

pillowtalk

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/77230121) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/77230121>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Heated Rivalry (TV)
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov
Additional Tags:	Fluff , Silly , Idiots in Love , Ilya Rozanov Loves Shane Hollander , Shane Hollander Loves Ilya Rozanov , language of care , Post-Episode: s01e06 The Cottage (Heated Rivalry)
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2026-01-07 Words: 1,810 Chapters: 1/1

pillowtalk

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Summary

Shane's fingertips lazily trace down the middle of his back, and then tap their way back up. Ilya wants to die here.

"If you could be any animal," Shane asks, yawning in the middle of the sentence, "what animal would you be?"

Shane and Ilya play a game.

Notes

can i be loved genuinely

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

Their second last night at the cottage, they fall asleep in one of the guest beds. Ilya finds himself curled into Shane, their legs slotted together. The crickets sing outside. Shane's heart thuds in his chest. Ilya wants to hear it forever, wants to slip a recording device into his ribs and get a speaker surgically installed in his ear so that he is always aware of it.

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"If you could be any animal," Shane asks, yawning in the middle of the sentence, "what animal would you be?"

Ilya laughs, fights back a yawn himself. "I don't know. What would you be?"

Shane contemplates for a second. "Maybe a beaver?"

"Because you are Canadian?"

"No, because—" Shane looks suddenly delighted. "How did you know the beaver was Canada's national animal?"

"I didn't," Ilya admits. "But I have seen it on the little fat coins here. Five cents."

"Nickels," Shane is smoothing over the top of his head.

"Tell me why you would be beaver," Ilya asks, because he wants to know.

There's been a lot of time wasted leaving and making excuses that could have been used to have these conversations. Ilya knows how Shane moves, what he likes and prefers and how he exists in the comfort of privacy. Ilya wants to know all of that, but he wants to know every mask he's worn too, every phase, every circumstance that has crafted him. Favourite colours. What subjects they were good at in school. Traditions. He bets that Shane's house had been ripe with fun ones.

He used to feel jealous, when they were younger, but now he is mostly thankful. *Thank you to the world for keeping Shane Hollander happy and safe. Thank you for giving him to me like this. I will take it from here.*

"It would be fun," Shane insists. "You pile up sticks, build stuff. Plus, if there are any predators close you can just go into your house, and you're safe. In your dam."

"Ah," Ilya presses his mouth against Shane's rib, smiling into skin. "Makes sense, now."

"What?"

"Even in your animal fantasy, you are thinking about real estate," Ilya sighs, and Shane jabs his thumb into the middle of his back for a second as punishment.

“You’re such an asshole,” Shane says, but then he’s pressing a kiss to the top of Ilya’s head, and all is forgiven. “What would you be?”

“Are you going to be this animal with me? Or are you a person?” Ilya asks, closing his eyes.

“Well, you’re born the animal, so we don’t even know each other technically,” Shane says, now tracing careful circles.

“Hollander,” Ilya groans, propping his chin up on Shane’s chest to really look at him. “We spent all this time not together and now you want to spend time together talking about not meeting?”

“Your eyes are so nice,” Shane says absentmindedly, dragging the tip of his nail right below Ilya’s waterline. “Like the water. Should we go swimming again tomorrow?”

“Yes,” Ilya says, something hot turning in his stomach. “Maybe. Yes.”

“If we were both beavers,” Shane starts, “I think my dam would be bigger than yours.”

This guy is crazy, Ilya thinks. Then, *nobody other than me should ever have him.*

“You are trying to be my rival, even as wild animal,” Ilya says in disbelief.

“How else would we even meet?” Shane frowns.

He laughs, wraps his arms around him the best he can and squeezes, overcome with something affectionate, soft, thankful. Who else is ever going to ask him something like this? Who else is ever going to think through this kind of hypothetical with intention to make it mirror reality? Nobody else, as far as Ilya is concerned.

“I saw the question in one of my mom’s magazines,” Shane admits. “I was just thinking about it.”

“What kind of magazine is asking you to think about these kinds of questions?” Ilya asks, amused.

“It was some better living thing, I don’t know,” Shane exhales, smiling a little sheepishly. “It was an article giving ideas for good pillowtalk.”

“Pillowtalk? Like only to talk about when in bed? Why can we not talk about animals elsewhere?”

“No, it’s like— pillowtalk is just what you talk about after you finish having sex with someone and you’re just kind of laying there,” Shane is going a little red, visible even in the dim lamplight. “I don’t know. We didn’t do very much of it before, but it’s supposed to build your bond. Increase intimacy. I want to do that with you. I would like to.”

Shane, Shane, sincere and lovely Shane who will collect pieces of information like a magpie, sort them into little piles to retrieve at the right time. All Ilya wants to do is lie here forever. Damn the league and damn the cup and the whole world too while he’s at it. Shane, who

wants to talk to him and know him, doesn't ask him for anything but his honesty, doesn't need him to worry and fret about all of the little details, just wants him here, beyond what his body can provide, beyond money and honour and duty. Wants him.

It makes him hungry for something. For Shane to ask something material of him. To have to work for it, earn it, impress him. Money is such a foreign worry to him now, less about having it and more about managing, being diligent. Ilya has a guy for the legal stuff, but he manages the logistics himself. He makes sure everyone is fed, warm, healthy. He likes doing those things. He just wishes he did not feel taken advantage of instead of appreciated.

"Okay," he announces, sitting up, pulling Shane onto his chest now, planting his hands firmly on either side of his hips. "I have mine."

"What is it?" Shane shifts, adjusting himself, craning his head to look at Ilya.

"You get to be a person, and we are on a farm," Ilya sets the scene for him. "And I am your horse."

"What?" Shane asks. "You can't be a specific animal in a specific place."

"Why not? You are beaver in Canada. You could have been beaver in Arctic. I would not mind."

Shane doesn't have a response for him, but he does crack a little smile after a couple seconds before pressing a cheek into Ilya, obscuring his face.

"Do you want to hear why I am your horse?"

"Because I'm *riding* you?"

"Ah," Ilya had not thought of that, but he's delighted at the way this is working out. "No. But that is very good."

Shane inhales. The crickets sing outside.

"I want to be useful to you," Ilya says to him.

Shane is silent. The words are heavier than he anticipated they would be, but they carry truth, and that's what they're meant to bring to each other this weekend.

"You can tell me what to do. Where to take you. And it will be something I can do for you better than you can do for yourself," Ilya's palm settles over his shoulder, squeezes. "I want to give you that when I can."

You are my peace. I want to slot myself into your life. I want to make it easy.

"You do," Shane says quietly, rubbing his cheek on Ilya's chest. "You already do that."

Ilya shakes his head no, because he doesn't want to be appeased, doesn't want to ask for comfort. This is something he is trying to give.

“You have your own world, and you have done all of it by yourself,” Ilya knows he’s not explaining himself the most effectively, but he hopes that the sentiment still comes across well enough. “I am not the person doing that for you.”

“Well, I don’t need you to be,” Shane’s voice is low, soft.

“I know,” Ilya says, and he doesn’t know how to explain this without spilling out everything inside of him.

I know you are self sufficient. I know you are capable. I like that about you. I like that you are a builder. I like that you can attack any problem once it’s set in front of you, once you’re told it’s something you need to do. I am someone who has earned time and attention through doing those things for other people. I want to be with you. I want to do good for you, be good for you.

Then, quieter, from the pit in his stomach, the sentiment propping up his wishes.

I don’t know how else to earn you.

“Ilya,” Shane says his name, and electricity shoots down his spine, heat rising to the tips of his ears. “I like being with you.”

“Why?” Ilya finds himself asking, words coming out bitter, unhappy, and he doesn’t want to do this, doesn’t want to fight.

Shane doesn’t rise to it. “It feels good. I think even if— even though it’s hard, it’s easy. It’s worth the hard parts.”

Ilya stays quiet. He doesn’t like to ask for what he needs.

“You ground me. You make me someone I’m scared to be out loud,” Shane kisses his sternum, knowing anyway. “You challenge me. You know what I need. I want to be what you need too.”

Something primal inside of him is understood by something primal inside of Shane.

“You are,” Ilya feels his jaw wobble, tense, wobble. “You are so safe for me.”

You give me what I need. You anticipate me.

“It helps that you suck my dick really well,” Shane continues, and Ilya laughs, squeezes him tight. “And you are understanding.”

“I would never call myself understanding,” Ilya says.

“Well, you are,” Shane is back to drawing circles, on his chest this time. “So deal with it.”

Ilya sees it, a version of them in their thirties, forties, fifties here. He can see two suitcases, both their names on the deed of a house, if Shane will ever agree to that. Framed photos. Joint invitations addressed to the two of them in spidery cursive on a dining table, to *Mr:*

Hollander & Mr. Rozanov. And maybe, a whisper in the crevice of his mind suggests, after he retires, *Mr. and Mr. Hollander.*

“You are rubbing off on me, all your boring,” Ilya says when he catches himself fantasizing about documents.

Shane sinks his teeth into his chest for a second in what is meant to be retaliation. What Ilya wants to say is *thank you for your stability. Thank you for the quiet. Thank you for peace. Thank you for wanting to do that for me. Thank you for doing that for me.*

He doesn't have the words, but he is sure that Shane understands what he means.

End Notes

for canada for canada for canada!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Leave a comment what animal you would be i think i would be a hare with a fucked up face and intense eyes and i would have really dense bones.

Thanks clemmie for telling me nobody knows beavers are Canada's national animal

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