

Secrets Taken Not Quite to the Grave (But to the Couch)

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Secrets Taken Not Quite to the Grave (But to the Couch)

by [stabthroughme](#)

Summary

Marleau is really good at keeping secrets. He's also really good at hinting when he knows things.

Ilya, however, is a dense fucking idiot sometimes.

(Suicide Attempts tag is there for reference, it is not on the page and is not made light of)

Notes

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

One thing Cliff Marleau was proud of was that he was not a fucking snitch. He would talk shit, and maybe he had some shit to learn still, but he was not a fucking snitch.

Which is why he didn't say shit when he showed up to apologize to Shane Hollander in person and saw how... *familiar* his best friend was being with the Metros captain. He kept his mouth shut, and didn't even try to hint at knowing.

Because whatever Ilya got up to off the ice was none of his fucking business.

He did send Hollander a very pricey fruit basket, though.

So when Ilya signed with Ottawa seemingly out of the blue, he wasn't surprised. He was apparently *really* good at pretending to be, though, because the first game Ottawa played against Boston, Ilya insisted on taking Cliff out for a drink to apologize for leaving.

So now Cliff was sitting across from his best friend who was in an *at least* two year long love affair with Shane fucking Hollander and had signed to the worst team in the fucking league to be close to him and launch a charity with him. And Ilya's shoulders were so tense Cliff was pretty sure his chiropractor would be making a killing tomorrow.

"My sister tried to kill herself," he said instead, when they were in a back booth with beer and food and no more waiters coming to talk to them.

Ilya looked at him in shock and Cliff realized okay, yeah, Ilya was his best friend but they didn't really *talk*.

"My baby sister, she's not a baby anymore but... There's eight years between us, so she's always gonna be my baby sister, y'know?" Cliff sighed and fixated on his food, Ilya had met his baby sister, had raced her around the rink when the families had come out for the cup win. Had let her win the race. "She's the smart one, got into a fancy private school and we all thought she was doing great and then the school called us. She'd been bullied a lot, her and another girl in her class were together or something and the kids were being mean about it and it became too much. They tried to pull a Romeo and Juliet, but someone found them both in time so..." He looked up at Ilya again. "The foundation you and Hollander started, it's up and running right? Like, officially?"

"Uh, yeah. Yes."

"Would you mind if I made a couple donations?"

"A couple?"

"One privately, for my sister, she doesn't really want to talk about it, she's on track to have a big academic career and doesn't want it to come up when people google her. *But*," Cliff smiled, an actual genuine smile because fuck he was proud of his friend, "I also want to make a public one, I shut down any shit talking about it in the Raiders but Pricey said Toronto's being, well, Toronto about it. Figured if a couple of other players make public donations it'd, I dunno, make it clear you guys are leading the way for a bunch of us."

"That would be nice, Marleau." Ilya relaxed his shoulders.

"You're taking girls at your hockey camps too, right?"

"We have Leah Campbell? Team Canada Women's goalie-"

"Oh fuck I remember her, she kept our girls from scoring for a whole fucking period," Marleau let out a low whistle of approval. "Damn you're gonna be churning out some stellar fucking goalies."

Ilya smiled proudly. "Her husband is joining us too."

"I thought she was a lesbian?"

Ilya's shoulders tensed again, but this time Cliff recognized it. Ilya was falling back to protect someone. "She was, her husband is trans man. He came out a couple years ago, after the 2018 Olympics."

"Oh shit, that must suck." Ilya tensed more and Cliff restrained himself just enough to play off as though he was continuing his sentence after taking a drink and *not* rushing to reassure Ilya. "I mean, the NHL won't take him 'cause Crowell's a fucking dinosaur, and the AHL probably wouldn't either. Does he have a team or?"

"No, he does not. Which is very bullshit," Ilya added.

"Complete bullshit. Good for him, though. Knowing all that and coming out anyways?" Cliff nodded approvingly. "Takes balls."

"It does."

"Cool that she stood by him, too. Can't imagine there's a whole kumbya singing circle 'bout it." Ilya looked lost and Cliff rephrased, "I mean like, it's probably similar to what Hunter's dealing with, right? Fuckheads like Crowell being fake and shitheads being aggressive."

"How has Boston been about that?" Ilya was pretending to pick something up on his fork but actually just moving the food around.

"Well you didn't let anyone talk shit 'bout him, so I don't let it fly either. It's the 21st century, by the time we're retiring it probably won't even be worth mentioning." Cliff was doing a *great* job not staring at Ilya and winking at him and telegraphing that *hi yes I know and it's okay I support you*. "Hopefully Crowell will be long gone by then."

"I will drink to that."

"You drink to everything."

Ilya smirked. "True, but I *mean* it this time."

"Hey for the record, playing against you guys fucking sucks now," Marleau said to Barrett who was, apparently, gay and a good person who just was *really* good at pretending not to be. "Fuck the power of friendship bullshit hockey team literally fuelled by puppies and hugs."

Barrett grinned. "I'd apologize but that'd be a lie and I'm trying this thing where I *don't* do that."

Ottawa beat Boston's ass. Marleau made a point to lightly shoulder-check Ilya as they started to file off the ice.

"Stop being fucking Care Bears Friendship Squad," he chirped.

"You should give it a try!" Ilya grinned. "Drinks?"

"If it can make me forget the last several hours I'm *so* down."

Which is how they ended up at Ilya's place after far too many drinks, with Cliff crashing on the couch.

"-doing here?" Shane Hollander hissed. Cliff's head was killing him *fuck-*

"We got drunk."

"Yes, Ilya, I can see that."

"I am. Maybe. Hungover."

"Oh you fucking think?"

"Sweetheart is too early-"

"It's 9am."

"Oh. Well. I am trying to find the- oh. Thank you."

"No. No kisses until you explain why Cliff fucking Marleau is passed out on our couch."

"We got drunk. None of the Boston players were answering their phone, I do not know what hotel they are staying at."

"Jesus *fucking Christ*, Ilya."

"Hm?"

"Ilya. Wake your friend up and get him back to his team before they miss their flight."

"Is private flight. They will not leave without their captain."

"Yes they will and you know it."

"I am. Too hungover to drive. He did not remember the hotel."

"Oh for the love of- Ilya. Call Harris. He can figure it out."

"I think. I may still be a little drunk."

"I will call Harris then. You- Ilya stop it- you wake him up."

"And when he's gone I can fuck you?"

"...You are *so* lucky I love you."

"I know."

Ilya sounded downright lovesick and happy and Cliff was doing *so* good at pretending to be asleep. A+. Gold star. Ilya better fucking give him a gold star-

"*Marleau*," Ilya hissed, crouching down in front of the couch. "Wake up."

"I'm awake," Cliff said without opening his eyes.

"Oh. Good." He heard shuffling and opened an eye to find Ilya laying on the floor, up against the couch. "We have shitty smoothies because Shane wants to torture me."

"Smoothies are good for you, Roz."

Ilya wrinkled his nose. "They're gross."

"Yeah and you're a professional athlete who makes millions, these are the trade-offs bro." Okay so maybe Marleau was also still a little drunk.

"Shitty trade-offs. Can't fuck my fiance, can't have McGriddles. What is point of life?"

"Win cups, make money, play hockey?" He suggested.

Ilya hummed. "I guess."

Cliff poked Ilya's shoulder. "You should fuck Hollander more, might dislodge the stick up his ass."

Ilya opened his eyes to glare at Cliff. "He does *not* have a stick up his ass, he is under a lot of pressure because the Metros fucking suck as a team and take it all out on him."

"Damn. Fuck the Metros."

Ilya's glare turned into a grin. "I am."

"I fucking *know* you dumbass." He shoved the fancily upholstered couch cushion he'd been using through the night down onto Ilya's face. "I'm doing fucking great at pretending to be asleep."

Ilya held the pillow over his face. "Oh, good idea. If we are asleep Shane won't give me watery eyes-"

"Oh my fucking *god* Roz, you're *so* fucking whipped."

"I know," Ilya sighed softly. He reached up and smacked Cliff's arm as the stairs creaked. "Be asleep!" Ilya hissed.

Cliff closed his eyes and pretended to be asleep again. Right up until Shane talked.

"What are you idiots doing?" He asked.

"Pretending to be asleep," Cliff answered.

"Mhm. Your team's flight leaves in two hours, get up." Cliff opened his eyes to see Shane Hollander glaring at him, arms only uncrossed to hold a glass of water and a bottle of Advil out to him. "Take two."

Still hiding underneath the pillow Cliff had shoved off the couch, Ilya's voice was muffled when he said, "Shane is very good at taking care of other people."

"Makes him a good captain," Cliff said, taking two of the pills and downing them.

"Uh huh. Do you have any food things? Allergies? Diets?" Shane asked as he retreated to the kitchen.

"Peanuts." Cliff kicked Ilya with his foot. "Get up asshole, your fiance's making food."

"Why do *I* have to get up?"

"Because you're being an asshole." He kicked Ilya again. "Get up."

Ilya got up, made it halfway to the kitchen, then froze, like he was buffering. And then he turned, slowly, eyes wide as he looked at Cliff. "What did you just say?" And damn Ilya sounded *really* Russian all of a sudden.

"You're an asshole?"

"Before that."

"Uh..." Cliff furrowed his brow, the headache and the still lingering alcohol were *not* making it easy. "Dude I don't fucking remember."

"*Marleau*," Ilya's voice had that very specific tone that Cliff had filed away under "*you have five seconds to run before I make your life hell*". He'd never had it directed at him before. "What. Did. You. Just. Say?"

"Ilya?" Shane looked between them from the kitchen. "What's happening?"

"Apparently I said something but fuck if I remember what," Cliff answered.

Ilya said something in *very* slow Russian and Cliff felt like he had been transported to another reality when Shane seemed to recognize it. He watched fear fill Shane's eyes when

they returned to looking at him.

"How do you know?" Shane asked, slow, jaw tight.

"Know?" Oh. *Oh fuck.* "Oh. Uh. Well. I showed up to the hospital and you two were being... Kinda familiar? And then Roz signed with Ottawa so..." Cliff held his hands up. "I haven't told anyone."

"Since the- You were at the hospital?" Ilya blinked, body relaxing from *fight* into pure fucking confusion.

"Well yeah, just 'cause it was a clean hit didn't make it feel less... Yucky. I mean, Montreal had a shot at the cup and then they didn't and that kinda. I dunno, felt shitty. Plus bruises alone hurt like a bitch and I've had enough concussions to know they're no walk in the park either. Plus broken bones." He shrugged, still keeping his hands up. "I was gonna apologize before we got on the plane but uh, you were there being friendly and seemed like you kinda needed it so I just. Went back to the hotel and sent a fruit basket instead."

"Oh. Yeah. My mom devoured that." Shane turned back to the kitchen. "So you've known for three years and said nothing?"

"Well. Yeah, it's not like Roz told me, so it felt shitty to bring it up. Figured if you wanted me to know you'd tell me, if you didn't you wouldn't tell me. And like, it's real fucking complicated so I don't feel like, entitled or shit." He looked at Ilya. "I'm not gonna say shit, I'm great at pretending I don't know shit."

"You have known. For three years," Ilya repeated.

"Yes. And I kinda... Look when there's literally no one else to talk to about something this big it sorta percolates so I figured the Montreal girl you were blushing over all the time was Hollander. One of those, makes sense in hindsight sorta things." He tilted his head from one side to the other. "Jane, Shane, pretty close."

"I do not *blush*," Ilya stated, crossing his arms, but he wasn't giving Cliff murder eyes so he figured that was an improvement.

"Dude, you 100% do. I watched you stare at your phone and grin and blush like a fucking high school kid with a crush for *years*."

"Oh really?" Shane was grinning at the blender, both Ilya and Cliff winced and covered their ears when he started it.

"You have known the whole time?" Ilya repeated, quieter.

"Yeah. I figured..." Cliff made a vague circular gesture with his hands. "I told you about my baby sister, figured I could make it clear you'd be, y'know, safe or whatever with telling me however much or however little you wanted to share. That's all I could do without like, cornering you or forcing it outta you which I really didn't wanna do. And there wasn't any reason to?" He shrugged again. "I'm not gonna pretend like it's not a big fucking deal, but I've

also been sitting with it for three years and I know you pretty damn well, Roz. Whatever you two have going off the ice only makes you better players on it, so it's nobody else's business unless you want it to be."

Cliff *did* know Ilya really well, he knew he was overly affectionate with words and touch, he knew that he was the best fucking captain Cliff had ever played with because he knew every player's weaknesses and how to assuage them. He'd been trying to do the same since he'd left, had just tried to do the same *to* Ilya.

Given that Ilya was crushing him in one of his tackle-bear hugs he figured he'd done a pretty good job of it.

"I've got your back, brother," Cliff said, hugging Ilya back. "Whenever you need."

Ilya didn't say anything, just kept hugging him, before his thick voice muttered a "thank you," into Cliff's shoulder.

"You've got a plane to catch," Shane said, appearing beside them and holding out a shaker cup full of a green smoothie. "Kale, banana, blueberries, yogurt, and some dairy-based protein powder. There should be an Uber showing up in a couple minutes out front, and Harris- the Centaurs social media guy called the Raiders' social media person and they let your coaches know you're on your way."

"Thanks, man." He took the shaker cup. "Sorry for like, freaking you guys out."

"We're a little paranoid," Shane admitted. "Sort of planning on going public some time this summer but the actual plan portion of that is... In progress."

"Marriage first," Ilya stated. "In July, before camp. Will text you when we figure out an actual date. Oh and Sveta knows."

"Oh thank fucking *god*. I am making her get coffee." He pulled out his phone and sent her a quick text before shutting it off again to save battery. "I'll make sure Svetlana brings the good vodka."

Ilya clapped his hand on Cliff's shoulder. "Marleau if you can get me actual fucking vodka for my wedding I will be fucking ecstatic."

"Will do my best, brother." He looked at Shane. "Any requests from the other groom?"

"Just don't tell anyone and we're all good."

"So you don't want another giant fruit basket?" Cliff joked.

Shane Hollander actually fucking laughed at that. "My mom ate most of it, and then she fed the rest to the deer in her yard."

"Soooo... Smaller fruit basket. Got it." Cliff saw the Uber pull up and took the pair of sun glasses that Shane shoved into his hand. "See you guys in July!"

The moment the car door shut Cliff had his phone charging and was texting Svetlana with a near rabid level of speed.

"Dude you seen this shit?" One of the rookies shoved his phone into Cliff's face. On the screen was a video of Hayden Pike, talking at the camera, and then wandering into frame was Shane and Ilya. Who then stopped, had a filthy make-out session, and then kept walking.

"It's too early for this shit," he muttered. And then Cliff called the smartest person he knew. Cliff called Svetlana.

End Notes

Ha ha ha ha I'm so normal about them :) We love Marley in this house :D

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