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i should say and you should hear

by [starflur](#)

Summary

So yeah, it takes a few days, but eventually Jonny gets to deliver the gospel of winning a faceoff by interfering directly with your opponent's stick.

(Heh.)

Notes

For [Zara](#) for a variety of reasons. One of them is that she asked for it, so this is mostly all her fault anyway. (But thanks to her anyway for looking at this many-a-time and all the other things that go along with it.)

But really, I mean it when I say this has no discernable plot.

[Yes, there are of course tracks. Yes, that's a Call Me Maybe remix. No, you shouldn't look at me right now.](#)

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

Patrick's convention activities are pretty sharply limited—mostly he gets stuck on panels that present little to no opportunity for active questioning and then gets hustled offstage before he can be mobbed by angry fans or something. He's not quite sure what everyone's so worried about. It's not like people have been taking the opportunity to stop him in the street and spit in his face. But he also knows they could've been a lot less cool about everything.

So he shuts up when he's supposed to shut up, rambles about inspiration and shit when it's time, waves

at a lot of people from balconies, and pretty much before he notices, the thing's over and he's dismissed with some slaps on the back and advice to keep up the workouts because he's looking good.

He's not sure whether he's gonna stay in Chicago or go back to Buffalo or what. He could do either: he's been skyping with the trainers while he's at home, but it would be nice to maybe run through everything they've been describing so he can make sure he's doing it right and maybe step it up.

But he doesn't have to decide now, and neither one actually affects his plan for tonight, which is of course dinner with the boys. He didn't plan it, doesn't know who's coming, but he figures Jonny's a safe bet, so he sends him a text.

carpool 2 sharpy's dinner?

He doesn't have to wait long for a response.

pick u up at 7

Which is pretty typical Jonny, who's made his feelings on Patrick's (awesome) car quite clear and shuts down any attempt of Patrick's to get him in it unless there's basically no other choice.

Whatever, his loss.

He doesn't try to argue it now, though. He doesn't mind driving with Jonny, especially around traffic time, when he lays epic judgment down upon droves of commuters just trying to get home but daring to cut him off to do so. His righteous indignation is *hilarious*. Patrick just sits in the passenger seat and takes the opportunity to mess with the radio.

Besides, he and Jonny have had pretty different schedules this year, so he's barely seen the guy. As basically the best and everyone's favorite ever, he's booked solid the whole convention. And all the time, actually. So it's going to be really good to see him.

He's got a pretty good idea of what Tazer's gonna look like based on past experience: tan, kind of huge compared to how he looked after the physical drain of the playoffs. He's mostly right, but he didn't get the part where Tazer's hair is *long*, like, way longer than Patrick's ever seen it before. His first instinct, even before he buckles his seat belt, is to lean in and touch it, brush it back from Jonny's face.

Jonny lets him, actually closing his eyes until Patrick manages to, like, pull himself together. It's just good to see his awful face, is all. It's not like Patrick's any more or less obsessed with Jonny than he was yesterday or the day before or the year before that.

"You look like a barbarian," is all he says, especially since he was right about the tan part. And the muscley part, *jesus*. He knows this is how it always goes, bulk up during the summer because it's nearly impossible to maintain during the season, especially the postseason. Hell, he's doing the same damn thing himself. But still. Jonny kind of looks like he could bench a horse. Or a car.

"Takes one to know one," Jonny says, looking smug as he pulls out into the road, like that comeback's something to be proud of.

"I *am* a beast now," Patrick allows, relaxing back into the seat.

"You're doing good," Jonny says, not taking his eyes off the road, so Patrick doesn't bother to try to hide his pleased grin.

Because he hasn't really seen Jonny in a long time, in months, and sure, they'd texted some, but Patrick hadn't really been sure what was gonna happen until now. Part of him had been worried that the supportive stuff—the texts, the sound bites, the one time they spoke on the phone—had been some sort

of captainly act, a holdover until the time he could get Patrick in front of him and shout himself hoarse. But he thinks if that were going to happen, it would've happened already.

In thanks, he doesn't try to play "Call Me Maybe" or the new Luke Bryan even once on the drive over. He'll make sure Jonny appreciates that on the way back.

Turns out it's just Sharpy and Duncs and Seabs and their respective wives (or fiancée, in Brent's case). Patrick wonders if that makes it weird for him and Tazer to come crash their couple party or whatever—he totally read in one of his sisters' magazines about this shit—but who cares, they're all awesome. If they wanna spend that time being awesome with him, he's all for it.

Sharpy and Duncs start talking about all the crazy shit from their panel—the dude who brought them cookies, the chick who made super thinly veiled references to asking how much blow they went through in a season.

"She was lurking by the door when we left, man, you don't even *know*," Duncs says, looking hunted even now. Patrick tries not to snort beer out his nose.

"She probably just needed a hookup," Seabs says.

"Maybe she was offering," Kelly-Rae points out.

"Yeah, did you get a number?" Patrick asks. "I'm fresh out. Jonny made us do key bumps on the way out."

"What's a key bump?" Jonny asks, looking suspicious.

Sharpy snorts.

"Who's gonna demonstrate?" Abby asks, grinning wickedly, and Jonny's looking more alarmed by the second, so it's probably for the best that the baby starts crying over the monitor and Abby has to go feed her.

But then she gets to hang for a while, which is awesome. It's kind of crazy, actually—Patrick feels like last time he saw her, she was basically a blob that made Sharpy go all goofy without even trying, but now she's actually, like, a tiny person with little teeth and a huge smile and maybe the greatest laugh ever. She also knows a good joke when she hears it, judging by her reaction to Patrick's detailing of how her father is the worst person in the world, but at least she's got a couple cool uncles around to make up for it.

Tazer mostly just stares at her, head cocked like she's something to be figured out instead of just the adorable, early stages of a human being. Hell, babies are way less complicated than most adults Patrick knows. Particularly Jonny himself, the bastard.

"You wanna hold her?" Patrick asks, and Jonny shakes his head so fast he kind of looks like he's having a seizure. Patrick laughs. "You sure? You look like you might."

Jonny purses his lips, so Patrick laughs at him more, then even harder when Madelyn gets in on the action, too.

"She's on to you, Tazer," he says. "You can't even fool an *infant* into thinking you deserve anything but ridicule."

He's pretty lucky he's got the baby, actually, so Jonny can't try for a headlock like he so clearly wants

to. So Patrick turns it up a notch, letting a slow, obnoxious grin spread across his face. “Her first words are probably gonna be about how lame you are.”

Only then it's Madelyn's bedtime, and as soon as Sharpy sweeps her out of Patrick's arms, face evil with glee at Patrick's impending doom, Jonny moves in for the kill.

He considers saying they need to be quiet, the baby's trying to sleep, Jesus, but that argument's probably not worth the air he'll waste on it, especially since he needs all the oxygen he can get to try to fight his way out of Tazer's vise-like grip.

And he smells really good, so Patrick would rather use his lungs for that than futile debates, thank you very much.

He's still feeling kind of giddy when they leave a couple hours later—probably having overstayed their welcome, but he's done worse. Jonny falls into step with him down the walk, shoulders brushing companionably.

“What's your plan?” he asks. “For the rest of the summer.”

Patrick shrugs. “Haven't decided yet.”

“Well,” Tazer says, “if you can stick around for a few weeks, I've got something I wanna do.”

“Um,” Patrick says, because that's not cryptic in the least. “Like . . . murder someone?”

Jonny makes his how-do-I-even-know-you face, also known as how-do-I-even-like-you, also known as maybe Patrick's favorite. “No, dummy, like help you get better at faceoffs.”

Oh.

“Did they say something to you?” he asks. Because they haven't said anything to him.

“Just a fan. A joke as part of a question.” Tazer looks uncomfortable about it for some reason, standing next to his car and messing with his keys. “But if you do end up playing center sometimes, then you should get better at it.”

Patrick's not convinced, especially if this is coming from one of Tazer's weird, too-serious reactions to some fan's joke. He knows his strengths, is all. There are some things at which Patrick Kane is excellent.

Others, not so much.

Faceoffs, not so much. He's not so sure he's gonna get much better though: he's fast, but he's small for a hockey player, never been good at the physical aspects of the game. There was a time in his life when he was bitter as fuck about it, wallowed in self pity and all that shit, before he woke up and realized that sure, most of the dudes have a couple inches on him (or more, thanks, Tazer), but Patrick's better than practically all of them anyway. It was an awesome day, full of self realization and other important life development stuff.

But the point is: before last season, no one had seriously tried to make Patrick a center in a long time, and his lack of faceoff domination is probably a big reason why. Sure, he did pretty well at first last season, but that went downhill real first, and truthfully, he doesn't know why.

“I dunno, man,” he says. “What did you have in mind?” He should give a shot, he supposes. It's not

like Tazer is ever wrong about hockey shit, or like he has anything but Patrick's and the team's best interests in mind all the time.

"I guess we'll start figuring out what you really need work with and go from there," Tazer says, leaning against the car and eying him. "You're kinda short for it, obviously, but otherwise—" He stops, probably because Patrick's rolling eyes so hard at this familiar tune they might be about to fall out of his face. "No, I mean it. Otherwise you're okay. You're fast, and if you can keep the muscle you've got now, I think you can get way better."

Patrick makes a face, because keeping the muscle he adds during the summer has never been a theme with him.

But Tazer's looking all hopeful and earnest next to him, so there's no way in hell Patrick's going to the effort of pretending like he's gonna say no.

"Just tell me where and when, man," he says, and Tazer's happy grin is enough reward even if Patrick never wins another faceoff again.

Where turns out to be Jonny's condo, more specifically the part where the ping pong table usually sits, now folded up and rolled to the wall. And when is, of course, now.

Or rather, when is as soon as Jonny manages to google the exact dimensions of the circle (which on the real Patrick is kind of surprised he doesn't know already), then dig up a measuring tape and some packing tape. It looks like he's about to have some super-serious communing with the floors, so Patrick goes to watch TV instead of even fronting like he's gonna be any help.

Halfway through a Teen Mom rerun (season one, classic), Jonny comes in, looking all satisfied, so Patrick guesses it's time. He follows him back into the other room, and sure enough, he's got the whole thing marked out, and Patrick would bet it's perfectly regulation.

"Okay," Jonny says, handing him a stick and an old pair of gloves. Patrick wonders where they came from. "Let's see it."

Patrick hunkers down into the familiar stance. He's not completely clueless—they spent some time on this last season, after all, along with those times when he was a kid.

Jonny—just kind of stares. Patrick lets him for a bit, then thinks maybe they're done or something, so he starts to straighten up.

Jonny doesn't say anything, but he makes a super impatient, ridiculous noise. Patrick almost keeps going just to see what would come next, but Jonny's got his gameface on, all intense focus and gravity, so Patrick gets back down. Fucking with Jonny is basically the best, but the payout is usually minimal when he's all concentrating and captainly. Besides, if he actually is just sitting there pondering the miniscule details of Patrick's faceoff stance, then Patrick's really interested in the conclusions.

He puts a little more effort into actually duplicating what he'd do as best he can, widening his stance and putting his weight more firmly into the ground, imitating it as best he can without skates. Then he looks up, watches Jonny's face as he checks it out.

It doesn't give anything away, of course, but fortunately he seems to have scrutinized his fill right as the whole situation starts veering into uncomfortably hot territory and Patrick has to worry about, like, popping a boner in yet another unfortunate situation. He's always been super into Jonny's intense scrutiny look, even outside of how he likes it because he just likes having Jonny's attention. It's basically like kryptonite for his self-control.

“Can I stand up now?” His muscles are kind of protesting.

“What?” Tazer says, blank. “Oh—yeah—take a break.”

He does, shaking out his muscles. “So, how’d I do? Six out of ten? Thirteen?”

“You did okay,” Jonny says, grinning a little. “Again.”

So Patrick does it again, and this time Jonny leans in across from him, close enough that Patrick can hear him breathe.

“Okay,” he says. “Three, two, one—” and long before Patrick gets what’s happening, he’s moving. The next thing Patrick knows, he’s on the floor.

“I think I know how that kid felt,” he says.

Jonny appears, hovering over him, face a curious mixture of worried and annoyed.

“Never be a coach,” Patrick tells him.

“I counted down!” Jonny says, like that’s the issue here.

“Just . . . never,” Patrick says, rolling onto his feet.

“Okay?” Jonny asks, brow furrowed.

Patrick nods. “Yeah, let’s go again. For real, this time. And in the future, I can’t read your mind, moron.”

“I don’t know what the hell else you thought was gonna happen,” Jonny pouts, but he gets back down, and Patrick does the same. “Okay, three, two, one—”

Two hours later, they’ve moved from Jonny counting to a timer app on his phone, and Patrick’s starting to worry he’s going to be dreaming about the damn thing’s chime the rest of his life. Probably he’ll be dreaming about the whole night, actually—Jonny’s messed with basically every aspect of his stance, hands warm and firm all over his thighs, his hips, his shoulders. Finally, Patrick seems to be moving the way he likes, so he steps back.

“Enough for now?” Patrick asks.

“Yeah, I mean, it’s like midnight,” Jonny says, checking the phone—which makes sense, all things considered, but still. Time flies and all that (yes, Patrick’s made peace with how sometimes his idea of fun is half-squatting in someone’s condo all night practicing for what’s technically his job).

“You wanna just sleep here?” Jonny offers. “I can take you home, but—”

“Yeah, no, that’s fine,” Patrick says. “But I’m using your shower,” because the part where they’ve spent like two hours knocking each other around means he’s kind of gross.

“You better,” Jonny says, making his disgusted face.

“Whatever, like you’re any better,” Patrick scoffs, grinning.

“Yeah, well, I’m gonna shower,” Jonny says, rounding it up with another of his epic comebacks. Jesus, but they’re Patrick’s favorite.

Yes, he's already acknowledged that he has a problem.

Jonny stands there all tall and awkward for a moment, staring like they're rookies and he can't figure out how to respond to one of Patrick's awesome, side-splitting jokes again.

Patrick tilts his head, feeling his face fall into a weird, confused expression, raised eyebrows and questioning tilt to his mouth. "What's up?"

For a long moment they just kind of look at each other, then Jonny grins a little, soft, and cuffs him lightly on one arm. "Nothing, Kaner," he says. "Goodnight."

"Goodnight," Patrick echoes, watching as Jonny disappears down the hall.

The next morning, he raids Jonny's t-shirt rack (and who hangs their t-shirts, for serious), cause he has no problem wearing the same jeans as last night, but definitely not the shirt.

It's always weird wearing Jonny's clothes, because he's used to seeing them on Jonny, not himself. On him, they're invariably a little longer, a little tighter across the shoulders and, right now especially, the chest.

Of course, Jonny kind of looks like he gained another person in muscle since the playoffs, so maybe they'd look different on him too right now.

Either way, Patrick's got one of his shirts on *and* he managed to get it without waking Jonny from his dead-person sleep. So now he's facedown on the couch, watching Law & Order reruns because he's a little terrified of Jonny's weird coffee maker of the future. He's hungry, but not enough to risk waking the sleeping monster over it—grouchy morning Jonny is *scary*, okay.

He wakes up again right when the jury's coming back with their verdict (guilty, duh, bitch) to Jonny hovering over the back of the couch, shaking his shoulder and looking cranky.

"Why didn't you make coffee?" he whines.

"Because last time you told me my coffee privileges were revoked," Patrick points out.

Jonny wrinkles his nose. "You're useless," he says, disappearing in the direction of the kitchen.

"Are you gonna feed me?" Patrick calls, lifting his head just enough to try to catch the expression on Jonny's face when he processes the words.

It's absolutely worth it. "You should be feeding *me* for putting up with you."

"I am the *guest*," Patrick reasons. "And the only reason I'm here is you kept me up all night knocking me to the ground."

"Oh, yeah," Jonny says. "I thought we'd work on timing today."

"Wait," Patrick says, suddenly bolt upright. "There's *more*?"

"Um, yeah," Jonny says once they've finally managed a passable meal of eggs and fruit and some sort of weird, off-color smoothie that Patrick's still eying distrustfully. "There's a lot more."

Which is obvious, now that he thinks about it. Surely Jonny didn't get to be one of the best in the league at faceoffs by having the strongest starting stance. But, rather like how Jonny has a number of positive attributes that Patrick does not (and vice versa, sorry, some things are just inborn), surely he

doesn't expect to make Patrick anything like he is.

But, Patrick supposes, it's not like it would be interfering with his packed days or anything. Jonny would hardly let him shirk on his planned training schedule. This is just . . . adding something. And hell, even if it barely helps at all, that'll still be something in the event he plays center more next season. Information is scarce on that one, frustratingly. He hopes they're not still, like, fighting over it or something.

"Okay," he decides. "Lay it on me."

"It" turns out to be way more than timing, of course, as Patrick learns once they've spent a truly obscene amount of time in the building's gym and then more on the weird machines taking over the third bedroom in Jonny's condo. Patrick hopes Jonny's parents aren't planning on a surprise visit, or that they like sleeping in the shadow of a personal gym.

Probably they should shower, but if they're just going to get all gross again, there's no real point. If it's a concern to Jonny at all, he doesn't mention it. Instead, he makes Patrick go through the various starting stances—depending on where he's going, what he plans to do with the puck, where his opponent is—*again*, and then is apparently sufficiently satisfied to move on to timing as promised.

It should maybe be weird, standing there and running through a series of moves like he's a dancer or something while Jonny watches and tells him what to change or what to hold, sometimes interrupts by demonstration when words won't do the trick (kind of often). But it isn't at all. It's typical, actually, he and Jonny helping each other, taking each other's technique apart and rebuilding it into something better, something a little of both of them. And it's worked so far, so why change it up?

"Okay," Jonny says, standing to the side of the circle, by Patrick's left shoulder. "If you're not paying attention, it's really easy to get thrown out," which isn't new information or anything, but Patrick knows Jonny's gotta be thorough or he doesn't feel like he's doing it right. "But don't worry about that for now."

Instead, he worries about ascertaining when, *exactly*, to start moving, to go for the puck. Or, rather, to take the steps towards moving for the puck, including heading off your opponent.

Jonny can't really get in on this without some sort of complicated chain reaction to dump the puck from a ceiling fan or something, but he compromises by alternating tossing the puck in like a ref would and simulating starting without a puck at all, making Patrick go through all the angles, all the options, fighting him the whole way. Not letting Patrick have anything easy.

But Patrick doesn't want it easy. He wants it *right*, and he knows Jonny does, too.

It's long past lunch when they stop, but he's been so focused he hasn't thought about it once. Patrick's fucking exhausted, which is kind of lame, because they weren't even skating or anything, but he feels good about it, still. He thinks Jonny does, too, at least if the pleased little smile on his face means anything.

"I was awesome, wasn't I?" Patrick coaxes.

Jonny meets his eyes, smile widening. "You did good."

"Good," Patrick says. "I'm going for 75% next season."

"Oh yeah?" Jonny says. "Doubling your stats?" He steps in close, like they're across from each other at the dot again.

“I wasn’t *that* bad,” Patrick argues, even though he kind of was. He slugs Jonny lightly in the shoulder for emphasis.

“I guess not,” Jonny concedes, smiling at the floor like a weirdo. Then he looks up, meets Patrick’s eyes in a frank, serious gaze. “You could, you know. Be way better.”

He thinks about joking it off, but doesn’t, for some reason. Probably the look in Jonny’s eyes, huge and not quite so dark up close. “I hope so. I don’t want—I can’t have another season that ends in people shouting for me to get traded.”

Jonny opens his mouth, closes it again, face fierce.

Patrick tries to be realistic about things, not too melodramatic. He knows that not everything that went wrong last season could’ve been fixed by him scoring a few more goals or somehow suddenly being amazing at a position he’s not overly suited for. But he also knows how much he let all the other things—mostly Jonny’s lingering injury, the way it weighed on him like it was the entire world slowly bending his shoulders in—get to him. And he knows that if he’s going to be playing center in any permanent capacity, there’s some shit he has to work on.

Maybe Jonny gets all that, somehow. Or at least the important part, because all he does is nod like everything Patrick’s thinking is being spoken aloud. “You won’t,” he vows.

They basically spend the next few days like that: food, gym, hovering in each other’s space in Jonny’s condo. Finally, Patrick goes home to actually shower in his own bathroom, put on his own clothes afterwards. He wanders through his condo in his underwear for a while, just because he can, he guesses, then calls home to check in. He’s not really sure what else to do, other than watch TV or something.

“I’ll probably be here for another while,” he tells his dad. “Jonny’s putting me through the advanced course of being awesome at faceoffs.”

“Well,” his dad says, sounding pleased. “You’ve got a good teacher.”

The best, basically, but Patrick just makes an agreeing noise. “How is everyone?” he asks, which is enough to set his dad off on an overview that gets interrupted shortly by his mom in favor of a more detailed version.

He gives the highlights to Jonny later, on their way to Duncs’s place, because he and Seabs are both headed back to Canada soon, so they’re having a goodbye party.

Or maybe party isn’t the right word, because it’s the same crew as before: Jonny and Patrick collectively horning in on coupletime or whatever. At least Sharpy and Abby got a babysitter, although Patrick kind of wishes Madelyn had come. She’s fun.

But he supposes that with her there, they wouldn’t be able to get a drinking game to 2 Fast 2 Furious going, so then Tazer wouldn’t be, right this very second, trying to drunkenly explain this, like, car parade that happens in Winnipeg? Or something? It’s not coming across very well, but maybe that’s because Patrick is completely unable to stop himself from asking the important questions: How many lowriders are there? Ford Pintos? Chevy Aztecs? Model T’s? Does Tazer drive his Mercedes up from Chicago for it every year, or did he buy a new car just for the Winnipeg car parade?

“It’s called *Cruise Night*,” Tazer says, like he’s honest-to-god offended Patrick’s not duly impressed. Which might be true—Tazer can get pretty defensive about old Peg Town.

“Sometimes people drag race,” says Duncs, and Patrick is *filled* with unholy glee.

“Wait, like, this?” he asks, gesturing at the TV, where Tyrese and Paul Walker are about to drive a car onto a boat. “Holy shit, Jonny, we *have to go*. I will take back everything I’ve ever said about Winnipeg if we go to Cruise Night *right now*.” He’s not sure he’s ever been so excited about anything in his entire life.

Excepting June 9, 2010, of course.

“I’ll buy you a whole *car* full of NOS,” he vows.

Jonny looks unimpressed, so Patrick moves on. “Duncs. Kelly-Rae.”

“Sorry, Kaner,” Duncs says, “I got rid of my drag racer when I got drafted here.”

Patrick’s life is a *tragedy*.

“You’re a cruel, cruel, man, Jonathan Toews,” he says, collapsing onto the couch. “Maybe I’ll just go by myself.”

“You’d get eaten by a moose,” Sharpy says. “A moose would come into the city just to eat you. They’d smell you coming.”

“I smelled your *mom*—” Patrick begins, then claps a hand over his mouth. Even he’s never been drunk enough to finish that sentence.

“Jesus, Peeks, there are ladies present,” Sharpy says, looking disgusted, but when Patrick risks a glance at Abby, she’s just laughing.

Not as hard as Jonny, though, who’s giggling into his beer like a total maniac (or maybe a five-year-old girl). Patrick thinks it’s probably more *at* him than *with* him, but he probably deserves it for that disaster.

And anyway, they’re kind of the same with Jonny. It would be one thing if he were some random dude Patrick had just met, but instead Jonny’s been one of his best friends for five years, the guy who’s been through more with him than basically anyone else in the world. So it’s okay for Jonny to laugh at him sometimes, because at the end of the day, he still thinks Patrick’s the best.

Patrick’s totally not even making that shit up, or, like, extrapolating—Jonny used those *exact words* once. Granted, it was right after the cup and they were wasted on endless champagne and probably about as high on endorphins as humans could possibly be, but still. The *best*.

And hey, just because he may not think Patrick’s the best in all the ways Patrick thinks so right back at him, it still means a lot. To know. So he just grins back at Jonny’s stupid laughing face, happy.

“I don’t think I can in good conscience let either of you drive tonight,” Seabs says, looking dubiously between them.

“This is my third beer,” Jonny protests, because he totally has a system of how much he weighs at the moment and what he’s eaten and how long it’s been and when he’ll let himself have another or get anywhere near his keys again. “And last.”

“Um, your third of my enormous, high-gravity German beers?” Seabs asks, all judgment face.

“Oh,” Jonny says, looking at his glass like the beer’s betrayed him personally.

“I only have one guest room. Unless one of you wants to fight the dog for the couch, I guess. Hey, it’ll be just like when you guys were rookies!” He looks excited at the revelation.

“Still such children,” Sharpy laments, shaking his head sadly, which is pretty rich, coming from the king of lame, high-school pranks.

Truth is, he and Jonny have actually slept in the same bed before. Not regularly, or anything, but there was the time one of Sharpy and Bur’s pranks involved what surely amounted to dozens of gallons of ice water all over Patrick’s in Montreal, the time Tazer stayed at his place after they put together all his furniture and it turned out they maybe hadn’t done such a bangup job on the one of the beds, a couple random other incidents in various places.

And maybe this bed is smaller than most of those, but it’s definitely not smaller than Jonny’s in that one NYC hotel where the spider had fallen onto Patrick’s chest right as he’d been about to close his eyes and he’d refused to go in his room the rest of the night. Jonny had given him a lot of shit for it, but then Patrick put forth the perfectly reasonable option of just switching, if he was so brave. The ensuing excuses were lame enough that Patrick didn’t even pay attention to any of his not-so-subtle barbs about manliness and shit.

So it’s not going to be a problem, he’s sure. Especially since Seabs really wasn’t kidding about those beers—Patrick only had four, himself, and he’s kind of on the verge of the spins. That’s also what happens when you follow up drinking your liver into complete and total submission with a couple months of barely drinking at all and working out all the time. He forgot about that part.

“I’ve made a grave miscalculation,” Patrick whines, wondering if he should stave off tomorrow’s pain and just smother himself with one of Seabs’s fancy pillows now. Or maybe Jonny would do it—he sure looks like he wants to sometimes, and he could probably get better leverage.

“Just shut up and go to sleep,” Jonny says from across the bed. There’s less than two feet between them, actually, which enables him to drop a heavy hand across Patrick’s mouth without even reaching far.

Patrick bats it off his face with one hand, letting it flop onto his chest, where it stays. “I’m not tired yet. Let’s . . .” He trails off, not quite sure what they should do.

Jonny lifts his head up enough to give him a sloppy, sideways look. “You’re really not tired?”

“No,” Patrick insists. “Let’s—” he gets an idea, stops to giggle at it “—let’s play truth or dare.”

“Oh my god,” Jonny moans, thumping his head back down to the pillow. “Let’s not and just say we did.”

“Truth or dare?” Patrick asks, beaming at his genius.

“Dare,” Jonny says.

He *always* picks dare. So Patrick should be prepared, but that hardly means he is.

“Um.”

Jonny laughs quietly. “Just let me know when you think of something,” he says, then yawns hugely, which totally makes Patrick yawn, too.

He gets distracted thinking about why that even happens for a while, and by the time he remembers the task at hand, he looks over, and Jonny’s sleeping, breathing softly through his mouth and looking impossibly young in the dark.

Come to think of it, maybe Patrick is kind of tired, warm from the alcohol and the Seabses' showy guest bedding.

"I'll get back to you later," he tries to say, but it gets interrupted halfway through with another endless yawn, and that's all she wrote.

They take the next day off due to hangovers and Patrick's devastating argument that there's no way even Jonny wants to do more than necessary in this condition.

Instead, they take Seabs and his fiancée to brunch in thanks for putting up with their drunk asses, then go see *The Dark Knight Rises* because there is no way in heaven or hell that it's not going to be sick and it's hot as fuck outside. It's probably kind of gross to sit around the theater in the same clothes they slept in and shit, but hey, Seabs had toothbrushes. They're not total animals.

Patrick does his best imitation of the Bale Batman voice the rest of the day, or at least until it starts to hurt his throat. He kind of wishes he had a black sheet or something, but all he's got is the Superkane cape, somewhere in his condo. So disappointing.

"Yo, just drop me off at home," he says once they're close. Jonny nods, pulls into the side street they always use.

"Ten tomorrow?" he asks, because he knows Jonny'll counter with nine and then at least he can sleep til 8:30.

"Sounds good," Jonny says after the ensuing negotiations, smiling that same soft smile as he says, "See you," and drives off.

It's quiet, alone in his condo, so he mass-texts his sisters about how awesome the movie was and pretends to spoil them for a while, making up a bunch of totally ridiculous plot points. *Bane becomes Robin*, he tells Jacqui, sends *Anne Hathaway gets pregnant by Alfred* to Jessica and Erica.

Then, satisfied with the day's work, he flops on the couch with dinner. But there's nothing he wants to watch on, especially after the most epic movie at all time.

So he goes for his computer instead, sits with the cursor in the search bar for a while. The he types *Jonathan Toews faceoff* and settles in for the long haul.

"The long haul" turns out to basically mean until his ass is numb and he's got a super nasty crick in his neck that he didn't even notice forming. And maybe half a boner.

He's watched Jonny take hundreds, maybe even thousands, of the things, but sitting on the ice and waiting for the puck to come his way, even sitting on the bench and waiting for the puck to go someone else's way, it's all completely different than watching from the camera's angle. Especially the draws that really matter, that change everything, like when Jonny pretty much single-handedly won them game 5 against the Yotes (not that they could pull out game 6, but still). He's starting to really get everything that went into that play, how the entire game hung on Jonny in that instant.

It makes him want to be able to pull that out, too. He knows he can be clutch—a lot, Stanley Cup, hello—but he wants this, too. Wants to do as well as he can.

He's seen Jonny get pushed out by a ref, but not so often as the changing cast of men across from him.

He can imagine, now, the look on Jonny's face as the puck begins to fall, the way he moves into it, over it, takes possession. Bends the game to his will like always.

Finally Patrick has to move, what with the deadbutt and all, but even once he's in bed, he just lies there, thinking about Jonny on the screen of his computer, Jonny in his space on his living room floor, staring at him, daring him to go, to win.

He has no idea what, lying in the same bed in the guest room of their engaged teammate's house, he could possibly have dared Jonny to do.

Apparently he's ready for the big leagues, at least where the big leagues means Jonny acting like an eagle-eyed ref on uppers. Sometime in the past eighteen hours he's acquired a whistle—or maybe he already had it, who knows—and if he's not blowing that in Patrick's face, then he's pushing him bodily away at some slight misstep, moving too quickly for Patrick to really keep up.

It doesn't take too long before he's completely fed up with it.

“Okay!” he cries, flinging his arms out and narrowly avoiding getting Jonny in the face with the stick. “Enough! I'm going deaf and can't even get my balance before you're throwing me off again.”

Jonny backs off but just stands there for a moment, watching him. “You're not always gonna have the chance to get your balance,” he says. “That's the point.”

“I know *that*,” Patrick says, exasperated. “But it's not gonna be like this, don't even front.”

“It could be,” Jonny argues. “You've been in games like this, where you can't catch a break for even a second.”

He has, but that hardly means he's unable to get his feet under him before the play even starts.

Or maybe it does, if you're centering and taking the faceoffs.

“Fine, you've made your point,” he concedes. “I think you've made it enough for the day.”

Jonny watches him for another interminable time. “Okay,” he says finally, then goes to put on the extra pair of gloves. “I was thinking about how to do this last night without someone to actually drop the puck.” He comes back to the circle. “Just try to get it and keep it away from me. I'm gonna try to not move my legs.”

Patrick doesn't really get what the last part has to do with anything until they're facing each other across the circle again, and Tazer drops the puck, grabs the stick again, then counts down. Patrick shoots forward at the right time, angling his shoulder in to block Tazer as best he can, and either because he's actually getting better or because it's what Tazer wants, he gets the puck.

But it's not over there, and that's when Tazer's plan starts to make sense, because if he stays mostly in place, they can actually simulate—or approximate, at least—the initial scrum of the faceoff for a while, over and over, angle after angle until they both hit the puck at the same time and it shoots off to the side like a cannonball, denting the wall.

“Oops,” Patrick says, looking at Tazer guiltily.

But apparently Tazer doesn't give a shit about property damage, because he's beaming like they just scored a goal instead of scored a hole in the plaster of his house. “Wanna go again?” he asks, and there's no way in hell Patrick's saying no to that, so he just picks up the puck, dusts it off, and gets

back into position at the dot.

Three hours later, he thinks every muscle in his body is going to be sore tomorrow and he's probably going to be peeing straight protein shake after how much Jonny made him drink.

But Jonny's still beaming like they did something great today, and he'd spent the whole time they were chugging chalky protein grossness standing at the floor-to-ceiling window over the river, looking down at the city with his arm around Patrick's shoulders.

"So I'm awesome now, right?"

"Awesomely terrible," Jonny says in his I'm-making-a-funny voice, and Patrick laughs because he basically has to at that tone combined with Jonny's invariably terrible jokes.

Sometimes he really can't believe this is his life, but mostly he can't believe how damn happy he is about it.

Most of the guys fuck off home for the summer, the same way Patrick usually does, so he and Tazer are kind of left to their own devices. Since it's them, their own devices equates to a lot of shitty reality TV they both pretend they're not into (some more convincingly than others), video games and epic dude movies at night. One night they channel surf past a super awesome gunfight on TV and end up watching, like, four straight hours of Hong Kong action films, or at least what they learn are Hong Kong action films after they're too ridiculously amazing to not google.

It's kinda lame, sitting in the middle of an incredible city like Chicago and barely leaving their condos, but they're totally *working*, so they have an excuse. And once they're done with that, they're kind of tired a lot. Sometimes they go to the gym at the UC to check in with the trainers or use a special machine that's too big or ridiculous for Tazer's spare bedroom, so that counts for something, surely.

Especially since they're seriously working really *hard*. Jonny's newest tactic is for Patrick to legit write down what he plans to do with the puck, five or ten moves at a time, then give them each a shot so they can actually see how he's doing in terms of following through or whatever.

It's okay, he thinks. He thinks Jonny's holding back—not to make it easier or out of pity, because they don't do that, but because he's pretty sure that if Jonny came on full throttle immediately, he'd dominate so immediately that Patrick would hardly get to practice anything and there wouldn't even be a point to the whole exercise in the first place.

But he thinks Tazer's starting to amp it up after a couple days. He gets in closer, moves faster, gets that super-intense look on his face. Patrick's stats drop immediately (oh yes, he's keeping track, and Patrick doesn't even wanna know whether he had that white board in advance or bought it just for this), but not as low as he would have thought, and maybe not enough for Tazer's horrifyingly immense competitive streak, if the warring expressions of pleased pride and dismay on his face are anything to go by.

It's the middle of the nighttime traffic jam when they stop one Friday, Jonny taking the opportunity of the puck skittering down the hallway to drop his stick and slump forward, getting a hand on Patrick's shoulder and just kind of bending in. He's breathing hard.

So's Patrick, now that he pays attention.

Then Jonny leans further in, until it's his forehead on Patrick's shoulder, not his hand. Patrick kind of

freezes, but all Jonny does is super obnoxiously wipe the sweat dripping from his hairline all over Patrick's shirt.

"Oh my god, you're disgusting," Patrick complains, trying to shove Jonny back, but there's the part where Jonny's taller than he is and better at throwing his weight around and also in a better position to do so, so all Patrick ends up doing is setting himself off balance.

He squawks, flailing until he manages to catch a grip on Jonny's biceps.

Jonny's laughing, probably at his successful sweat wipe as well as Patrick's failtastic reaction. He's a total jerk and none of it is funny at all, but Patrick starts laughing with him anyway—it's basically inevitable, for some reason. If Jonathan Toews is laughing or even if he just makes one of his super-lame jokes, Patrick Kane is gonna laugh, too.

When did his life become so predictable? Probably about the time it took a turn for the part where standing in someone's fucked up living room laughing at himself with them and clutching their stupid hot arms caused his heart to seize up in his chest, his stomach to swoop and dive.

Yeah, that's the situation he's in.

Jonny's hair is standing basically straight up from his forehead, creating the clear categorical imperative (that's a thing, he knows it) to mess with it.

He draws Jonny in by the grip he still has on both arms. Surprisingly, Jonny just lets himself be pulled instead of resisting, so Patrick takes advantage of his compliance to reach up and smooth down the ridiculous cowlick.

Jonny watches his hand as it moves, but then Patrick's looking at his hair instead, and when he looks back, Jonny's staring right at his face, right into his eyes.

His hand falters, and he draws it back a little, unsure. This doesn't really fit into the lines he tries to draw with Jonny, or rather with himself and Jonny, to keep things as normal as possible.

Because Jonny's been one of the most important people in his life for what seems like forever now. For all his adult life. For all the best things that have happened to him (and some of the worst). And none of that is worth throwing away for anything.

No matter how much he wants it.

He should probably drop his arms, take a step back, but instead he waits for Jonny to do the same. He does neither, though, so Patrick observes in technicolor close-up the deep breath he takes, long steady inhale and slow shuddering exhale.

It's pitch black outside, a wall of inky darkness through the windows, but inside it's perfectly bright. Jonny's eyes are wide and dark, though, pupils dilated huge, and that's the last detail Patrick observes before that categorical imperative overwhelms him again and he's yanking Jonny in by the shoulders to crash their mouths together messily.

Jonny makes a sharp noise into his mouth, but he's got both hands cradling Patrick's face, keeping him close, so Patrick thinks it's safe to assume it's not a protest. So he keeps going, backs up just enough to get their heads into actual working alignment before he dives back in, trying to crack Jonny's stoic facade further open.

Unshockingly, Jonny kisses like he does everything else: intense and focused and nearly overflowing with passion. It's enough to ruin Patrick's concentration, to weaken his knees and take them both to the floor.

He drags Jonny's shirt off with both hands, pops the button on his shorts with hands that are nearly shaking. He thinks his heart might beat right out of his chest, especially when Jonny settles a hand in the center of his chest, grounding them.

"Okay?" he asks. He's breathing like he's come off a shift, and Patrick's pretty sure he himself is shaking. He nods, tries not to smile til his cheeks hurt.

But maybe that part's fine, too, because he's grinning and Jonny's grinning and they're grinning at each other and it's probably the dopiest thing ever until Jonny finally ducks his head back in and puts them both out of their misery by kissing him again.

There's been a lot of times in Patrick's life where he's thought *best thing ever*, from food to hockey plays to the first time someone went down on him. But he's only once meant it with the same fervor as right now, dividing his attention in some unfathomable proportion between the slick, perfect heat of Jonny working both their dicks in one hand and the feeling of him shaking apart, above and around Patrick. Everywhere.

The last thing on Patrick's mind when they line up again the next morning is faceoffs, but Jonny's working his gameface, so he licks his lips and tries to focus. Jonny's eyes narrow in on his mouth like they're magnetized, though, so Patrick just thinks *fuck it* and jumps him.

After a while of making out again, Jonny wrenches his head back and manages, "Not here," dragging Patrick down the hall to his room.

Which, Patrick is forced to admit sometime later, lying sprawled across Jonny's huge bed and trying not to come as soon as Jonny flattens his tongue under the head of his dick, was maybe the right idea.

"Let's go to the beach," Patrick says after they've napped it off—all this training is tiring on its own, okay, not to mention adding in all this awesome fooling around.

Jesus, he realizes. Jonny's totally gonna use this as an excuse to make them drink more protein shakes.

Jonny doesn't answer, but when Patrick looks over, he's awake, which is as good a cue as any to keep talking. "I mean, we're sitting here, in *Chicago*, in the summer, and we've basically been acting like it's—like it's Pegtown in February, man. By which I mean: uninhabitable," he clarifies, in case Jonny was thinking that was a good thing somehow.

Jonny makes the same face he always does when Patrick talks trash about his homeland (there's such an endless fount of trash, though, it's not like he could ever stop).

"You totally want to," Patrick says, because he knows it's true. "It's like, right over there." He waves vaguely.

A slow, mega-dorky grin spreads across Jonny's face. "Yeah, okay," he says, rolling out of bed before Patrick can execute a victory fist pump.

Patrick watches him walk naked towards the bathroom.

"I'm just telling you now that I would make some sort of love-to-watch-you-go joke, but I actually love it too much to concentrate on thinking of one," he calls. Jonny makes a scandalized, judgmental noise and turns on the shower without comment.

Patrick's hardly bothered, though, as he gets up to follow. Jonny thinks he's awesome. Awesome enough to touch his junk, even. And then, yeah, have an in-depth talk about sexual history and STDs and testing and shit. But after that he put his *mouth* on Patrick's junk (and vice versa, Patrick Kane is a considerate, giving *gentleman*, okay).

So Jonny can make that judgey noise all he wants. Patrick knows what's really up.

He mass texts anyone he can think of who might be in town, but once they're actually out by the water, he gets lazy and forgets to check his phone again.

And in the end, it's kind of cool that it's just him and Jonny, anyway. Not cause then they can make out without worrying about grossing people out (hello, famous people—chicks wanna take pictures of Patrick Kane when he's just *sleeping*). It just . . . is? He doesn't really get it. But he doesn't dwell, either, because that's a pretty worthless waste of time.

Sharpy's barrage of texts gets increasingly saltier as he pouts about getting ignored, so Patrick invites him to dinner in an attempt to reassure him that he's still Patrick's second-bestie.

He doesn't really get the whole etiquette of friends and spouses, so he always just keeps the invitation vague and prepares for either contingency. Apparently tonight's a date night or something, which is almost enough to make Patrick think he and Jonny should have gone home and showered again so they don't gross Abby out, but oh well.

"You got sand all over your neck, Peeks," Sharpy advises him as soon as they sit down. And they're not in a nice place by a long shot, closer to a pub than fine dining or anything, but Patrick still tries to be slightly discreet when he brushes it off.

Judging by Jonny's amused face across the table, he's not so successful. Whatever, Patrick's totally not telling him about the sunscreen in his ear.

It's cool spending all this time with Sharpy and Abby together, actually, because he hasn't really, before. He's always liked her, but since he's not around much over the summer and his mind is always elsewhere during the season, he's never just sat around and shot the shit for a while with her. He likes it, especially now that Jonny's totally over that thing he does with all the team's wives and serious girlfriends where he treats them with such civility and courtesy it's bordering on coldness. Instead, he's relaxed and friendly—to an extent, it's still Jonny, after all—but he does that thing where he tries to joke with her, and she even seems to think they're funny. Some of the time—it's still Jonny, after all.

On the way back, he takes a break from rapping about how his only wish is that he dies real to ask Jonny to just take him home again, because he thinks maybe they should spend some time apart—he read about that in one of Erica's magazines, once. People get, like, sick of each other or something. Jonny nods obligingly, but when he pulls in to drop Patrick off, he spends a good thirty seconds looking over at him and opening his mouth and then looking away.

Finally, Patrick gets it. "You wanna come watch a movie or something?"

Jonny doesn't answer, because he's still a huge weirdo with the social skills of a taxidermied moose, but he gives one of his tiny smiles and puts the car back in drive.

Those magazines are pretty lame, anyway.

Now they've got to redraw some boundaries, rework how they're going to do these things. Hooking up

once in their makeshift practice space thing is a fluke, but Patrick kind of ruined it yesterday—although he didn't do it on his own, it never would have happened if Jonny hadn't been *looking* at him like that, okay. But the point is, they're in a weird sort of in-between land—it's Jonny's condo, but it's also sort of a practice area. It's not the rink, which Jonny clearly loves but just as clearly considers *job*, considers *work*, so he'll mess around but he'll also keep it professional. But it's not completely neutral.

Patrick makes an effort to be serious and respectful at practice, but he's not even gonna pretend he's on Jonny's level of machinery. If the opportunity for a joke or a prank or just giving someone shit arises, you can damn well bet Patrick's gonna take it. Jonny? Usually not so much.

So he's a little worried that he's gonna be unable to stand across from Jonny in his condo without just wanting to make out all day again. The next afternoon, they square off looking anywhere but at each other, which, you know, makes the whole process kind of difficult. Patrick can't help but laugh, straightening up again.

Jonny does the same after a moment. "What if we just say right now that it's not gonna happen again," he suggests.

For a cold instant, Patrick thinks he means the whole thing, the whole last couple days. But then he looks at Jonny's face, the sheepish slant that makes his dumb smile look even more ridiculous.

He thinks for a bit, then counters, "What if we go make out in the other room for a while and, like, get it out of our systems?"

Jonny tilts his head, evaluating, then he drops the gloves.

Victory.

Two hours later, Patrick rolls off the couch when he's just trying to get his damn pants back on.

Jonny peeks over the edge, laughing. His hair is sticking out all over like he got struck by lightning.

"I think it worked," Patrick decides. "Let's go, I'm ready. Are you ready?"

"In a minute," Jonny says, dropping himself (kind of gracefully, the jerk) over the edge of the couch to sprawl over him and kiss him, long and deep, until Patrick's breath catches in his throat.

Then he moves. "Okay, ready," he says, standing in one smooth movement and moving to the living room, pulling up his sweats as he goes.

Patrick rolls to his feet and follows, willing down the beginning of yet another boner. Time to work.

In some ways, this is totally like practice. Tazer and Kaner, working on hockey. They do it all the time.

But at the same time, it's Patrick and Jonny spending a couple hours looking intently into each other's faces and basically wrestling. Without even any pads and helmets and shit to keep it clinical.

So really, he thinks they're doing pretty awesome, even though Jonny is currently trying to help him practice taking control of your opponent's stick itself as a way of winning faceoffs . . . by plastering himself to Patrick's back and "guiding his movement" or something.

It's not really like any other instruction Patrick's received in the past. Then again, maybe that's a good

thing.

And anyway, even if he never learns anything more about taking control of your opponent's stick (heh) ever again, this right here is probably worth it.

"No," Jonny's saying, "you should be quicker *here*," moving Patrick's right side forward, like there was ever a world in which this would be faster than Patrick doing it on his own.

"So, like this?" he asks, moving from Jonny just enough to improperly replicate the action.

"No."

"Oh, this?" He does it again, still slightly wrong but in a different way. He's biting his lip in an attempt to not laugh.

"No," Jonny says again, and that's when Patrick can literally not stop himself from snickering.

Jonny stops.

"What about this?" Patrick says, hooking his ankle around Jonny's and pulling them both forward in a huge, exaggerated stagger. "Think I got 'em?"

Both Jonny's arms wrap tight around his ribs, keeping them upright. "This is serious, Kaner," he admonishes.

"Oh, yeah," Patrick laughs. "This is mega serious, right here. Captain Serious, even." He turns in Jonny's arms, catches exactly the way he's absolutely about to laugh. "I think I got it anyway. You're my opponent, right? And I *totally*—" he shoves a thigh between Jonny's legs "—got control of your stick."

Jonny groans, thunking his head onto Patrick's shoulder.

"Eh?" Patrick asks. "Eh?" No appreciation for his genius and his swag, here. Fortunately he can appreciate it himself.

"You're horrifying," Jonny says into his neck, belying the words by backing Patrick away from the circle, down the hall.

"Horrifyingly intimidating, I know, everyone says," Patrick laments, letting Jonny lead him but doing his part by stripping off their shirts, dropping them on the ground.

He pounces onto the bed, pulls Jonny in by the waistband of his sweatpants—too stretchy to be super effective, but it gets the job done.

Jonny rolls onto his side, bringing Patrick with him until their limbs are a tangled mess, faces close.

"What do you want?" he asks, looking into Patrick's eyes like it's the most important question he's ever asked.

Jesus, maybe it is.

"Whatever," Patrick says, but that's not quite it. That comes out wrong, and Jonny's falling face means he probably thinks so, too.

So he corrects himself, leaning in the centimeter required for his lips to brush Jonny's when he says, "Anything. Anything."

So yeah, it takes a few days, but eventually Jonny gets to deliver the gospel of winning a faceoff by interfering directly with your opponent's stick.

(Heh.)

Shawtsy comes back into town a few weeks before training camp, sending Patrick a text message demanding to hang out at Rockit that night. It's a little presumptuous for someone who's basically still a rookie, he thinks.

But of course he's still saying yes, replies with *we'll be there* before he actually asks Jonny. But come on, there's no way he already has plans, considering that they've basically been shut-ins since they had dinner with Sharpy last week.

It's kind of of embarrassing once he actually thinks about it.

"Rockit with Shawtsy tonight," he calls. He's in his kitchen and Tazer's in the laundry room because he's totally certain he's gonna find his missing sock somewhere, but Patrick thinks he'll still be able to hear.

Sure enough, he gets, "Shawtsy's in town?"

"Yeah, going to some concert with his cousin tomorrow. But we've been summoned tonight."

"Summoned, eh," Jonny echoes, returning from the wilds of the laundry room. And sockless. "Sounds like someone's getting a little too big for his britches," because he totally uses expressions like that. And means them.

"Plays one season and thinks he can just order us around," Patrick agrees.

But Shawtsy's so excited to see them Patrick can't even pretend to be salty about the ordering around, just hugs him back even though that means he shouts "Tazer!" right into Patrick's ear.

"Hey," Jonny says, grinning the extra-goofy grin that means he's happy.

"Drinks?" Patrick asks, then decides for them. "Drinks." He pulls his cap down lower and heads over to fight for a place at the bar. He'll give the Canadians time to reminisce about fishing and the moosey motherland or whatever.

By the time he gets back, three beers in one hand and three shots in the other, they've managed to commandeer a table and procure their own rounds of shots. Hey, the more, the merrier, if you ask him.

"What have you guys been up to?" Shawtsy asks.

Patrick and Jonny exchange a look, then Patrick shrugs. "Nothing really. Training. El Capitano is making me work on faceoffs."

"Oh, thank god," Shawtsy says, miming like he's praying to the lord.

"Shut it, rookie, or you'll be wrapping my stick all season," Patrick says, thankful he's with two of the select few people who can hear those words without their minds falling immediately into the gutter.

"Seriously, though, you must've been doing *something* else. No girls? No morning after twitter photos?"

Tazer snickers next to him, so Patrick gives him an unimpressed look before answering. “Nah, mostly we’ve been, like, seventh-wheeling on Sharpy and Duncs and Seabs. Competing for Sharpy’s kid’s affections.”

Shawsy laughs. “If there’s two of you, are you seventh-wheeling or are you just another one of the couples?”

Patrick pauses. “Interesting point, rookie,” he says, pondering. He thinks about how they must look now, a little crowded at the table, Jonny slumped back into the booth with his arm across the back of the bench, just short of being on Patrick’s shoulders. Patrick himself leaning forward a little to be heard across it. It doesn’t paint a picture that’s wildly different from dozens of similar nights over the past five years.

That probably means something, but he supposes now really isn’t the time to figure out what it is.

Shawsy just looks between them and laughs some more. “Aren’t you guys supposed to be role models or whatever? Have your shit figured out?”

“Fuck you, I am your inspiration in this and all things,” Patrick says. “Tazer here’s just for intimidation.”

Shawsy doesn’t look very intimidated.

“Come on,” Patrick says, poking generally at Jonny’s torso. “If he’s not intimidating now, then he’s basically never going to be.”

“What can I say?” Shawsy shrugs. “Maybe if he hadn’t spilled a whole drink on himself laughing at you trying to sing karaoke to Lady Gaga in January.”

“Jesus,” Patrick says, disgusted. “We gotta trade you for some rookies with proper respect for the elders.”

“And betters,” Tazer chimes in.

“And betters.” Patrick agrees.

“Yeah, I think the jury’s out on that one til we see if your faceoff lessons paid off,” Shawsy says.

Outrageous, the disrespect on the Chicago Blackhawks.

“Oh, it’s *on*,” Patrick says, barely resisting the urge to shake his fist. “Come on, let’s go, right here.” He eyes the space at the end of the table, wondering if there’s something Jonny can use to mark out the circle.

Shawsy looks totally into it, so of course it’s Tazer who rolls his eyes and shuts it down, because he’s such a hater.

“Fine,” Patrick relents. “But haters have to take two shots.” He flags down one of the wait staff.

Jonny rolls his eyes so much Patrick’s surprised they don’t fall right out of his stupid head, but he does the shots anyway, watching Patrick challengingly the whole time.

Like that’s going to be anything but hot? Please.

A few hours later, they've ensured Shawsy's safely in a taxi and taken one themselves, stumbling into the elevator in Trump Tower, giggling like a couple schoolgirls.

NHL superstars, that's right, everyone.

Patrick slams his door closed on accident, falling against the frame afterwards because he's laughing so hard about it.

"Your neighbors are gonna try to evict you," Jonny says, but he's basically bent double cackling and it looks like he's about to cry from laughing at nothing, so. Patrick's not really concerned.

"Fat chance," Patrick says. "I *own* this shit, assholes." He shakes his fist in a threat to all potential hater-neighbors.

"I think they can still get rid of you somehow, it's usually in the by-laws," Jonny says, then shrugs. "It's okay, you can come live in the spare room."

"With the exercise equipment? Wow, you're so generous," Patrick says, slugging him in the arm.

Jonny just laughs some more and grabs his hand, holds it.

"Hey," Patrick says, realizing something. "Hey."

Jonny squeezes his hand, raising his eyebrows questioningly.

"It's a good thing I didn't have that faceoff with Shawsy tonight."

"Agreed," Jonny says, face and tone saying he's glad Patrick's finally arrived at this realization.

"Yeah," Patrick continues. "Cause then I would've had to, y'know, take control of his stick, if you know what I mean." He leers and waggles his eyebrows to make sure Jonny does. "And I don't wanna do that."

For some reason, that makes Jonny laugh so hard he has to fall back against the wall. "I don't want you to, either," he says when it seems he can finally speak again.

"Well," Patrick considers. "I guess . . . If *I* don't, and *you* don't. Then I won't."

"Sounds good to me," says Jonny, who's at least managed to stand up straight like a human being instead of some sort of apeman, but is still leaning against the wall and grinning dopily.

He's also still got his fingers wrapped around the hand Patrick used to punish him with his fists of fury, and he uses this to reel Patrick in, leaning forward to twine both his arms around Patrick's waist once he's close enough, tucking his face into Patrick's neck.

Patrick steps closer, all the way in, gets both arms around Jonny's shoulders. He's warm, a little sweaty, and he smells really, really good.

"I'm really drunk," he says, the brush of lips against Patrick's neck making him shiver.

"I know, babe," Patrick says into his hair. "Me, too." It's kind of funny, how they're both so drunk, so he laughs about it some more, lightly.

Something about this causes Jonny to make a fierce growling noise that vibrates against Patrick's skin, and he tightens his grip until they're pressed together everywhere, flush. So Patrick relaxes into him, burying his face in all his dark hair.

He feels awesome, happy and comfortable and safe and all that. Kind of floaty, maybe.

He shifts back, enough so he can tell Jonny this to his face. It's important it be to his face.

But then he can't say anything, because the look on it is too much—too open, too vulnerable, too deep. He can't speak, but he can't stop looking, either.

And Jonny's just standing there, holding his gaze. Eventually he moves one of his arms, hand settling so gently into Patrick's hair that he can barely feel it. The fingers ghost across his face, down the bridge of his nose to barely graze the outline of his lips.

He can't stop his eyelids from fluttering, but he fights to keep them open, because he wants to keep watching Jonny as he watches his hand trace Patrick's features, like there's something new he can find in the familiar planes.

Only once Patrick lets his eyes fall closed does Jonny move, the first touch of his lips on Patrick's so soft that he could almost believe it was their first kiss all over again.

In response, Patrick opens his mouth on an exhale, hearing Jonny suck in a harsh breath of his own before he presses in, zero to sixty with no stops between.

Patrick slumps forward into him, all the way he can go, grabbing two handfuls of Jonny's horrible, douchey shirt before sliding his hands all the way down his back to get the damn thing off. Jonny makes a noise, small and involuntary, when Patrick pulls back to get the shirt over his head.

Surely the reason he's so light-headed all of a sudden is that all the blood in his body just rushed straight down.

He wants to yank Jonny's pants down and blow him in the hallway. Even more, he wants to push him to the bedroom and then lie down himself, let Jonny open him up until they can barely breathe and see what happens from there.

Now probably isn't the best time for that, though, and he's not even sure he could stand the wait, especially when Jonny's finally getting with the program, pulling Patrick's shirt off in one quick move, trying to get both their belts undone at once and succeeding at neither.

Patrick huffs out a laugh, leans in to capture Jonny's bottom lip between his own and taking care of Jonny's belt as well as the button on his jeans. And yeah, Patrick's always been the one with better hands, but that doesn't mean Jonny can just give up and try to just unzip Patrick's fly and get at his dick that way.

Or maybe it does, because he actually does it—and really, Patrick should know better than to doubt him—stroking him to full hardness before sliding down to his knees, leaving Patrick to brace himself desperately with both hands against the wall and try not to thrust too hard into his perfect fucking mouth.

Heroically, he manages to pull back enough to finish himself off and come into his own hand, nearly sobbing with the force of it. He slides down the wall and kind of just collapses into Jonny's chest, wipes his hand on someone's discarded shirt and just floats for a few blissful moments, until he can come back to himself.

He kisses as much of Jonny's face as he can reach, pushes him down to the floor with one hand and licks his lips as he finishes the job he started earlier of actually getting Jonny's pants off.

Jonny gasps out a moan like Patrick hit him square in the solar plexus, and when Patrick looks up at his face, he's all glassy-eyed and flushed, and the hottest thing Patrick's ever seen.

Patrick smirks at him, runs his tongue across his lower lip again just to watch Jonny track the movement. Only then does he push Jonny's legs further apart so he can slip between them. The noise Jonny makes when he finally runs his tongue up the vein on the underside before getting his lips around the head is so incredible, he might have to take twice as long next time.

By the time training camp's rolled around, Tazer declares him a graduate of the Jonathan Toews School of Killing It at Faceoffs—but warns him there's a regular continuing education component to the certification.

Patrick's not quite sure how they're gonna do that, what with how Jonny's stripped the tape off his floor and returned the ping pong table to its rightful place, but he's sure they'll find a way. He's got faith and all that.

The way he's tearing shit up at camp bodes pretty damn well for the future, and if he had to guess, he'd put himself still kind of limboing next season, but he thinks he has a better outlook for both positions. Q and Bowman both take the opportunity to call him out on it—in a good way, of course—and Patrick thinks it's possible, as he leaves on the last day, that he might never stop smiling again.

The team kind of inadvertently takes over this restaurant by the UC after the last day of camp, and before long everyone's wives and ladies and other relevant family members are there too, all kind of milling around and ordering way too many drinks. Even Patrick's best girl Maddy makes an appearance, and she still thinks peek-a-boo is the greatest game of all time—he'll wait until she's a bit older to introduce her to the perfection that is ice hockey—especially when he does the peeking part by jumping out from behind Tazer's back or something. At that, she laughs so hard she gets hiccups and then he has to stop, concerned.

Sharpy laughs at his guilty face. “Yeah, stop entertaining my child, you irresponsible hoodlum,” he says.

Tazer puts an arm around his shoulders. Somehow he's had enough drinks that he's reached his touchy, smiley phase. Normally, Patrick would think it Sharpy's doing, but Sharpy looks totally normal, and he's barely left his family's side.

So Patrick narrows his eyes at Duncs and Seabs, but they're at a booth with their own wives and neither of them is subtle enough to pull off that level of nonchalance.

“Who got you all tipsy?” he asks, squeezing Jonny's hip.

“Hammer and Stalberg,” Jonny says, narrowing his eyes like they're in front of him to get fried by his laser glare instead of completely out of view. “They said something about Swedish tradition, but I think they made it up.”

Patrick laughs, putting aside his beer. Looks like he'll be the one driving later.

“You should go talk to the rookies,” he says, since most of them are still majorly intimidated by Tazer. Patrick gets why—Jonny's reserved naturally, saves the joking around at practice for the people he knows pretty well, and he spent the majority of last season being stoic about his injuries but obviously miserable for it. And he's also, you know, their captain and one of the best players in the league and has a Cup and a gold medal and the Conn Smythe and all that jazz.

So.

“You think?” Jonny asks, wrinkling his nose.

“Maybe you can make them honor the Swedish tradition,” Patrick suggests. “Make up your own rules.”

Jonny’s face brightens, and he smirks. Across the room, the rookies are slowly but surely covering a table with empty glasses, but it looks like mostly beer. They’re totally not gonna know what hit ‘em.

“A shot for whoever can’t name best forward at the Olympics,” Patrick suggests, and tries not to grin too overwhelmingly dopily at how Jonny looks kind of *bashful* about it, Jesus.

“Okay,” he agrees, looking at the floor and smiling like he can’t help it. “And five shots to whoever doesn’t know who won the Calder in 2008.”

“If they don’t know *that*, they’re off the team,” Patrick says, aghast at the very possibility. But. “Jesus, we’re pretty awesome, aren’t we?”

Jonny laughs, that laugh where he can believe neither a) Patrick just said that, nor b) that he finds it so funny. Patrick thinks he should just give in and accept his feelings, already. They’re pretty obvious.

“Yeah,” he agrees. “We are.”

End Notes

Didn't I tell you about the plot?

Thanks to [liketheroad](#) for introducing me and the rest of fandom to the completely real [Cruise Night](#) in Winnipeg.

If you don't believe Kaner about Tazer dominating at faceoffs, [believe someone else](#).

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