

Touch Was Our First Language

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Touch Was Our First Language

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Summary

Because Ilya knew how Shane liked to be treated, and the Shane Hollander who dropped like a fucking rock from being denied in a filthy bathroom, even after begging for it with half the hockey world outside, would love dirty talk. Honestly, fuck his father, fuck homophobia, fuck English, and fuck his shitty brain from keeping them from having what Ilya was sure would be the best fucking sex of their lives.

At the cottage, Ilya lets the most terrifying confession of his life slip when he tells Shane he loves him. On the bright side, now that Ilya's no longer afraid of blurting out his feelings during sex, this obviously meant he could step up his dirty talk beyond foreplay and muttered directions.

But when Shane takes one of Ilya's commands literally and shuts down, they have to learn what they never had the safety to indulge in before this: honesty not only in how they fit together but what they choose to share.

Notes

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

Chapter 1

You would think that after all these years, Ilya knew how Shane liked to be treated.

Sure, sometimes Ilya would have moments where he got to watch Shane, and it felt like something fragile and beautiful threatened to eat him from the inside out. Like the first time Ilya leant against the kitchen counter of Shane's very private glass-walled cottage and watched how the orange morning rays lit up the furrow in Shane's brow as he made them both the smoothie he had every day that he was home.

Ilya watched as Shane added powders and leaves and seeds into a blender by the fucking milligram with his little tongs and littler spoons. It took Shane twenty minutes to make it twice, once for each of them, and was the worst smoothie Ilya had ever had.

Ilya told Shane so and received Shane's go-to "fuck you" in return. But Ilya's wonder about how it was that he of all people got to learn how Shane liked his smoothie when not avoiding seeds and fruit during the season? That thought was for Ilya to keep in his chest.

But that wonder lived in Shane's carefully curated kitchen. His kitchen, his backyard, his couch when they curled together to talk rather than fuck. In all of those places, Ilya was still learning how to use those imprecise English words to tell Shane truths that he barely knew how to say in his mother tongue.

Things were different here. Here, in bed together—or in the shower or on the couch or a few times against Shane's big windows—Ilya and Shane never needed words to communicate. Here, Ilya had belonged for years, long before they became boyfriends, and he knew it in how perfectly he fit into the space Shane silently made for Ilya between his legs as they fell open now.

God, Shane was beautiful. Shane was propped up on several pillows, ones with washable pillowcases and not those weirdly shaped decorations that had to be thrown into the washing machine whole. He met Ilya's eyes, deep brown pools fixing on Ilya with their usual intensity.

Shane's legs formed two outward pointing Vs, and he ran the fingertips of his right hand up and down his own stomach. He was waiting because Ilya had asked him to.

Fuck.

Usually, Ilya was the biggest—hm, biggest yapper.

With time and distance wearing the hurts of his youth from blade sharp cuts into ice-numbered burns, Ilya said all kinds of shit with a grin on his face. He was loud and brash on the ice and in front of cameras in a way he had never been allowed to be when growing up as his father's son. No one would accuse star hockey captain and playboy Ilya Rozanov of mincing his words.

But here in bed, where Ilya leaned forward so he could hold Shane down by his wrists and slot their bodies together like they had so many times before, Ilya and Shane learned how to be real together long before they learned how to talk to each other.

Anything they would have said out loud during this last decade would have been less honest than how their bodies came together anyways.

Still, these weeks were about trusting each other with honesty and transparency. The cottage could hold the kind of thoughts and feelings they had never dared to speak into existence anywhere else, not with as many eyes as they had on them.

Even when they were fucking each other in apartments and hotels all across the goddamn continent, the feeling that someone would burst in and catch them in the act never truly disappeared. There was a part of Ilya that did not give a fuck, but there was a part of him that watched panic snap at Shane's heels and thought about how his mother country was still that because his mother was still there—even if she was dead.

And more than that, there was a part of Ilya that guarded his tongue more and more carefully the closer that Shane Hollander came to undoing him.

It was different for Shane, Ilya thought. Shane, who rehearsed everything from what he would say for unscripted appearances to chirps to what he planned to order at a restaurant, who sunk deeply and beautifully like it was as easy as breathing so that Ilya always wondered what he did to deserve such trust—Ilya was not surprised that pretty Shane did not reach for words in bed.

But for Ilya, words were his freedom as much as they were his defense. Even when English words rolled blunt and wooden in his mouth, never quite precise or free enough compared to the language he still thought and felt in even when Russia was no longer his home, not really, that was true.

So, there were reasons why Ilya and Shane only ever exchanged moans and expletives between them, reasons that weren't just the fear of being outed or how Shane drilled what he thought he should say like he drilled passing the puck around on the ice.

Running his mouth as foreplay so Ilya could watch Shane's brown eyes turn molten with desire as he sank into that beautiful place was one thing. And giving short orders like "kneel" or "suck my dick" or even "get on your stomach so I can eat you out" was not that much riskier, even though the knowledge that Shane would do exactly what Ilya asked before Shane's brain even really processed the command pushed Ilya over the edge more than once.

But actually voicing the kind of thoughts that ran through his brain increasingly often when Ilya was moments from shooting his load into Shane's perfect hole, too raw to put on his usual show? Not orders, however much of a lifeline they formed for Shane and Ilya both, but shit like "It's always been you," "I think you might be all I never dared to dream of," and "I don't think I can fucking live without you?"

Boring.

Ilya couldn't risk losing this, losing Shane, because he had moved in a world as unforgiving as this one with his heart instead of his dick.

But now—the cottage was different, and they were different. This was where Ilya had already blurted out the scariest fucking thing he could have said to Shane like an idiot and been held close instead of thrown away.

In this place where he figured no one else would burst in without calling ahead ever again—Ilya finally unclenched his teeth and let some of the words he mouthed against Shane's skin breathe.

Ilya let himself breathe.

Because Ilya knew how Shane liked to be treated, and the Shane Hollander who dropped like a fucking rock from being denied in a filthy bathroom, even after begging for it with half the hockey world outside, would love dirty talk. Honestly, fuck his father, fuck homophobia, fuck English, and fuck his shitty brain from keeping them from having what Ilya was sure would be the best fucking sex of their lives.

"You like that?" Ilya asked, grinding his cock up against the slick space between Shane's cheeks as he pinned Shane's wrists above his head on the bed. Ilya watched Shane's eyes widen—round and wet like a baby deer. Expressive, speaking volumes about how startled he was by Ilya's words.

Fair enough. Usually, by the time they were this far into it, grunts and moans were all that escaped from Ilya's tightly pressed lips.

But Shane loved Ilya, would love Ilya even if Ilya said boring things like I love you, so Ilya did not need to keep silent out of fear that similar sentiments would slip out of his heart. And that meant that even if Ilya felt like he was about to lose his mind with how badly he wanted to fuck Shane, he did not need to shut up.

Not here, not with Shane.

The whole world could never know how much Ilya Rozanov loved Shane Hollander, but there was nothing else keeping Shane from knowing it now.

Hell, even if Ilya could shut up, burying his truth into the marrow of his bones until they were all that was left of his body, Ilya did not want to keep quiet anymore—not when his words made Shane clench up in so visceral a way Ilya could feel him spasm just by sliding the tip of his cock over Shane's hole again and again.

"You like that," Ilya smiled. Ilya had been teasing Shane for a long time now, relishing in the kind of time and privacy that they never had before this. Shane was damn near shaking with how much he wanted what Ilya had been dangling in front of but refusing to give him. Ilya could feel Shane squirming under him, and he didn't need to look to know that Shane was rubbing his feet together even as he bucked in place.

Smirking, Ilya made Shane cross his wrists so Ilya could keep hold of them with just one hand. Ilya's smirk only grew when Shane obeyed wordlessly, keeping his arms still. Shane was so good, lying there quietly as if it hadn't even occurred to him that he could slip a hand down between their legs and force Ilya's hard cock into his hole himself.

This new position freed Ilya's other hand so he could slide it down to Shane's pelvis. Rather than giving into the urge to reward Shane's submission, however, Ilya chose to push them both a little further. He gripped one of Shane's hips, keeping Shane from twitching up to meet him. Ilya fucking loved how needy Shane got like this, when desperation had chased all of Shane's usual, tightly wound self-control from his limbs.

"Fuck you, Ilya," Shane moaned. But despite the strength Ilya knew Shane had trained into his legs and hips, Shane stayed still as Ilya ground down against him, taunting him as Ilya slipped his hard cock past where Shane was spasming with how badly he wanted to be fucked.

"Mm, you are confused. You are the one who wants to be fucked, no?" Ilya rubbed his thumb over the bulge of Shane's right pelvic bone. He watched as Shane's eyes slipped closed as Ilya traced circles round and round on his skin, almost like how Shane had drawn patterns on his own inner thigh earlier.

"Maybe I am wrong. I can stop if I am wrong?" Ilya rutted against him again, letting go of Shane's wrists so he could plant his weight down on Shane, caging him in.

Shane whimpered, and today was quickly becoming the best day of Ilya's life. When Shane opened his eyes again, his gaze was soft and spacey when it slipped past Ilya's own. Ilya bit down on the side of Shane's neck, where a bruise would certainly form. Ilya would enjoy looking at it tomorrow—and the promise of tomorrow finally made Ilya decide to stop torturing Shane and himself before Ilya blew his fucking load like a teenager without even getting his cock into Shane.

Even if Ilya forgave himself for that, he wasn't sure Shane would.

"I don't understand your little bird noises," Ilya said, even though he knew very well that the desperate sound that wrenched its way out of Shane meant he was losing his goddamn mind. Sex was the way they communicated, and they had been fucking for so long that Ilya was more fluent in Shane's sex noises than he was boring English.

This time, when Ilya surged into Shane, the head of his cock breached Shane's hole before it slipped back out, and their fucked-out groans sounded in unison. "Be good," Ilya gritted out, too on edge to deny either of them anymore.

His head spun with how much he wanted Shane, the desire unlike any form of intoxication he had ever experienced before. Now that Ilya was no longer biting back his words in case they scared Shane off, they spilled out of him uncontrollably, English and Russian blurring together. "Shane, my life, tell me." Ilya kissed Shane, licking between his lips until Shane shuddered and jerked like he wanted to bury his forehead into Ilya's shoulder but could not bear to pull away for long enough to do so.

Sensitive Shane, who shone with how much he felt, even when he did not realize it. Shane was always beautiful, but Ilya thought he was most radiant in two places—on the ice, making calls and seeing things that no one else did—and here, too overwhelmed by how much he was feeling to do anything other than lie back and take what Ilya would give him. Shane was loose-limbed and submissive under Ilya, so unguarded it had a strange way of making Ilya feel like he was worthy of being entrusted with something so precious.

“If you want me to fuck you, you need to use your words.” And Ilya was just chirping, really, because he knew from the look in Shane’s eyes that he was well beyond the point where he could do much more than be so soft and good for Ilya.

He thought that Shane, who was turned on by the kind of humiliation of asking and being told no, would be driven wild when he found himself so far gone that he couldn’t form sentences, couldn’t do anything but take it when Ilya gave him exactly what he needed anyways.

In fact, Ilya had already let go of Shane’s hip so he could palm roughly at his cock and finally guide it toward where they both needed to be joined when Shane froze.

Any and all languidness in Shane’s posture evaporated. In the span of a breath, Shane was pulling away and putting distance between them so quickly that the memory of the last time Shane told him he couldn’t superimposed itself over Ilya’s vision.

For a moment, Ilya wondered if Shane was about to pull on his clothes and run out of his own cottage, leaving Ilya alone out here in the Canadian wilderness with only the terrifying wolf-birds for company.

Ilya wondered if Shane was about to leave because Ilya was too much after all.

But even though Shane slammed himself back up against the headboard as he cleared his throat roughly, taking four tries to mouth something before he muttered out the saddest fucking “Sorry,” that Ilya had ever heard, he didn’t run. Instead, in the time it took Ilya to find his bearings and scootch forward on his knees until he could settle next to Shane, Shane had curled into a sad ball, folding his arms around his knees and planting his face down into them.

“Hey, hey,” Ilya murmured, wrapping his hand around the back of Shane’s neck. He moved slowly but intently, applying pressure and massaging the tense muscles there like he was scruffing an anxious pup. “You’re good, you’re safe.” When Shane only shuddered, rocking just the slightest bit where he was doing his best impression of an armadillo, Ilya sidled up beside him, pressing their bare hips together too.

Next time, Ilya thought absently, he would leave a blanket nearby. He glanced across the room where Shane had neatly folded their extra bedding so they wouldn’t have to wash them multiple times a day. Convenient, because it meant they had more time to fuck, but across the room was too far away now when he didn’t want to separate from Shane.

“S—sorry, I’m fine,” Shane hissed, even though the way each word was forced from his throat made it clear he was anything but. Ilya was used to the way Shane sometimes froze up

during post-game interviews, reaching for words with a wooden expression on his face. Even without seeing Shane's face, though, Ilya could tell that this panic was that heightened too many times over. "Just give me—give—"

"Shhh, Shane, it's okay. You're good here, no rush."

Usually, those reassurances, a firm touch, and somewhere to redirect his focus were enough to start grounding Shane. Ilya couldn't always pull Shane back, but Ilya could often anchor him before he worked himself into a spiral.

But this time, for the first time in a long while, Shane fought Ilya. Even as his short, silent breaths and slightly trembling shoulders made it clear that Shane was half a step away from a panic attack, Shane tried to do what he thought Ilya wanted. "I'm—" Shane tried one more time, voice sounding tight and pained even as muffled as it was by how firmly his face was buried into his lap.

Ilya wasn't sure if his words were right, didn't have the time to parse through them the way he usually did, but that didn't matter when Shane's were clearly hurting him. How Shane pushed through his discomfort during interviews was one thing. Hurting himself to follow Ilya's command was another.

Ilya would be damned before he let Shane push himself too far because Ilya misstepped. He couldn't let Shane think that was what Ilya wanted from him, not when Shane would flay himself open to give it. Right as Ilya slung his arm heavily over Shane's shoulders in lieu of draping a blanket over him, his next words fell out of him the way "I love you" had.

"Quiet, Shane."

Chapter 2

No one has ever told Shane Hollander to stop talking.

(Well, that wasn't entirely true. Sometimes, Shane would lay awake at night and stare at his ceiling and think about all the times he had awkwardly overshared because he couldn't take one more complaint about being too distant of a captain, and then he would think to himself, "God, Hollander, why the fuck don't you ever stop talking.")

Most of the time, though, people generally wanted more words from Shane.

But sometimes his words slipped through his brain like sand through his fingers. The setting did not really matter. Shane would be accepting an interview or trying to socialize his way through an uncomfortable networking event while gripping a ginger ale like his life depended on it or sitting through some other similarly public setting and replaying his PR training in his head. Whatever it was, it was as if the more he tried to think his way into something eloquent, the further what he wanted to say fled from him.

Between what happened in Shane's brain and how syllables could catch in his mouth, aching in his gums like he was clenching down too hard on his mouthguard, Shane got this far because of training—training to say just enough to diffuse situations and redirect questions was part of Shane's job.

Even if pushing the words out of himself felt like pulling teeth or forcing up a cough with bruised ribs, that was as much part of getting to play hockey as skating or scoring goals or letting commercial directors drench Shane in liquids until all his clothes stuck to his skin before they flashed the brightest lights Shane had ever seen in his face.

Youth coaches told Shane to "Use your words, son," and reporters asked Shane, "Can you say more on that?," and Shane would because it was what he needed to do if he wanted to play—and Shane didn't know what he would do if he couldn't play.

If he needed to lay in hotel rooms with the lights off and the central air unit silent for the rest of the night after these encounters, that was just part of the deal.

Things were different with Ilya. Yes, Shane had made a fool of himself talking himself into awkward spirals in front of Ilya—the memory of what Shane had said to Ilya the very first time they talked always made Shane's stomach hurt. But their too short rendezvous in person usually involved more fucking than talking. Hell, most of the time, Shane was *on* his stomach, too fucked out to do more than moan as Ilya pounded his brain quieter than it usually ever was without his intervention.

And most of their communication occurred over texts, where Shane could pretend to be infinitely more articulate than he actually was. Plus, texting gave Shane the power to delete any errant thoughts before he hit send, a skill he never quite managed to exercise while just conversing to people's faces.

If Shane wasn't sharing too much, he was sharing too little. If there was a social playbook on how to share enough to be personable and not aloof, but not so much everyone stared at him like his hockey stick had sprouted from his forehead, Shane missed that circulation.

This cottage retreat was the most time Shane had spent continuously in the presence of someone else since he moved out of his parents' place. Sure, the team traveled together and shared everything from locker rooms to buses during the season, but Shane usually had a hotel room to decompress in by himself at least once a night.

Moreover, this was the most Shane had ever talked to anyone continuously too. And *talking* to Ilya, being talked at back, getting to learn about Ilya and hold him and stroke his hair and his hip as they both watched flame and smoke form patterns in the air that scratched at Shane's brain in just the right way—Shane never thought he could have this.

It was perfect.

The sex was perfect too. Of course, sex with Ilya was always perfect, but these days at the cottage had revealed a different version of Ilya that Shane was obsessed with. Ilya was softer here, less severe, less like he was carrying a weight too heavy for him to shoulder alone. Shane liked to think that Ilya was happier, and happiness looked good on him. This Ilya was more playful, less restrained, and it showed.

And as much as Shane loved being railed hard and desperate onto any available surface, there was something to be said about slowing down, playing, taking their time because being alone together in this idyllic place made them feel like they had all the time in the world rather than just two short, rapidly elapsing weeks.

The walls that kept each of them as close to whole as possible were coming down as they luxuriated in the safe space of the cottage—a place where Shane no longer needed to be afraid that someone would kick down their door to accuse them of being queer. Where it felt like someone had finally told Ilya Rozanov that no one would shout at or punch him for feeling things other than Slavic stoicism.

Ilya was lighter here, and Shane wanted nothing more than to play with an Ilya who was ready to take his bellhop apart or say hot, brazen things that made Shane feel small and quiet and perfect.

Until Ilya told him to use his words. Until Shane tried, he really did, he tried to do what Ilya wanted him to. He wanted to, because he always wanted to do what Ilya wanted him to. He wanted to, because nothing made all of Shane's anxieties fall away faster than doing exactly what Ilya explicitly asked him to and being praised for it. Shane wanted to play—except then Shane tried, and he couldn't.

Because sometimes, no matter how badly he wanted to, Shane couldn't use his fucking words. It was like they died somewhere between his lungs and his mouth, no matter how hard they spun where they originated in his brain. They died, and any zombified things he could sometimes force out if his anxiety to please overtook how bad it felt took something from him in exchange.

And it wasn't Ilya's fault that Shane got like this sometimes. And Ilya did not risk his career and his life and everything he knew to come to the cottage so that Shane couldn't even give him this, so Shane was sorry and he was fine and if Ilya just gave him a moment he would get it together like he knew he could and they could keep going and Shane could be good like Ilya thought he was even when he wasn't because the words wouldn't fucking come no matter how hard Shane scraped his teeth across his tongue and the sides of his cheeks and—

"Quiet, Shane."

But Ilya had wanted—

"It's okay," Ilya squeezed Shane tight and close, corded muscle and soft fat and strong bones coming together to exert pressure that made Shane feel so grounded he shut his mouth again, aborting his latest attempt to tell Ilya he was fine. "I'm sorry. You don't need words to tell me how badly you wanted it. It was mean for me to tease you when I saw you were telling me with your body and your freckled face and your pretty deer eyes the whole time, no? Can I see again, since I need glasses just like yours?"

And then Shane was unburying his face because Ilya was asking, and his body knew how to give Ilya what Ilya asked for even before his brain knew he wanted to.

And more than that, Shane was opening up because he could tell that Ilya *got it*. Shane had been responding, he always was, he nodded and he moved and he answered, he did, except sometimes the only answer people wanted was a spoken reply because they would insist in the same breath that it was the most truthful response even as they read hidden meanings into what Shane hadn't said anyways—

But Ilya was different. Touch was the first language Shane and Ilya really shared, and their honesty lived in that form of communication long before they tried speaking to each other.

Ilya could understand that Shane meant what he meant without saying it and not being able to voice it did not make his thoughts and feelings any less truthful.

Shane fixed his gaze on Ilya's pupils, staring at them as Ilya blinked and blinked and blinked. Concern bled across Ilya's expression. In Ilya's eyes and the corners of his mouth and his arms around Shane, Shane could read the familiar "there you are," and "stay," and "it's this," that Ilya usually traced into his skin after they fucked.

Shane wondered what Ilya read in his own brows, his shoulders, how his hands clung to Ilya because he still felt unmoored and desperate to be understood.

"I know I am handsome, but you will give me a complex if you look at me like that," Ilya ribbed Shane. His flippancy was ruined by how tightly he hugged Shane to him as soon as Shane leaned toward him. Ilya pulled Shane over one of Ilya's legs and then between them so he could tangle them together now that Shane's limbs had become more malleable.

And the *fuck you, where did you even learn that*, shot out of Shane's brain and was right at the tip of his tongue. It stuck a bit though, and before Shane could rip it out of himself anyways, Ilya was leaning over and grabbing Shane's phone off their nightstand before slipping it into his sweaty palms. "For you. But I know you're going to say something like

‘fuck you, who is teaching you fun things in boring English language,’ right? The Bachelor is just like the New Yorker.”

The laugh that Ilya startled out of Shane was so genuine and unthinking it surprised even Shane when it didn’t even take anything with it. The sound of it made all the hard lines in Ilya’s face go soft.

Oh. I scared him.

And Shane thought he could get the words out, the “Sorry for killing the mood, don’t be scared, it’ll go away soon, and I can be functional again, just don’t leave yet,” that Ilya deserved to hear after all this.

Shane could do it, he knew he could. He was further from that fuzzy space where all he wanted to do was do exactly what Ilya wanted him to. He was no longer panicking because he was meeting unexpected resistance when he tried to speak even though he just wanted this all to be perfect.

Shane could tell he wasn’t at the point where he needed to call out sick because the words wouldn’t come even if he bit his tongue until it bled. He could give Ilya this.

“I’m sure your Boston Lily misses you.” Ilya said, and Shane could feel Ilya’s smirk between the kisses that he had started peppering on Shane’s back.

That freed Shane, warring indecision coming second to how badly he needed to respond right the fuck now. Before Shane knew it, he was tightening his hold on the phone Ilya handed him and swiping open their text chat. Quickly, Shane typed, *How the hell did you learn that’s what my teammates call you?*, and then tilted his screen so that Ilya could read it over Shane’s shoulder.

“I am Russian.”

You use that line every time I ask you questions you don’t want to answer!

“Are you—how do they say it? Denying my identity?”

Shane’s mouth dropped open as he scrambled for the right letters on his screen.

ILYA!

“Mm, yes, I love how you scream my name.”

And then Shane turning his phone screen off and setting it back on his wireless nightstand charger because he wanted to scream with how much he loved Ilya fucking Rozanov, but he wouldn’t give Ilya that satisfaction, so he needed his hands free to kiss him instead.

Shane turned around, closing the distance between them. As Shane nipped at Ilya’s bottom lip, he felt Ilya relax, parting his lips so that he could slip his tongue into Shane’s mouth.

Shane pulled back even as Ilya's hands chased him, sliding back on the bed so he could get an eyeful of Ilya's curls, his face, the cords in the column of his neck, his taut abdominal muscles, and then finally his hardening cock. Throwing one knee back and then sliding onto his stomach as he followed up with the other, Shane moved back on the bed until his mouth hovered over Ilya's groin.

If Ilya wanted Shane to be quiet, Shane could be quiet. Fucking Ilya Rozanov could help.

With that, Shane closed his mouth around Ilya's cock.

For the rest of the night, Ilya regaled them with an endless stream of language, much of it so explicit a veteran hockey player would blush at them, and Shane didn't say another word.

They didn't stop touching each other, not even when they fell asleep together.

The rest? That would come.

But for the first time, the future was starting to look like they might be able to let it.

End Notes

brought to you by my identity crisis after i started a job where i have to do lots of taxing things just so i can do my job.

and fun fact, i started this fic because i personally hate the whole "use your words"/"say it if you really want it" trope except i learned while researching that sometimes the response is actually Really Not The Point which blew my mind because why ask questions except so you get answers?? and this was born.

may one day write a scene about communicating without the fade to black, but this was really about my big feelings about otherness and communication and how it echoes with queerness, neurodivergence, language barriers, and all the intersections between them, so oop.

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