

Is normal. Building is just excited. (And other lies Ilya told himself while wearing the captain's jersey)

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Is normal. Building is just excited. (And other lies Ilya told himself while wearing the captain's jersey)

by [Nullevoy](#)

Summary

He waited. The ref held the puck.

Then, a sound echoed through the arena.

Maaaaaaa.

Ilya froze. He looked at the ref. The ref looked at him.

From the Zamboni entrance, a goat trotted out onto the ice. It was a small, brown-and-white goat wearing a tiny, custom Boston scarf.

Or

The captain's jersey is cursed, it takes a while for Ilya to notice.

Notes

If i were a structural engineer in boston, i would quit my job. also, cliff is definitely making a profit off of his captain's suffering and that's the kind of friendship we all should aspire to have

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

Ilya was already so done with this, and they hadn't even started.

The press room smelled frankly disgusting. The lights were aimed at him as if their sole purpose was to burn his retinas off. And behind that were some ninety cameras lined up like a firing squad.

He shifted in his chair, smoothing his hand over the brand-new jersey PR had forced over his head a few minutes ago. It was warm and stuffy and he'd rather be anywhere else. Could he do all of his future interviews shirtless? How's that for publicity?

He waited for the cameraman's sign and leaned into the microphone.

"I am happy to be here," Ilya said, his voice a low rumble. "Boston is good city. I think we make many wins."

The universe, apparently, took that as a personal challenge.

Deep within the building, a sound erupted. It was a deep, dark groan that felt like it traveled through every nook and cranny of the building until it arrived at the conference room. Dust began to sift down onto Ilya's shoulders like snow.

God, he really did not have the patience for this right now.

"Uh, Ilya?" Ryan Price whispered from the side, eyes wide.

Ilya didn't look up. He didn't even blink. He just stared directly into the lens of the primary camera. "Is normal. Building is just excited."

He should've just kept his fucking mouth shut.

A chunk of the ceiling the size of a Fiat 500 detached itself with the casual grace of a falling guillotine. It slammed into the back of the podium area, missing the PR director by an inch and obliterating a stack of papers. A light truss swung down, sparking like a disco ball. Reporters scrambled, chairs overturned, and the air became a thick, chalky fog of pulverized plaster.

Fortunately, the rigging was designed not to kill people; unfortunately, it demolished everything else in its wake and electrified every microphone with insulation and other remnants of what was once a ceiling.

Cameras blinked out. A woman near the front shrieked. Somewhere a laptop whined and died. PR folks began shouting. "Evacuate! Out! Out now!"

When the dust settled, Ilya was still sitting there, covered in white powder and chunks of plaster. He blinked, unfazed, and reached up to brush a speck of chalky concrete from the letter on his jersey.

That's how Cliff Marlow found him. "You okay?"

Ilya looked up, shrugged. Dust motes fell from his hair. “Is dramatic,” he said.

They postponed the press conference. People muttered about insurance and litigation and ‘structural assessments.’ Somebody called a building manager who sounded very small over the phone and promised they’d have an engineer by Monday.

Marcel’s mouth stayed open in a way that meant they’d try again. Of course they would.

Attempt number two was held in the basement of a different building, one specifically chosen for its lack of decorative ceilings.

This time they’d had everything planned out. Fewer soft-focus shots, more contingency plans, an on-call structural engineer who refused to smile, and three crew members whose look could be summarized as ‘do not trust anything with visible bolts.’

“We have three backup generators,” the PR head whispered, looking like a man who hadn’t slept since the 2004 lockout. “We have offline storage. We have a priest on standby. Nothing can go wrong.”

Ilya sat down. He was wearing a different pair of trousers, but the same captain’s jersey.

They got halfway through. Ilya was explaining his philosophy on defense which mostly involved him being faster than everyone else and then glaring at them, when the monitors flickered.

Well, ok, it was more like a very impromptu epilepsy-inducing light show.

Every screen in the room went bright, neon green before it started flickering like a strobe light. The tech team dove for the servers. The lead engineer let out a sound that was less ‘professional technician’ and more ‘wounded animal’.

“It’s gone,” the tech wailed. “The footage. The audio. The cloud backups. It’s all... it’s just gone. It’s like the data committed suicide.”

Ilya leaned back, crossing his arms. The C on his chest seemed to catch the green light of the dead monitors, looking suspiciously smug.

“Maybe Big C is shy?” Ilya offered.

“Ilya, the server literally melted,” Cliff said, staring at the smoking tower in the corner. “It’s not shy. It’s hostile.”

“Is same thing,” Ilya muttered.

By the third attempt, the PR team had reached the ‘Despair’ phase of grief. They didn’t even try for a professional vibe anymore. They just wanted a recording that didn’t involve a

structural collapse or a digital haunting.

“Just sit there,” the director pleaded. “Don’t move. Don’t even breathe too hard.”

Ilya sat. He was tired. He wanted to go home and text Shane things that would make a sailor blush. He wanted to take the stupid jersey off.

Suddenly, the overhead lights hummed. There was a *thunk-whir* sound from the lighting booth.

A spotlight hit Ilya. It wasn’t white. Of course it wasn’t. Why would it be?

It was a vibrant, aggressive violet. Then another hit him, hot pink. Then yellow. Then green.

Within ten seconds, Ilya Rozanov was sitting in the middle of a high-intensity, multi-colored disco nightmare. The spotlights were rotating in a slow, hypnotic rainbow pattern.

The PR director stared. The cameraman stared.

“Is this... a choice?” a reporter asked, squinting through the neon glare.

Ilya looked down at his hands, which were currently turning a soft shade of indigo. He looked at the C on his jersey, which was currently circling through all of the colors of the rainbow instead of the white it should be.

“I am very inclusive captain,” Ilya said, deadpan. “I bring color to boring city. We film like this. It is fashion.”

Cliff started wheezing in the back of the room.

They filmed the whole thing in rainbow. It became the most-watched press conference in NHL history, mostly because Ilya looked like he was about to drop the hottest synth-pop album of 2014.

The first time Ilya wore the captain’s jersey on the ice for a real game, they were playing the Admirals. And it was going terribly.

Boston was sluggish. Ilya was frustrated. Scott Hunter was skating around like he owned the oxygen in the arena, looking insufferably talented and tall.

“Since when does he play good?” Ilya asked, head low as he skated near Cliff.

“Since always? You do know that he’s actually a good player, right?” Cliff said.

“He’s like million years old.”

“He’s literally in his prime,” Cliff said, rolling his eyes as he bumped Ilya on the shoulder.

It looked like they’d be losing this one, badly.

Then players started dropping.

The Admirals' top defenseman tripped over the blue line. There was no one near him. He just... fell. He stayed down, clutching his ankle.

Two minutes later, a center went into the boards on a check and came out looking like he'd been hit by a freight train. Then another Admiral crumpled in the neutral zone.

By the ten-minute mark, the Admirals' bench looked like a field hospital in a war movie.

"Is this a plague?" someone muttered. Ryan Price, who'd seen enough weird shit in his life being thrown around teams like a ping-pong ball. But this really took the cake.

On the bench, Cliff snorted and leaned forward, turning to Victor St-Simon. "If this ends with them being dismantled and us winning, I'll never not laugh at you for—" he began.

The injuries kept coming. The Admirals' coach went white.

Scott Hunter skated past Ilya, his face a shade of red that shouldn't be biologically possible. "What are you doing?" he hissed. "Are you greasing the ice? Are you using magnets? I swear to god, Rozanov—"

"I am doing nothing," Ilya said, gliding past him. "Maybe your team is just... fragile. Like glass."

"Fragile? My goalie just got a cramp so bad he had to be carried off!" Scott screamed.

Ilya paused. He looked down at the C on his jersey. He looked back at Scott.

"Is the letter," Ilya said, his voice dropping an octave. "It does not like you."

Scott looked like he was going to have a stroke.

Boston won 8–3, mostly because the Admirals were down to two lines and a very confused backup-backup goalie who looked like he'd been recruited from a local beer league ten minutes prior.

In the locker room, the atmosphere was a mix of triumph and pure, unadulterated confusion.

"Okay, we need to talk about it," Victor said, pointing a roll of tape at Ilya. "The ceiling. The lights. The... whatever happened to the Admirals. It's the jersey."

Cliff snorted into a bottle of recovery drink. "What, the fabric has a grudge?"

"No," Victor said, earnest. "Not the fabric. The C. The captain's C. What if when Ilya has it on—"

"You're not seriously..." Ryan began.

Victor's eyes gleamed. "No, no hear me out on this one. Ceiling, power outage, rainbows, then an entire team collapses in a single game. It's either cosmic coincidence or we have the most theatrical captain in the league."

Cliff laughed so hard he nearly choked on his Gatorade. "You're telling me my boy Rozanov is a walking weather event? That is the best PR copy we've ever had."

"It's just fabric." Ilya said. "You know I was only joking when I talk about letter."

"I thought Russians didn't joke." Cliff laughed as he was chased off by the jersey Ilya slung in his direction.

"Is it?" Ryan Carmichael asked, leaning in. "Ilya, the Admirals' captain literally got a nosebleed the second you looked at him. That's not hockey."

"I put five bucks on a livestock incident," Cliff announced, scribbling on a pad. "Three to one odds for goats. Ten to one for a swarm of bees."

"I hate all of you," Ilya muttered.

"You love us," Cliff chirped. "And you love your magic cursed letter. It's basically your third child."

"Didn't know I was hiding a first and second"

The home game against Montreal started normally. The anthem was sung. The crowd was roaring. Ilya stood at the center circle for the puck drop of the second period, his C sitting proudly on his chest.

He waited. The ref held the puck.

Then, a sound echoed through the arena.

Maaaaaa.

Ilya froze. He looked at the ref. The ref looked at him.

From the Zamboni entrance, a goat trotted out onto the ice. It was a small, brown-and-white goat wearing a tiny, custom Boston scarf. It was followed by another. And another.

Within thirty seconds, there were six goats on the ice. One of them began a long, graceful slide across the blue line, its hooves skittering as it bleated in delight.

What the actual fuck.

The jumbotron, which should have been showing the score, suddenly flickered and displayed a giant graphic of a cartoon goat jumping over a hockey stick. **"GOAT TIME!"** it flashed in bright, obnoxious yellow.

The crowd went silent for exactly three seconds before erupting into the loudest, most confused cheer in the history of sports.

Ilya stood perfectly still. A goat trotted up to him and began curiously nibbling on the hem of his jersey.

If Cliff had anything to do with this, Ilya was going to kill him.

He looked toward the bench. Marlow was standing on the boards, screaming with laughter, holding his pad in the air like a holy book.

“I TOLD YOU!” Cliff yelled. “GOATS! I WIN! PAY UP, VICTOR!”

Ilya looked down at the goat. The goat looked back.

“I hate it here,” Ilya whispered to the goat.

The goat just bleated and took another bite of the jersey.

In the meantime, somewhere in the background, a very confused Shane Hollander was trying to pet a goat.

The game against the Rangers was tight, not the kind of game where goals were being scored left and right but the kind that made Ilya’s teeth itch.

The kind in which, after almost one and a half periods, the score was 1–1.

Then Ilya intercepted a pass, danced through the neutral zone like he was dodging laser beams, and buried the puck in the top corner of that godforsaken goal.

He threw his arms up. The crowd roared. And then, the goal cannon fired.

Usually, the cannon emitted a satisfying *thump* and a plume of smoke.

Tonight, there was no smoke.

Instead, it fired a concentrated blast of high-velocity, industrial-grade iridescent confetti. Within three seconds, the entire left half of the rink was invisible. A shimmering, colorful blizzard of paper rectangles descended, coating the ice, the players, and a very confused referee.

“I cannot see!” Victor yelled, skating blindly into the boards. “Everything is sparkly! Why is everything sparkly?!”

Half the bench looked like a craft project curated by a very industrious kindergarten class.

“You’ve got to be—” Cliff began, voice lost to a shower of fuchsia flecks.

The cleanup took thirty-five minutes. A fleet of shovel-wielding teenagers tried to clear the ice, but the confetti seemed to be sentient and clung to the frozen surface as if someone had coated it with superglue beforehand.

Ilya had to do the mid-game interview while standing in a pile of glitter that reached his knees. He had a pink rectangle stuck to his eyebrow and, at least what it felt like, several in his ass crack.

“Ilya, that was a great goal, but, uh, the cannon?” the reporter asked, trying not to look at the gold star currently glued onto the captain’s nose.

Ilya stared into the camera with the dead-eyed resignation of a man who had accepted his fate. “Is celebration,” he said through the confetti. “Fans like colors. I provide.”

He then spat out a piece of blue foil. “Tastes like victory.”

In the locker room during the second intermission, the team ignored the tactical whiteboard entirely. They were crowded around Cliff’s locker.

“Okay, so we’ve had structural failure, digital suicide, impromptu disco two times and livestock,” Ryan Price said, ticking points off on his fingers. “What’s left? Spontaneous combustion? Dimensional rift?”

“I’m putting fifty on ‘Unexplained Weather Phenomenon,’” Victor said, slapping a few bills onto the bench.

Cliff was scribbling furiously. “I’m telling you, the odds for ‘Ilya Notices’ are currently sitting at a thousand to one. He thinks it’s all a coincidence. He thinks the universe just hates him personally, independent of his fashion choices.”

“He’s Russian,” Carmichael whispered. “He’s built to endure misery. He just thinks this is what being a captain feels like.”

Ilya walked in, still trailing glitter behind him. He looked at the money. He looked at the notepad.

“You are betting on me?” Ilya asked, narrowing his eyes.

“No,” Cliff said, smooth as silk. “We are betting on the *vibes*, Ilya. The vibes are very high today.”

Ilya pointed at a line on the pad. “Why does it say ‘Goat Round Two’?”

“Insurance,” Cliff said.

They'd just won, spirits were high and so after the game, the team headed to a high-end club in the Seaport. Usually, Ilya Rozanov entering a room was the social equivalent of dropping a steak into a piranha tank. He was beautiful, he was rich, and he had the charisma of a high-speed car chase.

Tonight, Victor had dared him to wear the captain's jersey out.

They all stood drinking, joking around. And then something miraculous happened. *Nothing.*

A group of girls approached the table. They swarmed Victor. They giggled at Price. One of them actually bumped into Ilya's shoulder, looked him directly in the eye, and then asked him to move so she could get a better selfie with Carmichael.

Ilya blinked. He looked at his drink. He looked at the jersey.

He was so fucking done with all of this.

Ten feet away, a girl was hitting on Sebbin with the intensity of a thousand suns. Ilya, the man who usually had to be extracted from clubs by security to avoid being mobbed, was effectively a ghost.

"I am invisible?" Ilya asked, sounding more offended than relieved.

Cliff leaned over, grinning like a shark. "It's the C, buddy. It's a repellent. The universe is protecting your virtue for Jane."

Ilya scowled. He tried to catch the eye of a passing waitress. She looked right through him as if he were a particularly well-dressed coat rack.

"I hate this," Ilya muttered, taking a massive swig of vodka. "I am very attractive man. This is insult."

Two days later, the team was winding down after a grueling practice. Ilya was the last one to the showers, he was still wearing his jersey because he'd been caught in an intense, mildly explicit conversation with Shane.

God he couldn't wait for Montreal to play in Boston again.

He plopped down on the bench near his locker, phone still in hand, as he heard one of the shower handles turn.

Instead of the usual steaming spray, there was a sound like a jet engine stalling. The water came out as slush. Within three seconds, the pipes groaned, and it sounded like the showerhead decided to end its career as a shower and turn into a power jet for ice.

"Guys?" Cliff yelled from the locker area. "Why do I hear the sound of a glacier forming?"

“The water... It's broken!” A voice shouted back, shivering as the air in the stall plummeted to sub-zero temperatures. Followed by a variety of very creative curses.

Ilya, along with the rest of the team who had just a second earlier been catching their breath after practice in the locker room, sprinted over to the showers, where they found Ryan Carmichael looking seconds away from turning into a humanoid ice sculpture.

Cliff took one look at the frost creeping up the walls and the way the water was freezing into a solid pillar around Ryan's ankles, and promptly turned around pointing a finger at Ilya.

“THE JERSEY, ILYA! TAKE OFF THE FUCKING JERSEY!”

“Is just water, Cliff! Physics does not work like this!”

“PHYSICS GAVE UP ON YOU A WEEK AGO! TAKE IT OFF!”

Ilya fumbled with the hem, his fingers numb. The second he pulled the jersey over his head, the icicles vanished. The water turned instantly, scaldingly hot.

Ilya stood there, dripping, holding the damp jersey.

“Okay,” Ilya whispered to himself, his breath still hitching. “Maybe is jersey.”

The Boston-Montreal game was a bloodbath. After the final whistle, the adrenaline was still humming in Ilya's veins like a live wire. He needed Shane. He needed to see him, to touch him.

They met in a back-of-house service corridor, a dim, concrete hallway that smelled of cleaning products and ozone.

Ilya was still in his gear, sweating, panting. Shane looked tired, beautiful, and desperately glad to see him. They didn't talk. They just collided against the wall, Ilya's hands tangling in Shane's hair, Shane's mouth tasted like peppermint gum.

It was perfect.

Then gravity, feeling left out, decided to get involved.

“Ilya?” Shane murmured against his lips, pulling back slightly. “Is the building... vibrating?”

Ilya looked down at the C on his jersey, then the one on Shane's

“Oh, no,”

Oh fuck his life.

With a sound similar to the earth splitting in two beneath your feet, the cinderblock wall behind them simply... gave up. A six-foot section of the concrete buckled inward, collapsing

into a heap of gray rubble and dust.

They scrambled back, Shane tripping over a piece of rebar, Ilya catching him as the dust cloud billowed around them.

Through the new, jagged hole in the wall, they could see into the Boston locker room.

The entire team was sitting there in pure silence.

Cliff, surrounded by Victor, Price and Carmichael, sat on his bench, a Gatorade in one hand and the betting pad in the other.

His gaze quickly jumped around the rest of the team, Sebbin, Kane, Cadyn, Johansson. Who all sat staring either confused, concerned, slightly disturbed or somehow all of the above at the same time. And in no particular order.

Ilya found that, given the circumstance, to be a rather apt reaction to finding your captain shagging his arch rival.

Cliff looked at the rubble. He looked at Shane and Ilya, who were currently covered in concrete dust and looking like they'd been caught in a landslide during a hookup. Finally, he looked at the C on Ilya's chest.

"Ilya," Cliff said, his voice ringing out in the silence. "I told you. I told you three times. *Take the fucking jersey off.*"

Shane looked at the jersey. He looked at the hole in the wall. He looked at Ilya.

"You destroyed a wall?" Shane asked, a small, hysterical laugh bubbling up.

Ilya looked at his jersey. He slowly, deliberately pulled it off over his shoulders and threw it on the floor.

"Is not me," Ilya said, brushing dust off Shane's shoulder. "Is the letter. It is very dramatic."

"A thousand bucks!" Cliff screamed in the background. "Ilya noticed! I'm rich!"

End Notes

I had such a blast writing this, i'm like a fairy spreading crack to every fandom i visit

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