

(Not actually) Prometheus

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(Not actually) Prometheus

by [Quente](#)

Summary

Paquette laughs, then, so loudly he wakes up Gudas across the seat from him. Gudas reaches out a long arm and cuffs Paquette in back of the head. “Quiet, kid,” Gudas grunts, and Paquette settles down, but his grin is still there, wide and teasing.

“You really *do* wanna play on that first line, don’t you?”

“Oh, shut the fuck up,” Drouin says.

Notes

- + I am still trying my best to write light-hearted fluff to calm myself down while the Bolts cling precariously to first in division. This snippet starts a few days ago, just before [Drouin's sick pass to Stamkos during the Flyers' match](#).
- + Canon: [Stamkos remembers every single goal he's ever made](#).
- + Canon: [Baaaaaby goaltender Vasilevskiy gets his start with Bishop on IR](#).
- + Canon: Drouin's junior team, the Mooseheads, [loved to kiss during cellies](#). And people wonder how mumps get spread.
- + I changed the title of this from "Prometheus" to "(Not actually) Prometheus" to make Killorn's prank a little more apparent.

On the bus between Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, Jo figures it out. He only figures it out because his eyes are dry from staring too long at a blond head in front of him, and because Paquette's elbow is none too gentle in his ribs.

Quietly, Paquette leans in and murmurs, "Still thinking about your time in the sun?"

Oh. Maybe that was it, and not a ... some kind of ... boyish crush. "I was," Jo admitted, leaning back and grinning the tiniest bit. The game sucked, of course, but not for him. He'd scored, FINALLY, the longest drought he'd ever had between two goals since he was a boy. He'd scored, and he'd been put on the first line again. It was a moment of revelation for him, especially after being hidden in the checking line for way too long.

(It wasn't that Boyle and Morrow sucked, but maybe they weren't as fast as Jo, and maybe it took someone with the fleet foot of an elite scorer to catch what Jo fed.)

"Ow, Caddy."

"You keep spacing out."

Paquette had a shiner. Jo hadn't even kept track of who he'd fought last, but it wasn't the Penguins. The pre-game meeting with Coop had been a little different, this time, and Paquette had especially been shut down.

"Listen, boys. We're going into infectious disease territory. If you get up close and personal with these guys, you'll be the next mumps statistic. Don't even tempt fate. And Caddy -- no fights. No fluids. No contact. Stammer, everyone, quit spitting. We don't want to share our bodily fluids for a while, okay? People have to slide on the ice through all that, and that's how it spreads. If you see one of the Penguins drink from your water bottle, toss it back to equipment. We're not fucking around, here. Just check your grosser habits and consider how gross they are."

Everyone looked sheepish after that, but it struck home. They'd read the pamphlets, including the part about potential sterility, if the case was absolutely the worst. Who wanted that?

"Yeah. Lots to think about," Drouin mumbles, and turns his head to stare out at the tri-state-area scenery of woods interspersed by small Pennsylvanian towns. "Ever think about how weird it is that this one state has two NHL teams?"

"I always thought that about Florida," Paquette says, his elbow still digging into Jo's side. "So yeah. You were staring."

Drouin drops his voice to something quiet, leaning close, switching to French. "Did you hear what happened? I was standing behind Heddy and Stralzy when they were talking about it, and they kept forgetting to speak in Swedish."

"What happened?"

Drouin glances around for Killorn. That fucker can speak French like a Frenchman and not like their own gum-chewing Western version. He's ahead, next to the pretty blond head leaning in frustration against the headrest, so Drouin tells the tale.

"Those guys saw Stammer getting close with an old friend of his. Really close. Like, Mooseheads close."

"Like they were banging? Captain and who?"

"...St. Louis."

Ceddy sits back, and Drouin can see him processing the story. After a while he shrugs.

"That's not even the weirdest thing I've heard around the leagues, so good for him." Then he narrows his eyes. "So what's it to you?"

Ah, there it is. Jo was anticipating this, a little bit, so he meets Cedric's eyes steadily.

"Maybe...a chance?"

Paquette laughs, then, so loudly he wakes up Gudas across the seat from him. Gudas reaches out a long arm and cuffs Paquette in back of the head. "Quiet, kid," Gudas grunts, and Paquette settles down, but his grin is still there, wide and teasing.

"You really *do* wanna play on that first line, don't you?"

"Oh, shut the fuck up," Drouin says, shaking his head. So much for expecting a little maturity. He sticks his elbow right back into Paquette's ribs, none too gently. "I'm serious. He's...I've never seen anything like him, not even...not even Nate."

Paquette gets it, then. His gleeful expression fades, and is replaced by something oddly gentle. "Who was that guy who wore wax wings and flew up into the sun? You gotta be careful, Jo."

"Uh. Greek myth, right? I don't fucking know."

"Hey -- Killer -- what was that Greek myth about the guy who flew too near the sun?"

Killorn glances around at the French called in his direction. "Oh God. Of course, you learn I went to college and suddenly I'm an expert on every fucking thing."

"I bet you know it, don't you," Paquette snorts.

"Yeah," Killorn says, "Prometheus. Now shut the fuck up and let us old men get some rest."

Stamkos turns his head, glancing back in their direction. He meets Paquette's eyes, and then Drouin's. Jo can't help his expression, knows that his eyes widen, knows his cheeks flush just a little. Crushes suck.

Paquette's elbow in his ribs sucks too.

~

Vasilevskiy steps into the locker room with the biggest grin that Drouin has ever seen outside of his own first day in the show. Everyone looks up and smiles -- it's easy to remember, especially for Jo, what this feels like. His debut wasn't that long ago. Was it only a matter of months? He'd been all over the lineup since -- scratched, fourth, third, second, penalty kill, power play, scratched again, everything.

Jo's played with Vasya before, of course. During camp, and with the Crunch. All of the young guys are hungry, and he can see in Vasya's eyes that he wants the win tonight.

Luckily they're up against the Flyers. Jo's actually looking forward to Giroux. If there's anyone he knows he can play against with all the wild abandon of home, it's another French-Canadian, and Giroux is the most homeboy of all homeboys. He can tell Caddy feels it too, the fire in his eyes unmistakable as he laces up for morning skate.

Suddenly there's a light touch on his head, the gentlest of caresses in his hair. Jo blinks up, surprised, only to be dazzled by a helmetless captain with a teasing grin on his face.

God, Jo knows he's blushing already, and he avoids looking over at Paquette.

"Hey, come chat for a second."

"Yes, cap." Jo rises, ignoring Paquette's wink and following Steven's duck-walk into the halls of Wells Fargo. It's not the most awesome visitor's room he's been in, but it's a far sight better than most AHL arenas, so Jo's not complaining.

Steven turns, leaning against the corridor wall. "Wanna be my left wing tonight? Coop gave the OK to ask if you're up for it."

Does he want to? Drouin feels like he's inflating, like the sun is settling deep in his gut, rising to flood his heart with heat. He almost can't stand the nostalgic smile on Stamkos's face.

"I remember when I first got put on Marty's line," Steven says. "It was the best feeling to be trusted there. My first year sucked, I can't even tell you how much. Felt like my draft pick number was a lie. Took Marty a long time to break me in. But when we got there..."

And now Drouin feels caught, his gut twisting as he sees that warm expression, understands it for the longing that it is. So Jo goes with his gut, it's never done him wrong before, and steps forward to crowd Steven the tiniest bit into the wall.

"I'm ready to be on your line. I'll make you forget you were on anyone else's," Jo promises, blushing as the cheeseball line emerges from his mouth like the best of drunken Frenchmen.

Stamkos laughs, but he doesn't back away, and he no longer looks caught in nostalgia. "Show me," he says, and his sweet smile gets fucking sweeter, Drouin doesn't even know.

~

Unlike the Penguins, the Flyers give them as much space on the ice as they want to get their game in gear. It's a nice feeling to finally be in sync, and Drouin's mind slows down the play into a tight, dangerous dance.

The golden sun is in the center, his light drawing the shadows of the opposite team, dense objects that block and chase. Drouin flies near, his skates winged, feeling the heat and pull as if it's from gravity.

NOW is the time to pass -- and Stammer does, a sweet zing from his stick to Jo's. Jo takes it, knows the game. Two of the dense masses are flocking to him and he takes them on, dances the puck easily between their feet. Who are they, even? Jo knows them as shapes, nothing else. He lets them think they've got him, draws them -- and Mason -- into his orbit.

Wait -- wait -- wait -- and -- THERE --

The puck flies backward to Stammer's stick and then it's aloft, past the shoulder of the distracted goaltender, top shelf. It feels orgasmic, it's all Drouin's joy in the game in a millisecond of play, and Mason's expression is distressed within its cage.

Another second and Drouin's holding Stammer close. Stammer's eyes are on his, and his face shines with triumph. Drouin knows that Stamkos remembers each and every one of his goals, too -- and that this one will be filed away for posterity somewhere in his head. It makes Drouin feel almost drunk with the joy of it -- he's inside Steven's head now, he's living there in the space he's built himself.

Jo is three seconds away from a Mooseheads-esque kiss when Callahan flies up and knocks him loose, getting in his own relieved headtap. How long has it been since they've tied up a game? Far too long, and now they're laughing on the ice with relief.

~

Two goals later they all line up to see Vasya's smile. First game, first win, one goal allowed.

"We need to send a thank-you note to the Flyers," Paquette jokes, and Vasya smacks his shoulder.

"Is not thank you Flyers. Is thank *me*," Vasya says, joking and sassy and proud, and Drouin taps his helmet a little harder than he has to.

~

They're on the bus to New Jersey. This time the scenery is mid-state urban blast, and Drouin is fascinated by the Christmas tree lights streaming down from the tall industrial smokestacks of Camden. They're in a no man's land, the only feeling of home, each other.

Paquette pushes Drouin into the aisle seat, claiming age and the desire to nap against the window. Jo should've known something was up by the twinkle in Caddy's eye, and then he sees Steven settling down in the seat across the aisle.

"Playing on the first line," Paquette whispers, and Drouin shoulders him.

Steven affects not to notice, but he does give Drouin a tiny sideways glance, his smile once again quiet and inward.

In the back of the bus, Nabokov is teasing Vasya in Russian, the seasoned old man breaking in the call-up after his first game. The atmosphere is good, upbeat, a relief, especially after how it's been.

"Sweet pass," Stamkos says, catching Drouin's eye. "I wanna see you do it again."

Drouin feels his heart start to glow. Beyond Stamkos, Valtteri is waggling his eyebrows over Steven's shoulder, his expression knowing. Rookie crushes are a thing, and Drouin suddenly realizes that his must be the size of Florida.

"Friday," Drouin promises, and suddenly he can feel it all again, that sense of absolute faith in his linemate (like Nate, no, maybe better), knowing Steven will be exactly where he should be to catch what Drouin pitches.

"I'm looking forward to it."

The competitive gleam in Steven's eyes is almost unbearable, and distracts Drouin entirely from the hard elbow in his back, and Val's not-subtle-at-all snickers.

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