didn’t know Ilya’s only real parent had died long before. That he was nothing but a cash cow for his surviving family members. But he knew no one was ever in the stands for Rozanov. He knew no one had come down to the ice for him when they won the Stanley Cup. He knew he hadn’t gone back to Russia this summer. Whether it was a symptom of their lifestyle or something deeper, neither knew, but Ilya had begun to realize that they weren’t that different. Perhaps their friendship wasn’t as coincidental as it sometimes felt. Maybe they both knew more than they let on. He felt that understanding as he looked at Marleau more clearly. A softness to his gaze on Ilya, caring, earnest, sympathetic in a way that still made him feel some shame.

He offered him a smile and turned back to his phone to text Shane.

Lily: I have important question.

Jane: ?

—

Marleau didn’t go out that night after all, not offering much of an explanation besides blaming Ilya. *Your domesticity is starting to rub off on me, man.* It didn’t sound as much of a joke as Marleau intended.

After an hour of pondering it, Ilya finally broke the silence that he had left them in as he texted his boyfriend.

“It is not a girl you know,” he said without looking away from his text thread with Shane, continuing a conversation that he started in his own head.

“What?” Marleau took his eyes off his phone and looked to Ilya. Eyebrows furrowed, his face confused and concerned, partially because neither of them had spoken in so long, but more so because *what did Roz mean it isn’t a girl?*

“Montreal girl. She is not.” Ilya turned to Marleau, keeping his face hard and unforgiving, beckoning it not to betray him.

The confusion slowly left Marleau’s face as he remembered their conversation. He caught himself as his eyes went wide. Ilya didn’t know if he was relieved or insulted that his companion’s poker face was definitely worse than his own. Marleau tossed his phone aside on his bed, closing his eyes and sighing as he tossed his head back against the headboard, offering nothing more than a barely audible *Oh* to Ilya.

“Oh,” he said louder now, seemingly returning to his body for the first time since Ilya had spoken. “I’m gonna be honest, man. It shouldn’t be the most shocking news.”

That finally broke Ilya’s rehearsed indifference. *What the hell was that supposed to mean?* Marleau saw the way Ilya’s eyes and eyebrows shot up.

“No, man like you’ve always been the playboy of the team. I’m just saying. Seems like the more the merrier?” He was desperate to justify his comments, to assure Ilya that he didn’t have a problem. Marleau had no way of knowing that he couldn’t be more wrong. Ilya’s attraction to men hadn’t expanded his pool of people to sleep with, it had closed off his entire world. It didn’t create a revolving door of men and women, it only finally let him have Shane.

“It’s not a problem, man, you know that. I’m cool. The rest of the guys are cool. You’re our captain and a damn great one. Why should we give a fuck?” Marleau had swung his legs over the edge of the bed, sitting looking straight at Ilya who was avoiding eye contact. Truthfully, Ilya wasn’t surprised. Despite whatever the press or fans may think of him and the guys, Ilya had never heard Marleau spew the homophobic slurs that were, more often than not, commonplace on the ice. That didn’t mean he was naive enough to not test the waters.

“So, if Montreal girl isn’t a woman..” He was coaxing him and Ilya had anticipated it. He had spent the last hour speedrunning through this conversation in his head, reminding himself to stay alert for the warning signs that would let him know he should shut up. Promising himself that he would, that he could. *She is not a girl, she is a man, I love him, I love Shane.*

“He is a man. It is serious.”

Marleau’s expression was steady, no disgust or anger. He looked to Ilya expectantly, his eyes soft, mouth slightly parted in surprise.

“I love him.”

This was the first time he was saying the words out loud to someone who wasn’t a Hollander. It crystalized them, made them real in a world outside of Shane’s cottage. He could feel the smile and blush that Marleau had teased him over creeping back. *God, he loved Shane.*

“Oh. Oh, shit. So it’s real,” Marleau murmured as looked down at his feet, suddenly finding it much harder to look at Rozanov. He had expected his captain to tell him that the ever elusive Montreal girl was a man he was hooking up with. Or an amalgamated identity for all of the men he was seeing. He didn’t expect it to be a boyfriend that Rozanov loved, a boyfriend that

he would admit to loving to Marleau. Rozanov had never been one to so readily offer any information that made him look soft or vulnerable or, honestly, *human*. Marleau may not have had a girlfriend or a wife, but he wasn't an idiot. He was a grown man who had been in love before and who had done things he'd never do otherwise for that love. This was real.

"Sorry to pry, man. I didn't think it was so serious. How long have you been seeing each other?" He looked at Rozanov again. It was the least he could do.

Ilya leaned his head back, as if deep in thought. As if he had to think about this for more than one second to answer. As if the first time he had had Shane wasn't burned into his brain and bones and skin.

"Since our rookie year. No, summer before. It is big difference."

Marleau had a feeling this wasn't an accident. "We weren't rookies together, Roz."

"No, we were not," Ilya said definitively as he turned to Marleau and cocked his head, willing him to ask what he wanted to ask. Seeing if he would begin to put the puzzle pieces together.

"He's a player," Marleau finally figured with no disgust or anger or betrayal in his voice. Ilya decided this was safe.

"He is the player."

"You're the player, man."

Ilya threw Marleau a cocky grin. "Yes, that is true. He is the second player. My Jane..." He was starting to have fun with this. Wanting someone else to put him and Shane together in their mind, for someone else to say *Shane Hollander is your boyfriend*.

"Your Jane..." Marleau looked past Rozanov as he willed his brain to make use of the clues Rozanov was giving him, knowing he wouldn't say more. Jane. A player in Rozanov's rookie class. Second best in their *biased* opinion. Secret hookups at the mercy of their game schedule. Empty Montreal hotel rooms. *Holy shit*. Ilya saw the moment it clicked in Marleau's head.

"You are not fucking dating Hollander," he laughed as he said it, not because the idea was unbelievable but because he couldn't believe just how obvious it now was. How quickly it all fell together. How it felt like seeing Rozanov and the years he had known him for the first time. The teasing smile that he only ever saw directed toward Hollander as Rozanov checked him on the ice. The way he beamed at him during faceoffs. The way they moved together on the ice at the last All-Stars game like they were tethered by something no one else could see. The fact that Rozanov never once talked badly about Hollander, not on the ice, not in the locker room, not after losing to their biggest rivals. He had always assumed greatness recognized greatness. And he supposed it did, much more than he realized.

Ilya didn't look away from him, reveling in seeing his and Shane's love live in someone else's brain.

“Of course you’re in love with Hollander. God, typical of you to fall in love with one of the best hockey players. It’s so obvious now. Jesus, how has no one ever realized?” He laid back onto the bed, staring up at the ceiling. Things felt different.

“Shit, I guess that’s stupid to say. I don’t think I would’ve ever figured it out on my own.”

“It is not a problem with you?” Ilya asked him even though it didn’t matter anymore. It was out there now. But Ilya wanted to hear it from Marleau’s mouth. To have words to recite for Shane’s peace of mind.

“No, man. I mean if you’re going to love any guy, it might as well be the best one.” Ilya would repeat that part to Shane begrudgingly. He would act annoyed as Shane teased him that his friend liked Shane more. He couldn’t blame Marleau.

He was broken out of the trance he often went into when thinking about Shane as Marleau continued, “So is he as strict in bed as he is on the ice?”

Evidently, Marleau’s crudeness was not bound by gender. Ilya liked this. It was *normal*. He was a man in love with another man, in love with his rival, in love with Shane Hollander. And it was *normal*.

Marleau laughed as Ilya’s hotel pillow hit him square in the face.

“Do not talk about my Shane in bed,” Ilya warned Marleau as he picked up his phone and stood up from his hotel bed. Part of him meant it, the rest of him focused on staying upright as he heard himself claim Shane out loud. “I have to make a call.”

“Alright, alright. Tell your Montreal love that I said hi!” Marleau yelled as Ilya stepped out into the quiet hotel hallway. Until now, it hadn’t occurred to him that he hadn’t sworn Marleau to secrecy. He hadn’t threatened him to keep quiet in a way that was more hollow and afraid than frightening. *His Montreal love*. Somehow, Ilya knew it would be okay.

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