

I Know Exactly Why I Walk and Talk Just Like a Machine

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/77910861) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/77910861>.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warnings:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings , 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 , Hayden Pike (mentioned)
Additional Tags:	Introspection , Autism , Autistic Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov Loves Shane Hollander , Shane Hollander Loves Ilya Rozanov , Emotional Hurt/Comfort , Fluff and Angst , Overuse of italics , you can pry them from my cold dead hands , no beta we die like shanes resolve in episode two
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2026-01-18 Words: 1,349 Chapters: 1/1

I Know Exactly Why I Walk and Talk Just Like a Machine

by [The_Shittiest_Knight](#)

Summary

Shane Hollander was a man defined in the ways that set him apart from others.

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Shane is autistic, he may not have the language for that, but it does not make it any less true. Love, when you are autistic, can be complicated.

Notes

Okay! Time for me to project onto Shane Hollander for over 1000 words :))
I am AuDHD myself, so my experience is probably quite different to how Shane experiences autism. but I thought I'd share some of my thoughts on how he handles relationships. Please keep in mind that ASD is not a "one size fits all" disorder.
Also! Title is from Oh No! by MARINA

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

Shane Hollander was a man defined in the ways that set him apart from others.

The league defined him by his skill; the best in the NHL, a prodigy, star player. They gave him the captaincy and he gladly accepted it, forgetting at the time that it was just another way he was different from his peers.

They harped on about his ethnicity as if it was proof of something, rather than a set of inherited traits. *Look at us, isn't the league so diverse? Isn't this proof anyone can make it?* Shane hated it, hated the way that his existence had to be an example for others. He hated the way they acted like his presence wasn't fought for and hated it even more when they talked about how it was.

He hated it even more when that lens was turned on his marriage. He never wanted to be the first anything, he never wanted to be a role model or an icon, he wanted to play hockey publicly and love his husband privately. He wanted to hear that he was great without a qualifier. No "despite", no "considering". He wanted to kiss Ilya without making headlines.

Shane knew he had other differences. He felt it in the way he interacted with others, the way his skin felt too tight as he stumbled through conversations that he never received the rulebook for.

"Again?"

"Jesus Christ. You gotta work on your lying, man."

Tact had never been his strong suit.

It seemed like no matter what language Shane learned the people around him spoke a different one. He could never learn nuances on his own and no one seemed to want to teach him. Maybe that's why he and Ilya meshed so well; being set adrift in an alien world.

There was always space between himself and the others, a moment's hesitation. He didn't know how to bridge that gap, how to close the space. He didn't know how to seem "relatable" with a camera shoved in his face, or how others were able to split focus the way that they did. He couldn't understand people in their unspoken complexity, and he couldn't figure out why it was always on him to understand them.

Ilya was both the same and different. Same in the way that his face would sometimes twist into some unknowable expression, would say some things with an expectation of clarity that never seemed to dawn on Shane. Different in the way that he picked up on it and adjusted.

"That's French, Ilya."

"Yeah, I know, Shane."

Shane didn't touch Ilya when he wore that shirt with the bad texture? Shane found it in the trash later, not a word spoken about it. The same way Shane supplied English words to him, Ilya explained the jokes he didn't quite catch. He understood the way Shane's brain was

structured, could navigate the towering files on thoughts, assumptions, feelings that organised his understanding of the world.

He never made him feel bad about it either, Shane privately thought that was the most surprising thing about it. It would be so easy to turn it into a joke, hell even Hayden had done that a few times, but he never did. Even when it should have been hard. Ilya seemed to love Shane as easy as breathing, and that terrified Shane sometimes.

Here was the thing, Shane loved Ilya more than anyone or anything in this world. Loving him was unavoidable, undeniable. But, it was also *hard*. Not because of Ilya, necessarily. Shane felt closer to him than he had ever felt to someone, but love was an emotion that required communication and Shane had never learned the words.

He tried, and cried tears of frustration when the words came out fumbled and wrong and wholly inadequate. This thing that was beautifully simple and more than he could ever express, there was no way he could ever capture the size of it.

Sometimes, he thought Ilya knew. Times when he laid in bed at night, tracing patterns on Ilya's chest, and he would choke on the all-consuming love he felt for this man. Ilya would take his hand gently, and look at him with such a depth of understanding and emotion on his face that Shane felt that he had to have seen. He had to know.

Logically, of course, Shane knew that he knew. They were married after all, they had witnesses and everything. But, sometimes he wished there were words enough to describe it.

So, he learned Russian. He didn't have the words? He would find some new ones, ones that meant something, ones that Ilya loved as easily as he loved Shane.

Shane had a list of words, words that made up Shane Hollander.

Shane Hollander:

- Hockey player
- ~~Montreal Voyageur~~
- Ottawa Centaur
- Gay
- In love with Ilya Rozanov
- Married
- Japanese-Canadian
- Anxious
- Different

He had carried this list for most of his adult life and it was pathetically small. He had spent so long becoming most of these things, folding himself neatly into these boxes, that he had no idea who he was outside of them. He was over thirty years old now, who would he be when he had to retire from hockey?

He stared at the document on his phone. Was this all he was? Was this all he could be? It wasn't even that he was unhappy with the contents of the list. The problem was that he saw

everyone around him, they all had such rich, vibrant lives. There was no one thing that could be taken away to make them less themselves.

“What’s that?” Ilya asked, resting his head on his shoulder from where he stood behind him.

Shane turned off his screen.

“It’s nothing,” he tried, “Just a note.”

“It had your name, were you updating your wikipedia again?” Ilya teased, but his brow furrowed in concern.

“Okay, first of all, that was you. Second, it’s not important, it’s just a list.”

Ilya hummed.

“Can I see?” he asked.

Shane swallowed against the spike of anxiety he felt at the thought of handing over the list. This was Ilya, there was no safer person to hand himself over to.

“Okay,” he croaked out, holding out the phone.

Ilya took it, reading the short list quickly. Frowning slightly, he looked up.

“*Moy lyubimyy*, is this all you think you are?”

“I’m not a complicated man, Ilya.” Shane shuffled his feet. Ilya had turned to face him now and Shane faltered under his scrutiny.

“That is wrong,” Ilya looked devastated. “But I will fix.”

“What?”

Ilya was typing away, looking more intent than he did scoring a goal. After a short while he handed back Shane’s phone.

“Read,” he said. “I could think of more but I think this will do for now.”

Shane looked at the list which seemed to have doubled in size.

Shane Hollander:

- Hockey player
- ~~Montreal Voyageur~~
- Ottawa Centaur
- Gay
- In love with Ilya Rozanov
- Married

- Japanese-Canadian
- Anxious
- Different
- Surprisingly funny
- Kind
- Loving husband
- Smart
- Focused
- Driven
- Good friend
- Sexy ;)
- Bottom

Shane huffed a wet laugh at his ridiculous husband and kept reading.

- Perfect
- Loved

“There are no words that could contain you, Shane. You are full, unique, individual person. And, you are so loved. Sometimes, I think I can hardly describe it.” Ilya said, holding Shane’s face in his hands. “You are loving, you look at me and I see it written so plainly. You love with the same focus and strength that you do anything. It kills me that you don’t see that.”

“Even though I’m... different?” Shane asked, not sure he could handle the answer.

“You are different. Is true. You think differently. It makes you a force to reckon with on ice, but that is not the point. You are someone whose entire worldview is fundamentally different from those around them. *And* you are the most wonderful person I have ever met.”

“So what if you would rather die than touch a wet cloth? You are you, *moye solnishko*. And I love you so much.”

End Notes

Hi guys! Crazy how much I've been writing lately lmao
If you haven't checked out my other HR fic, please do! It's much funnier than this one, I promise, I was having sad boy autism hours.

<https://archiveofourown.org/works/77596516/chapters/203226406>

As always, feedback is appreciated and your support feeds my ego!

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