

You Knew Who I Was Every Step That I Ran to You

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You Knew Who I Was Every Step That I Ran to You

by [Skaboom](#)

Summary

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This time, Ilya did drop his beer.

“Fuck.” Ilya moved to clean it up, Cliff’s words bouncing around in his head. “Sorry, the bottle was damp, my fingers slipped, I-”

“Hey, it’s okay, man,” Cliff said, bending down to help him. “The bottle and...the other thing.”

“The other thing.” Ilya gulped.

“Yeah. Look, I’m sorry, man, I didn’t mean to spring it on you like that, but I know, Roz. Shane is your Montreal girl. Your Jane, right?”

or

Ilya tells Cliff that he is not re-signing with Boston, only to find out that Cliff has known about him and Shane basically the entire time.

Notes

Okay, I have been working on this for a couple of weeks, and idk if there is much of a market for this, considering the friendship between Ilya and Cliff wasn't as pronounced, but that poor guy needs a friend, so I'm giving him a good one, damnit.

Title from Someone New by Hozier.

It wasn't a difficult decision, the choice to move to Ottawa. Was it a plan that Ilya would have come up with on his own? Probably not, but Shane had, and the fact that he had stayed up? That he had fretted over it? That alone made it worth it to Ilya.

Shane wanted him. He didn't want Ilya to marry someone else, even for a passport, and while Ilya loved winning, well, he loved Shane more.

A lot more.

Ilya had never had many friends. Growing up, he had kept everyone at arm's length because letting anyone too close meant letting them see who you really were, and he hadn't been sure enough of who he was at first. Once he was sure, he had all the more reason to keep his distance.

When he had come to Boston, his English had been perfectly fine, but even as an all-star rookie, making friends had been difficult because the Ilya Rozanov that he pretended to be in the locker room and virtually everywhere else was not the Ilya Rozanov that existed behind closed doors.

Over the years, though, Cliff Marleau had been a good friend to him. He had taken Ilya under his wing as a rookie, and Ilya had always known that he could go to Cliff for just about anything. He *didn't*, because that wasn't really his style, but just knowing that he could have was...nice. As a result, Ilya wanted to be the one to tell Cliff that he wasn't re-signing with Boston after this season.

So far, the only people that knew about that choice were Ilya, Shane, and Shane's parents, but with the season half over, Ilya did not want Cliff to be taken by surprise in July when he announced that he would not be returning. It would be a surprise. Everyone was expecting him to re-sign with Boston. The contract would be huge, the chances of winning a cup just as much so, and it was home for him...or so everyone thought.

In reality, *Shane* was home for him, but there was no way to tell that to the world.

"Hey, Marley, come over to my place for a drink," Ilya said, slapping Cliff on the shoulder as they exited the locker room.

"A drink at your place? You don't want to go out and celebrate winning?"

"Beating San Jose is barely a celebration, is like beating a team of preschoolers," Ilya said with a shrug, doing his best to hide the anxiety that was beginning to bubble inside of him.

He genuinely did not care what Boston would do without him. He didn't care about the owners, he didn't care about the coach, he didn't even really care about the fans, but Cliff had never been anything but a true and loyal friend to him, even if Ilya *had* kept him at arm's length.

Cliff, he cared about. Cliff, he would miss.

“Fair enough. Sounds good, I’ll swing by home, drop my stuff off, and meet you there?”

“I will pick up some food on the way home,” Ilya said with a nod.

What he did was pick up a couple of pizzas and rush home so as not to be beaten by Cliff. He set the pizzas in the oven to keep warm and made sure that Cliff’s favorite beers were front and center in the fridge and cold enough that they would be welcoming.

“Man,” Cliff looked around Ilya’s house as they headed to the kitchen. “It never ceases to amaze me. This place is crazy.”

“Thank you.” Ilya nodded, knowing that he would not be living here for much longer. He pulled two beers out of the fridge, handing one over to Cliff. Perhaps it was best to simply rip off the band-aid. “It will be on the market soon, if you are looking to buy.”

“Man, don’t tell me you’re going bigger, Roz,” Cliff said with a chuckle, taking a pull of his beer. “What do you need a bigger place for, anyway?”

“Ah, no. Is not that.” Ilya bit his lip, leaning against the kitchen counter. “I will not be re-signing with Boston again after this season. I wanted you to hear this from me.”

“Oh...shit.” Cliff nearly dropped his beer, setting it down on the countertop for its own protection instead as he looked to Ilya. “Did something happen?”

“Uh...it is complicated,” Ilya admitted, busying himself by pulling the pizzas out of the oven. “It is difficult to explain, but you have been a very good friend to me all this time, and I will be sad to leave you behind.”

“Well shit, that’s gonna be hot news,” he said. “All the biggest markets are going to be tripping over themselves to free up cap-space, I bet. You can probably go anywhere you want.”

“Yes, probably,” Ilya agreed. “But between you and me,” he said, knowing that he could trust Cliff not to tell anyone this. “I will be going to Ottawa.”

“Not Montreal?”

The words left Cliff’s mouth before he had really had a chance to think them through.

“No, not Montreal, why would I go to Montreal? They already have star center,” Ilya frowned.

“No, of course, I guess Ottawa makes sense.” Cliff took his beer again, taking another pull from it.

“You...think Ottawa makes sense for me?”

“Yes...”

“Ottawa is terrible.”

“Yeah, and I mean, I can’t pretend I think this is the best move for your *career*, but hockey isn’t everything, winning isn’t everything.”

“No, there is also money,” Ilya agreed.

“Sure, fine, but I mean,” Cliff shrugged. “First off, any team you go to will be exponentially better just for that. Second...” he trailed off, though his brown eyes remained locked on Ilya’s.

“Second off, what? Finish your thought, Marley, I do not read minds.”

“Second off, it’s only a couple of hours from Montreal.”

“Wow, good job, you can read a map.”

“Rozanov,” Cliff rolled his eyes. “I’m being serious, here.”

“Yes, seriously confusing. You did not take a hit tonight, not that I saw. What is going on with you?”

“Are you really gonna make me say it?” Cliff asked.

“Since I do not know what you are talking about, probably, yes.”

“It makes sense for you to go to Ottawa,” Cliff said slowly. “Because it’ll be a lot closer to Shane Hollander.”

This time, *Ilya* did drop his beer.

“Fuck.” Ilya moved to clean it up, Cliff’s words bouncing around in his head. “Sorry, the bottle was damp, my fingers slipped, I-”

“Hey, it’s okay, man,” Cliff said, bending down to help him. “The bottle and...the other thing.”

“The other thing.” Ilya gulped.

“Yeah. Look, I’m sorry, man, I didn’t mean to spring it on you like that, but I know, Roz. Shane is your Montreal girl. Your Jane, right?”

Ilya dropped the *pieces* of his beer bottle back on the ground.

“Fuck,” Ilya said again, this time, moving back to sit on the ground, too stunned to get to his

feet. "How did you know that?"

Cliff moved around the broken glass and spilled beer to sit on the ground next to Ilya.

"Well," he shrugged. "First off, I'm not as stupid as I look - and don't-" Cliff chuckled. "Don't make a jab, we're being serious right now."

"Okay, fine, I will save jokes about your ugly face for later."

"Fair enough." Cliff nudged. "But, yeah, I mean, you always got fidgety when we went to Montreal, checking your phone like, a million times more than you usually do, you wouldn't come out with the team, and sure, maybe a time or two I saw the name 'Jane' on your phone screen. So sure, I thought you had a girl in Montreal that drove you kinda nuts, fair enough. But then I noticed you were behaving the same way in Boston...when we *played* Montreal. You would beg for us to kick Montreal's ass, then you wouldn't come out with us when we did, you were checking your phone - Jane was texting you. You always brought other girls out, but we never met Jane, you never talked about her, and I mean, Ilya, come on. Jane? Shane?"

"Jesus Christ." Ilya reached up, rubbing the back of his neck.

"Oh yeah, and that's not it," Cliff said, his tone laced with amusement. "You looked like you were going to blow up the locker room when Connors told you that Shane was dating Rose Landry, and then at the club in Montreal? You look like someone had just shot your dog right in front of you when you saw Shane dancing with Rose."

"Fuck, you saw that?"

"Yeah, man. Don't worry, no one else clocked it. There were a lot of good looking women there that night, no one was looking at your ugly face."

"Ah, still a better face than yours," Ilya said with a gentle smile.

"Shut up." Cliff nudged him. "But yeah, so I was pretty sure about it for a while, and then I saw you two in Florida this past year, and...wow. The two of you together on the ice? It was a fucking All Star game, man, and I'd never seen you more alive. You seemed happy - like *really* happy, and when you kissed his helmet, I just knew for certain what I had already been pretty sure for years."

"So you have known all this time," Ilya said. "And you didn't say anything?"

"I wanted you to tell me when you were ready, when you were comfortable," Cliff said with a shrug. "And then..." he looked down. "I hit him on the ice - I swear I didn't mean to, if I'd known it would have hurt him like that I never would have-"

"Marley, I know. You were just doing your job, it was a clean hit, was an accident."

"I just...watched you, standing over him and if it hadn't been sealed before, it had been then,

and I don't think I've actually ever felt worse in my life," he admitted. "I was worried that you wouldn't forgive me, that you wouldn't be able to trust me *this*, or with anything."

"Is that why you repeated over and over again, 'Oh Roz, I am so sorry, it was an accident, I didn't mean to hurt him' for like five hours that night?"

"I didn't...know what else to do," Cliff admitted. "I needed a reason, or at least I *wanted* a reason, to be dogging you, because I wanted to make sure that you weren't alone. You hadn't told me, and I was pretty sure you weren't going to then, seeing as I'd just about killed the guy you love--"

"The guy I love?" Ilya asked.

"Is...am I not...is that not correct?" Cliff asked.

"No," Ilya gulped. "No, it is correct, I just...didn't think you would be so cool about this. Me being bi, sure, maybe, but me and Hollander?"

"Well, to be fair, I've had several years to get used to it."

"And you do not care?"

"Oh, I care, Roz," Cliff said. "I care a lot, actually. I care that you're happy, man."

"Oh that is so cheesy," Ilya grimaced.

"Shut up, Roz. You deserve to be happy, and I know you front tough, and you goof around, but you haven't been happy, not really, not this whole time, maybe not ever since I've met you. But...you were happy on the ice in Florida. If you have a shot at that happiness, dude, you should take it."

"You do not think I am stupid for giving up chances at winning cups to be closer to Shane Hollander?"

"Do you love him?"

"Yes."

"Do you want a future with him?"

"More than anything."

"Well there you go, like I said, winning isn't everything."

"So you would move to terrible team for a woman?"

"No," Cliff said. "But I've never been in love like that. My answer might change if I were."

“And how do you know how I am in love?”

“You have spent what, almost a decade doing the stupidest possible thing you could be doing. You could have had any woman in the world, any man, probably, too, and you spent nine years looking at your phone with big cow eyes, sneaking around, because he’s your person.”

“You...you think Shane is my person?”

“Don’t you?”

“No, I *know* that Shane is my person.”

“Exactly. Then it doesn’t really *matter* what I think, though for the record, I do think he’s your person, yes.” Cliff smiled. “Hockey isn’t forever, man, but if you’ve found the one, you’ve found the one and I’m not gonna be the person to tell you not to chase that. It was an honor winning a cup with you, playing with you. You are, by far, the best player I have ever had the privilege of sharing a line with, and I’m not gonna lie, I’m gonna miss you, dude, both on the ice and off, but-”

Ilya cut Cliff off by pulling him into a hug. It was awkward, as they were both still sitting on the floor, and Cliff was...surprised. There had been countless pats on the back, on the shoulder, fist bumps, high fives, even the occasional ass-smack here and there, but Ilya Rozanov had never hugged him.

“I am sorry that I didn’t tell you,” Ilya said softly.

“Hey, it’s okay, I get it. I mean, things might be starting to change, what with Hunter kissing that dude on the ice last season, but...this league hasn’t been friendly to people like you and Shane, and I know that Russia isn’t either. I’m just...I wish I’d said something sooner so that you wouldn’t have had to be alone with it.”

“Thank you, Marley,” Ilya said, pulling away, and Cliff noticed that there were tears welling in Ilya’s eyes.

“Yeah, of course, Roz, though I will say, I would like to meet him sometime.”

“You *have* met him.”

“Not as your boyfriend, I haven’t,” Cliff said with a shrug. “I mean, who else is going to tell him that if he hurts you, they’ll never find his body?”

Ilya let out a surprised laugh. “I think after you took him out of the playoffs last year, you should maybe not *start* with a death threat, but...” Ilya shrugged, swiping at the tears in his eyes. “But I appreciate the thought.”

“You might be right there,” Cliff admitted. “I just want to see you happy, man, and if moving to Ottawa and shacking up with Shane fucking Hollander is going to make you happy, then I say fucking do it, man.”

“Also a dog.”

“What?” Cliff raised an eyebrow.

“I would like to shack up with Shane fucking Hollander and also get a dog.”

“Okay then.” Cliff chuckled. “Move to Ottawa, shack up with Shane fucking Hollander, and get a damn dog, just don’t forget to call sometimes.”

“I will call.” Ilya nodded. “I will call to check up on how you are feeling after Ottawa kicks Boston’s ass.”

“Of course you will.” Cliff hauled himself off the ground, holding out a hand to Ilya. “Now, I believe there was going to be pizza, before you dropped your beer?”

Ilya nodded, taking the pizza to the table as Cliff threw away the broken glass and got two more beers from the fridge.

“So,” he said, looking at the label. “Did you get my favorite to butter me up?”

“Yes.” Ilya nodded. “I knew I would be delivering the most heartbreaking news of your whole life. I thought that you should have a treat.”

“Man, shut up,” Cliff said with nothing but fondness in his voice. “So, Shane Hollander, huh?”

“Yes, Shane Hollander.” Ilya’s cheeks tinged pink.

“Tell me about him.”

“Really?” Ilya looked up, surprised.

“Yeah, I mean, I only know the Shane Hollander that can skate circles around me. I wanna know the Shane Hollander that turned you into the Terminator at that club in Montreal.”

“Okay.” Ilya couldn’t hide the grin on his face. He had never gotten to *talk* to anyone about Shane, not really. He had had to pretend that he hated him, that their rivalry was all that there was to their relationship, and now that he was being given that chance, he didn’t know where to start. “Have you seen his freckles?”

“Oh wow,” Cliff chuckled. “I have, but I’m guess not the way you have.”

“Sorry, I am new to this, to talking about...my Shane. It is nice, though, not having to hide it, I just don’t even know how, I don’t think.”

“Well, tell me how you met, I mean, how it got started. I guess I know how you met.”

“I think it started the first time I met him,” Ilya admitted. “Maybe not for him, but I think a little bit for him. A lot for me, though. It was in a parking lot in Saskatchewan, he came up and introduced himself to me before world juniors, he shook my hand.” He paused. “Twice. It was that second time, I don’t know. It just felt...important. So then naturally, when CCM signed us both I suggested a joint campaign, and then I jerked off while staring directly at him in the showers, as one does.”

“You did *what*?”

“It was fine, he was looking first, I just...helped him along. You know Shane,” he said. “He sometimes needs clear words or actions to know what someone is feeling. I gave him a clear action. He gave me his hotel room number.” Ilya shrugged. “He folded his clothes.”

“What?” Cliff snorted with laughter.

“Yes. I was naked on the bed, and he fucking took the time to fold his clothes nicely before joining me and that was it. I was lost, I was gone. There was no hope for me after that, but I pretended for as long as I could.” Ilya paused. “It was not easy, it was a lot of both of us pretending, and that...hurt. Hurt me, hurt him, hurt us, but I went to his cottage this summer, for two weeks. We will not be pretending anymore, at least not with each other.”

“I wish I could have been there to support you through all of it,” Cliff admitted.

“Yes, looking back, I wish this, too,” Ilya admitted. “But we were both so scared. I think we still are, but...he is what I want. I could lose hockey tomorrow, or all of my money, my cars, my clothes, and it would be fine. If I lost Shane?” He shook his head. “I do not think that I would ever be fine again. I am just glad that he is willing to take these risks, that he wants to be with me as much as I want to be with him.”

“Yeah, man,” Cliff smiled. “Me, too, but who knew Ilya Rozanov was such a sappy romantic?”

“Shut up.” Ilya pulled a piece of sausage from his pizza, flicking it at Cliff.

Cliff chuckled as he pulled the piece of sausage from his shoulder and popped it into his mouth, leaning back in his chair, sipping at his beer as he listened to Ilya talk about Shane. The love was clear in his eyes, that spark of something real just beginning.

He would definitely miss Ilya, that was for sure, but more than that, he was excited to see what Ilya’s life would be like if he actually got to live the way that he wanted. By leading Boston to a cup, Ilya had made Cliff’s biggest dream come true. At the time, Cliff had thought it was Ilya’s biggest dream, too. Now, though, he was not so sure of that.

What he was sure of? If a life with Shane Hollander was Ilya’s big dream, Cliff was going to do whatever he could to make sure he got it.

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