Summary

Pat closes his eyes, rubs at his eyelids with the back of his hand, and tries opening them again. No luck. The Mountie is still there.

Notes

Thanks to CallMeBombshell for the super-quick beta action!

See the end of the work for more notes.

April 3: high of 42, low of 37, light rain & thunderstorms

Q comes out of his office already pissed off and shouts for Pat, voice booming out across the bullpen. Pat discreetly chucks the Sudoku he's been working on into the recycling bin under his desk before Q can see it. He's not really too broken up about tossing it -- he's pretty sure there aren't supposed to be two 8s in that row anyway.

Q stomps further into the bullpen, coming in for a landing a foot and a half from Pat's desk.

"Detective Kane," Q says. "I see you're still employed here."

"Yep," Pat says. He looks up at Q and tacks on a sincere, "Sorry. Maybe next time, eh?"
"I live in hope," Q says, and he looks at Pat, considering. The last time he put Pat under this much scrutiny, Pat ended up playing bodyguard for Rahm Emanuel's niece for a week and he still, to this day, does not know whether that was meant as a reward or a punishment.

"You're from Buffalo, right? That's near the border."

"Yes, sir."

"How's your Canadian?"

"Uh," Pat says. "Pretty good."

Actually: considering how much of his childhood was spent dangling pucks around the children of Toronto ex-pats, his Canadian is well above average. But he's fucked if Q needs someone who knows Celsius or metric.

Q gives him another long, assessing look. Pat keeps his hands flat on his desk so he doesn't start to fidget more than usual.

"Good sir?" Pat tries. Q continues to stare, unimpressed, not giving anything away, so Pat adds, "Eh?"

"You'll do," Q says. He doesn't say for what.

April 4: high of 46, low of 35, light rain

The what arrives the next day, and for a long time, all Pat can see is red.

"My eyes are up here," the wall of red fabric says, but Pat's brain is stuck on being eye level with -- is that rope? Why is that rope?

Pat closes his eyes, rubs at his eyelids with the back of his hand, and tries opening them again. No luck. The Mountie is still there.

The Mountie says, "Up. Here." The way he says it, he sounds like the words are being forced out of him at gunpoint.

Pat looks up.

"OK," Pat says. He takes a deep breath, checks over the paperwork that Q shoved into his hands a few minutes ago, and then he looks up again into the Mountie's dark and scary eyes. "OK. Hi. I'm Detective Kane. People around here call me Kaner. Not that you have to, but people do."

"Constable Toews," the Mountie says, holding out his hand.

"Huh?" Pat asks. He double-checks his paperwork.

The Mountie keeps glaring, and it occurs to Pat a few beats too late that he was probably supposed to shake the hand the Mountie's still holding up. Well, he's not winning any medals for international communication and cooperation today.

"Sorry," Pat says. He shuffles his paperwork and his coffee cup and his pen into his left hand and grabs the Mountie's outstretched hand with his right. It's a good handshake: firm grip, single pump,
clean release. "I was expecting a Constable, uh-"

"Toews," The Mountie -- Constable -- says. He points to where Pat's paperwork clearly spells out T-O-E-W-S. "That's me."

"Really? That sounds nothing like-"

"You wanna keep arguing about this?" Constable Toews asks, looking and sounding pissy as all get out. "I know how to say my own name."

Pat wants to ask, You sure about that? But this really isn't a hill he wants to die on.

"OK, OK, sorry, let's do this again," Pat says. He points at himself. "I'm Detective Kane."

"Constable Toews."

There's a minute where Pat thinks Toews is gonna go for the handshake again, but they get over it.

"Welcome to Chicago," Pat says. "Sorry about the weather."

"Thanks," Toews says. "Now, can we get to work?"

"Yeah. Fuck. I thought you'd never ask."

It takes Pat's laptop a year and a half, basically, to boot up and log into the system. Toews is just looking at Pat while he waits, for the most part, but his eyes keep drifting away to the chaotic mess of shit on Pat's desk.

"What?" Pat asks, as Toews keeps flicking his eyes from the piles of paperwork and takeout menus and bits of wire and string to Pat's face and back, looking increasingly annoyed and disappointed.

"Nothing," Toews says.

"Sure, yeah, uh-huh."

It's obviously not nothing.

Pat reaches under his desk, comes up with an empty cardboard box labeled PATRICK KANE IS AN ASSHOLE >! on the side in angry sharpie and shoves all his crap off his desk and into the box. He folds the top in, drops it down on the floor and kicks it back out of the way and out of sight.

"Better?"

"It was fine before," Toews says, but in the least believable tone that Pat has heard in forever. He even looks relieved not to be faced with Pat's squalor.

Pat turns the keyboard of his laptop so it's facing Toews and leans back, out of the way, says, "Just, please, whatever you were gonna do."

He watches as Toews pulls up a new browser and clicks through to some RCMP stuff that also takes forever. Good to know some things are the same internationally.

They don't talk for a minute -- it feels like Toews is deliberately not saying something and the silence feels like it lasts an eternity. It's so quiet he can practically hear Toews think -- but then Toews finally can't hold it back anymore and asks the question Pat didn't want him to ask, which is: "Uh, Patrick Kane is an asshole?"
"My ex," Pat says, meaning Sean -- the last shining example of Pat's occasionally awful judgement. "I asked for my shit back and to his credit, he did actually do it -- but he left it at the front desk like that."

"Sounds like a prince."

Pat thinks, eh, he gave great head, says, "He wasn't that bad."

Whatever Toews was waiting for loads, and then they actually get to work -- Toews walking Pat through a series of slides outlining exactly why he's here.

Toews closes out the last slide and Pat has to take a minute to process it all.

"So," Pat says, but he's really just holding his place in the conversation for the moment. He doesn't really know what he wants to say.

It makes sense it's just so... so...

Pretty much every cop in every movie Pat saw growing up at some point said the phrase, Now let me get this straight and then stated clearly the whole plot of the movie in one sentence. Now let me get this straight -- you want me to go undercover as a clown? Now let me get this straight -- ninjas have kidnapped the president? That kind of thing. It always seemed pretty hokey when people said it back in the day, but right now...

"Now let me get this straight," Pat says. "You've interpreted some weird shit you saw happening in Winnipeg -"

"Winnipeg."

"I know what I said. So. You've interpreted a series of strange shit going down in Winnipeg and the ramblings of some wackjob on some weird internet forum."

"Tumblr."

"Fine. The ramblings of some wackjob on tumblr and somehow all this makes you think that TJ Oshie's life is in danger when the Blues come to Chicago on Sunday."

"Yes."

"TJ Oshie, American Hero," Pat says, more for something to say than real clarification. It's not like TJ Oshies are thick on the ground around here.

Toews just gives him a look, which, OK. Fair enough.

Pat looks at his computer where Toews has helpfully pulled up a screenshot of the wackjob Tumblr in question: an instagram-quality photo of a hand holding plane tickets to Chicago, ominous and foreboding hashtags, a few sad likes from accounts with generic names and no re-blogs.

"Sure, sure, fine," Pat says. "Sounds legit to me."

"Are you making fun of me?" Toews asks, eyes narrowing.

Pat really wants to dismiss Toews as crazy, but it's not like he came all the way down here on just a hunch or anything. Toews' PowerPoint presentation on the whole thing -- with charts and graphs and
links to supporting documents and *everything* -- it's just, it's impressive, is what it is. Fucker came prepared.

"Nope." Pat says, and Toews looks simultaneously angry and relieved. In the short time Pat's known him, he's never not looked slightly angry about *something*. "What's the game plan?"

By 5ish they've got it mostly hammered out what they're going to do. Toews has a few in-person leads he wants to follow up on before the Blues fly in tomorrow and then they're going to meet the plane at the airport and then someone is gonna stick to Oshie like glue until it's wheels-up on the team flight after the game on Sunday.

Pat is blessed with the assignment of tagging along because Toews doesn't technically have jurisdiction on American soil and Q owes someone's cousin's niece's boyfriend a favor. This isn't Pat's normal kind of assignment -- he's in Major Crimes, mostly he gets to spend time with the bodies *after* the crime, not *before*. But, well, he's adaptable. He's flexible. He's got the best damn close rate in the department because he's awesome and he works for it. He can handle this.

Pat carefully looks over Toews' shoulder at the plans for the United Center, the bus route to and from the team hotel, what have you, until he's having trouble getting his eyes uncrossed and he just gives up. He reaches forward past Toews' elbow and shuts his laptop with a loud *snap*, making Toews jump in his borrowed chair.

"It's late," Pat says.

Toews starts protesting, weakly.

"I don't know about *you*, but *I'm* not gonna get anything else done today and the Hawks are playing in --" Pat looks at his watch. " -- fuck, 40 minutes. If I leave now I might get home by puck drop."

At the words *puck drop*, Toews looks interested -- which just figures, frickin' Canadians -- so that's why Pat doesn't think too hard about what he says next. "You wanna come over, watch the game? I may or may not have beer."

Toews looks a little pissy still that Pat cut off his access to work-related materials, but he also looks like his innate love of hockey might win out. "Sure," he says, after his Canadian programming finally kicks in.

"Here, give me your phone." Pat reaches forward, snapping his fingers and makes grabby hands. "I'll program in my address."

Toews doesn't cough up his ancient-looking iPhone, just crosses his arms, asks, "Are you off the L somewhere? I don't have a car."

Pat stops short. Does he not have a license or something? Can Canadians *drive* in the US? He's honestly never thought about it. "How did you get here?"

"I walked," Toews says. Pat really doesn't know him well enough to know if he's joking.

"From, uh, from Winnipeg?"

Toews looks at him like it's amazing Pat's allowed outside without supervision. "No, you moron, I flew into Midway and got a cab to the station."

"You are the *worst,*" Pat says, heartfelt. "I don't know why I even. Ugh, fine I can drive. You can pay for pizza."
Toews shrugs, like he could care either way. Pat has an urge to leave him in a ditch somewhere, but instead he leads the way to his car.

"Fucking horseshit call!" Jonny -- just call me Jonny, Kaner, please stop calling me Toews, you say it wrong anyway -- shouts at Pat's TV, nearly coming off the couch, pissed as hell over something that was very much not hooking.

"You kiss the Queen with that mouth?" Pat asks, and Toews waits until the Hawks clear the zone to look over at Pat and glare.

Before he realized he was never gonna make it pro unless he magically woke up four inches taller and a hundred pounds heavier, Pat used to play hockey pretty seriously, so he knows a few things about a few things. Mostly, that Canadians are not as nice and polite as everyone thinks they are. Case in point: Jonny's very vocal opinions on Quebeois refereeing.

The Jackets put it back deep into the Hawks' zone, battling for the puck against the boards, but Pat's having a hard time watching the game and not just... watching Jonny watch the game.

"Want another?" Pat asks, tapping on the side of Jonny's empty beer glass. Jonny shakes his head, not taking his eyes off the screen.

Pat has to get up, walk the four feet or so into the kitchen for a glass of water for something to do that's not... wildly inappropriate. The way the flickering light from the TV hits Jonny's face -- it's dead not to notice -- so it's better for the spirit of international cooperation and justice if Pat puts a little space between them.

The Hawks do squeak out a win, horseshit calls aside, but it takes a shoot-out and a truly heroic effort from Marian Hossa -- Pat's exhausted just having watched it. From the way Jonny's eyes look glazed over, he is too. Pat doesn't think it's a great idea for him to be trying to get home looking like that, wherever "home" is when it's not Manitoba.

"Where are you staying?" Pat asks. He maybe should have asked before dragging Jonny all the way to the South Side.


Also known as all the way across town.

"You were gonna take the L all the way back?" Pat asks and Jonny nods. "Eff that noise, you can crash on my couch. I'm told it's comfortable."

Jonny doesn't so much acknowledge that as he just lets himself fall sideways into the couch cushions, mumbling a muffled thanks a few seconds later.

Pat goes into his room to grab the quilt off the bed and when he comes back out, Jonny is already asleep. He looks -- sort of cute like that, face relaxed or, well, less angry, at least.

Pat drops the quilt over his legs and Jonny doesn't even twitch, completely dead to the world.

"See you in the morning, sunshine," Pat says, and stumbles off to collapse, himself.
"Oh, it's you," Pat says the next morning, coming out of the bedroom to the strange sight of a Mountie eating cereal in his kitchen. "You're still here."

Pat's never been stellar at mornings and he was a up later than usual last night since the game went so long. He probably still needs another twenty minutes and another five cups of coffee to really wake up.

Jonny grunts back at Pat's groggy incoherence. "You expecting any other Mounties around these parts?"

"Sure," Pat says. "My milkshake brings all the Canadian boys to the yard."

Jonny rubs a hand across his forehead, looking at Pat, huge eyes blank and unblinking.

"It's a song," Pat says. "It means..." Pat thinks about it for a minute. "Actually, I don't know what it means."

"I know it's a song," Jonny says, smiling. It takes Pat a full thirty seconds to realize that that's what's going on with his face and everything, since he doesn't look angry at all, but there it is. "I was waiting for you to make some sort of stupid Canada joke."

Pat looks at him, says, "Like, what, maple syrup and beavers? That shit was old in midget."

"Midget," Jonny repeats, looking thoughtful. "You played?"

"Yeah," Pat says, "Through high school. You?"

Jonny face switches from thoughtful to full of it in a second and he puffs his chest out as he says, "Four years at UND."

"Oh, fuck you!" Pat says, something of a knee-jerk reaction. "I went to Wisconsin."

They smile at each other stupidly for longer than Pat really wants to admit.

He didn't think Canadians had nice things, but the Consulate is actually, pretty impressive. Pat's not sure what he expected -- something more administrative and boring, probably.

"You can come in," Jonny says. "I need to shower, you know, I might be a minute."

Pat considers staying in the car -- but they're already on the fancy, expensive side of town and Pat feels a little weird already sitting in his dirty little Chevy in front of the big, ornate doors. He cuts the engine, follows Jonny inside.

They don't make it but a foot or two into the building before they run into smack into another Mountie and Jonny stops short.

"Sharpy," Jonny says, looking genuinely happy. "Someone said you made Inspector and fucked off to the US, but I didn't believe them."

"Tazer, I'm hurt." The Mountie in question looks mock offended before breaking into a breathtaking grin. He must have the nicest teeth Pat has ever seen.

Jonny smiles back, surprising and goofy-looking for a second, before he snaps into his rigid-spine
Mountie mode.

"Inspector Sharp, this is Detective Kane from the Chicago Police Department. He's been assisting with my investigation."

Pat shakes Sharp's proffered hand -- right away this time, he's learning -- and Jonny says, "I'll just be a minute. Try not to break anything." He disappears down a side hallway, leaving Pat out of his element and, technically, out of his own country.

"It's nice to meet you, Detective Kane," Inspector Sharp says, polite and still smiling. He looks like the poster for a RCMP recruitment drive. "Jonny and I go way back. Don't let him, well... I mean, he doesn't actually bite, you know."

"Call me Kaner," Pat says, on auto-pilot, responding more to Sharp's ridiculous grin than anything else. He has the strangest feeling, like he really wants to make Sharp like him. "Was he, uh, has he always been like...?"

"You mean Constable Serious? Yeah. Well, no, he used to be worse." Pat finds that both easy and difficult to imagine. "He was really hard on himself at first -- but then there was the whole maple syrup theft, you know, and he really loosened up after that. The Premier thanked him by name. Much less to prove when you've got a lake named after you and all, thought of course, now he's got a reputation to uphold. You know how it is."

Sharp looks fond, and Pat has about a million questions, the first of which being maple syrup theft? but the one he actually asks is, "Are you, uh, from Winnipeg, too?"

Sharp shakes his head, says, "I was born in there, but no. We were posted together for a while in Regina. I grew up across the lake from here, actually. Thunder Bay."

Pat smiles. He's always liked the name Thunder Bay, even if its main purpose in the world seems to be exporting hockey players named Staal. He says as much to Sharp, who laughs, and then they talk hockey for a while. Sharp plays pick-up in a rec league, mostly ex-pats and Wisconsinites -- and he gets good deals on Hawks tickets through the Canadian alumni association or something.

"Do you have to be for reals Canadian to get in on that action? Or does Buffalo count?" Pat asks. "I went out with the whole 2-7 to a game like, five years ago. But you can't get anything under a hundred for the nosebleeds since they stopped being so god-awful."

"I'll hook you up, sometime," Sharp says. "The Canadian ones sell out, you can't get Leafs tickets to save your life, but we can get pretty good seats for the Oilers or something."

Jonny emerges from the back looking exactly the same except that his pants are infinitesimally less creased than they were when they left the apartment. "Let's go," he says, but Pat makes him wait a minute while he types his number into Sharp's phone.

When they get to the car, Jonny gives him a look.

"What? We're gonna hang out some time. He seems pretty cool."

Jonny doesn't drop the look.

"Not like you at all."

Jonny glances heavenward, like he's asking God, What have I done to deserve this? The effect is mostly ruined by the fact that he's really just looking at the boring beige fabric lining the interior of
Pat's car.

"OK, Constable Serious, where to?"

Jonny facial expression reaches a level of pissy heretofore unknown on this Earth. It's amazing. He crosses his arms, says, "I never should have introduced you two."

"Too late now," Pat says. and he pulls the car too fast out of the parking spot, just to see the annoyed look on Jonny's face.

When interviewing people, Jonny somehow turns on the simple, country-boy aww-shucks charm and dead-eyed intensity all at once, giving off the impression that he's both a very nice young man and a credible threat of violence. It's impressive, Pat's impressed. Still, all of Jonny's leads turn out to be busts -- no one's seen nothing, no one's heard nothing. It's all very sad and predictable and boring, but that's police work for you.

At least the stupid part of the day ends with Pat knocking elbows with the majority of an honest-to-goodness professional hockey team.

He greets the Blues each individually when they reach the tarmac, shaking hands like he's in a receiving line: Detective Kane, Chicago PD -- hi, nice to meet you. Detective Kane, Chicago PD -- nice to meet you, I saw that awesome shot block you had in Montreal, you know the one? Detective Kane, Chicago PD -- good game against the Flyers last week. No, no, I'm a Blackhawks fan, I just appreciate a sick goal when I see one. By the time Oshie gets off the plane, Pat's hand hurts and his voice is sore.

"JT!" Oshie shouts, jumping down the last two steps of the jet's little staircase, and Jonny face just lights up.

"TJ!" Jonny shouts back. Oshie bounds up to them, grabs Jonny into a hug.

Pat steps back, startled. In all of Jonny's volumes of supporting information, he neglected to mention that he and Oshie knew each other.

"It's been a long time," Jonny says, voice muffled into Oshie's shoulder.

"Too fucking long, man!" Oshie hits Jonny on the back, hard, before letting him go and rounding on Pat. "Who's your little buddy?"

"Patrick Kane, Chicago PD." Pat says for what has to be the fiftieth time today. He'd bristle at the little buddy if he wasn't overcome by an unstoppable swell of patriotism. "Man, what you did in Sochi -"

Oshie cuts Pat off with a hug, says, "No, man, you're the real hero." He doesn't even manage to sound that douchey when he says it. "I'm just a guy with a stick. You guys eat yet? I'm starving."

There's a mix-up with the reservations at the front desk. Oshie was supposed to be on the eleventh floor with the rest of the team but there's also some IT conference in town that's booked up all the rooms and Oshie's reservation got put in with them on a different floor. It's either convenient or highly suspicious, Pat can't quite figure out which one he believes.

They share the ride up in the hotel elevator with a chatty dude who ignores Pat and Oshie completely, but introduces himself to Jonny right away.
"Good to see a fellow countryman," the guy says, since it turns out he's also from Thunder Bay.

*What are the odds*, Pat thinks. He tries his Staals export joke again and while Oshie chuckles a little, the guy gives him a weird look before saying goodnight to Jonny specifically and getting out on the eleventh.

"Can't win 'em all," Jonny says, but he looks a little smugly superior, like *that guy* was any real judge of character.

Jonny has them get out on the eighteenth and walk down to where Oshie's actually staying using the stairs because he's a paranoid weirdo, but Pat can't really fault his reasoning.

They install Oshie in his room, and then it's just the two of them again -- this time in an ugly hotel hallway.

"I, uh, I meant to say earlier -- I'm sorry," Jonny says, voice sounding like it's coming from all over due to the weird acoustics.

"Huh?" Pat asks. He's eying the door warily, not convinced Oshie isn't going to come back out of it, even though they finally managed to make him agree that he should sleep and that they're fine, no they don't want to crash on the other bed in the room, no it's not that TJ snores, what the fuck man? no, they didn't wanna have a couple beers, Jesus, they were working.

Pat's come to realize that Oshie's concept of danger is highly skewed, but with hockey players... it comes with the territory.

"I'm sorry," Jonny says again. "I didn't ask. If you had other plans tonight."

Pat can't stop a snort of laughter. *Plans?* Since Sean fucked off, Pat's social life has been thin on the ground -- his plans for the night had been hitting up the night class at his cross-fit, grabbing something on the way home, and eating it on the couch in front of ESPN. Nothing he couldn't blow off for a four-star dinner with a Mountie and, oh yeah, an NHL All-Star.

"Does sleeping count as plans?" Pat asks.

The look on Jonny's face could probably be described as amused, and his shoulders relax a fraction of an inch. He says, "Uh, no."

"Then you got nothing to be sorry for," Pat says. Jonny smiles for a split-second -- there and then gone -- Pat wouldn't have caught it if he wasn't looking for it.

"Well, uh, sorry about TJ, at least," Jonny says, and he looks embarrassed. "He and I can get kind of..."

Yeah.

After they got the initial, *Oh, yeah, we went to college together! Didn't I say?* out of the way, dinner conversation had been forty-five solid minutes of one *Do you remember the time that...?* after another. It would have been boring as *f*uck if Oshie and Jonny hadn't decided that their primary goal in their trip down memory lane was to somehow make each other look progressively worse: *do you remember the time that you got us both arrested, JT?* yeah, *do you remember the time that you had to break into your own apartment, TJ?* well, *do you remember the time that you found out you can't actually tip cows, JT?* uh-huh, *do you remember that time you got locked out after running naked across the quad, TJ?*
At one point, Pat had laughed hard enough that he choked on his diet Coke.

"No problem," Pat says, and when he catches Jonny eyes he can hardly stop himself from laughing all over again. "Oh, hey, do you remember the time -"

"Shut up," Jonny says, but the smile is back.

Jonny takes one side of the hallway, leaning against the number plate to the right of the door for TJ's room. Pat takes the opposite side, slides down with his back to the wall until he's sitting with his legs folded up in front.

"I just wish I had a tennis ball or something," Pat says.

"Like Steve McQueen in The Great Escape," Jonny says, makes a motion with his right hand like he's throwing something against the wall.

"Exactly." Pat nods. "I get, uh, I fidget. My dad used to give me a stick, have me practice my stickhandling with a lacrosse ball. He said, heh, if I was gonna have all that energy I might as well put it to good use."

Jonny looks Pat over, then. Having Jonny look at him, really look at him -- it makes Pat feel good, it's a good feeling, one that he'd like to have the opportunity get used to.

"Were you any good?" Jonny asks, and then he looks away before Pat answers, face turned away down the hallway. Pat knows the feeling -- in a weird way, it's a kind of a personal question. "Uh, you don't have to -"

"No it's fine," Pat says. "Yeah."

"Yeah?" Jonny asks.

He was. Just, not enough.

"I could have gone pro, but I was just always... waiting on a growth spurt," Pat says. Jonny looks him over, a little bit incredulous. "I'm still waiting."

Jonny laughs. It's a nice sound -- Pat thinks he could get used to that, too.

Pat asks, "What about you?" The way Oshie told it, Jonny was the next coming of Gretzky or some shit.

"I could have gone for the draft, but my heart wasn't in it," Jonny says. "I wanted to do something that meant something."

Pat chuckles, says, "Like what, rescuing gallons of maple syrup?" Jonny looks down at him, his face clearly stating that he thinks Pat's a jackass. "Sharp told me."

Jonny says, "Like protecting Canada's strategic maple syrup reserve. It's important. To, uh, to Canada's economy." He can't even get through saying it all the way without cracking up.

"Yeah, yeah," Pat says. "Strategic reserve, I take it all back."

They chirp back and forth for a while, run out of bullshit small talk sometime around midnight, too tired to really think of anything else to say, and then they lapse into silence.

It's comfortable, but it's boring. Nothing that Pat isn't prepared for -- stakeouts are inherently boring,
but at least you know what you're looking for, mostly. This is a little bit different -- long, quiet stretches punctuated by nervous tension at anything, any damn sound: the distant dings of the elevators, the hissing and clicking of the ice-machine in the vending room at the end of the hall, the footsteps and conversations of people walking past to their rooms.

Pat starts feeling pretty loopy around 3AM when the footsteps coming down the hall turn out to be their relief -- a couple younger officers from the 2-7. He doesn't know Smith so great, but he'd trust Kon with his own life -- he feels confident leaving Oshie's in her hands. Jonny, of course, had wanted to stay the whole night. He only agreed to letting someone else take second shift when Pat reminded him that he really wouldn't be at peak physical form for the game tomorrow without at least some rest.

"All good?" Officer Kon asks, reaching down to help Pat up off the floor. Pat's knees creak -- he regrets a little not hitting the gym tonight.

"All good," Jonny says. He points at Oshie's door and adds, "Keep him alive, eh?"

"Sure thing," Officer Smith says. "Goodnight, Kaner."

Pat's not sure all his neurons are firing completely, so he just follows the red blur of Jonny's uniform down the hallway.

"Wait, hey," Jonny says, coming to a stop, "Come with me?"

Pat mumbles something that might be yes and goes with him, unthinking, into the vending machine room. There isn't a lot of room -- just a few square feet between a Pepsi machine and an old, noisy icemaker. Jonny doesn't get very deep into the room and when Pat takes enough steps inside to get the door closed behind him they're standing close.

"I don't think I'm reading this wrong," Jonny says. Pat stares at him like -- what? But then he blinks hard and really looks at the expression on Jonny's face and...

"No," Pat says, "You're not wrong."

Pat doesn't know if he moves or if Jonny does, does it matter? One second they're standing barely an inch apart and the next they're kissing, Jonny's hand warm on the back of Pat's neck.

Jonny steps into Pat, kind of focused and intense and Pat's into that. One hundred percent on board.

Pat reaches forward, hands slipping against the weird texture of Jonny's uniform, and he gives up on grabbing him, works his fingertips up under Jonny's jacket instead. As soon as he's got his hands on Jonny he has to get his shirt off, because damn. Pat starts in on Jonny's uniform, but there's a lot of weird hooks and buttons, two belts, that fucking rope.

Jonny pushes Pats' hands away with a look, says, "Stop, stop, you're useless, let me."

Pat's pride is slightly damaged, but it's worth it when Jonny finally works his way free. Jonny shirtless is a sight.

"Fuck," Pat says. "Do they make all Mounties like you?"

Jonny seems -- pleased and kind of smug. He says, "No."

Jonny kind of edges Pat back and to the side, a slow-motion body check into the boards, until the
Pat's back hits the ice machine and he stumbles. He wakes up a little bit at that — everything when he's this tired feels like a dream — and remembers where they are. Doing this now and here is a phenomenally stupid idea.

"Do you -- we can go back to --"

"Yeah," Jonny says, "Yes." But he doesn't stop kissing Pat, touching him. It's like now that he's started he doesn't actually have an off button.

Pat's about to just say, screw it, they can wedge something into the door to keep it closed, but then suddenly there's a bright flashing light, a loud blaring noise.

"Shit. Is that the fire alarm?"

Jonny looks disappointed for a flicker of a second and then Mountie mode fully engages. He grabs for his shirt, discarded and draped over a corner on the ice machine, and says, "TJ."

Oh shit. If Pat wanted to get to Oshie, this is how he'd do it -- wait until a shift change, cause a little chaos, try something when there's enough other shit going on that he might be able to get away cleanly after.

Pat opens the door to the vending room. There are people everywhere, coming out of their rooms in various states of undress -- the smart ones are wearing boots, shoes, shoving their arms into coats or those fancy hotel terrycloth robes. Pat catches sight of Oshie only because he's the only guy in the hallway shirtless and built like a truck. Jonny goes right for him and Pat hustles up to Kon and Smith.

"Kaner?" Kon says, "I thought you left." She gives him a weird look and Pat self-consciously wipes his fingers over his lips.

"Yeah," Pat says. "It's -- fine, you know, I'm here now."

Pat looks back over at Jonny -- at least he's talked Oshie into putting on a coat -- and he nods. Pat nods back and they wait for the hallway to clear out before they head to the stairs. The whole way down they move in tandem, quiet -- Pat doesn't have to say anything, because every time he looks over at Jonny he's already doing what Pat wants him to.

By the time they make it out the fire exit there's like five firetrucks parked in the circular driveway of the hotel.

Pat spots the rest of the Blues clustered in the parking lot by the team bus. Backes catches Pats' eye, he waves at them, and they all walk over with Oshie, the four cops in a diamond pattern around him, like a motorcade, or a 4-on-3.

Pat keeps his eyes out for anything suspicious. The hotel guests are scattered around the sidewalk in front of the hotel and in the parking lot. Everybody looks tired and cranky, but no one looks like they're carrying a weapon or a grudge against American hockey players. Jonny, though, says, "Did you see -" and Pat looks over where he's looking at a stand of trees near the northwest corner of the hotel.

"What?"


Pat moves a little closer to Oshie, blocking off the lane of access from that side of the building. They
make it to the rest of the team unscathed, and once Oshie's safely surrounded by a swarm of other twenty-something dudes that could bench-press Pat without breaking a sweat, he feels a lot better about the situation.

"Thanks, man," Oshie says to all four of them, and then he turns to Jonny. "Go get some sleep, man, you look like shit."

Pat looks over at Jonny. Oshie's not wrong.

"Hey, come on, let's go back to my place," Pat says.

Kon and Smith both give Pat a look, and for that matter, so does Jonny.

"To sleep," Pat says. "You people, I can't deal with you right now."

"Goodnight Kaner," Smith says, and Kon winks.

"Ugh," Pat says. "Fuck you guys."

Jonny follows him back to his car, but he hesitates a little, glancing back into the parking lot.

"I really do mean to sleep," Pat says, and Jonny shakes his head, opens the door and gets into Pat's car.

Inside, ignition turned over, seatbelts on and the soothing sounds of Kendrick Lamar playing through the radio, Pat keeps on like they're having a real, two-sided conversation. "I mean, earlier, that was great. We should do that, uh, again sometime. I'm just -" He breaks off on a massive yawn and when he glances over Jonny is smiling at him.

"It's not that," Jonny says. "I just -- I think I saw something earlier."

"Anything you want to share with the class?"

"Maybe," Jonny says. "I'm still working it out. I'll tell you in the morning."

Pat nods, points his car in the direction of home.

April 6: high of 56, low of 36, mostly cloudy

"Jeeze, Kaner, calm down. You're embarrassing yourself." Pat doesn't feel the slightest bit of shame, but Jonny looks embarrassed enough for the both of them.

"What?" Pat asks, but he can't stop himself from reaching forward and touching the gray concrete walls.

"Seriously. Act like you've been there before."

"Fuck off," Pat says. Just the feeling of walking into the player's entrance of United Center, through the tunnels -- hallways that Michael Jordan walked through -- it's nuts. It's insane. It's the coolest thing Pat's ever done, hands down.

"You gonna ask for autographs?"

The thought had crossed Pat's mind, but he decided against it. It seemed tacky.
They hover just outside the dressing room during warm-ups and team stuff, but nothing happens. The first and second periods prove equally uneventful -- Jonny keeps watch, but Pat ends up for the most part just watching the action from between the player benches. It's only on their way back to the dressing room before the second intermission that Jonny spots what he's been looking for.

"That guy," Jonny says. "There. He was at the hotel, last night -- and I think I saw him hiding in the parking lot during the fire drill."

Pat follows where Jonny is pointing and sure enough, it's the same chatty Mountie enthusiast from the elevator last night. He's standing near the mouth of the tunnel with focus, one hand on the railing and the other tucked into his coat. He might as well be holding up a flashing, neon sign reading I'M UP TO NO GOOD for how unsubtle he's being.

Pat's hand goes to his gun. "I've got you covered."

They make their way into the guy's section, and then Jonny strides forward, taps the man on the shoulder and he reels around, face red.

"Sir, I need you to come with me," Jonny says, and the guy startles.

"What?" He looks distracted, keeps looking back at where the Blues are starting to shuffle through.

"I know what you're planning on doing," Jonny says. "I'm afraid I can't let you do it."

The guy looks stricken, starts to shout into Jonny's face, "You should understand! I'm doing this for US."

"I'm afraid I need -"

At that, the guy pulls his hand out of his jacket, fist clenched around a make-shift weapon -- a wicked-sharp looking shard from a broken mirror, one end crudely wrapped in stick tape. He lunges right for Jonny before Pat has a chance to react, but Jonny moves quickly, efficiently -- dekeing out the way of the guy's attack and using his momentum to spin him around. Jonny grabs his wrist, bangs the back of his hand against the railing until he drops his weapon, and then just as quickly Jonny has him incapacitated, both arms twisted up behind his back.

Pat takes a second to recover, but then he's on it -- snapping his set of handcuffs over the guy's wrists, reading him his rights while Jonny calmly steps back and collects the discarded shiv.

Pat frog-marches the guy out of the crowd and down through the arena to the curb where there's a squad car waiting for this very reason. Weapon gone, the guy deflates completely and becomes quiet and reserved, what you'd imagine if you had to picture a normal, everyday Canadian. He goes easily, docile into the hands of the officers that Pat hands him off to, folding into the backseat of a black and white without protest.

"Well that was anticlimactic," Pat says, watching the car drive off, not even running the lights.

Jonny checks his watch. "We still have time to catch the end of the third."

"I like your priorities," Pat says. He gestures back at the UC. "After you."

The Hawks win because of course the Hawks fucking win. The final siren blares and Pat high-fives everybody within a five-foot radius as Jonny looks on in what Pat's come to recognize as fond
disapproval.

The Blues are subdued after the game, shuffling onto the bus without talking much to Pat and Jonny or each other. Pat floats through the last of the guard duty on case-closed, game-winning endorphins -- Jonny has to elbow him twice to get him to stop grinning.

"Tough break," Pat says to Oshie when they part ways.

"You win some, you lose some," Oshie says. "Thanks for keeping me above ground."

"That was all that dude," Pat hooks his thumb over his shoulder at where Jonny's trying and failing to look inconspicuous -- the uniform isn't really built for blending in. "I'm just a guy with a gun."

Oshie beams and pulls him into another tight, unexpected hug before letting go with a, "See you around, little buddy," and bounding over to Jonny for a long goodbye. Pat tries not to listen in too much.

The plane takes off, headed for home, leaving Pat and Jonny alone.

"Hey," Pat says. "Let's go back to my place." He feels like a broken record, but he figures he'll stop asking if Jonny stops saying yes.

"To sleep?" Jonny asks. He's got one eyebrow raised in question, but the look in his eyes is more like he's throwing down a challenge.

Oh it's on.

"Hell no."

This time, getting into the car -- Jonny doesn't hesitate.

April 7: high of 55, low of 37, overcast

The next morning, Pat wakes up the right way: well-rested, wrapped up in Jonny, body sore in strange and good ways. They get coffee and bagels at a little shop around the corner from Pat's building before heading into the station, swapping dumb stories the whole way.

After a night and a morning like that, well, anything would be a let down, but really the rest of the day just flat-out sucks: whole thing, start to end.

"Constable Toews," Q says, shaking Jonny's hand when they get to the 2-7. "It's been a pleasure. Give my best to Inspector Trotz."

"Pleasure's all mine, sir," Jonny says, sound just as wooden and remote as he was the first moment he got here. Nothing like the joking, grinning guy that Pat woke up with this morning. It's like a bucket of ice-water over Pat's good mood, a reminder: Jonny doesn't know Q well enough to give him shit because he just got here, he's already leaving, and he's not coming back.

It's not that Pat forgot that Jonny wasn't here permanently -- he just, well, he forgot Jonny wasn't here permanently.

Jonny helps Pat fill out a ton of normal paperwork plus about an inch-thick stack of extradition shit because the perp of course has a million priors in Canada proper -- and then. Well, and then Jonny
doesn't really have any excuse to stay.

"Is this, uh," Pat starts. "You're headed back to -"

"Yeah," Jonny says. He looks kind of broken up about it -- pretty much how Pat feels on the subject. It's crazy, objectively crazy. It's been three days, it's really just not possible that Pat's used to having him around, but still... Pat's used to having him around. Likes having him around.

Pat knows, knows that this isn't a good idea. But he knows it the same way he knew that he wasn't big enough to go pro, that Sean was a safe bet -- which is to say, he's an unreliable fucking narrator and a shitty judge of character and he should probably do everything the opposite of what he thinks the right decision is.

"It's been, uh, I mean -- we work well together," Pat says.

"Yeah," Jonny says.

Pat doesn't know what else to say -- don't go? That seems... well. From the look on Jonny's face, it's not something he's expecting or desperately hoping Pat's gonna say, so Pat doesn't say anything, and they just look at each other for a second.

Jonny says, "Well, uh, this is goodbye, I guess." Something in his voice at least sounds a little unsteady, so Pat decides fuck it -- if it's the last thing he should be saying out loud, it must be the right call.

"I really don't want you to go," Pat says, and for a second Jonny looks a little shocked. "That's stupid, right?"

Once he's gotten over the surprise, Jonny's face is absolutely unreadable. He just nods, says, "Yeah."

Harris, one of the junior officers, comes up to Pat's desk.

"Excuse me," Harris says, and then he clears his throat and says it again, louder. "Excuse me. The car's here to take Constable Toews to the airport."

Jonny nods and starts to follow, getting to the door before he stops and turns around. He walks all the way back into the bullpen, to where Pat's still standing like a dumbass.

"You're kind of an asshole," Jonny says.

"Hey."

"And kind of an idiot."

"Hey!"

"I have to go, but we're, uh," Jonny says, and then he visibly steels himself enough to go on. "I think this has been good. I don't think we should let this end here."

"No," Pat says. He feels like less of complete dumbass, now that Jonny's actually showing some emotions, too. "We shouldn't."

April 27: high of 61, low of 42, mostly cloudy

Pat's drifting off on the couch in front of Wheel of Fortune when Jonny texts: *Get on Skype now.*

Pat types back: *pushy* much?, but he opens his laptop and dials him up anyway.

After they get through -- *How was your day? Good. How was yours? Good. Did you watch the game? Yeah.* -- they just... stare at each other, without saying anything for a while. Same as they did last week and the week before that.

"*Fuck,*" Jonny says. "This isn't working, is it."

It really isn't, but it's not because they don't *talk.* They've been calling each other on the phone some, texting more. Pat knows what's going on with Jonny's day-to-day since he left, but seeing his face, all Pat really wants to do is the one thing he can't do and that's to reach out and *touch.*

Pat shakes his head. He feels his heart sink in his chest, dread pooling in his gut.

"Is this, uh," he starts. "Did you not want to -"

"No," Jonny says, cutting Pat off. "No. I'm going to *fix this.*"

Pat doesn't know how, really -- but it's *Jonny.* Pat believes him.

June 1: high of 92, low of 69, mostly cloudy

Pat feels hollow when he turns off the TV, the Hawks loss echoing in his skull and building in him a deep and abiding desire to punch in Drew Doughty's stupid face.

They really had a *chance,* but it seems like it's just not gonna be their year. Pat can sympathize and then some -- it hasn't really been his year, either.

There's a loud knock on the door. Pat ignores it at first, because at this time of night it's always someone drunkenly banging on the wrong apartment, but after a few minutes it doesn't go away.

"*OK, OK, I'm coming, what the fuck.*"

Pat opens his door, aware he's already pulling bitch-face, and for a full minute or so all he sees is red.

"I requested a transfer to Chicago," Jonny says, when the silence has gone from startled to awkward.

Pat remembers, suddenly, the first moment they met -- Jonny growling, "*Up. Here.*" He looks up into Jonny's smiling eyes, says the first thing that comes to mind, which is, "*That was fast.*"

It's been two months, yeah, but in the Chicago PD you can't get a request for a *stapler* approved in two months, let alone get something through the nightmare that is personnel.

"I work for Sharpy now," Jonny says and shrugs. "They wanted to get rid of me, anyway."

*Now that* Pat can believe. He feels something like happiness rising up in his chest, pushing out a numb, defeated feeling that was the prior and only tenant.

"Did they kick you out because you make everyone else look bad?"
"No," Jonny says, but he sounds unconvincing at best and then he honest-to-goodness smirks. "I need a place to stay. I'm told your couch is comfortable."

"Hell yeah it is," Pat says, stepping back into his place, making room. "But my bed is better."

Pat drags Jonny into his apartment by his stupid neck-rope and kisses his stupidly attractive mouth. Jonny drops his bags and kicks the door shut behind him in one graceful and fluid move.

"Welcome to Chicago," Pat says when he pulls back far enough to breathe a little. "Sorry about the weather."

End Notes

Title from the Due South theme by Northern Pikes.

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