Do Not Text Jane

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Do Not Text Jane

by icopythefax

Summary

Ilya's POV for I Like Jane For You

The same mix-up leaves Ilya with someone else's boring phone for three days. It does not contain as many secrets. It does contain more Hollander, more pregnant nudies, and it comes with constant annoying updates from Hayden Pike.

Notes

Translation in Russian thanks to @masturblaine (who also helped with some important words for this fic)

I heard you ask for additional Haydenov text threads, the Pike family dinner, other peoples' text threads, the baby's cottage visit, Shane's POV... and I chose to ignore all of those and write Ilya's POV, which almost no one asked for, instead. This was just fun for me, because I'm not done with this freaky little universe.

I think I checked it and this fic might be able to work if you haven't read I Like Jane For You but it's probably best if you read that one first (it's also just a better standalone). This is the same story, just from Ilya's week instead. There are some additional interactions that Hayden didn't think were important enough to put into his POV.

Set pre-tuna-melt.

See the end of the work for more notes

- Translation into Русский available: Не пиши Джейн by masturblaine

Tuesday night away game.
2015-2016 season.
Final score: Boston 2-Montreal 3

Why did Ilya even have to be here? Hollander's place is just minutes away, he could be tangled in his sheets gearing up for round two by now. Instead, he's at a stupid bar filled with stupid hockey players. And none of them are the stupid second-best player/bad idea he wants to be with right now.

"Keeping up appearances," Hollander had said quietly during warmups before the game. *"If you don't go out it's suspicious."* Ilya put on a good puppy-dog pout, just playful enough to maybe look insulting from a distance. *"Just go for like an hour, dude, come on. I'll send a car. Same company as last time."*

Ilya hates that he agreed to this. He gets one good night of the best no-strings-attached sex every few weeks and now it is cut short at a bar that has no good vodka, so he's being handed an *American* beer, for fucks sake, and no one is here to keep him company except oh, no— Hayden Pike is sidling up next to him, tossing his cell phone onto the edge of the bar and tapping his credit card against the wooden surface.

Pike is Hollander's best friend and Ilya has always wondered how much, if anything, Hollander has told him about their occasional hookup. Ilya hasn't told anyone anything, but some of these North American friendships are more… indulgent. They share secrets readily and talk about their *feelings*. Maybe not if they include Shane Hollander, but Pike seems like a touchy-feely sort. Ilya pictures telling Svetlana about any of this and scoffs. Any of his other friends… well actually, Ilya doesn't have many other friends. He likes it that way.

Hopefully Pike won't bother him. Ilya doesn't think he's ever spoken to the worst player on the Metros. Ehh, that's not fair, there are some old men who should have retired and some rookies who are still in diapers. Maybe 15th best. The bartender asks Ilya if he's opening a tab and he responds quickly, "No, just one."

Ilya sips his beer and stares at his phone after handing over his credit card. He tries to look absorbed to avoid talking to Pike. Not only is he probably boring and annoying like Hollander, it's also risky. It will be fine as long as he doesn't try to make convers—

"Early morning flight?" Fuck. He knows. If he's asking that, he already knows. If Ilya were only having one beer because of the flight, none of his teammates would be here, on their 6th shot of the night and just getting comfortable.

"Sure." Ilya keeps his eyes glued to his phone to not give anything away, but he can feel Pike's eyes reading his open texts. Ilya rereads and ensures there's nothing incriminating. It's just "Jane" talking logistics, figuring out how to get him there, leaving the door open for him. He shoots Hollander a thumbs up emoji.

“Ah.” Pike responds, more to the texts than to Ilya. Fuck, he definitely knows. "Jane" is so clearly "Shane" to anyone with eyes, and if he already knows about them, then it’s even more obvious. “Well, good game. It’s always more fun to play against you.”

So knowing isn’t enough, he wants to *talk* about it too. Ilya would rather die. He quickly closes his phone and puts it on the bar to look Pike directly in the face and issue a challenge: “What do you mean by that?” *How much are you going to say in this public place?*

“Just… the team rivalry?” Pike says, “Goes back decades, right? Doesn’t hurt that you and Shane are in this crazy scoring race every season.” Ilya diverts his eyes and looks around the room when he hears Hollander’s first name. Anyone could hear this, why is Pike being so loud about it?

God… maybe Pike knows *too* much. Why would he bring up the scoring race? Ilya has had a terrible week and the result is a 7-point deficit to Hollander. He wouldn’t even care, the media made it up anyway, but the two have a side-bet. If he wins, Hollander has agreed to send him a nudie picture for the first time ever. So he *will* be winning. Ilya just can’t believe Hollander told Pike about that. They haven’t had a conversation about not telling anyone in about 6 years, maybe it’s time for another one. “He is ahead for now. But I will beat him.”

“I don’t know…” Pike gets a knowing smile, “He’s at home watching tape with a ginger ale, and you’re here, so…”

Wait. Maybe he *doesn’t* know. If he thinks Ilya is in town and Hollander is currently at home watching old hockey? not changing the sheets, washing his asshole, nervously fluffing 1,000 pillows? Then Pike really doesn’t know. Ilya wants to laugh with relief. Pike thinks Hollander is the boring robot that— well, actually, Pike is pretty spot-on for the other 359 days of the year, and it’s a solid burn, even if he didn’t intend it that way. “Funny.” Ilya says.

Hollander is definitely *not* watching tape with a ginger ale right now. The thought of what he actually *might* be doing right now… Ilya checks his watch. 20 minutes. He can do 20 minutes of standing around and drinking this shitty beer.

But he can’t do it talking to Pike. He can’t stand around and talk about Hollander or the game or… stocks? whatever boring topic Pike will choose. So Ilya picks his phone off the edge of the bar and puts it in his pocket, signs his receipt with his usual $81 tip. He shows Pike the receipt just for a laugh and walks back to his team.

“What did Pike want?” Cliff asks when Ilya sits down at their table.

“It was uhh… proposition. To suck my dick. I told him no, thank you.” Ilya says to a resounding laugh across his teammates.

“I wouldn’t be surprised. That guy idolizes you. If he weren’t common-law-married to Shane Hollander, he’d probably have a shrine to you instead.”

“He probably does, it’s just a secret.” Someone down the table says. Ilya doesn’t see who. He’s busy checking his watch. 12 minutes until the car comes. “Hollander probably wouldn't put out if he found it.”

“How did Pike even score a goal tonight? Can’t believe we lost to these assholes.” Someone else says. Ilya sips his beer. 11 minutes.

They’re recounting the game. Ilya doesn’t know why they always do this. They lost. It was a last-minute goal by Pike. A fluke. What’s the point in analyzing it? They sound like Hollander. 4 minutes.

Ilya downs his beer and excuses himself to the bathroom. Really, it’s just to kill time. 2 minutes.

He exits the bar as a black car is pulling up. The driver rolls down the window, “Mr. Gretzky?” Ilya rolls his eyes at Hollander’s over-thought, over-planned caution. He gets in the car hoping there’s no one else having a secret affair, because that alias would probably be pretty common in this bar tonight. He doesn’t want to show up at some married woman’s house. Not tonight, anyway. Some other time, married lady. Hollander is waiting.

He spends the 10 minutes buzzing with excitement. He shouldn’t feel this giddy after a loss, but he can’t really help that. The door is indeed propped open with a brick, like Hollander’s text said it would be. He kicks the brick aside after him and heads up the stairs, where Hollander lets him in.

Hollander immediately asks if he was followed (to which Ilya responds, *“Yes, by a fucking parade.”*), if the driver asked him anything weird (*“Yes, whether Shane Hollander ever shuts up.”*), and if anyone at the bar was suspicious (*“Yes, no one could believe Pike scored a goal.”*) and then finally, *finally* Hollander stops worrying long enough to make the trip worthwhile.

Three hours later, Ilya gets the feeling. It’s the feeling he gets every time they do this. The sex endorphins are seeping out and a different kind is seeping in. It means it’s time to go. He treats himself to one more slow, deep kiss. One more safe minute for that feeling to be normal. And then he breaks it. “Ok. I should go. Early flight.”

Hollander is unfazed. At this point, they’ve been doing this for so many years, they know the script well. Whoever is visiting has that line.

“Yeah cool, you can see yourself out.” Whoever is hosting has that line. “Be careful leaving,” is Hollander’s usual added tagline. It’s an extension of his caution, Ilya knows, a reminder to keep this private, don’t get caught. But sometimes Ilya lets himself think it’s really *“Get home safe”*.

Hollander excuses himself to the bathroom while Ilya gets dressed. Shit, where are his socks? Why did he even take them off?? He’s about to ask Hollander but “honey, have you seen my socks?” is a bit too domestic for rivals-with-benefits. Instead, he opens Hollander’s sock drawer, embarrassed that he knows which one it is, and steals a pair from the bottom of the

neatly organized pile, hoping it doesn't mess with Hollander's systems and routines too much.

Hollander calls him a car that takes him back to the hotel. On the ride, he pulls out his phone for the first time in hours.

No. What the fuck is this?

The phone is the same, the phone case is the same. But the background of this phone is two little girls in Montreal jerseys. It opens without a passcode. Whose fucking phone is this??

Fuck. Is this Hollander's phone? Maybe those are Pike's kids? Ilya knows he has one or two, just from stalking Pike's instagram late at night for pictures of Hollander. Or maybe they're some nieces that years of internet stalking didn't tell him about? But no, Hollander's phone is different, his phone case is different. And his background is still the cup he won last season. Even though it's been months. Get over it.

He scrolls through the contacts. No one he knows until— **Shane**. Ok, this is a Metro's phone… Pike is the only one he interacted with tonight. He should text Hollander from this phone and let him know he has it. But shit, if this is Pike's phone… Where's *his* phone?

Oh my god, this is an emergency. Not because he leaves for Boston in— fuck— *six* hours with someone else's phone, but because his phone, with no passcode, is *somewhere else.* It might still be at the bar. Maybe someone picked it up. Fuck. A cold panic takes hold of Ilya's lungs.

One screaming thought takes residence in his mind and leaves room for nothing else: *Hollander is going to fucking kill him.* This is it. They had a good run, but this is it. Hollander only does this thing with Ilya because he's discreet, they trust each other to be very careful. This mistake will end it. Ilya needs to fix this, quickly. Hollander can never know about this.

He vaguely remembers the name of the bar and calls it from Pike's phone. No one turned in any phone. Fuck.

Ilya can't breathe as he takes the elevator to his hotel room. He's lucky his roommate is already asleep, he wouldn't be able to talk.

In bed, he quickly spirals. Whoever has his phone is in for a wild surprise. Sure, Hollander is "Jane" in his phone, but any idiot would read the sexting carefully and find out Jane has a dick. He's pretty sure he's even texted Hollander's name, details about their games, pictures inside their homes... oh my god, pictures of Ilya's dick, dozens of them. Luckily— and it pains Ilya to think this is a good thing— none of Hollander's. This is exactly why Hollander never sends them. Ilya can't be trusted. Fuck, now there won't be any *ever*.

At least the *really* damning Hollander stuff— screenshots of his Instagram, his ads, downloaded interviews, the selfies from the MLH awards, and that very daring time Ilya took a picture of Hollander nude while his back was turned, are all in a locked folder. He opens that folder more than he likes to admit, and would never, ever admit to opening it sometimes before bed, lonely, even with no intention of jerking off at all.

Normally he'd be scrolling social media to distract himself. He picks up Pike's phone and opens Instagram. God, Pike's feed is so *boring*. Hockey and other people's children. Hollander posted about their win right after the game. Ilya allows himself a luxury he usually doesn't get: he likes the post.

"Get up dude, we have a flight."

Ilya's night comes rushing back to him. The sting of losing, pure bliss of being inside Hollander, ache of leaving, and the frenzied panic that his phone is in this city somewhere without him. In someone else's hands. A stranger, a Metro, a journalist… fuck. Hollander is going to *murder* him.

There's no time to retrieve it, even if he knew where it is. Today he has a few hours in Boston before their night game. He can go to the store, get a new phone, move everything that's in the cloud, and just pray to God his phone is in a garbage can or gutter somewhere with no battery left.

On the airport boarding line, the strange phone in his pocket rings. It's jarring, hearing his phone make an unfamiliar sound. Across the screen is his own phone number. Oh. Why didn't he think to call his number? He removes himself from the queue for some privacy, ready to meet whatever monetary demands the stranger has… no, how would they know how to contact him? "Hello?"

"Rozanov? Fuck." Of course. Pike has his phone, too. Ilya feels dumb. "It's Hayden Pike. You have my phone??"

This is… not the worst. The worst would be a journalist, or someone who would leak details to the press. But Pike? Pike will tell Hollander. Hollander will find out Ilya was so irresponsible and all of this will be over. The one thing he could offer Hollander was secrecy. Fuck.

"That explains some things." Rozanov says sarcastically. "We have the same phone. And phone… cover… thingy." What's the word for that?

"Well!? Can I come switch them? Are you still at the hotel?" If only.

"Ehh no. I am at airport. My airplane takes off in a half hour."

"Fuck! What do we do?"

Ilya quickly pulls up his mental calendar, the one he's kept since he was drafted, the one he updates immediately when he sees each new season schedule or gets invited to an event out

of town: *where am I, where is Hollander, how far is that?* “On Friday… our games are about a three hour's drive. Meet me halfway, we will switch.” Please don't overthink how quick that was, Pike...

Luckily, overthinking doesn't seem to be a problem for Pike. “What do I do until then? I need a phone.”

“Use my phone.” *Duh,* he wants to add. Except… oh, no. He can *not* use Ilya's phone. “Uh… for emergencies only. Do not answer calls. Do not read texts. Do not go through pictures. Do not go on my social media. Do not beat any levels in Candy Crush. Ah fuck, do not open uhh… web browser.” He wants to add '*under no circumstances do you tell Shane Hollander.'* But he doesn’t trust himself not to give it away.

“Yeah. Same. The pictures thing…” Pike says nervously and Ilya smirks. *Oh*. There could be some blackmail on here. Maybe he could be convinced not to tell Hollander? “And if there’s anything that looks like an emergency, please text me about it. I have kids— everyone has that number.”

“I will.” Ilya would have done that anyway. But Pike shouldn’t. “Don’t do the same. Don’t look at anything.”

They hang up and Ilya boards his flight. He saves his own number where he can contact Pike: **15th best Metro**. He downloads Candy Crush. This is going to be a long three days.

Getting off the plane with no missed calls or texts is strange. Usually by now Ilya would have a call from his father or brother, or a text from Svetlana or maybe even Hollander to open. But no, there is nothing on Pike’s phone when he turns off Airplane mode. Guess Pike has no friends.

Ilya didn’t sleep at all last night, so he goes home to nap before he has to be at the rink for his game. In bed, he halfheartedly wonders if Hollander has texted. Would Pike look? Would he answer? Would he immediately know his best friend’s texting style? Ilya wouldn't be able to forgive himself if he’s the reason Hollander unwillingly gets outed.

Ilya opens the text thread labelled **Shane** on Pike’s phone. He might as well hear it from Ilya first, so he doesn’t text anything incriminating while Pike has the phone. Pike is going to tell him he has Ilya’s phone anyway. They’re best friends.

But ugh, what if Pike *doesn’t* tell him? It would be best for everyone— ok fine, just best for *Ilya*, if Hollander never, ever found out about this.

He gets distracted scrolling back through Pike and Hollander’s texts. It’s weird, they are best friends. Hollander says this, their social media says this, sports media says it... But Hollander isn’t really the same here. He’s giving one-word answers, texting only about practice times or meeting up. He’s not texting him updates throughout the day, or even hockey tidbits like he sends Ilya. Maybe they see each other so often he doesn’t have to text Pike constantly. Ilya

feels a little jealous and schools that emotion quickly. He can't be feeling *jealous* of Hayden Pike. For any reason.

He decides against texting Hollander. It's cowardly, yes. But he can try to convince Pike not to say anything and maybe Hollander will never find out what a close call this was.

The game that night is awful. Ilya scores two goals, but his defense is terrible and allows five points against them. Ilya definitely should have been penalized for hitting someone from the other team, whose name he forgets now, or never knew, but somehow miraculously he got away with it. The guy deserved it, anyway, he told Ilya to "learn how to skate." So llya decked him. Because his chirp was not creative or applicable to Ilya. Whatever-his-name-was had to learn.

The team is going out to mourn their loss, but Ilya goes home early, depressed for another reason. He's wondering if Pike has told Hollander yet, whether it's already over and he hasn't been informed.

Ilya pours himself a vodka and sits down with Pike's phone. He scrolls through the pictures, scanning them for one person in particular. Here is Hollander, in a group picture with his team, now holding Pike's children in a yard, now in sunglasses on a beach, now in the background smiling as his teammates act up in the locker room. He keeps scrolling.

And now there are boobies. *Oh no*, these are very specific boobies. God, is this woman *pregnant*?? This is something Ilya definitely should *not* be seeing. Pike is married, right? He wouldn't have anyone but his wife's on his phone would he? Ilya pulls up a —clothed— picture of Pike's wife and… yeah this is probably her. Fuck. Ilya has now seen Hayden Pike's wife's pregnant boobies. That's enough scrolling for now.

Well, maybe he can use this to his advantage. This is a secret Pike definitely doesn't want shared, so maybe Pike will keep some of his secrets, too.

Ilya: wife nudies came up on screen
15th best Metro: don't look. We said no snooping.
15th best Metro: it's not like she just sent them. She knows I don't have my phone.
Ilya: I am looking
Ilya: nothing to be shy about, Lady Pike is hot.
15th best Metro: then I'm texting these girls back
15th best Metro: I like Jane the best she likes hockey

Fuck. He's reading the texts. Of course you like Jane the best, she's your best fucking friend, you idiot. Can he really not tell? Hollander might have even texted about Ilya's game tonight. Not that Ilya would *expect* him to, just sometimes if he has the night off, Hollander likes to give his stupid, boring, obvious commentary like he is a *Man in the Crease* podcaster. Pike should be able to recognize his best friend's texts.

But there's something else Ilya takes from this… Hollander wouldn't still be texting his phone if he knew. He would have told Pike not to look at the phone, maybe even taken it away from him. He would have texted Pike's phone in Ilya's hand to berate him like an angry kitten. So Pike hasn't told Hollander yet. Maybe all hope isn't lost…

Ilya: do not text Jane.
15th best Metro: I put on good Russian accent
Ilya: You cannot text with an accent.

He smiles. Even though this fucking moron is going to ruin Ilya's life, he's a little funny. The phone stops making noise for a moment. Then he gets a screenshot, and his stomach sinks. Pike really did it. He really texted Hollander. Ilya didn't think he truly had the balls to do it.

Ilya: *thank you sweet Jane*
Ilya: *sorry I am not as good as Hayden Pike*
Jane: *thats right asshole*
Jane: *Hayden scored more than you this week*
Jane: *And sorry did you win the cup last year?*
Jane: *Or was that Hayden?*
Jane: *you're just jealous bc he can see me naked anytime*

15th best Metro: ok now I REALLY like Jane

Fuck. Fuck fuck fuck. He can *not* be texting Hollander. Ilya has to do something. He has to threaten to send Pike's wife's nudies out to everyone.

Ilya: great I will text her from your phone
Ilya: I will send her lots of pictures

Hoping this scares Pike enough to stop, Ilya puts the phone down and breathes. He's interrupted by another text. Another screenshot.

Ilya: *pike is married*
Ilya: *but what about Shane Hollander?*
Ilya: *I think he's single.*
Jane: *best player in the league?*
Jane: *so much better than you?*
Jane: *still five points ahead of you?*
Jane: *what about single Shane Hollander?*

He can't believe Hollander even responded to that. Ilya secretly loves these screenshots. If he knows what's being said, it calms the anxiety that Hollander is outing himself to Pike. Plus, it kind of feels like Hollander is texting him directly. For a brief moment Ilya wonders if he could coach Pike through some sexting and send those screenshots instead.

15th best Metro: dang should I give her number to Shane?
15th best Metro: She's in Montreal, I don't think he has a girl here.

He better fucking not, Ilya thinks before checking himself. Of course Hollander can have a girl wherever he wants, though Ilya has started to wonder if Hollander even likes women. Thinking of him with other men though—

Wait, but Pike is still texting "Jane". He obviously didn't take the hint that Ilya would send Lady Pike's nudies to everyone in his contacts. Ok, so they're doing this. He pulls up the text thread labeled **Shane** for a different approach.

He thinks through several options that he knows would make Hollander blush and would be terrible for Pike, but Hollander would be able to tell it's Ilya. He goes tame. Well, tame*r* than he would normally text Hollander.

Hayden: I just heard crazy rumor Ilya Rozanov has a huge cock
Shane: ???
Hayden: he is just so handsome, right?
Hayden: I would go gay for him any day.

Ilya waits patiently for a response. He likes to imagine just those messages might make Hollander a little hot. That was actually kind of fun, he can kind of see why Pike did it to begin with. If Pike knew it's Hollander they're *both* messing with, he probably wouldn't think it was funny.

Still no response from Hollander. This is boring now. He's simultaneously pissed and relieved that Hollander won't talk about his dick to Pike.

Ilya takes a screenshot and sends it to Pike.

Ilya: he didn't respond ☹️
15th best Metro: you're a fucking dick
Ilya: guess Hollander is too boring to play.
Ilya: Jane would never ignore me like that

He can't help throwing in the snark. It's funny to watch this play out. Hollander is definitely going to catch on, or be told, by Friday anyway. Might as well burn the whole building down.

Ilya is still a little mad at Pike, though, and Hollander didn't give him the reaction he wanted. So he opens a text thread labeled **Jackie ♥**. He thinks it's a pretty good guess that it's the wife he saw in those pictures.

Hayden: what would you say, threesome with Ilya Rozanov?
Jackie ♥: 🖕

Ilya smiles. Lady Pike is cool, ok, got it. Clearly she told Pike about the text. They're probably in the same room or have telepathy or announce all of their texts out loud or something… Ilya doesn't really know how married couples work.

15th best Metro: Truce. Stop texting my wife.

And because he's having a little fun, because this is the most he's ever texted another guy who he hasn't seen naked, Ilya keeps the conversation going.

Ilya: I didn't know you and Hollander are married.
Ilya: But I would not have been invited I don't think

He knows it's dumb to joke about this. The more they talk about Hollander, the more likely Pike is to tell him about the conversation. But Ilya *never* gets to talk about Hollander. He polices how often he mentions his name, he exits conversations that turn to him, he makes sure no one finds any clues. When reporters ask about him, his insults have to be about hockey. He can't even tell them how annoying he is off the ice, too. Here is someone who apparently wants to talk about Hollander just as badly.

15th best Metro: Yep. And we live in a huge organized house and watch hockey tape and eat bird food all day

Ilya laughs out loud in his empty living room. He's surprised Pike is ripping on Hollander, but then again, being married to Hollander sounds like the worst. Can you imagine? The sex would be good, obviously, and *constant*. And he would care about hockey. He would cook, even if it was nasty, healthy vomit. The house would always be clean. It sounds like hell. Ilya doesn't want to think about it anymore.

Ilya: 🤣 it is true
Ilya: Hollander is boring
Ilya: stay with Lady Pike
Ilya: she gives you sexy nudies
Ilya: Hollander does not do that

Fuck. Shit. He got too comfortable. How would Ilya know whether Hollander sends nudies??

Ilya: I do not think he would

Ok that makes it seem like a guess… like Hollander is so virginal and pure that he would never. Not the real reason— that he's so afraid the nudies will be found on the very phone Pike is holding right now.

It sucks, really. If he were here alone any other night, he would be trying to goad Hollander into sexting with him. He doesn't even have his usual locked folder material. Pike's pictures of Hollander are new to Ilya, which makes them interesting, but in most of them he's holding a child or with 22 other guys, neither of which will work for masturbating to.

Nervously, he opens the text with Hollander.

'Sext with me,' he wants to write, *'even though I am Hayden Pike.'*
'It's Ilya, please throw me one more bone before you realize why I'm sexting you from this number.'
'Send dick pics' would be worth a shot. Maybe he would trust Pike with them more.

He looks at the last texts, the prank ones about himself. Hollander never responded to them. Ilya starts to type, careful with his grammar, he checks it one hundred times. He scrolls up to make sure this is how Pike texts.

Hayden: sorry about that.
Hayden: Jackie had too much wine and stole my phone.
Shane: it's ok! Figured it was something like that.

Ilya wants to use this mask of best friends to ask the real questions. What do you really think of Ilya Rozanov? Do you think he's handsome? Would you "go gay" for him? Ilya knows the answer to that one, fortunately. Unfortunately, he plays it safe. Safe enough.

Hayden: what are you up to?
Shane: nothing really.
Shane: why, you need something?

Wait, Pike doesn't normally just ask what he's doing? Usually when Ilya asks Hollander what he's doing, he just tells him. He's never heard "nothing".

Hayden: no I'm just hanging out
Shane: alright haha have a good night

Wow. Really? He's just going to brush him off like that? He knows Hollander thinks it's Pike, but it still hurts a little. Wait— it *can't* hurt. Hollander doesn't owe Ilya a text.

Fine. Now completely unaroused, Ilya opens Pike's messages with his wife. He scrolls up. The texts with Pike's wife are domestic, gossipy, flirty, angry, and so grossly in love that Ilya wants to throw up.

There's pictures of twins— Jade and Ruby, Ilya learns. They're cute. Ilya loves kids and only sees any at team picnics and gatherings, where he has a reputation as the team jungle gym. He's not close enough to any of his teammates to be close with their kids. He has a niece, yes, but she is in Russia being raised by his dickhead brother who probably talks nothing but shit about him. That's probably true for these Pike kids, too. They're probably raised to hate him.

This thread is depressing, a snapshot of something he'll probably never have and only recently figured out he might want. Not for the first time, he thinks he should just marry Svetlana. It would be easier than feeling so stupid lonely all the time.

He stops scrolling when he hits a Pike Dick Pic. It's time to put the phone down now.

Ilya wakes up on his Thursday morning off to the phone buzzing.

15th best Metro: Call from Papa?
15th best Metro: and 2:30am sexts from Jane
15th best Metro: so this girl is serious huh?
15th best Metro: no other repeat customers on here
Ilya: don't read Jane's texts.
Ilya: nothing for you Mr. Popular.

Pike doesn't respond. Ilya thanks the fates that Hollander's sexts didn't imply he has a penis, though Ilya is starting to think Pike knows and is trying to coax him into saying it. That, or Pike is the dumbest motherfucker who has ever lived on Earth.

Ilya briefly considers calling his father from Pike's phone, but to be honest, the day off yesterday was nice. Not hearing his phone ring incessantly with his family's bullshit is like a breath of fresh air. It's weird, no one has texted or called this phone at all. The phone in Ilya's pocket is eerily silent all day, and it's no surprise that when the phone buzzes again right before Ilya heads into practice, it's still just Pike.

15th best Metro: and just now three calls in a row from Alexei.
Ilya: no one else?
15th best Metro: no

Ilya sighs. Alexei probably won't leave this poor fucker alone. Not that he cares about Pike, but no one should be subjected to that. He types out a vague threat to stop calling until Saturday and sends the Russian text to Pike, who confirms he sent it. A few minutes later the phone buzzes.

15th best Metro: wow. Sweet message.

Ilya laughs. Pike can work a translator app, good to know. It strikes Ilya yet again that this is the most he's ever texted with someone he's not fucking or trying to fuck. It's a little fun. He would never tell Pike that. He just keeps the conversation going.

After practice, there are more texts from Pike and Ilya gets a little giddy seeing the name on his screen. What is *that* about?

15th best Metro: Jane is still texting.
15th best Metro: will she get mad if you don't respond?
Ilya: no. Do not text Jane.
15th best Metro: too late for that right?
15th best Metro: this one is about hockey, I think I can talk about hockey?
15th best Metro: in good strong Russian texting accent, da?

Ilya stifles a laugh in the locker room. Cliff gives him a look. This Pike thing is getting out of hand. At least these texts mean he hasn't told Hollander about the phones yet.

Ilya: You could not point to Russia on a map. And it is very large country. Do not text Jane.
15th best Metro: she's gonna get pissed. Girls are weird when you don't text them back.

Objectively, it's true. Hollander would definitely spiral if he hasn't heard anything in a few days, or if a good text goes ignored. It hasn't always been like this— when the fuck did that happen? That they text every day and it's weird if they don't? Ilya feels a little like he's going through withdrawals. It's not supposed to be like that.

But Pike can't text Hollander from Ilya's phone. Hollander would figure him out too quickly. Or he would respond with something that would out them to Pike. That's actually more likely. Fuck, but it really seems like Pike is going to be relentless here.

Ilya: I am not accountable for what Jane sends back.
15th best Metro: I'm a big boy, I can handle it.
Ilya: you are average boy.
Ilya: I have seen pictures.
15th best Metro: 🖕

Hoping that settled it, Ilya resumes changing and packing his stuff. Just as he's about to head out, a text comes in. It's a screenshot. Fucking seriously, Pike?

Jane: *Kent out on injury for 2 weeks*
Ilya: *I'm glad he's out. Kent is better than me.*
Jane: *lol*

15th best Metro: nailed it.
Ilya: you nailed nothing.
Ilya: Jane knows I am the best player in the world.
15th best Metro: last night she said Shane Hollander was better
Ilya: I will sext your grandmother if you don't stop texting Jane.
15th best Metro: my dead grandmother would sext better than most of the women on your phone

Ilya is surprised by the laugh that comes out of his mouth. Several of the guys turn to look at him and he shakes his head to try to convey "it's nothing." He didn't know Pike would be like this, all bold and entertaining. Boring, yes. Annoying, yes. But endearing. He can see why Hollander is friends with him, even if their texts look nothing like this.

Ilya: 🤣
Ilya: Pike is funny. Who knew?

"You got a girl on that phone, Rozanov?" Cliff finally asks what everyone in the room is thinking. No, Ilya wants to say, I have Hayden Pike. A stupid fucking bad hockey player who won't stop making him laugh when he's having one of the worst weeks of his life.

"Yes. Is your mother. She sends regards." Ilya says blankly. "She has also said that you should score more goals."

That night is another lonely one. Ilya knows he has a few tinder matches sitting on his phone, but downloading the app on Pike's phone seems wrong. He could go to a club and find someone, but he's exhausted. He thinks about Pike, coming home from practice to a wife and kids, maybe guaranteed sex. Ilya can't help wanting that someday, but it just isn't in the cards for him. Everyone gets one thing. He's good at hockey. He can't ask for anything else.

The phone makes a sound. And then another, and another. No one but Pike has texted in two days, so Ilya expects it to just be him again. Maybe to let him know Alexei is still calling him or that Hollander is trying to sext him before bed. But no— this is a group chat: 🏒**Metros Team Chat** 🏒 **(inc. Shane)**. The name makes him laugh. What, there's a separate group chat without him? He wonders if that's the name of the chat on everyone's phone, including Hollander's. Ilya watches the group texts come in.

JJ: i have a party lined up after our win tomorrow night. women's soccer team will be there.
Ryan: downnnnn
Simon: 👍
Mitty: aren't those girls all gay?
Ryan: i'm willing to try
Ryan: soccer players are hot
Michael: wife will only let me go if im wingman for "Captain Hollander" lol
Michael: yes she called him Captain Hollander like that 😂
Mitty: shane doesn't hookup unless we're in boston
JJ: come on cap
Shane: yeah maybe

Ilya's blood boils. No, Hollander. Not maybe. You're not going to a party of beautiful, athletic women, no. He has to remind him what he has.

Hayden: what's so special about Boston hookup?
Hayden: is it really that good?
JJ: i bet she's a Boston fan
JJ: probably loves Rozanov
JJ: angry hateful sex
Mitty: yuck dude he wouldn't bang a Rozanov fan.
Shane: ha ha funny guys
Shane: I'll be there

No! This had the opposite effect! Fuck. The group chat continues to talk about their flight tomorrow morning. Ilya ignores it in favor of opening another text thread.

Hayden: really? You would go to that?
Shane: yeah i might.
Shane: why?
Hayden: what about Boston hookup?
Shane: ???

Shane: i told you, there's no Boston hookup
Shane: you guys made that up
Shane: I'm not like in a relationship

Wait, Hollander has a point. Why is Ilya's blood pressure raised thinking about him going to a fucking *party*? His only role in Hollander's life is as a sexual outlet. So he just has to be the best sexual outlet for Hollander. And if that makes Hollander not want other people, well, that's neither here nor there.

The whole conversation has Ilya confused and horny. He wants to be sexting with Hollander, of course, that's like, his default state. But he can't do it from Pike's phone and he can't let him know it's not actually Pike. He's careful about grammar, he's trying to be Pike as much as possible. If he can just get Hollander thinking about him, he will count it as a win.

Hayden: oh i thought there was someone in Boston who fucks your lights out
Shane: Hayden wtf!!
Shane: graphic, dude
Shane: no there's no one anywhere
Shane: i told you, you'd be the first to know.
Hayden: I wouldn't want you to tell me if you were having multiple orgasms every time we played Boston.
Shane: way too much dude.
Shane: are you like drinking?
Shane: we have an early flight
Hayden: especially if it's a Rozanov fan

Hollander stops responding and Ilya can't think of how to get this back. He hopes just the thought of Ilya got him excited, but there's no way to tell.

Ilya hates this. One more day. One day and then he can sext freely again. If he and Pike can just keep this from Hollander until then, everything will be fine. He deletes the messages he sent and Hollander's disappointing responses.

He goes on private browsing to search for Hollander's underwear ad. Thank god this man is famous.

As Ilya settles into his seat on the plane to their away game, Pike texts him.

15th best Metro: tonight?
15th best Metro: where are we meeting?

Ilya: [Link: pinned location]
Ilya: is closer to you
Ilya: because i drive faster than you

15th best Metro: how could you possibly know that
15th best Metro: but yes obviously because I don't have a death wish I drive normal.

Ilya: ok so maybe even closer to you then?

15th best Metro: fuck off. This is fine.
15th best Metro: what is it, a rest stop?

Ilya: more like parking lot.
Ilya: no buildings no security cameras

15th best Metro: …
15th best Metro: are you planning to murder me??

He laughs. But all his time with Hollander constantly looking for security cameras has taught Ilya well. This isn't a hookup, obviously, Pike wouldn't be able to handle it. But Ilya still doesn't want to be caught in the middle of the night trading cell phones with Hayden Pike. Actually, the media would be a circus. It would probably be fun.

Ilya: oh sorry you want to be filmed switching cell phone at midnight with Ilya Rozanov?

15th best Metro: ok yeah no you're right
15th best Metro: please don't murder me tho

Ilya: no guarantees.

He laughs at his own joke. He might miss this a little, having someone to text that isn't Hollander. None of his teammates banter over text, they just plan their next meeting and banter in person. It means there's no one but Hollander when Ilya is alone and wants to text a random thought. Svetlana is fine but she's not a guy. Plus, he can't talk about Hollander to her.

But if he keeps this up after they switch phones, Pike would tell Hollander, surely. It almost makes Ilya want to ask Hollander to tell Pike. They can let one person in on this. Plus, it might help. The teammates room together on the road, maybe Pike could be convinced to fuck off occasionally or cover for them. But maybe they're not as close as everyone thinks. Pike hasn't even told him that he has his rival's phone— Wait.

A cold wash of dread comes over him and he scrolls up through their conversation. Pike hasn't mentioned Jane since yesterday afternoon. Almost 24 hours. Has Hollander stopped texting him? He figured it out? Or he was told?? Fuck. Is 24 hours normal for Hollander to go without texting? It should be, but the last few months… years? The texting has gotten so frequent, Ilya has no idea what's normal anymore.

Deboarding the plane, Ilya turns off airplane mode to no notifications, which just worsens his anxiety. He wants nothing more than Pike to annoy him with another "Jane" text. Every minute is agony, worrying that Hollander is done with him.

On the team bus to the hotel, he chooses a seat in the very back. He picks his favorite pictures of Hollander from Pike's phone— ok he picks *all* the pictures of Hollander from Pike's phone. He goes to Pike's email and sends them to himself. He deletes the sent message and prays Pike isn't checking Ilya's emails. If he has to give this phone back tonight and live with the knowledge that Hollander will never send him a nudie, then he is at least making additions to his locked folder.

Just before the game, in the away team locker room, things go from bad to worse. While his team talks about some big trade news that Ilya couldn't give a shit about, he gets the text he's been dreading. Well, first he gets the text he wants.

15th best Metro: who is this Jane??
Ilya: Do. Not. Text. Jane.

And he grabs his cross and thanks God. Hollander is still texting his phone. He still doesn't know. Just a few more hours and this will be the closest call in Ilya's life.

15th best Metro: why does she know Scott Hunter

Fuck. The second worst scenario, after Hollander finding out about the phones, is that Pike finds out about Hollander. Not just because it's something Hollander is keeping secret, but because Pike would *definitely* ask Hollander about it. And then Hollander would find out about the phones anyway. Ilya wants to cry, 30 minutes before the puck drops. He has a half a mind to call Pike, explain everything, and beg him not to tell Hollander.

He deflects.

Ilya: hunter is 154 he has probably fucked her great-grandmother.
15th best Metro: I'm not gonna tell.

Oh god he knows something. But he won't tell? That's his first reaction? *Tell who?* Ilya wants to ask. *What do you know?*

Ilya: there is nothing to tell.
Ilya: stop texting Jane.

And then, just in case Pike found out Jane is actually someone he knows personally, he adds another to appeal to any part of him that cares for "Jane".

Ilya: she will be so pissed.

Fuck. He's not responding. Ilya gets changed into his pads and uniform in a hurry, checking his phone frequently.

"Damn cap, hot date?" Cliff sees him check the blank screen for the 15th time that minute.

"Fuck off, focus on winning."

"You first." Cliff spits back just as Ilya's phone lights up. The contact is wrong. Fuck. The phone buzzes again. He takes it to the bathroom and shuts himself in a stall uncomfortably with all his gear on.

Shane: fucking asshole
Shane: why does Hayden have your phone??

Ilya's world collapses. His heart hurts. He shakes his head. It's not supposed to be like this. So what if Hollander drops him? It's supposed to be fine. He'd lose some good sex but—well, *great* sex, actually, the best, but he's supposed to be able to survive. Right now though, with the air not making it all the way into his lungs, he's not convinced he will.

Shane: ????

Hayden: yes sorry
Hayden: he should not have texted you

Shane: you didnt think to fucking tell me???
Shane: asshole??

Hayden: it is bad?

Shane: he thinks you're bi and that scott hunter is gay

Ilya scoffs a little. Weird way for this to come out, but ok. Hollander didn't get outed though, or else he would have led with that. Again, he thanks the small victory during this, one of the worst moments of his whole life.

Hayden: Scott hunter IS gay
Hayden: we talk about this a lot

Shane: oh my god !!!
Shane: delete all of these messages
Shane: and the ones from last night!! fuck!!!!
Shane: did you really try to sext me from Hayden's phone???

Typing dots appear and disappear rapidly on the screen for a minute.

Shane: I'm coming with him tonight so I can murder you myself.

It's really not the time. At all. But Ilya fucking *missed* this. He missed Hollander texting him. He even missed Hollander cursing him out and bringing out the Angry Kitten. The one who tried to fight Scott Hunter. The one who gets pissed at a ref and tries to hide it. The one who yelled at Ilya when he didn't text him back for six months. The last three days have him wondering how he ever went six months. He doesn't want to go that long ever again. And... *that's* not a thought anyone should be having. Especially when Hollander is about to throw him out like hot garbage.

Ilya wants to respond something about how he's excited to see him, that maybe they could sneak away from Pike tonight. But Hollander won't do that. He's done with Ilya.

Hayden: ok.

He deletes the messages diligently, breathes twice, and leaves the stall.

The game was fine. Ilya had two goals and two assists to win the game. Assists don't count toward the scoring race, but now that there's no reward from Hollander at the end it doesn't seem to matter as much.

He breezes through press where he is blessedly not asked about Hollander but about the big trade news out of New York. He forgot to even look at it before the game, too preoccupied. Usually Hollander would text him the gist of it like his own personal hockey newscaster. But Ilya answers with something about not caring who's on what team, he'll beat them anyway. The PR guy pats his back on the way out, so it was a good sound bite.

He rinses quickly, tells his team he has a date with Cliff's mom and can't go out with them, and heads to his rental car. The GPS says 2 hours. The GPS doesn't know him.

Ilya panics the whole drive. Yes, obviously about Hollander. Are they going to speak openly in front of Pike? Or will they make up some excuse so that Hollander can punch him in private? He wishes he weren't so maniacally turned on by Angry Kitten Shane Hollander. He's panicking that he might not get to do this anymore, and that feeling makes him panic even more. It's not supposed to be like that. He's supposed to not care.

The other thought in his mind is Pike. Now that Hollander knows about the phones, he could continue texting him. Hollander wouldn't like it, of course, but Hollander can't tell him what to do on a normal day, let alone if he's cutting off their… whatever this is. He wonders once again if he could try to convince Hollander to come out to Pike. It would be nice to have someone on their side who knows about them. Selfishly, it would just be nice to have someone to talk to about Hollander.

Ilya doesn't have a Pike in his life, and until Wednesday he didn't realize he wanted one. Pike gives his honest opinion and he's surprisingly funny. But now Pike knows— or thinks— Ilya likes men. Maybe he wouldn't want to be friends. Maybe he'll tell people. Hell— 30 seconds after he said he wouldn't tell anyone, Hollander was setting his phone on fire, having been told.

He thinks about his ideal situation, where Hollander miraculously gives him another chance, tells Pike about them, and lets Ilya have someone to talk to. Then he snorts a laugh. He'd also like the cup, reversal of Russia's anti-gay laws, and for his brother to drop dead, if we're just wishing for things now.

He arrives first because of course he does. Pike probably drives like a drunk old lady. He leans against the rental car for a smoke. The spot is perfect— he's had it in mind for a while. He has a spot like this between a lot of close cities, just in case. Ever since Hollander muttered "I need you" in that Vegas penthouse, Ilya has been ready to hear it again, and he's prepared to hear it anywhere. If none of this had happened and Hollander had said that tonight, he would be in the same exact spot, ready to go.

Finally another car pulls into the lot. He flicks the cigarette hurriedly, hoping Hollander didn't see it. If there's any chance at all— there's not. Stop that.

The car parks and both front doors open. Ilya looks at Hollander first, but Hollander isn't meeting his eye. Ilya looks at Pike and a smile takes over his face.

"Hayden Pike!" Ilya lets out. He's surprised how excited he is to see him. "I think tonight I have caught you in our scoring race." He doesn't actually know, but there's no way Pike scored two goals tonight.

"I had a good three-day run where I was better than Ilya Rozanov." Pike smiles back, "They'll put it on my tombstone." Ilya barks a laugh and looks at Hollander to see if he's laughing too. He's not. He has his angry kitten face on. Ilya wonders what his plan is— did he come here to talk? Or just moral support? Or, a hopeful little dickish voice whispers, did he just want to see Ilya's face?

"The honors?" Ilya says and they switch phones. He's waited long enough. He needs to feel Hollander's eyes on him. He nods in Hollander's direction. "How did you do? I didn't have time to look at final score."

Hollander finally looks at him. The stare simultaneously punctures Ilya's heart and goes directly to his crotch. That's always been Hollander's specialty. "Rozanov…" Hollander warns. Again, the mere mention of his name... especially in that tone of voice...

"Nah, he's kind of cool, Shane. It's fine." Pike turns back to Ilya, "The game sucked. We got shut out."

What?? *Kind of* cool? "I am not kind of cool. I am the coolest."

Pike laughs. Then he takes a big breath and starts to say, “Look man, it’s none of my business —” Fuck, here we go. Ilya would rather die than talk about whatever Pike thinks about his sexuality, or Scott Hunter, or “Jane”.

“—you are a smart man, Pike. It is not.”

“...But those other girls just text you when they want something. I think Jane is different, and I think you like them. You should… hold onto that one.” There it is.

“Is that what you think?” Ilya gauges Hollander for a reaction to this. He’s not really sure who he’s asking. He wants to know, though, and Hollander could easily break everything off here subtly. ‘No,’ he could say, ‘let Jane go.’ Or ‘Jane deserves better.’ She does.

Hollander doesn’t take the bait. He puts his hands in his pockets and says, “We should go…” before making no attempt to actually leave. Ilya lets himself feel a little hopeful.

Pike, like an idiot, doesn’t quit. “I won’t tell anyone what I saw in there, and I know you two could never be like... open about it, I know Russia is crazy but...” Ilya doesn’t want to hear this. The problem with Pike always speaking his mind is that sometimes he actually makes sense.

But there still hasn’t been a straight answer from Hollander, and it’s funny to see how oblivious Pike is. So Ilya asks, “Hollander, you agree? Did you also make your way into my private sexual life?”

“I wouldn’t do that. I think it’s really—” Hollander stops himself and sways for a second. “Let’s just go.” Again, he doesn’t even turn to the car. Ilya wishes he could just *ask* him. *‘Are we done? Did I make it so you'll never trust me again? Are you really going to leave this parking lot without touching me once?’* But Pike is here, he can’t ask any of that outright without outing both of them. Which actually would be great for Ilya, but Hollander obviously doesn’t want to.

He gets an idea. It’s a bad one for sure, naughty in a childish way, but sure to force Hollander’s hand into telling him what he’s thinking. He smiles deviously. “Should I call Jane right now and see if she picks up?”

“No.” Hollander answers immediately, brow furrowed. The angry kitten is finally back. “*That* sounds like a private conversation.”

Ilya hears this loud and clear. Ok, he doesn’t want to talk in front of Pike. In truth, Ilya kind of forgot they had an audience, but shit, the audience now agrees with him: “Yeah, you should! I kind of want to meet her— him? After spending three days talking to… them.”

A sound leaves Hollander and he turns his back to them muttering, “Three *days*... oh my God.” Ilya can’t help but smile at this. He’s always been a sucker for Hollander’s panic attacks, and this seems like it’s a good one.

Pike gets defensive. “Well I couldn’t have just left her on read! She would have dumped him!”

“Then tell them someone else has the phone!” Hollander is facing Pike, his voice raised. Ilya realizes why he might be so pissed at Pike. He smiles.

“Oh I see… My Jane got too into the sexting with you, Pike.”

“Uhh yeah, so… my wife might have responded to a few.” Oh god, this is too rich. Ilya laughs. He didn’t know Lady Pike had it in her, the fox. Pike is very lucky, the woman is the whole package.

“*Jackie??*” Hollander cries as Ilya laughs. Obviously the laugh caught his attention as Hollander surges toward him in a way that raises Ilya’s hopes. He’s flung himself at Ilya enough times for that movement to spark a visceral reaction. Except usually he’s not saying, “And *you*, asshole. You could have said something before—” He groans. It’s hot, but Ilya knows Hollander is hurting, and he should take it seriously if he ever wants to hear that sound ever again.

“I told him, do not text Jane.” Ilya shrugs.

“Did you tell *Jane* not to text *him*??” Hollander comes even closer as he continues to yell. He’s going to need to back up if he wants Pike to stay ignorant. Ilya can’t be held responsible for what he wants to do. “No password on your phone, putting it down in a public place…” Fuck. This is exactly the lecture he’s been dreading all week, knowing it would lead to the end of sex for them. Still, as Hollander says, “Fucking *irresponsible*, Rozanov!” he wishes he was recording it. He would use it as his ring tone, his alarm clock. He would tell the audio guy to play it whenever he scores a goal. “Anyone else would have gone directly to the press. You are so *fucking lucky* it was Hayden.” Saying his name seems to remind Hollander that Pike exists. He steps back to a socially acceptable distance and turns to Pike to declare, “I’m leaving. I will literally drive back without you.”

Someone should really tell him that leaving would require walking toward the car at some point, not just saying it.

“I have the keys.” Pike reminds him with perfect comedic timing, and Ilya chuckles. Clearly Pike knows Hollander’s threats are full of shit too. It only solidifies Ilya’s belief that they should tell him, let them be friends after this. “Let’s just wait until Rozanov calls this guy. I’m so fucking curious.”

“Don’t do this.” Hollander is begging. God, he’s just hitting all of Ilya’s messed up turn-ons tonight, huh? Is he doing this on purpose?

“I know you’re like…” Pike trails off but Ilya desperately wants to know the end of that sentence. “But aren’t you curious? This could be another *player*!”

Ilya smiles. If he only knew. He wants to give Hollander this opportunity to tell his friend. Hopefully they’re showing him they can get along, if that was his fear. And Pike is clearly fine with it being another man, so he’s at least not a bigot. Ilya thinks Hollander knows Pike won’t tell anyone, except maybe Lady Pike.

He's also just having a lot of fun teasing Hollander, even if Pike doesn't know they're teasing his friend. Ilya keeps it up. "I don't mind. I'll call her. My Jane would drop any boring conversation to answer me." And then, just in case Hollander is being like this on purpose, he adds, "She is constantly begging for it."

Then Hollander looks at Ilya, a little wrecked. They lock eyes for the first time since he was yelling. "Нет, хватит." Hollander whispers, his rimmed with tears. "Please."

Ilya's breath catches, and then his heart breaks. Hollander's safeword. *No, enough.*

He remembers the night they came up with it. It started innocently enough, in between two fantastic sessions. Ilya had just mumbled something in Russian.

"If I spoke Russian, would that be like, a turn-on?" Hollander had asked, head pressed on Ilya's chest.

Ilya laughed and considered it. "No, I think really I would be so shocked, I would have to stop what I am doing, probably."

It was Hollander's turn to laugh, "Good to know. If I ever want you to stop—" he cut himself off and blushed. Ilya hated that he could read his mind in the moment, even then. Hollander realized mid-sentence he would never want Ilya to stop doing anything. God, Ilya should have walked out right then and there. Instead, he did the very, very stupid thing of reaching into his heart even further.

"Нет, хватит." Ilya said softly. "If you ever need to shock me into stopping."

"Нет, хватит." Hollander repeated with the worst accent ever. It was endearing, but Ilya never wanted to hear those words out of his mouth again. "Like a safeword. Нет, хватит."

Hollander had said it once, when Ilya already saw discomfort in his face and was stopping anyway. He said it another time when he was too close to finishing too soon, which isn't really the point of a safeword. Still, he knows Ilya takes it seriously. And now, here he is saying it fully clothed in a parking lot next to his best friend because Ilya is being too annoying.

Apparently it's more than annoying, though. Hollander is freaking out.

Ilya puts the phone in his pocket and his hands raise in surrender. He wants so badly to go touch Hollander, calm him down. He loves Hollander's panicked face, but this looks more serious than anything he's seen. He wishes this scooped-out feeling would stop wreaking havoc in his abdomen and let him focus. Ilya stands still to follow Hollander's lead. Any air of humor or lighthearted banter left when Hollander said no.

"*What the fuck.*" Pike whispers. That's fair. Why would Hollander say anything in Russian? "Umm... well whatever the deal is, we should head out soon. So just call her, let's make it quick." Pike doesn't notice or care that the atmosphere has shifted. Ilya is starting to worry that maybe the man is a dumbass.

The problem is, there's no real way out of this situation without something bending. Pike is going to wonder no matter what. He's not giving this up. Whether that's pressuring them now, or the returning car ride from hell, or texting both of them endlessly for answers. Short of the full truth, he's not going to be satisfied with anything they give him right now.

Plus, all jokes and selfishness aside, Ilya has started really thinking Hollander should be telling Pike about all of this. Hell— *he's* out to Pike now, and up until Hollander looked up and uttered Russian words at him, he was feeling great about it.

"Hollander." If Ilya can't pull him aside, he wants everyone to know this is a 2-person conversation now. Hollander closes his eyes. "Your *best friend* Hayden Pike is going to be good no matter who picks up. He has already said he would not tell anyone, and he is…" fuck the English language. He knows the vocabulary, just not whether it's too formal for the situation. "Relentless? He will not relent?" He shakes his head. "Do you really want *this* drive home? Or… maybe I trust one person. Might help Jane. Might help *me*." This last part is crucial for Hollander to understand. It's not just about him. *Ilya* is the one who wants to let Pike in. Hollander couldn't possibly appreciate that they've spent their nights texting and laughing during the day, that Ilya doesn't have that with anyone but Hollander, and if Hollander is going to drop him…

But it's still Hollander's choice. Ilya is not going to take that from him. He thinks hard about the next move. There's a way to make this Hollander's choice and let Pike blame "Jane" if Hollander decides not to tell him.

He cards a hand through his hair. Ilya hates thinking hard while also speaking in English, but he also hates most things about this situation. On top of planning, he also has to mask any details from Pike. Fuck, this is hard. He takes the cell phone back out and starts slowly. "I am going to call my Jane… phone is always on silent. And if maybe she wants to pick up, and have a conversation to your *best friend*, she will. I will hang up after five rings, I will not let it play her voicemail." Hollander's face is blank. This is good. This gives him a choice. But what about Ilya's choice? "But I think she should answer."

Hollander nods at the ground. Ilya knows, logically, they're not telepathic, even though sometimes on the ice and in bed it feels like that. But he knows with that nod, Hollander is talking himself into it. He's agreeing. Ilya smiles with relief. He breathes again. "...Because maybe this will benefit me, too, if her friend fucks off for a half hour, I can see if maybe she wants to get touched in my car." Hollander snaps his head up to glare at him and Ilya pumps his eyebrows at him. It's risky. Hollander is probably done with him anyway. But maybe he'll give him one last memory for the road.

Pike reminds them both that he's here. "That's TMI, Rozanov. Just call her."

Hollander has a calmer, but still annoyed affect to his voice, "No, that won't be— ugh… just do it already." The way he whines makes Ilya sure: he's going to pick up. He nods at Hollander, one last check-in. Hollander nods back at him. It's a real shame they can't play on the same team. This kind of nonverbal communication could murder an opponent on the ice.

Ilya hits the contact for Jane and puts the speaker phone on. He looks at Pike for the first time in several minutes. He looks confused but excited. They both turn to Hollander as he pulls his

phone out of his pocket. Ilya can see the light from the screen reflect on his face.

“Ah shit, you gotta take that?” Pike asks him, looking over Hollander’s shoulder.

Ilya rolls his eyes and chooses Russian, *“Take all the time you need, genius.”* Hollander turns his screen to fully face Pike, and Ilya mimics the motion as the speakerphone stops ringing and the call connects. Ilya wants to laugh so badly. Pike is the world’s dumbest human, huh?

Finally, after one thousand years, Pike’s eyes widen. “No, what the fuck? Answer it.” He whispers to Hollander.

“I did.” Hollander shrugs. The declaration comes out of Ilya’s phone speaker, too, as if Pike needed extra proof. Hollander hangs up and Ilya’s phone goes black, if Pike still has any doubts. Ilya is about to go put his hand down Hollander’s pants if Pike wants any further evidence.

“What the fuck… Lily is—”

“Yeah.”

“Are you two like—”

“Yeah.”

Ilya watches the exchange like a ping-pong game, giddy. He’s proud of Hollander, he’s excited to get to keep the moron Pike, and he hopes he can maybe salvage an orgasm or two out of this shipwreck of an evening. There’s a beat of silence, and Pike’s mouth is still hanging open.

“We have broken Hayden Pike. May we go have sex in a car now?” Ilya grins. Is having sex — in a car or not— even still on the table for them?

Pike turns to Hollander and boxes Ilya out of the conversation. That’s fair. “What— is it serious? Are you, like, in love?”

“No. No-no-no. No.” Ilya answers unequivocally for both of them. Luckily he hears “No, no that’s gross no,” coming from Hollander at the same time. *Love?* Friend, you saw our texts. They're hockey and dumb stuff from their lives, mixed with some very hot sexting. How would he think that’s *love*? Pike has a wife, he knows what a loving relationship looks like. This guy is so completely clueless, it’s almost adorable.

“Oh my God but the *sexting*??” Pike cries. Ilya grins again. He knows he’s usually hoping Hollander isn’t sexting anyone else, that it’s just for him. But he’s a little happy someone else saw it. Sexts from Hollander can get pretty good. He wonders what they said.

Hollander falls to the ground in a fetal position and bends his head down. “*God*, I am so sorry Hayden.” Oh, so they really *sexted* each other. Or, Hollander sexted Lady Pike. Ilya can’t help but think it’s funny until he notices Hollander isn’t breathing.

Ilya's skin itches with the need to go touch him. Wait— now he *can*. He squats with one knee on the ground, letting his propped up knee frame Hollander's back. Hollander immediately leans into it and uses Ilya's leg for support. Ilya sees a sigh leave his torso. He rubs a pattern on Hollander's back. "Hey, hey. Is ok, Hollander." He says softly. "I'm sure it was best sexting he's ever had. Wife mainly talks about babies, sends some pregnant nudies. All very boring."

"Oh my god, no. Stop talking." Hollander breathes. Ilya wants to laugh. His favorite hobby is making Hollander uncomfortable. Well, second only to making Hollander *very* comfortable.

Pike shifts his weight and starts stuttering. "I'm uhh… who knows?" What a stupid question. "Can I tell Jackie?"

Hollander's head nods a little. But really, he's not in any condition to be making decisions. Ilya thinks Lady Pike can know, but he feels a protective urge to clarify. He stares at Pike's face and waits until he has eye contact. "*No one* knows. You are *it*. Nude-Lady-Pike is *it*. Now? three people know. And they are all here." Ilya thinks Pike will be good about this. And from snooping on their texts, he thinks Lady Pike will be too.

Pike whispers, "Of course." He looks like he might cry. God, Ilya hopes they're not making a mistake here.

Ilya turns back to Hollander and rubs his hand up and down his back again. "See? He's good, you're good. We're good." He strokes a hand over Hollander's head and down his back.

He's almost ready to ask Pike to give them a minute when Pike reads his mind. They should *really* all play for the same team some day. "Ok. I'm going to go sit in the car and…" he trails off, eyes following the motion of Ilya's hand on Hollander's back. "...my wife. And you guys can… I don't know." He gives up and walks away toward his rental car.

Ilya gets up and puts a hand under Hollander's armpit. "Take a walk, Hollander." He lifts the weight of the limp body. Pike's car door closes. Alone and standing, Ilya takes the opportunity to hold Hollander like he's wanted to all night. They don't do this often, just *hug*. It doesn't really fit into their unwritten rules. They hug in bed sometimes, after. They cuddle until round two or until one of them feels something and bolts with the nearest excuse.

"No." Hollander says and pulls his head back. "What the fuck were you *thinking*, Rozanov?"

Ilya scans his face. "You are not happy you told Pike?"

"Not that, ugh. I guess that too. Fuck!" Ilya tightens his grip on Hollander's body. It works, Hollander breathes. "I thought you took this shit seriously."

Ilya looks down. This is it. "I know." Ilya mumbles. "I'm sorry." He means it. If he could go back three days and put a damn password on his phone, glue it to his fucking hand, he would. He would play hockey with a phone in his hand for the rest of his career. They would call him Phonanov and he would break 30 cellphones a year against other players' faces and he would still end up in the hall of fame.

Hollander leans his forehead on Ilya's shoulder. "I'm so fucking angry. And embarrassed. And I feel… exposed. Mostly angry. And stupid."

"Not stupid like Pike." Ilya points out. "He read your texts, he didn't know. You yelled at me, he didn't know. You got a *phonecall*, he *still* didn't know." Ilya giggles, and Hollander breathes a laugh out of his nose too, thank god. "That man *drove* you here, Hollander. Do you want me to be calling you a cab?"

"No, not that stupid." Hollander responds and Ilya laughs. "Stupid for doing any of this. For thinking we could get away with this."

Ilya sighs. This has been his worst fear all week. At least he was prepared. "I have messed up. I understand if you have to…"

Hollander backs his head up to look at Ilya. "If I have to what?"

Isn't it obvious? "If you don't want to do this anymore." Ilya states plainly.

Hollander furrows his brow and backs up a little. "Rozanov, get in your fucking car."

Ilya is about to protest. Really, he's about to *cry.* But then Hollander is moving. He's walking toward Ilya's car. Oh fuck, this is *happening*. Ilya nearly clicks his heels. He catches Hollander before he opens the passenger side door and presses him up against the car. He cups his face and leans in to press their lips together. Hollander responds well and brings his hands up too.

Relief spreads through Ilya so hot he has to think about whether he's peed himself. He groans when he feels Hollander's boner against his leg. He breaks off. "Hollander, get in the car."

Hollander shoves him, "I was fucking *trying* to."

After giving a thorough blowjob, and finishing just from Hollander *holding* his dick during it, Ilya presses his head into Hollander's shoulder. It's uncomfortable with the car's center console digging into his ribs. Ilya doesn't care. He almost lost this.

And that feeling— the one that usually provokes him to leave whatever bed they're sharing— has been here the whole night, so there's no indication when they should part ways. If he's following his own rule, to leave when he feels it, he should have left around when Hollander started yelling at him. Maybe before.

"Give me your phone." Hollander says. His voice is still breathy from panting. He presses a few times on the screen. Ilya should be looking at what he's doing but he can't. He's looking at Hollander's concentrated face lit up by the glow of the screen. He's interrupted when Hollander hands the phone back.

Ilya tries to see what he's done. A numberpad comes up on the screen.

"Hollander, what is the password to my phone?"

“Same as your locked folder, asshole.” He responds pointedly and Ilya carefully *doesn’t* blush. So Hollander had some time with the phone.

“You looked?? That is private!”

Hollander raises both eyebrows. Oh yeah, Ilya doesn’t really have a leg to stand on here. “Nice ass picture of me, too. I deleted it.”

Ilya gasps. “No! That was my only one!” Hollander just glares at him. “Is ok, when I win scoring race I will have another.”

“You actually think I’m still—” Hollander cuts himself off. “No. I’m still fine with it because there’s no fucking way you’ll win that scoring race.” Ilya bites his cheek so he doesn’t smile like a lunatic. Hollander continues. “This phone doesn’t leave your sight. Ever. I want it in your pants pocket or your hand at all times. If it’s not, it’s locked in a locker or locked inside your house. Fucking *no one* touches this phone.”

God, if Ilya hadn’t just spilled all over this man’s hand, that would have done it for him. “Yes. I agree.” He manages to get out through a shuddering breath.

"And names— we're so dumb. We text our *names*."

"No, no. Not as dumb as Hayden."

Hollander laughs, "No, never. But no more names. We're going to be a lot more careful." Ilya nods.

He takes Hollander’s chin in between his thumb and forefinger. There’s a lot he’s trying very hard *not* to say right now. Things that could ruin the tentative truce they’ve been building all these years.

Luckily Hollander isn't done. “And Hayden?” He doesn’t specify a question, just leaves those two words hanging.

“Actually, my name is Ilya.” He knows what Hollander wants. He wants to know how it happened that Ilya is now joshing around with the worst hockey player in the league. Hollander gives him a look. Ilya rolls his eyes. “He is good. We had fun—”

“—At my expense.” Hollander clarifies. Ilya gets the gist of what that means, he thinks.

“Yes. I am sorry for that too. I just wanted to sext you so much, and Pike was being a… cockblock?” Ilya loves that word, and he’s always looking for a reason to use it.

“So you decided to sext me from his phone? As him? About you?”

"Did it work?"

"Fuck off." Hollander blushes and smiles a little, "I basically immediately texted your phone. That's what he— or, I guess *Jackie* responded to."

Ilya laughs with glee and Hollander kisses him deeply to stave off whatever victory speech would have come out. Ilya wonders what would end this, if this fuckup didn't. Maybe if Hollander meets a nice girl? If they're outed in some other way? If Ilya is sent to a Russian prison?

Hollander pulls back but leaves a hand in his hair. They sit for a while longer just kissing and looking at each other, Hollander playing with Ilya's hair. The feeling is getting stronger, they really should be leaving, but Ilya doesn't even think about it. The words '*I should go'* never enter his mind until—

"I should go." Hollander says. "Hayden is way too traumatized to come and get me."

"Yes. Of course." Ilya shakes himself out of it. He forgot Pike is still in the other car. He glances over and sees him animatedly talking on the phone. Ilya smiles a little. Hollander opens the car door. "Wait." Ilya stops him from getting up with a hand on his arm. "I… do not have many people like Pike." Ilya confesses. What is he doing? They don't talk about this stuff. They don't talk about anything in person except hockey and gay sex, and sometimes the combination of those, gay sex between hockey players. Facts about themselves are saved for text, and serious, personal facts about themselves are saved for… never. Or hidden in a joke in a text somewhere.

Hollander nods like he understands. "He's always secretly thought you were cool. I bet this whole thing is, like, his dream."

"You think he would text with me?" Ilya doesn't mean for his voice to come out so vulnerable.

"I think you'd have to work to get rid of him at this point." Hollander laughs.

End Notes

Thank you for reading! If you haven't read the original Hayden POV, you can find Hayden and Ilya's continuing text threads there.

You can find me lurking and DMing on tumblr @exactphoify

Works inspired by this one

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