

# The Greatest F\*\*king Hockey Story Ever Told

or:  
every conventional sports cliché in the book told so  
unconventionally through the eyes of mental  
patients that it simply becomes the  
greatest fucking hockey story  
- ever told -

Nighttime, present day, nestled somewhere deep in hockey country a storm brews outside an arena...

Inside are two rinks side by side. A Zamboni cleans the ice of one while a practice is underway on the other. The players skate lazily in circles before floating into position as the referee readies to drop the puck at center ice.

The puck drops but the play dissolves into chaos: the players caterwaul; they shriek; and they love whatever game they've invented. They're mental patients, state-certified odd-balls.

One grizzled character, Theo Fleury, stands apart, watching through narrowed eyes. A referee checks his watch and gives him a look. He replies with a solemn nod, and then pulls a whistle from his sweatshirt and blows. Nothing is heard, though a dog in the stands goes wild, barking like crazy. The team dutifully stops what they're doing and skates off the ice as a professional team steps on to take their place.

That night at the nut-house, they're tearing around as Theo tries to get them to unpack their gear and get them ready for bed. They're a rag-tag bunch, dressed in the oddest outfits; one guy wears a pink sheet as though it was a monk's robe, another's got a mismatched thread-worn suit, while another's dressed like a figure skater in drag. All of them have their own sense of unique, if puzzling, identity.

After a little cajoling, they convince Theo to tell them their favorite story about the greatest hockey player he's ever played with...and it wasn't Gordie Howe, shit no - not even Wayne Gretzky.

"Okay then - stop acting like a bunch of fuck'n retards and listen up! If we're gonna do this, you gotta sit down and shut the hell up!" They quickly fall into rank and pipe down.

"Once upon a time, I was an ignorant little prick when I met this guy, Franklyn Beans..."

...and so, the greatest hockey story ever told begins.

As Theo narrates the background of the story to the mental patients, the screen dissolves into a moon-lit outdoor rink (which also happens to be the large painting in the common room where Theo and the patients are sitting).

A thick-necked, gruff-looking man sits on a wood bench lacing up his skates. A choir of cats prowls over the banked snow, a few of them inching closer toward him.

Back in the day, Franco Beans was an old-time hockey player "who didn't mind a little high-sticking, a stitch here, a tooth there." He could have been a contender. But when we catch up with him by the rink he's in his forties, his career fizzled out years ago, and he's contemplating turning down the only chance he's got to redeem himself. Out of the blue he'd received a call from Ted Giller, one of the old players who made good and now owns a farm team. Ted wants him back on the ice, to knock some grit into his squad. In his opinion, the game has changed for the worse and the kids these days want to be stars, not the hard-hitting team players of yesteryear. He wants Beans to play with them during the exhibition season, "to teach the kids about salt and guts."

But the irony of Ted's salt-and-guts comment doesn't go unnoticed by Franco, who works at the local fish cannery. He suspects Ted just wants to put some coin into his pocket, out of pity, and true to his character, Beans won't accept pity from anyone. Including himself.

His skates laced, he takes out an old coin and gets ready to flip it when out of the dark woods strides the indefatigable Coach Rickets, carting a tank of oxygen behind her. Yup, the same Coach Rickets, that old salty bull-dyke croaker herself, Franco's mentor back in the day. Her oxygen mask sits atop her head, like a piece of scuba gear.

Where the hell did she come from? Franco accepts her without question. "Not that old coin bullshit again..." She smacks the coin from his hand and he gets down to business doing laps around the ice. From her perch on the snowbank, Rickets blasts him with a classic "you-used-to-be-the-best-til-you-choked" speech until he stops, exhausted and wheezing. She offers him a cigarette, which he accepts. And a beer, which is pulled from a six-pack cooling in the snow beside them.

Old Theo's voice booms in the background: "He knew he couldn't do it without her and she certainly agreed with that. But whatever else Coach Rickets said to him must've worked." We see Coach Rickets continue to berate Franco by the rink. "He accepted," continues Old Theo, "But not without another little push..."

The scene dissolves into Franco and his wife sitting in their small steamy kitchen. It's a tender scene between a man and his wife, where she urges him to pick up his old dream and face down his demons. It is an intimate moment between two lovers and friends, except something unusual out the window behind them begins to happen: one by one, faces appear and soon the whole gang of mental

patients is staring in at the sentimental domestic scene within. Wearing full hockey gear, all are silent but crying, earnestly, tears streaming down their faces.

Franco arrives in the big city and finds himself a cheap room within walking distance to the rink. Despite his good intentions, he sleeps in and is late for the first practice. Alone in the locker-room he suits up. His equipment is ancient and mended many times over, like a dented suit of armor. A lace snaps off in his hand as he tightens his skates. They're old...he looks at his pile of gear...shit, everything's getting old.

Head barely up he steps onto the ice. Coach Rickets begins screaming furiously at him from across the rink and Franco dutifully begins his laps. When he's done, she singles him out and discretely hands him a beer, whispering that together they'll teach "these pussies what playing hockey's all about".

As Franco and Coach Rickets look out over the ice, it becomes apparent that all the players on the team are being played by the mental patients listening to the story. That is, all except one; a cocky and self-assured, exceptionally talented prima donna.

Franco has caught the tail end of pre-season training. In the few pre-season practices left, the story cycles through the gauntlet of sport's movie clichés about pre-season training...except in this version, the clichés become blown all out of whack as the mental patients bring their own interpretation and unique perspective...

Things are rough for Franco the first while. He's out of shape to begin with. And Coach Rickets expects him to get in top shape - and show the whippersnappers what the game is about - as well as match her beer for beer throughout the day. But Franco's toughest problem turns out to be the hotshot kid, none other than Young Theo Fleury, our narrator's younger self.

It's now a classic tale about the young hotshot and the out-of-shape but savvy old-timer. Young Theo and Franco's rivalry finally comes out into the open during a practice when Young Theo makes a wise-crack about Franco's age. Franco, who hasn't yet shown any of his reputed former magic, flips a puck onto the blade of his stick and launches it lacrosse-style through the air, down the rink, to hit Young Theo square in the back of the head. The young player is knocked out and dragged unceremoniously off the ice as one the patients/players, dressed half as a hockey player/half as a figure-skater, works on his routine in the background.

From the strange clothing that the mental patients wore at the hospital in the prelude, we see how they retain their identities in the context of the fantasy: the guy in the sheet sees himself as a budding Buddha, a peaceful warrior who carries the team in turbulent times and is never out of his saffron robe; the man in his thread-worn suit becomes an impeccably dressed womanizer; and then there's a rapper, over-dressed in streetwear and bling...

The routine of the patients' lives at the mental hospital also colors the details of the story, further blurring the lines between fantasy and reality. For example, during a period break, Coach Rickets bangs-out the crew for their sloppy efforts on the ice as she hands out their meds.

To complicate things between Young Theo and Franco, the love interest, Ted Giller's hot daughter, has a crush on Franco; Young Theo has a crush on her; and Franco's too exhausted to care or deal with either of them. His only interest is in the game, and after another tough practice, he thinks he just can't cut it anymore. It's a death blow. Defeated, he speaks with Ted Giller who's more than happy to let him go - without his payment.

Beans realizes he's trapped. Or rather, he realizes he's fallen into Giller's trap, giving up his steady job for a faded dream. But Giller must have forgotten who he's trying to push around and true to the cliché of a fighter, Franco "The Bull" Beans paints his white surrender flag red and charges.

The next day he's back at it, doing double the work to get in shape, enacting the old-timer come-back cliché. He's the first on the ice in the morning and the last to leave at night. He jogs on top of his regular work-out. He does extra push-ups, sit-ups, chin-ups. He eats a box of nails for breakfast. He silently tells Giller to go fuck himself. And accompanying him in the background, the mental patients cheer him on.

The team hits the road to play a series of exhibition games in a souped-up handicapped bus - all except Young Theo who's determined to keep his distance and follows on his motorcycle.

They get into all kinds of madness on their exhibition tour: hotels are taken over; local women's hearts are stolen and broken; NHL scouts wine and dine them; they brawl with an opposing team, narrowly avoiding the clink, etc.

All the favorite sports clichés get enacted by our odd-balls. But amazingly, everyone they meet, from hotel clerks to gas attendants, treats them as if they were totally regular, sane people...and kick-ass hockey players to boot.

A reel of game scenes. They contain hard-hitting, real hockey moments, and then moment's of lunacy, all woven together. One night during a game, the action on the ice stops and they all look quizzically at each other, then up. The roof of the arena is gone and we see Old Theo, who's telling them the story, watching from above, like a god in the sky.

He suddenly realizes what they're waiting for and proceeds to tell them how the play unfolds. The action on the ice starts again and they play it out, but slightly differently. Old Theo's voice booms out, "Hey - that's not what I said." The characters look up, a bit sheepishly, and one of them replies "It was kind of confusing....what the fuck - we still won, didn't we?" Old Theo waves them off with "Ahh, you fuck'n nut jobs" as they vacate the ice, celebrating their win.

In another game the team is getting their ass kicked, though during the last period Franco pulls some beautiful moves and scores the final goal in an act of sheer grace and agility.

In the locker room, he's the reluctant recipient of the team's curiosity...he's managed to win them over, except of course for Young Theo. The players crowd around, but Franco just smiles and packs his gear, trying not to show how exhausted he is and leaves out the back door.

The players undress, wondering where Beans learned his moves when Rickets sets them straight: "From a faggy German kid." She goes on to tell them that when they were kids playing on the local pond Franco took the time to learn to figure skate. "That's why he was the best...fuck'n ice ballet." The figure skater character shouts-out with a woo-hoo. Rickets continues; "You got schooled out there today. They're not better players, they're just a better team."

As they must, things come to a head between Franco and Young Theo. Franco makes a mistake during the last exhibition game and Young Theo tries to take the opportunity to humiliate the old guy. But it backfires when Rickets collapses and has to be taken to the hospital.

That night, a drunk and sullen Young Theo finds Franco nursing his bruises over a beer at a bar next to the hospital. Young Theo's looking for a fight, but Beans is too old and too tough to bother. He whoops the kid's ass in a New York minute and goes to tell the young punk like it is: "You know what your problem is, besides being a little fuck'n prick?"

But Young Theo doesn't miss a beat, confronting Franco with his own truth: "Who the fuck are you? You're not even a has been - you're a never-was-been."

The scene is poised to degrade into a low-grade sentimental kibosh of oedipal reckoning and forgiveness so common in the sports genre. And it does. But as Franco releases Young Theo from his manly shirt-grip, the mental patients, dressed in their nightrobes, crowd around the bar and listen to the mutual confessions, fears and doubts of the two players. Franco reveals he played with Theo's legendary father and was supposed to be backing him up on the ice the night he was killed in a freak accident in a game against a Russian team. Young Theo, in turn, confesses to the pressure he feels living up to the old sock.

With their cards on the table and an understanding formed between them, Franco encourages Young Theo to sober up and spend his energy getting his girl, Ted Giller's daughter.

The season looks to be over for Rickets and Beans, and with no more exhibition games, he has no reason to stick around. The team gathers for dinner at a hotel and it looks like farewell.

As Young Theo approaches the restaurant for the send-off, a bunch of NHL scouts out in the parking lot rush him. Young Theo's doing his best to appear

excited but his mind is on other things, and he's further distracted when he sees Franco trudging alone across the other side of the lot.

The restaurant's packed, and in the middle of the sedate farewell dinner, the dapper character, Jacques Bitchier, decides he just simply can't stand the food. He marches back to the kitchen, takes off his tailored tuxedo jacket, rolls up his sleeves and hits the grill. The luke-warm kitchen starts to hum and the dining room awakens with excitement as wonderful dishes start to hit the tables. Women swoon and men send bottles of expensive wine to the chef in thanks. Using a microphone to communicate with the dining room (as is used in the mental hospital), Jacques addresses the guests to see how everyone's enjoying the food...and the place goes fuck'n nuts. Jacques steps into the dining room to screams and applause. They do the wave. The music suddenly starts to jam and the place goes wild; Jacques jumps onto a table, bites the cork off a bottle of champagne and all hell breaks loose.

But Franco Beans has slipped out unnoticed. Young Theo catches up with him in the parking lot. A light snow falls. They begin an awkward series of goodbye gestures when suddenly the sound of a horse's pounding hoofs interrupts them.

Pulling in the reins of a black horse, Old Theo, dressed inexplicably in a 19th century red-coat uniform of the old British army, addresses them:

"They Russians are coming," he says. "Get the crew to turn-in, Ted Giller's booked a game with their National team...who happen to have the day off...and are here, balls deep in our own goddamned turf."

The fucking Russians. Old Beans turns white. Young Theo runs off to sound the alarm.

Later that night at the rink the lights flicker to life and shine off the perfectly groomed ice. Young Theo steps out of the shadows and into the sphere of light. Sure enough, as it always happens in the genre, Coach Rickets finds him there...wheeled into the scene in her hospital bed by a nurse.

And so they have their heart-to-heart and she tells him how Franco blew his shot at the NHL. He was on a team with his dad, she was coaching them and they were playing the real deal against a Russian team. Beans was a sure bet, maybe even more so than Theo's dad. But the smell of success got to them both and they started playing selfishly, looking more like liabilities than assets to the scouts. They were down a game in the series, but still had a shot at taking it back. The next night they played the fateful game when Theo's dad died. Franco never recovered. He knocked around the minor leagues for a few more years before admitting defeat and packing it in.

We cut to Franco as he walks up the steps of a church where he goes to confession and spills his guts. We see that the priest is actually his wife.

Operatic Russian music plays as Franco sits in the church and ritualistically checks his equipment; tapes his stick, hand-sharpens his skates, etc., while hitting a few beers.

Back to the arena...which is again empty, quiet and alone with it's perfectly smooth ice...the stage upon which the final act of drama will unfold...

David Bowie and Queen's song *Under Pressure* fades up. One by one, the team skates out and they do a synchro-skating routine to the song. The rapper character earnestly mixes the music from a dj table on the ice. Each character breaks from the group and skates forward to sing a lyric as everyone they know starts to appear in the stands, all singing along. The figure skater lays down an amazing routine. Coach Rickets is brought out on a cross, tubes stuck in her arms and nose, and is wheeled around to the music. As the song drops off, the people in the stands start to disappear and one by one the team skates off the ice. Rickets is the last person on the rink. She pulls herself free from the tubes, gets off the cross and staggers out as the song ends. The light's go out.

The big game. The stands are packed, the press is present, there's a ridiculous number of hockey scouts jockeying for the best view. Franco's wife is there. Ted Giller's daughter sits next her, Young Theo's motorcycle helmet on her lap. The NHL players from the opening scene are there. The mayor makes the opening speech and Celine Dion sings the anthem which is re-mixed by the rapper. Then the Russians hit the ice. They're monsters. Dolph Lundgren skates by. The patients/hockey players are slack-jawed; "That's the mother-fucker who took down Rocky."

In the locker room, Coach Rickets gives them a rousing speech and gets their blood boiling. "This isn't the 2010s anymore girls. This the 70s and we're dead-locked in a cold war with those gargoyles." They storm out of the locker room and she sends them off with some final inspiring words - "I don't want you playing like a bunch of fuck'n retards out there!"

It's a bloody, hard-hitting game. The crowd is in a fever pitch, the arena screams with noise. Our team's behind and the only one able to stand up to the Russian onslaught is our man Beans. He digs deep and plays his heart out, like an old bull making a futile charge up a steep hill. Somehow he's found his old rhythm and turns it on.

Between periods, the coach hits a different, somber note in the locker room with her crew. The truth. She tells them that they all wanna be something they're not, and that in fact, they're all mentally handicapped. It drops like a bomb. But she then tells them that in truth they already are these people they want to be (a figure skater, a rapper, etc.) and that it's only someone else's perception and judgment that says they aren't. They've had a hell of a pre-season so far, and regardless of how the rest of the world sees them, it's their job to get out there and just do the best they can. They're showing heart. And guts. And grit. And pride. And solidarity...and any other cliché she can think of. And win or lose, nobody can take those things away from them.

Back in the game, Franco's slowing down, showing his age, but the others pick up their end and put on one hell of a show. Somehow they manage to narrow the gap so they're only two goals behind. The clock's ticking - just a few seconds left - and Ricketts calls a time-out and lays it down for them: they've got to pull themselves together and make their last offensive drive. She wants Young Theo to stall the play at center ice long enough for Franco to drive up his wing and get in position to take his pass. They won't be expecting it. Franco looks up, bloodied and beat, and admits defeat: "Let the kid take it, he's the better player." Before it's decided, the whistle blows and they're over the boards, back onto the ice. The puck drops and they grind into action. Young Theo sees a break and a chance to move, but from the corner of his eye he sees Franco on a blind run. His moment of indecision almost loses him the puck, but he regains his position. Up the ice, Franco's on auto-pilot, acting on pure instinct. He narrowly avoids a crushing check by Dolph Lundgren and the crowd roars.

Cut from the big moment back to the looney bin. The patients, aka the hockey player characters, are leaning in, listening intently. Old Theo pauses for a moment and they go nuts - "What happened?" "Did we win?" "Did we?" "Did we?"

Old Theo looks at them incredulously. "What? How many fuck'n times have I told you this story? We lost."

The patients cheer uproariously anyway.

Cut back to the game, slow motion, maybe even black and white. Young Theo starts his charge but sees Franco up the ice. He waits, not sure what to do. Sweat drips into his eyes. He moves...and stops again. Up the rink, Franco's all business, giving it everything he's got. He leans low to the left and starts his drive past the front of the net. His stick is ready for a pass but he doesn't look back. He's just the fake. But damn it all to hell if the puck doesn't suddenly glide by and land perfectly on his blade. There's no time to think. He loads up. A fan screams out in a slow-mo voice "Pull the trigger Beans! Pull the fuck'n trigger!" Flashbulbs explode. He glides past the net, his body at an impossibly low angle, and let's the puck loose from his stick. It lifts off the ice and sails through the air...the crowd let's out a deafening roar...the goalie's arm lifts but the puck squeaks past and finds the net. They lost the game - but Beans got his goal.

The place turns into a zoo, like Rocky's big winning moment on crack, when the buzzer goes off. The flashing red light, signaling the end of the game, dissolves into the red light of an emergency exit door in the mental hospital. Old Theo's holding a back door open, watching the patients run toward a moon-lit outdoor rink, screaming and whooping it up. Behind him a nurse approaches.

When the light strikes her face, we see it's none other than Coach Ricketts.



"Come on, Theo," she says gently, her voice soft and maternal. "Time to pack it in." Old Theo shuffles off, suddenly much wearier than we remember him, and disappears down a hallway.

Nurse Rickets steps outside. The rink is empty. The patients have disappeared. She puts a cigarette in her mouth and kicks her foot into a snow drift – it hits something. She bends down, and with an old Coach Rickets cackle, pulls a can of beer from the snowbank and pops it open.

The end.