

With Candy Canes and Silver Hedgehogs Aglow

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With Candy Canes and Silver Hedgehogs Aglow

by [charlizetiger](#)

Summary

[coming back soon~]

It's Christmastime, and Shadow finds himself being dragged along to Sonic's cabin. At least it's only for one night.

Right?

Thankfully, a certain time traveling hedgehog shows up and seems determined to make sure Shadow is having a good time. Hopefully this won't be such a waste of time after all.

Alternate Description: Shadow and Silver have been through a whooooole lotta shite separately, and I make them sad for a little while so they can be happier in the end.

Cabin...I Think That's Italian

Chapter Summary

yes this chapter's title is a snapcube reference. scout/mikeplier says it in the until dawn dub for those of you who don't know. i literally could not read the word cabin without pronouncing it "ca-bean" and had to take the opportunity.

Chapter Notes

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

December 20 | 14:30

All Shadow can think about is how much he does *not* want to be here.

Of course, Shadow had been dragged to Sonic's cabin by Rouge. More specifically, bribed by her. He happily obliged because it was a good sum of money. Rouge was pretty well off thanks to her stealth and her obsession with gems — which meant for her, most of the time, seeking out and permanently borrowing these previously mentioned gems.

Shadow wouldn't have came by himself, that's for sure. He never really saw a need for gatherings, granted there was no world to save. It always had felt like a waste of time to him. He didn't need friends. He didn't have interest in small talk or becoming close with anyone. Aren't Rouge and Omega more than enough?

Shadow would never admit it out loud, but...he did really care about Rouge. So yes, he was partially bribed by her, but part of it was due to him feeling an obligation to pay her back. She had saved his ass and been there for him many times before, and he saw this as an opportunity to get even. After all, it was a huge cabin — Sonic isn't too poor either, being the hero of Mobius — and he would have his own room if and when he needed to escape.

So here he is, sitting at the spacey island counter with Sonic, Tails, Knuckles, Rouge, and Amy, none of which besides Rouge he's particularly fond of. He's successfully blending into the conversation, barely saying a word and only half-listening at all. He's pretty sure they're discussing who Sonic invited and who had yet to show up, but the hero seems certain that no one else will be arriving. Then he says something, however, that dares to catch Shadow's attention.

"Oh, actually..I think Silver's on his way, too. Unless he got busy."

Everyone celebrates except for Shadow, who is a little perplexed...if it's who he's thinking of, how can he be here? Won't that mess up the fragile timeline they live in? The butterfly effect is very real. Even though he doesn't want to ask and make it seem like he *cares*, his curiosity gets the best of him.

"Silver...the psychic?"

"Yeah, him! We don't get to see him a whole lot, so it'll be nice to catch up."

"...I thought he was from the future? Doesn't that prevent him from being able to come back? Why is he here risking the integrity of the timeline?" The questions don't even sound angry as they leave Shadow's mouth, just genuinely curious.

Sonic seems to think he's suggesting that Silver isn't welcome here, though. "For your information, his future isn't exactly perfect yet. He comes back and forth a lot to fix minor issues. He's just takin' a vacation. You can at least pretend that you like him."

This idiot...that's the inference he made from what I said? "I never said I didn't like him, hedgehog. That's the conclusion you jumped to. I asked because I was concerned about his timeline, which just so happens to be ours as well."

"Whatever, dude."

Before Sonic can say anything else, Tails has him distracted with a story about something that happened to him on his way here. Shadow begins to tune them out again, but soon after, a pink figure makes their way over to him.

"Just so you know, Shadow...if you're rude to Silver at all, you're going to get your butt kicked by somebody, and it'll probably be me. Got it?"

Shadow rolls his eyes. "I'm not planning on being rude to him, there's no reason to as long as he's not obnoxious."

"Well, he's certainly not obnoxious, so you'd better watch your mouth!"

Shadow scoffs in response, and then nods and hums to acknowledge Amy's threat when she doesn't immediately walk away. That seems to be satisfactory for her, as she retreats; likely to go back to try and win Sonic's heart.

Why the hell does everyone think he's gonna be a dick to Silver? He hasn't seen the guy in forever, and their interactions have mostly been neutral. Although there was a *little* bickering between them back when Shadow helped Metal Sonic to work against the Doctor, Silver wasn't really doing it out of malice. It was apparent from that time on that the time traveler just **really** doesn't like people getting in his way and prohibiting him from meeting his goal. Shadow always thought that was respectable. Overall, he respected Silver, just like he did Sonic. He was extremely powerful and was one of the only ones who could actually rival the power Shadow had. They *were* rivals for a reason. If he wasn't strong and respectable enough, he wouldn't be the ultimate lifeform's rival.

Not much time later, the hedgehog in question shows up. Shadow takes note that everyone seems absolutely thrilled to see him. He can't imagine ever getting that excited to see someone...it must be humiliating.

After a flustered Silver makes his way out of the bombardment of his friends, he notices Shadow and flashes a wave to him, smiling wide. Shadow nods a head in his direction in response, trying his hardest to ignore the strange wave of *deja vu* that just swept over him.

Good. He didn't even try to talk to him, not a word. There really will be no need to be rude to him as long as he keeps this up.

18:20

"What have you been up to, Shadow?"

A voice breaks Shadow out of his vigorous dish washing, which he was hoping he could get done quickly and then go take refuge in his room for a little while...maybe for the rest of the night. He wants to sigh, but noticing the voice belongs to Silver, he holds it back as he really doesn't want to feel Amy's wrath just yet.

"Nothing." He deadpans before catching a glance at Rouge. She's staring at him, silently encouraging him to continue the conversation. Ugh, he *really* doesn't want to — but it's part of their agreement, so he clears his throat and swallows his pride for once. "Future still not working out for you?"

Silver seems somewhat taken off guard by the question coming from someone who he rarely hears a word out of. "Oh, n-not exactly. There's still some things that need to be fixed. But I'm not giving up!" Shadow smirks at his audible determination, and Silver continues for him before he can think of what to follow up with. "I'm sorta surprised that you're here. I thought you didn't like hang outs like this, or...people at all."

He said this so mindlessly, it was obviously not meant to be an insult or even offensive at all. Shadow takes it that he's not too good at censoring himself. He had heard about his naivety and awkwardness in the past, anyway. It didn't seem like he was all that amazing at reading social cues.

Which is good, because Shadow isn't particularly skilled at it either. That, or he just doesn't care a whole lot about how other people react to what he says.

Snapping back to the conversation, he remembers that he has a response to make.

"I usually don't care for these types of things. I can't stand having to be social for long amounts of time, it's far too tiring." He pauses and looks around suspiciously. "If I'm being honest, Rouge said she'd pay me a fair amount of money if I came."

Silver snorts at this. "Really? How much?"

"Heh...I don't think I can tell you. She'd probably have me assassinated." Silver's face pales, not picking up on the joke. Maybe he's oblivious. Maybe Shadow is not good at kidding around. Probably a mix of both. "Not literally, obviously. I mean, I don't think so...I *can* tell you that the money plus the promise that I only have to stay for one night convinced me."

"Damn. I mean, I'm enjoying being here, but maybe I should've pretended not to so she would give *me* some perks too. She sounds very generous."

"Yes...in fact, the only condition was that I 'make an effort to talk to people', so the fact that I'm talking with you right now is a good look for me."

Hm...could he have taken offense to that? Maybe I should make sure...

"I didn't mean for that to sound offensive."

He ended up looking genuinely apologetic, making him question if the words really came out of his own mouth. *The fuck? I've been conversing for two minutes and I'm already feeling irrationally sympathetic?*

Silver laughs anyway, unaware of Shadow's internal disgust at himself. "It's okay. That's probably a compliment coming from you. Rouge seems nice, I should try to talk to her! I've met her before but I've never spent time with her."

"Well, beware. She can be a bit...provocative. And she might talk your head off. Really, though, she's pleasant to be around. A character, for sure, but she's alright."

"Thanks for the advice, Shadow!" He grins big again — god, he's like a golden retriever. The "advice" was so half assed too, in Shadow's opinion. "So, um, tonight I think we're gonna watch a movie or something if you're interested."

"I'm going to go to my room for a bit."

"That's okay, we're gonna do a lot of stuff tomorrow!" His expression suddenly drops. "Oh, you're leaving tomorrow, right?"

"I'm planning to. But...I don't have to leave first thing in the morning, I suppose."

And just like that, his signature enthusiasm is back. "Cool! There's so many things we can do here."

"I'm sure I'll hear all about it tomorrow." He could tell Silver was about to go into a very lengthy list of all the possibilities, so he acted to get himself out of it right away. He could just feel his social energy bar dropping by the second. It was a long day. And Silver didn't seem at all disappointed that he couldn't go off on his shepel, probably relieved that he had more time to think of all the possibilities.

"If you don't decide to watch the movie with us, then have a good night. Tomorrow will be fun, I promise."

Shadow just sends him a wave and heads to his room, thankful that he could finally be alone. *Admittedly, it is nice to know there's no obligation to watch this movie tonight. At least I'm not being forced to do anything.*

He lets out a relieved sigh, looking forward to his time to recharge.

Maybe not looking *as* forward to tomorrow's schedule which will almost definitely be filled to the brim.

Chapter End Notes

i literally just made this as an excuse to write christmas shadilver fluff...anyways
also i know it's may and what about it

Hedgehog White As Snow Loves The Snow, How Fitting

Chapter Summary

It's Shadow's last day and Silver and his friends fulfill their duty of getting Shadow to try new things.

Shadow makes another deal, but this time it's not with Rouge.

Chapter Notes

quick tw for blood i guess? but it's minor and it's resolved very quickly

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

December 21 | 08:00

The first thing Shadow hears in the morning is a certain blue hedgehog banging on his door so loud it sounds like he's trying to knock it down.

"Shadooooow! Wake up! Everyone wants to go do stuff and Silver says you're leaving today so we have to go now!!!"

He really knows how to be annoying, doesn't he.

It's a good thing Shadow wasn't in any kind of deep sleep before he did that, anyway. Another restless night to add to the books.

"Fuck off, Sonic. I'm awake."

"Hurry up then!"

"*I'm working on it!*"

Just gotta get through this day, Shadow reminds himself. And he's hungry, so it's probably for the better that he gets up.

13:15

"Alright! Snowboarding next?"

Shadow groans at Sonic's undying enthusiasm. It's so incredibly tiring. Doesn't he ever get tired? They've literally been at it for *hours*, finishing lunch only to move onto the next thing before the food even digests.

"No, no, no. No offense, but I'm not doing that right now. I'm going back to your place to rest."

Tails tilts his head in question. "Well, aren't you leaving later? Don't you wanna make the most of the time that's left?"

"I'm not going to be able to make the most of the time that's left if we don't go back and take a break." The fox nods in understanding.

"Okay, whatever. If anyone wants to back to my place and chill that's fine, and the rest of us are going boarding." Sonic turns around and begins to walk away, most of the crew following — minus Rouge and Silver. Rouge quickly makes her way to him and enters his personal space to tell him something. He doesn't mind, though; she's one of the only people in the world who can do that without getting socked.

"You'd *better* not ditch. Go rest, but if you're not there when we get back, I *will* find you. And you're not getting any money!"

Shadow sighs, unable to be angry when she's making threats like that. He can't help but chuckle to himself. "See you then."

"Have fun brooding." She hugs him, to Shadow's dismay.

"I hate you."

Rouge laughs at his insult of endearment, knowing there's no actual mal intent in it, and turns away to go after the others. Now Shadow can finally find some peace and quiet. He'll probably nap, or read, and he'll definitely pack. Just be alone.

...or, so he thought.

He's alone except for one other shy looking hedgehog who hasn't left yet.

"Uh...thanks for saying all that. You saved me back there." Silver smirks as he says this, but Shadow raises an eyebrow in question. "I mean, I was getting sort of anxious for a break, but I didn't want to make Sonic think I didn't want to hang out with them, especially since we never get to see each other."

"Anxious?"

"Yeah...I get overwhelmed sometimes. I kinda needed some breathing space, but...I was too nervous to say it. So I'm glad you said something."

"Oh."

Shadow had never considered that anyone else felt the way he did about socialization...was feeling exhausted like this normal? No...probably not. But at least someone could relate, right?

That aside, he genuinely doesn't know how to answer to what Silver said, after thinking it over in his head. The only people that ever really thank him for anything are Rouge and Sonic, and he usually just hums in acknowledgment. This is...different. He's admittedly very close with them, and he barely knows Silver. His simple gratitude felt foreign to Shadow. Sonic was always more worthy of compliments from strangers. "I thought my hatred of get-togethers was due to my general disliking of conversing with others." He pauses to look at Silver to find golden eyes looking right back at him, waiting patiently for him to finish. "I wasn't aware that anyone else couldn't handle it for long."

Silver smiles. "It's not just you. My best friend Blaze is like this too. It's funny, because we both know that we don't want to hang out for long when we do. It works out, I guess."

Shadow eyes him again. He looks so lost in his memories, smiling to himself like he's in a different world. It's sweet, actually.

Ew. Sweet is a gross word. This is just embarrassing now.

They keep moving in silence, nearing the cabin. A part of Shadow wants to say more and continue the conversation, but the other part of him tells him not to. Yeah. It's just stupid to keep up small talk.

...Sweet. That word can't leave Shadow's mind. It's stuck in his head like a song. It doesn't mean anything to call another guy sweet, right? All it is is a strange intrusive thought. Like, okay, from what he can tell in his short time knowing him, Silver is really friendly. And now apparently he's relatable. So far, he's not obnoxious like the rest of them are 99% of the time. And this whole time he's just wanted Shadow to have fun. It's so obvious that he loves the snow, too. Earlier it started to flurry while they were walking around downtown, and Silver admired the sight with twinkling eyes. And then when they were waiting for their food he laid down in the snow with not a care in the world, leaving a Silver-shaped indentation in the snow after he got up. That was kind of cute.

Cute now? Man, the cold must really be getting to Shadow. Thankfully, they've arrived at Sonic's door. Shadow fishes for the keys that Sonic threw him before he left. He's sure he's never opened a door faster. Just like that, he disappears to the bathroom without a word.

Only a few more hours, and then you can leave. Have to get through the next few hours, that's all.

14:00

Shadow walks to the living area to see what's on TV. Silver seemed to have been one step ahead of him, sitting on the couch to the left of the TV and sipping some kind of drink.

"I made hot chocolate, if you want some."

"Mmh, not now. I'm still full from lunch."

Shadow takes a seat on the couch facing the TV, as the last thing he wants to do is invade Silver's space. Although, he's still not sure why he cares about that so much. Why is he getting so self conscious? This is awful. He's usually so confident...what the hell is going on? All Shadow knows at this point is how much he can't *wait* to leave.

This is precisely why he refuses to get close to anybody — it's far too tiring. Constantly worrying about how they will react to you, worrying about how they feel...it's too much. And unnecessary. You don't need people holding you back to get along in life!

Really, what's a thing like him doing here, anyway? He can't ignore that he was created to be a weapon, and that everyone treats him as such. Weapons aren't supposed to have friends. He's not meant for this stuff.

"Shadow?"

The voice almost makes him jump; he nearly forgot that Silver is here, too. He looks up to the face that the voice belongs to only to be further questioned.

"Did something happen?"

"I'm sorry?"

"Well, I didn't know if you were okay, you looked kinda sad and I was curious I guess. *Are you okay?*"

Shit...was it that obvious? Shadow thought Silver wasn't good at reading this stuff...

"I'm perfectly fine." *No way in hell I'm telling him the truth.*

"Oh, good! I didn't mean to offend you or...anything." Silver waits a few seconds with no response, only a Shadow who looks conflicted and very deep in thought, and then keeps talking in a desperate attempt to break the silence. "So...are you still leaving today?"

Shadow's immediate answer seems obvious, but he genuinely considers the question for a second. *I can't stay, can I? I don't want to. I mean, I think I don't want to? I don't want to let this stupid trip waste any more of my time. I did some silly little things with Sonic and his friends and now I can go away and forget about this whole thing.*

...So why does he not want to tell Silver this? *What, is it not true?*

I mean, maybe it is. It has only been about 24 hours. Would I even be able to take more of this? I'm not so sure. I want to go home, but god I really don't. So what? I go home, and then what? Just think about how lonely I am? How pathetic my situation is?

..."Lonely"? *I'm not lonely. I don't need anyone.*

But I don't want to go home. In fact, I can't go home. Not yet. I can make up some bullshit and I can stay here. Yes, that sounds good. I can still have my own privacy whenever I

want...but it won't be forced.

I won't be forced to be alone.

Silver, completely unaware of Shadow's dilemma with the only giveaway being his expression which is once again distant, figures that he's just been ignored. It hurts, a little, but he tries his best to understand Shadow. All he's heard from anyone else is that he's been through a lot, and he is refused any more information. But Silver knows at least that Shadow isn't the unfeeling, cold-hearted antagonist that everyone seems to think he is. And then he speaks, fully disproving Silver's assumption.

"I don't know. I don't know if I can."

Silver raises an eyebrow. "What do you mean? Do you have something to do? If I were you, I'd stay for Christmas. I know it's a few days away but it's *so* much fun, especially when we're in such a wintry place like this. I promise you'll like it. And we don't have to do as many things as we did today because we'll have more time to do them!"

"You promise?" Shadow asks, amused. "You're quite sure about this, aren't you? What's so great about it?" He's not completely sure why he's asking. He finds it fun to humor Silver, what can he say? He's so excitable and cheery, and that gets annoying after a while, but it's entertaining in moderation.

"Oh, there's so many great things! Snow has endless possibilities, I swear." Silver suddenly gasps. "Have you ever had a snowball fight?"

"I don't believe I have."

"Oh my god, they're so much fun."

All of a sudden, a mischievous grin creeps onto Silver's face.

"We should make a deal."

"Yeah? What type of a deal?"

"Let's have a snowball fight. If I win, you have to stay for another day."

"And what do you propose happens *when* I win?"

"*If* you win, which you won't because I will, you get to leave right away."

"And you get to give me \$20."

Shadow slaps this onto the end of the deal knowing it's a very small sum of money, and not entirely sure why he added it at all...perhaps to test Silver? How exactly will he react to this?

"Okay, deal. But I don't have to worry about giving you anything because you're going to lose."

Damn, for someone who's seemingly so friendly, Silver loves his trash talking.

Okay, if that's how you're gonna play it...

"You'd better run."

Silver races behind a tree, heart pounding. He needs more ammo.

He knows this is just for fun, but...is it *really*? Shadow is incredibly intense, not known to go easy in fights. He's pretty sure he's gonna go all out, so he has to match the energy. He quickly picks up as much snow as he can and flies up to take cover in a tree. Technically using powers isn't cheating, as they never disclosed any rules.

Shadow is smart enough not to fall into any traps. He moves slowly so as to hear any movements. He's not going to let himself lose a silly snowball fight, are you kidding?

He spots Silver up high, seeing as a perfect opportunity. Maybe he can knock him out of the tree.

He winds up to throw as quietly as he can, which he is sure he does well. No one could've heard that from over a foot away.

He waits for the snowball to break, and probably hear a few colorful words exclaimed by Silver — but nothing of the sort happens, in reality. Instead, Shadow's ego is immediately crushed as Silver no joke catches the thing *without even looking*. Facing the other way the *entire* time.

Oh, now it is on.

Some impressive dodges and close calls later, Shadow *finally* hits Silver, and not without a hell of a lot of force.

Oops, maybe too much force.

Silver is thrown back but stays on his feet. He holds his waist where the snowball hit for a second as if he's in pain.

"Good?" Shadow flashes a thumbs up to him in question. Silver promptly removes his hands and nods. He still looks a bit shaky, but Shadow figures it's nothing he hasn't handled before.

Little did he know, that hit hurt like hell. It nearly knocked the wind out of the boy. But the last thing Silver is gonna do is let this cause his downfall.

The fight only intensifies from its already intense state from here, with spin dashes, teleporting, and mind control thrown into the mix. At one point, Shadow goes into a spin dash like he's done many times tonight; although, this time is different because he hears a *crunch*. But after a quick self examination, he assures that none of his bones are broken. He looks around frantically for anything he could've ran into...

...oh no.

A tree. Not only that, it's now broken in half, and it's right in front of a sharp decline which is surely going to cause an avalanche if the tree falls down it.

Before he's even able to react beyond a yelp, the tree becomes enveloped in a blue glow. He turns around to see Silver visibly using all of the concentration he can possibly muster to keep it upright. He's able to move it to a semi-open area and turn it on its side before releasing it, letting out a sigh of exhaustion and relief once the crisis has been averted.

"Fuck...that was close."

Silver smiles at this, although it looks tired. Shadow's eyes drift to where he hit him earlier, eyes widening in horror when he sees blood. There's not much of it but it's there all the same. He walks over to Silver as a pang of what feels like nausea hits him...what the hell is this? He's seen so many worse sights, and he barely even knows Silver, so why is his body reacting like this?

He doesn't know, but impulse takes over and his mouth moves without his permission.

"Did I hurt you?"

Silver covers the area with his hands, trying not to draw attention to it. He's strong, he can handle a little pain and blood!

"I'm fine! It was just part of the game--"

He's cut off by a gloved hand other than his own lightly grazing his injury. The area, right above his hip, internally bursts into flames, and his heart rate *spikes*.

Wow, he didn't think the injury was that bad!

"Does it hurt when I do this?"

Shadow applies light pressure to the area with his fingers, and the whimper that leaves Silver's mouth answers for him. Shadow cringes, but a solution that's all too obvious suddenly pops into his head.

"Give me a second...don't worry."

He keeps his hand where it was and closes his eyes. Silver is mystified at how a person notorious for being aloof, intense, and at times even labeled as violent, can treat him so gently. Before he can say a word, he feels an incredibly strange and completely foreign sensation coming from the hand on his injury, which turns to pain and then swiftly turns to nothing. He inhales shakily.

"What the hell did you just do?"

"Are you still hurt?"

“Uh...” Silver feels the area himself with no pain, even with the same amount of pressure applied as the amount Shadow applied a minute ago. “...no? How did you...”

“I can heal. It’s part of my chaos powers.” Shadow looks down, a shy look in his eyes. It’s very funny; for someone who’s always so cocky and such a show off, he seems very uncomfortable with the attention that may come with admitting his healing powers in this moment.

“That’s...amazing. Thanks.” Silver smiles in astonishment. “So, how come you weren’t bleeding? I got you good a number of times.”

“Must’ve not gotten me good enough.”

Just like that, the playful, daring spark in Shadow’s eyes is back. Silver scoffs.

“Sounds like a challenge.”

Shadow’s heart stops for a second, shocks of adrenaline shooting from his chest out. For some reason that’s the single most exciting thing he’s ever heard someone say.

Sadly, something stops him in his tracks suddenly before it can escalate back into a fight. It looks as though Sonic and crew have returned, and he doesn’t want to be caught having a childish snowball fight in front of them.

“They’re back already? Wait...how long were we out here for?”

Shadow doesn’t have a watch. “I’m not sure. I wasn’t under the impression that we were out here for long.” He looks to the cabin, where everyone is heading inside. Rouge sends a wave their way.

God, knowing Rouge, she’s probably going to assume that I like Silver just because I’m standing with him. I’ve got to get out of this situation.

“We should go inside. The sun is going to set soon, and it’s going to get colder.”

Silver smirks at him. “Is that a surrender?”

“No. It’s simply a ceasefire.”

“Really? If I were just any guy, I would think you’re surrendering. Just saying.”

Shadow is not having this slander right now. “Shut up. I’m not surrendering because I’m telling you I’m not surrendering. Let’s go.” He waves Silver towards the house as he walks away, but Silver is paralyzed. Shadow seemed kind of seriously angry when he said that, and Silver thought they were just kidding around. Now he just feels bad.

He starts to walk back too, disappointed, and upon arriving Shadow opens the door. Before he walks inside, he turns around.

“Why do you look sad?”

Apparently the tables have turned. Now Silver is the one trying to hide his emotions.

"It's stupid."

"Does it involve me?"

Silver reddens. "Um...yeah."

"Then tell me."

"It's not a big deal, I just thought we were having fun but you seemed actually mad at the end there and I don't want you to be mad at me."

Shadow quirks an eyebrow. "I'm not mad." Why would Silver care if he's mad at him anyway? He finds that odd, but guesses it really doesn't matter. Maybe Silver is just sensitive or something. And Shadow isn't about to act like he isn't either — he's just better at pretending he's not. A wave of something — empathy? — washes over him. "I...apologize if I made it seem like I was. I wasn't meaning to offend."

Silver looks incredibly relieved at this. "Okay, good." He laughs awkwardly, feeling ridiculous about his misreading of the situation. "I just wanted to make sure. I don't like being on bad terms with people."

Wow, there's something Shadow can't relate to; at least in his mind. Most of the time he truly doesn't give a shit if someone doesn't like him or is angry about something he did or said.

"Don't worry. If I was mad at you, you would know. Trust me." Shadow smirks at him now.

That is...very unsettling.

Silver makes a mental note to stay on Shadow's good side. The latter is about to walk in, but Silver stops him.

"Wait, so did I win?"

"No. It's not over, remember? What we just did was a draw, if anything."

"So what happens to you?"

"Hm?"

"Are you still gonna leave tonight?"

Shadow holds back a laugh.

"We have to conclude the battle, don't we?"

Silver beams once he understands the implications of this statement. The other holds the door open for him and they finally go inside.

Shadow goes directly to his room to avoid any questioning from Rouge. His mission is accomplished: he doesn't have to leave for another day *and* he came up with a good excuse for it.

Looking over at the clock, he is taken back by it displaying 6:02 PM. Holy shit...does that mean they were outside for three and a half hours? It certainly didn't feel like that long. He missed dinner.

Maybe he'll go heat up something in the microwave and bring it back to his room. He's tired, physically and mentally, but he doesn't even mind it today. It's a calming type of tired, and not an exhaustion type.

He hopes that this trend will continue to tomorrow, his actual final day here. Might as well make the best of it, like Tails said.

Chapter End Notes

i feel like silver showing signs of RSD is not out of character

Title Track

Chapter Summary

In which Shadow lives up to his name, Sonic underestimates how smart Tails is, and Silver goes Phoenix-Wright-trying-to-break-psyche-locks mode on Shadow.

Chapter Notes

ive realized when i read the date and time in this story i hear the ace attorney typewriter like noises when they introduce a new setting/time

slight cw for discussion of mental health, ptsd, nightmares, etc. starting dec 23

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

December 22 | 08:30

When Shadow walks out of his room, he's greeted with a glorious sight — candy canes. On the kitchen counter, there's an entire pile of them sitting, waiting to be eaten.

His mouth waters; he's a sucker for sweets, and that can't be denied. When he approaches, he realizes how messy everything is. It looks like they were hastily unboxed, the box itself torn into pieces and empty wrappers within the pile.

He looks over to the living area, where he finds the culprits. Not surprising at all that Sonic is sitting there with Tails and Amy, candy cane in hand.

“Yo, Shads!”

Only one person uses that nickname — that stupid, ridiculous nickname — in the entire world, and that man is Sonic the Hedgehog.

“You're up early,” Shadow sneers. Early for *him*. The guy usually wakes up at no earlier than 12 in the afternoon.

“Aren't I? Yeah, I usually don't wake up at the ass crack of dawn like that guy Shadow.”

“Never heard of him.”

Sonic involuntarily cackles. “I should introduce you to him. You'd get along with him. He's almost as fast as me, can you believ-”

Before he can finish his sentence, he's dodging a candy cane coming for his head at high speed.

He takes a moment to recover after the attack, and puts on his best British accent. "The envious die not once, but as oft as the envied win applause."

This sentence Sonic finishes, just barely in time to dodge another candy cane, and then *another*. He throws his hands up in exaggerated annoyance.

"What was the extra one for?"

"For using big words."

"What the hell? I thought using big words was a good thing! That's what you always do."

Shadow smiles. "What, did you think I'd kiss you? You sounded ridiculous using them."

"Well, that's a good thing, because I got that quote from the internet."

Shadow shakes his head, but it's true. Sonic had that completely prepared because he knew he could get under Shadow's skin by acting all intellectual out of nowhere. And, look at that, he was right.

"Arrogance is the camouflage for insecurity, hedgehog."

Sonic scrunches his eyebrows. "What do you mean?"

"I mean, it's bold of you to assume that I would be envious of you. How cocky."

"You're just afraid to admit it. I know Shadow the Hedgehog is secretly my biggest fan. Here, throw me another candy cane and I'll sign it for you."

The urge to oblige to what Sonic suggested eats at Shadow, but since throwing it at him would technically be obeying him, he decides it would be better if he didn't.

He turns his back instead and goes to grab one for himself. The two of them were just taunting each other, nothing serious, but it's funny because Sonic wasn't completely wrong. He doesn't want to admit that he's jealous of Sonic, because he's not of course, but he sure is jealous of something the hero *has*. Maybe his friendships, or his charisma, or his piercing green eyes that are the same color as his favorite chaos emerald. Or maybe...his public image?

Sonic really is the world's hero, who everyone considers sweet and innocent. Shadow stands by everything he does, and he's definitely not going to act a certain way just for public approval, but sometimes...sometimes he just wishes he could be treated by the media the way Sonic always has been. And, don't get him wrong, he's not bullied by the media or anything — well, most of the time — but he's typically not revered either. Even though he's as fast and stronger than the other and is usually working with him when it's a huge event that gets them on the news.

He's always been treated as the dark version of Sonic, and never his own self. Always linked to someone else.

...No, this is stupid. Shadow doesn't need anyone else to know how good he already knows he is.

A figure walks towards the kitchen that takes Shadow out of his sudden onset brooding session.

"Hey, Shadow."

He smiles. Silver sounds way less enthusiastic when he's just woken up. Even someone as golden retriever-like as him isn't a morning person.

"Hello."

He's interrupted from any further train of thought by a gasp.

"What are these things?"

He peers over at what the time traveler is looking at. "Candy canes."

Silver's face lights up. "Candy?!?"

It's amusing how all that was needed for Silver to regain his eagerness was a mention of candy.

"Do you not know what candy canes are?"

"I've never seen one before!" He picks one up carefully. "What are they?"

Shadow can't believe Silver has never had one, not even *seen* one before. Man, the future must suck. He's missing out.

"Well, are you familiar with peppermint?"

"Uh...I always get the mints mixed up. There's so many of them."

"That's what candy canes are, essentially. Here," he unwraps the candy in Silver's hand carefully for him, not wanting him to learn of the wrapper's existence the hard way while also knowing that's absolutely something he would do. Silver watches in awe, although Shadow doesn't feel like he's done anything awesome.

"The wrapper is so thin! How would you even know it's there?"

Shadow smirks. "How would *I* know? I've had a disgusting amount of candy canes in my existence, you'd hope I'd know by now."

Silver laughs at the prospect of someone unknowingly eating candy with the wrapper their whole lives.

He really enjoys Shadow's sense of humor, especially when it's dry (which is often) because he's not too good at detecting sarcasm (which unfortunately is the other most common form of Shadow's humor).

Shadow doesn't think he's funny, although he really enjoys making others laugh. He can't let anyone know that, but there's always a feeling of satisfaction in him when he entertains people; especially when it's Silver. It's only day three of having spent any meaningful time with him at all, but *his* laugh is Shadow's favorite. It's very bright and lively, which fits his personality. It's a sound that makes his chest feel all warm, but in a good way...almost in fondness?

He shakes his head. So it's possible that Shadow no longer feels completely indifferent about Silver. That doesn't really mean anything to him now. Impressive, yeah, but not significant.

Silver has spent his time inspecting the sweet, feeling it with his fingers and then very tentatively sticking the tip of his tongue out to lick it. He's immediately hit with the mint flavor. It's probably the mintiest mint he's tasted so far.

"Come on, you've got to do more than that. How can you even taste it with that small sample?"

"Alright, alright, I'm getting there."

He finally puts the thing in his damn mouth, and it's obvious that he loves the flavor, but Shadow has to ask.

"Do you like it?"

"Shadow, I think this is the best thing I've ever tasted."

Shadow raises his eyebrows. "Is it?"

Silver's response is momentarily delayed by his devouring of the candy. "I'm not joking. Candy canes?" he asks, confirming the name. Shadow nods. "New favorite candy. Probably my new favorite food."

"That's great for you. No thanks necessary."

Silver puts on a smug face, almost resembling Shadow's own. They must be spending too much time together, they're starting to rub off on each other. "You want me to thank you?"

"I just introduced you to your new favorite food. Thanks would be welcome, but you can also show your thanks in cash."

"Thank you, Shadow. These are really freaking good. And I'm not giving you any money, unless it's in your dreams."

Harsh, but Shadow guffaws at the completely out of pocket and out of character jab. Snarky Silver is wonderful. And neither of them are aware of it, but Shadow hearing the sincere thankfulness in Silver's voice was worth more to him than any amount of money would be.

15:00

“Guys...I wanted to talk to you about something.”

Eyebrows raise all around the room.

Sonic is never serious, why does he sound serious? Did something bad happen?

“What is it?”

“Well...” His voice goes real low. “Tails is young, y’know? He’s a kid. And kids believe in Santa. So you guys need to act like Santa is real. I’m not gonna be the one to tell him.”

A scoff.

“Then I will.”

Sonic darts his eyes over to Shadow, pleading without saying a word.

“You won’t.”

A genuine look of disgust rolls over Shadow’s face.

“How cruel of you to lie to your dear younger brother, only to break his heart and trust when he gets a bit older.” He shakes his head. “You know what? That’s not even relevant. Are you trying to tell me that a child genius with an IQ of 300 has not figured out on his own that Santa is not real?”

Tails walks in with impeccable timing, having picked up that he was being talked about based off of how everyone looked at him with wide eyes and stopped talking as soon as his presence was known.

“Tell him now.”

“Tell me what?”

Sonic nervously laughs far too loud. “I-It’s not important, w-we were just talking ab-”

“Santa does not exist.”

Everyone’s mouths drop, some gasping.

“But you knew that already, didn’t you?”

The guests hold their breath for how Tails might respond, wondering if they should comfort him, change the subject, punch Shadow, anything to make this tense, awkward silence, which in reality only lasted a second or two, end.

Finally, a sigh. Rolled eyes.

“Of course I know that. I’ve known that for years.” He turns to Sonic. “Sonic, did you not know that I know?”

The word “dumbfounded” does not do justice to explain how Sonic feels in this moment.

“Well, yes! Why didn’t you tell me? You have no idea how difficult it was to not slip up, and I could’ve *avoided* all that?” He acts fake offended — well, most of it’s fake. Everyone seems to be less tense now, leaning towards relieved. The air feels lighter. Tails laughs and elbows his brother.

“You think I’m stupid?”

Shadow goes to walk away, making a pit stop where his rival stands.

“What did I say?”

“You’re going to hell, Shadow the Hedgehog.”

The burst of laughter that leaves Shadow’s mouth at this surprises even himself, and even though Sonic is genuinely mad at him, he can’t help but laugh at the other’s laugh. Shadow seems to be in a good mood today, and as frequently as the bastard gets on his nerves, he still considers him a friend and is happy to know that he’s been a good host to him so far.

December 23 | 02:30

Shadow sits on Sonic’s couch, drinking coffee that he doesn’t want to drink as he gazes out at the beautiful scenery through the enormous window. It amazes him how the world can be so beautiful and calm while he feels like the world is crumbling where he sits.

This has been his ritual for the past three nights of being here. Go to sleep in his room, and then wake up on the ARK.

Oh, wait, but he’s not actually awake, it’s just that his logic-depleted subconscious can’t tell the difference. And there he runs with a young girl, too young, guiding her through the complicated hallways that he hadn’t quite memorized despite his many years living there. It’s fuzzy, but he knows the girl is Maria, and he knows how this will end already.

He’s had dreams like these far too many times before, and no matter how many times they happen, his brain refuses to recognize them as a dream in the moment. And no matter what the nightmare contains, whether it’s a recollection of that dreadful day or something unrelated with the same helpless feeling of failure and loss, it always ends with Shadow waking up and a panic attack quickly following; only sometimes does he even try to go back to sleep. And tonight is not one of those nights.

Tonight, actually, the dream was new.

Well, of course, the premise wasn’t new. It was the same old in that sense. He felt the same pathetic helplessness as he watched his sister get shot — and for what? She didn’t do anything, and even if she did, Shadow was created specifically to protect her. He couldn’t even do that?

But this time, instead of waking up after this and getting the scheduled panic attack over with, his first person view turned into a third person view and then he was in a room with all the people staying in the cabin. Shadow inferred that he had been explaining to them what happened that day...the kind of dream-logic detail that is not explicitly stated but you just *know*.

But all of them looked so *upset* at him.

How could he mess up that bad? Such a fatal missed opportunity. If he had just done one thing different, she would've been saved. She pretty much died because of him.

He should've done better, and they let him know.

Only after this did he finally wake up, this time his regular panic symptoms paired with nausea. It had been a truly sickening dream, and one that Shadow believed to in fact be the others' likely reactions if and when he told them about the incident.

Something nags at him though...that is, why did the dream affect him like this? He doesn't want to care about what other people think about him, so why is it so hard for him to do it? They're not his friends, maybe besides Rouge and Sonic, so why does he care about their approval?

Emotional attachments really are too much for him to worry about.

At the recollection of his night, Shadow feels tears form in his eyes, but they don't fall. A part of him wants to cry — he almost doesn't have a choice, as merely one blink would do it — but the other part knows it would just be ridiculous to do so. Why is he crying about this, anyway? Why is he acting like the victim? The victim is Maria. And she isn't even here to have a chance to cry-

“Holy shit, you scared me.”

Shadow turns around quickly, immediately recognizing the voice to be Silver's. Fantastic. The best person to find Shadow at his worst, someone who he actually doesn't hate and the only person who's made his time here tolerable. What perfect timing to scare him away.

Contrary to what he thought, a few tears must've found their way outside of Shadow's eyes earlier after all, because instead of moving on to where he was going in the first place, Silver takes a seat next to him with a concerned look.

“Why are you awake so late?”

Shadow crosses his arms. “I could ask you the same question.”

Silver holds his hands up defensively. “*I* was going to the bathroom.

Shadow contemplates this statement...not quite buying it. It doesn't make sense.

“May I ask why you were walking to the bathroom across the cabin? Why wouldn't you just go to the ones near your room?”

Silver's eye widens as if he's having a revelation. "There's ones near my room?!?" Shadow rolls his eyes but Silver doesn't let up. "I genuinely did not know that."

He isn't sure if he believes Silver, but drops it. It's an unnecessary thing to argue about. It happened, he's here and concerned, and now Shadow just hopes he doesn't say anything to embarrass himself in his sleep-deprived state.

"Okay. I told you why I'm awake, so now you have to tell me why you are."

Shadow huffs a laugh, the undertone bearing a tinge of bitterness. "I don't recall agreeing to this deal."

Silver doesn't break eye contact with him, obviously not in the mood for banter, so he reluctantly decides to answer the other. Anything to break the stare that was going straight through his soul.

"I couldn't sleep, if you *must* know."

Silver gives him a look of disbelief, and then his eyes dart down to the cup that Shadow is still holding and occasionally sipping out of.

"...So your solution was to drink coffee? That doesn't make any sense."

Shadow doesn't answer. He stares ahead through the window.

Silver can tell he's hit dangerous territory...but pressing just a little further can't hurt, right?

"Don't you want to sleep? It's so late, and we've been so busy, I'm *sure* you want--"

"I don't want to have another nightmare," Shadow states firmly, maybe a bit louder than he should at near 3 AM, and he continues to look out the window, unable to even look in Silver's direction at this point. He doesn't want to see his reaction. He doesn't want his pity. That'll make him feel worse. He really just wants to be left alone.

Silver is rendered speechless at the other's confession, though his shock is not visible.

Shadow the Hedgehog has nightmares? No way. The guy who survived a fall from space? Who doesn't dare show to anyone that he cares about anything?

He wishes he didn't say anything in the first place. Now it's all awkward.

"...I'm sorry. You weren't obligated to tell me that."

To his surprise, Shadow doesn't chaos spear him or skate away.

By now, Silver has spent just enough time around Shadow to learn that silence is almost never a negative sign from him. If he's not chewing you out or punching you, it might actually mean you're on the right track. So, impulsively, and though unwise, he decides to go on.

“Uh...so, you’re just not going to go back to sleep?”

Shadow’s silent treatment persists, so Silver changes his tone for the next question, trying to sound as gentle as possible. “...How often do you do this?”

“Frequently.”

One word is better than zero, Silver supposes.

“What, do you just pull all-nighters multiple times a week?”

“Correct.” Shadow drops his head, finally ending the staring contest he was having with Sonic’s window. “In fairness, I don’t require nearly as much sleep as those like you do.”

Silver conveniently ignores the jab at “those like him”. He’s finally getting Shadow to spill, and although his pride is yelling at him to retort, he’s smart enough not to get in a fight with Shadow’s superiority complex now. No, instead, he softens his expression again and tries to get to the truth.

“...Okay, but it can’t be enough. It looks like you’re fighting to keep your eyes open right now, speaking of which are very red, by the way. And you were obviously tired enough that you needed coffee to keep you awake.”

Shadow doesn't dare look at him. Everything he said is true...he is exhausted, mentally and physically, but too petrified to sleep. He kind of feels like he’s going crazy, and yet the last thing he’s gonna do is admit that to anyone else.

“Shadow...”

Silver raises an unsure hand to his shoulder, the other flinching and tensing up at the contact, but not pushing him off. At least that got his attention well enough that they’re making eye contact now.

“...are you okay? *Really*? And, I don’t want just an ‘I’m fine.’ What are you feeling? You’re always so deep in your thoughts.”

Shadow opens his mouth to answer but suddenly forgets how to speak. Saying yes would be a straight out lie. He’s not okay. He is *drowning*. But how can he admit that to someone? They’re just gonna tell him he’s overreacting like he’s sure he is, and then he’ll have no one. He can’t say no either.

He turns away, vision blurring, tears filling his eyes again, and being unable to stop it. He knows he can’t blink under any circumstance. Not a chance he’s gonna let Silver, or anyone, see him cry. He’s not going to bother anyone else.

Silver notices his struggle — this time, he knows he’s not being ignored.

“You know it’s okay to have nightmares, right? They can be really disturbing. They don’t make you any less of a person. It’s okay that you feel like this.”

It's okay that you feel like this.

Is it?

No one's ever told him something like that...well, besides Rouge and Sonic the very few times he's vented to them. And the way Silver phrased it and said it made it sound far more believable. Shit, maybe it is okay.

It was such a small statement but meant so much; it was validating. Validation that he needs, even though he still doesn't fully believe it to be true.

Silver has not looked away from Shadow this whole time, and Shadow has done the exact opposite, still staring down. His eyes are strained, *so* heavy, and he instinctively blinks. A tear escapes his eye.

He scowls — why is he so weak? There's no reason he should be crying. Why can't his stupid brain understand that?

“Shadow, if you want to talk about it, I'm here. Or if you want to cry, that's okay too. If you need *anything*. Everyone's asleep, so no one will hear you, and *I* certainly won't say anything to anyone if you don't want me to.”

Don't cry don't cry don't cry don't cry...

Shadow bites his lip. Even with permission, he's still not going to.

What if he tells someone? How can I trust him not to? What if someone walks in and sees this pathetic display? What if-

He's brought out of his racing thoughts by a hand ever so softly brushing his muzzle, and carefully tilting his head so the owner of the hand can see his face.

“Hey...” Silver lightly wipes away the tear that was lingering on Shadow's face, speaking as gently as he makes the touch. “It's okay.”

To Shadow, it really isn't okay, but after that he hardly even cares.

In a matter of seconds, he realizes that he actually hasn't been touched so delicately, felt so *cared* for, since he lived on the ARK. He finds Silver's genuine verbal and physical concern for him reminiscent of Maria. But it's not her, and while bittersweet, it's *alright*. He's surprisingly okay with it being someone else right now. There is a sweetness to it.

My, it's *so* sweet. He's missed this feeling more than he could ever have imagined; so starved for it that this simple embrace alone makes him want to cry.

Just this once...Silver wins.

Every emotion Shadow has had for god knows how many years comes to the forefront of his mind at once, and he's so overloaded that he completely loses any control of his watering eyes that he may have still had.

He looks down in a second, not wanting to be seen like *this*, but takes advantage of the hand still embracing his cheek and nuzzles into it.

And then, the dam is broken.

Though uncomfortable for him at first, Silver on the other hand reacts almost immediately, showing no signs of discomfort and only looking to console. He strokes Shadow's muzzle with his fingers, working with limited mobility in his hand as the hedgehog whimpers and leans more into the palm now dampened by his tears.

...He wholeheartedly supports and even encourages Shadow finally openly expressing his feelings, but deep down his heart is *breaking*. His whispered sobs are a sound that Silver learns this night are one of his least favorites in the world; even though he pledges to himself that he will always comfort Shadow when he's troubled from now on, the sound is still tragic to him. He wishes he never has to hear it again.

No time to angst over that, Silver thinks. For now, he simply continues to caress Shadow's face.

"Awh, Shadow...it's okay." He uses his free hand to embrace the other side of Shadow's face, his weeping only worsening as he likely gets more comfortable with the feeling of vulnerability.

God, by now, Silver just wants him to stop. He wants to make it all better. Most importantly, he wants to find whoever made him hurt like this.

He moves his right hand around to rest below Shadow's back spines, hoping to gently pull him closer.

"Here...come here."

Shadow shockingly obliges, scooting over and burying his face into the front of Silver's shoulder.

At least this position will muffle his sobs. No *way* is he gonna risk anyone hearing this.

He's stiff in the hold, but he eventually brings one of his own hands up to Silver's chest fluff and rakes his fingers through it before slowly but tightly, *desperately* clutching it, as if the other will abandon him if he doesn't, and makes sure his fingers are curled enough to prevent his sharply clawed fingers from digging into Silver's skin.

His body trembles as he cries; which makes sense to both of them, as they both know that this is after *years* of repressed grief and turmoil. All Silver can do is keep holding him, his arms wrapped tightly around his body while simultaneously running his fingers through the other's quills in hopes to soothe him in any way.

“...I’m s-scared.”

It’s low, barely a whisper, and nearly incomprehensible through the sobs. But Silver hears it.

Right. Shadow’s a teenager, a kid, just like Silver. He occasionally forgets this. Actually, he *often* forgets this. It’s hard to remember for a lot of reasons, mainly because of his immense power and his maturity, which now that Silver thinks about it may be an effect of whatever he’s gone through. But in the end, he’s only been out of stasis for probably a year more total than Silver’s been alive. He’s a *kid*.

Kids get scared sometimes. Shadow has every right to be.

The voice goes on, mumbling between sobs, and not giving Silver an opportunity to do anything more than widen his eyes.

“This hurts...so much. I-It’s worse than...any physical pain I’ve...f-felt.”

He involuntarily grimaces. He can only imagine how Shadow must feel... it makes him want to cry himself.

But he can’t. This isn’t his moment.

He looks back down at his hurting friend. “I know, Shadow...I know. I’m here. You won’t ever have to feel alone in this again. I promise everything will work out in the end.”

He’s still not entirely sure what kind of pain Shadow is referring to, but he continues to try to reassure the hedgehog in his arms, who is still shaking while tears stream out of his eyes.

Worse than any physical pain he’s felt? This coming from the guy who fell from space? Shit...this must be bad.

Thankfully, he seems to calm down in time, sobs turning into infrequent sniffles and the aching in his ribs subsiding as his violent shaking gradually comes to a halt.

He’s okay. He cried, and he’s not fixed, but his head is clearer.

And Silver was there the whole time with him.

He didn’t judge. He didn’t ask for an explanation. He didn’t give him pity. There was no disgust or mocking at all.

Funnily enough, and though he’s a bit ashamed to admit it, he feels safe in Silver’s arms. He’s almost constantly on edge, ready for any danger that may present itself to him. But now...he just feels secure. Protected.

And Shadow the Hedgehog sure as hell doesn’t need protection, but god damn does it feel nice regardless.

A thought has been creeping up in his mind, though. A worry. He tries to ignore it at first, but it lingers. Reluctantly, he decides to speak up to Silver, figuring that if Silver has really

stayed with him and comforted him all this time, after this whole display, another quick question can't hurt. Right?

He whispers the other's name who makes eye contact with him.

Oh boy.

Deep breath.

"...Are you sure you want to be put through this?"

Silver looks perplexed. "What do you mean by *this*? Like, being there for you?"

"All the fucking things I've experienced, are you certain that you even want to bother with it?"

Bother with me?

"Are you asking if I'm prepared to take on your problems?"

Shadow just nods. *He's got it now...* he clenches his jaw, prepared for Silver to say something along the lines of, "fuck no".

"...Yes. I am. Because you're my friend, and I want you to be happy. Plus, you're supposed to be here to have a good time! I love the snow and I love seeing other people love it too. It makes me so happy."

Silver looks back at Shadow, who looks unconvinced. He frowns.

"You know why I'm friends with you, right? Do you think you're not deserving of it or something?"

Damn, he read my mind. How does he keep doing that?

Shadow's silence answers for him.

Oh, Shadow...

"Listen." Silver once again cups Shadow's cheek, and this time the latter can feel his face getting warm. Earlier the touch was relieving, and it still is, but now it's joined by...another feeling. A feeling that Shadow isn't sure of. All he knows is that it's not bad; well, he's pretty sure. And the intense eye contact they've started to make sends a shot of adrenaline down his body.

Probably just anxiety.

He waits patiently for Silver to go on, content with the silence for now. It's a bit odd; it almost feels like they've been this close before. And Shadow knows they haven't, but...then why does he feel like he has a whole past with Silver? The memories aren't there, and the knowledge isn't, but the feelings are. This whole situation is all too familiar. Did Shadow

perhaps know him around the time that he got amnesia? Maybe he just hasn't recovered those memories...

Silver sighs.

"I don't know who, or what, made you believe that you don't deserve someone looking out for you, offering their support — but they were wrong. You wanna know why you're my friend? Ever since I first met you, I've looked up to you. Even when we were working against each other. You are literally the most powerful being alive. And it shows!" Silver takes a breath only to jump into the next sentence, showing no signs of slowing down. "Your personality is more than what the media shows. Anyone who spends two minutes with you would know that. You care about others, you care about the world — damn it, you've been protecting it for so long? You've been dealt a bad hand," -there's a phrase Sonic taught him...he'll celebrate later for using it in the right context- "so what? You've done some questionable things, okay, which one of us hasn't?"

Silver exhales, breath suddenly shaky. "I know what it's like to be alone. And I know what it's like to lose. It seems like no matter how many times I go back to the future, it's still fucked up one way or another."

...Oh dear, where is he *going* with this now? It started out strong, and now it just sounds like his own rant.

"Silver..."

Now the tables have turned. A hand carefully reaches up to wipe away his own few tears which he didn't even feel fall.

"...I take it that you haven't necessarily had it easy either."

Silver snuffles, trying to regain composure. "No. I haven't. Maybe everyone telling me vague things about how you've had it rough too made me want to get to know you. I don't know, I just felt like hopefully I could finally relate to someone-"

"You're empathetic.

"Uh...yeah. I think so. That's a good thing, right? When you understand the pain that someone else is feeling?"

"Mhm. You know what it's like to feel like you're-"

"Underwater."

Shadow is dumbfounded. This guy's 3 for 3 now. So how many more times are they going to sync their brains?

Silver looks at tired scarlet eyes. "You try to get to the surface, but fighting it just makes you tire out."

Shadow raises an eyebrow. "So you're suggesting to..not fight it?"

“I don’t know what I’m suggesting.” Silver shakes his head, exhaustion apparent in his face. “But...we can figure it out together?”

The sentence, although technically not framed as a question, was clearly asking for confirmation. Silver was asking if it was okay that he joins Shadow in whatever kind of journey this is.

Together...that actually sounds good.

So Shadow smiles softly and nods, which makes the other smile back in relief. He rests his head back against Silver, still being held by him. He’s too tired to even think coherently at this point, his brain’s main and only objective being to sleep by any means.

“Okay.” Silver sighs, feeling like he can breathe much easier.

He hasn’t forgotten the reason why he originally got up; he regrets not going to the bathroom but he won’t *dare* stand up now. Shadow is like a heated blanket, never mind the fact that he’s just gotten someone as indifferent and cold as Shadow to get all snuggly with him — who, by the way, is so incredibly soft — and he doesn’t even seem to mind the contact.

Silver does something that he thinks is stupid, but he might as well give it a shot — he starts to run his hand over the other’s hip where his hand was already resting, and despite fully anticipating him to recoil and/or slap him, he actually seems to...enjoy it? In fact, he even moves to rest his own hand over Silver’s, albeit a bit experimentally and hesitantly, and the latter happily continues his gentling as he feels his own face begin to burn.

Silver infers that Shadow is only willingly accepting this affection because he’s hardly even awake. He might even think this is a dream. Silver’s in the same sleep deprived boat, questioning himself if it is in fact a dream.

But he cannot shake the strange feeling of intimacy that this moment holds. And yet, it feels right? As in, nothing feels out of the ordinary, if it were that they’ve held each other like this a hundred times before.

They both watch the snowfall outside, and this time it’s Shadow notes that it’s not surreal — it’s hopeful. He feels himself slipping back to sleep within what’s likely a single minute, soothed by the warmth and touch of the hedgehog he sits against.

Whatever. Maybe it won’t hurt for him to have an extra friend.

Chapter End Notes

this chapter ends real calm and cozy but this won’t last...sorry. lots of gay panic to follow.

sorry this is late as FUCK i had to pass my classes and guess what i fucking did. barely
but i don't care.

Empty Chair, Do A Solo!

Chapter Summary

Both Shadow and Silver assume the other is hetero which is simply not true for either of them. They don't know that about each other yet though, unfortunately.

Rouge helps Shadow out with a problem, and Silver has a little freak out of his own.

Chapter Notes

no the title of this chapter being a dance moms quote has no relevancy to the actual chapter. but did i create an interaction from an empty chair and after writing the words empty chair the only thing that played in my head was holly's voice? yes.

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

December 23 | 06:35

Shadow's eyes flutter open slowly, his vision blurry. The first thing he realizes is how warm he is, and in a good way. He's always warm, but he usually can't feel it like this. He looks over to his right, being able to make out what looks like a cup of something. Did he not finish the coffee he made last night?

He knows he should move it so it doesn't spill everywhere, but he's too comfortable to move yet. Sonic's couch is really cozy, and he's leaning against what he assumes is a very soft and fuzzy blanket.

For once, he feels relaxed. Serene, even. He never wants to get up.

Until, of course, he feels a heartbeat other than his own.

Yep. The "blanket" he's sitting against is not a blanket at all, really the furthest thing from it.

It's Silver. He's leaning against Silver. In the open, a common area where anyone can see, the other's arms hugging him from behind. He's also asleep, signified by the quiet snoring barely audible from behind Shadow.

Immediately horrified at this realization, Shadow breaks out of the hold as the memories of last night come back to him. Silver must wake up at this as he whines, presumably at the loss of contact.

Shadow cringes. The last thing he wanted to do was hurt him, but he *had* to get out of that situation. If someone saw him like that he surely would've died on the spot. To his relief, though, no one else seemed to be awake yet.

He leaves the room to go to his own. What happened last night was not some absurd dream.

He decides he needs some time to...reflect.

07:24

So, about that reflecting — it's not working out.

All Shadow has done in almost an hour is panic. He shouldn't have told Silver *anything* he told him last night. And the way he felt in certain moments (when he wasn't crying his eyes out), the fondness, and the *physicality* — before last night, the thought of touching almost anyone in any context sent his heart racing and NOT in a good way, but last night, not only did that not happen after about five minutes, but he actually felt comforted by it?

This isn't good. He's letting himself get close to someone, and he can *not* let himself do that. They're all just gonna leave eventually, anyway — relationships fade, people fight, people die — and that inevitable pain is not even necessary.

Ugh, he has to leave the cabin today. Leave today and forget this ever happened. That'll have to do.

He hears a knock at his door.

“Shadow? You in there?”

It's Rouge. Hmm...he could actually use her help.

“Rouge...come in here right now.”

The door opens and a concerned looking bat enters, closing the door before taking a seat next to Shadow on the bed. Before she can ask, Shadow speaks up.

“I'm having a serious issue. And I know you're the type to freak out about these types of things, so I'm going to tell you about it and if you know what's good for you you will not interrupt me.”

Rouge raises her hands defensively. “Whatever you say, Mr. Intense.”

So, he tells her about what happened the night before. She keeps her word, only occasionally nodding or making a face. When he gets to the end of his story, he looks away as she thinks of a response.

“So...you told Silver about your sleeping problems and he offered support, and...what exactly is the ‘big issue’ here?”

“Do you seriously not see the problem? I cried in front of him, I *fell asleep* on him, I told him information I never should’ve told anyone!”

“Why do you care so much? Like really, what is he gonna do with that information? He helped you, he made you feel not so alone, so what are you so up in arms about?”

Shadow can’t believe that Rouge genuinely doesn’t see the dilemma here. “How do I know he’s not going to tell everyone? I shouldn’t have trusted him, I barely know him! Everyone’s going to know, and they’ll know that I’m the freak that everyone makes me out to be, and then I’ll have no one.”

“Shadow! What are you *talking* about? Calm down.” She grabs his shoulders and makes eye contact with him. “You’re catastrophizing. Even if any of that happens, you will *always* have me. I hope you know that. And none of that is going to happen anyway! You’re not a fucking freak for having emotional baggage! Even if everyone knew that you can’t sleep, they won’t even know the reason behind it. You didn’t tell him that, am I correct?” Shadow shyly nods to confirm this. “What’s the real worst thing that can happen? People know you have nightmares sometimes?”

Shadow sighs. “I suppose you’re right.”

He still feels uneasy, though. There’s one more thing that he didn’t tell Rouge, and he’s wondering if he even should at all...

“You’re still worried. I can tell.”

The only bad thing about being friends with Rouge; she can read a person *so* well.

“Tell me what else is on your mind,” she continues.

“Last night, after I told him about everything and had my little breakdown, I got this...strange feeling. I couldn’t tell if it was good or bad. It felt like anxiety, but it was slightly different, foreign, and it scared me.”

“It scared you?”

He nods. “It was a feeling of comfortability, in a sense. But, in addition to that, it felt a bit like an urge to get...*closer* to him. And I don’t want that. I can’t do that.” The last part hardly even sounded like he was talking to anyone specifically, just reaffirming it to himself. Rouge is almost sure she knows what he means, but she wants to hear it from him.

“Why not?”

Shadow pauses for a second, but he knows the answer just as well as she does, and it hurts.

“I...don’t want to lose him.”

He looks down and away from her as he says this, the words leaving his mouth quietly to try to avoid any potential cracks in his voice. This was the first time he was admitting something like that to himself, let alone to anyone else. He can feel his face burning.

“Shadow...”

She slides her hand to his back, and to her surprise, he goes on.

“He’s going to die, and I’m not. If I get close to him, I’m going to have to watch him die and then live the rest of eternity like that. Just like...w-with-“

He can no longer speak, can’t say the name he wants to say. His throat aches, and he embarrassingly feels like he’s going to start weeping uncontrollably again.

“I understand.”

She pulls him into a side hug and he can’t even try to stop the tears from flowing. Twice in one day, huh? He’s been more open today than he had his entire life before today. Must be something in the air.

Soon enough, just like earlier, his tears cease and he feels just the slightest bit better. Rouge had nothing but sympathy for him.

An idea suddenly pops into her head.

“Shadow, I don’t know if you’ve ever even considered this, but I saw something the other day...these scientists are in the trial stages of removing immortality in, well, immortal beings. And you have that genius fox boy who hangs around Sonic, I’m sure he knows about it.” He immediately knows where she’s going with this, but is actually quite intrigued to hear her out and stays quiet, which is a bit jarring to her. “Um, I know how much you agonize about your immortality. And I might be crazy for suggesting this, especially since the research isn’t even close to finished yet, but...well, let me ask you this, are you familiar with the process they’re going through right now?”

He scratches his head. “I don’t keep up with the news much.”

“I’m trying to ask, would you look further into it and maybe, you know...” she waves her hands in a circle in a “finish my sentence” manner.

“Get rid of my immortality.”

Rouge nods, that not being exactly what she was trying to say, but still happy that he filled in the blanks so she didn’t have to say the words out loud.

Shadow, on the other hand, has never even given thought to that! He always wondered if it was possible, but it was just a tiny hopeful but anxious voice at the back of his head. He was not expecting it to materialize in front of his eyes so soon.

“I mean, I don’t know. That’s an enormous decision to make.”

As much as immortality scares him, mortality scares him just as much.

“Don’t hurt yourself. You don’t have to make a decision now, obviously. It’s just something to keep in mind. That aside...until you come to a conclusion about that, the best advice I can give you for now is to follow your heart. That’s how I’ve always been. You’re such a thinker, you follow your mind and logic.” (Well, except when it matters most, a voice in the back of her head says. She’s not gonna tell him that now, though. That’s a lecture for later.) “But I’m telling you, in this case, you have to do what your heart wants.”

“I don’t even know what my heart wants!”

“Well, you want to be friends with him, don’t you?”

Shadow considers this question. Friends. That seems like the only logical answer, but something deep in his brain is screaming otherwise. Close friends?

“...More than friends?” Rouge smiles, but Shadow is totally baffled. How could she suggest something so absurd? She must just be fucking with him. But her smile has a genuine look to it, so he tries to remove any salt lacing his next choice of words.

Just say no, Shadow.

“I have no idea, Rouge.”

Oooof course. It’s never that easy.

“Well, do you have a crush on him?”

He snorts, unable to hold back laughter at such a question, finding it even funnier considering that she’s the only person in the world who knows about him being very much aromantic.

“Rouge, I don’t even know what a ‘crush’ feels like. I don’t like people in that manner.”

Rouge sighs and rolls her eyes at his apparent ineptitude. “I know you’re aromantic, Shadow. But it’s a spectrum, just like anything sexuality related. There are aromantic people who fall in love, but very rarely or only when they feel really connected to someone. You feeling these feelings doesn’t make you any less valid.”

Pft. News to him.

“Didn’t you say earlier that you had this ‘strange feeling’ about him or something? Explain that to me.”

“I told you, it felt like anxiety. Adrenaline. Like I was flustered. You know, your heart rate spikes, you start sweating, you feel like you’re burning. Though, to be truthful, they didn’t feel negative. Uncomfortable yes, but there was something of excitement that accompanied them.”

“When did you feel like this? Like, what prompted it?”

“Um...” Now he feels like he’s blushing again, because he knows exactly when and why it happened.

“...When he...embraced my face, the second time. He was looking right into my eyes, and... well, I’m not intimidated by anyone, but it made me want to squirm. I kept the eye contact, anyway, but my heart was racing, and I have no idea why. I don’t think it was fear. As uncomfortable as it made me, I didn’t want to look away. I couldn’t. It was like I was in a trance.”

“Shadow.”

She looks at him, clearly tired of his shit.

“You are in love with him.”

Shadow’s jaw drops. “What the fuck are you talking about? That’s completely ludicrous. You can’t even fall in love with someone that fast.”

Rouge ignores the language, because despite the obscenities, they didn’t sound particularly angry; more out of shock. “Ah, you’ve never heard of ‘love at first sight’. Come on, Shadow. You can fall in love with someone at any time, as long as they’re right for you!”

“I don’t believe that’s possible.” Shadow shakes his head, in pure disbelief that she would even bring something up that was so *absurd*. “Even so, there’s more to love than just feeling adrenaline.”

“Okay, so what do you think about him?”

“I think he’s strong. He’s almost as powerful as I am, and that says a hell of a lot. He’s been rather...*nice* to me this whole trip. And he listened to me during whatever the fuck *that* was last night. The whole time. Willingly.”

“And how do you feel about that?”

“I don’t know...surprised?”

“That’s it?”

“If I’m being honest, it *was* a nice feeling. I guess I feel happy. I want more of it.”

Rouge hums thoughtfully. “Does it feel like butterflies in your stomach, by any chance?”

That’s precisely it...how did she explain how he felt last night to a T?

“A little bit.” He hides a small smile at his conscious downplay of how he actually feels.

“Hm. And when you think about spending time with him, how do you feel? Does it make you feel anxious or dreadful or do you actually look forward to it?”

“I can say I feel less drained when I spend time with him than with anyone else — mm, besides you. At first that assuredly wasn’t true, but now I don’t mind when we’re together. He’s shown me some exciting things. And he’s very understanding if I need some time alone, because he’s the same way.” He looks down to fidget with his hands. “That’s substantially important for me when it comes to socialization.”

A glance up at Rouge reveals the face of a bat who is thinking *very* hard.

“Would you want to stay with him even after this little vacation is over? Besides the fears of abandonment, forget about that. What does your *heart* want?”

This is a tricky question. He thinks it over very carefully. First he has to remove himself from the self doubt, which is *incredibly* difficult. But once he imagines what it would most likely be like if he didn’t have a self destructive voice in his head, the answer is clear.

“I do.”

He looks ahead at the wall. “I fear that we don’t have enough time.”

“How so?”

“We’re going to part, and then...what? One half of my brain wants to run away and forget he ever existed, and that exact concept is the other half’s greatest fear. I want to give him help the way he did for me. We understand each other and he seems determined to stick together in order to figure ourselves out. And...I want that too.”

Shadow sighs in exhaustion, feelings his cheeks go red for the hundredth time today.

“Oh my god, Rouge. I...I might...be...” he trails off, and she waits excitedly for his confession, having been left off on a cliffhanger at the worst possible time.

“...Am I falling for him? I...I think I’m falling for him.”

There it is, Rouge thinks. *What we all knew this whole time*, he finally admits.

“We all” obviously meaning Rouge and only Rouge, since no one else on the trip knows Shadow as well as she does. She is a bit surprised that Shadow was brave enough to verbally communicate his realization, though.

“I want to figure this all out with him, Rouge.”

“That would definitely go on past this little trip...is that what you want? Would that make you happy?”

Shadow’s heart flutters at the mere thought of that, being with someone so gorgeous inside and out. A soft smile forms on his face.

“It would.”

She smiles back at him. “Then I’m going to say this in the nicest way I know how: tell him that, idiot!”

That statement is like a slap in the face to Shadow. He suddenly truly realizes the intensity of this situation. Confronting him about it is a whole entirely different fear! So many things can go wrong if he does that. And Silver’s a guy! Shadow hasn’t even thought about what his sexuality might be yet, how could he just ask someone out like that?

“I can’t do that Rouge, you know that. It’s far too early. Plus, he’s a male, and...so am I. I don’t even know if I like men, and I especially don’t know if he does! His two closest friends are both female, he’s probably together with at least one of them.”

“Shadow! You can’t assume that. He might be having the same crisis you’re having.” She lowers her voice, knowing that if anyone hears what they’re talking about she will be killed at the hands of Shadow. “And what do you mean you ‘don’t know if you like men’? You just told me you’re in love with a man!”

Shadow can’t even argue with that. Even better, this is the first time he’s felt this about *anyone*. And any girl he had ever known he had no interest in dating, and definitely not having sex with, to the point where the idea made him greatly uneasy. Almost nauseous.

For some reason, he had never thought these extreme negative feelings were a sign of preference in the past. He had just assumed that it was due to the fact that he wasn’t built for this kind of stuff. But now, with all the memories flooding back to him, he realizes that he’s probably gay.

It had been hard for him to tell because of his lack of attraction in general, but he’s suddenly confident in his conclusion. He doesn’t like girls. He never has, and he never would. He doesn’t want to, that’s for sure. And he feels strangely at peace with this realization, the gay panic having subsided for the moment with clarity and acceptance taking over.

...Unfortunately, this doesn’t solve the fact that he has no *idea* if Silver would ever like him back. What he does have an idea of is that he is not going to risk humiliating himself by confessing to him.

He sighs one last time, thanking Rouge for the help.

He knows now that he will be staying here a bit longer. Just how long he doesn’t know, he just wants to see how the next day or two or few goes, and do some living in the moment.

18:34

The day has (mostly) come and gone. After Shadow’s little freak-out-leading-to-revelation, he subconsciously avoided Silver and most people in general. He didn’t want to be the cause of any awkwardness, and he knew that with the things he was feeling that that was a totally possible scenario.

Now dinner's here, and Shadow has reluctantly decided to join everyone else instead of just taking his food to his room like he usually does. It's just one time, he figures.

And for whatever reason, it sure will make Silver happy.

He is very enthusiastically waving at Shadow and gesturing for him to sit in the seat next to him, and conveniently enough, Rouge is on the other side of the empty chair. He really has no choice.

"Hey, perfect seating, right?" Rouge asks as he sits down. He doesn't exactly understand what she's implying at first, but after a second he rolls his eyes. Does she think this is a joke?

Obviously she does, as she laughs and innocently kisses him on the cheek. Shadow is shockingly not finding humor in the situation, his face burning and only making this more embarrassing.

No one heard what she said though, or seemed to care about their interaction. *Thankfully.*

Ah, but it's never that simple, is it?

The one person who was aware of Rouge's teasing was the only one in earshot not distracted by a conversation with someone else, which was who other than Silver the Hedgehog. He didn't hear the context of what Rouge said, maybe because he wasn't listening, or maybe because he was too focused on what happened directly after.

Probably the latter.

Silver is just floored. There is a single thought going through his head — why the hell did Rouge kiss Shadow?

He shakes his head. Why should he care anyway?

But he undeniably *does*. He cares. He feels sick. Because how could he for one second think that Shadow would want anything to do with him?

He feels so stupid. Of course, he should've known Shadow's a straight guy with a girlfriend. And Silver's...certainly not straight, he knows that much. That could never work. *They* could never work. He knew he shouldn't have let himself believe that they could ever have something.

He probably just thinks I'm creepy for wanting to spend so much time with him. He probably doesn't even like me, I never should've touched him, I probably made him feel uncomfortable.

Silver can feel the rejection setting in; his thoughts are racing, he doesn't want to be here anymore, he just wants to be alone-

He had almost forgotten that he was with his friends at all when he feels a hand on his shoulder.

“Silver, what’s going on?”

How ironic that Shadow is both the direct cause of his internal panic and the first one to ask if he’s alright.

“Oh, it’s nothing-”

“Do you need some air? We can step outside, it’s fine.”

“Uh, I-”

“Here, let’s step out.”

Before Silver can even think, his hand is grabbed and he’s being pulled firmly towards the back door. Once they’re outside he understands why Shadow insisted they come out here, because he immediately feels like the air is less heavy and that it’s easier to breathe. The air’s got that cold, crisp feel to it because of the cold temperature.

Silver laughs, anxiety forgotten. “How did you know I needed to get out?”

Shadow gracefully lets go of his hand. There’s something that almost looks like shyness in his eyes for a split second, which is quickly replaced by the regular cockiness that it usually holds. “You make it too obvious.”

“Do I? What did I do?”

Every once in a while, Silver remembers how much he dislikes being perceived.

He knows that Shadow was joking, but there’s always gonna be that anxious voice in the back of his head telling him otherwise. He’s curious on what Shadow could’ve seen on the outside that made him concerned.

“You hadn’t eaten anything, or said anything... you looked like you were gonna cry or have a panic attack or something. I, uh...I know a lot about those.”

It breaks Silver’s heart to hear that, but it’s accompanied by comfort and makes him feel just a little bit special which, in turn, makes him feel guilty. He shouldn’t be having positive emotions in response to Shadow admitting something so personal and probably bothersome to him, but here he is. He feels special that Shadow cares about him enough to watch out for his well-being, because that guy does *not* seem to care for much. And there’s a comfort in what he said too, because now Silver doesn’t feel so alienated in his irrational panicking.

He looks back up at Shadow with an apologetic frown. “I’m sorry to hear that. I was, um, actually kind of panicking, but...I’m better now that we’re outside.” He expects Shadow to ask what the issue was considering he was so vague, but instead he nods in understanding. Silver’s not complaining; he doesn’t want to go into detail, not with the nature of his freak out.

And, regrettably, part of him is selfishly happy that he gets some alone time with Shadow now.

“Always helps me. The air is fresh and open landscape can’t feel claustrophobic.”

Silver raises his eyebrows in surprise. “You have panic attacks?”

“It seems so. Although, I’ve never been to a doctor.” Shadow contemplates for a second. “You know, it’s less of panic attacks and more of...flashbacks.”

He knows he probably shouldn’t be telling Silver all this information, but at the same time he’s already told him so much so *what’s a little more?*

“Oh! Do you have...agh, what’s it called,” Silver looks down, troubled that he can’t remember the name of it, and Shadow is about to help him out when he remembers. “Post traumatic stress? I think that’s what it’s called?”

Shadow is thoroughly impressed that Silver knows about that. He just seems so innocent, so it takes him by surprise that he knows a little bit about mental disorders.

He’s also hit with the realization that he had never done an extensive amount of research on what he was dealing with. He just has to give Silver the best answer he can.

“I have never truly sat down and went through all my symptoms to find out what’s wrong, but...I’d say that’s certainly possible.”

It looks like a light bulb goes off above Silver’s head.

“Wait, do you think your nightmares are related to that?”

Like Shadow said, he has never done much conscious self reflection on what he might have, and therefore he’s not familiar with symptoms of each illness. But two parallels is enough to catch his attention.

“Is that...a part of PTSD?”

“Wow, I can’t believe I know more about PTSD than the ever wise Shadow the Hedgehog,” Silver jokes. “It’s actually a really common symptom, I think...”

“You’re not speaking from experience, by any chance?”

“No, sorry. Well, actually, in a way...” he looks conflicted which intrigues Shadow further. He finally sighs. “I have my own problems. I’ve looked into all the big ones, y’know? And I didn’t skip over PTSD, with *my* past- er, future. But, I don’t think I have that.”

Silver goes on to tell him how ADHD and anxiety seem to be his main suspects, and Shadow bites the bullet and asks him about other PTSD symptoms because now he’s *really* interested.

Everything seems to begin to fall into place.

He thought his flashbacks, nightmares, guilt, irritability, removal, all that, were no more than things that came with being a hero. All the people he’s seen die, the times he’s been seriously injured, the baggage he carries from Maria’s illness and demise, the emotional trauma that

came with his brain trauma, those things all just caused constant hypervigilance and some bad memories that he wasn't strong enough to handle on his own. But now he's been enlightened to the possibility that it's not his fault or weakness, maybe it's far out of his control. He doesn't believe it, but one day he hopes he will.

A silence falls over them, but it's welcoming. He looks up at the stars and then at Silver and finds that he's unable to feel unease about his past or his future. Right now, all he cares about is the fact that maybe he hasn't got to be locked up in an insane asylum, contrary to what he believed for so long. Maybe he's going through something...treatable. Maybe he'll be alright.

"The stars are so pretty tonight!"

Silver's break into conversation does not seem like a desperate way to break the silence, and Shadow can't help but love the genuine tone to his voice.

He loves a lot of things about Silver.

"The sky *is* very clear."

"Isn't it? It looks like you could just grab one."

He puts his hand out in front of him and pinches down as if he's just touched a star.

There's that burning feeling again...in Shadow's cheeks, in his chest, in his stomach. Normally he would ridicule someone acting like this, but Silver is just so adorable. He shakes his head, arms crossed, but still smiles.

"You're so cute."

That wasn't a thought, was it.

Couldn't have been, because Silver goes bright red and giggles. "Thanks." Oh boy...

Changethesubjectchangethesubjectchangethesubject

"Are you cold?"

Silver can barely comprehend the question because *oh my god he thinks I'm cute*. He manages to force himself back out of his inner squealing to answer with "a little bit". Shadow is wearing a sweatshirt which he selflessly offers, and Silver takes it but now feels like he's in debt.

"...Won't you be cold now?"

Shadow just chuckles. It's a nice sound, Silver thinks — deep and charming. He wishes he would hear it more.

"I don't need to bundle up to be warm. I wear jackets and such for show, mostly."

"Really?" Silver asks while still holding the shirt, not having put it on yet.

“Chaos energy creates heat, like any other energy, and I’m basically an embodiment of chaos energy.”

Silver honestly had no idea about this. He didn’t seem that warm when he held him last night...though, he was really tired. Less energy = less heat, Silver guesses.

“If you’re so warm, why don’t I just use you as a blanket?”

“Heh, I’m not that warm. Feel.”

Shadow puts his hand out and Silver doesn’t hesitate reaching for it. *Shadow* being the one willingly initiating physical contact is something Silver can’t pass up.

As he takes the other’s hand, he’s awestruck by the warmth radiating off his body. He *definitely* didn’t feel like this last night!

“What do you mean ‘not that warm’?”

Shadow is subsequently pulled into a hug, and he would be lying if he said his body didn’t tense and his heart rate briefly stopped, and then skyrocketed, but he finds himself undeterred by his initial reaction and that his stress is quickly replaced by fondness. He’s never properly hugged Silver, and in fact the only time they ever touched was last night when he was broken down and half asleep.

“You’re so warm! I’ll never need a coat again. I don’t want to ever let go of you.” Silver giggles, and it’s after this that Shadow realizes how good of a hugger the other is. He’s just so inviting with it, and not overbearing at all.

And his last remark; Shadow could really say the same about Silver. He certainly wouldn’t mind holding the other forever. It probably meant nothing, just a joke, but he’s nearly swooning over it.

What the hell, he’s feeling kind of impulsive tonight.

“You don’t have to.”

He said it before his anxiety could tell him not to, and it must’ve been the right thing to say because Silver leans into the embrace more.

“Fine with me.”

Did...he really just say that? Is Shadow hearing correctly?

Huh, so he didn’t get an awkward laugh or a push away in response. Remarkable.

Silver sighs in what sounds like relief/contentment and squeezes Shadow a little tighter, sweatshirt still in hand. Shadow’s not quite sure how to return the affection — he’s still new to this — so he does the little back rub thing that Rouge always does with him, and that Maria used to do with him. Silver purrs as a result and rests his head on Shadow’s shoulder

which makes him want to explode. He's far too touch starved for this, he's overstimulated, but he really, really doesn't want to let go.

So he doesn't.

He knows that Silver is only doing this to get warm, and he also knows that Silver can probably feel how much his heart is pounding. He'll hold on for as long as Silver wants. Any second now.

Any minute now.

Okay, it's got to have been at least five minutes. Did he fall asleep or something?

Actually, the thought of him feeling safe enough with Shadow to fall asleep on him sends his heart into outer space. Unfortunately, this theory is proven to be incredible as Silver suddenly loosens his grip and looks up at the other, withdrawing his head from his shoulder.

"Haha, sorry, I spaced out there."

"No problem."

A hand nonchalantly moves up to Shadow's shoulder while the other stays put on his hip, the latter of which is not helping his heart that's currently running a marathon without him.

"Thanks for the warmth." Silver offers him a sweet smile, and all Shadow can do at this point is hope that he doesn't inquire about his very flushed face, because there's no longer even a chance to try and stop it.

"Do you want to go inside now? Are you ready? There's no need to rush, obviously."

...Stop talking? Why am I talking so much? Way to act cool.

"We probably should, I don't want them to think we bailed or anything."

Shadow is about to pull away and walk inside, but there's something in Silver's eyes that makes it look like he's holding something back.

"You're feeling better?" Shadow asks to clarify.

Silver's eyes — which Shadow just now notices are strikingly golden and strikingly pretty — suddenly glimmer and his expression softens. "I feel a lot better. Thank you for helping me."

"Don't mention it."

They break away finally, and despite the fantastic success of that whole interaction, Shadow can't help but feel incomplete. There's not a single reason he should feel unsatisfied, but he does, and he's angry at himself for feeling it. He can't understand it.

The two go inside, and the rest of the night is fun, but the feeling lingers and only gets stronger once he goes to his room and is alone with his thoughts. He's still not sure what it is.

It almost feels like a longing for...something? Just a longing feeling. Maybe not for anything specifically.

Silver also has this unidentifiable quality that has a hint of familiarity. Shadow's been feeling it the entire trip when looking at and interacting with the time traveler. He wonders if the other has felt the same strange allure to himself. Maybe he knew him in another life...

He decides to sleep it off. At least he has an indefinite amount of time to try and get rid of the feeling if it persists, considering the fact that he's not going to leave on any specific day anymore.

...And if the feelings really are that bad, he has another person he can talk about it with now.

Chapter End Notes

yeahhh about silver showing signs of rsd? so that's a THING now. projecting my mental illnesses onto silver the hedgehog? perhaps

also quick head canon (might be canon?) that no one asked for. i don't like hc'ing that shadow has green blood, i know it's the alien thing or whatever and it's a totally valid hc and makes sense and makes him unique, but once i read on wiki that black arms' blood was originally red and the sole reason they changed it was for that stupid e10+ rating i decided to never head canon him having green blood out of spite. like apparently the single reason why they changed it was for censorship, and i'm someone who fuckin hates censorship of art, and i'm also someone who considers video games art,,, it's 100% a petty and spiteful head canon that i have but it's the explanation for why he has red blood like everyone else in my stories LOL

Priceless Gifts

Chapter Summary

[Look at this art of ch. 4 by Okkotsuuus.](#) LOOK AT IT. It's so beautiful and I will cry now, if you'll excuse me.

Christmas shopping, confusion, and deep night time convos yet again in this one (and in that order).

Chapter Notes

welcome back to silver the hedgehog apologizing an amount of times completely incongruent to how many apologies the interaction calls for

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

December 24 | 11:35

Gift cards. That's what we're looking for.

Now where are the ones that you can use for anything...

Ah! Here.

Shadow grabs six cards for each of the guests, not caring about the lack of sentiment they hold. He does care about them all, sure, but the problem is less one of carelessness and more due to the fact that Shadow simply doesn't know how to act sentimental. It's always made him uncomfortable.

He meets Rouge in the middle of the store, and she has a whole basket full of individualized presents because *why wouldn't she?*

"Got everything you need?"

"...Yes." Shadow thought he was confident, but now he feels insecure at the comparison of their gifts.

Rouge gestures at Shadow's full hands. "That's it? You don't wanna get something more personal for your boyfriend?"

Red. Hot. Face.

“Will you keep it down?” He darts his eyes around nervously as Rouge snickers, feeling a small sense of relief when no one seemed to hear, and lowers his voice to a whisper. “He’s not my fucking boyfriend.”

“Whatever he is. Flame. Confidant. Crush. Boy toy.”

The tremendously-loud-for-a-gasp gasp that leaves Shadow’s mouth after the last suggestion is far louder than anything either of them have said so far. “Never.”

“Take it easy, honey. I know you’re not using him. Are you sure you’re okay with the generic gift cards though?”

Shadow is sure he is...almost.

Well, until they’re on their way out, and while in the checkout aisle something catches Shadow’s eye. A plush. It’s a candy cane, but it has a tiny face. A little smile, and eyelashes, and glimmering eyes. And to top it all off, it wears a little green bow around right where the curve of the cane is.

It’s the most ridiculous thing Shadow has ever seen, and it’s perfect. He grabs it with zero second thought, already trying to decide what wrapping paper he should use for it.

12:12

“So, what’d you find?”

Shadow smirks. “Not telling. Isn’t the point of Christmas to be surprised?”

He’s met with a stuck out tongue, but Silver’s demeanor quickly changes into a more playful smile, and Shadow can only think about how *cute* he looks when he’s all mischievous like this.

“What’d you get for *Rouge*?”

Shadow’s feelings of affection are hastily wiped clean and replaced by bewilderment. Silver put a *whole* lotta emphasis on her name, all while wearing that uncharacteristic smirk.

His confusion must’ve been visible, because Silver continues. “Rouge...isn’t she your girlfriend?”

Shadow’s heart stops dead in its tracks, and Silver’s heart subsequently does the same thing. Did he offend Shadow by asking that? Was that too personal? Oh no, he made him uncomfortable. He didn’t mean to do that. Shadow’s probably going to never speak to him again.

But, to his horror, Shadow’s next move is to break out into a *fit* of laughter, and Silver can’t tell if that’s better or worse than just getting socked. He’s so startled by the outburst that he can’t even think straight.

He can't exactly tell if Shadow's howling laughter is out of amusement or anger, and he's wondering if he should run out of the room before he gets murdered. He's just never heard Shadow laugh like this, he's not sure if anyone ever has, and it's about the most jarring thing he's ever heard. He doesn't even realize how adorable it sounds through his stupor.

Shadow regains enough composure to force some words out, but he's still unable to stop the occasional chuckle. "Rouge is not my girlfriend. I...don't desire women like that. She is the closest thing I have to family. A sister."

Silver's face heats right up, from pretty much every part of Shadow's confession. "Oh my god, I'm sorry. I-I didn't know that you saw her in that way-"

"There's nothing to be sorry for. I must thank you for making me laugh harder than I have in as long as I can remember."

Silver nervously laughs, trying to process the information he's just been given. Like, wait...if Shadow doesn't like women like *that*, then that means...

"Do you like guys?"

The second the question leaves his mouth he regrets asking it. He shouldn't have asked that, it's none of his god damn business.

"I shouldn't have asked that, you don't have to-"

"You're fine. I do, uh...exclusively, I believe. I almost never feel romantic attraction, though. Wasn't built for it."

The relief that washes over Silver one would never believe. He feels guilty that he assumed otherwise, but mostly relieved. Thank god that Shadow is single, and thank god he likes men.

Hey, Silver can relate to both of those things.

Meanwhile, Shadow smirks at the lack of response he's given. "You heterosexist or something?"

Silver's eyes widen in horror at the way his silence was interpreted. "No! No, god no. Um... heh, it's funny, actually. I, uh...when I was younger, growing up, I had crushes, so, different from you, but...they were never girls. I don't like girls either, I don't think."

"...Oh. Well, I apologize for assuming you were-" he cuts himself off with a snorted laugh, feeling embarrassed and a bit ridiculous, "a homophobe. I was kidding...mostly."

Silver breaks out into his own laughter at the confusion, and Shadow follows suit. The absurdity of asking someone like Silver, who is not only queer themselves but also the sweetest, most empathetic thing in the world if they're *homophobic* is too absurdly funny for him.

After a moment the both of them regain some composure and Shadow sighs. "So, we're in the same boat."

“Huh. I guess we are.” He smiles. “That’s good to know.”

“Mhm. Another similarity between us.”

Now Silver is blushing hard. It is, and a convenient one at that. So...they *could* work together? This is the best news he’s gotten all week.

“I did get something for Rouge, but...it’s not very personal. I suppose I should get her something more customized. I just don’t know how to go about that stuff.”

“I can help you with that! I mean, if you want.” Silver brainstorms for a second. “You know, you could just give her a card with your present. That can be as personal as you want it to be, and she’ll appreciate it coming from you. She seems to care about you, so it would probably make her happy.”

Shadow reluctantly nods, not necessarily looking forward to being sentimental but willing to give it a try. He did invite suggestions, so he might as well accept the help.

20:22

After an hour or so intensive letter writing training, Shadow has come out of it a smarter man. The road wasn’t entirely smooth, with Shadow not wanting to write the word “dear” because he “felt foolish” in his words so he instead just wrote the less formal “Rouge-” as a greeting, and with Silver guiding him to write some nice things but him being physically incapable of leaving out an insult and back handed compliment or two, and with Shadow also not being comfortable with writing “love” at the end so he simply writes his name. But he did it, and Silver is proud of him. For anyone else, a card like this would just be normal and a little funny, but it being written by Shadow quite possibly could be enough to make Rouge cry.

Now Silver, a newfound scholar, walks out to the living room where everyone’s watching a movie after taking a little rest of his own from socialization.

Well, almost everyone is watching it. A certain black hedgehog is noticeably absent.

He knows that Shadow is probably just in his room, but since he shared his sexuality with him, something so personal to most, he’s felt a lot more of a desire to spend time with him. Even more so from before, which was *not* something to scoff at. He knows Shadow must trust him enough to share something like that with him, not to mention that in turn Shadow is the only one he’s told about him being gay, or androsexual, or whatever label he’ll decide to go with. The trust that they seem to have built up within each other in such a short time makes Silver feel all warm and fuzzy.

He walks over to Rouge hoping to ask about Shadow privately. She answers saying that he’s outside, and he immediately finds it strange because of the freezing weather and wind chill, but quickly remembers that Shadow doesn’t get cold as easily as the rest of them...and maybe not at all?

After quickly grabbing one of his sweatshirts he goes outside despite the cold, ready to walk back in if the other wants to be alone. At the end of a busy day he'd rather just spend time with one person anyway, rather than a whole group of people. Sometimes he can't understand how Sonic can spend his entire day hanging out with people and not keel over from exhaustion.

He walks outside, and once Shadow notices him he gives him a weird look as the constantly stoic hedgehog's face reddens the slightest bit.

"Hi," Silver greets him.

"Hello."

As he approaches where Shadow is lounging, the latter looks him up and down and Silver suddenly feels more self conscious than he ever has before in his life. He waves his hand in front of Shadow's face and he immediately snaps out of it, shaking his head.

"Sorry, I just...was surprised to see you wearing my clothes."

...

What?

To Silver's internal horror, he looks down to double check what he's wearing and it is, in fact, the sweatshirt Shadow offered him yesterday. He tilts his head apologetically.

"Oh god, I'm sorry, I forgot to give it back to you. I just threw on the first thing I saw before I came out here."

Shadow sniffs a laugh. "It's okay, I have no problem with it. Like I said, I wear that stuff for show, not out of necessity. You could use it better than I could."

Not to mention, of course, that the idea of Silver wearing one of his own articles of clothing around is an idea he absolutely adores.

"Any reason why you came out here?"

Silver nervously laughs, trying to ignore the fact that he came out here specifically hoping to see Shadow.

"Haha, I wanted to see how cold it was. Which...it is."

Shadow takes out his phone to check the time, and the fact that someone so private and closed off owns what is essentially a mobile tracking device is shocking to Silver.

"Would you like to go in the hot tub?"

Silver's face lights up with excitement. "He has one?!?"

"That's right. He doesn't use it very often, for whatever reason."

“Is it inside?”

Shadow shakes his head and brings Silver around to the location. They turn on the water and it fills up quite fast; Shadow gets in first to check the temperature and judges that it's fine, but Silver has to question if Shadow is a truly accurate referee of the state of the water, as he's like eleven thousand times warmer than the rest of them. Silver gets in anyway, the only way to really find out being to experience it himself, and ends up being fine after about ten seconds. Not too hot that it's burning, but not lukewarm. It's comforting.

He had taken off the sweatshirt he wore out, not wanting to ruin the thing that his crush has so kindly lent to him — the only downside being the great deal of insecurity that suddenly clouds his brain (despite the fact that he's almost never worn clothes this entire trip) as he notices how the lights on the inside walls of the hot tub accentuate Shadow's body.

He's never seen Shadow this clearly; the lighting generously highlights his lightly but perfectly toned body, and Silver can feel himself getting self conscious about his own — he's certainly not complaining about the view, only his reaction to it. He knows that he himself is far from unattractive, having his own muscle definition due to his training, but he also can tell that the “tone” in his own stomach is built on top of a softer, more cushiony type of foundation, rather than the firmer muscle that's apparent on the other.

His stupid brain of course ventures out towards self deprecation, concluding that he and Shadow could never be in a relationship without it looking completely lopsided. People would probably judge left and right, like, how is that relationship fair? How did that kid from the future end up with someone who looks like *that*?

...If only there was a way Silver could know that Shadow currently feels just as mystified at the sight of him in the spotlight as he feels about Shadow.

“Temperature good?”

Shadow's question snaps Silver out of his thoughts. “Uh, yeah! It's good.”

He spends the next moments trying to look anywhere other than Shadow, not wanting to awaken anything more in himself than he already has. He regrets sitting directly next to him. He feels all awkward and shy, so he looks up.

Looking at the night sky, he's momentarily entranced by how pretty the stars look. ~~*But not as pretty as the total looker sitting next to me.*~~

“So, uh, the moon's nice.”

He says it without even turning his head to look at Shadow, not believing that he's even capable of making eye contact with the other at this point — it would probably make him even more awkward than he already is acting. Plus, he feels too giddy with excitement, and he fears that if he looks at Shadow his brain will flatline.

“Shame that half of it’s gone.”

Never mind. Mission abort.

Apparently something as simple as hearing Shadow’s voice makes his chest do a somersault.

“...I have a love-hate relationship with space.”

This statement is just thought-provoking enough to allow Silver to form some coherent thought. He can’t turn down an opportunity to learn more about the ever private Shadow like this, and especially not when Shadow is the one who offers the information.

“Really?”

He hums in confirmation. “I was raised there, by a scientist. Actually, he created me. I was genetically engineered.”

“Wow. That sounds so cool!”

Shadow only shakes his head. “I wish it was. I mean, it was at times, but...I just didn’t get to experience the real beauty of my environment most of the time.”

“Aw...why not?”

He sighs; Silver can tell it’s a touchy subject for him, so he’s not gonna *make* him say anything, but...he *is* really curious.

“There’s too many bad memories that took place there. They outweigh the good ones. For one, ever since I was sentient they only saw me as a test subject, even though they knew I was aware. And then later, once they deemed that the test was successful, they viewed me as a weapon.”

“Oh.” Silver frowns. “I’m sorry. That must’ve been lonely.”

“Sometimes it would get like that, feeling like everyone’s working against you or using you. But, there was one that I was very close with. The scientist’s granddaughter...her name was Maria, and we grew up together. We were like siblings. That’s how we were raised. She was...amazing. I was a brother to her — not a toy, not an experiment. A lot of the time it felt like she was the only one who acknowledged that even though I was manufactured, I was made to be able to feel. And...she was sick. All the time. She had an autoimmune disease. But I would do anything to protect her and make her happy. She never cared about why I was made, or that I didn’t look like her, she just saw me as a friend.” He pauses before laughing, but Silver can hear that it holds a tone of heartache. “It’s funny, because I see her as my little sister, but I don’t doubt that she would be mad if she heard me calling her that. She was the big sister, in her eyes. It’s ironic, considering the fact that I was created in part to be her protector. But that’s the way she was. She would never let anything bad happen to me, not if she could help it.”

He looks down, the memories visibly upsetting him.

“She should be here. My biggest regret. I should’ve saved her.”

Silver sulks. In this moment, he swears he can personally feel the other’s guilt. He feels like he’s been stabbed through the heart. Who made Shadow think that he was at fault?

“Hey.” He places a hand on Shadow’s shoulder. “I know you don’t want my sympathy, but whatever happened with her was not your fault. I’m sure it wasn’t.”

“You don’t even know what happened.”

“No, but I know you, and-”

“You don’t know me. You don’t know who I am. There’s so much harm I’ve caused...I’m not who you think I am.”

Silver removes his hand. “Shadow. Someone who caused so much intentional harm would not be agonizing over it this much. The fact that you feel sorry shows how good of a person you are.”

Shaking his head, Shadow laughs bitterly. “You’re just like her. Always insisting on seeing the best in people...you’re too naïve for your own good.”

Silver crosses his arms. “I think she was right. We are right. Seriously, if she knew you when you were young and innocent, then she must know the ‘real you’, as you put it. She knew that at heart you’re a very caring and empathetic person. I can’t read minds, but Shadow, I know you’re a good guy, from what you’ve told me and from what everyone who’s actually met you and spent time with you has told me. I think you have trauma and you’ve convinced yourself that everything is your fault because of it. And she seemed to really love you. I’m sure she doesn’t blame you, and even if it was your fault she would forgive you.”

Shadow nods, and Silver is surprised to see he’s actually trying to accept his (correct) words. He blinks and drops his head again, a few tears leaving his eyes.

“I appreciate you. I hope one day I’ll believe the things you say about me.”

Silver guesses that that’s probably the highest compliment anyone here has ever gotten from Shadow. He can’t feel more special right now.

“I promise you will. I’ll help you.”

Shadow meets his eyes and Silver can see the genuine gratefulness in them. “I’d like to do the same for you, if you’d be alright with it.”

Once he processes what that entails, Silver can’t contain his smile. “I need that. I don’t know how to fix my own problems, so I try to fix other people’s. It can get exhausting.”

“I can see that about you.” He pauses. “...You should know that it’s impossible to solve someone else’s problem. You’re already going above and beyond by assisting them at all. Don’t carry all that weight on your shoulders.”

Funny, because two minutes ago he was essentially doing the exact same thing. It's good advice, but...

"How about we both try to do that? Like...together? We're obviously too far gone to fix each other by ourselves, but we can help each other get help?"

"What type of help?"

He looks at the striped hedgehog, putting on a fake exasperated look. "Shadow, we both desperately need therapists."

A laugh bursts out of Shadow's throat, and Silver giggles himself.

"You might be onto something."

"I can find a place and make us appointments. But in the meantime, let's just have each other's backs."

"I...like that idea."

Shadow falls into a thoughtful silence, and Silver hopes that he's not brooding anymore. Really, how much of that can someone do in a day?

"My main wish is that...wherever she may be, she's cured of her illness. She's not in pain anymore. I'm not sure what happens after you die, but no matter what, I hope she's free."

He looks over at Shadow who still gazes into the night sky. "I don't know either. None of us do, do we? I'm sure that whatever it is, she's okay. She's proud of you."

Shadow scoffs, but tears run down his cheeks anyway after he takes a second to really let Silver's words set in. "You're too kind. You know that?"

"I try. But it's the truth. Be easy on yourself."

Another nod. "That's probably what she'd want me to do anyway."

"Right." At this point Silver *really* really wants to hug Shadow, but for one, he's not sure if Shadow would take kindly to it, and in addition to that, he's not sure he himself would be able to handle it. The other would hear his heart racing like it's in a god damn NASCAR race.

"Did you guys like constellations up there? I think they're interesting but I don't know too much about them."

"It always interested me as well. Maria was a little bit obsessed with them. Her favorite was Pictor, which is an art easel, I think. She loved art, and I think it was tough for her because everyone on the colony was science obsessed. They appreciated art, but not like her. It's funny, it's a more obscure constellation for sure, but she would always be so excited when we could see it."

Mental note created.

“Hmm...maybe after you die, you turn into a star. Maybe she’s part of the constellation now.”

Shadow smirks. “That *would* be nice.”

“Right? Just imagine it. She can draw and paint whenever and whatever she wants, and she’ll never be sick again. No one can ever hurt her, so you don’t have to worry about protecting her or failing her. But she’ll be protecting you, wherever she is.”

He looks over to Shadow who lets out the quietest, smallest whimper and looks in the same direction so as to avoid being seen. Silver naturally assumes the worst and guilt immediately washes over him.

“Wait, I’m sorry, I didn’t want to make you cry-”

“No, no.” Shadow looks back over to Silver, sniffing, and Silver is relieved to see it didn’t go any further than a little cry. “It’s okay. I needed you to say that. I truly hope that’s how it is...the idea of her finally being painless makes me feel a lot better.”

Silver smiles, more relaxed and always happy to help. His eyes wander over to Shadow’s hands that grip the edge of the hot tub’s seat and reaches for the right one with his left without thinking, instinctively feeling like the touch would be less nerve wracking than a hug.

Though...it wasn’t. It was ten thousand times more nerve wracking. And even so, Shadow seems happy with it and squeezes Silver’s hand to prove it, and if Shadow’s happy then so is Silver.

“We’re okay. We’re going to be okay.”

Surprisingly, the words of encouragement do not come out of Silver’s mouth, but rather out of the known cynicist’s who he holds the hand of. And Silver can’t help but think that the hopeful, promising words sound extra enticing and believable when paired with his deep-toned voice of velvet.

He smiles when he looks over at Shadow and is met with an awaiting stare. “Yes we are.”

They steal one more look at each other and proceed to just enjoy each other’s company, not saying anything in particular of any importance, and fingers still entwined absentmindedly. If time is passing, they can’t tell. Shadow slides over a little bit, just enough to rest his head on Silver’s shoulder, which makes the latter indescribably happy. Shadow still seems so hesitant with physical contact, so it properly stuns Silver that, all things considered, the other still manages to be so gentle with his touch as if he were a seasoned professional. Underneath that coldness, he sure is a snuggly one. Honestly, how could Silver not allow someone so sweet and soft and cuddlesome to use his shoulder as a pillow?

Plus, you know, the whole crush thing. But he can’t think about that right now, it’ll ruin the moment. Instead, he leans into Shadow and moves his free hand to caress the back of Shadow’s own with his thumb, and they just savor each other’s presence.

No more going it alone. Tomorrow is Christmas, but they've both already gotten the best gift they could've asked for — compassion.

Chapter End Notes

if anyone wants to know the inspiration i had for what the plush should look like, [here's the link](#). also it's 18 inches so that means it's almost half silver's size. also i may or may not have cried just now when looking up silver's height and finding out he's 3'3. tiny tiny precious little hedgehog.

Nothing In Particular Day

Chapter Summary

Part one of the day that brought them all together...gift giving and idiots in love. Also, Shadow has a very dry sense of humor, and Silver adores it.

Chapter Notes

slight cw there's a mention of CBD in this chapter below the section break but it's very small

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

December 25 | 09:20

“Shadow! Come over here.”

He doesn't hesitate to walk over to the all too familiar voice; that sweet, bright, and rather silvery voice that belongs to an equally as sweet and bright silvery hedgehog, that now seems to fully enchant Shadow every time he hears it. He's more than happy for it to be one of the first sounds he hears after he leaves his room, and for the sight to be one of the first people he sees.

“What?”

A hand tugs at his sweatshirt from where Silver sits cross legged on the floor, conversing casually in a circle with the rest of the crew.

“Your sweater looks so soft! Sit, I wanna feel it.”

He gently directs Shadow onto his lap, and once he gets a better feel he's instantly delighted by the texture. It's got that teddy fluffiness; he feels like he's touching a cloud.

“What's your analysis, Sir Sensuous?”

Silver giggles, realizing that he has been making a big deal about sensations on this trip. What can he say? He just wants to experience everything in this time period while he's still here.

“Well, my deduction was correct.”

Once Shadow feels the other's arms wrap around his waist, he feels comfortable returning the affection. Unbeknownst to the two, this embrace does not go unnoticed by the rest of them. None of them have necessarily suspected anything happening between them besides Rouge, no one has seen them together enough to come close to that conclusion. So, needless to say, it's a little bit startling to see someone who normally recoils anytime you brush against him comfortably participate in an open display of affection with someone who they all thought he wanted to chop the head off of five days ago.

The two idiots are blissfully unaware to the double takes they're getting, too lost in each other to even acknowledge anyone else in the room.

"So, today's just a normal day, right?"

Shadow nods, playing along. "Correct. It's a good thing nothing special is happening."

That adorable, charming laugh leaves Silver's mouth again. Shadow involuntarily beams, unable to hold back a smile at the infectious noise. "Seriously. Happy- er, merry Christmas. That's what the saying is, right?"

"Mhm. It's merry."

Shadow knows nothing about religion besides the things he learned offhand when he was younger — growing up in the 1950's, many more people took part in religion than they do today, so he picked up on a handful of traditions in his childhood. And if that's the trend in 50 years, he can only imagine how the numbers look 200 years from now. He figures Silver has probably never celebrated the holiday, and since Shadow has had no interest in religion, it'll be a first for him too.

"So, is this like...do we need to do anything today? Like...some people go to church, right? Are you supposed to do that?"

Shadow smirks. "There's nothing that you're "supposed" to do. Church is for people who are religious or want to experience religion, so if you're not either you don't need to do anything of the sort. I may be biased, though. I find most traditions to be rather repulsive or just extraneous."

Silver breathes a sigh of relief. "Good, 'cuz I've heard that it's really long and boring. So thank god."

Shadow nods in agreement, and then a sudden laugh bursts out of his throat, having just processed what Silver just said. "Don't you think it's..." another laugh as Silver smiles along nervously, "...ironic, to say that? You're thanking god because you don't have to go to church."

Before Shadow's even finished the sentence, Silver catches on and they both break into uncontrollable fits of laughter. It's not even cackling, or howling; it's the type of laughter where it's so extreme that it's silent, the only thing audible being their gulps of breath in between heaves.

The worst part's that the joke isn't even that funny. It's not even a joke, just a funny unintentional contradiction, but for some reason they can't catch their breaths. Silver's head is thrown back, Shadow's resting on the other's shoulder because he's too weak with laughter to support his own head.

The good part of this is that, because of the silent nature of the outbursts, they're not making a big scene. The bad part is of course the fact that Shadow has never laughed like this in front of any of them before, besides maybe Rouge a few times, so instead of making a big scene they make a slightly smaller scene.

And yet, despite the glances they're getting, they remain unbothered. Even once they calm down, both wiping tears from watery eyes, they still feel as if they're the only two in the world.

As they continue their conversation, containing nothing of importance but far too important to be considered small talk, they keep each other in that casual hold around each other's waist.

It's so obvious how happy the two are. While the interaction is a bit jarring to those around them, they can't help but feel their own moods be lifted at the sight of two of their shyest friends enjoying the company of one another.

It's just when Silver adjusts his grip on Shadow that he becomes aware of the black hedgehog's cheerfully wagging tail. He can barely see it from his position, but he can feel it swaying slowly back and forth to the right, and occasionally brushing against his hand, which he now thinks is the most precious thing in the universe. If there was any doubt about if Shadow genuinely likes him or if he's just hanging out with him to be nice, it's all gone now.

Seeing Shadow this happy, and knowing it's because of *him*, makes his heart race.

20:02

The gift exchange was successful. Shadow's generic gift cards felt a bit underwhelming compared to the other things he saw under the tree, so he figured the least he could do would be to wrap it in something that remotely related to the recipient's interests. Like, for Sonic he just used a plain blue, because of course he did, but he felt like it wasn't meaningful enough on its own, so he quickly sketched a little Sonic head with sharpie on the top. Drawing is actually something he enjoys, having picked it up from Maria, and he found it quite easy to make a rough sketch of the blue fool's annoying face.

Sonic lost his mind over it, as was expected, and in return Shadow got a Sonic head stress ball, so in Sonic's words he would "never be able to escape him" but what he didn't know was how satisfying it would be to be able to squeeze the bastard's face whenever they're not together. So, in the end, what was supposed to be a gag gift ended up being a useful contribution.

Rouge was in fact almost brought to tears by her heartfelt-for-Shadow-the-Hedgehog letter. She gave him a bunch of small but thoughtful things, including his favorite candy, some new

coffee he'd mentioned that he wanted to try to her a ways back, and lip balm for "whenever you [him and Silver, he can only assume] decide to suck face", along with other... relationship safety supplies (which one can guess Shadow found *hilarious*. Not.) There was the tiniest bit of sentiment under the sarcasm and teasing, though — after all, she's really just looking out for him, and that's what big sisters do. If anything, anything at *all*, it was a nice reminder that he has family willing to assist him.

And from Silver, he received some hot chocolate mix, and CBD oil and patches which he explained to him privately might relax him after a nightmare or flashback and relieve pain after battles. He was very grateful and eager to try it, but he couldn't stop himself from being a little curious on where the time traveler got his hands on something like that. That stuff must be normalized in the future. Shadow's happy to believe that.

As for Shadow's gift to Silver, immediately upon exposing the candy cane plush Silver gave it a big hug and started gushing over how adorable it was. He seemed to be excited about the generic gift card, too, so there's an extra win. For the rest of the gift opening process and the rest of the time they were together, Silver did not let go of that damn candy cane. And it was painfully cute to watch. He was obviously not doing it to please Shadow, as there were multiple times where he'd walk away and glance over at Silver to see him hugging the thing again.

The way his heart does a gymnastics routine just thinking back on it, and his face heats up, and he feels shy even though he's alone in his room...he has it *bad*. That psychic hedgehog is going to be the death of him.

As fulfilling as giving was, Shadow is happy to see the day end. He's exhausted, for one, but he also has trouble just...receiving and accepting things from others. It was a very overwhelming day for him in that aspect.

He's just thankful that he doesn't have to worry about any other materialistic gifts for at least a year...

Chapter End Notes

what would u do if i told you i finished the chapter immediately following this before i finished this chapter itself. what would happen then

also as a result of this i will be posting ch 7 way early. the two kinda go hand in hand so that's why this one's a bit short, and to make up for the shortness [here's a sketch of shadow making sonic's present](#)

Guess He Liked It

Chapter Summary

Silver has one extra gift for Shadow.

Chapter Notes

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

...

Knock knock.

Did he just jinx himself in his own thoughts?

“Yes?”

The door opens, and Shadow’s favorite hedgehog peers in. “Can I come in?”

This question gives Shadow a dreadful feeling in his gut, but he says yes anyway. Pretty much an equivalent of “we need to talk”.

As Silver enters, he can see that the time traveler has a small box in his hands. Shadow gestures to it, silently questioning it.

“Oh, it’s, uh...I have one more present for you. I wanted to give it to you privately.”

“Silver...that’s completely unnecessary,” Shadow pleads with his eyes. “You’ve given me so much already.”

They both know that Shadow isn’t just referring to the things he’s received today.

Silver hands him the box anyway, as the other takes it begrudgingly. “It’s just this. This is it. Open it.” He makes eye contact with Shadow and now it’s his turn to plead with his face.

“...Please?”

Shadow finds that he is actually physically incapable of rejecting the puppy dog eyes, but he still isn’t happy about receiving another gift. He starts to slowly unwrap it, shaking his head. “You seriously had no reason to do this.” A smaller blue box of velvet lies inside of the wrapping paper. “I’ve gotten so much from you already, you have no obligation to...”

His voice trails off.

“Silver, I...”

Inside the smaller box is a piece of jewelry. Now, Shadow is not particularly adept in that field, but he's almost certain it's a bracelet. It's a very thinly chained band, the color matching Silver's name. It sits on a card picturing the night sky.

And the charm at the forefront is a constellation.

Pictor.

Shadow's breath is completely taken away. He doesn't even feel his mouth hang open as he stares at the bracelet in awe. Where did he even get this? It's so beautiful, it's thoughtful, and it's personal.

It's *really* personal...he can't believe Silver remembered that detail! He had forgotten that he even told him about that, but he's just so attentive and caring and amazing. He's never been given something like this.

A lump forms in his throat, but he doesn't feel it until tears blur his vision. He's not a sappy guy, obviously, but this is really getting to him.

"I'm sorry if that's too personal. You just told me that it was Maria's favorite, and since you won't always be able to see it in the sky, I thought maybe you could just look at that and it would remind you of her—"

Shadow walks towards Silver. Close enough to touch. Whatever Silver says after this he tunes out because at this point there's only one thing he's thinking of. He's not waiting anymore; he *can't*.

Silver's blabbering and unnecessary apologies are abruptly cut off and muffled. Soft lips passionately collide against his own.

His brain hardly has time to process what's going on before he returns it and slowly wraps his arms around Shadow's neck, pulling him impossibly closer. He kisses back reflexively — likely because he has been waiting with anticipation for this to happen, and more recently dreaming of it. For it to seep into his subconscious, one could assume that he's thought about this scenario in fairly vivid detail before. And he's thankful for his preparation now, because he's so awestruck that if his body *didn't* go into autopilot he wouldn't have had time to process it and make himself kiss back before it was over.

The kiss isn't short for a first one, but it ends before Silver can completely fathom what they're doing. It's only when Shadow pulls away just enough to see his face that Silver really feels the hands gently embracing the sides of his face, which are partially responsible for his flushed cheeks (which he also just notices he does).

The world suddenly seems more colorful. And he kind of feels like he's floating, but he knows he's on the ground. He's hovered too many times to count before, so he knows what it feels like, and this is just...different.

He finds himself lost in beautiful scarlet eyes, and as he trails his eyes down he's met with a few stray tears which so slowly drift down Shadow's face. Happy ones, he figures. Inches lower, pretty lips part to speak.

"Thank you."

"No problem, Shadow." He smiles, though the sight of the other's tears and whatever just happened is making him misty-eyed himself.

He brings a thumb to Shadow's face to tenderly brush against his muzzle. "Aww, Shadow... you're gonna make me cry too!"

They both chuckle, both tearful, and Silver feels safe enough to press a few more kisses to Shadow's muzzle in an attempt to kiss away his tears. His skin is...really soft. Silver realizes he's been missing out.

"Um...now may be a good time to tell you," Shadow starts, but then pauses and swallows hard, mentally preparing himself. Only everything to lose, now.

"I-I..."

What the hell? He never stutters. Why can't he just say the words?

He does find, however, that not making direct eye contact with Silver and looking a bit to the side eases his nerves.

Just breathe. Breathe, and think.

"I'm in love with you."

For Shadow, at first, it feels like an out of body experience. Something possessed him in that moment, and *that* was who just confessed that to Silver, not Shadow. The silence feels like it drags on for hours, when in reality it probably lasts ten seconds. Silver first blinks, and then scoffs, which momentarily stops Shadow's heart and brain, but he quickly recognizes that it was the kind of scoff done out of disbelief.

"You're kidding."

A wave of dread takes over Shadow, threatening to drown him where he stands. "I...I would never joke about that..."

He must've outwardly looked disturbed and offended enough, because Silver's face grows remorseful. "No, don't be upset. I just...I'm just shocked that we...feel the same."

"...What? You're kidding, aren't you?"

Silver guffaws. How the tables have turned.

“Fuck no.” He lightly scratches the side of Shadow’s face, looking at him softly. “I love you, Shadow.”

Uggghhh, the sheer amount of TIME he waited to say those words. It was really only five days, but it felt like a lifetime. And, likewise, the amount of time Shadow waited to *hear* those words. He can’t believe it. This whole interaction feels like a dream to both of them.

Silver’s eyes return to soft, tan lips, slightly agape. Underneath all the truly obscene thoughts scattering his brain, he hears a more sane voice telling him, *begging* him to capture them again; his own lips tingle with want. He wants to be on them again, he wants to kiss Shadow just as gently but passionately as Shadow kissed him the first time, and this time knowing that they love each other.

Holy shit, they *love* each other!

“I know you might not believe me because you have this twisted notion that you can’t be loved or whatever, so...can I prove it to you?”

Shadow quirks an eyebrow. “What do you propose?”

He blinks at Shadow and moves forward painfully slowly, stopping right in front of his face. His mouth opens just enough for warm breath to mix with that of the beautiful striped hedgehog in front of him.

He only stops because he’s unsure if Shadow would be comfortable with another kiss; he figures that maybe Shadow making a move like that was total heat of the moment that he wouldn’t do if not driven solely by adrenaline, but before Silver can gather the words to verbally clarify, Shadow has already begun to tentatively close the distance between them. Silver is patient, and once their lips meet at last, it’s somehow more enjoyable than the first time.

Unhurriedly, he moves a hand back from Shadow’s face to lightly brush the sides of his quills, and once no objections were made, starts to run his fingers through them lovingly — which must’ve been a good move, because Shadow only pulls him in closer. Silver feels a hand on the back of his head gently keeping him in place, and with their bodies now flush together he can feel Shadow’s chest rumbling against his. Is that...purring? Is that something he can do?

Aww, does he really make Shadow that happy?

They both seem to try to drag out the kiss as long as they can, as if they’ll never have another opportunity after this to do it ever again. A snuffle interrupts their little bubble, though, and it’s only when Silver feels teardrops tickle his cheek that he realizes one of them is crying.

“Sorry.” Shadow looks down. “I’m overwhelmed.”

Guess it’s not me, Silver thinks.

Yeah, that was his original thought, but when he tries to reply and is only met with a scoff that sounds an awful lot like a sob, he realizes that both of them are. Whoops.

“Shadow...you don’t have to hide your face.”

Two fingers on the underside of Shadow’s muzzle carefully tilt his head up. As expected, he looks just as beautiful as always.

“You’re good looking, you have nothing to cover up.”

Shadow rolls his eyes, but smiles anyway as he blushes furiously. “You’re the one who’s easy on the eyes.”

He really wishes he was brave enough to tell Silver how gorgeous he really is. How much time he could just spend admiring his physique, and his face — which is an entirely different story too complex to even begin — the way that the black streaks that contour the edges of his eyes bring out those aureate irises, the way his cheeks turned a pretty pink after simply telling him he’s a pleasant sight to see...Shadow is convinced that he’s perfect. He does feel slightly insecure about the, as he sees it, *huge* asymmetry between the two, but despite this he’s going to try his best to believe Silver when he calls him attractive. He sure believes that he loves him, anyhow, and all that took was a really good kiss.

And, you know, all the many things that Silver has helped him with during this trip. But... that *kiss*. That’s all he can think about at the moment. Is that something he’ll get to do all the time now?

The mere thought makes his face heat up again, so he grabs Silver’s hand to try and create a diversion.

“Sit with me,” he says as he pulls the other, who does not have much say in the situation, to the edge of his bed. But he doesn’t question and warms up as soon as they sit down; he giggles and wraps his arms around Shadow, inviting him to lean into him which he has already started to do without thinking. They can both feel the love radiating off of each other’s bodies. Love... *wow*. Neither of them can believe it, still.

Shadow feels more comfortable than he’s ever been. A little too much, perhaps...his eyelids suddenly feel heavy, even though it’s incredibly early.

Oh well, crying usually makes him exhausted. He’s become very familiar with that fact the past few days. Leaning back into the warm, loving hold of Silver makes him feel like he’s gonna nod off at like 8:30.

“Shadow?”

Silver’s soft, whispered voice makes Shadow perk up. He rubs his eyes. “I didn’t fall asleep, did I?”

Strong hands support either side of his head. “No. But you looked like you were going to. You should lay down.”

His body moves before his brain can process Silver’s gentle advice. After wrapping himself under the blankets, he opens one eye just enough to see Silver moving a comfy chair to the side of the bed.

“You know...you could sleep next to me, if you’d like.”

Shadow doesn’t see, but Silver’s eyes go wide at that suggestion. For all the things he’d spent the day mentally preparing himself for the possibility of, sleeping in the same bed was not one of them. In the last five minutes or so he watched how tired Shadow came to look, and figured based off of his tentativeness with physicality that there wasn’t a chance he would let him do something like that. In fact, he assumed that if he even stayed with Shadow tonight at all, he’d just crash on the floor on some blankets or something. The suddenness of it all makes him feel unprepared, and yeah, normally he’d love to fall asleep next to Shadow, but, well...he doesn’t now.

At least, his anxiety doesn’t want him to.

Was not expecting for the one who hates being touched being the one comfortable sleeping in the same bed, while Silver is the one with the debilitating anxiety surrounding it.

“No, it’s okay. I’ll...give you the space.”

He cringes after he says this; not only does it hurt him to turn Shadow down because in reality he does want to cuddle with him and fall asleep with him, but the bed is literally *king* size. You could probably fit 10 people on one of those things. But, to his advantage, Shadow seems too tired to realize how much of a shitty excuse it is.

Once he sits and settles in, he grabs a dark, ungloved hand with his own.

“You don’t have to stay here, if you don’t want.”

Silver smiles. “I want to.”

Through his sleepiness, Shadow gives his own smile and squeezes Silver’s hand.

Within probably sixty seconds, he falls asleep as Silver runs his thumb over the back of his hand. That boy really was fighting to stay awake, wasn’t he?

The room is almost quiet enough to be able to hear a pin drop, and the only thing breaking the silence is little snores coming from Shadow. Aw, how cute. Is there anything about this guy that isn’t adorable?

Silver figures at first that he’ll stay with Shadow a bit longer and then go back to his own room. He pets him, and lets out a sigh of satisfaction, captivated by how peaceful the constantly-tense hedgehog looks.

“I love you.”

He knows the other can't hear him, but now that they've said it to each other he feels weird going to sleep without telling the other. Not to mention the fact that there's literally nothing better than finally being able to express his love to Shadow in words.

Hmmm, speaking of sleep, that's something Silver would love to do. Maybe he can just lay his head down on the bed in front of him. Savor the moment, rest his eyes for a minute...

Chapter End Notes

hey, they did the thing!

i've been thinking...the amount power we could've had if pete capella's silver and david humphrey's shadow coexisted. CAN YOU IMAGINE. god.

This Was Supposed to be Fun

Chapter Notes

welcome to episode ten million of projecting my adhd experience onto poor silver the hedgehog

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

December 26 | 08:27

Knuckles, in the morning, suggests that they all go out to a pond and play a game of hockey. From the start, this is an unwise suggestion, because most of them has never put on skates and/or held a hockey stick before — and that's precisely why they all agreed to go. All of them are intelligent, but very often they show very little signs of brain cells.

Ah, well...common sense isn't very common, is it?

13:05

Silver puts his tight fitting skate on, which was enough of a task in of itself, and once he finishes he's delighted (and by delighted, of course, meaning livid) to feel the crease of his sock underneath his foot instead of on top where he can't feel it. Uncomfortable, but manageable, so he curses under his breath and just takes it off to do it again. Just shift it back to the top, and it should be fine. So far so good.

And, nope.

Now it's even worse, digging into his pinkie toe from the side of the skate. He huffs and pulls it off again, feeling anger bubbling up in his chest. Three times the charm, right? Shift it up a little higher than before, and he should be good to go.

No problem so far. Okay, it's fully on, and it feels fine.

Wait...

An exasperated sigh leaves his mouth. "Are you fucking kidding me?"

Now it's on the top where it should be, but he can still feel it. That was supposed to fix it, and yet he still feels horribly uncomfortable. He's not supposed to feel it at all! This can't happen. Why can't things just work for once?

Pissed off beyond comprehension, and momentarily forgetting his surroundings, he rips the skate off and drops it onto the snow on his left, muttering more curses louder this time,

putting his colorful vocabulary on display. He buries his face in his hands, trying to suppress the blind rage coursing through his body, and consequently misses the glances of concern everyone in their area gives him.

“Silver, are you alright?”

Slowly looking past his hands, he sees a hedgehog kneeling in front of him that would normally immediately comfort him, but now the sight of him is making him feel like shit. Embarrassed as hell.

And the rest of them are trying to pretend they’re not looking, but they totally are. And he’s still too angry to even care. But as Shadow persists and tilts his head in question, his soft gaze acting like physical reassurance, Silver is hit with reality and feels tears well up in his eyes.

Oh no, oh no, oh no-

He made a scene in front of all his friends, and the person he loves most, and now they probably think he’s crazy. He made a fool out of himself. A debilitating wave of hatred hits him hard enough to knock him over; his face burns. The hatred he feels is not of anyone else.

It’s himself.

Idiot. Idiot! How could you let something like this happen? It’s your fault. You’re too old for this type of thing. They probably all feel second hand embarrassment for you, that’s how mortifying that display was.

Sweat overtakes his body, and it stings. It feels like little pinches all over his skin. His heart drums in his chest, so loud and so fast that he’s convinced everyone within a close radius can hear it.

Get out of here, you’ve got to get out. You’re going to die from the embarrassment, it’s going to kill you.

The ghostly pale expression on Silver’s face is all Shadow needs to answer his question, but the psychic speaks anyway.

“No. I’m fucking stupid. I can’t do anything right.”

Silver gets up and starts moving, ashamed and panicked the fuck out, not knowing where he’s going and just wanting to get away from everyone. Probably go somewhere and cry by himself. Embarrassing. He practically had a temper tantrum in front of his best friends, like a toddler.

He plops himself down onto the snow not too far away but far enough that no one will hear him or see his face. No one should see his face, anyway. You act like a baby, you don’t deserve to be-

“Silver?”

He's not crying, though tears run down his face freely. He doesn't turn his head to where the voice came from; it's not necessary, because he knows who it is. The love of his life is the last guy he needs to see him crying like a baby because he can't control his temper and decided to throw a fit. No anger that he just felt can compare to the anger he feels towards himself in this moment.

Shadow kneels next to where Silver sits, the latter turning his head away from him shamefully.

"Will you let me sit?"

No answer, but Shadow sits and there's no disagreement. Even though his head is turned, he can tell the other is crying now. His body trembles slightly through infrequent sniffles.

After a minute he tilts his head just the slightest bit to look over, only to see Shadow still sitting, waiting patiently. Momentarily, they make eye contact.

An airy voice sounds that Silver normally finds so pleasant and, to put it bluntly, *hot*, but any amount of lustful thoughts in his head are too quiet compared to the white noise he hears.

It asks a simple question.

"Are you okay?"

Silver turns his head down again, unable to stop a new swarm of tears spilling out of his eyes. Gotta try a different approach, Shadow guesses. He clears his throat. "May I...hold you?"

A nod is the only answer.

Shadow carefully moves over to wrap his arms around his love; his body decides to move before his brain can. He rocks the other slowly, caressing the side of his face, trying to do anything to make him feel less out of control.

He knows a little bit about Silver's experiences now, and he figures this could be anything from just a build up of overwhelming emotions, anxiety or otherwise, or just an ADHD-esque anger outburst.

He's felt alienated before, and he can tell that that disorder can make someone feel very alienated.

"D-do they...think I'm...crazy?"

"No one thinks you're crazy, Silver. They were a little worried about you, but they weren't judging. You said some things about yourself that they don't agree with."

He hopes that's a good enough answer to the choked out question. This is his first time helping anyone in any kind of meltdown, so he just hopes he's doing a good job. Mainly, he doesn't want to see Silver like this. It hurts him. His pain is Shadow's pain, now.

Pain and anger subsided but embarrassment eating him alive, Silver leans against Shadow. The reassurance *did* help in calming him down, but now he feels a whole lot of guilt bubbling up inside of him.

“I’m sorry I get like this-”

A finger presses against his lips, “Shh...” and then moves to the top of his head, “it’s okay... everything’s okay...you have no reason to apologize for something you can’t control...” Shadow soothes in between scratches behind Silver’s ear.

Silver sighs, trying to take in the words, feeling those relaxing chemicals flood his brain at the touch. “I just, you know...I get so mad sometimes. That stupid fuckin’ sock wasn’t positioning right, and even once I got it right finally it didn’t matter because I was already thinking about the stupid crease and I couldn’t *not* feel it. Even though it wasn’t supposed to be uncomfortable anymore, it was.”

“I understand. It’s not a big thing, but the anger bottles up, and then at some point you just can’t hold it in anymore. You shouldn’t have to feel that level of anger, anyway.”

That’s certainly happened to Shadow before.

Glimmering golden eyes look up to him. “That’s exactly it. I just...don’t know how to deal with it. I don’t know how to express it. Like, if I’m alone or away from other people I’ll throw shit, or kick things, that kind of stuff. It’s really bad. I’m...afraid of people hating me for it.”

“That’s a valid fear. As you know, I thought the trauma I had was nothing more than a weakness for years. I always thought people would think less of me for it.”

He wishes that he could give Silver better advice, but he finds that all he can do is relate. Make him feel less lonely, at the very least.

...And *that’s* why they’re both getting therapists. But he supposes he can offer one more comforting statement, at the expense of being too gushy in too small a span of time.

“I couldn’t hate you for anything.”

“I love you,” the psychic mewls, nuzzling into black fur. After a few minutes of being held and petted, his heart rate slows down enough.

“Do you still want to skate?”

Silver says yes in his head, but when he looks down he realizes that his socks are soaked from stepping in the snow. He feels ashamed again, the memories of what he did coming back to him with full force.

“M-my socks are wet...”

He expects a laugh, but instead, Shadow seems to evaluate the situation for a second and then looks at Silver. “I’m sure someone has extra. Or...you could skate without them. That won’t

be comfortable either, but no socks is better than wet socks.”

They both laugh. Truly one of the worst sensations.

“Okay. I want to skate. As long as we can figure it out.” He stands, and Shadow follows suit. He links hands with Silver.

“I promise we will.”

It’s such a trivial thing to Silver when he steps back and looks at what caused his meltdown, but he can’t even laugh because the way that Shadow looks at him softly and squeezes his hand makes him feel more like he’s just been promised a ticket out of the apocalypse than reassured of the fixing of a sock crisis.

Maybe it isn’t trivial. Maybe, his problems do matter and actually evoke a real emotional response in him, even if they seem minor to the naked eye.

That said, there’s a mutual but silent understanding between the two that that promise is all inclusive, not exclusive to this situation, and it makes Silver realize he is finally getting that love and adoration that he so craved.

They’ll figure everything out — better yet, he’s been *promised* this.

He loves Shadow. He really does. It’s all too clear to him now. His mind wanders back to this morning, when he woke up with fingers still intertwined with Shadow’s; the memories from yesterday being the only things on his mind as he looked at the rare sight of a Shadow at peace, still asleep, still snoring softly; the way it took him several minutes to realize that this wasn’t all a dream, that by some incredible means these two polar opposites really did meet up and go from an acquainted rivalry to declaring their love for each other in a mere matter of days; and when Shadow woke up not long after, having had the same train of thought as Silver minutes ago, the pure shock of it all clear on his face.

Not to leave out when Shadow swung his legs around and got out of bed almost immediately after his realization to gently pull Silver into an embrace — what was different this time was that they didn’t have to worry about anybody else seeing them. Not like they ever particularly worried about it in the past anyway, but being in a comfy room together with the door closed made both of them feel a whole lot better about showing each other affection.

As Shadow squeezes his hand and they start making their way back to the ice, he feels his heart grow with fondness. He feels bad for all the people missing out, the ones who believe Shadow’s an evil guy, because now he knows how big of a heart the hybrid has. Maybe he just needed to find the right person to open him up a little bit, who knows, but something deep inside Silver’s thoughts tells him that this is the real Shadow. Still snarky as ever, but oh so loving, and lovable, and not defined by his trauma. A true sweetheart. Who would’ve guessed?

The idea that he really did help Shadow, even if just a little bit, and he’s started to unlock such a beautiful side of him underneath the macho mentality...it gives him butterflies.

He could get used to this love thing.

Chapter End Notes

u know as a hockey fan, writing abt gay hedgehogs around christmastime made it actually physically impossible to not dedicate a whole bit to the sport so here's part one

phew sorry this took so damn long to update i was just Not Feeling Inspired

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