

accessory

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by [WingedQuill](#)

Summary

The day after getting kicked out of the playoffs by the Centaurs, Hayden Pike shows up for a post-series debrief along with the rest of the Metros. They are greeted by a roomful of cops, a recording of a late-night 911 call, and an empty chair where Shane Hollander should be.

Notes

A Russian translation is now available [here!](#) Huge, huge thank you to zotyee for translating this fic, I'm really flattered that you took the time to do this <3

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

Post-loss tape reviews always suck.

Post-loss tape reviews after getting kicked out of the playoffs suck even more.

Post-lost tape reviews after getting kicked out of the playoffs and then practically chasing your captain out of the locker room because he caught an edge at the worst possible moment...

Hayden is not looking forward to today.

He knows, right, after a night of sleeping on it, he *knows* that the trip was an accident. There had been a flicker of doubt in the locker room, just one, when J.J. spoke up, because J.J. was Shane's second-best friend and if *he* could see a dive, maybe there really was one. Maybe Hayden had just been blinded by virtue of being Shane's first-best friend.

But then he'd seen the raw, *hurt* look on Shane's face, before he'd turned away from them to grab his phone out of his locker with fumbling fingers. And Hayden had remembered the hours and hours of extra time that Shane had poured into the practice rink, the turned-down invites for beer and burgers and fucking *ice cream*, the fact that Rozanov had come within three feet of death-by-fire-y-plane-crash and Shane had put his head down and played a game the next day.

People who take dives for their boyfriends don't do that shit, he's pretty sure. Why put in all that extra effort for a game that you're planning to lose?

So he'd shaken himself back to his senses pretty quickly. And after a night of mentally replaying his own worst trips and stumbles, he'd stamped out every last hint of doubt. Shane had just shifted his weight wrong, or there had been a groove in just the wrong bit of ice. Simple. Painful, horribly unlucky, but simple. It could happen to anyone.

Hayden pulls his car to a stop outside the Bell Sports Complex and fishes his phone out of the cupholder. Still no word from Shane. He'd called him three times this morning, to ask him if he wanted to play hooky or show up to the complex together. Present a united front. But Shane hadn't answered, and Hayden can guess why—can guess at all the awful things their teammates might be texting him, the slur-filled voicemails that might be piling up in his inbox. Hayden would turn his phone off too.

Still. There's an uneasy, prickling feeling at the back of his neck, staring down at the call log, at the three bounced calls to Shane Hollander. He'll feel better when he gets his eyes on him.

His car isn't in the lot. Makes sense. He probably wants to slip in as late as possible, if he's coming in at all. Hayden grits his teeth, pockets his phone, and prepares to be the bomb-sniffing dog, laying out the borders of the minefield his best friend is about to walk into.

Not for the first time, he considers the fact that this could've all been avoided if he just *watched the fucking video*.

Not for the first time, he stuffs that thought back down into his brainstem. It won't help Shane to keep ruminating on his own guilt, he tells himself firmly. He can't change the past, no matter how much he yearns for a time machine. He can only go forward.

He steps into the complex to Comeau's sneering voice.

"Should be a quick review," he's saying. "Drapeau, block more shots. Pike, get more shots in. Hollander, threaten to take away blowies for a week if your boyfriend doesn't let *you* win next time."

There's laughter all around. Hayden clenches his jaw hard enough that he can feel one of his fake teeth creaking with the strain.

"Sorry you're not satisfied with the *three* champion rings Hollander led us to," he says.

"A fourth would've been nicer," Comeau says with a shark-tooth smile. "Plus the poor little rookies didn't even get *one*. Imagine getting your rookie year Cup chances dashed by a cocksucker. Very must be beside himself."

Verrier—a big, soft-spoken d-man from a tiny town on the Labrador border—does look a bit beside himself. He's got his hands fisted under his jacket sleeves, and his skin is a *weird* shade of gray, and he's wearing the expression of a man that's just been served a particularly nice steak dinner. On death row. When Comeau directs the team's attention to him, he ducks his head, wide eyes fixed on his sneakers.

"There will be other rings for Very," Hayden says. "And for you too, if you're not a complete *moron* that chases away the person that *gave you* the three you have."

"Hockey's a team sport," Drapeau pipes up. "I wouldn't say Hollander *gave* us those rings."

"Exactly," Hayden says. "I'm sure that Coach has many, *many* more flaws to point out over the course of the *series* that we just lost than a single caught edge. Since we lost *as a team*."

"A 'caught edge,'" Comeau snorts. "Yeah, okay."

Hayden takes a deep breath. Compresses all his rage into a tiny ball and swallows it. It won't do Shane any good for him to start a fight. Hopefully he's planted a bit of doubt in some of their minds. J.J. at least, God, *please*. Andropov, maybe Renaud. Hell, maybe Verrier. He doesn't seem nearly as angry as Drapeau and Comeau, just...nervous. Scared of whatever Coach will say to them, probably.

"Let's just get this over with," Renaud sighs. Their backup goalie looks as rough as Hayden feels—God knows why, he didn't even play last night—with dark circles under his eyes and a patch of playoff scruff that never had the chance to grow into something as dignified as a beard. There's a bandage wrapped around his right hand, stark white against the faint bruising on his knuckles. Maybe a bar fight, but Hayden suspects he just got drunk and punched a wall. He'd seen him raging his way through a hotel lobby after more than one loss.

“Fine,” Comeau says. He claps a hand on Verrier’s shoulder—the man honest to God *flinches*, does he think Coach is gonna fucking execute the least valuable player?—and heads for the tape room.

Hayden follows, trying to get his brain into normal review mode. Maybe he can manifest a normal review that way, a normal review where Shane’s trip gets five seconds of Coach’s time before he turns his attention to their bad O-zone entry and the fact that the defense folded like a cheap lawn chair every time they heard the words “penalty kill.”

Granted, Ilya Rozanov on the power play was a terrifying force *before* you added Troy Barrett into the mix, but come on. The fucking 2017 Western Conference All-Stars team had a better PK rate than the Metros did this series, and they had to contend with Rozanov *and* Shane on the power play line. Which is a terrifying thought, but it’s a thought that the Metros would very much *need* to contend with if they continued to be homophobic dickheads to Shane.

Stop. Stop thinking about Shane. Stop thinking about the Metros being dicks to Shane. Stop thinking about Shane moving to Ottawa. Jackie’s sister has been big into manifestation recently, and Jackie had called it a quack science right up there with astrology and crystals, but Hayden is starting to see the appeal to it. He just needs to manifest a normal review, and then maybe he’ll get one. He just needs to manifest Shane staying, Comeau being nicer, winning a fourth and fifth and tenth Cup with his best friend.

Of course, that’s when he opens the door to the tape room to find five cops waiting for him.

There are a handful of players in there already, Mitty and J.J and Gagnon. Cooperton, a fourth liner who’d been called up when Stedlund had blown out his shoulder. They’re huddled around the conference table, looking up at the opening door like startled, guilty children being caught cheating on their math test.

“Gentlemen,” says one of the cops. She’s sitting on J.J’s right, a tape recorder and a notebook laid out in front of her. “Please. Sit down.”

“Uh,” Drapeau says.

“Do we have to?” Comeau asks.

“Yes,” the cop says. Her eyes are hard as flint. “Unfortunately, yes.”

They file in together. Hayden takes a seat at J.J.’s left, his heart doing its level best to squeeze its way out from in between his ribs. What the fuck is happening? *Was* Renaud in a bar fight last night? Was every Metro but him in some sort of illegal sports betting ring?

J.J. nudges his foot under the table. Hayden nudges back. Right. Okay. He’s got the A, that means he should like...speak up, right? Take charge, since Shane’s not here?

“What’s going on?” he asks. His voice sounds small.

“I will explain the details once everyone is here,” the lead cop—Hayden *assumes* she’s the leader at least, she’s the only one sitting while her colleagues stand around like bodyguards—says. “But we are here to execute a series of search warrants.”

“...in the sports complex?” Hayden asks.

She shakes her head. Reaches into a briefcase and pulls out a thick manila envelope.

“On you all, as individuals,” she says, placing the envelope on the table with a tight smile. “If any of you already know why we are here, I would suggest coming forward now. It would save us all a lot of trouble.”

No one speaks. Of course no one speaks. They just trade confused, frightened, what-the-fuck-did-you-*do* looks over the tabletop. Hayden feels like he’s going to throw up. There’s a trash can by the door. Another tucked away in the corner underneath the TV they use for tape reviews. He wonders if the cops would taze him if he lunged for one.

Saliva gathers in his mouth. He swallows. No one moves.

The rest of the team trickles in one by one, or in pairs. Berkes, Schneider. Olsson, Laine, Koch. Still no sign on Shane. The lead cop makes checkmarks in her notebook with each new arrival, gives them the same explanation she’d given Hayden if they ask. Verrier gets grayer and grayer. Hayden stares up at the ceiling light and focuses on the burn in his eyes instead of the sick feeling crawling up his throat.

“Alright,” the lead cop says once Coulliard has taken his seat. She nods at one of the other cops, the big guy that’s been waiting by the door. He shifts to stand in front of it. “We can get started.”

“Uh,” Hayden says, glancing around the room. J.J., Comeau, Drapeau, Verrier...and no, Shane has not materialized from the ether while Hayden was busy blinding himself. “We’re missing someone.”

“Are we?” the lead cop says, faux-pleasantly. Her back is a steel rod. Hayden is walking into some kinda trap, and he knows it, and she knows he knows it, but whatever. He hasn’t *done* anything.

“Yeah,” he says. “Shane. Hollander. Um, our captain?”

“She knows who Shane Hollander is, dumbass,” Comeau hisses.

“I do,” she says. “He’s actually why I’m here.”

“Jesus Christ, is it because he threw the game?” Drapeau says. “Look, none of us knew—”

“He *didn’t throw the game*,” Hayden snarls, and something is wrong, something is wrong, something is—

“Please calm down,” the cop says. She pulls the tape recorder towards herself, her eyes flicking between Hayden, Comeau, and Drapeau like she’s cataloging every twitch of their

faces to present to a court later. *Shane, Shane, Shane.*

Shane's not here—

Everyone was so fucking *angry* at him—

“Is that a widely held belief on this team?” she asks. “That Mr. Hollander threw the most recent game you played against the Ottawa Centaurs?”

“I mean,” Drapeau says, shifting in his seat as her gaze pins him again. “It's...suspicious, right? That he conveniently tripped in game seven of the playoff series against his secret boyfriend? We would've won if he'd gotten that goal, and he just...*happens* to fall over right in front of Rozanov?”

There's a murmur of assent from a few other Metros. Blessedly, there isn't one from J.J. He's gone very, very still, his foot pressed against Hayden's.

The cop jots something down on her notepad. She clears her throat.

“And this suspicion, it made you all angry at Mr. Hollander?”

“Sure,” Drapeau says. “What does—?”

“Angry enough to hurt him?”

“...what?”

His head should be exploding, Hayden thinks. His eyes should be turning into jelly. Surely this must be what it feels like to be thrust, suddenly and violently, into the vacuum of space. Airless and silent. His lungs don't know how to be lungs anymore.

“No,” Drapeau breathes. “Did—did someone hurt Hollander? Is that why you're here?”

The cop just looks around the room, taking in their shock, their horror. She can note the time of Hayden's death, he thinks, when he asphyxiates on his own useless lungs. And then.

And then.

“How 'bout angry enough to kill him?” she asks.

Oh God.

Oh God, oh God, oh God, please, *no*.

“He's *dead*?” J.J. shrieks. He's half out of his seat, gripping the edge of the table, and his voice is like nothing that Hayden has ever heard. “Someone fucking *killed him*?”

Ninety seconds.

He'd been rushing. He'd been lazy. He'd looked down at the ninety-second Fanmail, glanced at the thumbnail, thought *my hair looks good enough*, and pressed send. He hadn't considered

the windows. He hadn't considered Shane's safety. He hadn't wanted to spend ninety seconds of his time watching the video back, and Shane was outed, and now Shane is dead.

Oh God, Shane is dead. And the cops think that someone on the Metros killed him.

"No," the cop says. "Though it certainly wasn't for lack of trying."

Relief crashes into Hayden like a wave, like a heavy, uncaring force of nature, skinning him bloody over the sand. He leans forward, putting his face in his hands. He's trembling.

"We received a 911 call last night from Mr. Hollander," the cop says. "I'm going to play it for you. And then, if no one wants to talk, we're going to take DNA samples and fingerprints from each of you."

There's a click as she presses a button on the tape recorder. J.J. sinks back down into his seat, leaning heavily against Hayden. Hayden can't move. If he could, he would cover his ears. He doesn't want to hear this. He doesn't want to hear Shane hurt, bleeding, alone.

"911 what's your emergency?"

"Help."

Shane's voice is quieter than Hayden's ever heard it. Quieter even than when he first met Amber, when he first rocked a sleeping Arthur in his arms. It's a punched-out wheeze of a syllable, barely a word.

"I...I need help. Ambulance. I—*fuck*, I dunno...I dunno how I'm...how I'm alive, but—"

The words are slurred together, stumbling into each other like a crowd of drunks.

"Okay, we'll send an ambulance to you right away," the operator says. Her voice is steady, calm underneath Shane's frantic babbling. "I've got you at ____," and here the audio bleeps out for a moment, obscuring Shane's address from a roomful of potential murderers. "Is that accurate?"

"Mmhmm," Shane grunts. "Unit...unit's ____."

"Is the door unlocked?"

"Yeah. Think so. Don't think they...don't think they would've locked it..."

"They? Did someone hurt you? Can you tell me what happened?"

And then Shane's voice changes. Strengthens. For a single, awful sentence, Hayden can hear him clear as day.

"I've been shot," Shane says. "My...my teammates fucking *shot me*."

He sounds bewildered by his own words. Like such a concept doesn't fit in with his understanding of the world. Like someone has played a cruel, cruel prank on him.

“Okay,” the 911 operator says, still calm, still gentle. “Can you tell me where you were shot?”

“Hand,” Shane says. “Head.”

“Your head? You were shot in the head?”

“Mmhmm.”

I dunno how I’m alive.

Hayden presses the heels of his hands into his eyes as hard as he can. There’s a cold sweat beading over his back, under his arms. He feels like he’s just come off a period-long shift, muscles aching and shivery. Someone in this room shot Shane in the head. Someone in this room shot Shane in the head and walked out of his apartment and left him for dead. And then they showed up to work the next day, like they weren’t a monster now.

J.J. is sobbing.

“Fuck,” Drapeau is saying, “what the *fuck*—”

“I need to go,” Shane is saying over the tape. His voice sounds almost dreamy. “I need to...I need to call him. He’ll die if I don’t call him.”

“Wait, sir—”

“Hurry. Please.”

The recording cuts off abruptly, plunging the room into silence. Hayden breathes and breathes and breathes. *I’ve been shot*, Shane says in his ears, and he sounds so lonely. So betrayed. *I’ve been shot*.

There’s a flurry of movement. A sharp “sir” from one of the cops, followed by the sounds of retching. When Hayden lifts his head off his hands, he’s greeted with the sight of Comeau doubled over one of the trash cans, his entire body shaking as he empties his stomach. At the head of the table, Drapeau’s hand is blue with ink, a pen crushed in his hand. He doesn’t seem to notice, even as the ink starts dripping onto the carpet. He looks like he’s aged ten years.

“You idiots,” he chokes. “You fucking—you fucking *morons*, it was a fucking *game*, even if he did cheat, what the *fuck* did you do that for—”

Andropov is folded over the table, his head buried in his arms. Mitty has a hand on his back, but his eyes are darting around the room. They look haunted. Hunted. He’s wondering the same thing that Hayden is, probably. *Which one of you did that? Which one of you made him sound like that?*

Which one of you saw a man lose a hockey game and decided he needed to die for it?

“Can I—?” Comeau says from the floor. He spits out a mouthful of bile and tries again. “Can I talk to you, officer? Outside, I mean?”

Rage makes a valiant effort to stir in Hayden’s chest. Because of course. Of course it was Comeau. Of course it was the man who’d pointedly stopped getting in scrums when Shane took dirty hits. Of course it was the man who’d left increasingly large and colorful dildos in Shane’s locker over the course of a month, until J.J. threatened to take him to HR for sexual harassment. Of course. Of course. Of fucking course.

But there’s no room in his head for anger. He’s too busy counting out ninety seconds, over and over and over again. *This time. This much time. This is all it would’ve taken to save him.* Ninety seconds and a once-over, and Shane would be sitting next to him right now, taking notes on the PK with a furrowed brow.

Hayden wonders if he’ll ever see that familiar scrunch between his eyebrows again. Maybe there’s just a crater there now.

Comeau walks out of the room with the lead officer and one of her minions. One of the other cops hands J.J. a box of tissues. He sobs noisily into one of them.

“I—I told him that he—I didn’t mean it—I didn’t, it was a fucking *accident*, we all knew it was an accident—I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I—”

There’s no room for this anger, either. Hayden can only put his arm around J.J.’s shoulders, can only hold him as he blubbers apologies. One of the cops asks, “what was an accident, exactly?” and J.J. chokes out something about the trip, and that seems to satisfy them enough that J.J. isn’t tearfully confessing to murder.

Renaud picks at the bandage on his palm. Drapeau wipes his ink-stained hand on his jeans. J.J. steadily builds a mountain of damp tissues. Hayden breathes and breathes and thinks about Shane dying alone in his apartment and considers confessing to like. Accessory. Aiding and abetting. *Something*. He has to be guilty of something.

“He’s still alive,” he asks, after Comeau has been gone for ten minutes. “Right?”

“Last we heard,” the cop guarding the door says.

“He’s my best friend,” Hayden tells a knot in the table. His tongue is too big for his mouth. “He’s the godfather of my children. I...please. Can you just search me first, or whatever, so I can go see him in the hospital?”

So I can say goodbye. So I can say I’m sorry. So I can tell him how much I love him.

The cop opens his mouth. But Hayden doesn’t have to listen through an apology or an admonishment, because just then, the door opens and Comeau walks back in. He refuses to meet any of their eyes, just slinks back into his seat as the two cops follow him into the room. The lead cop looks even stonier, somehow.

“You,” she says, pointing to Renaud. “Up. Hands behind your back.”

The fucking *backup* goalie?

He didn't even play. He didn't even *fucking play* last night. None of the glory would've been his, if they'd won, so why, why, fucking *why*—

Renaud doesn't protest. He just stands, and puts his hands behind his back, glaring daggers at Comeau the whole way. The cop clicks her teeth at the sight of his bandage.

"Livingston," she tells the man at her back. "Get the camera ready, I'm taking this off."

Renaud doesn't protest this either. He clenches his jaw as she peels the bandage off his hand, and Hayden remembers the faint bruising on his knuckles. Had he fucking *beaten* Shane too? Was killing him not enough?

"Oh yeah," Livingston murmurs, holding up a camera. "That's a bite mark alright."

A bite mark.

On the palm of Renaud's hand.

There's an image in his head, then, so strong it nearly bowls him over. Renaud's arm wrapped around Shane's neck, his hand pressed over Shane's mouth so he can't scream. The barrel of a gun jammed against the back of Shane's head. And Shane, bright, fierce, stubborn-as-a-mule Shane fought back in the only way he could. Of course he did. He would never have done anything else.

"What the fuck is *wrong with you?*" Hayden's spitting, and he's on his feet, and he's not in his body anymore. He's trying to lunge forward, and someone's arms are holding him back, and the anger has finally, finally overpowered the guilt. He's looking Shane's would-be-murderer in the face, and Renaud is giving him *nothing*.

"Calm down," someone says in his ear. He's being hauled back, and sat down in his chair, and Renaud is being led out of the room with cuffs on his wrists. The world is going a weird shade of reddish-gray.

"Alright, you," the lead cop says, and Livingston is hauling up shaky, gray-faced Verrier. The rookie. The fucking rookie with his whole career ahead of him, plenty of opportunities for future cups and future glory, and he threw it all away because...what? Because he couldn't have it right now? Because he'd decided that Shane had taken it from him?

"And you," she finishes. Cooperton, the call-up. He looks almost relieved as he is dragged to his feet. Hayden doesn't think he'd seen him speak to Shane more than three times. Those three times were enough, apparently, for him to decide that Shane had deserved to die.

The rest of them are processed in a quick, orderly fashion. Fingers are printed, cheeks are swabbed, and they're led one by one into a private room to strip down to their underwear and be checked for suspicious injuries. Hayden has a nasty bruise on his ribs from game one, and the cops take their time photographing it even though it's obviously several days old at this point.

When it's all over, they're released with strict instructions to stay in the city for at least the next week and a number to call if they want to confess to anything. There's no further orders beyond that, nothing to do. Theriault had texted Hayden and J.J. to let them know that the review is cancelled until further notice. Fucking obviously. As if any of them can even think about hockey right now.

They're left adrift, standing in an awkward semicircle in the parking lot. Drapeau has his eyes closed, his lips moving soundlessly. Praying for Shane's survival, maybe, or his own absolution. Andropov has sunk into an awkward crouch on the pavement, head between his knees. Mitty is sitting criss-cross applesauce next to him, trying to cajole him into accepting a ride home.

Comeau keeps glancing at Hayden. Opening his mouth. Closing it. There's something curdling in Hayden's stomach.

"How did you know?" he asks. The words are clipped, bitter as lemon pith.

Comeau scuffs at the ground with his shoe. When he speaks, his voice is ragged.

"I heard them," he says. "Not...not saying they were gonna kill Hollander. Obviously. But...I heard them saying that they should teach him a lesson. To make sure he couldn't betray us again."

It's not surprising. It's *so fucking obvious*, actually. But Hayden finds himself shocked into silence anyway. There aren't any words really, to express the depths of this betrayal. To express what Renaud and Verrier and Cooperton have done, what Comeau has done, what *Hayden* has done. There aren't words to express how deeply they have all failed Shane.

Comeau glances around at the crowd.

"I thought it would be like a fight on the ice," he says. "Release some pressure, y'know? Like they could just get out their feelings and then it wouldn't go bad."

"You thought it would be like a fight on the ice," echoes J.J. numbly. "In front of thousands of witnesses. Where there are consequences if you take it too far."

"It was stupid," Comeau says. "I know that. I *know that*, God, you don't think I'd go back in time if I could? Fuck."

He turns away from them all, rubs his hand over his eyes.

"I think we all would," Mitty says from the pavement.

None of them pulled the trigger.

But they'd all sat there and accused Shane of cheating. Out loud or in their own heads, it didn't really matter. They'd put the thought in Renaud's brain. They'd given him a motive.

Maybe they should all be arrested, Hayden thinks. Maybe they should all be kept far, far away from Shane. Let him recover and love and *live* in peace.

But he's weak. He's selfish. He needs to look at Shane one more time, even if he's never allowed to see him again afterwards. He needs to know just how hurt he is. He needs to know just what he's done.

"I'm going to the hospital," he says, and heads for his car.

End Notes

sooooo...thoughts?

As of now, this is planned to be just a one-shot, but I've said that before about an attempted murder story and that's now a 57K word behemoth and growing, so. I do have a vague desire to write another one-shot in this same verse following Ilya as he wakes up to a terrifying voicemail. Lmk if that's something you'd like!

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!