

Ask and You Shall Receive

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/77763561) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/77763561>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Heated Rivalry (TV)
Relationships:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov , Shane Hollander & Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov , Hayden Pike
Additional Tags:	Love Confessions , Fluff , Autism Spectrum , Autism , Neurodiversity , True Love's Kiss , Fluff and Humor , Getting Together , Alternate Universe - College/University , Not Canon Compliant , Friends to Lovers , Feel-good , Tooth-Rotting Fluff , Opposites Attract
Language:	English
Collections:	Hollanov sucks! , ✨Favoritos✨ , my fav gay hockey players
Stats:	Published: 2026-01-16 Words: 2,053 Chapters: 1/1

Ask and You Shall Receive

by [oceandeeppmind](#)

Summary

Shane bombards Ilya with random facts until one question changes everything: "Do you know what a kiss feels like?"

Notes

Listen. Shane got his kisses. I got nothing but the carpal tunnel from writing this.

If this made you feel even 10% of what Shane felt on that bench, drop a kudos. It's the only affection I'm getting these days and honestly? I'll take it.

Your perpetually single author who writes romance instead of experiencing it 🙄👊

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

Shane Hollander had a reputation on campus. The Japanese-Canadian freshman was known as "that kid who asks weird questions," specifically to Ilya Rozanov, the six-foot-three Russian exchange student who looked like he'd been carved from marble and intimidation.

It started in Introduction to Chemistry.

Shane had turned around one Tuesday morning, tapped Ilya's notebook, and asked, "Do you know what water tastes like?"

Ilya looked up, gray eyes narrowing. Most people would've retreated. Shane just blinked and continued, voice picking up speed with enthusiasm, "Pure water doesn't have a taste. What we taste is the minerals dissolved in it. The human tongue can detect their absence, which is why distilled water tastes flat. Isn't that weird?"

A pause.

A long one.

Then Ilya responded in his thick accent, "Da. That is... weird."

Shane smiled, genuinely delighted, and turned back around.

That should've been the end of it.

The next week, Shane asked if he knew honey never spoils. "They found edible honey in Egyptian tombs! It's the low moisture content and acidic pH. Bacteria can't grow in it."

Ilya had simply nodded, something almost like amusement flickering across his stern features.

By October, it became routine. Shane would find Ilya between classes, in the library, at the campus coffee shop, presenting whatever fascinating fact had captured his attention. Did Ilya know octopuses have three hearts? That bananas are berries but strawberries aren't? That the smell of rain is called petrichor?

Their classmates watched with confused fascination. Ilya Rozanov didn't do friends. He didn't do small talk. He showed up to class, worked out, and returned to his dorm. Nobody approached Ilya Rozanov.

Nobody except Shane Hollander, who seemed entirely immune to social cues and fear alike.

"Why do you keep bothering him?" Shane's roommate Hayden asked one evening. "He's terrifying."

Shane looked genuinely confused. "Ilya? He's not scary. He listens."

And he did. While others dismissed Shane's rambling or told him he was being "too much," Ilya never did. He'd pause whatever he was doing, give Shane his full attention, and listen.

Sometimes he'd ask follow-up questions. Sometimes he'd just nod. But he always listened.

Shane didn't have many people who did that.

November brought cold weather and new patterns. Ilya started saving Shane a seat in Chemistry, draping his jacket over the chair. When Shane arrived, usually three minutes late with hair disheveled from rushing, the seat would be waiting.

"Did you know penguins propose with pebbles?" Shane said one morning, sliding into his saved seat. "The male searches the entire beach for the perfect one. If she accepts, they're mates for life."

Ilya paused, coffee cup halfway to his lips. He looked at Shane with an expression difficult to read, something tender and vulnerable flickering in those gray eyes before he could hide it.

"The perfect pebble," he repeated slowly, carefully, like he was testing the weight of the words.

"Yeah! Isn't that sweet? They put so much thought into it."

Something soft crossed Ilya's face, gone too quickly to name. His voice dropped lower. "Da. Very sweet."

By December, things had shifted. Ilya walked Shane to his dorm after evening study sessions. He brought coffee without being asked—somehow always knowing Shane wanted a caramel latte with extra foam. When Shane got overwhelmed during finals week, stimming by tapping his fingers rapidly, Ilya wordlessly moved their study session to a quiet corner where Shane could pace while reciting formulas.

Shane's facts continued, but he'd started choosing them more carefully.

"Did you know crows remember faces?" Shane asked while they walked across the frost-covered quad. "They remember someone kind to them for years. They even bring gifts, shiny things they've found, to people they like."

Ilya's hand brushed Shane's, warm despite the cold. "They bring gifts to people they like."

"Yeah." Shane's cheeks flushed. "I think that's nice. That they remember."

"I think so too."

The semester ended. Shane went home for winter break and found himself oddly adrift. He collected facts but had nobody to tell them to. He texted them to Ilya instead.

Ilya responded every time. Sometimes with questions, sometimes with facts of his own. Once, he sent a photo of a smooth, perfectly round stone he'd found on a beach back home in Russia. Shane stared at that photo for longer than he'd admit, remembering penguins and pebbles.

When they returned in January, Shane bounded up to Ilya at the coffee shop on their first day back. He'd meant to ask about Ilya's break, but what came out was, "Did you know your heart beats faster when you see someone you're attracted to? It's autonomic, your sympathetic nervous system activates, releasing adrenaline. Your pupils dilate too, and..."

He stopped.

Stopped talking.

Stopped breathing for a second.

Realizing what he was saying. Realizing his own heart was hammering against his ribcage like it was trying to escape. Realizing Ilya was staring at him with an intensity that made his skin feel too warm.

Ilya watched him with quiet intensity, leaning forward slightly. "Is that so?"

Shane nodded, unable to look away from those gray eyes. Unable to form words. Unable to do anything but feel his pulse thundering in his ears.

They fell back into rhythm. Same saved seat, same study sessions, same comfortable silence punctuated by Shane's questions. But something hummed underneath now, electric and new.

February arrived with unexpected warmth. Shane and Ilya sat on a bench outside the science building, Shane eating a sandwich while Ilya reviewed notes. It was comfortable. Easy. Shane felt settled in a way he rarely did, his usual mental static quieted to a manageable hum.

Then, without planning to, Shane asked, "Do you know what a kiss feels like?"

The question hung between them.

The world seemed to stop. The chattering students faded. The rustling trees went silent. It was just them on that bench, and Shane's heart beating so loud he was sure Ilya could hear it.

Ilya went very still. Slowly, deliberately, he closed his notebook and turned to face Shane fully. "Are you asking me for a fact?" His accent seemed thicker suddenly, rougher.

Shane's heart was racing again. "I don't... I don't know. Maybe I'm asking what it feels like. With you. Specifically." The words tumbled out faster now, the way they always did when he was nervous. "Because I've been thinking about it, and I've researched it, the neuroscience is fascinating, all this dopamine and serotonin and oxytocin, your brain's reward centers light up, but that's not the same as knowing, is it? The empirical data doesn't tell you what it actually feels like, and I..."

Ilya's hand came up to cup Shane's face, thumb brushing his cheekbone with devastating gentleness.

Shane's words died instantly. Completely. Like someone had cut the power to his brain.

"Shane," Ilya said, and Shane loved how his name sounded in that accent, the way Ilya's voice dropped an octave, went soft and careful. "May I show you?"

Shane nodded, not trusting his voice. Not trusting anything except the warmth of Ilya's palm against his skin.

Ilya leaned in slowly, giving Shane every opportunity to pull away. Shane didn't. He tilted his face up, eyes fluttering closed, and then...

Soft.

That was his first thought.

Ilya's lips were impossibly soft, pressing against his with a gentleness that made Shane's chest ache in the best way possible. It was brief, chaste, asking a question rather than demanding an answer.

When Ilya pulled back, Shane's eyes opened slowly. "Oh," he breathed.

"Oh?" Ilya's lips quirked into the smallest smile.

"The research didn't mention it would feel like everything suddenly makes sense. Like finding the answer to a question I didn't know I was asking."

Ilya's smile widened, transforming his face. "No? What else did the research not mention?"

"That I'd want to do it again immediately." Shane bit his lip. "Can I?"

Instead of answering, Ilya kissed him again. This one lasted longer, his other hand cradling Shane's face like he was something precious. Shane made a small sound of happiness, clutching at Ilya's jacket to pull him closer.

They separated, both breathless. Shane leaned in eagerly for another, so focused on the sensation that—

"Shane," Ilya murmured against his lips, pulling back slightly. "Breathe."

Shane blinked, realizing he'd been holding his breath entirely. He sucked in air, laughing. "Sorry, I just... I forgot. Too focused on..."

"I know." Ilya's smile was soft, his thumb stroking Shane's cheek. "But I need you to breathe, da? Cannot have you passing out on me."

"The research didn't mention how easy it is to forget basic bodily functions," Shane said, still dazed. "The sensory input is overwhelming. In a good way."

"We have time to learn." Ilya pressed a kiss to Shane's forehead. "No rush. We go at your pace."

"What if my pace is really enthusiastic but also really inexperienced?"

Ilya's laugh rumbled through his chest. "Then we figure it out together."

Shane melted against him, fingers clutching at Ilya's shirt. "You're really patient. No one's ever been this patient with me."

"Then everyone else is foolish." Ilya's expression turned fierce. "You are worth all the patience in the world."

Shane kissed him again, remembering to breathe this time. "I like listening to you talk," Ilya continued, brushing a strand of Shane's dark hair behind his ear. "Your voice, your excitement, the way your eyes crinkle when you smile. Why would I want you to stop?"

Shane's response was to kiss him once more, clumsy and eager.

"Breathe, baby," Ilya whispered against his mouth, and Shane could feel him smiling.

Shane obeyed, drawing in air while Ilya pressed soft kisses to the corner of his mouth, his jaw, the sensitive spot just below his ear that made Shane shiver.

"Did you know that I've been half in love with you since October?" Shane murmured.

Pause.

"Only half?" Ilya asked softly.

"Okay, entirely in love with you. For months. I just... I didn't have the data to confirm you felt the same way. I'm not good at reading people and you're so hard to read sometimes and I..."

"Then I will be clear." Ilya took both of Shane's hands, thumbs stroking over his knuckles. "I am in love with you, Shane Hollander. With your questions and your facts and the way you see the world. All of it."

"That's the best data I've ever collected."

They sat there as February sun warmed the campus around them, Shane's head on Ilya's shoulder, fingers intertwined. Ilya pressed a kiss to Shane's temple, then another to his cheekbone, then one more to the tip of his nose, making Shane scrunch up his face.

"You're thinking very loud," Ilya observed fondly.

"Sorry, I'm just... I'm really happy. Like, scientifically, measurably happy."

"Mine too." Ilya pulled Shane closer. "Though I do not need science to tell me this."

Shane shifted to face him, tracing the line of Ilya's jaw with gentle fingers. "Can I kiss you again?"

Ilya's answer was to lean down and capture Shane's lips, one hand cradling his face while the other wrapped around his waist. This kiss was unhurried, sweet, and when they parted, Shane

buried his face in Ilya's shoulder, overwhelmed by the rush of emotions.

"Too much?" Ilya asked quietly, rubbing soothing circles on Shane's back.

"No. Just right. I just need a second to process that this is actually happening."

Ilya chuckled. "Not a daydream. I am here. You are here. We are real."

Shane pulled back, dark eyes searching Ilya's face. "Promise?"

"Promise." Ilya sealed it with another gentle kiss. "See? Real."

"Best data I've ever collected," Shane agreed, grinning.

They stayed there as the afternoon stretched on, Shane asking if Ilya knew that penguins mate for life.

"You told me that one already," Ilya said, pressing a kiss to the top of Shane's head.

"I know." Shane's voice was soft. "I just thought it was worth repeating."

Ilya's arms tightened around him. "Da, worth repeating."

Shane thought about all the facts he'd collected, all the questions he'd asked. But sitting here with Ilya, the scary Russian guy who turned out to be the least scary person Shane had ever met, the guy who listened, who stayed, who loved him exactly as he was, that was the most fascinating discovery of all.

End Notes

Written by your autistic author: Ocean 💕 Hello to my co neurodivergent out there! Hope this made you feel seen 🌟

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