

tell me

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by [3e2f48](#)

Summary

Ilya has been thinking. Since Christmas has rolled around and no work on the ice has been done, Ilya and Shane have retired to the cottage, and Ilya has been thinking. Maybe it's time to voice those thoughts.

SET POST 'THE LONG GAME'

The cottage houses both Shane and Ilya, and has been since the NHL sent their players home for the winter. Shane, who sits on the left side of the couch, is engrossed in his phone, meandering over Instagram. Ilya sits across from him, on the right, sprawled over the cushions with his eyes closed, pondering his thoughts.

Shane sends Ilya a look or two from the side, watching over as Ilya's eyes work under his lids, pouring over whatever it is he's been thinking of the past week. Seems it has come to the surface, now. He shifts from his splay and sits up properly, opening his eyes. Shane looks away.

Ilya stretches his arm out over the back of the couch, alike to a panther. He awkwardly taps his fingertips against the material, pursing his lips in thought.

Shane, naturally, notices. Ilya's knee is bouncing. The rhythm is disrupting. "What are you thinking about?"

"Nothing," Ilya is quick to defend.

Shane tilts his head, defying Ilya's answer. "Ilya."

"Nothing *important*," he insists. "Just . . ." He inhales to blow up his cheeks then exhales to pop like a balloon. "You're very . . .Neurotic, sometimes."

"Gee, thanks," Shane scrubs his nails over the nape of his hair, now short, stubbly like he likes it.

"No, is good." Ilya amends, sitting up and leaning closer. "Is good to have attention to detail. Sometimes you pay too much attention."

Shane chews on the inside of his cheek, feeling the line of a scar marred across it with his tongue. "Where is this going?"

"You feel a lot." Ilya adds, tugging at one of his curls, trying to convey his point.

"Yes, Ilya. I'm not a robot."

Ilya hums low in his throat, looking momentarily very confused and frustrated with where the conversation has gone. He reels Shane back in: "remember when you told me to get therapy?"

"Christ," Shane expels in unprepared shock, "how could I forget?" It's how casually Ilya says it that catches him off guard.

"I think you could benefit."

Shane nods. "I don't disagree," he shrugs, wanting to melt into the pillows. Sadly, long ago, they promised to be honest to one another. It is both a blessing and a curse. "I've been seeing Ottawa's counsellor every once in a while."

“‘Once in a while’.” Ilya parrots, lifting his bouncing knee from the floor to tuck it beneath himself, crossing his legs. “I, uh . . .” He huffs, computing his next words.

“Spit it out,” Shane urges softly, straightening his leg and taking his foot at a point to poke Ilya’s thigh.

“You know how my mother had depression. I got depression,” Ilya articulates, inching closer to Shane on the couch, shimmying over.

“Yes?” Shane says, gaze tender, shifting to meet Ilya in the middle. His hand finds itself snaking around Ilya’s thigh and gripping him close. Ilya’s arm comes around Shane’s shoulders around the backrest.

“Your father . . .He has autism?”

“You think . . .I have autism?” Shane’s eyebrows knit.

“Wouldn’t be so far fetched.” Ilya shrugs.

Shane is trying to be somewhat *angry* with this conclusion. Thinking, how dare Ilya diagnose him like this? Yet, all he can think is how sickeningly sweet being so intimately known by another for them to recognise something monumental like this is. His eyebrows stay knitted but he’s almost smiling. “When did you start thinking that?”

“It wasn’t . . .How you say? Conscious? I just started noticing.” Ilya tries to explain, dropping his arm to rest across Shane’s waist, drawing patterns with his fingernail politely tracing into Shane’s side. “Things I didn’t pay attention to before. Your routines. Bad social skills.”

Shane looks offended for a moment, before reality sets in and he wonders if Ilya really is so far off. “My social skills aren’t bad.”

“Not . . .Bad. Fuck. I’m bad at this.”

“No, no . . .” Shane comforts, trailing off. He can’t seem to get enough of the conversation. It’s almost amusing. “Keep going.”

“Internet said about social cues. Sometimes you don’t get conversation. Like, jokes don’t land.” Ilya explains, swallowing anxiously, chuckling slightly for it to wear off. Shane nods at him. “And this might not mean anything, but you like being clean . . .The cottage is always clean. Your car; clean. Bedroom; clean. You shower every day. Wash your face morning and night.”

“Yeah,” Shane agrees, “comforts me.”

“Another thing,” Ilya is reminded by Shane’s word choice, “they said comfort. Like, your weird rituals. The way you make your breakfast then eat it. Your routines. Game day is different but same, you know? Always the same.”

Shane has begun smiling, now. “My parents have always said the same thing—I’ve had the same routines since I was maybe a teenager.”

Ilya nods at Shane, mere inches away. Somehow, the conversation has brought them closer than they sit. “And feeling. You feel very intensely.”

Shane nods, swallowing past the lump grown in his throat. There is surely sweat beading at his hairline. “I do.”

“You get very anxious sometimes. Freak out. Then it passes and you feel very fatigued. Sometimes small things irritate you. Room too bright. I talk too loud.”

Shane has reprimanded Ilya for his volume twice in his life and both times made him feel horrible for doing so. “Yeah.”

“On the ice, you like to be hugged or celebrated by touch, but then off it, you like to stand to the side, not be bothered.” Ilya continues, one of a myriad of ways he’s noticed Shane in the past. “Unless it’s me, of course.”

Shane grins. “Of course.”

“You’re also picky. Not so much with food but very much with drinks.”

“I like what I like,” Shane weakly defends. Ilya gives him a look, fond yet kindly slapping sense into Shane, who deflates against the couch. He sighs, “fuck. You’re making a lot of sense.”

“I’ve been thinking about it a lot,” Ilya admits, winking with gusto.

“When I was young my parents took me to a children’s therapist. We opted out when hockey started looking serious.”

Ilya blinks up at Shane, folding in closer, nearly cuddled into him, now. “Maybe you should ask about that.”

“Yeah,” Shane presses a kiss into Ilya’s hair. “Maybe.”

Ilya smiles from beneath him and stretches a hand up to clasp against Shane’s neck, stroking his hair. “I liked your long hair.”

Shane accommodates Ilya’s touch by nuzzling closer, allowing his entire palm to cup Shane’s neck. “I didn’t,” he sighs, feeling Ilya’s fingers run over the once again short hair, “too much to deal with.”

“Irritating?” Ilya asks, touch feather-light.

Shane laughs slightly through his nose, smiling stupid. “Yeah,” he says into Ilya’s hair, “something like that.”

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