

Cool My Brain

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Cool My Brain

by [SonicaSpeed123](#)

Summary

Sonic's insomnia is getting the better of him. So is the rest of his brain.
In a last ditch effort to distract himself, he has a talk with Shadow about mental illness.

Notes

I had a rough night so i did what any normal person does and wrote about it but with sonic instead of me.

Insomnia

Sonic twisted around in his bed for the hundredth time that night. He threw the blanket off of him, which helped for a minute, but his discomfort was only partly physical.

He groaned, turning over again and reaching for his phone. He distracted himself momentarily with it, but eventually, his feeds ran out of new posts.

He desperately wanted to sleep, but he knew that whatever was wrong with him tonight wasn't going to let him.

He opened a game and fucked around with that for a few minutes. He started losing rounds, and that only served to make him frustrated. He knew he was better than this.

Okay, shut up. It's a game. Just a game.

He tried one more match, but pathetically failed again. He stared at the results screen, feeling the self hatred start to seep in.

He willed himself to stay completely still as his intrusive thoughts conjured up different ways to punish himself for being so useless.

He took a deep breath, and they passed. He closed the game.

He gently scratched at his arms to get rid of the feeling the intrusive thoughts gave him.

At least you didn't hurt yourself this time. That's progress.

Next time you probably will, though.

God, he hated this.

Every nerve in his brain was alert, agitated, and seemingly conspiring against him.

He shifted again, turning the pillow to the cool side. It was nice, but he still had a headache. Probably from looking at his phone when he was trying to sleep.

He closed his eyes and tried to think of something calming. The beach. Nice waves, sunshine, that kind of thing. But his brain hijacked his imagination, ringing an unbearably grating sound through his head. Like a scratchy fire alarm.

"Agh, *why!?*" He groaned aloud. He was so tired. And now, overstimulated. Thanks to his own stupid brain.

Okay, overstimulated. He could fix that. Clean off the bed.

He sat up and started moving things around, giving him a clean, empty space to lay in. It still wasn't enough to calm him down, so he moved on to the rest of the room.

Once he finished that, he crashed back into bed.

Now the texture of the sheets against his fur was wrong.

He stood *again* to put on pajamas, putting a layer between his fur and the bedsheets.

Even after all that, he was still wired.

He sighed and rubbed his temples, trying to dispel the static building behind his eyes.

He grabbed his phone again, and sent a message to Shadow. It was the last thing he could think to do.

[Hey, i can't sleep]

He didn't expect a response, let alone one so soon.

[Unfortunate. Is something wrong?]

[Yeah my head's just fucking with me tonight. Idk. Why are you up??]

[I can't sleep either.]

[Anything I can do to help?]

[I guess i just need to talk]

[I feel like my brain is on fire]

[Not sure if its panic]

[Or mania]

[Or whatever]

[I've been there.]

[Sorry you're going through it]

[I'll be fine. Eventually haha]

Shadow started typing, then stopped. God, that did *not* help his anxiety. He started typing again, and Sonic stared breathlessly at the icon until his next message appeared.

[I'm glad you decided to talk to me about it. I have a panic disorder, so I have trouble sleeping often, too.]

Sonic blinked. He knew *something* was up with Shadow- with his traumatic past, he'd be more shocked if he *wasn't* mentally ill- but he'd never actually talked about it with him.

[I dont know what I have lmao]

[Im not diagnosed with anything]

[Technically]

[But somethings wrong]

[You know yourself best. If you can tell something's wrong, then something's wrong.]

He forced himself to type out the next message, not pausing to doubt himself.

[I think im autistic]

He rushed to explain himself.

[Like i dont act autistic but it makes too much sense. I relate to autistic ppl too much for it to be a coincidence]

[There is no one specific way that autistics act, it's a spectrum]

[It's certainly possible]

[Like I get overstimulated and social interactions drain me so fast and]

[Oh]

[I dont know why i thought u wouldnt believe me lmao]

[Self doubt can manifest that way]

[I do believe you, Sonic. I've noticed some neurodivergent traits but didn't think it was appropriate to bring them up]

[Wait really]

[Like what]

[You stim a lot]

[A LOT]

[It's endearing honestly]

[Snodandk WHAT REALLY]

[WHAT DO I DO]

[When you flick your nose? And shaking your hands when you're excited? Tapping your foot when you're nervous?]

[Oh my god]

[And you do this head tilt when you're overstimulated]

[That one might be a tic though]

[Wow im. Not normal akdnsk]

[Whats the difference]

[Between a stim and a tic]

[Generally, tics are involuntary and stims aren't]

[You've never wanted to be normal though]

[I guess not]

[Man i should see a doctor huh]

[If you think the diagnosis will help you, I'd recommend it. Especially if you struggle with feeling like you're making it all up]

[I thought I was having panic episodes for attention somehow]

[But remembering that someone else looked at me and saw the same thing helps with that feeling]

[Shadow you hate attention why would u fake a panic attack for attention ajdndkx]

[It's not logical but mental illness do be like that sometimes]

Sonic smiled as he responded.

[It really do be like that]

[I dunno sometimes i think its just anxiety and adhd cuz autism overlaps with those a lot]

[That's true]

[But either way]

[You need help right?]

[You don't have to wait until you break down to seek help]

[Learned that the hard way lol]

[Yeah]

[Thanks for talking shads]

[I really needed this]

[Anytime, I'm happy to help.]

[You're not alone.]

And that was what broke him. Tears finally welled up in his eyes and rolled down his muzzle, and he did nothing to stop them.

Of course, he knew this whole time that he had countless friends to turn to, but it was nice to hear it. Especially from Shadow.

When he was finished crying, his brain felt a bit cooler. Maybe he could actually get some sleep tonight?

[Thank you]

He typed out another message, but froze up. That was too strong, he couldn't send *that*. Shadow was just being a good friend. Well, he could still tell him he cared, right? But what if Shadow took it the wrong way and hated him for it?

He deleted the "I love you". For the sake of him hopefully getting to sleep.

He hoped to god that Shadow didn't watch him start and stop typing the same way Sonic always did.

[I'm glad I have you]

[I'm gonna try to get some sleep again]

[Good luck, lol]

[Let me know if you need to talk again]

[Good night ♥]

Sonic stared at the heart.

There was no way. He didn't know what it meant, right? He talked to Rouge a lot, it was probably just something he picked up from her. She used hearts in her messages to *everyone*.

Still, that meant Shadow was comfortable enough to send him a heart. Whether platonic or romantic, Sonic was happy to receive it.

He sent back a single heart and plugged his phone back in, rolling over in his bed.

He waited for it to buzz again, just in case, but it never came.

His eyes easily slipped closed, and he finally was able to rest.

Panic Attack

Chapter Notes

okay this was SUPPOSED to be a oneshot but then i kept writing. lkasdj
oh nooo not more content.. how horrific /s

Thanks so much to everyone who commented and wished me a better day! I really appreciated it <3

Getting to sleep was alright for the next couple nights. Sonic couldn't say he was *well-rested* or anything, but he wasn't dragging himself out of bed with only two hours of unconsciousness under his belt. It honestly surprised him how much better he felt with a few extra hours of rest.

He thought a lot about what Shadow said the other night. About getting diagnosed. He wondered if he really needed it- it was gonna cost him some money, and just thinking about making the phone call scared him enough to want to crawl under a blanket and hide forever. But there was also the fact that if he did, he would actually know for certain what was going on in his head, and be able to put words to it.

He looked at his phone and *wanted* to reach for it, but his body wouldn't move. He thought about reaching over and picking it up. He focused on it. His arm shook a little, tense like a rubber band stretched to its limit.

Come on, it's not that hard, it's just a phone call! Just do it!

The rubber band snapped, and his body finally moved. He opened his phone and searched for the correct number to dial. Why did hospitals have so many different phone numbers? What if he called the wrong one? The receptionist would be so annoyed, and they already had enough to deal with in a day, he was sure.

Maybe he shouldn't bother.

Maybe he could show up in person? For some reason, it was always easier when he could see the one he was talking to.

While he was scrolling through the list of numbers, his phone started ringing. He jumped a bit before reading the caller ID- it was Shadow.

He froze up again.

He couldn't answer the phone. He didn't know what to say. He didn't know what Shadow wanted. How was he supposed to script a conversation if he didn't know what Shadow was

going to say? But maybe it was important! Shadow had been texting him for the past few days, so if he needed to call, it *must* have been important!

Just as he was about to hit the answer button, the call disappeared.

Too fucking slow.

Before he could think, he slammed his wrist into his temple as punishment. The pain tingled in his head for a moment until it was replaced with shame.

Call him back. It's important.

But what do I say when he picks up?

It doesn't matter, he needs you. What if he's dying?

Why would he be dying? That doesn't make sense. If he was dying, he'd call an ambulance.

You're so pathetic, you can't even help your friend. You just fail and hurt yourself.

He growled, wincing at the new ache in his head reminding him of what a monster he was.

The phone buzzed to life again.

Pick up, pick up, pick up, pick up!!

He forced himself to hit the button and bring the phone to his ear.

"H-Hey, Shadow!" His voice was so much weaker than usual. He wanted to hide so badly.

In response, all he heard was some hurried, short breathing.

"...Shadow? You there?" He tried again, pushing himself to be louder.

"-Sonic? Oh, thank God-" Shadow didn't sound much better. His voice was broken up between gasps.

"Are you okay?"

"I'm hav- having a-" He stopped short. "What year is it?"

Sonic blinked at the odd question. He had to search through his frazzled mind to find the right answer, but he provided it. "2021."

"It's 2021." Shadow repeated the number back to him, sounding slightly assured. "-And I'm not on the ARK."

"No, you're not. You're on Mobius."

Shadow exhaled as if he'd just received the best news of his life.

"Shadow, are you okay?" His voice shook with concern, but for once he didn't care how he sounded.

"I'm having a panic attack." His voice was suddenly surprisingly steady and slow, and he sounded more like he was telling himself that than Sonic.

Suddenly, his anxiety was overridden by sympathy. "Oh, God- What do you need? How can I help?"

"I need to ground myself. Rouge isn't here, I can't ground myself. I'm all alone-" He inhaled sharply, and Sonic thought he heard him sob. "I'm alone-"

"I'm here, Shadow. I'm right here, you're not alone! Just breathe for me, okay?" Sonic stood and grabbed his shoes from the floor. "Do you need me to be there? I can come over!"

"Please, please, I can't be alone." He pleaded desperately.

"I'm on my way." He threw the door open and bolted through the forest.

"-Don't hang up!" Shadow shouted as if ending the call would sever his last tie to reality.

"I'm not, I'm right here. I'll be there soon, okay? How do you usually ground yourself?"

"-Oh my God, thank you. Thank you." His breath stuttered going in. "Rouge makes me focus on the room I'm in."

"Okay," He jumped over a fallen branch, just barely avoiding tripping. "What color are the walls?"

"White."

"Describe the floor?"

Shadow inhaled and paused before answering. "It's hardwood. Hazelnut brown. There's a spot from where we spilled juice while we were staining it."

Sonic smiled as he broke out of the forest. The city came into view.

"Is there anything on the walls? Like, decorations?"

"Pictures," he responded a bit more quickly this time. "Pictures of our family and friends."

"Family?" He hopped onto the freeway, bobbing between cars as he headed downtown.

"Rouge and Omega and I."

He could practically hear his smile.

"Doing a bit better?"

"A little. Are you-"

"Almost there, Shadow." He turned down the hybrid's street. "Two minutes."

Sonic tore through the apartment complex's lobby, probably tipping over several decorative plants on his path. He didn't care. He skipped the elevator in favor of the stairs- he was *way* faster.

He found the right floor and skidded to a stop in front of the door.

"I'm here," he said between gasps. He hadn't run that fast in a while.

"In the kitchen."

Sonic took that as an invitation and opened the door, hurrying to where Shadow was sitting on the floor.

At first, Shadow didn't even notice him enter. He stared off into space, clutching his phone close to his ear and shaking.

Sonic crouched down to be on his level, but gave Shadow plenty of personal space. He ended the call and tossed his phone aside.

"Hey, what do you need?"

Shadow dropped his arm down as he looked at Sonic. His eyes immediately filled with tears.

"Hold me." He said, barely above a whisper.

Sonic scooted closer, wrapping his arms around Shadow, petting his quills. Shadow instantly mirrored him, holding tight.

He seemed to find the physical contact soothing, so Sonic kept running his hands through his quills.

"You're okay," he muttered, "You're not alone. You're safe."

Shadow stayed quiet, but his breathing began to slow. After several minutes, his shaking was reduced to small tremors, and his breathing was mostly even, aside from the occasional hiccup.

"Thank you." He whispered into Sonic's body.

"You good?"

"Yes. You can let go."

They unraveled, Sonic taking a seat in front of Shadow.

"...What happened?"

Shadow looked over to the TV, which had been paused. He grabbed the remote and turned it off, sighing.

“I ought to not watch action shows. I was doing better, recently, about the gunshots, but... I guess I’m not ready to deal with them while I’m by myself.”

Gunshots... Oh.

“Where are Rouge and Omega?”

“Out shopping. They were supposed to be back in two hours, so I thought I’d be okay.” His expression tightened again, “What time is it?”

Sonic checked his phone, “Four fifteen.”

Shadow exhaled. “They should be back at four thirty.”

“...Why didn’t you call them first? Not that I didn’t want to help. I’m just surprised you wouldn’t let them know right away.”

“...You were the first person I thought of.” Shadow answered honestly. “Thank you for coming.”

“Don’t mention it,” Sonic felt his face heat up, “I owed you one. And I’m not just gonna sit around while my friend has a panic attack.”

Shadow smiled tiredly. “If it isn’t a problem, could you stay until they get back?”

“You kidding? You couldn’t make me leave you alone even if you wanted me to!”

They moved to the couch, and Sonic turned on his phone to let Tails know where he was. While he was typing, Shadow scooted closer and leaned into him.

Usually, any foreign touch sent a horrible chill up Sonic’s spine, but for some reason, he didn’t mind this. Maybe because they’d hugged earlier.

Or maybe just because it was Shadow.

“Sorry,” Shadow pulled away suddenly, “I didn’t ask if I could-”

“It’s fine!” Sonic said a little too quickly. “I don’t mind.”

The hybrid turned his gaze away. “It’s just... Physical contact helps keep me grounded.”

Sonic smiled and looped his arm around Shadow’s, linking their hands together.

“Does this help?”

“...Yeah.” Shadow blushed.

Did he like holding his hand, too?

Don’t be stupid. He’s embarrassed that he has to touch you.

He tried to dismiss the cruel, doubtful thoughts, but... Part of him believed them. At least he could help Shadow, even if he was horribly mortified to even touch Sonic.

He sent the message to Tails, then closed the app. His internet browser caught his eye- it still had the list of phone numbers open. He huffed.

“Something the matter?”

“...I was gonna try to call the doctor to get tested, but...” He swallowed his pride- Shadow knew all about his struggles already. “I can’t do phone calls. I wish I could just send a message.”

“I can call them.”

“Wh-” Sonic stumbled over his words, “What? You can? Isn’t it confidential?”

“Not necessarily. Someone else can make appointments, they just can’t give out your medical information. Here, I can call them for you now.”

Sonic was stunned, but handed over his phone. Shadow skimmed the list of phone numbers until he found the one he wanted, then dialed it. It rang for a few seconds, then was answered by the automatic machine. Shadow listened intently, occasionally hitting some numbers for the correct options until the receptionist picked up.

He casually worked through the conversation, asking Sonic for the correct information when he needed it. In only a few minutes, it was over.

Shadow made it look like the easiest thing in the world.

“...How the hell do you do that?”

Shadow chuckled. “I make lots of phone calls for work.”

It's easy, you just can't do it.

Shadow must have heard his thoughts or something. “Everyone has certain things they struggle with. I struggle with being alone for more than an hour. You struggle with phone calls.” His grip on Sonic's hand tightened the tiniest bit. If Sonic weren't so sensitive to touch, he wouldn't have noticed. “Simple things really aren't that simple. Everyone's 'easy' is different.”

Sonic was quiet for a moment before he leaned his weight onto Shadow.

“Thanks for doing that. It really helps.”

Shadow shifted towards Sonic as well, silencing any doubt that he didn't want to be close.

“It's the least I can do.”

A strangely peaceful pause settled over their conversation. Shadow closed his eyes, still gathering his bearings from his panic. Sonic started bobbing his leg to keep himself from going crazy. He didn't dislike this position in the slightest, but he also wasn't used to sitting so still. Shadow didn't seem to mind.

Despite how much Sonic enjoyed being this close to Shadow, boredom started to creep in. Damn his short attention span. He clicked his phone on, scrolling through the sea of brief stimulation. He chuckled at a post, alerting Shadow to what he was doing. To his surprise, he didn't chastise him for ruining the moment or not paying attention. He simply smiled and closed his eyes again.

God, this was nice.

At exactly four thirty, the doorknob twisted, making Sonic jolt a bit. Rouge strolled in, placing a single plastic bag on the floor. Omega stomped in behind her with the rest of the groceries.

"Welcome back," Shadow piped up. Sonic waved awkwardly.

"Hey, hun!" Rouge noticed the other hedgehog. "What are you doing here, Blue?"

"I had a panic attack." Shadow provided.

The bat immediately became a doting caregiver. "Oh, dear- Are you alright? Do you need anything?" She hurried around the couch and gave Shadow a hug. "I'm sorry we left you here by yourself, sweetie-

"You asked if I wanted to come along, it's my own fault."

"It's nobody's *fault*, Shadow." She backed up, giving him a stern, almost motherly look. "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine," he seemed completely relieved now that the other two were home. "Sonic helped me."

"Expressing gratitude," Omega finally spoke from across the apartment.

"Yeah, thank you, Blue."

"Don't mention it, seriously. I care about Shadow, too. I'm happy to help out."

Shadow seemed to blush at that.

"Okay, well, since you guys are here, guess I should head home!" He squeezed Shadow's hand gently one last time before standing.

"Be safe. Text us when you get home!" Rouge turned and sashayed into the kitchen before putting the groceries away.

Sonic glanced down at Shadow. The hybrid stood up.

"I'll talk to you tonight."

"Cool. Take it easy, okay, faker?"

Shadow smiled. Then, he turned to glance towards the kitchen, checking to see that his teammates were distracted. He leaned towards Sonic's head. Sonic, thinking he wanted to whisper something, leaned forward, too, tilting the side of his head closer.

Shadow's lips touched his cheek.

It was a brief peck- it had to be, so the other two didn't notice. But still, Sonic must have flushed bright red.

He had turned his head. Shadow wasn't aiming for his cheek.

Before he could truly react, the darker hedgehog was pushing him towards the door.

"Okay, get out."

"Sh- Shadow, wait!" His heart was racing.

He opened the door and stepped out with him, closing it behind them.

"You... Can we try that again?"

Shadow chuckled and leaned forward again, and this time, Sonic got the memo. Their lips touched, and the kiss, while still brief, lasted longer than the last one.

Sonic found he had no idea what he was doing. Yet, for once, it felt more like an adventure than a terrifying obstacle.

They separated and breathed, simply looking at each other.

"I didn't think... You felt that way, too." Sonic didn't know what else to say.

"I do." Shadow smiled again- God, what a sight. "I figured I should make the first move."

"Yeah. I was stuck. Kinda scared." He admitted.

"Well, now neither of us has to be."

"You're amazing."

"Get home safe. I'll talk to you soon."

"For sure." Shadow placed his hand on the doorknob, and Sonic's tongue slipped. "-Love you." Fire burned in his throat at the mistake. His claws ached to dig into his own arm.

Shadow stopped and looked Sonic in the eye before responding.

"I love you, too."

And with that, he went back inside.

Sonic's fear swung in the opposite direction, to absolute elation. The fire in him changed to electricity and overwhelmed him completely. He couldn't contain it- he shook his arms and head, he chirped and buzzed, he spun around. His joy was too much for his body, and it poured out of him like pure sunlight.

When he stopped, he had to take several moments to level his breathing.

He was so happy.

For once, that stupid little voice had nothing to say. No room for misinterpretation or lies.

Shadow loved him.

His phone buzzed, and he checked it. Tails asked him to bring home dinner. He smiled and replied that he would, and that he was leaving right now.

Once he'd calmed down, he took off.

Rage Meltdown

Chapter Notes

welcome back to the projecting my mental illnesses onto sonic the hedgehog this time with rage induced meltdowns <3

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

Months passed, and things had been up and down. Shadow made him feel understood. Shadow was patient with him in ways other people weren't, simply because they didn't understand. But Shadow got it.

Sonic's mental health hadn't been perfect, of course, but he'd been improving.

Well, until recently.

He sprained his ankle two weeks ago. So he couldn't go anywhere. At first, he adapted pretty well, since Shadow offered to stay with him and care for him while he healed. It felt like a great excuse to spend lots of time with his boyfriend.

But, even with Shadow there, he was still Sonic. He still managed to fuck it up.

He just wanted to play an old game he remembered from when he was a kid. A good old nostalgia trip to distract him from the fact that he was basically stapled to his bed until further notice.

He hyperfixated on it, and six hours passed in a blur as he blazed through the game. Gradually, the fun faded and he focused on finishing the task.

Normal people would've stopped there- would've gotten bored hours ago. Would've noticed their hunger or their exhaustion. But he didn't, because he was broken.

He wanted to be done, but he couldn't just stop. He had to *finish*.

All it took was one hard minigame. Just a simple game that took a few too many attempts.

Failure after failure wore down on him. He felt the exhaustion, now, veiled with rage.

But he couldn't stop. He couldn't. He was so close to the end. He just had to beat this one stupid minigame.

And when the next attempt failed him, too, he couldn't control himself.

He latched his teeth onto his arm and bit down firmly. He hated himself. He was pathetic and useless- he couldn't even play a kid's game without hurting himself. What was wrong

with him?

He stopped biting and expected blood, but none came. He took a deep breath.

And he picked up the game again.

He'd always been taught that perseverance was a virtue, but he was sure it was just foolish. Or cruel to oneself. At least the way he did it.

He still couldn't stop. His determination wouldn't waver, even in the face of all his self hatred.

He knew where this cycle would lead him, but he couldn't stop.

He had to finish. Had to prove to himself that he could.

He failed again, and hit his head. Again, and he bit himself. Yet again, and he slammed his wrist into the side of his head- which he knew would rattle him the most. Another failure, and he cried out in anger.

Why couldn't he stop? What was wrong with him?

He dug his claws into skin. Pulled up his skin with his own claws. Hit his head against the wall. Yelled and forced back tears.

He knew Shadow would hear. He knew Shadow would know what it meant. He knew Shadow would come to stop him. But he couldn't stop.

Why? Why? What the fuck was wrong with him? What happened to him to make him like this? Why couldn't he just be normal?

He hit his head again and groaned.

He was better than this. He was stronger than a fucking kid's game.

Suddenly, it was the final straw.

He didn't know what was different about this failure, but he couldn't take it anymore. He threw the game down, slamming it shut and biting his hand instead.

He remembered biting the console itself when he was younger for the same reason. He was ashamed.

He let the shame and rage and self hatred stew for a few moments, then let his hand go. His whole arm hurt, now. He was shocked he wasn't bleeding.

He didn't have the patience to let all his feelings subside before going to try again.

But when he opened the game, the screen was completely white.

He remembered all the times he'd done this before. The game wasn't broken forever. He'd shaken the cartridge when he handled the game too violently.

But he'd lost hours of progress. Hours of rage-inducing, frustrating, tedious progress.

All of this. All of this childish *anger* and *screaming* for *nothing*.

And still, he screamed. He reeled his head back into the wall again, feeling the impact against his skull and in his eyes.

Then, he crumpled pathetically, curling up on his bed.

Shadow knocked at his door. He couldn't be bothered to respond. Shadow entered anyway.

"Is it time to be done?"

He wanted to kill him for that. In his fire-filled brain, all he could hear was 'You are a child, and now I need to take away your toy until you learn how to play with it correctly'.

"Shut the fuck up!" He regretted it immediately, but his anger didn't let him express it. Instead, he buried himself away further.

Shadow was right. He was a child. He was emotionally stunted. He couldn't act like a normal person. He was broken.

Shadow didn't react to Sonic's lashing out.

"You're hurting yourself."

Sonic glared at him. Did he think he wasn't aware of that? Did he think he was stupid?

He was angry. It was making him irrational. He *knew* that, but it wasn't helping him. He couldn't calm down.

"I think you need a break." Shadow stayed stone-faced, which Sonic knew meant he was trying to be gentle, but the voice in his head screamed that he was being talked down to. He couldn't stand the thought.

"I know!" He yelled and pushed the game off his bed, letting it fall to the floor. "I know, I'm fucking done!"

"Sonic," Shadow stepped closer, vulnerability finally showing on his face, and it was all it took for Sonic's anger to step back a bit.

Sonic cried. He was ashamed. Ashamed of his lack of control, ashamed of his immaturity, ashamed of the things he'd just said, ashamed of everything he was. He was volatile. He was a time bomb. He was pathetic.

"I'm sorry," he sobbed, "I don't know what's wrong with me. Why can't I just be a normal person? It's just a fucking kid's game, why-?"

"-Because you're autistic and have a low frustration tolerance."

It wasn't said with cruelty- it was a fact. Sonic's therapist had been saying it for months, too.

Sonic massaged his eyes, partly to clear up tears, and partly for the sensation.

Technically, he wasn't diagnosed yet. He was trying, but nothing had come out of his efforts so far.

But surely any doctor would look at him right now and understand that something was wrong.

Shadow stepped over the mess in his room and sat on his bed with him.

"I'll leave you alone in a minute if that's what you need, but I just want to make sure you're not hurting yourself any more."

Sonic rubbed at his arm and tried to ignore the pounding in his head. He was a danger to himself. Try as he might, he couldn't conjure a response. He couldn't look Shadow in the eye.

"Do you want me to go?"

His first instinct was to push him away, so he didn't have to see him like this. So that his anger couldn't ruin what they had. So he couldn't say something else he didn't mean.

He nodded.

"Let me know if you need anything." He rose and lay his hand on Sonic's arm for a moment. "I love you."

The post-tantrum exhaustion had kicked in. He was too tired to even react. He didn't deserve Shadow or his love. He was a childish monster.

He was shutting down. Which meant it was over, for now. He just wished he could bring himself to say he loved Shadow back.

Because he did. So much. He was so patient and understanding. Even when Sonic was like this, he cared. He didn't deserve it. Maybe that was why he couldn't bring himself to speak.

He only noticed that Shadow had left moments later. Now that he was alone, he lay down in his bed, too exhausted to do anything else.

His thoughts kept spiraling down the tunnel of self-hatred. He couldn't stop them or even distract himself from them.

Shadow just wanted to help him. He just wanted to stop Sonic from hurting himself. And he yelled at him. He was a terrible boyfriend. How could he let his anger control him like that?

He picked up his phone.

[I'm so sorry that I yelled at you]

[I shouldn't have done that you just wanted to help me]

[It's okay]

[I know you didn't mean it, you were having some strong feelings.]

[That's no excuse]

[I can't just treat you like shit because I'm having an episode]

[So I'm sorry]

[I love you too]

[I'm sorry I didn't say it back earlier, I think I'm nonverbal rn]

[I appreciate the apology]

[And I figured you were]

[I'm not upset with you, I promise]

[I thought you'd like some space to decompress]

[And I know you just get more upset when you feel talked down to]

[Yeah]

[I did kinda feel like you thought I was a little kid. Something about "oh is it time to be
done" feels insulting]

[Like "time to put you in time out"]

[Maybe i deserve it for acting childish]

[I'm sorry, I didn't realize. I won't use that phrase anymore.]

[No, you don't deserve to feel belittled just because you have difficulty regulating your emotions.]

[I'm glad you told me, so I can change next time.]

[...I still feel bad]

[I know, dear]

[But remember: you're working on it, and there's going to be setbacks. It doesn't mean you're not trying.]

[You can bring it up at therapy in a few days. And I'm always here to talk]

[But you know that already]

[You're sweet]

[Thank you]

[I need to rest.]

[Have a nice nap, I hope you'll feel better when you wake up.]

[I love you, good night]

[I love you too, darling]

He still felt awful, but at least he knew Shadow wasn't upset with him.

He hated trying to sleep while he was like this. He always felt hot, and his dumb brain got overactive when he was upset, no matter how tired he was.

But his shutdown made him feel so heavy and exhausted, he had no choice but to at least try and sleep.

He wished he'd asked Shadow to stay and hold him as he drifted off.

Chapter End Notes

Shortly after writing this, I spoke to my therapist about developing better coping strategies when I begin to lose control of my actions when I'm angry. Making progress, even if it's slow.

Misdiagnosis

Chapter Notes

welcome back :) no im not mad why would i be mad

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

Sonic fidgeted with his trusty old stim toy- a spiky ball of plastic which happened to be the perfect firmness- as he sat in the unfamiliar room. He tried to settle into the couch as the doctor skimmed the list Shadow had prepared.

"This is very helpful," the cat commented, and Sonic breathed a sigh of relief. He knew it was obvious what was different about him. All he had to do was prove it.

He tried his absolute best to listen intently to the doctor's directions when she explained what to do. He completed some simple puzzles, answered some questions about himself, and took turns with the doctor describing the events in a picture book.

Doubt began to creep in. Something felt off. Maybe he felt weird because he was doing kid stuff, even though he was nearly twenty-one. He pushed the doubt back in order to focus.

He noticed he was struggling keeping eye contact when he answered her questions, consistently looking to the left of the doctor instead. He was sure she'd pick up on that.

"What does someone mean when they say, 'When pigs fly'?"

Obviously, she was really asking whether he understood idioms. This was such a common one, he'd learned the meaning of it a long time ago. He answered honestly.

"Oh, it means that something is really unlikely to happen."

The cat nodded and scribbled something down on her clipboard. To his surprise, they immediately moved on.

"Can you describe how happy feels?"

Sonic blinked at the unusual question. He glanced down to think. "Man, that's a good question... I've never really been asked to describe *how* happy feels." He thought of the first time Shadow kissed him, and how he had been overcome with the joy filling his chest and making him shake. "...Buzzy, I guess."

The doctor hummed. "How about sadness?"

"Heavy. Like a weight on you." He could picture each emotion so clearly that he could feel them in the moment.

"And what about anger?"

He hated anger. He wished he was never angry, but it took hold of him so, so often. He didn't want to, but he imagined the feeling again.

Heat was always there in his face and chest, but when he was really, truly enraged, his body would shake. Anger would fill him from head to toe, bursting out of him at every opportunity. Anger would take his control from him, replacing his normal self with someone completely different, fueled by fear and self-preservation.

"Anger is buzzy, too. But in a bad way." He knew he had to elaborate. "Like, happiness is a bumblebee, but anger is a wasp. If that makes sense."

The doctor sounded impressed. "That's a unique way of putting it!"

After just a few more tests, she put the clipboard down. "That's all for the autism assessment. Next, we'll go down the hall for the ADHD assessment."

Already? Okay. Maybe that was another long set of tests. His sense of time was pretty poor, so maybe a lot more time had passed than he'd felt.

He took some written questionnaires about anxiety and depression while the doctor set up the next test. After that, she sat him down across from a computer and explained the assessment.

"All you have to do is press the spacebar every time you see a letter on screen, unless there is an X. When an X appears, just do nothing. Does that make sense?"

Sounded simple enough to him.

He messed up a few times, either from forgetting the rule or from hitting the spacebar on impulse at the wrong time. The test itself went on forever, and it took all of his willpower to stay still and not let his mind wander. Despite his best efforts, he started thinking about other things near the end. Which made sense. He probably had ADHD, too, if his usual therapist was right.

Finally, *finally*, the test was over.

"That's all we have for you today!"

Sonic turned around in his chair. "Huh? Really?"

That was all?

His therapist had told him the assessment would probably take several hours. It had only been one hour.

That doubt crept back up.

"We'll see you in a few weeks for the feedback appointment!" She directed him to the exit, and he was too disoriented to bring up any questions.

In truth, his brain was still stuck on that ADHD test, and he was having a hard time switching back to normal functioning. Switching between tasks had always been a bit difficult for him...

Well, he had done all he could. All he could do now was wait for the results.

Very anxiously.

Sonic stared at the paper the doctor had presented him with.

'Diagnoses: GAD, Depression, C-PTSD.'

Not ASD? Not even ADHD?

He *knew* he had ADHD. His therapist agreed.

He forced his emotions back down when the doctor began talking.

"You don't meet the criteria for ASD, but you do fit the criteria for Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder."

Sonic stared for a moment. He could concede that he'd had a traumatic childhood, and that it was still affecting him. But why didn't he fit under ASD?

"What about my sensory problems?"

She came prepared: "We've been seeing an increase in sensory processing disorders among young people in the past few years."

Okay, but what did that have to do with him not being autistic? She hadn't diagnosed him with a sensory processing disorder instead of autism.

"I thought..." No, he *knew*, "that I had autism. What criteria do I not meet?"

"You're able to communicate your feelings very well, and you are quite mature for your age."

What? Did this lady think that autistic people couldn't talk about their feelings? That they were all inherently immature?

He had wasted his time. He had wasted his effort coming here.

They couldn't even see his ADHD. The report read that he 'seemed to be putting forth his best efforts', and that all his scores were within an 'acceptable' range. How the hell would she know? She didn't know how his brain worked. She just looked at how he seemed on the outside.

"Do you have any more questions for me?"

He shook his head. There was no convincing her. It would just be another waste of his time.

He felt like a child being ignored again. Just like always.

He left the clinic hopeless and empty.

He texted Shadow immediately.

[They said I don't have autism. Or ADHD.]

[What?]

[That can't be right. Did they see my note?]

[Yeah, she said it was 'helpful', remember?]

[They said C-PTSD instead]

[They basically said im too emotionally intelligent to be autistic.]

[That's disgusting. I'm so sorry.]

[What do you think about the C-PTSD diagnosis?]

[It makes sense i guess. But i really thought i was autistic]

[I dont know what to do now.]

[I truly don't understand either, dear. You definitely have ADHD at the very least. Something is wrong here.]

[I think they were looking for an autistic child and not an autistic adult.]

[I still believe you, Sonic. I am with you.]

Sonic couldn't help but tear up, all the masked away emotions finally bubbling up.

[Thank you]

[Can I come over?]

[Of course you can, dearest]

[Okay i'll be there in a few.]

[See you soon]

Rouge offered a sympathetic wave when he entered the apartment, but he was too focused to respond. He made a beeline for Shadow's bedroom immediately.

He knocked, still unsure of the proper etiquette for when he visited his boyfriend's house. When his love answered the door, he couldn't help his face twisting in anguish as he fought back tears.

Wordlessly, Shadow took him into his arms, holding him close and letting Sonic sob into his shoulder.

They remained there for a few minutes before Sonic pulled away to wipe his tears and finally enter the bedroom.

Shadow's bedroom was always dimly lit whenever he came over, but the rack of indoor plants near the window told him that it was usually sunny. His minimalist bookshelf was neat and organized by genre. Even his work desk was immaculate, the only thing left on it being a framed photo of Team Dark. His bed was lofted above the desk (the bed was made, of course) and close to the ceiling. The whole room smelled like Shadow- dark, sweet, and strong, like star anise. Sonic tried to be subtle about it, but he couldn't get enough of being in Shadow's space, surrounded by everything that was his. There was something so comforting about it.

Sonic clambered up the ladder and pulled himself onto the bed, and Shadow followed. It was almost always awkward fitting two bodies on Shadow's twin bed, but thankfully, being in his room made Sonic feel cuddly.

He lay on his side, burying his face into Shadow's white fur, breathing in even more of his air. He was okay when Shadow touched his sides and noticed when he stopped before his back. Any touch to his lower back always made him uncomfortable, and the fact that Shadow remembered and cared to avoid touching there made him want to cry, for some reason.

"Do you want to talk about it right now?" Shadow asked, the calm rumble of his voice through his chest soothing Sonic even more.

He nodded weakly, then recounted all the details for Shadow, sharing all his doubts and confusion.

Shadow hummed and shook his head. "You have therapy later this week, right?"

"M'hm." He was so tired. He didn't want to think about it anymore.

"See what Kara thinks. I'm sure she'll have a few choice words for them."

He pictured what the horse's face would look like when he told her what had happened; the way her voice would sound when she would go off on them. He chuckled weakly, mostly air leaving him.

"I know you hate this question, but is there anything you need from me, angel?"

Usually, he didn't know what he needed. This time was different.

"I want to nap with you."

Shadow hummed and shifted, getting comfortable.

"Rest as long as you need to, Sonic. I'll be right here."

Sonic sobbed again, and Shadow curled his arms around his head, kissing his forehead.

He held him until his jolting breaths evened out; until the tears stopped and his face became peaceful again.

Chapter End Notes

kay i lied it's been two months and im still pissed :)
this is why self dx is important

Avoidant-Restrictive Food Intake Disorder

Chapter Summary

!!Content Warning for this chapter!!

This chapter is about Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID) and will contain a depiction of an eating disorder not related to weight, as well as descriptions of unpleasant textures and flavors of food and the mechanics of eating (chewing and swallowing). if youre like me that might make you feel gross so- Reader's discretion advised!

Chapter Notes

protip for whoever might need it- distracting myself while eating makes it a lot easier. i usually just put on a video or something that requires active attention so i don't think too hard about how eating feels.

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

"You need to eat something with protein, Sonic."

He buried his face into the sheets, groaning.

"I know," he was muffled, "-But I don't *want* anything."

Usually, he was a great intuitive eater. But recently, his intuition hadn't been telling him anything specific.

"I can pick up something, if that's what you can have right now."

He sat up and looked at Shadow, wincing. "No... I've had too much fast food lately." He didn't want to think about it- the smell, the texture, the taste- any of it. Drive-thrus had been his saving grace the past few weeks, but even that had turned to mush.

Shadow exhaled, thinking, but it felt charged.

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry, I don't want to be difficult."

"It's alright. I just want to find something you can have, that's all." He looked hopeful.

"How about a chili dog? I could learn to make them for you."

Dread formed on Sonic's face before he covered his mouth and gagged. He shook his head, trying to erase the memory of the texture from his tongue.

Shadow's face fell with grave concern. "Not even..? That's *always* safe for you!"

He sobbed quietly as his stomach turned again. "I know. I just can't..."

Shadow thought for a long moment.

"Can I try to make you a turkey sandwich? If it's no good, you can snack. Any food is better than *no* food."

He didn't want it. His memory of the flavor was twisted into something that repulsed him.

"Okay."

They migrated to the kitchen, where Sonic sat at the island. He watched his hands tremor uncontrollably.

"Tell me how you like it- walk me through it." Shadow gathered the ingredients and washed his hands thoroughly.

It needed to be made right- with everything in the correct order. Sonic felt seen, but also terribly guilty for being so picky.

"Toast the bread, first." He sniffled. "Let me- let me see the spinach."

As Shadow put the bread in the toaster (always set to '2'), Sonic inspected the greens, picking out the thickest, strongest leaves and breaking the stems off.

Images of rotten, slimy, flimsy lettuce flashed in his mind, and his breath shook.

It was spinach, not lettuce, for that very reason. Spinach was better. Spinach was *fine*. He was fine.

"Wash these." He tied up the produce bag once Shadow had retrieved the chosen few leaves. Once he turned around, Sonic let himself cry.

He watched Shadow dutifully wash the spinach in cold water, pulling the leaves apart to make sure they were all clean. He shook the excess water out and immediately put them on a separate plate.

Oh, he was so sweet. He was so considerate. He didn't deserve him.

The toast popped.

"A little mayo on both pieces." His tears changed the sound of his voice. It was humiliating. "Just a little."

Shadow nodded and did as he was told, then presented the result.

"That's good. Thank you."

Shadow smiled. "Of course. Anything you need." He brought the ingredients to the island to assemble the sandwich before Sonic. "What's the order?"

Sonic swallowed and wiped his eyes. "Spinach, one piece of turkey. Lemon pepper. The other turkey, and cheese."

As if he were creating a piece of art, Shadow considered the placement of each ingredient, being sure each bite would be as similar as possible. When he was done, he slid the plate to Sonic.

"Is that okay?"

Sonic nodded, tears building up again. "I love you."

"I love you, too." He swept crumbs off the counter, catching them off the edge with his other hand and dumping them into the garbage.

Don't think about the garbage, don't think about the smell, or the fruit flies. Don't think about the sink, or the food scraps. Don't. Don't. Stop!

"You don't have to eat it all- just a few bites. You won't hurt my feelings if you can't finish it."

He took a huge, shaking breath, purging his brain of every thought.

Sandwich. Eat. Try.

He didn't like the crust, but he was chewing.

It was okay. It was okay.

Oh, God, he hated swallowing.

He held the bite in his mouth for far too long, after the texture turned mushy and the flavor became too much. He didn't want it in his mouth anymore. Swallow it. Swallow it!

He forced it, and he felt all of it, and he hated it.

Shadow opened a can of soda for him, and he quickly washed the terrible feeling away.

He felt so childish. So pathetic. So *dramatic*.

Sandwich. Eat. Just a few more bites.

The process repeated. He chewed until it was bad, hesitated, then forced himself to swallow, and cleaned his palate. Again, and again.

On the second-to-last bite, he gagged before he swallowed, and that was it.

"Can't. Done."

Shadow, the beautiful, patient soul, whisked the plate away immediately.

"Thank you, Sonic. You did wonderfully."

"Don' patronize me," he muttered. He stared at the countertop, trying to ignore the way his body felt.

"I'm not. I'm proud of you." He leaned onto the island, making eye contact with him. "I know how hard this is for you, but you did it."

"I'm so sick of this," he sobbed, covering his face. "I just want to *like* food again-"

"You will. You will, Sonic." Shadow was beside him and held his arms before leaning forward and kissing his forehead. "You're having a bad season- but this season will end. We just have to make do in the meantime."

Sonic leaned into Shadow's touch. "Thank you for making it my way, even- even though I wouldn't like it anyways..."

He remembered people- very angry people- telling him to eat. To be grateful. If he didn't, he'd starve for the night. No, he couldn't have something else. No, he couldn't make himself something.

"You deserve to have your needs met. I'll do whatever I can to see that they are."

Before Shadow- before their relationship, Sonic had never heard that in his life. Even still, it sounded unreal. Like being told the closet in the next room opened up to a fantasy world.

He tried to suspend his disbelief. It was nice to pretend.

He hoped that someday, he wouldn't have to.

Chapter End Notes

it's fucked up how long it took for me to realize that i do actually have an eating disorder and having only a handful of safe foods at a time is not normal! and actually people don't get grossed out by the process of eating!! its not hard for everyone??? and most people never have bad food days where everything is disgusting??? anyways does anybody else do the thing where you hate the taste and texture of something you're eating but you can't swallow it because you don't want it inside you but you definitely can't spit it out so you just hold it in your mouth, only prolonging your suffering?

ALSO ALSO do normal people not feel and taste things when they think about them??
when my arfid is really bad i can FEEL bad things in my mouth just by thinking about
them or hearing them mentioned its awful
God this didn't even get into most of the problems i have with contamination. guess i'll
have to wait until next chapter to talk about The Worms.

Panic, Sensory Overload, and Tics

Chapter Summary

!!Content Warning!!

Brief allusion to past suicidal thoughts - Fears of suicide of loved ones (methods are brought up)

Tic warning, minor stress-induced motor and vocal tics

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Shadow felt off.

From the moment he'd woken up that day, he'd known it was going to be a *bad* day. A strange hollowness seeped into his chest. His heart was already pounding.

I'm going to have a panic attack.

The realization itself was enough to spark it, and he gasped for breath, drowning on dry land.

No, God, please stop, stop, stop, stop-

He curled in on himself, heaving as he tried to consistently fill his lungs. In through the nose, out through the mouth. He tried. It never really helped all that much. And especially not now, when he was spasming uncontrollably and hiccupping on every inhale.

Stupid. Stupid. Can't even control your own breathing. Can't control anything.

He sobbed, fighting tears as everything spiraled. Nothing was in his control. He couldn't do anything.

I'm going to die. I'm dying right now. Who will find me? Rouge, or Sonic.

He choked down a scream as his mind conjured the moment like a scene before him, the sorrow his closest family would feel, the piercing scream they'd let out when they would find him.

I'm sorry, I'm sorry, it wasn't my fault this time, I don't want to anymore, I promise!

Sonic wouldn't be able to go on without him. It'd be his fault when Sonic took his own life. Without Sonic, everything would fall apart.

His mind was a cruel director, forcing him to watch as Sonic flung himself from the highest peak he could find, or, perhaps, jumped into too-deep water, or maybe just simply 'failed' to dodge a robot's fire.

Stop! Stop it! Stop!

Rouge would never recover. The void in her life would follow her everywhere, forever. She'd never be able to feel happiness without feeling guilt alongside it.

He couldn't be someone else's Maria. No one deserved the pain he felt every single day.

But he didn't have a choice, did he?

Despite his efforts to panic quietly, he wailed, certainly alerting Sonic to his condition.

He held himself, sobbing when he heard Sonic rise from his bed in the next room.

I don't deserve your help, I don't deserve your concern. I need to see you. I need to be sure you're still alive. That you still love me. You should hate me instead. It'd be safer for you that way.

Just let me panic. I'll tire myself eventually. Leave me alone. I need you. Hold me and tell me I'm safe. I won't believe you.

There was a gentle knock, and Shadow couldn't tell if he wanted to invite him in or push him away. He hated both options.

Sonic made the choice for him, slowly opening the door and entering with his arms at his sides, as he always did during Shadow's panic attacks. He could never tell immediately whether Shadow was having a flashback or not, so he opted not to reach out towards him until he was certain that he could.

"Hey, Shadow, it's Sonic. I'm here, you're safe." He approached, kneeling on the bed and not hovering at the side of it like the scientists used to. "Can you hear me, Shads?"

He nodded, still hyperventilating. Still sobbing and crying and trembling. It was fucking embarrassing.

Weak. Weak. Weak.

Sonic smiled encouragingly. "You're going to be okay. I know it all feels like it's falling apart, but I promise that I'm here with you."

Pressure. He felt pressure on all sides, threatening to crush him in his place.

"Could you open your eyes for me?"

He did, staring at the sheets between the two of them.

"Thank you, Shadow. Can you tell me where you are?"

His voice was blocked in his throat. He shook his head.

"Okay, that's alright. Can you look at me, then?"

He tried, but couldn't make eye contact. The furthest he could get was his chest.

"Can I touch you?"

I need you to hold me. If you touch me, I'll crumble. I don't know. I don't know.

After receiving no answer, Sonic scooted closer, but did not touch him.

"You are safe in your bed. You are not dying. I'm here. I love you."

I know. I know. I know. I'm still drowning. I'm still panicking.

Shadow sobbed again and hid his face away behind his knees.

Sonic seemed to sense that his words weren't helping much. He stayed quiet and didn't move, simply sitting with Shadow while he worked through it.

Time was the only thing that dulled the panic at the moment. It took nearly forty minutes, but eventually, his breaths stopped heaving and he wasn't trembling anymore.

He felt frozen, afraid to uncurl, afraid to face the person he cared about so much.

Sonic asked again, "Can I touch you? It's okay to say no."

He nodded and leaned closer to him. Sonic hugged him, but did not restrict him or try to get him to uncurl. They sat in quiet for a little while longer, until Shadow finally lifted his head, wiping teary streaks from his muzzle.

"Do you want to talk about it right now?"

"...No." He managed. "I'm sorry."

"You don't need to say you're sorry. You haven't done anything wrong." Sonic spoke calmly and with certainty. "This is never a burden to me. You're never a burden."

His eyes filled with tears again. "I love you." He nuzzled his face back against Sonic's shoulder.

"I love you, too, Shads." He gently rocked back and forth, partly to soothe his boyfriend and partly to keep himself moving. "Do you want to reschedule our date we had today?"

"Mno," he mumbled. He pulled his mouth away from Sonic's fur. "We made reservations..."

"If it's too much, it's too much. There's always next time. We can just have a day in, take it easy. We could order sushi!"

It sounded nice, but the guilt was too much. "I want to go out. We've been planning this for weeks."

"Shads. You won't even be enjoying it like this. Please. I'd rather we stay home on this kind of day."

Shadow was silent for a long time, conflicted, but ultimately settled on an answer. He looked up at Sonic again.

"Could we make that baked potato soup?"

"Aw, hell yeah, that sounds *amazing* right now." He frowned. "I don't think we have any potatoes, though. I'd have to run to the store."

Shadow sighed, averting his gaze.

"Would you be alright by yourself..?"

He shook his head. "I'll just come with you. It'll be quick."

Sonic leaned back. "Are you sure?"

"I *really* want potato soup."

Sonic laughed, and Shadow finally felt himself relax a bit.

"We gotta go soon, then. It's gotta cook for a few hours, plus we gotta prep it..."

Shadow held back a groan. He'd really have preferred more time to collect himself, but it didn't always work out that way.

"Okay." He moved to stand.

"Bring your headphones." Sonic reminded him, standing and leaving so Shadow could get ready.

As they entered the store together, Shadow put on the album he'd been fixated on most recently. Sonic gently held his hand as they made a beeline for the produce section.

In and out. He'd be fine.

He kept his gaze fixed on the ground, watching and following Sonic's footsteps that didn't match up to the beat of the song he was listening to. Before he knew it, they were in the right section.

Sonic had to let go of his hand to inspect the bags of potatoes, leaving Shadow without an anchor. He gripped the edge of the display instead.

He looked at Sonic's face, his kind eyes hidden behind his 'shopping sunglasses'- the ones that filtered out the fluorescent lights. He had his expensive noise-canceling headphones on, too.

They both looked strange. They stood out too much. Everyone was staring. Everyone was-

Sonic pointed to the corner of the bag he was holding and mouthed 'five pounds?'. Then, he pointed to the larger bags. 'Ten?'

Shadow held up five fingers, and Sonic took his hand again.

Their grocery store had recently opened a few self-checkout lanes. What a godsend. Shadow closed his eyes as Sonic handled the checkout, focusing on the music.

No matter how loud he turned it, he could still hear the beeping of scanning items. It made his neck hurt and shot unease down his spine every time.

He felt himself tensing up more and more with every beep. His head hurt, his heart was pounding.

His neck twitched, and his head turned up of its own accord. He grunted involuntarily and felt himself burning up with embarrassment.

Not again.

Sonic noticed his tic and tore the receipt from the machine before scooping him up completely, dashing out of the store.

When Shadow opened his eyes again, they were sitting on a bench in the nearby park. He took out his headphones and tried to even his breathing out.

"You okay?" Sonic reached towards him with concern.

"I'm ticcing aga- *Ah!*" His head ducked down, as if he'd been hit. He winced. "-again."

"We'll chill here for a bit, alright? No worries."

"Mmnn," his body hummed despite his efforts to keep himself composed.

He had no control. He couldn't do anything.

"Hey," Sonic's voice was gentle, but the sudden sound made Shadow's neck twitch again anyways. "Tensing up'll make it worse. Let them happen and try to relax."

His lungs spasmed, forcing a small gasp from him. "Easy- easy for you to say." He sighed. "Let's just go home. I'll feel safer there."

"Okay," he sounded cautious, "but I'm carrying you."

"I can run just fine! I don't get motor tics, other than-" his head jerked to the side, and he groaned. *"-those."*

Sonic frowned. "I think you should take it easy for the rest of today, at *least*. Maybe even tomorrow. You haven't had tics like this since you were working ten hour shifts..."

Shadow's face twisted as if in pain, a chirp being forced from his throat. Sonic didn't comment- or even draw attention to it, really.

"Let me take care of you, okay? Consider it as me paying you back, if you gotta."

"...Fine." He sighed as Sonic lifted him again, cradling the stupid bag of potatoes. "...Thank you."

Sonic smiled and nuzzled his forehead. "You're welcome, Shads."

Chapter End Notes

love when im having a Bad Brain Time and the inner child and self hatred are screaming at each other so i dont know what i actually need or want!

Anyways, Shadow is listening to.. uh

shuffles character playlist

Spirit Phone! (look i know im sorry i have like 5 lemon demon songs on his playlist.

dont ask me about mother mother please its embarrassing)

(and sonic's listening to overtime by cash cash on loop)

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