

mania

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mania

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Summary

Shane thinks Ilya doesn't notice. Ilya does.

Of course he does, he's the love of his life, how could he not notice?

OR

Shane struggles with trichotillomania, but Ilya makes sure he knows he is not alone.

Notes

tw: trichotillomania

projecting heavily onto shane here. as a person with trich, it is a lot about control (for me personally, so i rope it into the ocd category) and from the books, shane values control a lot. shane's experience is based on a lot of my own experiences! this is in no means trying to generalize the disorder at ALL, and if you are struggling with the same thing, you are definitely not alone <3

Shane thinks Ilya doesn't notice. Ilya does.

Of course he does, he's the love of his life, how could he not notice?

It flares up when Shane is stressed, or bored, or a combination of both which Ilya doesn't really understand how that happens. When playoffs are inching closer and closer, or when the team is on a particularly bad losing streak. When Shane's life seems to be tumbling out of control, his hands find solace in his hair.

It sounds weird. Ilya thought so in the beginning. How often Shane twirls the strand of his hair between his fingers, aimlessly running through his black hair. And of course, the pulling.

It must hurt, Ilya thinks as he pretends not to look at Shane as he inspects the hair in his hands. Shane's eyes dart around the room, landing on Ilya as he shoots him the "I'm fine" smile. Ilya returns the smile, though it isn't as bright as it should be. He diverts his gaze, his phone suddenly looking a lot more interesting than it was three seconds ago.

"Hey," Ilya mutters, as he scoots closer to Shane. "Put your head on my lap."

"Okay." Ilya loves how Shane just obeys.

Ilya sinks his hand into Shane's hair, massaging his scalp and running his hands through the dark locks. He notices there are spots at the back of his head that feels, thinner, but he decides that he wouldn't push it. Shane would tell him when he is ready, right?

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Shane is about to have a mental breakdown.

He is doing everything he knows. Three deep breaths, the five senses and whatever he researched on the internet, he is pacing around in the tiny bathroom so much he might as well log it onto Strava.

It's not working.

His mind is racing and he doesn't know how to stop it. Something is wrong, his head itches and he feels like he could pull his hair out, literally.

It's a bad habit, or that's what his parents always told him. Playing or toying with your hair, and he believed them. Bad habits can be fixed, right? But Shane starts to feel like it's not. He can't control it. It physically pains him when it flares up. He can't focus on anything but how itchy his head is, it feels like ants are swarming his head, making a nest in his hair.

Shane wants to shave it all off. But there will be a *lot* of people that will get really upset, really fast.

He grips the edge of the sink, his knuckles turning white.

Shane stares at his reflection in the mirror. His eyes are sunken, dark circles are evident of the sleep deprivation. His usually perfect skin is scattered with small red spots, he always breaks out when he is stressed. His eyes are glassy, unfocused. His fingers twitch towards his hair again, muscle memory stronger than reason.

Don't, he tells himself. Ilya doesn't know. He will be so weirded out if he does.

He drags his hands down his face instead, nails scraping briefly against the stubble on his jaw.

Nope, bad idea.

Shane turns on the tap, running his fingers under the cold water. The coolness relieves his urges a bit, but his scalp still itches. The ants don't go away.

There's a soft knock on the door.

"Shane?" Ilya's voice, careful.

Fuck. He's been here for too long. Shane glances around the bathroom, letting out a shaky sigh of relief when the mess on the ground isn't as bad as he thought it is.

"Can I come in?"

No. His mind screams. He's not ready, Ilya can't see him like this.

"Not right now, sorry," He says, voice wobbly. "I'm sorry."

"It's okay. I love you."

"I know." *But he won't when he finds out.*

===

Trichotillomania.

That's too many letters and too many syllables.

Ilya blinks at his screen. Shane has been in the bathroom for probably an hour. He's not showering, and his skincare routine does not take this long. So there was only one probable reason why Shane had locked himself in the bathroom.

He's having one of his episodes.

There's an ache in Ilya's chest, how Shane refuses to tell him. *Did he think Ilya is going to treat him differently because of it?*

He retreated to ask Google for the information.

Pulling hair. Hair pulling. Twirling finger in hair. Hair pulling disorder.

He typed “hair” so much it stopped looking like a real word.

Ilya doesn't click on any of the links at first. He just stares at the word like it might jump off the screen and bite him.

Trichotillomania.

It sounds so clinical. Cold. Like something that belongs to a textbook and not attached to the man he loves, who is still locked inside the bathroom, probably with his head between his knees as he counts tiles or breaths.

Ilya takes three deep breaths, the way he knows Shane does when he is trying not to spiral.

He clicks into the first link that pops up. There are too many complicated words that Ilya's brain doesn't register, but he manages to grasp the main information of the website.

Body-Focused Repetitive Behavior.

Compulsive.

Ilya makes sure to put some of the words through a translator app to make sure he understands it properly.

“Trick-oh-till-oh-mania,” he says to himself softly. That is a big word.

He clicks into a few more websites, this time with people talking about their own experiences with the disorder. His heart aches as he reads about their anxiety and stress, their fears of people judging them, their numerous attempts to hide it.

Is that why Shane has an extensive collection of beanies? Or toques, as Canadians call it. He doesn't wear it often, but when he does, it matches his episodes. Is this why Shane is always meticulous about his hair? Brushing it constantly or keeping it short during playoffs. Ilya had teased him about it once, why he was wearing a beanie around the house. Shane had laughed it off too quickly and changed the subject.

Ilya wishes he could go back and take that moment by the shoulders and hold it gently.

Causes distress and often guilt.

Loved ones should offer support and avoid shaming or judgement.

That last part is a no-brainer. He closes the tab on his phone and leans against the headboard. He doesn't want Shane to feel cornered, or watched, or even judged. Or like Ilya would treat him differently if he knew.

Ilya just wants Shane to feel safe around him.

He stands and walks over to the closed bathroom door again. He doesn't knock, but he presses his lips towards the small gap between the door and the archway.

“I’m here, okay?” He says quietly. “I love you. You are not alone.”

There is no immediate response except for some shuffling on the other side.

Then, the faint sound of a breath hitching.

Shane’s voice is small and shaky, “Can I tell you something?”

“Of course.”

“You promise you won't freak out?”

“Never.”

There’s a pause. Ilya doesn't push.

“My head, does this thing,” Shane starts, his words stumbling over themselves. “It's weird and I know it's gross. But I can't stop it, I tried Ilya, it hurts if I don't, if I don't stop...” He stammers as his voice breaks. “I promise I don't have lice.”

“Sometimes it feels like my head is burning.”

He sounds so small.

Ilya pressed his head lightly against the wooden door.

“Hey,” he says, gentle but firm, “Hey... I know. You wash your hair so many times, I think lice will die from too much water, what is it, drowning.”

He pauses. And continues.

“I don't think it is weird, or uh, what you say, gross. I think it is your brain trying to help you. Even if it is not very good at it.”

There’s a small, broken sound on the other side of the door. Not quite a laugh. Not quite a sob.

“It does not feel very helpful,” Shane admits.

“I know,” Ilya says. “But that does not mean you are wrong.”

Silence settles again, not awkward or forced, it feels like a warm blanket thrown over something shaking.

“I googled,” Ilya adds carefully. “There is a word for it. But I will not say it now if you don't want me to. Or ever.”

“Does that mean something is wrong with me?” Shane asks.

Ilya felt like he just got hit by a million pucks flying at full speed.

“No. It just means your brain is trying to help you and it thinks this is what helps you. Even though you don't like it.”

“That’s not very reassuring,” Shane says, his tone lighter than before.

Ilya huffs softly. “There are too many big English words. Is hard to translate what I want to say into English.”

“Say it in Russian.”

And he does.

“I think you are very brave. And you don't give yourself a lot of credit. You carry your team like your life depends on it, you don't want to disappoint them. Every time I see you lose, I see how you blame yourself. It is not your fault. And I know you know it, but sometimes it is hard to convince our brains otherwise.

And your parents. They are wonderful, but they put too much pressure on you and I see how your shoulders tense up whenever Yuna brings up some sponsorship or ambassador thing. You think they will be disappointed but I know they are so proud. They tell me everytime I am over. That they are so lucky to have you as a son.

This doesn't change who you are. I love you even though you think I won't. You are not weak.”

The words linger in the air for a moment, and Shane breaks the silence.

“I wish I understood Russian.”

“I know.”

“My brain is kind of a dick.”

“If your brain was a dick, I’d suck it.”

“Ilya!” Shane’s laugh cracks a grin on Ilya’s face. “You're supposed to be nice right now.”

“I am!”

“I was so scared you'd think I am, weird or disgusting, or...” Shane pauses, trying to find the right words, “...weak.”

“You are not weak. You are just stressed.”

There is a quiet click, and the door unlocks.

Ilya waits. He doesn't touch the handle or opens the door.

After a second, the door creaks open just enough for Shane’s face to appear. His cheeks are flushed red, hair curling strangely at the edges. He looks exposed in a way he rarely allows

himself to be.

“Come here.” Ilya extends his hands and Shane walks into them. Ilya places a kiss on the top of Shane’s head, a kiss on his forehead, on his nose and then his lips.

“I’m sorry I didn’t tell you,” Shane whispers against Ilya’s shoulder.

“You were scared. But I am here now.”

They stand like that for a while. Ilya’s hands tangled in Shane’s hair, gently massaging his scalp. The ants are quieter, like they all retreat back to their nest.

“Does this help?”

“A lot.”

Shane relaxes into Ilya. For the first time all night, the burn slowly dwindles.

And Ilya notices too.

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