

It's you

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/78809906) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/78809906>.

Rating:	Not Rated
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Heated Rivalry (TV) , Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov
Additional Tags:	Established Relationship , Autistic Shane Hollander , Soft Ilya Rozanov , Stimming , unmasking , Emotional Hurt/Comfort , very little hurt lots of comfort , Domestic Fluff , Post-Canon , as in post TV show canon , author has not read the books yet whoops , author is MAJORLY projecting onto shane hollander , feel like that tag must be growing by the day , Not Beta Read
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2026-02-13 Words: 4,301 Chapters: 1/1

It's you

by [passivelyreading42](#)

Summary

Ilya noticed the little things, the nearly imperceptible movements of fingers and minutely shifting facial muscles. He noticed the patterns in it all as well, when it tended to happen more than not. One day, an internet rabbit hole leads him to learn that there may be more behind his boyfriends quirks than he initially thought.

or: after some coaxing, Shane lets himself unmask enough to stim in front of Ilya. Ilya is predictably smitten

Notes

I acknowledge that this fic is incredibly self indulgent and full of projection, but listen, as a queer neurodivergent person, heated rivalry (positively) emotionally obliterated me in a way I was completely unprepared for and this is how I'm choosing to deal with it. Enjoy some fluff from the inner recesses of my brain.

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

The thing about Ilya was that he was perceptive, sometimes too much for his own damn good.

Sure, it made him an incredible athlete, that ability to sense another player's next move from just a subtle shift of their body weight or tilt of their head, but it could be exhausting for him too, to *notice* things all the time.

He often found himself finding patterns that maybe didn't even exist and looking for meaning in places that usually didn't warrant his attention. It was something he had intentionally tried to relax on as he had aged, knowing that it was all just a part of his anxiety anyway, and he was luckily in a place in his life now where hyper vigilance didn't need to be his norm anymore.

Despite these efforts to save his mental energy, it wasn't all that surprising that Shane became one focus of his perceptiveness over the years. After all, he had become a focus of Ilya's life in many more ways than that.

He had noticed the big things rather quickly, the ginger ale, the clothes folding, the dietary restrictions, but with every hour he had spent with Shane, no matter how spread apart those hours had been in the beginning of their relationship, he had begun to pick up on more subtle habits as well.

He had noticed the way Shane's hands lingered on some fabrics more than others, often repetitively stroking the pillow cases between them as they lay together in countless hotel rooms.

After they had made their relationship official and started spending more time cuddling rather than just having sex, Ilya had noticed how Shane almost couldn't seem to touch him when he was wearing certain clothes. He would always try of course, but Ilya could tell by the tension in his neck and hands that he wasn't fully relaxed, not until Ilya switched out the offending garment for something else (or removed it entirely).

Without much conscious effort, those items of clothing had slowly found their way out of rotation until just about everything in Ilya's closet was Shane approved. He still had his favorites, the hoodies that were more his than Ilya's and the well worn tshirts that he always seemed to nuzzle extra close to, but nothing much remained that was on Shane's entirely unspoken "no-touch" list.

Over time, Ilya had developed a pretty reliable sense of which textures were upsetting to his boyfriend and simply didn't buy much that fell into that category. He liked when Shane was cuddly, sue him.

Once they had moved into their apartment together, Ilya had picked up on even more little habits, like how Shane always hummed the same pattern of noises while he ate breakfast or grimaced and briefly moved his hands toward his ears when Ilya accidentally turned on the TV too loud. Sometimes, when Shane was stressed and thought Ilya wasn't looking, he would

repetitively smack his hands on top of his thighs for a few seconds, like he was letting off a little burst of steam.

Even if all these behaviors might have added up to something unusual to an outsider, Ilya had never really thought much about it in the past. It was all just Shane stuff, special to him because Shane was special to him, but not particularly notable in any other way.

It wasn't until one night when he was scrolling on his phone before bed that he ever encountered an outside explanation for some of Shane's quirks.

His thumb was mindlessly flicking through instagram posts when a familiar scene forced him pause. A young woman in a restaurant filled his screen and something about the way she was holding her knife and fork and moving her food around her plate reminded him *exactly* of Shane. It was uncanny.

The video then cut to the same woman standing in front of her closet, clearly having just finished getting dressed, with a man off screen playfully asking her how many of that same tshirt she owned. Another moment that could have been clipped straight out of his daily life. It was only then that his eyes made their way to the text at the top of the screen, "POV: you have an autistic partner."

Several more scenes of the couple continued to play, but Ilya was lost in thought. He let his eyes go out of focus as he stared at the bedroom wall. Shane was away that night, so there was no one there to question why Ilya was allowing the same instagram video to play over for the 12th time with a thousand yard stare on his face.

After several minutes of contemplation, he opened his translator app and hastily typed in the word "autistic." While he was generally quite confident in his English at this point, he needed to be absolutely sure what he was working with before he let his brain go any further.

The Russian that popped up on his screen was the word he had been expecting. He let out a rough sigh. The more he thought about it, the more it started to ring a bell in his mind. He recalled one of his evenings spent at Shane's parents house and the word "autism" being passed around a few times between Yuna and Shane. Ilya had been in the other room and not paying much attention, so he hadn't ever bothered to ask his boyfriend about it.

Curious, he opened the comment section on the video. It was filled with many words that Ilya wasn't familiar with, but what he did understand continued to fit into a distinctly Shane shaped picture in his brain. One commenter joked about their girlfriend always drank the same thing and was ruffled when restaurants didn't have it. Check. Another talked about how their partner lovingly teased that they would wear a hole in the floor by pacing the same path over and over. Check again.

He scrolled and scrolled for longer than he'd liked to admit, and by the end had scratched out a list of terms he needed to translate. *Masking. Stimming. High-functioning. Disregulated. Sensory overload. Meltdown.* He of course understood the literal meaning behind some of these words, but he had a feeling that there was a lot his was missing without context.

In a rare exercise of self restraint, he got himself to put down his phone and turn off the bedside lamp without beginning an hours long research project. This could wait for tomorrow, he reassured himself, and it would all almost certainly be easier to understand after a good night's sleep.

Over the next few weeks, Ilya dove deep down an internet rabbit hole. In whatever free moments he had, he found himself searching for information through nearly every source imaginable: online forums, reddit, instagram, youtube, blogs, even webmd.

Early in the process, he had been lucky enough to find an online dictionary that specialized in translating terms about autism into other languages. The Russian page elucidated the words that had seemed so complicated and made them simple, even providing context and examples that painted a clear picture in his brain. A once again very Shane shaped picture.

The more he read, the more he wondered how he had gotten so far into his adult life not really knowing anything about this. It was simply something that wasn't discussed in Russia. You were either normal enough to participate in society or you just *weren't*. No medical explanation or accommodations needed.

Of course, not everything he read reminded him of Shane. Some people talked about wanting to listen to loud music and thrash around as a way to blow off steam and calm down. That didn't seem like Shane at all. Others mentioned loving eating spicy food because it tickled something deep in their brain. Also not very Shane.

So he was somewhat perplexed. Was this a piece of the puzzle of his boyfriend that he had somehow been missing for all these years, or was he just making a mountain out of mole hill and "over-noticing" again? He had learned rather quickly through his research that neurodivergence was considered to be on a spectrum, but really so was all of humanity (in a different sense), so how could he know if Shane was autistic or if he was just *Shane*?

The whole situation was also somewhat complicated by one of the many new concepts he had come across: *masking*. He was plagued by the idea that Shane was shutting down parts of himself in an attempt to seem more normal.

And the more he thought about it, Shane did do that, didn't he? The way he flinched when someone turned on bright overhead lights but quickly schooled his expression. The way he stopped tapping his thighs when Ilya noticed him. The way he never actually said anything about the fabrics he couldn't stand and Ilya had to intuit everything.

He was at a loss for what to do.

He didn't want to make Shane uncomfortable, but he also didn't think he could go back to their life without getting closure on this issue.

After a few more weeks of considering the pros and cons (and continuing his research), he decided to bring it up, in a very low-key way. Or at least that was the plan.

They had a blissful 3 days off to spend together with absolutely nothing planned. Shane had, predictably, still gotten up at the crack of dawn to work out, but had allowed himself to be coaxed (post shower) into lying with Ilya on the couch.

An unimportant game was playing on the TV at a low volume, but neither of them were really watching it. In fact, Ilya was fairly sure Shane's eyes were closed as he lay with his head on Ilya's chest, one arm and one leg wrapped around him like a koala.

Ilya stroked his boyfriend's hair in a steady pattern and enjoyed the rhythmic rising and falling of their touching chests. This was perfect, he thought, he could stay here forever if Shane would let them. And yet something in him compelled him to break the silence.

"Can I ask something?" he said quietly, voice somewhat gravelly from lack of use.

"Hmm?" Shane stirred, scooching until his chin was on Ilya's sternum and he could look up at him. "What is it?"

Ilya averted his eyes and paused for a moment, unsure of how to proceed now that he had gotten the courage to start. "Well," he began, "I was thinking about something I heard you talk about with your mother one time."

Shane sat up more and continued to stare back without speaking. Ilya swallowed down his nerves and continued, "I remember her saying something about, well... autism once."

His boyfriend's eyebrows shot up, clearly somewhat taken aback by where the conversation was going. "Autism?" he repeated, as if he was convinced he hadn't heard Ilya correctly.

"Mhm, yes," Ilya replied, "There's no pressure to talk, but I have just been... wondering a bit lately."

"Wondering," Shane repeated again, this time fully sitting up and moving to sit separate from Ilya. He stared down at the baseboard across the room and didn't respond.

"Hey," Ilya said gently after a couple seconds, "Like I said, no pressure." He resisted the impulse to reach out and touch Shane, knowing that that was rarely helpful in moments like these unless Shane asked for it.

They sat in silence for some time, Ilya eventually looking back to the TV to allow Shane time to organize his thoughts. He was used to this at this point, and had learned not to view it as being ignored or rejected.

The quiet stretched on, Shane still staring at the opposite wall and rubbing his fingers together.

"I'm autistic," he finally said, breaking the silence. He let the statement linger in the air for a few seconds before turning to face Ilya.

Ilya hummed and nodded, trying to keep his expression as neutral as possible. "I guess I just thought you'd, well... figured it out already on your own," Shane added.

"Hmm," Ilya responded, contemplating for a moment, "I guess I already had. Well, at least, sort of."

He shifted and reached out to take Shane's hands in his own, continuing, "I did not know anything about a diagnosis or a medical term, but I have known you for a long time, and the you I know is... pretty autistic now that I think about it."

Though it wasn't Ilya's intention, this admittance seemed to break the tension in the room and Shane flopped backwards against the couch with a laugh.

"Seriously?" he asked, playfully exasperated.

"Yeah," Ilya chuckled, "I mean, is not a big deal. You are still you, just with a little more explanation added."

Shane gazed at him from where he lay on the couch, smiling slightly. He sighed and shook his head, then whispered, "It's not something I've talked about in a long time."

"We do not have to," Ilya quickly reassured, "It does not change anything. But thank you for telling me anyway."

Shane crawled back over to Ilya and nuzzled his face into his neck rather than responding, but Ilya got the message.

It didn't come up again for over a week.

Any fears that Ilya had had about things being awkward were swiftly squashed after their conversation. They spent the rest of their 3 days off enjoying each other's company, resting, and eating, exactly as they would have before they had ever talked about it.

Ilya continued to notice more little things about Shane that now made more sense, his meals that always consisted of the same 10 foods, his obsession with maintaining his workout routine, his seeming inability to hear what someone was saying when there were other conversations happening in the room.

Unfortunately, the confirmation of this fact about Shane had really created more questions than it had answered for him. At the same time, he was also aware of how sensitive of a topic this was, so he tried his best to be content with the information he had and not to worry about the rest. Shane was a nearly thirty-year-old man who had been living this way for his whole life. He was fine.

Much to Ilya's surprise, Shane was the one to bring it up again.

"So how much do you even know about autism?" he asked out of the blue. They were scarfing down dinner together after a home game (or more accurately Ilya was scarfing and Shane was eating at his usual, measured pace).

"Mmm, some," Ilya replied between bites, "Not much until the past couple of weeks. That's why I asked you about it."

"Well, what changed then?" Shane asked, "I mean, why suddenly start learning about it?"

Ilya took a sip of coke and leaned back in his chair, "I saw a video about it online. It reminded me of you and made me curious."

Shane blinked back at him somewhat incredulously. "What kind of video? I mean... in what way?" Shane questioned, insecurity written all over his face.

Ilya took another bite and responded while chewing, "Nothing serious, just something about what it's like to have an autistic partner. It was lighthearted, nothing to worry about."

"No, I want more details," Shane demanded, not willing to let his boyfriend off the hook so easily, "Clearly it's more obvious than I thought if random internet videos like that remind you of me."

"Shane," Ilya said, leaning his elbows on the table and looking the other man in the eye, "This is really not a big deal. Is not obvious, I just know you very well."

Shane stared back, unyielding and clearly still expecting an answer.

"Ok, ok," Ilya began with a huff, "It was just things about routines, preferences for food and clothes, stimming, things like that."

Shane glanced away and thought for a moment. "Alright I guess that makes sense," he conceded, "Wait, how do you know the word *stimming*?"

Ilya collected both of their plates and took them into the kitchen. Shane followed.

"Part of my research," Ilya bragged, "I have learned so many new words in the past few weeks." Shane began loading the dishes into the dishwasher rather than replying.

The two men worked silently in the kitchen for a few minutes, Shane cleaning and Ilya starting to prep their breakfast for the next day.

Now that the opportunity had presented itself, Ilya couldn't stand the thought of ending this conversation without addressing a few more of his questions. Given Shane's general caginess, he wasn't sure when he'd get the opportunity to ask again. "There was another word I learned too," he started, breaking the silence, "*Masking*."

Shane stopped wiping the counter and turned to face Ilya, who was still casually filling up jars with oatmeal ingredients.

"It means when an autistic person changes their behavior so they can fit in better," he explained, grabbing raisins out of the cupboard.

"I know what it means," Shane responded defensively.

"Yeah I bet you do," Ilya murmured. A quiet tension stretched out between the two of them. "I think you probably do it a lot," he eventually added.

Shane leaned back against the counter and ran his hands through his hair, deep in thought. "I'm not sure," he sighed, "I've perfected how to play my role in the world and been doing it so long that it's... hard to tell what's natural and what's not anymore." Ilya nodded, placing his now finished jars into the fridge.

He approached Shane and put his hands on his shoulders. "Well if you feel like you are playing role, then I think that is something to think about," he said softly, "Do you-- do you feel like you are playing role with me?"

"No," Shane replied quickly, a small smile on his lips, "Or at least not consciously, not most of the time."

Ilya brought one hand up to cup Shane's chin, the other settling on his waist. "I never want you to feel like you are performing for me," he whispered, "I know it is hard after all these years, but I want you to feel safe enough to, well, unmask around me."

Shane broke eye contact at that, but Ilya gently turned his face back. "Hey," he soothed, "I am not saying to make some kind of huge change. Just... do whatever feels natural and comfortable. If you want to stim, then stim. You are safe with me."

"Ok," Shane whispered after a long pause, voice breaking slightly. Ilya used his thumbs to wipe away the tears that had started to well up at the corners of Shane's eyes, then brought him into a tender kiss.

Just as they had discussed, nothing big changed in their relationship. Rather than any particular physical act, the shift Ilya noticed most was in Shane's general demeanor. It was like the last little bit of a wall had come down between them; Shane took less time to think before speaking in conversation, now more assured that he could express his thoughts without manicuring them. Ilya had always been happy to wait for him, but he liked seeing his boyfriend talk more confidently.

Shane even began to let Ilya in on more of his thought processes that had always been running behind the scenes.

"Can you take off your clothes?" Shane blurted out with a gesture to Ilya's tshirt one night as they were getting ready for bed. He had been pacing around the bedroom for the past few minutes, seemingly unable to let himself quiet down enough to crawl under the covers with Ilya.

"Sure," the other man replied with a smirk, already pulling the hem over his head, "Why?"

Shane tapped his hand against his leg and looked towards the bathroom. "Because," he sighed, "Because I'm super fucking wound up and-- and I really want to cuddle with you but I can't stand the thought of clothes touching me right now." Ilya had slipped off his boxers during this explanation.

"Ok," he said, flopping back down on the bed, "Take off yours too then." Shane flushed slightly at the implication but still stripped off his own underwear before crawling over the

mattress to wrap his arms around Ilya.

Bringing one hand up to brush through Shane's hair, Ilya reached over and turned off the bedside lamp. "Did you set the alarm?" Shane asked, though it came out muffled with his face pressed against Ilya's skin.

"Mmmhh," Ilya confirmed, flipping over his phone screen to show Shane.

The two lay in comfortable silence for a while. Ilya was ready to fall asleep any second, but he could tell that Shane's mind was still on the prowl based on his posture.

In the earlier days of their relationship, Ilya would have had to ignore it or drag whatever it was out of Shane, but he was pleasantly surprised when his boyfriend spoke up on his own, "Do you think you could, like, lay on top of me?"

Ilya looked down at him, somewhat shocked but also amused.

"I mean, not fully obviously," Shane clarified, "But I think the pressure might, I don't know, feel kinda nice."

He continued to look down at Shane, raising an eyebrow before suddenly rolling them over so he was on top. "Ask and you shall receive," he whispered.

"Where did you learn that?" Shane chuckled.

"In book I read," Ilya sighed, making himself comfortable on Shane's chest, "Hit me if you want me to move."

They both fell asleep quicker than normal that night.

The first time that things really changed was only a couple days later.

Ilya was sitting on the couch, resting a newly sprained ankle, when Shane burst through the front door. He had had meetings all day (which Ilya had luckily been spared) and was just returning home after nearly 10 hours out of the house. The minute Ilya set eyes on him, he knew that he was in a bad way.

Shane's eyes were blown wide and his chest was heaving with uneven breaths. His hair was a mess where he had clearly been tugging on it.

"Shane?" Ilya asked, turning as far around as he could on the couch. The other man didn't respond, just bracing himself against the kitchen counter and squeezing his eyes tightly shut. "Shane?" he repeated again, now with more intensity.

Still getting no response, Ilya pushed up off the couch and hobbled his way over to his boyfriend. "Sweetheart," he whispered, "What is happening? Did you drive home like this?"

Shane violently shook his head back and forth and began pacing around the room. "I-- I--," he tried to speak, "Everything's... fuck!"

Ilya resisted the urge to touch Shane, instead trying to simply act as a calming presence. "Did something happen?" he questioned.

"It's just-- It was all fucking day and I hate this shirt so much and I was hungry but there was nothing there I could eat and ... god! Everyone always wants something and I'm so tired," he rambled, breaths becoming more erratic.

"My love, you are overstimulated," Ilya interrupted. Now that he could name this kind of crisis, he was feeling slightly more prepared to deal with it than he had been before.

Shane began to scrub his hands over his face as his pacing continued. "Look at me," Ilya gently commanded. Shane turned his body towards Ilya but didn't make eye contact. "Would it help to stim right now?" he asked, "There is no pressure, but you are safe, ok? Just ... do whatever you need to do with your body to feel better."

Shane was still for a moment before giving a curt nod and returning to pacing. Ilya took that as a sufficient sign and went to sit back down. He positioned his body so that he could still see Shane but was far enough away to give him room to breathe.

Ilya watched as Shane hastily pulled off his tie and unbuttoned his dress shirt. That alone seemed to lower his shoulders by a few centimeters. He kept walking the same path around the dining table and, with a huff, somewhat reluctantly began to flap his hands, stopping every couple of feet to jump up and down a few times.

This same pattern continued for a few minutes, becoming slower and slower as Shane's breathing evened out and his muscles began to relax. Eventually, he let out a long sigh and plopped down on the floor right where he stood. He closed his eyes for a moment before hesitantly looking over at Ilya. The other man smiled reassuringly, chest welling up with affection. "Thank you," Shane croaked out.

Ilya laughed and began to limp his way over to the other side of the room. "Why are you thanking me?" he probed, lowering himself to the floor next to Shane, "I did nothing but sit on couch."

"You did more than that and you know it," Shane replied petulantly, resting his head on Ilya's shoulder.

"No," Ilya rejected, "You are so strong and brave. Thank you for showing me."

Lacking the energy to argue, Shane just shook his head and snuggled closer. "I love you," he whispered.

"Ya tozhe tebya lyublyu," Ilya whispered back, leaning down to kiss the top of Shane's head.

They sat together in silence, simply enjoying listening to each other breathe.

"Alright," Ilya sighed eventually, "Time for bubble bath." He stood and attempted to scoop Shane up off the floor. "Jesus, your ankle!" Shane warned, "I'm not a damsel in distress."

"Ehhh, you like it," Ilya teased as they walked towards the bathroom. Well, Shane couldn't argue there.

End Notes

As I wrote this I realized that I was also making Ilya kind of neurodivergent but decided to keep it bc it's cute and kind of makes sense to me

Feedback is appreciated as always! Please tell me if you are a fellow neurodivergent and have had a similar experience with this show bc all my friends are just talking about how hot the sex is (which it is, don't get me wrong) but it is just not the main take away for me at all. Also I will hear no complaints about the hand flapping/jumping bc I am a basic bitch stimmer and this is based on my personal experience lol

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