

A Very Odd Family, Indeed

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A Very Odd Family, Indeed

by [opheliabloo](#)

Summary

It all started in the nether, all those years ago.

A retired warrior, father to the most fearsome fighter in the land, a sharp-eyed leader with a dangerous spark, and a boy who could turn mountains to dust if he put his mind to it.

Yes. They were a very odd family, indeed.

(This work is finished. I just can't figure out tags.)

Piglin Child

It had all begun in the nether, so so many years ago.

Avoiding the blazing fireball of a nearby ghastr, Phil collapsed against the netherite wall and cursed loudly to himself. He'd been stupid, gotten too comfortable, and he had paid for it dearly. The gash in his hip burned with every slight movement, and the blood running down his leg had grown warm and clammy in the sweltering nether air. He swung his backpack off his shoulder haphazardly and rummaged through it, digging past pieces of quartz and the piles of golden nuggets he had been bringing home to melt down. He cursed again — no health potions. How had he become so stupid?

Phil's head felt uncomfortably bare; it had been the damned golden helmet that had gotten him in this situation in the first place. Phil glanced at his bag again, at the two broken pieces of his helmet jutting out at odd angles, and nearly screamed. Shit. Shit. Shit. He had gold, but no crafting table or furnace to melt it down into bars and into a new helmet. His hip hurt so badly as his adrenaline faded that walking was a near impossibility, and the herd of piglins between him and his portal would attack again if they even got a glimpse of him. He had to get out, and he had to get out fast. Phil wasn't good with blood on a good day, despite his years of battles, and the the unforgiving heat that surrounded him made him nauseous.

Crunch.

Phil jumped so hard he sent his bag clattering over sideways, spilling its contents out onto the ground. Phil grabbed his sword from beside him and swung it, half-blind, more in a haze of panic than anything. When nothing attacked him in the moments that followed, Phil allowed himself to scan his surroundings.

Crunch.

A juvenile piglin, no higher than his thigh, tottered closer to Phil's overturned bag and sniffed it. It knelt down, Phil watching in stunned awe, and clumsily pulled out more of the golden carrots that Phil had brought with him. Golden carrots weren't nearly as tasty as the natural ones, in Phil's opinion, but they lasted nearly forever unrefrigerated and left Phil full for hours in times when eating was a bother. The juvenile piglin sniffed them quickly, then downed several of them nearly at once. Phil spotted the remains of another one nearby.

"You hungry, little fella?" Phil chuckled nervously. The juvenile piglin's eyes snapped up to him in a flash, and he let out a huff through his nose. A show of dominance. Phil could have laughed. "Don't try that shit with me right now, little guy. I've got bigger things to worry about than baby bacon bits. The carrots are yours. Take a handful of golden nuggets too, if you'd like."

Perhaps it was the blood loss making him delirious. Talking to a piglin? Questionable on a good day. Juvenile piglins were no less dangerous than their grown counterparts, given how blastedly fast the little bastards were. Phil was simply hoping the little guy would be satisfied with a pocketful of gold and a shiny snack and would be on his way before another piglin came to fetch him.

It was then that Phil noticed something by the little piglin's foot — a golden helmet. Sloppily-made and dented in places, but in one piece.

Phil leaned over to grab it, but the tiny piglin shrieked and batted his hand away.

“Whoa whoa whoa!” Phil cried. “I’m not stealing it, I promise!” He pointed to the portal across the valley. “I just need it until I get to that portal. Then it’s yours, and the whole bag too.”

To prove his point, he pushed the bag closer to the baby piglin. The tiny creature studied him intently, as if working through what he had said. Could piglins even understand English?

“Please, little bud,” Phil said slowly. “I need that helmet, or else your big buddies over there will tear me into little Phil-bits. I promise I’ll give it back, okay?”

The piglin stared at him for another good moment, unblinking. Then slowly, carefully, it let go of the helmet, and Phil pulled it to him. The fit was tight and lumpy, but damn it, Phil could have kissed the thing.

As Phil struggled to his feet, the piglin baby grabbed Phil’s bag and swung it over its little shoulder, only to immediately fall over due to its weight. It let out a frustrated squeal.

“Want me to carry it?” Phil said. “You can have it at the portal. I’ll empty it and let you take what you want.”

Once again, the piglin stared at him with wide, white eyes. Then, to Phil’s surprise, it nodded.

“You are one smart little fella!” Phil exclaimed joyfully. “Come on, now. I’ve had enough of this hellhole for a while.”

He paused. “No offence.”

Perhaps he really was losing his mind.

The walk to the portal was slow, painful, and possibly the weirdest experience of Phil’s life. The baby piglin tottered dutifully at his side as he awkwardly limped through the valley, praying to all the gods above that no ghastr would come floating by. The other piglins sniffed him suspiciously and huffed in his face if he got too close, but not a single one acknowledged the child walking beside him. As they reached the portal and away from the main herd a couple yards away, Phil waited to hear the familiar shriek of a parent piglin calling for their baby. A couple of piglin children had followed him to the portal before, but they never got far before they were called back. But there was nothing but silence that called for the little one at his side.

“Time to go back now,” Phil said, laying his bag up against the obsidian. “I’m going to go back to my world now, and you get to have lots of shiny gold to go take back to your buddies. Okay?”

The piglin tilted its nose up at him, snorting gently, gesturing in the portal’s direction. Seemingly frustrated that Phil couldn’t understand what it was saying, it then pushed past him and began hoisting itself up into the portal. Before Phil could speak, it had disappeared into the purple haze.

“Uh—“ Phil turned back to the herd of piglins. They remained engrossed in their own business. Whatever that was.

Well, I guess this day couldn’t get any weirder, Phil thought to himself. Grabbing his bag, he threw himself through the portal and back into his own world.

~

Raising a baby piglin was odd, to say the least.

Phil didn’t exactly mean to adopt the little guy, but the baby piglin didn’t seem to give him a

choice. Once it had crossed into the overworld, it refused to go near the portal again. Getting it to leave Phil's side was even difficult. That didn't bother Phil too much. Within days, he'd grown embarrassingly attached to the strange little creature.

Now, Phil knew a thing or two about piglins. They were herd animals, which explained the baby piglin not wanting to be alone. They were also natural hoarders, which explained why every shiny object in Phil's house began disappearing, then reappearing beneath the piglin's makeshift bed in the storage room. They liked to eat and grunt and fight and be aggressive.

However, piglins weren't smart.

And yet strangely, this one was.

Phil bestowed a name upon his newfound son on the third night of his arrival. Technoblade. There was no reason behind it; Phil simply thought it sounded cool. And if he was going to have a piglin son, then damn it, it was going to be cool! Phil called him Techno for short, and Techno quickly learned his name.

"Techno."

Phil froze, his knife hovering above the half-sliced carrot. He turned, staring silently.

"Techno?"

The piglin sat on one of Phil's dining room chairs, wiping his sword with a piece of cloth, just like Phil had shown him. "Techno."

This piglin could talk. Phil didn't know whether to laugh, cry, or pinch himself.

"Yeah," he said calmly, turning back to his carrots. "That's you, bud. You're Techno."

That was the extent of the conversation for that night. Techno didn't speak another word for a month after that. Phil made do with sign language, given that his attempts to learn piglin-speak only resulted in Techno laughing so hard he peed himself. Words came slowly, but Techno never forgot a single one.

~

"Dad!"

Techno's shriek pierced the cold morning air like a dart. Phil dropped the shears he held in his hand.

"Help, Dad, help!"

The fear in Techno's voice was palpable, sharp. Phil scaled the fence of the animal pen in a single jump and sprinted towards Techno's voice. He turned the corner of his house and immediately drew his shield. A hoglin, fully grown and decently bulky, stood in the clearing in front of the portal, scratching its hooves in the dirt. Techno sat half-collapsed against the stone fence, his ears pulled close to his head. The golden hoe he'd been using was clutched in one shaking hand.

"Dad!" Techno cried out again.

"Don't move, Techno," Phil unsheathed his sword, careful to make no noise. The hoglin shrieked, wild eyes trained on Techno. Phil noticed one of its tusks was bloody, and a pit formed in his chest.

“Come here!” He bellowed, taking a running leap at the beast. The hoglin roared as Phil’s sword came crashing down upon its flank, but Phil evaded the tusk that swung towards him and finished it off with a blow to the side of the neck. White eyes rolling, the beast collapsed onto its side.

“Dad!”

Phil broke from his battle-induced trance and ran to Techno’s side. The poor child’s chest heaved with every breath, and his hands clutched desperately at Phil’s jacket as he scooped him up into his arms. “Did it get you? Did it hurt you?” Phil asked, feeling the child’s back with his free hand. It took a moment for Techno to regain enough composure to answer.

“My hand, Dad. My hand.”

Phil brought them both inside. Techno was shivering, ears still pulled back flat against his head. He shrieked when Phil tried to set him down on the kitchen table, so Phil kept him on his hip as he rummaged for bandages and a health potion. Sure, a health potion was overkill, but a gulp would help Techno feel better and Phil had plenty to spare.

“Can I put you down now, bud?” Phil said gently. Techno whined softly, but allowed Phil to set him down on the kitchen table. Phil took his hand gently, revealing a long, straight gash going up his palm. Phil exhaled sharply. “He got you good, didn’t he?”

“I didn’t see him,” Techno replied weakly. “I was farming and then I turned around and it was there and it threw me against the wall and then —“

Phil shushed him with a gentle kiss on the head. “You were very brave, Technoblade. I’m proud of you.”

They sat in silence as Phil wrapped Techno’s hand in bandages and filled a small cup with the healing potion, Phil chuckling softly when Techno grimaced at the strong, melony taste.

“I’ll give you a pass on morning chores, okay? You stay inside and relax until I’m done working.”

Techno nodded. “Thanks, Dad. I love you.”

Phil ruffled the tuft of pink hair on Techno’s head and grinned.

When Phil returned outside, he found Molly the sheep staring at him, looking very bothered at being left half-shorn. He gave her an extra bundle of hay as an apology for the sudden interruption.

Grow, Boy, Grow

Chapter Summary

Techno grows; Phil finds difficulty in hiding his past.

Chapter Notes

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

Technoblade had grown into a rather handsome young man. Phil guessed that he'd be around twelve, if he aged in human years. However, piglins aged out of adolescence twice as quickly as humans did, so Phil wagered he'd have a fully-grown Techno by the end of the next year. The thought was weird to him. A grown son.

Techno had grown long and lean, with a mane of pink hair down to his shoulders. His voice deepened a bit more, though his face retained the piglet fat he had from childhood. Though he was a slight bit awkward as he learned to grow into his rapidly-changing body, Phil couldn't help but find him handsome. He really was a charming little thing.

Phil rested his hands on the windowsill. Techno was outside practicing, once again. Phil almost felt sorry for the poor fighting dummy he'd purchased for Techno's last birthday (or as Phil liked to call it, his 'you-followed-me-home-and-now-I'm-stuck-with-you day'). The poor thing wouldn't last another month of Techno was going to keep up this kind of pace.

Thwack. Thwack. Thwack.

Techno had a knack for sword-fighting. Maybe it was the piglin blood in him. Phil couldn't really tell. His moves were slow and sloppy from inexperience, but lacked the blind brutality of a piglin swing. The technique was there.

'He's like you, you know,' said the voice in his brain. 'You could teach him. He could be what you couldn't be.'

Phil leaned his head on the window and closed his eyes. The glass was cool.

Thunk.

Phil jumped, then grinned. Techno's face stared back at him, nose pressed up against the glass. "Did you watch me?" He said, his voice muffled through the glass. Phil gave a thumbs up.

He didn't need to tell Techno about his past just yet. He'd find the old armour and weapons soon enough, and Phil would tell him then. Yeah. He'd tell him then.

For now, he'd let Techno fight the dummy and the dummy only. That was the only enemy he needed in his life right now.

~

Phil woke to a sickeningly familiar noise.

Thwack. Clatter. Clatter. Thwack.

He was out of bed in a moment, sword at his side as he pushed through the front door and into the night air. The moon was hidden behind thick, rolling clouds.

“Techno!” He screamed.

Techno emerged from the shadows of the sheep pen. “Dad?” He said.

A couple of bones were tucked beneath his arm. In his other hand was the gleaming netherite sword Phil had given him for his birthday. “A skeleton got into the sheep pen and was causing a ruckus so I decided to come out here and —“

“Back inside, now.”

Techno blinked. “What?”

“Back inside. Now, Technoblade.”

Techno raised his eyebrows, but obeyed without any more fuss. Once he was back inside, Phil sat down at the kitchen table and rubbed his face in his hands.

“You went out and fought mobs without me.”

Techno placed the bones in the compost barrel by the door. “You were asleep. It was only one skeleton.”

“People have been killed by a single skeleton before, Techno.”

“Dad, I’m sixteen,” Techno set his sword down on the kitchen table and ambled to the living room. “I can fight mobs on my own now.”

Phil breathed in slowly. “Absolutely not. If you’re going to fight mobs, I’m coming with you.”

“Can you at least teach me some better sword moves? Or let me use the crossbow?”

“I’ll think about it!” Phil snapped. Techno’s ears flattened.

“You’re so weird sometimes,” he muttered, digging his toe into the ground.

“I’m trying to keep you safe.”

“You’re keeping me useless! I want to learn to fight, Dad!” Techno rubbed at his eyes in frustration. “I’m not a kid anymore. I want to — I need to fight. It’s in my blood. I can feel it.”

“What’s in your blood is a whole lot of stubbornness. Back to bed, now. If I catch you outside again I’m taking that sword away.”

“Oh, fuck you.”

Phil paused. Techno had never sworn at him before. He turned and walked back to his own bedroom, slamming the door behind him.

This many years in, and it was their first big argument. Phil should consider himself lucky. But as he lay in bed, listening to Techno pace the living room floor, he felt a chill up his spine.

I need to fight. It’s in my blood.

Something about that phrase made Phil's stomach turn. He wasn't yet ready to admit why.

That night, he dreamed of an acrid battlefield, the taste of gunpowder strong in his mouth. Rotting hands pulled at him from every direction, pulling him into fire, into lava, into the endless black void. He was alone. He was surrounded.

Phil woke up in a cold sweat for the first time in years, surrounded by sunlight that did nothing to warm him. Techno was outside, feeding the sheep, unusually silent.

When Techno came back inside, flushed from the cold air, Phil sat in the living room on one of the plush chairs, staring at the ground.

A full set of faded diamond armour stood on an armour stand in the middle of the floor.

“Techno, come here. There's something I want to show you.”

Chapter End Notes

a shorter chapter to help start the story off. feel free to comment ideas if you have any!
I have a general storyline I want to follow but I'm also a whore for clout so

- Ophelia

Sins of the Father

Chapter Summary

Techno learns of Phil's past.

Chapter Notes

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

The sun was a golden halo over the nearby mountains by the time Phil had finished telling his story. Techno sat cross-legged on the floor, tracing a jagged dent in the diamond helmet with a finger. He hadn't said a word in hours, just letting Phil speak.

"That dent came from an enderman. They may not look it, but their skin's hard like obsidian. Get too close to one without a helmet and you'll leave with a nice little bit of brain damage."

Techno's finger continued to trace up and down. It was slow, methodical. Phil could tell he was deep in thought.

"Why were you in the war?"

"I was good with a sword."

"How old were you?"

"Eighteen when the war began, and on the cusp of twenty-one when the village rang the peace bell."

Phil had taken Techno to see the peace bell in the nearby village a couple times over the years, though he'd skimmed many of the details as to why they even existed.

"They're to symbolize safety and peace," Phil told the curious child. Techno stared at the gleaming yellow bell with wide, shiny eyes. "You ring it if there's danger, and then you ring it when the danger is gone."

Some of the villagers watched him as they passed. They knew who he was, no doubt. Techno did not seem to notice their stares.

"Any danger now, Dad?"

His English was improving quickly, and Phil felt his heart swell. "No, Techno. The bell hasn't rung for ten years. If we're lucky, it won't ever ring again."

He turned and grabbed the bag full of groceries. Rabbit stew for dinner, tonight. "Let's go home, Techno. We've got perishables in here."

Techno snorted softly, and waved goodbye to the bell as they made their way out of the town square.

What would you think, Techno, Phil thought to himself, If I told you I was the one who rang it?

Techno darted up ahead of him, chasing a chicken up the cobblestone road. The villagers stared as they passed him, their faces a mix of recognition, awe, and perhaps a little bit of pity. Phil wasn't always good at hiding his limp.

Techno turned back to him and gestured for Phil to speed up. Phil stuck his tongue out, making Techno laugh.

He'd learn soon enough.

"Why did you never tell me about all this stuff?"

Techno's voice was quiet, hurt. Phil had expected as much, but the quaver in his son's voice still stung.

"I had to wait for the right moment. It's not a part of my past I like to think about."

"You fought in a war! You were a general! You saved our village from being torn to pieces! How long were you going to keep this from me?"

"Until I couldn't anymore!" Phil fought the urge to raise his voice. He'd been staring at that set of armour for hours now, reliving every dent, every slash, and his chest felt tight. The world he'd had with Techno was gone now. It had disappeared the second he dared to take the armour out of its chest.

Phil had lost the privilege to just be known as 'Dad' to Techno. He wasn't even sure he deserved it in the first place.

Phil buried his face in his hands. "I did awful things in that war, Techno."

"You killed people?"

"For every person I saved, I butchered ten other creatures. Some of them men like me, some of them mobs like you."

There was a pregnant pause. "Most of them mobs like you."

Techno set the helmet on the floor and rose to his feet. He placed his hand up against the large, half-melted hole in the side of the leggings. "What made this?" He said after a long moment.

Phil took a deep breath. "A man."

"Hero-something?"

The name was rotten on Phil's tongue. "Herobrine."

~

Techno had heard of Herobrine before. Try as he might have, Phil couldn't keep his son isolated from the village legends. The remnants of the portals still existed, dotted in fields and buried in forests. There had been thousands of them during the war, each one an open, oozing sore that bled hellish creatures into the overworld. It had taken years for portal patrols to close each one.

"I was allowed onto the final patrol because I could do well with a sword and the heat of the nether didn't bother me as much as it did the other soldiers. I was lithe and quick and deadly."

By the time they reached Herobrine's fortress, tucked deep within the unexplored part of the

nether, he was far from human.

“The two archers on the patrol were killed immediately by an ambush attack. Herobrine had found a way to bring dead piglins back to life. Well, a sort of life.”

A zombified piglin barrelled for him, tusks gleaming with half-dried blood. Phil swung his sword into its rotted skull. The bone splintered like dead wood, and the piglin fell, screaming. Phil stomped on its throat until the noise had stopped.

“I got separated from the three others. I heard their screams as they died.”

There was no worse way to go than by withering, in Phil’s opinion. It sucks the oxygen from one’s blood, eating away at the veins until the shock from the poison finishes the poor creature off. Withered people died with their mouth open, eyes wide, gasping for air as their body rotted away before their eyes. Those who were lucky enough to pour milk onto a wound within moments of being hit could survive, but were left with amputations and pockets of poison within them that could burst at any moment.

Phil’s hip clicked uncomfortably. As if that’s any better than death. Spending every moment in fear.

“I had no choice but to fight him alone. It was either that, or die.”

“You fought him? Like actually?” Said Techno.

“I landed the killing blow.”

Techno’s eyes widened. “Dad, you basically saved the whole world! You’re a hero!”

“Don’t say that word to me!” Phil snapped. Techno visibly recoiled. “Just because it was my sword that cut the bastard’s throat doesn’t mean that any of my atrocities are forgiven. I am a murderer, Technoblade!”

His voice had risen to a shout, and Phil felt years of guilt bubble up from within him. “I watched people die horrible deaths in front of me. Some of which I had caused!”

“You saved the world!” Techno’s voice broke.

“I set villages ablaze because those inside were too sick to be saved!”

“Dad, please!”

“I looked into a sick, sick man’s eyes as he gasped for breath through a throat I had slashed in half and smiled, Techno. I smiled.” Phil was crying now, but he didn’t care. “Then I brought my sword down over and over and over until the fucker’s head was mush!”

Phil drew in a great, shuddering gasp. He could smell it in his nose. The blood. The smell of Phil’s own burning flesh as a wither skeleton sunk its teeth into his leg.

Techno pushed his way into Phil’s arms and sobbed. “Dad...”

Phil hugged him back so tightly Techno wheezed. “I’m sorry. I’m so sorry.”

Sorry for yelling, sorry for breaking down, sorry for telling him all the horrible details of Phil’s past, he didn’t know.

“I know you’re good, Dad. I know you are. I’m going to be just like you.”

There came the karma. Phil knew it would catch up with him someday.


“Please, don’t,” he whispered. “Don’t be anything like me.”

Techno didn’t respond.

The armour went back into the chest by nightfall. By the time the sun crested the horizon, the chest was a pile of ash and melted metal in the fire pit.

Chapter End Notes

It’s my dad’s bday so have some delicious angst! I can’t wait to introduce Wilbur to the group >:))) also only half my italics are working so I’m filled with rage

Also waking up to people liking my stories has given me enough serotonin to last the horrible Canadian winter 

-Ophelia

Vagabond Boy

Chapter Summary

Phil receives an odd request from his little friend Nikki.

Chapter Notes

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

Phil quite enjoyed farming. It was decently laborious, but repetitive enough for his brain to wander as he worked. Phil found much contentment under the hot sun, digging potatoes and carrots out of the ground with his bare hands.

Farms were the first to go in wartime. Perhaps that's why Phil felt so protective of his golden fields. They were his peace.

It had been just over a month since Phil had told Techno the truth about his past, and they hadn't talked of it since. Techno returned to dutifully practicing his sword-fighting, sneaking out more than once during the night to find the couple mobs that came creeping about in the early hours of the morning. Phil stopped trying to discipline him after the first few tries. Techno always kept the compost barrel full of bones for bone meal, and Phil's potatoes were quite scrumptious thanks to the extra help.

He began making frequent trips to the village on his horse to sell the extra vegetables and wheat he harvested. People in the village were happy to buy from him, perhaps from a sense of respect for what he'd done so many years ago. Phil liked to think it was more because he could harvest a mean potato.

The weekend morning dawned cool and dewy, the sun casting a gentle yellow light over the mist that hung in the air. As Phil readied his horse in the barn, Techno popped his head in, holding an envelope in his hands.

"Dream killed the wither this morning."

Phil stopped mid-brush, causing his horse to nicker in annoyance. "Who'd he do it with?"

"He did it solo, Dad. There were witnesses and everything."

"Good god. Isn't he your age?"

"Yeah. He turned sixteen a week ago or something." Techno stretched his fingers towards Percy's nose and tickled him. "He's incredible. Barely anyone knows what he looks like. He wears a mask everywhere."

Phil chuckled and resumed his work. This wasn't the first time he'd heard of Dream. The young folk hero had made his rounds around the province, proving himself to be a near-unbeatable fighter. However, beating the wither at all was an incredible feat by itself. Beating the wither alone? Almost unheard of. Phil had never even attempted to collect a wither skull. A single wither bite was too much to risk.

“You jealous of him?” Phil said humorously.

Techno let out a loud snort.

“You’re baring your tusks.”

“I am not—“

Phil grabbed Techno by the cheek and pinched him. “Someone’s jealous!” He laughed. Techno batted his hands away, ears flattening in embarrassment. “I think you and Dream could be great friends if you ever met. You’re very similar.”

Techno huffed to himself, tugging on a piece of his long hair. “He’s probably a dick. I’d be a dick if I was that cool.”

“I’d scold you for saying that if it wasn’t probably true,” Phil replied with a smile. “Go shear the sheep. I’ll be back this evening.”

Techno threw him his striped bucket hat from its hook on the door. “Don’t get sunburn, old man!”

“It’s not even sunny!”

“And yet you still manage to burn!”

~

A girl was waiting for Phil when he arrived in the village, perched on the edge of his stand in the market. She was small, younger than Techno by a year or two, with a head of bouncy blonde hair.

Phil smiled. “Nikki.”

Nikki was a gentle little creature, sole daughter of the town bakers. Phil had watched her grow up, and seeing her made his heart swell. Her cheeks were rosy and her hands were soft, untouched by the harshness of the world outside of her village. Her only scars were long, thin burns along her palms from touching hot pans, and the scratches up her leg from the stray kitten that she’d become intent on adopting (she’d named him Zuko. Apparently it meant fire in some other language. Phil really wasn’t sure).

Nikki waved at him as he approached, though Phil could tell there was something on her mind. She held a basket of baked goods on her lap, as she always did when he came to trade, but in her other hand was a small white envelope.

“Phil!” She cried, leaving her baked goods on the stand as she darted to meet him. “I need a favour.”

“If that favour happens to be extra potatoes, then you’re in luck. Techno’s bone meal is a miracle! Now I know why that stuff’s so expensive.”

“It’s not — well yes, actually. My parents are making gnocchi as a seasonal treat. So... potatoes, yes. Lots of them,” she licked her lips nervously. “But I need another favour from you. A big one.”

She thrust the envelope into his hands. “I’ll take your potatoes to the stand. Read it. I explained it better in there because I knew I’d get nervous.”

She pulled the two heavy sacks of potatoes off of Percy’s sides, doing her best to hide how much she struggled to carry them. Giving Percy a quick kiss, she made her slow way back to the stand.

Phil looked down at the envelope in his hands. It bore Nikki's signature in neat cursive. He peeled it open, put the envelope in his pocket, and unfolded the small piece of paper within.

Dear Mr. Phil,

I please implore you to help my friend. He is an orphan boy in this village who comes to my bakery for food. He has nowhere to live and the nights are very cold but he refuses to go to the orphanage in the next town over. I am very worried for him. He is a very good guitar player and if you paid him a little he could help out on the farm with Techno.

His name is Wilbur. He is not very nice but that is just because he is afraid. I think you will like him.

Please consider this offer.

Nikki :)

An orphan boy in need of a home. Though it warmed his heart to know that Nikki trusted him enough to care for her friend, he felt uncertain. How would Techno do with another boy in the house?

He doesn't have to adopt him. He can be a stable hand. Phil will give him a room in the barn loft, steady meals and some money to save up. That's all he needs.

Nikki waited for him anxiously as Phil led Percy into the nearby stable. She'd grabbed a little loaf of bread absentmindedly and had begun to rip it into little pieces, letting the birds eat from her palm.

"Where is this friend of yours?" Phil asked, leaning his elbows on the stand's counter. Nikki started, spooking the finch in her hand into flying away in a blur. She wiped her hand on her apron and leaned her head on top of Phil's. They stared into the village square together for a moment, watching the other villagers go by.

"I don't know. He never tells me where he goes at night," she said softly. "But I told him I'd be here today, with food. He's going to come and play his guitar."

"Where did an orphan boy get a guitar?"

Nikki sighed. She smelt of warm bread and honey. "I bought it for him. With my birthday money. I wanted him to have a way to get some cash for food."

Nikki's kindness could be a force of nature if she wanted it to be.

"What does he look like?"

"He's got curly brown hair, pale skin, and he's usually in dark clothes. I let him have one of my old wool sweaters. It's yellow, so look out for that."

And so they did, for the next hour. Nikki was a welcome presence by his side. Animals seemed drawn to her, so anyone who walked by with a dog or a flock of sheep was bound to stop by. She chattered happily as Phil traded potatoes for salted meats, soap, beetroots, and whatever seemed to

come by. Phil could manage fine on his own, but village trading brought him joy. He needed the interaction.

Just as Phil had waved off another customer, Nikki grabbed his sleeve. “There!” She whispered shrilly, pointing to the well near the peace bell. A young boy sat cross-legged up against the cobblestone, fiddling with the strings of a guitar. He was pale, obviously dirty, and when his face lifted to scan the area, Phil could see the deep shadows of his cheekbones etched into his face.

Phil had seen too many starving kids in his lifetime. Too many had been beyond saving.

“Go tell him he can play his guitar here. It’s warmer out in the sun.”

Nikki nodded, and lifted her skirt to run to the boy’s side. Phil watched his face lift as Nikki neared. He’d felt that way once. Only once.

Nikki didn’t seem to let the boy decide where he was going. She grabbed him by the arm and dragged him to Phil’s stand. Wilbur towered over her, and over Phil too, but Nikki pulled him with ease.

“Phil! This is Wilbur!” She said, gesturing to him. The boy did not smile. “Wilbur, this is Phil. He sells me potatoes. He also saved this village from war.”

Phil’s cheeks flushed. “I’m primarily a potato farmer. Nice to meet you, Wilbur.”

Wilbur reminded him of an owl. He stood straight-backed and tense at Nikki’s side, staring Phil down with big dark eyes. He took a step back when Phil reached forward to shake his hand.

“Not a people-person, are you?” Phil chuckled. Nikki vibrated nervously as Wilbur continued to stare. “That’s alright. I’m not one either.”

He gestured to the empty stool beside him. “Take a seat and play away, bud. I’ll give you some potatoes for your time.”

Wilbur looked to Nikki, who shooed him forward with an encouraging grin. Wilbur approached the stool slowly, then looked up at Phil. Phil tried his best to look friendly. He hoped he remembered to brush his teeth.

Wilbur picked up the stool in one hand and walked away with it, ignoring Nikki’s squeak of dismay. He set it down a couple yards away, beside Percy’s stall. Percy sniffed him curiously, and Wilbur gave him a pat on the head. Then he began to play. It wasn’t any song Phil recognized, but the tune was nice and blended into the gentle hum of village noise. Nikki hopped back onto the stall’s counter and sighed. “He is a bit shy.”

Phil laughed out loud. “You collect the strangest creatures, Nikki. I think you’re magic.”

Nikki blushed. “I think I just smell good. Animals like bread.”

“So do orphan boys, apparently.”

Nikki giggled. Another customer approached. From behind him, Wilbur began a new tune.

The hours passed as such.

~

“How much can you lift, Wilbur?”

Phil allowed Wilbur to step back from him as he spoke. The boy watched him warily, guitar slung over his back.

“I don’t know. I haven’t counted.”

“Consider yourself strong?”

“I don’t know.”

“Can you farm? Shear sheep? Milk cows? Keep a stable clean?”

“I’ve never done any of those, so I don’t know.”

Phil had had better conversations with Techno before he could speak English. “Would you be willing to learn?”

Wilbur crinkled his nose. “Why do you care?”

The sun had begun to set, and Nikki had long since went home. Wilbur seemed much more uncomfortable without her presence.

“My son and I could use another hand on the farm. I’d give you your own room in the barn loft, three meals a day, access to hot water and I’ll pay you for your labour.”

“I don’t need hot water,” Wilbur replied blankly. “I take cold baths.”

Good gods in Aether above.

“Well, whatever. Hot water, cold water, frozen water. The point is, I’m asking you if you’d be willing to give it a shot. One month. That’s it. Then you’re free to go if you’d like.”

“I’ll go whenever I like starting now, thanks.”

Phil tightened Percy’s saddle. “Fine. Whatever. Is that at least a yes to try it out?”

Wilbur didn’t answer. Phil gave him a quick once-over. He was shivering in the evening air.

“Come on, kid. You’ll freeze to death out here. I’ll give you a warm bed and good, healthy meals. I don’t like to see kids go hungry, especially not my little Nikki’s friends.”

“Fine.” Wilbur replied sharply. “But don’t be surprised if I leave.”

“Fine to me. Just finish your chores first. It’s only polite.”

Chapter End Notes

I fucking hate italics with my whole being

I hope last chapter wasn’t too angsty for y’all. I love me some spicy war crimes

I can’t wait to keep writing this story! I haven’t felt this good about my writing in a long time. Thanks for the nice comments y’all :,)

- Ophelia

Opened Home

Chapter Summary

Phil helps Wilbur settle in for his first night on the farm.

Chapter Notes

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

The ride back to Phil's house with Wilbur was dead silent. The young boy walked by his side, having refused to get up on the horse with him. He walked with his arms crossed, eyebrows pinched together. Phil tried to start conversations with him every couple of minutes, yet eventually resigned to the awkward silence.

Techno was out on the porch as they moved onto Phil's property, collecting the dried bedsheets from the day's laundry. He paused when he saw Wilbur, who looked more like a prisoner than a potential stableboy.

"Techno!" Phil called. "Come here. There's someone I'd like you to meet."

"Your son is a piglin?" Wilbur whispered. "Did you fuck a pig?"

"I can assure you, the relationship I have with my pigs is nothing but casual. Technoblade is adopted." Phil replied calmly. He'd been preparing himself for Wilbur's reaction to Techno for the last half hour, and considering he hadn't run away yet, Phil considered himself lucky.

Techno jogged up to them, looking over Wilbur suspiciously. He was dressed casually, his long hair braided down his back. "Who's this?"

Phil slipped off of Percy's back and handed Techno the reins. "Both of you, walk with me."

Both boys did as they were told, but the tension between them was so thick Phil felt the hairs on the back of his neck stand up. Techno remained stuck to Phil's side, while Wilbur stayed as far away as he could from them without walking on the nearby wheat. Aether above, Wilbur looked so thin in the warm light of the lanterns that dotted the path. His height made him look so willowy, like a single breeze would knock him over.

"Techno, this is Wilbur. He's one of Nikki's friends from the village," Phil began. "Wilbur, this is my son, Techno."

"Pleased to meet you, Wilbur," Said Techno stiffly. Wilbur remained silent.

"Wilbur's going to help us out around the farm for a little while. I figure it'll help lighten some of the workload. Many hands make easy work."

"It's only for a month." Wilbur kept his eyes on the ground. "I'm not staying long."

If Techno was relieved that Wilbur's presence wasn't permanent, he didn't outwardly show it. "Well, it'll be nice to have some extra help."

That was the extent of the conversation between them, as the moment they reached the barn, Techno disappeared into Percy's stall. Phil beckoned for Wilbur to follow him. "Here," he said, leading the boy to a small doorway. A narrow staircase ran up the side of the wall, leading to the small loft above where Phil stored his hay. "This will be your room. I actually made it for Nikki, in case she ever needed somewhere to go when her parents were gone."

"Did Nikki force you to let me stay with you?" Wilbur asked quietly.

Phil winced as his hip shifted with the weight of going up the stairs. "No. She told me about you, and I made the decision on my own."

Wilbur, unsurprisingly, didn't reply. He let out a single little laugh when they arrived in the loft and saw a stuffed cat placed neatly on the bed, and Phil allowed himself to smile. Nikki. The only point of connection between him and this strange, strange young man. Phil could work with that.

"This is yours," Phil gestured around the small room. "It's not much, but—"

"It's more than I've ever had."

Wilbur sat down on the bed and inspected the stuffed cat. "I shared a room this big with two other boys in the orphanage."

Phil felt his heart break. "Well, this is all yours. If you're going to share it with anyone, it would be Nikki. And I'd have to chaperone if you're having sleepovers with girls up in here."

Wilbur didn't smile, but he snorted at Phil's joke. Good enough.

"The outhouse is outside to the left, and there's a toilet inside the main house if that's more your style. I haven't gotten plumbing into the barn yet. Techno and I are up early, so try not to be late for breakfast. I'll give you a couple days to get used to it all," Phil crouched down in front of Wilbur and smiled. "I'm happy to have you here, Wilbur. My son needs another young man around the house. He could use a friend."

Wilbur stared at him for a good long moment. "Thanks."

"I'll go get you some extra blankets and some dinner, okay? Keep track of how cold it gets in here over the next few nights. There shouldn't be any drafts, but let me know if you get chilly." Phil hoisted himself to his feet, earning him once again a pinch in his hip. He walked to the door and paused in the doorway. "And come into the house whenever you'd like. Don't think you're banished to the barn."

The air seemed to soften around him. Wilbur gave him a small nod.

"Thanks, Phil."

~

"When were you going to inform me that you were hiring a stablehand?"

Phil tucked another blanket into the basket and sighed. "Nikki came to me and asked if I'd take him in. He's an orphan, Techno. He'd have frozen to death if I left him out there."

Techno, from his place upon the couch, mumbled something under his breath. He fiddled with the spoon in his empty bowl of soup. "He better not touch my shit."

“Techno,” Phil warned. “Be nice to him. If I see you causing problems, I won’t be happy with you.”

A container of hot rabbit stew, a half-loaf of bread, and a piece of chocolate for dessert. A fitting first meal for Wilbur. Phil hoped to fatten him up in the coming weeks. Seeing him so emaciated made him anxious.

He’d folded a couple blankets into a large wicker basket, along with a pair of his old nightclothes. Phil would have to go searching for some more clothes for Wilbur in the morning. “I think you and Wilbur could be friends. You’re around the same age, and you need more interaction with people your own age, Techno.”

“I’m fine just as I am, Dad.” Techno said dismissively. “I don’t need friends.”

Teenagers. Gods help him.

~

Wilbur sat on a roll of hay as Phil entered the barn, scrubbing his face and arms with water from a bucket and an old rag. Phil frowned. “We have a bathtub in the house.”

“I’m fine with this,” Wilbur said, shaking his head to dry the hair he’d wet. “I already told you I take cold baths.”

“Well,” Phil placed the wicker basket of blankets beside him. “There is a pair of fresh nightclothes in there for you. I can wash what you’re wearing now if you’d like.”

Wilbur rolled his eyes and grunted, but his expression visibly changed when he saw the food in Phil’s other hand. He rose to his feet as if on instinct and took a step forward, eyes blazing, then snatched the container from Phil’s hands.

“Whoa!” Phil stumbled back. Wilbur blinked, seemingly aware of his sudden aggression. “You sure are hungry.”

Wilbur averted his eyes and deflated, quickly retreating back to the roll of hay he’d been sitting on. The soup had been nearly scalding when Phil had put it in its bowl, but Wilbur dug into it ravenously, tearing the bread in half and stuffing a whole piece in his mouth at once.

“When’s the last time you had a proper meal?” Phil found himself asking.

Wilbur seemed bothered at having to stop eating for a moment in order to answer. “A long time.”

He picked up the square of chocolate and crinkled his nose. “The fuck is this?”

“Chocolate,” Phil replied. “I thought it’d be nice to have a little dessert on your first day here. It’s from the jungle, so don’t expect it too often.”

“It looks like hardened shit.”

Phil couldn’t contain his laughter. “Taste it. Your opinion will change.”

He left Wilbur to his meal and returned inside, enjoying his brief walk in the cool night air. Techno was asleep on the couch, curled in on himself like a cat. His nose twitched in his sleep, and Phil’s heart swelled.

He hadn’t carried Techno to bed in years, but he did it that night. Phil wasn’t sure why he felt so

compelled, but the weight and warmth of his gangly, sleeping son in his arms made a part deep inside him settle. He gently kicked the door of Techno's room open, careful not to create noise, and laid him down in the unmade bed.

"Goodnight, Dad," Techno mumbled. "I love you."

Phil laid a hand in Techno's hair and kissed his forehead. "And I love you. Goodnight."

As Phil laid in bed, he found himself thinking of Wilbur. He hoped he'd fallen asleep by now. He hoped he'd had enough food. He hoped Wilbur was happy.

What an odd young man he was.

Chapter End Notes

WOOOO SMP WAR TODAY BITCHES

i'll be watching it live so feel free to talk abt it in the comments

A short chapter today. Im a wee bit paranoid of this story getting boring while I do the exposition! I promise there will be big boy action and plenty of angst to make y'all suffer soon lol 😊

enjoy bastard boy wimblur!

- Ophelia

Young Men

Chapter Summary

Phil should have been suspicious after two weeks of relative peace.

Chapter Notes

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

The days passed easier than Phil had expected. Techno and Wilbur remained standoffish towards one another, but they were smart enough to bicker out of Phil's earshot. The work Wilbur did was decent, the horses seemed to like him, and the gentle sounds of his guitar at night made great reading ambiance. Wilbur seemed to be coming to life before his eyes. He looked happy.

The same could not be said for Technoblade.

He'd been off since Wilbur arrived. Techno was an odd young man on a good day, but Wilbur seemed to strike a particular nerve with Phil's adopted son. As Wilbur warmed up to Phil (which was surprisingly quick, once he realized Phil wasn't going to kick him out if he made a mistake) and came out of his shell, Techno retreated more and more into himself and his fighting practice. He'd bashed the fighting dummy to pieces by Wilbur's third day there.

Phil had tried to talk to him, but Techno shut up at the mere mention of Wilbur. When Wilbur drifted to Phil's side during a particularly nasty thunderstorm, Techno had basically butted his head between them and stood there for the next half hour with his head tucked under Phil's arm, something that was considerably difficult given how Techno was two or three inches taller than him. Phil remembered how Wilbur had stared, and how Wilbur had stared back, and how the two young men had exchanged so many words without opening their mouths.

It had been a long time since Phil had been a teenager, and they weren't years he longed for much. But he was long past the time in his life when he could speak the silent language of young men, and he'd kill to have been able to know what his son and odd orphan stableboy had said to one another.

In his blissful haze of fatherly affection, Phil didn't notice the tension thickening in the air, the elastic band being pulled from both ends. Fraying.

Ready to snap.

Phil woke to a crash, then the sounds of screaming voices. He rocketed out of bed, grabbing his sword out of instinct, and barrelled outside into the night without his robe. "Techno?" He screamed into the downpour. "Wilbur?"

"Dad!" Techno's voice was strained, angry. "We're in the fields!"

The rain was cold against Phil's neck, coating the grass under his feet in a half-frozen slush. He ran blindly, knocking over several of the extinguished lanterns as he ran around the side of the house, just reaching the barn as a figure stumbled into the stripe of golden light spilling out of the open barn doors.

“Wilbur!” Phil cried. Wilbur’s lip was split, dribbling dark blood against his pale skin. His eyes were dark, blazing with fury and streaming with tears.

“Your son is a fucking maniac!” He spat.

“Don’t let him run away!” Came Techno’s voice from the shadows.

“Wilbur—“ All the oxygen in Phil’s lungs seemed to disappear. Wilbur wiped at his eyes and sobbed. Before Phil could even catch his breath, he’d sprinted off into the night.

“Dad!” Techno ran to him and grabbed him by the shoulders. He was soaked, shivering, covered in blood. His tusks were bared and glinting in the lantern light. “That bastard — he — he fucking stole from us!”

“What do you mean he stole from us?” Phil’s head was spinning.

“I caught him sneaking into the kitchen and stealing food and the gold from the furnace!” Techno ran his hands through his ruined braid. “I knew he was no good. I *knew and you didn’t listen!*”

Phil whirled around and looked into the night. Wilbur had disappeared. “And you attacked him?”

“I got angry!”

“Shit—“ Phil rubbed his face in his hands. “Go saddle Percy up. I gotta go find Wilbur before he gets himself killed!”

Techno’s expression changed to one Phil wasn’t able to place. “Dad, no!”

“The village is two hours away and Wilbur is unarmed and doesn’t even have a lantern. I don’t give a shit if you don’t like him, Technoblade. I am not going to let him die!”

Techno stared at him imploringly. Phil jabbed a finger in the direction of the barn. “NOW!”

By the time he’d run inside and thrown on a pair of actual pants, Techno had Percy by the reins just outside the door. He didn’t look Phil in the eyes as Phil threw himself upon Percy’s back. With a kick to his sides, the chestnut horse carried Phil into the night.

“Wilbur!” Phil could barely see in the rain. “Wilbur! It’s me!”

No response. Phil cursed to himself. Wilbur had a minute’s head start at most. How fast could this kid run?

“Wilbur!” He felt an arrow skid by his cheek. Shit. Phil had forgotten a lantern in his hurry. Percy whinnied nervously, pacing as Phil slowed him to a halt.

“Wilbur! If you can hear me, call out to me! It’s dangerous out here!”

Percy suddenly reared, nearly knocking Phil off. The cold hands of a zombie grappled at his pant leg. Shrieking, Percy began to lurch from side to side in his panic, kicking wildly. “Fuck! Percy, calm down!” Phil pulled back on the reins. He felt one of Percy’s hooves connect with something hard, and heard the sound of clattering bones.

“Phil!”

Wilbur’s voice was faint, but there. Without stopping to think, Phil kicked Percy’s sides and galloped towards the noise. “Wilbur!”

“Phil!”

“Stay where you are!” Phil ordered. A bolt of lightning illuminated the area, followed by the deafening boom of thunder. He spotted a small figure, huddled beneath one of the sparse trees.

“Wilbur!” Phil had never felt relief so sweet. Wilbur stood when he saw Phil approach, reaching out his hands to him.

“Something got my arm!” He said shakily. Phil pulled him up onto Percy’s back, holding him to his chest with one hand. They galloped into the night, back onto the path. Wilbur clung to him desperately. He said something, but Phil couldn’t hear him over the scream of the rain. He cursed the path lanterns for going out so easily. There had to be some sort of enchantment for that.

A lone figure appeared as they crested the hill, holding a lantern in one hand. Techno. He swung it back and forth, beckoning them back onto familiar land.

Phil couldn’t feel his toes. His ears stung with every half-frozen raindrop that hit them. Wilbur, pressed to his chest, was as cold as a corpse. The stench of blood was strong in Phil’s nose.

He brought Percy to a quick halt and maneuvered Wilbur off his back. Techno stared at them both, stunned. “Dad, his arm—“

“Go put Percy in his stall. Leave the saddle on the floor; I’ll put it away in the morning. I want us all in the house, now.”

Wilbur panted against him, a dead weight on Phil’s shoulder. His knees buckled after only a couple steps, and Phil eventually picked him up and carried him in. Techno followed closely behind him.

“What were you two thinking?” Phil set Wilbur down on a kitchen chair and inspected his injured arm. There was a sizeable gash in his bicep. No bone, but he’d lost enough blood to look green. “Both of you, idiots! You nearly got all three of us killed!”

Techno sat down across from Wilbur, arms wrapped tightly around himself. He was crying too, Phil realized.

“Techno,” he said, “Grab me a health potion, a needle, and some thread. This needs stitches.”

“No!” Wilbur grabbed Phil’s wrist, causing a fresh spurt of blood to run down his arm. “Please don’t — I don’t want stitches — I can’t do it —“

Phil placed a hand on the side of Wilbur’s head. “Shhh,” he murmured. “I’m going to give you a health potion, it’s going to help with the pain. You’re going to be fine, Wilbur.”

Techno returned with a needle threaded with thin black string and a vial filled with glittering pink liquid. Phil uncorked the vial and handed it to Wilbur. “Give me your arm. Focus on drinking the potion and I’ll make this quick.”

Wilbur’s breath came in big, shuddering gasps, and he was shaking so violently Phil had to press down on his arm to hold it still. Wilbur’s adrenaline was fading and the shock of losing so much blood would set in quickly. Phil had to move fast.

“On the count of three, I’m going to start. Okay?” Phil readied the needle. “One, two, three—“

Wilbur shrieked as the needle punctured his skin, choking on the health potion bubbling on his

lips. Phil finished a stitch, then two, Wilbur jerking violently every time the needle passed through his skin.

“Drink the potion, Wilbur. It’ll make you feel better.” Phil waited for another tremor to pass and continued his work. Four, five, six. He’d done stitches on far worse injuries of his own, but seeing the poor child in pain made him anxious. “I’m almost done, Wil. Almost done.”

The empty vial clattered to the floor as Wilbur’s hand went limp. He was conscious, but just barely.

“Techno, bandages.” Phil cut the string with his teeth and wrapped a bandage around the wound. Once the cloth was secured, Phil leaned back and took a deep breath. The slice in his cheek stung as he wiped the sweat from his brow. Wilbur collapsed forward, face buried in the crook of his good arm.

“Oh, gods,” Techno whispered.

“Both of you deserve a kick in the ass right now,” Phil said softly. “Violence, Techno? Over some fucking gold pieces? I thought you were better than this.”

Techno stared at his lap, silent.

“If either of you go running off into the night again, I’m not following after you. You could have killed me, or Percy, let alone yourselves. You can fight and scream all you’d like, but we don’t fuck with nature in this house. Ever. I’ve seen one too many people be killed by mobs in my life and I don’t want to have to go looking for your scattered body parts in my wheat fields because one of you decided to take an angsty night walk.”

All the rage and fear of the situation seemed to be hitting Phil at once, now that the dust had settled. He brought his hands down hard on the kitchen table. “I brought you both into my home out of the kindness of my heart and I will not lose either of you to the incredible stupidity of young men! Both of you, get over yourselves before I kick either one of you out on your asses!”

Techno rose abruptly, then walked to the empty fireplace. He sat down with his arms wrapped around his knees.

Wilbur looked at Phil with wide eyes, then at his bandaged arm, still crusted with dried blood. “Could I have a bath?” He asked, voice barely above a whisper.

Phil rose to his feet and began cleaning up. “Depends. Hot or cold?”

Wilbur let out a shaky breath. “I’ll just go to bed.”

“The bathroom is down the hall, across from techno’s room.” Phil walked back into the kitchen, back to both of the boys. “Take as long as you’d like, but don’t lock the door in case someone has to take a piss.”

Wilbur nodded silently, his breathing slow and controlled. “Thank you.”

“And you’re on the couch tonight. Nobody’s going back outside in this weather.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Go on, now. It’s almost four; it’s an early morning for us all.” Phil unfolded and then refolded a towel simply to look busy. “I’m going to try and get a couple hours’ more sleep.”

Phil heard the chair creak as Wilbur rose and walked down the hall, then the sound of water running. Fuck, he'd kill to have a dish to dry. Something to look busy.

A minute passed in silence, then two. Phil unfolded and refolded the towel three times, then opened a drawer and organized some of the already-organized cutlery.

Something pressed against his back. For a piglin, Techno could be incredibly quiet when he wanted to be. Phil paused.

"I'm sorry, Dad."

Phil turned and let Techno fall into his arms, shaking. "I'm so sorry, Dad." Techno pressed his face into the side of Phil's neck, just like he did as a child. "I got so angry. I couldn't control myself."

They stood like that for a while, Techno's head on Phil's shoulder, arms wrapped around one another. Techno cried silently, gasping through sobs as tears rolled down his cheek and soaked the damp material of Phil's shirt.

"Wilbur's not leaving at the end of the month, is he?"

"Not anymore, he's not," Phil said. He'd made the decision far before this moment, but Techno didn't need to know that. "He can't handle himself on his own."

"Would you ever make me leave?"

"If I did, I wouldn't be able to stop you from coming back."

Phil ended up sleeping almost until noon that day, while Wilbur and Techno began the day's chores by themselves. Though the situation was never mentioned again, they began fighting where Phil could hear them, where they were free to tell on each other and Phil could play father and sort the situation out. Phil doubted they'd ever be friends, but they came to accept their roles as brothers as the weeks passed and fall turned into a bitter, icy winter. One blustery morning, Phil looked at them both eating in silence and realized he could barely recognize them. Gods, they were grown men.

Wilbur looked up from the book he was reading. "Techno called me an asshole this morning, Dad. Just thought you ought to know."

Techno, in the middle of braiding his hair, replied, "I did. But he deserved it."

Almost. Almost grown men.

Chapter End Notes

angry phil angry phil angry phil

Y'all thought I wouldn't double down on the dadza angst?? After today's stream??

Y'all thought WRONG welcome to clout whore central

Stay cheesin my dudes

- Ophelia

Half A Nest

Chapter Summary

Techno comes to Phil with surprising news. Wilbur and Phil go hunting.

Chapter Notes

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

“You’re leaving?”

Techno pushed the opened envelope towards Phil. “Dream’s challenging me to a duel in Detlas. It’s worth a lot of money.”

Detlas was the province’s capital city. Last time Phil had been there, it had been nothing but ash, razed to the ground by an undead army. But from what Phil had been told over the years, it had been rebuilt remarkably quickly, and was nothing short of spectacular.

“Detlas is so far away. How would you even get there?”

“Boat,” Techno pointed to the envelope. “I take a horse to the village, then rent another horse to get to the docks in the next town, then take a boat down the river. Dream’s got it all arranged.”

Phil grabbed the ornate envelope in one hand and gave it another once-over. Wilbur peeked over his shoulder. “Shit, man. He’s loaded. Look at how fancy this writing is! I bet he paid someone to do it for him.”

Techno fiddled with the sword in his lap, ears twitching nervously. “Dad, I know it’s a lot to handle but—“

“You’re seventeen!” Said Phil.

“So is Dream!” Wilbur added, earning a smile from Techno.

“You say that like it helps,” Phil rubbed at his temple and sighed. He felt one of Techno’s hands close around his own and squeeze.

“Dad, I’m good at fighting. I’ve beaten every guy that’s challenged me between this town and the docks. I can’t just pass this up.”

Phil folded the envelope and stuck it in his pocket. “I have to think about it. Ask again in a couple days.”

Techno’s mouth pursed. Wilbur let out a strained cough.

*Oh no. “What aren’t you two telling me?”
Said Phil sternly.*

Techno began fiddling with the end of his braid. “Dad, the boat—“

“The boat leaves tomorrow.” Wilbur interrupted.

Phil put his head in his hands. “If you two give me a heart attack while Nikki’s visiting, her parents will be very angry at the both of you.”

The sheep began fussing outside. Wilbur’s head perked. “Speaking of Nikki! I’ll go help her with the lambs. Have fun discussing!”

He grabbed his coat from the peg by the door and disappeared. Phil turned back to Techno, who rested his chin in his hands and frowned. Phil copied him, mimicking his pout until a smile quirked the corner of his son’s mouth.

“You really want to do this?”

“More than anything I’ve ever wanted in my entire life.”

Phil let his expression darken. “And if I said no?”

“Honestly?” Techno sighed. “I’d sneak out with Percy and bribe Wilbur and Nikki into keeping quiet until I’m too far away for you to catch me.”

Phil leaned back in his chair and chuckled. “I like honesty, but you’re not taking Percy. You can take Carl and I’ll pick him up the next—“

Techno rocketed himself over the kitchen table, sending him and Phil crashing to the ground. Aether above, was he always this heavy?

“You’re the best dad in the world!” Techno’s voice was loud in Phil’s ear, shrill with excitement. He was hugging Phil so tightly that Phil felt a couple seams in his shirt tear. “I love you so much!”

Wilbur and Nikki came running through the door, wide-eyed. “What happened?” Wilbur said.

Techno rolled off of Phil and sprinted across the room, wrapping Wilbur and Nikki in a hug with enough force to send all three of them slamming into the wall. “I’m going to Detlas!”

Wilbur whooped, and Nikki exploded into a fit of musical laughter. “I thought he’d said no and you’d gone crazy and attacked him!”

Phil hoisted himself to his feet, rubbing the sore spot on the back of his head. “For a second, so did I!”

Techno pulled back and ran his hands through his hair. “I have to pack. I need my tools and my sword and armour—“ He disappeared down the hall in a blur of pink. “Nikki, Wilbur! Come help me!”

Wilbur, Nikki and Techno spent the rest of the day preparing Techno’s things, talking in muffled, excited voices. It was the best the boys had ever gotten along in the year Wilbur had been with them. Phil eventually moved from his place at the kitchen table to the rocking chair on the porch, having gotten himself a fresh mug of tea. The chair had been a gift from Nikki for Phil’s birthday. She’d hand-embroidered the white cushions with tiny prancing lambs. Phil read the letter over and over, waiting for the weight of the situation to sink in, and watched his tea waft steam into the cool fall air.

“Technoblade, out in Detlas by himself,” Phil murmured aloud. It still didn’t seem real. Techno had never been away from him longer than a couple days. And yet, in mere hours, he’d be on his way alone to one of the biggest cities in the country.

The air smelt of rain and leaves. Phil wondered what Dream's parents thought of him. Did he even have parents? What kind of parents would let a sixteen year old summon and fight a wither alone?

Phil had seen pictures of the young folk hero in the foreign newspapers he'd been given in town. Dream was a wiry, well-muscled young man; he reminded Phil of the soldiers he used to work with. His body language bled confidence. Phil chuckled to himself. Gods, he must be insufferable to be around.

Techno had been right about not knowing what Dream looked like; In every photo, the young man wore the same white porcelain mask, emblazoned with an unsettling smiley face. Phil couldn't understand how he fought with it on. It didn't even have eye holes!

Nikki came darting out the front door, skirts flying and hair bouncing in the wind. "I have to say goodbye to Carl!"

Phil cackled into his tea. "He's being left at your house! You're leaving with Techno tomorrow morning!"

"It doesn't matter! He's still going on an adventure!"

~

Techno left with Nikki at the crack of dawn, the moment the sun was high enough to scare away any lurking mobs. Phil watched them canter away into the distance, anxiety bubbling in his gut. Wilbur walked to his side and leaned his head on Phil's shoulder.

"You wanting to leave me too, now?" Phil chuckled.

"I've only had a dad for a year now. Techno had one for like, ten or something. Greedy bastard," Wilbur breathed in a deep lungful of air. "I'm not ready to leave just yet. I get to have a whole dad to myself for the next little while."

"You also get to have a full chore list to yourself, too."

"I'd take cleaning up sheep poop and grinding bones into dust any day over scrounging for meals and human kindness."

"Note to self," Phil said humorously, "Give Wilbur sheep duty more often for purposes of human kindness."

"Oh, shut it."

They stood in silence for the next little while, looking out onto the land. Phil watched a rabbit skitter through the tall grass.

"Let's go hunting."

Wilbur raised an eyebrow. "You hunt?"

"I didn't always live off of village trades. I could shoot a wild pig with my eyes closed! Ever shoot a crossbow, Wilbur?"

Wilbur shook his head. "I once stole a fish from a fox and ate it."

"Close enough. Come on, I'll show you how to work the crossbow."

~

Phil hadn't been into the forest in a long, long while. It was in the opposite direction to the village, and given how many wolves like to slink around those parts, he'd naturally come to avoid it. But as he trekked through the thick trees, Wilbur following behind him, he realized how much he had missed the familiar sounds and smells. A branch snapped beneath his foot, and the echoing noise spooked a flock of little birds into flying in all directions. Wilbur watched them, spellbound.

"The key to hunting is patience. Sounds cheesy, but it's true." Phil swung the crossbow down from his shoulder and nocked an arrow. "We're lucky out here to have so many wild cows and pigs. The cows don't milk well, so I don't keep them around, but a couple of the bigger hogs in my pen out back are from these local herds."

He flashed a grin in Wilbur's direction. Wilbur looked so out of place and simultaneously completely natural against the forest backdrop, his eyes wide and sparkling.

"There's a cow behind you," He whispered.

So much for patience. Phil nearly whirled around, but stopped himself. "You do it, Wilbur."

Wilbur's blinked. "What?"

Phil held the crossbow out. "Take it, and take it quick. Before it runs away. Just like I showed you on the way here."

Wilbur grabbed the crossbow with an unsure hand. "Dad, I don't—"

"I don't care if you miss. I've missed a target more times than I can count."

Phil took a gentle sidestep, careful to not make any noise. Wilbur brought the crossbow to his eye.

Twang.

"I hit it!" The crossbow clattered to the ground. "I hit it!"

A shrill whine filled the air. "I don't think you killed it, though." Phil darted past his son and down into the small, dried up river bed. The cow Wilbur had shot lay on its side on a pile of brambles, neck stretched at an awkward angle as it struggled to breathe through the arrow in its throat. It was a juvenile, speckled white and brown. Phil heard Wilbur jog up behind him and sucked in a quick breath.

"Wilbur, turn away," said Phil. "I'm going to put it out of its misery."

He felt for the knife at his belt, but the holster was empty. "Shit! I must have dropped my knife back up the hill. Give me a second."

Phil found his knife after a long moment of searching, stuck beneath a tree root. He ran back hastily, hoping to spare Wilbur from the gruesome view, but stopped dead in his tracks at the crest of the hill.

"I did it, Dad."

Wilbur held a sharp rock in his hand. The cow at his feet was eerily motionless.

"Wilbur, you—" Phil stammered, "I could have done it for you. You didn't need to do it."

“I didn’t like watching it in pain.” Wilbur set the rock down and looked at the blood speckled on his sleeves. “It had nothing to live for anymore, so why torture with more seconds to suffer?”

“Oh, Wilbur,” Phil said gently. “I wouldn’t have taken you out here if I knew you were sensitive about this stuff.”

Wilbur chuckled wryly. “You’re too nice to me.”

His expression brightened a little. “Want to teach me how to collect meat from a dead cow to lighten the mood?”

“Sure,” Phil chuckled. “That’ll make me feel like a good person again.”

~

Wilbur fell asleep on the couch that night, his empty bowl of beef stew still resting on his stomach. As Phil came to take it away, Wilbur’s eyes opened slightly.

“Thank you for adopting me,” he murmured. “It’s so nice having someone in this world to trust.”

Phil leaned down and pressed a kiss to the top of Wilbur’s head. “You’re my son and always will be. I knew that from the moment I laid eyes on you.”

Wilbur smiled, but said no more. Phil threw another blanket over him as he retreated to his own bed for the night. The idea of his oddball son catching a chill always worried him.

Phil wondered where Technoblade was. On a boat, probably. Or maybe he was already in Detlas, beginning the biggest journey of his life.

Phil hoped he’d write.

Chapter End Notes

whaddup hoes my brain is running in three languages today and most of what I ate today is plain pasta so oui la universidad es muy amusante

I have a question: do you guys want this fic to remain in the POV of Phil or would you guys like it to switch into the other boys? Leave ur opinions in the comments because I have ideas for both

I’m very excited to begin next chapter. Perhaps... a new character appears??? Find out probably tomorrow because this fic is the only thing keeping Miss Ophie Bloo functioning

happy scootin my friends

-Ophelia

Strange Creature

Chapter Summary

Things begin to go missing in Phil's house.

Chapter Notes

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

Phil's life had always been odd. Aether above, he was a retired soldier with two impulsively-adopted sons and a pocket of poison in his hip that could kill him if he sat down the wrong way. 'Normal' was not a part of Phil's daily vocabulary.

But something was off. More off than usual.

"Did I buy smoked fish yesterday?" Said Phil, rooting through his icebox.

"Uh," came Wilbur's voice from upstairs. "Yeah, I think so. You got it from the lady with all the dogs."

"Wrapped in brown paper?"

"Yeah."

"And you didn't eat it?"

"Not unless I ate it in my sleep!"

Phil sat back on his heels and furrowed his eyebrows. He *never lost things, but this was the third item in a week to disappear under his nose. Either Wilbur was pulling the gaslight of the century on him, which was unlikely, or Phil was going senile a decade or so earlier than he would have liked.*

Wilbur came hopping down the stairs before Phil could ponder his potential brain damage any more. "Something missing?"

"Yes," Phil huffed. "The smoked fish, my leftover bread from yesterday's dinner, and I could have sworn on my mother that we had more than three apples in the house."

Wilbur raised his hands up to his shoulders. "I've got nothing to do with it."

"Didn't think you did. You stopped hoarding food like, three months ago or something." Phil ran a hand through his hair and sighed. "Maybe we've got mice."

Wilbur grimaced. "I don't like rodents."

"I'm fine with them, but not when they steal the good smoked fish I wanted to have for dinner tonight. Now it's personal."

Something still felt off. Phil had had mice before, but they'd always made their presence clear. Food, wrappers included, didn't just disappear into thin air without as much as a crumb left

behind.

“Wilbur, go check around the property and see if you find anything out of place. This could be mice, or raccoons, or maybe a robber come to kill us all in our sleep,” Phil said with a chuckle. “Part of me hopes it’s the robber. The clean-up would be much easier.”

Wilbur turned on his heel and darted up the stairs. “I’m taking the axe!”

Wilbur returned an hour later, having found nothing out of the ordinary. Knowing his sharp-eyed son, Phil didn’t bother going out to look for himself.

Over the next three days, more food went missing, along with Phil’s precious hunting knife. He was at his wits’ end. Wilbur began staying behind while Phil went to town instead of coming with him, too anxious to leave the animals by themselves. Every bump in the night sent Phil patrolling the entire house with a lantern. Gods knew how well Wilbur was sleeping up in the barn, since he began napping frequently during the day. They were irritable, jumpy, and ready to snap.

On the dawn of the fourth day, Phil woke to someone standing over his bed with an axe.

“What the—“ Phil threw himself up against the wall, tangling himself in the blankets. “Wilbur? What the absolute fuck are you—“

“There is something in this fucking house!” Wilbur roared. His teeth were bared, eyes wide. “I fucking saw it!”

“What? What?”

“It was fucking huge and ran on all fours and it tried to attack me!”

The axe glinted in the moonlight. Phil saw a shadow run past his window.

“Holy shit!” Wilbur shrieked. “It’s back!”

He tore out of Phil’s bedroom, his footsteps loud and erratic. Phil heard the front door open and slam.

“Wilbur!” He screaming, nearly tripping over his own feet as he threw himself into a pair of pants. He really should just sleep in clothes. “Wilbur!”

“Come quickly! It’s fucking fast!”

Wilbur came sprinting from the barn doors as Phil arrived outside with his sword in hand. Phil had never seen him look so scared. “It’s got your knife!”

“Is it a person?” Phil asked.

“I don’t know! It’s on all fucking fours!”

Something shot through the shadows behind the barn, making Wilbur scream. Phil grabbed the axe from his son’s shaking hands and ran after it, his bare feet stinging on the gravel. The figure skittered into the wheat fields, crushing stalks as it went. It was surprisingly lithe on all fours, long-limbed and thin.

“Who the fuck are you?” Phil spat. The figure let out a shrill, barking laugh, unmistakably human. Then it rose onto two feet, taller than Phil, and took off towards the portal. “Don’t you dare!”

The figure disappeared into the purple haze, cackling like a hyena. Phil ran back inside, where he found Wilbur by the window, wide-eyed.

“Get me my gold armour, Will. I’m getting my knife back if I have to kill this thing for it!”

~

Phil hadn’t worn a full set of armour in quite some time, and the weight of gold on his chest and arms was simultaneously nostalgic and cumbersome. He barrelled through the portal, startling a group of nearby piglins. They all seemed on edge and particularly aggressive, indicative of the thief’s presence. Without armour, they couldn’t have gone far.

Phil heard a ghastr shriek from the other side of the valley. The figure sprinted out from behind a nearby spike of netherrack, narrowly avoiding a fireball. Phil could see them better in the nether’s light, but he still couldn’t make out their face from how absolutely filthy it was. Seriously, did this person roll in mud?

Distracted by the ghastr, the thief strayed too close to a group of piglins scratching away at the netherrack for gold and caught their attention. The biggest of them, a hulking piglin brute, took a swipe at them with their makeshift sword, and Phil’s hunting knife was too short to do any sort of worthwhile blocking. The thief ducked, lost their balance, and came careening in Phil’s direction as if they didn’t see him.

“Shit!” He heard them yell. Phil caught them in both arms, forced them to their knees, and slammed his gold helmet on to their head.

The brawny piglin who been chasing them came stomping up, snarling, a sizeable sword hanging at their side. Blowing foul-smelling breath in Phil’s face, the piglin leaned close and sniffed them both.

“We’re friends, big boy,” Phil panted, pressing a knee to the small of the thief’s back. He cocked his head at the gold helmet on their head. “See that gold, buddy? We’re friends. Friendly. Good guys.”

The piglin brute huffed, and wandered away after a couple tense moments. Phil felt the thief try to rise to their feet and tightened the chokehold he had on their neck. “Not a chance,” he hissed. “You’ve caused me hell for three straight days. You need to explain yourself.”

“Go fuck yourself, old man!” The thief smashed their head into Phil’s nose, blinding him for a moment with pain. When the stars in his eyes faded, the thief had disappeared into the portal.

“Fuck this kid!” Phil screamed at the bewildered piglins that surrounded him. “Seriously!”

As he jumped back through the portal, nearly manic with fury, he noticed Wilbur on the ground, pinning a flailing figure to the grass.

“Dad! I got them!”

Phil could have kissed his son in that moment. He ran to him, shedding his armour as he went, and took the thief by the arm as Wilbur rolled off them. “Wilbur, go grab rope from the barn. We can’t have this kid running away again.”

“This is kidnapping!” The thief spat. “I will have you guys arrested!”

“Good luck with that, bud.” Phil grabbed the rope from Wilbur’s hands and bound the thief’s hands together. “Wilbur, help me get inside. The last thing we need right now is a wandering

zombie making our lives any harder.”

The thief kicked and screamed and writhed the whole way inside, even as their energy began to deplete and their movements became more desperate. Phil sat the thief down at the kitchen table. “Stay,” he ordered. Scowling, the thief obliged.

Wilbur lit the lanterns and the fireplace, washing the living room in a gentle orange glow. Phil realized how startlingly young the thief was. He couldn’t have been more than twelve or thirteen. Built like Wilbur, long and willowy, the young man — boy, really — sat with his shoulders hunched forward, staring at Phil with thunderous eyes. He was covered in dirt, his clothes ragged and old.

“How long have you been in my house?” Said Phil.

The boy didn’t answer.

“What’s your name?”

“Tommy,” the boy replied sharply. “The rest of my shit is none of your business.”

“It wouldn’t be,” said Phil, “If you hadn’t been slinking around for the past week or so eating my food and sending me and my son into a panic.”

That made the boy sneer. “You guys were running around yourselves like mice. It was hilarious.”

Wilbur scoffed. “You are a little psychopath.”

“Thanks for the compliment, but you two need to let me go,” the boy struggled in his bonds. “I won’t come back here again, but I will not be put in another orphanage. Those places will kill me.”

“And being a thieving street rat won’t? I nearly killed you back there!” Phil exclaimed.

“I survive much better on the street than in those places. People take me seriously. There are no rules and I can do what I want.”

Phil sat down across from Tommy and studied him up and down. “Where do you come from?”

“Can you untie me? I want to cross my arms so I can look more menacing.”

“Absolutely not. Answer my question.”

“Detlas,” Tommy scowled. “For such a rich city, the orphanages there fucking suck.”

Phil let a smile cross his face. “My oldest son is in Detlas, did you know? His name is Technoblade.”

Tommy’s eyes widened to the size of dinner plates. “Technoblade? Like the actual Technoblade? The one who won the duel with Dream?”

“That’s the one!” Phil said. Tommy stamped the floor, grinning widely. Wilbur and Phil shared a quick glance.

“This is so fucking cool! Can I see his room? Do you have pictures of him?”

Phil raised a hand as Tommy stood up and began looking around in excitement. “Slow down there, kid. You still stole from me and physically assaulted my son. I won’t just let you off the hook because you think my other son is cool.”

Tommy pouted. "I just wanted food. And your other son is possibly the coolest person on this planet. This one, like you, fucking sucks."

Wilbur laughed darkly. "Shut it, twerp."

"You stole my hunting knife!" Phil silenced Wilbur with a wave of his hand. "I got that like, fifteen years ago. You know how much I panicked when I lost it?"

"I only stole it to get more food when I moved on to the next house. I wasn't going to rob you guys or murder you guys or anything." Tommy shifted uncomfortably. "Then I got caught by that guy Wilbur over there and I get really excited and aggressive when I get caught, okay? I'm used to scaring people."

Phil reached forward and picked a leaf out of Tommy's matted hair. "The crawling on all fours and being covered in dirt thing part of your brand or something?"

Tommy coughed. "Yeah," he said dejectedly. "I was hoping someone would think I was some cryptic creature or something and I'd become a local legend. It never happened, and dirt smells really bad."

"Well," Phil sighed, raising himself to his feet. "We'll give you a bath and a change of clothes, but you have to go back to the village. I can't just keep you here. What if someone's looking for you?"

"Nobody's looking for me! Nobody wants me," Tommy scoffed. He leaned his head back in his chair and moaned. "Please don't send me back there. I can't stand it in those places! They're just reminders that nobody could give a damn whether I'm alive or dead."

Phil felt his posture soften and let out a long breath. Wilbur grabbed him by the arm and dragged him outside. "You are not actually considering—"

"He's a kid, Wilbur! I've seen those orphanages. They're fucking awful."

"Yeah, I know. I spent the first fourteen years of my life being bounced between them like I was a lit fire charge. But this kid's a maniac! He tried to attack me!"

"You tried to attack Techno when you got here!" Phil cried.

Wilbur opened his mouth to reply, then closed it with a defeated grunt. "He threw the first punch, actually. But I guess I get what you mean."

"He'll be the last one, I promise. Any other orphan children that come wreaking havoc on my property will be sent away immediately. Three of you bastards is more than enough."

Wilbur raised an eyebrow. "Promise? I refuse to share your attention with any more people. This Tommy kid sounds like he'll be a menace until you smooth him out."

"If he tries to murder us in our sleep, I promise I'll send him away." Phil grinned hopefully. "Come on, Wilbur. Let's give the kid a chance to redeem himself."

Wilbur pointed a stern finger at Phil's chest. "Tell him you're hiring him as a stablehand until he works off his debt. I will not have him getting too comfortable."

"Deal. Fine. Great."

Tommy looked considerably more upset when they returned inside. "Where's your bathroom? I

have to piss. Badly.”

Phil sat back down and rested his chin on his hands. “Before that, I have a deal to make with you. In exchange for food, clothes, and place to sleep, you will work on the farm with us until we’ve decided your debts are paid. Then you’re free to go and cause hell wherever you’d like.”

Tommy’s eyes brightened. “Are you serious? You’ll let me stay?”

“Only temporarily, and only if you behave yourself,” Wilbur cut in sternly. “Steal any of my shit and you will be out on your bony ass, mark my words.”

Tommy nodded enthusiastically. “Fine. Fine. I promise. Just please let me go piss before I go on this chair. I haven’t drank fresh water in several years so my piss is like literal acid. I definitely have a disease or something.”

“Gross!” Phil clapped his hands. “I’ll show you the bathroom. Wilbur, start fixing up dinner. I’ll come help you once I have the dirtball in a bath.”

“If he tries to stab you, scream!” Wilbur replied.

“Noted!”

~

Phil stood outside the door as Tommy got the bath running, guiding him on which knobs to turn. According to Tommy himself, he hadn’t had a bath for as long as he could remember.

*“The orphanages had showers,” Tommy explained with distaste in his voice, “And once I got out onto the streets, I washed myself in rivers and in the rain.”
He paused for a moment. “It’s so weird to feel hot water again.”*

“Wilbur said the same thing when I let him have a bath in here when he showed up,” said Phil. “He’s like you, you know. An orphanage kid.”

“Do you just adopt every kid that stumbles onto your property or something?”

Phil chuckled to himself. “I guess so, but I don’t really mean to. I just can’t turn kids away when they need a good home.”

The water splashed as Tommy got in, and Phil heard him audibly sigh. “Holy shit. You could drown me in this and I think I’d thank you.”

“Soap’s on the rack in there. Use as much water as you’d like; the heater’s got fire aspect on it, so it could run for centuries.”

“Gods, this place is so fucking cool. I should have stolen from you guys earlier.”

Phil walked back out into the kitchen, feeling oddly warmed. Wilbur turned to him, frying eggs in a pan. “I think we’re so used to waking up in the middle of the night that we forgot this is technically breakfast, not dinner.” He said, pursing his lips to hide his giggles. Phil chuckled through his nose and wiped at his eyes. “Can’t you orphans do dramatic shit at like, four or something? I’m old and need my sleep.”

Tommy emerged an hour and a half later, looking a bit like a wet poodle with his wavy hair plastered to his head. Wilbur’s pyjamas fit him decently well, though they only accentuated how thin he was.

“Do I get to sleep in Technoblade’s room?” He asked.

*“Temporarily, until I find somewhere else to put you. You may be sharing the loft with Wilbur.”
Phil replied over his morning tea.*

Both boys made sounds of disgust. Phil rolled his eyes. “Stop complaining. I should make both of you start on morning chores for all of this nonsense.”

“It’s the morning?” Tommy exclaimed, flabbergasted. “I thought it was like, midnight or something.”

Phil pointed to the clock. “It’s five thirty in the morning. But since I’m nice, I’ll let you two take the morning off.”

“Hell yeah. I’m going to bed. Goodnight.” Wilbur finished scooping his eggs onto his plate and disappeared out the back door. Tommy looked back at Phil awkwardly, then smiled with a mouth of crooked white teeth.

“Thank you. I really mean it. I’ll work hard here.”

Phil sipped at his tea, hoping it would wake him. He needed to get to bed earlier. “Don’t make me regret this. I don’t want to have to send you back.”

Tommy rocked on the balls of his feet. He looked like he wanted to say something, but kept his mouth shut.

“Something you want to say?”

Tommy inhaled quickly. “Please don’t send me away if I fuck up or make a mistake. I’ll be good, I swear. I can’t go back to those orphanages.”

Phil smiled softly. “I’ll be kind, Tommy. That’s all I can promise. Go get a good sleep.”

Tommy nodded, relieved, and turned on his heel.

“And no touching any of Techno’s stuff!”

Phil heard Tommy curse, and he laughed to himself. He watched the rising sun create patterns on his floor, sipping at his tea.

He could live like this.

Chapter End Notes

TOMMY TIME BITCHES

YOU WANTED GREMLIN BOY??? HERE HE FUCKING IS

fuck he’s so fun to write I love that little shithead

I have three weeks of university left until Christmas break! thank god,, I am fuckign dying over here,, only clout keeps me alive

I've decided to keep this fic mostly in Phil's perspective, but I may add a chap or two in one of the boys' perspectives to spice things up ;~)

- Ophelia

A Full Home

Chapter Summary

Tommy settles into farm life, and Phil gets some exciting news.

Chapter Notes

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

Phil realized immediately that there was more to Tommy than what first met the eye.

Though their first meeting with him had been nothing short of chaotic, Tommy had settled in to farm life decently quickly. He continued to steal scraps of food, which Phil would then find tucked under his bed, but never touched any of the potentially valuable materials Phil would frequently leave out on the table. He loved the wild cows that would wander into the field, convincing Phil to eventually build an extra pasture and keep one, and certainly didn't mind getting his hands dirty in the garden.

Phil saw a lot of similarities between Tommy and Wilbur. In fact, Tommy was a near carbon-copy of his middle son. Despite how much he talked about Technoblade (which was, admittedly, constant), Phil could tell the young boy had a desire for Wilbur's approval. During the morning chores, Tommy remained plastered to Wilbur's side, chattering away about anything. He'd jump at any chance to prove his physical strength, and if Wilbur did so much as offhandedly chuckle at one of his many jokes he looked like he'd just been told he was king of the whole country.

Wilbur, however, held Tommy at arms' length. He didn't go out of his way to be mean and dutifully allowed Tommy to follow him around like a puppy, but drew back if he found Tommy getting too attached from him. He spent most of his time locked up in his room, strumming away at his guitar, leaving Phil to care for Tommy alone.

It had been a while since Phil felt like he had a kid in the house. Techno was a grown man now, and Wilbur had always been serious for his age. Tommy was bright-eyed and energetic and *young and Phil hadn't had to wrangle a little boy since Techno was small.*

"Where'd you learn about Techno?" Asked Phil over dinner.

Tommy swallowed his bite of fish so quickly Phil saw him choke for a moment. "Literally every—he paused for a moment to cough— "Every kid in Detlas knows about Dream and Technoblade. That duel was like the biggest deal of the year. Techno won, but he split the prize money with Dream. Because he's just that cool."

Phil smiled. "Thank you. I raised him."

"He's literally unbeatable. People think it's because his dad was the one who killed Herobrine, like, fifteen years ago or—"

Tommy stopped abruptly, mouth agape. Phil watched the gears turn in his head. Then he threw himself onto the table and nearly spat his mouthful of food onto Phil's lap.

"That's you! That's you! You killed Herobrine!"

Phil placed a hand on Tommy's shoulder and guided him off the table. "I thought you knew! I never really hid it. You've been here for a month and you didn't figure it out?"

"I didn't realize! I thought people meant his piglin dad or something. And you don't necessarily look like how I'd imagine the guy who killed Herobrine."

"Am I not grizzled enough?" Phil chuckled.

"No! I thought you'd be, I don't know, all beefy and scarred and locked up in a castle somewhere with all your riches."

"I'd love more riches," Phil brought his plate back to the kitchen. "But I don't need anymore scars."

"This family is so cool," Tommy collapsed back into his chair and ran his fingers through his hair. "I'm going to be just like you guys."

"Techno said that once," Phil ignored the stab in his heart at the familiar words. "Now look where he is."

Tommy's face lit up. "If I do something awesome, will you let me stay forever?"

You couldn't leave if you tried.

"I'll think about it." Phil brought his plate into the kitchen. "For now, focus on cleaning the shit out of the pastures. Do that awesomely, and I'll consider giving you extra dessert."

Tommy saluted to him proudly. "Sir, yes sir!"

Phil left a square of chocolate outside his room that night. Just to motivate him.

~

"Techno's coming back!"

Wilbur hopped the fence and ran to Phil's side, bumping a couple sheep as he went. He shoved the envelope into Phil's hands.

"What?" Tommy called from across the yard.

Wilbur stamped his feet in excitement. "He's coming home! And he's got stuff for us from Detlas!"

Phil grinned. He hadn't seen his son in over a year, and Techno hadn't sent any pictures. "When's he expecting to be picked up from the village?"

"He says he doesn't need to be picked up," Wilbur replied, reading over the envelope again. "Says he has a new way of traveling down the river. Apparently it's—" Wilbur raised his hands in quotes — "a lot funkier than a normal boat', what ever that means. He says he'll be home sometime tomorrow."

"Interesting. Look out for any gold-plated boats in the river, boys!"

"This is so exciting!" Tommy climbed up on the fence of the cow pasture, pressing his forehead to the cow's snout. "I'm going to meet Technoblade, Henry. It's going to be awesome."

"Did you ever get around to telling Techno about Tommy?" Wilbur asked Phil quietly.

Phil shook his head and chuckled. "He's a little hard to explain in a single letter."

Wilbur let out a big sigh. "You're sure right about that."

Phil quickly brushed the odd statement off. Tommy was a lot to handle, certainly for a teenager who'd become his idol overnight. Phil decided he'd give Wilbur some space. Being sixteen was hard. It had been one of the worst years of Phil's life. You couldn't pay him all the gold in the world to be teenager again.

*Though Techno never sent pictures from Detlas, he did send books. Unable to sleep one night, Phil sat in bed by the light of his sweet-smelling oil lamp and read. There weren't many books to buy in any of the nearby villages, so Phil was elated to have another story to add to his small collection. *The Mystery Behind End Cities And Their Inhabitants* was an incredible read, given how Phil would never dare step into an End portal in his life. The grainy pictures of floating purple cities were enough for him, thank you very much. He'd kill to have an elytra, though. They were bloody expensive and near impossible to find, but the thought of flying sent icy chills of excitement up Phil's spine.*

He heard Tommy fall quite loudly out of bed, then stagger to his door and open it.

"Tommy?" He called. "You alright there, bud?"

Tommy seemed to freeze. A couple moments later, there was a gentle knock at his door.

"Come on in," Phil said. "I promise I don't sleep naked."

Tommy chuckled as he opened the door, but the sound was flat. Phil noticed he looked a little tussled. "Bad dream?"

Tommy nodded silently, giving him a tight, toothless smile. "I'm just getting some water."

He chuckled again, squeezing his eyes shut. Phil set his book down on the bedside table. "Are you okay?"

Tommy swallowed and sucked in a breath through his nose. "Yeah," he whispered. "I am chill. Totally fine."

A laugh seemed to force its way out of his throat, and Tommy leaned a hand on Phil's doorframe. Red began to bloom on his cheeks and around his eyes. "I just—" a tiny sob broke free, more of a teary chuckle than anything. Phil opened his arms and Tommy ran into them immediately, crying and laughing all at once.

"I don't like nightmares," Tommy murmured into Phil's shoulder. "They happened all the time when I was on the street."

"I get them too, little man," Phil rubbed small circles into Tommy's back. "I've had them for years."

Tommy pulled back and wiped at his eyes. "At least you got yours from doing cool shit. I got nightmares just because my life is so awful my dreams need to remind me of it."

Techno never had nightmares, but Will had woken him up once or twice in the night before. Sometimes, Phil would find him curled up against his bedframe, tucked between his bed and the wall. Most of the time, he'd walk into the kitchen in the morning and ask for a hug. He'd say nothing of the dream, and Phil wouldn't ask. The hug was all he needed.

“Nightmares are nightmares, no matter what they’re from. Want to sleep in here for the night?”

“No, that’s weird. You’re not my dad,” Tommy sniffed. “I just wanna stay in here and talk for a while. It smells nice.”

“That’s my oil lamp. I got it from a wandering trader. Best purchase I ever made.” Phil patted the bed beside him. “Come on, then. Make yourself comfy.”

Tommy darted around the other side of the bed and slipped beneath the covers. He was silent for a moment, looking Phil up and down. “What’s that scar from?”

Phil had forgotten he’d only been wearing a tank top and shorts to bed. Tommy poked at a long, jagged line on Phil’s bicep. “That one,” he said.

“That one?” Phil had to think for a moment to remember. “Wolf attack. Got nicked by a single tooth, but those bastards can cut through flesh like butter. Never got it stitched up because I was nineteen and stupid.”

“Awesome. And that one?” Tommy pointed to the constellation of tiny slash marks on his shoulder.

“That, my friend, is from a blaze attack. Their fireballs are full of shrapnel. Hurt like a bitch. They had to drug me to take them out because I kept hitting the poor nurses.”

“I’ve got a scar on my leg,” Tommy kicked his leg out from under the blanket and pointed at a long, thin line going up his calf, “I tripped on a branch while running in the dark and it sliced me open like a fish.”

“Awesome,” Phil replied humorously.

“Not as awesome as wolves and blaze attacks.”

“It’s a close second. Look — this one,” Phil twisted and gestured to a fading line snaking down his back, “Is the work of a sword. Herobrine’s men were absolute brutes to fight hand-to-hand. We had to use range attacks to fight them because those bastards could land a mean punch.”

The horrible memories of Phil’s battle days seemed far, even as he described every single scar from the slice on his neck from a failed fatal blow to the nicks on his knuckles from getting too close to baby polar bears. Tommy listened to every one, his blue eyes shining.

There was only one scar he did not mention.

Eight teeth marks, etched into his thigh with burning poison that melted his flesh and burned his lungs. It left a piece of poison inside him. Any moment, it could burst. And Phil would never be fast enough to save himself.

As he leaned back over to grab his book from the table, Phil’s hip clicked.

“I’m going to keep reading; you’re welcome to stay and snooze in here or go back to your own bed whenever you’d like.”

Tommy gave him a nod. “I’m going to leave soon. I’m just very comfy here.”

He stayed there until morning, curled around a pillow, hair ruffled in every direction.

“Sleep well?” Wilbur asked as Phil came out for his morning tea.

Phil stretched his arms and cracked his neck. “Nope. Tommy snores like a ghaſt with a paralyzed vocal cord.”

Tommy didn't quite understand what had them laughing ſo hard over breakfast, but very much enjoyed watching Wilbur ſpew milk out of his noſe onto his toast. Phil ſimply giggled into his tea until the ſun was high in the ſky.

Chapter End Notes

HeLLo CLouT WHOREs HOW ARE YA

a gentler chapter today with a tender moment between adopted father and adopted gremlin child.

(I've got ſome plans for tomorrow's heheh)

Wilbur's a little angſty teen poor lad and Tommy is juſt :)

Hope y'all haven't miſſed the blade too much! He'll be back :)

drink your water and take your meds

- Ophelia

The (Un)Prodigal Son Returns

Chapter Summary

Phil awaits Technoblade's arrival, but a rainstorm brings some unexpected guests.

Chapter Notes

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

"I hate rain," Tommy muttered, gazing wistfully out the window. A bolt of lightning snaked across the sky.

"Rain's good for the crops, which means more money in our pockets," Phil said, pressing the lid down onto a jar of carrots. "A day or two inside won't kill us. There's plenty of hay in the stables for the animals to last without us.

"But I'm bored! And there's no way Technoblade is coming home in this weather." Tommy collapsed onto the couch, groaning. "I hate this. I need something to do."

"You can go clean Techno's room," Phil said with a wink. "Now that he's coming back, I'll have to find somewhere else to put you."

Wilbur gave him a glare. He'd been adamant on not having Tommy share the loft with him, but Phil had no other choice. Techno's room was far too small to fit two beds. Phil gave him an apologetic frown. "You may need to stay with Wilbur for the next little while."

Wilbur rolled his eyes and buried his face in his hands, but Tommy brightened. "Really? I get to share a room with Wilbur?"

"Temporarily. All three of you need a little space of your own, so I'll reorganize one of my storage rooms or something."

Tommy turned to Wilbur and grinned. "We're going to be roommates."

"Fuck off," Wilbur snapped.

Phil felt a rush of irritation. A tender irritation, but irritation nonetheless. "Alright, snarklepuss. You go clean Techno's room then. I think you need some space."

Wilbur scowled and stomped off to Techno's room, slamming the door behind him. Phil sighed to himself, then looked at the deflated Tommy and said, "Don't mind Wilbur. He's territorial. It has nothing to do with you."

Tommy smiled, but the echoes of hurt on his face remained. He chewed on his cheek and tucked his legs up under him. "He really doesn't like me, does he?"

"He likes you, but he hasn't figured out how to fit you in his neat little world yet. He will eventually, Tommy."

Phil returned to his canning, working through a particularly tough jar of beetroots, when Tommy

spoke again in a small voice.

“You like me, right?”

“I wouldn’t have let you fall asleep in my bed and snore my ear off last night if I wasn’t at least a little fond of you.”

That made Tommy flush. “I don’t snore.”

“Should I assume the sounds coming out of you were farts, then? In that case, I’m taking you to the village doctor immediately.” Phil fought to keep his face serious, but watching Tommy explode into shrill laughter cracked his resolve. It felt so nice to laugh. He’d barely laughed in the years since the war; it always felt odd to indulge in his own joy after what he’d done. But he allowed himself the privilege of sharing his sons’ happiness. Tommy, a constant source of crackling energy, laughed more than anyone Phil had ever met. He laughed for nearly every emotion, as if his body became so overwhelmed he had to expel the overflowing energy through laughing. Phil wouldn’t be surprised if he laughed in his sleep.

Phil looked back out the window and frowned at the continual downpour. He’d been looking forward to seeing Techno again, and was anxious to see how he’d fare with a house of three boys. One more day of waiting wouldn’t hurt, but Phil had never been the most patient of men.

“I’m going to go check on Wilbur and make sure he’s not sulking,” Phil said, rising to his feet. “Take a little nap on the couch if you’d like. There’s not much else to do.”

Tommy gave him a silent thumbs up, turning his head towards the window to watch the storm. Phil walked to Techno’s room and knocked gently on the door. “It’s Phil, Wilbur. Can I come in?”

Silence. Phil took that as a yes.

Wilbur laid on Techno’s bed, facing away from the door. Tommy’s items sat in a bag near the door, and Techno’s belongings looked neat and tidy. Phil sat down on Techno’s bed and placed a hand on Wilbur’s side. “Techno’s room looks really nice. Thank you.”

Wilbur shifted until his body was curled around Phil, his head by Phil’s thigh. His eyes were red and swollen.

“What’s wrong, Will?” Phil ran a hand through Wilbur’s brown curls. “You’ve been off for the last little while.”

“I don’t want him here.”

Wilbur’s voice came barely above a whisper. He inhaled shakily. “I don’t want to share my room, I don’t want to have another brother, I don’t want him following me around everywhere. I want things to go back to the way they were.”

Phil had expected an answer along those lines, but he still felt a pang of disappointment. “Tommy’s not leaving, Wilbur. He needs us. You’ll grow to love him in the same way you grew to love Techno.”

“I don’t want him,” Wilbur pressed his face into the side of Phil’s thigh and sobbed. “He can’t just come into our house and mess everything up before I got the chance to enjoy it.”

Phil began to rub circles into Wilbur’s scalp as he cried, thinking of what to say next. “All will be well. You’re my one and only Wilbur, just as much my son as the other two raggedy creatures I’ve

collected over the years.”

Wilbur sniffed. “I don’t know why Tommy wants my attention so much. I thought he liked Techno.”

“He does, but Techno’s not here. You’re the only buddy he’s got right now, and he looks up to you.”

“Why? I haven’t done anything.”

“You’re cool to him. He wants your approval. I remember feeling like that towards people in my life.”

“I didn’t feel like that with Techno.”

“Tommy’s younger than you were when you came here. He’s lonely.” Phil squeezed Wilbur’s shoulder. “Try to be a role model for him if you can’t be a friend. I won’t dump him on you to handle alone. You need your space and I’ll make sure you have a place to call your own.”

Someone knocked at the front door. “Tommy,” Phil yelled. “Could you get that for me?”

“Yeah!” Tommy exclaimed.

Phil wrapped Wilbur in a tight hug. “You stay here until you feel better, okay? I’m going to go see who’s at the door.”

Phil heard the door open.

“Maybe it’s Techno?” Wilbur said hopefully. They listened for Tommy’s excited screeching, but heard nothing.

“Perhaps it’s a traveller that got caught in the rain. I’ll go see.”

Phil walked out into the hall and immediately noticed something was wrong. The living room was dark; one of Phil’s oil lamps lay in pieces on the floor. “Tommy?” A pit formed in his stomach. “Tommy? Are you there?”

“What happened?” Came Wilbur’s voice from behind him.

“Stay,” Phil ordered. He took a couple tentative steps forward. His sword lay on the table. “Tommy?”

Thunder boomed, ringing in Phil’s ears. He made a running start for his sword, but felt something hard hit the side of his head with enough force to knock him to the ground. Head spinning, Phil looked up to see three dark figures looming in his doorway, staring down at him with icy blue eyes.

“What the—“ a crossbow was pointed at him, close enough for the arrow to slice the end of Phil’s nose. The main intruder, wearing an insignia of a grey, long-nosed face on its breast, grunted ominously.

“You can have anything you want,” Phil said quietly, raising his hands to his head. “Just leave me and my sons alone.”

He spotted Tommy, motionless at their feet, and felt his breath catch in his throat. There hadn’t been a pillager patrol in his province in years. After the invention of sentient iron golems, the pillagers remained mostly in their large towers, occasionally kidnapping wandering villagers that

strayed too close to their territory.

The patrol leader leaned forward and grabbed Phil by the cuff of his shirt, forcing him to stand. Motioning with its crossbow, it forced Phil to walk backwards until he stood pressed against the nearby wall. It then grunted to one of its companions, who threw Tommy's motionless body over its shoulder, and directed the other one down the hall.

"Leave my sons alone," Phil hissed. The patrol leader stared him down over the bridge of a long nose, then unloaded its crossbow only inches from Phil's head in a single, remorseless motion. Phil felt blood trickle down his cheek from the nick in his ear.

The pillager who'd gone down the hall returned a moment later, empty-handed and murmuring in confusion. Phil saw a slight movement in the doorway, though he didn't dare look and possibly catch the intruders' attention. The patrol leader grunted aggressively, pushing its partner out of the way and stomping down the hall. Phil heard several doors slam open. Slowly, he let his eyes drift to the side.

A bolt of lightning illuminated the doorway, shadowing the outline of someone crouched just outside. Phil's hands were growing clammy. Turning his head ever so slightly, he mouthed three simple words:

GO GET HELP

The figure disappeared without a sound, and Phil closed his eyes to fight back the tears that threatened to fall. Wilbur was safe for the time being. He just had to protect Tommy now. Tommy, who was motionless over a pillager's shoulder. Tommy, who stared at him with wide, rolled-back eyes.

Oh, no.

Tommy jerked violently in the pillager's arms, causing it to drop him in surprise. He crumpled to the floor, a low moan escaping his lips. Phil watched in horror as Tommy's body contorted unnaturally, his muscles seizing in a sort of horrible frenzied dance that made him spit and cough and foam at the mouth like a dying animal. Exclaiming loudly in their language, the two pillagers stumbled back, reaching for their arrows.

"Tommy!" Phil screamed.

Tommy was up on his feet in an instant, crouching on all fours with saliva running down his chin. A pillager fired an arrow, but its aim was sloppy in its shock and Tommy dodged it easily. Shrieking at the top of his lungs, Tommy grabbed Phil's jar of beetroots and jumped at the pillager, bringing the jar down hard against its skull.

Two more arrows whizzed past Phil's face as the patrol leader came sprinting out from down the hall, crossbow in hand. Phil lunged for his sword, narrowly missing another hail of arrows as the three pillagers tried to regroup themselves in the chaos. Tommy seemed to be everywhere at once, ripping the crossbows from their hands and throwing every nearby object at them, all the while bellowing like a dying ghast. The rain poured in from the open door, blinding them with raindrops. The wind was a shrill whine in Phil's ears. He swung his sword half-blind, but felt himself be pulled back the collar of his shirt.

Light exploded before Phil's eyes and consumed everything.

~

Phil felt hands on his sides, shaking him. A voice broke through the ringing in his ears, too warbled to be understood. Everything was blurry. Phil's eyes hurt.

Someone was standing over him, holding a large, pointed object out. Lighting flashed, and the object seemed to glow with the energy. The two surviving pillagers cowered in the living room, holding the scorched corpse of their leader.

"Get out," a deep voice said. "And don't ever come back."

Phil closed his eyes again, but when he opened them, the pillagers were gone. The door was closed, the living room had been cleaned, and the lamps were re-lit. Phil lay stretched out on the floor where he'd fallen, a pillow under his head.

He almost didn't recognize Technoblade sitting at his side.

"Hey, Dad. Glad I showed up when I did."

Phil ignored the buzzing in his head and basically threw himself into his son's arms. He tried to find words, but they caught in his throat and all that came out of him was a shuddering gasp. Techno had grown. Not just in height, but in stature as well. His beautiful hair had been cut short, just below his chin, and a golden crown rested forgotten by his side. Phil felt the rippling muscle of his arms as Techno hugged him tightly, burying his nose in Phil's shoulder. "Oh gods, Dad. I thought I lost you there for a second."

Phil pulled back and whirled around, one hand gripping Techno's red cape like a lifeline. "Tommy?" He choked. But Tommy was there, sitting by Wilbur's side nearby with a blanket wrapped around his shoulders. He was warm and alive.

Phil felt tears fall. Tommy ran into his arms, shaking. "Dad, I—"

"What was that?" Phil felt Tommy's face, arms, shoulders. Looking for wounds, for puncture marks, for poison burns. "What happened to you?"

"I faked it, Dad. I caught them by surprise." Tommy whispered. "It was my specialty back at the orphanage."

A sob ripped itself from Phil's throat, and he covered his mouth with his hand to stifle the pitiful noise. Tommy was okay. They all were okay. "Wilbur! You found Techno?"

"He found me, actually," Wilbur laughed tearfully. "He burst out of the river like some sort of water god and rode back home with me."

Techno rose and picked something off the table. "Look, Dad. Told you this was much funkier than a boat."

Aether above. Technoblade had a trident.

"Sorry for scorching the floor," Techno said sheepishly. "I had to think fast."

Phil touched it gingerly, feeling the cool material hum with energy beneath his fingers. "Riptide," he murmured.

"Found it myself. Dream and I conquered an old ocean temple together. He got the loot, I got the trident. Water-travelling is so much better than boating. This thing fucking rocks." Techno twirled the trident in his hands. "I've never killed something with it before, so that's a first."

Tommy rose from Phil's arms and stuck his hand out, giggling nervously with tears still running down his face. "Hi, I'm Tommy. I work for your dad. You're so fucking cool."

Techno blinked, then realization set in. "Another one? Really?"

Phil sniffed. "I can't help myself, okay?"

Techno gave Tommy a once-over and chuckled warmly. "Hello, Tommy. I'm Technoblade. Welcome to the family."

They all slept in Phil's room that night, tucked up under spare blankets. Techno sat with Phil on his bed until the early hours of the morning, telling him everything he'd seen and done. Wilbur slept leaned up against the wall, Tommy's back pressed up against his leg. One of his hands rested on Tommy's shoulder. A promise to protect.

"I've got something for you, Dad," Techno said. "I want to wait for tomorrow, though. I think we've had enough excitement for the day."

"Agreed."

Phil looked over at his oldest son, half-expecting to see the teenager that had left his house a year and a half before. But the teenager was gone, replaced by a grown man who looked over his two adopted brothers with a gentle warmth. Though they'd been talking for hours at that point, Phil still barely recognized him.

Maybe it was the hair. Phil still preferred it long.

Chapter End Notes

THE BLAAAAAADE

i love his stupid little trident you go funky pig man

still can't believe you guys actually made me google what a Chekhov's Gun is because y'all kept mentioning it last chapter stop making me do actual research I just wanna write abt found family block men because im isolated and don't have many friends so i desperately crave to mean so much to someone that they consider me adopted family :.)

alright moment of vulnerability over back to my Clout Whore Agenda

all I'll say concerning Phil's Chekhov's Gun is...

;))

-Ophelia

Sky's The Limit

Chapter Summary

Phil receives a gift.

Chapter Notes

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

Phil's head felt strange when he woke, as though someone had stuffed spider webs into his ears. He pushed himself up onto his elbows, watching the dark shadows of the world around him slide into familiarity. Wilbur was beside him, slumped up against the wall, his hair covering his face. Phil pushed it out of the way. Wilbur's face was silver — no, his lips were silver, his skin grey and his cheeks sunken in, mouth hanging open. Phil pushed him lightly. He rolled like a doll and fell to the ground. *He's falling so far that's going to hurt— He landed on his back in the grass with a dull thud and Phil winced. He turned around and Tommy was standing there in the battle field, foam dribbling from his mouth.*

“Did you kill him?” He asked.

“No!” Phil replied, kneeling beside Wilbur. “Help me get him back inside and into bed.”

“He's already in bed.”

Phil blinked. Wilbur lay before him, wrapped in his blankets. “I think he's dead.”

“Yeah.”

“Where's Techno?”

“In your arms.”

Phil looked down. Techno was curled in his arms. He looked so small.

“You're rotting away, Dad.”

There were black flames rolling up his legs. He couldn't feel them.

“It's been years. The poison should be dormant.”

“You know that's not true.”

“Am I dying?”

“Yeah.”

Phil woke up in a cold sweat. He barely made it to the sink before vomiting.

Though the sun had not yet risen, Phil found Techno awake at the dinner table, polishing something in a large wooden box. “You alright, Dad?” He said as Phil practically collapsed into the chair across from him, holding his head in his hands.

"I'm fine," Phil lied. "Just had a bit of a rough night."

"You were only asleep for like, an hour," Techno replied with a frown. He pressed his hand against Phil's forehead. "You're clammy. Are you sure you aren't sick?"

"You really are grown," Phil smiled. "Taking care of your poor old dad, now."

"Stop avoiding my question. Have you been taking care of yourself?"

"Yes, Techno. I have." Phil hoisted himself to his feet and walked to the kitchen to prepare his tea. "I get sick sometimes too. Dads aren't bulletproof."

Techno's face remained serious, eyebrows furrowed. "It's because of that bite you got, isn't it?"

Phil nearly dropped his mug. There was a painfully long moment of silence. "How do you know about that?"

Techno pursed his lips. "I met with some of your fellow veterans in Detlas. They're worried about you. You're the only one left of their patrol whose bite hasn't burst."

Fighting to keep his face calm, Phil brought the kettle down from the cupboard and filled it with water. His hands were shaking.

"You didn't tell me you were dying, Dad."

"Keep your voice down!" Phil hissed. "I am not dying. It's dormant."

"Wither bites don't go dormant. You know that."

Gods, Phil should have stayed in bed. Nausea began to creep up his throat in sticky tendrils. "I've been fine for years."

"Do you know how many veterans died after the war from—" Techno raised his hands in quotes—"Supposedly 'dormant' wither bites? Most of them, Dad. The lucky ones only lost a leg or an arm, and that was only because they got to a medic within minutes."

"You've been here less than a day, Techno. Ask Wilbur or Tommy; I'm fine." He pointed a stern finger at his son, who instinctively shrank. "And don't you dare mention this to them. You weren't even meant to know. This is my business and I want to keep it that way."

"What would have happened if you'd keeled over? They wouldn't have known to get you milk or a health potion! You'd have died in minutes!"

"I can handle myself!" Phil found himself white-knuckling the kettle's handle, spilling water on himself. "I'm not going to let you three live in paranoia of a stupid wither bite!"

"I'd rather live in paranoia than live without a dad!"

Techno's voice broke, and Phil's aggression melted away. Leaving the kettle abandoned, he walked to his son and wrapped him in a hug.

"I'm sorry for not telling you," Phil murmured. "I thought you were too young to understand."

Techno's hands bunched in the fabric of Phil's shirt. "If I see you get any sicker, I'm telling Wilbur and Tommy. You can't stop me."

“Fine,” Phil replied.

“And you’d be wrong if you think I’m going anywhere until this bite does something. I won’t risk it.”

“Techno—“

Techno stood, looming tall above Phil. “I’m a grown man now. It’s time for me to protect you. Go make your tea; I need to piss.”

“Don’t wake the boys,” Phil’s voice came out weaker than he would have liked.

“I’m a master at pissing silently, don’t worry,” Techno said with a smile. Then he left, leaving Phil alone in his living room with the smell of metal polish in his nose and the taste of guilt in his mouth.

Metal polish?

Techno had closed the lid of the wooden box that sat on the table at some point during their conversation, and Phil found himself staring at it in silence, spellbound and yet unwilling to touch it, even as Techno walked up behind him and placed his head on Phil’s shoulder.

“Know what it is yet?”

“I have an idea,” Phil said breathlessly.

“Open it, then.”

“I—“ Phil chuckled nervously, “I’m scared to even touch it! This box looks expensive.”

“Open it, old man. This thing wasn’t exactly easy to acquire.”

Phil grabbed the box in both hands and slowly flipped the lid open, holding his breath. “Aether above, Techno.”

A gleaming silver elytra lay nestled amongst scraps of cloth, smelling of polish. Phil pressed his fingers against the cold metal, feeling each feather-like plate shift beneath them.

“How much did this cost you?” Phil asked.

“Nothing; Dream and I took a little vacation to an ender city together,” Techno replied. “He’s a good friend of mine now. Really cool guy.”

“You went to an ender city?” Phil couldn’t decide whether he was more excited or horrified.

Techno picked the box up and laid it on the floor, allowing for Phil to lift the elytra into his arms. It was lighter than he’d expected. “There’s only one of these per city. They keep them in these big floating boats with dragon heads on the front. It’s awesome.” Techno put a hand on Phil’s shoulder. “You like it?”

“I don’t even know what to say, Techno,” Phil fought back happy tears. Did he always cry this much?

“What about ‘You’re the best son ever and you’ll always be my favourite?’ That would work.”

“Well, it would be a lie,” Tommy said loudly, standing in the doorway with his arms stretched

above him. "I'm the favourite child because I'm the newest, so Phil hasn't gotten a chance to get bored of me yet."

"Are all of my children morning people now?" Phil chuckled. "And I don't have a favourite child. I hate you all equally."

Tommy grinned widely at Techno. "He just won't admit that I'm the favourite."

Phil swung the elytra over his shoulders, belting together the set of straps that stretched across his chest. As if by magic, the great metal wings came to life, bending to the force of Phil's thoughts.

"Whoa!" Tommy exclaimed.

Phil curled the wings around himself, running his hands up and down the cool surface. He could feel them tugging on his muscles as though they were a natural extension of himself.

"Some pretty complicated enchanting went into those," Techno stepped out of the way as Phil stretched a wing out until it brushed the ceiling.

"Can I try?" Tommy said excitedly.

"Not until you're eighteen. Kids aren't allowed to fly." Techno replied. Tommy scowled.

"Get Wilbur up," Phil said. "I'm taking these for a run."

~

The night air was chilly, but the goosebumps on Phil's bare arms felt nice. He batted the wings a couple times, allowing his back muscles to adjust to the unfamiliar movement. His sons sat a couple feet away, tending a small fire. Wilbur, still half-asleep, looked quite confused.

"Get a running start and jump," Techno instructed, holding out his arms to demonstrate. "The wings will catch on the wind and lift you."

Phil should have worn better sandals, but he was too excited to go in and change. He unfurled his wings, feeling them catch on the gentle wind and pull him back before he grounded himself. He jogged forward, but stopped after a few steps to slow his excited breathing. Tommy yelled encouragements from his place at Wilbur's side.

"Come on, Dad! I know you can do it." Techno bounced up and down in anticipation. "Don't think. Just fly."

Phil took a deep breath and trained his eyes on the sliver of orange sun that had begun to crest the horizon. Then he ran. His wings opened, finding their place amongst the wind with ease, and Phil felt his body leave the ground. Techno whooped and punched the air with his fist.

Phil was flying. Actually flying. As though on instinct, Phil flapped the wings again, arcing higher into the sky until he soared above his own rooftop. He laughed into the roaring wind until his head was light. He dipped lower, lower, until the ground came rushing up to meet him and Phil took a rolling dive to the ground.

"Dad!" Techno ran to his side. Phil brushed dirt and grass from his hair, shaking with the adrenaline. He hadn't stopped laughing.

"Did you see that?" Phil cried. "I flew, boys! I flew!"

“You have to be more careful than that when you land, Dad!” Techno spat onto his sleeve and started rubbing at a line of mud drying onto Phil’s cheek. “You can’t just go crashing to the ground whenever you’d like.”

Phil breathed in a lungful of clean morning air. He had his wings now. They already seemed like a part of him, more special than any tool or piece of armour. He drew Techno in for a hug. “Thank you, Techno. This is the best gift you could have ever gotten me.”

The wings curled in around his son as well, enclosing them in a small space warmed by love. “Please be safe, Dad,” Techno whispered. “We can’t lose you.”

“Don’t worry about me,” Phil whispered back. “I’m not planning on kicking the bucket anytime soon. You three still need to earn your inheritance.”

The sound of Techno’s laughter stayed in Phil’s head for hours thereafter.

~

Three days later, Phil fell and discovered he could no longer rise.

Tommy had been the one to find him crumpled at the bottom of the staircase, awake but unable to move. The panic in his eyes had been more agonizing than the horrible tingling that had spread down one of Phil’s legs. Techno carried him back up the stairs, face hardened, and had basically forced Wilbur and Tommy outside while he locked himself and Phil into Phil’s room.

“I fucking jinxed it.”

“No, don’t start with this now.” Phil forced himself to sit up on his bed. “This has nothing to do with you.”

“Over ten years of dormancy and now the bastard decides to act up?”

“We should be thanking our lucky stars right now that it hasn’t burst!” Phil said in frustration. “The fact that I’m still breathing right now is a luxury!”

The fear in his chest seemed to be eating away at him. He felt ants running up and down the bones of his legs, biting away at the nerves with ever minuscule movement. He leaned back, feeling sweat on the back of his neck.

“I should have just taken you to the village when I found out.” Techno began to pace the room, rubbing at his eyes. “I shouldn’t have just let you talk me into a false sense of security and then let you smash yourself into the ground a couple thousand times over the next few days!”

“I am a grown man, Technoblade! I do not need you to parent me.”

“I’m trying to keep you alive so you can parent me and the other two children you have! Remember them?” Techno pulled at his hair. “You kept a potentially lethal injury secret for over ten years. You let me live the first twelve years of my life believing that you were going to be around long enough for it to not hurt as much when you finally died!”

He whirled around to face Phil, his lips pulled back in fury. “What if you had died when I was little? Or when Wilbur got here? You would have just left us alone after promising to protect us? Can you even understand how fucking traumatizing that would have been?”

“Stop that!” Phil ordered. “I won’t listen to you try to guilt-trip me because I tried to let you have

a stress-free childhood. Kill me then, if that's such a crime!"

"You are a ticking time-bomb!" Techno was screaming so loudly he was spitting. "That fucking thing could burst at any moment and we'd have minutes to save your life. Minutes, Dad!"

Fear stoked the flames of rage burning behind Phil's eyes. Techno's shoulders straightened, and he looked at Phil with an expression that sent ice shooting down his spine.

"You could have avoided all of what you're about to put Wilbur and Tommy through if you'd just been brave enough to face your fucking past instead of ignoring it!"

"I could have avoided all of this if I'd never joined that stupid fucking war and walked into that stupid fucking fortress in the first place!" Phil threw himself forward, ignoring the pain that burst in his leg. "But you know why I did, Technoblade? Because if I didn't, Herobrine would have eradicated this whole fucking country! I killed that sick bastard alone so my future children and I could have a change at a normal life! And if you think I'm a coward for doing that, then you can go back to that hellscape you came from and scrounge for gold the rest of your ungrateful fucking life!"

Techno stepped forward as if he were about to attack Phil, but stopped himself. His eyes thinned to white slits. "Fine. I'll go back to my hellscape and take my brothers with me so they don't have to watch you rot before their eyes. You're free to die as you'd like."

He slammed the door behind him with a resonating crash. Phil lay back on the pillow, curled into the wall, and sobbed until he had no more tears to cry.

Chapter End Notes

hee hee hee I rly lulled you clowns into a false sense of security *insert meme of smug cat surrounded by knives*

CHEKHOV'S GUN LOCKED AND LOADED FUCKERS

i woke up today and chose violence and you all have to suffer for it. Don't worry, your heartbreak will pay off. I'm a merciful clout whore ;)

On a more serious note, I read every single comment I get and every one makes me grin like a silly little idiot. I hope this fic will keep making you guys happy. ♥

- Ophelia

Chapter Summary

end of part one.

Chapter Notes

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

Phil didn't sleep at all that night. Whatever was happening with his wither bite, it did not seem to be calming down any time soon. After several hours of writhing and jumping between being chilled and overheating, Phil was too exhausted to do any more than lay motionless in his bed and wait for help or death — whichever one came first.

He never called out to his sons, and they never came to him. After Techno had left, the house had been silent. Phil guessed his sons were either up in Wilbur's room, or Techno had been serious about leaving with them.

But he wouldn't just leave Phil to die, right?

Right?

In the hours of being alone with his thoughts, the awful reality of what Phil had said to his son had sunk in, and Phil had never hated himself more. Though he wanted so desperately to be helped, for his sons to come back and take him to a medic or simply sit with him as he died, he couldn't hold it against Techno for taking them away. For sparing them the trauma of having their father ripped from their hands.

Phil wondered where Tommy was now. Would Wilbur step up and become his protector, or would Techno do it for him? Would Tommy simply run off again and start anew as a starving street urchin?

He closed his eyes and leaned back against his pillow, now moist with sweat and tears. He definitely didn't want to die, but he definitely deserved it.

When Phil opened his eyes again, Techno was standing in his doorway, trident in hand.

"Techno?" Phil's voice came out as a dry wheeze. He reached for him, desperate to feel him one last time.

"Get up, Dad," Techno said quietly. "I'm taking you to someone who can help you."

It took a moment for Phil's fuzzy brain to wrap around his son's words. He wasn't leaving him to die. He'd come back.

"Techno, I—"

Techno shushed him gently. "I know you're sorry. Try and get up."

Phil motioned weakly towards his legs. "Can't walk, Techno. I can't move."

Techno's breath hitched. He slid himself under Phil's arm, letting him pull himself into a sitting position. "Up we go," Techno grunted, and lifted Phil to his feet. Phil's leg buckled immediately, sending sharp needles of pain down his thigh.

"Dream!" Techno screamed. "I need some help in here!"

"Dream?" Phil said weakly. Techno didn't answer.

A young man in green slipped into the room, wordless, and positioned himself under Phil's other arm. Together, they basically carried him outside. Phil's head began to spin, plunging him in and out of a grainy darkness that made his eyelids ache. "Stay with me, Dad," Techno muttered over and over. "You'll hate yourself forever if you die now."

They were walking him towards the portal. Phil's body seized, sending him to the ground. "No — not there," he moaned, grappling at Techno's shirt and cape. "I'm sorry, Techno. Please. Don't make me—"

Dream placed his hands on Phil's shoulders. His mask was askew, revealing a single green eye and the tight line of his mouth. He had a scar across his nose. "You're going to be alright, Phil," he said, his voice oddly grounding. "We've got to travel a long way, and it's quickest to do it though the nether. You'll be safe, Phil. I promise."

He looked up at Technoblade. "Get the cart ready and tell George to prepare a regen potion. He's delirious."

Techno nodded and sprinted into the portal's purple haze. Phil reached for him. He couldn't lose him. Not again. "Technoblade!" He shrieked.

Dream's face appeared before him. "If you start to have trouble breathing, you tell me right away, alright?"

"What's happening to me?" Phil sobbed.

Dream hoisted him up from beneath the armpits and began leading him closer to the portal. Phil could smell the acrid stench of the nether, and every fibre of his being was screaming to stay away. But Dream was stronger than he was, and Phil was in too much pain to fight back.

"I think your bite is leaking. It hasn't burst, so only little bits of poison are getting into your blood, but it's not looking good."

They entered the portal, and Phil felt his skin be set aflame. He fell, screaming. The world warped around him. Someone poured a potion down his throat. There were hands all over him, pulling, pushing him. He felt himself be lifted into a cart. "Go!" Dream's voice commanded. The screeching of the rails filled Phil's head and gave way to a horrific, unending scream over which Phil could hear nothing except the rapid pounding of his own heart.

"Techno!" He cried, though he could not hear his own voice. "Wilbur! Tommy!"

All of his worst fears began to burst to life before his eyes. Thousands of Tommys came careening down from above, each landing in a heap of shattered bones and bent elytra metal at his feet. Nikki appeared every few steps, beaten and bloodied and begging for his help. Wilbur was always a few feet ahead of him, crying out for Phil to come back, but he'd vanish the moment Phil's hands got close enough to touch him. Hundreds of black skeletons followed at Phil's heels, leaving scorch marks down the back of his calves as their fingers seared his flesh away. Techno was nowhere to be found. He'd abandoned him. Left him to broil to death in a metal minecart that quickly heated

up beneath Phil's fingers. The cart began to melt around him, trapping him in the metal. His leg burned worse than Phil had ever felt before. Molten metal filled his mouth, his lungs. He couldn't breathe. He couldn't breathe. He couldn't breathe. He couldn't breathe. He couldn't breathe. he couldn't breathe he couldn't breathe he couldn't breathe he couldn't breathe he couldn't breathe he couldn't breathe

breathe

breathe.

Breathe.

"Breathe! Breathe, Phil! Come on!"

A great weight pushed down on his chest. Herobrine's mangled face leaned down close, dripping blood and shattered teeth onto Phil's face. "You again."

Phil gasped for air but found none. Herobrine was impossibly heavy, cracking Phil's bones beneath his weight. "You did this to me."

The edges of Herobrine's form were fading into the mist around them. His form was changing, writhing into an unexplainable mass. Then it was Techno's white eyes that stared down at him.

"You abandoned us!" He spat. "You monster!"

"I didn't! I won't!" Phil said, clawing at nothing.

"You're a heartless monster! Only fighting to fulfill your own sick goals!"

Though Techno's twisted features, Phil realized he couldn't recognize him. He couldn't remember how long his hair was, or what he'd been wearing. Techno was shifting before his eyes, bending to the power of his own fury.

The fear that hit Phil's body went so deep he couldn't even feel it at first. It sunk into the emptiness inside him, and Phil felt nothing. Then it hit all at once, hard enough to send his body into overdrive. Techno's figure dissolved into the darkness, but the weight on his chest remained. It grew heavier, heavier, heavier. Phil felt his ribs crack. His lungs had no room to expand. Fire crawled up his throat, burning away at his teeth and cheeks and tongue until Phil's mouth was a gaping hole of soot and ash and poison gods help him oh gods help him he can't breathe he can't breathe he can't breathe

he can't breathe

he can't breathe.

Chapter End Notes

ooga booga hehe

End of part one. Don't worry; this story will continue on this fic! Think of this as

another arc beginning. Dream smp time >:)

There will be some,, changes,, and certain things from the smp canon will be changed as it's too difficult to keep it 100% canon. I'm happy with the changes I've made, and perhaps another chapter may be posted today if y'all behave yourselves
characters coming!

new

This story has made me very happy. I love reading y'all's comments 😊. You guys give me so many ideas and I hope I can make everybody happy. Stay cheesin!

-Ophelia

Tommy

Chapter Summary

beginning of part two.

Tommy adjusts to life in Manburg

Chapter Notes

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

Tommy knew one thing for certain: whatever this new place was, he didn't like it.

Dream lived in an enclosed village, populated mostly by his fellow celebrities and friends. The houses were decently nice, but the black walls that surrounded them made Tommy feel as if he were in prison.

He just wanted his family back.

After getting them all to Manburg and making sure Phil would survive, Techno had disappeared. He left in the middle of the night with nothing except his armour and his trident. Nobody had seen him leave, and nobody knew where he'd gone. He hadn't even left a note.

"Tommy?"

Tommy pulled his knees closer to his chest. Wilbur sat down on the bed with him, resting a hand on Tommy's shoulder. "They're going to keep Dad asleep for the next little while. To give his body time to heal."

Hearing that his father would survive his leaking wither bite had been bittersweet news. Tommy had been relieved beyond belief, but the memories of Phil screaming and clawing at the rotted flesh on his leg had been etched into Tommy's mind and played on a loop in the days that followed. The fact that he wouldn't be able to even speak to him for however long put a lump in Tommy's throat.

"I didn't even get to have a dad for that long," Tommy whispered. "I'll kill him if he dies."

Wilbur sighed. "Come here, little man." He pulled Tommy up into a sitting position and wrapped him in his arms. "I've only liked you for a little while now, but if something with Dad or Techno goes haywire, I'll stay with you. I promise."

Tommy chuckled, and settled deeper into Wilbur's arms. It was strange having a brother, but he liked it. Wilbur made him feel safe. "Thanks, big man."

"Things won't be so bad here," Wilbur said. "It's pretty nice, and you get to be around cool kids like Dream."

"They don't want anything to do with me," Tommy frowned. "And they scare me."

"The president's son is your age. He's a kid in a suit with little ram horns." Wilbur brought his fingers up to his temples and mimicked curly horns. "You should go and meet him."

The 'president' of the small village was a big-wig businessman who'd invested a lot of money into Dream's duels and other adventures. In order to keep him under his thumb, Schlatt let him and his friends live rent-free on his property in exchange for a hefty cut of his earnings. He did have a son, a ward if Tommy remembered correctly, but Tommy barely saw him. He would bet he was a dick just like his dad. "I don't want to. He's probably an asshole."

"Then you two would get along well," Wilbur ruffled his hair. "Don't isolate yourself. We've got to make Dad proud."

"Okay."

Wilbur went to go tend to the couple animals they'd brought with them, including Tommy's beloved cow, and Tommy forced himself out of bed. There were always chores to do around the village, so Tommy had enough of an easy time finding something to distract himself with. He found himself in the bakery, watching Nikki punch away at a ball of dough until her face was red.

"I think I will kill myself if Schlatt asks for more pastries," Nikki muttered. "He's already made me work overtime twice just to fit his demands."

"How much does he pay you?" Said Tommy.

"Not enough," Nikki replied with a huff. "But he knows I want to stay with you guys, so I can't ask for a raise or he'll just fire me. The oil, please."

Tommy passed her the bottle of oil. "Thank you for that, by the way. I know it helps Wilbur to have someone he knows here."

Nikki smiled, and Tommy immediately felt safe with her. There were few people in his life that had been kind to him from the moment he met them.

"Your family means a lot to me, Tommy. And I'll always be there for you guys."

Someone cleared their throat from behind them. "Uh, Nikki?"

A young man stood in the doorway, looking timid and awkward. Two small horns poked out of his head of brown curls. "My dad wants updates on the pastries. He has friends over and needs them soon."

Nikki's mouth pursed in annoyance. "There's a batch in the oven, Tubbo, and I'm working on more dough. Tell him it'll be a couple minutes more."

Tubbo rocked on the balls of his feet. "I'll wait outside until they're ready. I don't want to go back to him empty-handed."

Tommy and Nikki shared a glance as he turned around and disappeared. "Tubbo is a nice young man," Nikki said quietly. "I don't know how he survives having a dad like that."

"Want me to help with those pastries?" Tommy asked.

Nikki let out a sigh of relief. "I was hoping you'd ask. Take a look in the oven for me, please."

Tommy darted over to the oven, happy to be useful, and inspected the baking pastries. "They look delicious!"

"Thank you!" Nikki laughed. "Do they look cooked, though?"

“They look brown! Does that mean cooked?”

“Yes. Take them out. The gloves are right beside you.”

Tommy had never seen cooler-looking pastries in his life. Nikki had curled and cut them into interesting shapes and stuck little pieces of fruit into the middles. Had the pastries not been going to possibly the scariest guy in the universe, Tommy probably would have swiped one. “These look so cool!”

Nikki giggled. “You and Will are so alike. Have you never seen a pastry before?”

“I grew up on the streets! Of course I didn’t see pastries!”

Nikki had him set the hot pans down on the counter, then fetch several large plates from the cupboard. “You’ll need to help Tubbo with these. I made a lot.”

“I don’t know him!” Tommy grimaced uncomfortably. “I don’t trust guys in suits. They’re usually dicks.”

“Tubbo’s a sweetheart, and you two could use each other as friends. I think he could mellow you out.”

Tommy crossed his arms. “I don’t need to be mellowed out!”

“Then,” Nikki passed him two plates of hot pastries wrapped in brown paper, “You can corrupt Tubbo and make him just as crazy as you. Off you go! Schlatt likes them hot.”

Tommy darted out the door balancing both plates on his shoulders. Tubbo gave him wide eyes.

“I have to bring these to your dad with you,” Tommy said. An awkward silence followed.

“Okay,” Tubbo replied.

Neither of them said a word as they walked. Tubbo kept his eyes on the ground, walking with his shoulders hunched forward. Tommy wondered if he had any other clothing other than suits. He’d never worn a tie before, but he guessed that they probably weren’t comfortable.

The president’s house was large and white, the kind of house Tommy would always steal from in his years on the streets. “You live in this place?” Tommy asked.

Tubbo nodded, as if the fact that he lived in a literal mansion was nothing out of the ordinary.

“Yeah. My dad doesn’t let me go into most of the rooms, though.”

“That’s still cool. Is your room big?”

“Uh, I think so. Generally speaking.”

“Awesome.”

They remained in silence until they reached the mansion doors. “I should take these in alone,” said Tubbo, grabbing both plates. “My dad doesn’t like me taking people inside.”

He lingered in the doorway, biting his lip. Tommy fiddled with his fingers. “Want to be my friend?”

Tubbo’s face lit up. “Yeah! Yeah. I’ve never had a friend before. Cool. I’ll see you tomorrow.”

Bye.”

He waved as best he could with the two massive plates over his shoulders and let the door close, flashing Tommy a grin as long as he could. Tommy found him very odd, but that was somehow comforting. He liked odd.

Wilbur sat at their tiny kitchen table when Tommy returned, mulling over a stack of papers. “What are those?” Tommy asked.

“Terms and conditions to live in this village,” Wilbur replied flatly. “Schlatt sent them just now. Fucking dick. I really don’t trust that guy.”

Kicking off his shoes, Tommy sat down across from Wilbur and looked over the papers. He’d learned to read when he was small, but he’d been out of practice for nearly five years, so many of the words were unrecognizable to him. “I met Tubbo today,” Tommy said, absentmindedly crinkling the corners of the page he held, “I think we’re best friends now.”

Wilbur chuckled and rolled his eyes. “I knew you two would click. Be gentle with him, okay? That kid looks like staying up one hour past his bedtime would leave him sick for days.”

“I’m going to teach him to run on all fours and be just like me.” Tommy stuck his tongue out at his brother, who returned the rude gesture back to him. “In return, he’ll teach me how to grow horns.”

“Good luck with that,” Wilbur said. His smile seemed to fade. “Want to go visit Dad?”

Tommy felt his muscles tense. They’d started doing that instinctively at any mention of his father. “Sure. It’ll be nice to see him.”

That wasn’t an outright lie, but it wasn’t the truth either. Being inside Manburg’s small medic centre made Tommy anxious. It felt too cramped, too clean. On his first night in Manburg, he’d cried so hard over his father that he’d had to be carried out of there, kicking and screaming. But Tommy loved his father, and seeing him breathe and ever so slowly regain his colour gave him the slightest amount of peace.

George, one of Dream’s closest allies and the resident healer, was nice enough to bring in a couple chairs for Wilbur and Tommy to sit in. Tommy didn’t necessarily like the wiry young man, given how curt and standoffish he was, but he was respectful enough to Tommy and mostly ignored them when they came in. His goggles were freaky, though. Did all of Dream’s friends have masks of some sort?

“Hey, Dad.” Wilbur pulled his chair up close to Phil’s bed and rested his head on the soft blankets. “Tommy and Wilbur here. Doing well.”

Wilbur liked to talk aloud to their father. He believed Phil could hear them, and that them talking would make him happy. Tommy wasn’t sure he believed it, but he’d be lying if he said that listening to his brother talk to their father about what they’d done that day didn’t comfort him.

Phil looked nearly peaceful. His arms rested at his sides, hands cleaned of all the blood and bile they’d been covered with when he arrived. George had mended the cuts, healed the scratches, bandaged the scrapes.

Had it not been for the emptiness where his leg used to be, Phil would have nearly looked normal.

His elytra hung by the windows, the wings lifeless without Phil’s thoughts and heartbeat to reawaken them. Tommy stared at them often, dreaming of slipping them on and being gone, flying

away from all the stress and heartbreak he'd ever experienced.

Tommy picked up one of Phil's limp hands and squeezed it. His skin was cool and callused. "Hi, Dad. Favourite child here. I hope you wake up soon." He paused. "I miss you."

Nikki joined them eventually, weary with exhaustion, and curled up on the floor on Wilbur's coat as he played endless melodies on his guitar. George came in and out, saying little but always watching. Phil remained asleep, his breaths slow and even and deep.

Tommy watched the sunset fall and wondered what his newfound friend Tubbo was doing.

Chapter End Notes

HI EVERYONE ITS TOMMY TIME

Phil's perspective will return, but I'm making good use of his coma time to allow for the boys to take center stage. I hope you guys enjoyed the way I set Manburg up. I can't wait to brainstorm all the characters' roles!! If you've got ideas, don't hesitate to comment below!

also no I couldn't kill Phil im too much of a little pissbaby

-Ophelia

Exiled

Chapter Summary

Wilbur and Tommy encounter a problem with the village president.

Chapter Notes

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

A week passed, then two, then three. The cold rains of fall began. Tubbo helped them build an stable for Henry so he wouldn't get cold, and Nikki kept them fed with the bread she brought over every day.

Tommy had adjusted to life in this odd village. It no longer excited him to see Dream walking down the streets with his friends, nor did it scare him to see Schlatt yelling at Tubbo from within their fenced-off backyard. His new best friend had assured him time and time again that his father was just tough, and that he did love him, but it bothered Tommy to no end how Tubbo never fought back against his father's scathing words. He'd have kicked Phil's ass if he'd ever called him useless or a failure.

Techno had only sent them a single letter in the weeks he'd been gone, assuring them he was safe but that he couldn't return. Wilbur had locked himself in the bathroom for nearly an hour when it had arrived, ordering Tommy to go to Nikki's and help her with baking. His disposition had darkened ever since. He was still kind to Tommy, a little overprotective if anything, but his growing distaste for Schlatt and his cronies was evident to everyone.

Phil continued to sleep away in the medic centre, the stump of his leg slowly healing. The enchanted golden apple that had saved his life hadn't been enough to completely nullify the effects of the wither poison, so George had opted to keep him asleep to spare him the agony of the slow process of healing. "His body won't ever heal as quickly as it did before," he'd said. "Even bumps and scrapes will stick around."

Tubbo picked a dried berry out of his tart and threw it to the nearby birds. His horns seemed to be glowing in the sunset. "If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go?"

"Llevigar," Tommy replied immediately. "Anywhere in the province of Gavel, really. I'd take an elytra and just fly over the ocean."

Tubbo thought about his answer for a moment. "I'd go to the Nivla forest and bring some Nivlan bees back here. I want my own apiary and Nivlan honeycomb is super lucrative for selling."

"The Nivlan forest?" Tommy replied, flabbergasted. "That's, like, a couple days' ride from here at most! That's where you'd go if you could go anywhere in the world?"

"I'm not a traveller!" Tubbo chuckled. "I went there with my parents when I was like, five or something and it was awesome. It's one of my only memories of them."

Tommy felt the familiar ache of sadness in his chest. "I have no memories of my parents. They gave me up when I was a baby."

“At least you have Phil, now. I have Schlatt. They’re both sort-of-dads.”

“Phil is my dad,” Tommy corrected. “Schlatt’s just an asshole. I don’t even know why you call him your dad.”

Tubbo shrugged. “I’d rather call him my dad than have nobody to call my dad at all. Plus, he is nice to me sometimes. When I do what he tells me to do, he says he’s proud of me.”

Tommy frowned and took a bite of his tart. It tasted of honey. “When my dad wakes up, I’m going to ask him to adopt you. He’s a good dad. I’ve only had a dad for like, a month or two now, but I know that he’s one of the best. I stole from him and Wilbur tried to murder me with an axe and he still adopted me.”

Tubbo gave him a small smile. “I don’t think it works like that. Schlatt’s still my dad, whether you like it or not.”

Tommy reached up and grabbed one of his friend’s small horns. They had just begun to curve backwards, something which Tubbo was very proud of. “You could just stab him with your horns if he’s mean to you.”

Tubbo batted his hand away, laughing. “And get brain damage from him smashing his horns into my temples as punishment? No thanks. I’m pretty sure he’d kill me.”

Wilbur crested the hill, his long coat flapping at his heels. Tommy grinned and waved, then noticed the anger flaring in his brother’s eyes. He ran up to them, face red with anger, and pointed an accusatory finger at Tubbo. “What’s your dad got against Nikki?” He snapped.

Tubbo shrank away from Wilbur’s fury. “What? What happened?”

“He’s raising her taxes! She’s barely making enough money to get by as it is!”

“I didn’t know anything about that! My dad doesn’t tell me anything about business!” Tubbo said, raising his hands defensively.

“Go tell your dad I want to talk to him,” Wilbur ordered. “Nikki’s come here out of the goodness of her heart and worked her ass off just so he can have fancy little cakes to eat with his friends. Fucking unacceptable.” He grabbed Tommy’s arm. “Come on. You’re coming back home.”

Wide-eyed, Tubbo got up and darted away, leaving his tart half-eaten in the grass. Tommy yanked his arm out of Wilbur’s tight grip. “Dude! Don’t yell at Tubbo like that!”

Wilbur pinched the bridge of his nose. “I’ll apologize later, okay? I’m not in the mood to be lectured right now. Let’s get home.”

They found Nikki sitting at their kitchen table, face buried in her hands. Her eyes were red and swollen. Wilbur rushed in and threw his arms around her. “I’m going to go talk to Schlatt,” he said firmly. “This is unacceptable. He’s being an ass just because he can.”

Nikki drew in a shuddering breath. “Will, don’t—“

“I have to, Nikki. He can’t treat you like this.”

“Wilbur, it’ll just make him more mad.” Her voice quavered as she fought to keep it steady. “I’ll find some way to make it work. I can do it.”

“Bullshit. I’m going to go and try to talk some sense into his thick head.” Wilbur smoothed his hair down in the mirror and made sure his shirt looked smooth. “Tommy, you stay here with Nikki.”

“No! I’m coming with you!” Tommy said angrily. “You can’t just go in alone!”

“Well, I am not leaving Nikki here alone either!” Wilbur replied.

“Then I’m coming with you too,” Nikki rose to her feet and wiped her eyes. “If you guys are going to defend me, then I have to be there to defend myself. I have to be tough.”

Wilbur looked between the two of them, eyebrows furrowed with worry. He clenched his jaw. “Fine. Just come on.”

Tubbo had obviously told his father of their plans to meet him, as two guards stood outside the mansion doors as they walked up. Fundy flattened his ears as they approached, making Wilbur curl his lip in response. Quackity only glowered.

“We’re here to see Schlatt,” Wilbur said, straightening his shoulders. “We have some matters to discuss with him.”

Quackity gave them a smile, though his eyes were cold. “Right this way,” he said in a honeyed tone. Fundy opened the doors and allowed for them to pass through, whipping the back of Tommy’s thighs with his tail as he went by. Tommy fought back the urge to call him a very rude name.

The inside of the mansion was opulent yet threatening, more of a museum than a home of a father and son. Schlatt had many large paintings up on the walls, all of them strange and frightening. One of them was of a Wither terrorizing a scorched village, painted in uncomfortable detail. Fundy snickered when he saw them staring.

They ascended a tall, marble staircase, passing many identical doors, before stopping at one with ‘Schlatt’s Office’ emblazoned on it in gold. Quackity rapped on the door with his knuckle. “Schlatt? They’re here.”

The door opened, revealing a very nervous-looking Tubbo. Tommy could have sworn he had a red mark on his cheek. Silently, he allowed for them to pass through, avoiding Tommy’s eyes when he tried to catch his friend’s attention. Once they were all in, he scampered back to his father’s desk and sat down on a small chair beside him.

Schlatt smiled. “Hi.”

Aether above, he was a mean-looking bastard. His curled horns circled all the way around his ears, jutting out from beside his cheekbones in two deadly points. His brown eyes were as cold as arid soil. He leaned his elbows on his desk, placing his chin in his hands. “What can I do for you all today?”

Wilbur cleared his throat. “You raised Nikki’s taxes today.”

Schlatt nodded slowly. “Yes. She needed some extra motivation to keep up with her deadlines.”

“She works day and night to keep up with her deadlines. She’s barely making enough money to scrape by as it is.” Wilbur swallowed. “I’d like you to return her taxes to normal. I’ll start working with her full-time to help her.”

Schlatt curled his lip and made a ‘tch’ sound that unsettled Tommy to the core. “I’ve given Nikki

many chances to ask for help from her little buddies, but—“

Nikki shot to her feet. “That’s a lie!” She exclaimed. “You said I wasn’t allowed to get help unless I paid them!”

“Quiet!” Schlatt hissed. “I simply didn’t want you manipulating these poor young orphans into helping you for free. I never said you couldn’t ask for a little help here and there. You assume too much, little lady.”

Tommy and Tubbo met eyes. Tubbo looked like he was on the edge of tears. He sat straight-backed by his father’s side, fists balled in his lap. Tommy wanted to run away. There was a roiling pit of anxiety in his gut.

“That’s not fair,” Wilbur said. “She’ll be basically paying you to work herself to death!”

“And we’re not orphans!” Tommy butted in. “Our dad’s alive!”

“I don’t appreciate you raising your voices in my office, boys,” Schlatt said. “But yes, your father is alive. Thanks to me.” His face hardened. “You’re welcome.”

“Yes, thank you.” The words looked like they physically hurt Wilbur to say. “And we’ll live here peacefully until our dad is healthy again. But you’ve gone too far with Nikki.”

Schlatt’s face soured. Nikki pulled on Wilbur’s sleeve. “Will, let’s just—“

“Are you doubting the way I run this village?” Schlatt said in a quiet voice. His eyes began to narrow.

“I’m doubting your objectivity when it comes to how you treat those who are beneath you,” Wilbur replied.

“You think you could do it better than me?”

“Yes, actually!” Wilbur’s face had gone red. “Because I know how to not be an asshole!”

Schlatt’s face broke into a wide grin. He tipped his head back and let out a deep, barking laugh that made Tubbo audibly flinch. “You make me laugh, Wilbur. You really do. I could appreciate a fiery temper like yours if it was so damn annoying.”

He stood and leaned over his desk. “Alright. I’ll lower your precious Nikki’s taxes.”

Wilbur’s body untensed. “Thank you.”

“But I will be revoking the citizenships of you and your brother. You two annoy me.”

Tommy’s heart dropped. Nikki’s mouth opened, but no sound came out. From behind them, Quackity and Fundy drew their swords.

Schlatt smiled. “Run.”

Tommy’s feet seemed to be frozen to the ground. It wasn’t until Wilbur grabbed his arm and began dragging him that Tommy’s body caught up with his brain and he began running faster than he ever had in his life. Nikki followed closely behind them, her eyes wild with panic. They shot down the marble staircase, past the horrifying paintings, and burst through the doors. “This way!” Wilbur yelled. They ran down the side of the walls, ducking in between trees, and had just crested the hill when Nikki fell with a shriek.

“Nikki!” Wilbur yelled.

Quackity had a rope around her ankle. “She’s on contract, idiots! She can’t leave!” He sneered, dragging her back as she kicked wildly. “Get out of here before we arrest you!”

An arrow shot by Tommy’s cheek. Stumbling back, he looked upwards and saw George peeking over the side of the wall, bow in hand.

“Go!” Nikki screamed. “I’ll be okay!”

Wilbur grabbed Tommy’s arm. “Come on!”

Into the dark forest they went. They ran for what seemed like forever, scratching their faces and arms on branches that came from nowhere. They fell into a knee-deep stream, and Tommy felt a sharp rock slice his ankle. The adrenaline in his veins dulled the pain at first, but by the time they reached a clearing, Tommy could barely walk without limping. “We have to stop!” He wheezed. “My ankle! I cut it!”

The sun had set; Wilbur’s figure was barely visible. “Have you got a torch on you?”

“I’ve got nothing!” Tommy collapsed onto his side, feeling the wetness that soaked his pant leg and boots. The pain was horrific, made worse by the frigid water that soaked his pants. “I’ve got absolutely nothing!”

Wilbur cursed and went digging through his pockets. “Shit. I should have prepared for something like this. I knew we couldn’t trust that bastard.”

“This was your fault!” Tommy cried. “If you hadn’t gone and made him mad, we wouldn’t be in this position!”

“He was going to work Nikki to exhaustion! That’s slavery!” Wilbur ran a hand through his hair and took several large breaths. “We need to find shelter and light. The rest we can save until morning.”

“I need something for my ankle,” Tommy said. Wilbur helped him to his feet and dragged him into the small cave in the nearby hill. It was barely big enough to fit the both of them, but it was a surprisingly well-shaped little space. Feeling faint, Tommy curled up against the wall, shivering. He felt Wilbur’s coat be thrown over him.

“I’m going to go find some wood and a little flint for a fire. Sleep while you can, okay?” Wilbur said quietly. “We’ll get through this. Dream or Technoblade or... whoever will help us figure this out.”

Tommy nodded silently. He still hadn’t processed what had happened, and his head was spinning. Using a sleeve as a pillow, Tommy fell into an uneasy sleep.

What seemed like minutes later, he awoke to Wilbur crouched beside him, tending a tiny fire that filled the space with flickering shadows. “Hey bud,” Wilbur murmured. “Feeling any better?”

“Not at all,” Tommy replied. His pants were damp and sticky, his head pounded, and so much blood had coagulated on his ankle that it pulled on his leg hairs when he tried to move his foot. Wilbur tore a strip off his pants and wrapped his ankle with as much care as he could, but Tommy remembered with a jab of grief how it had always been Techno who bandaged the bumps and bruises. Where was he now? Why had he left them?

A lump formed in Tommy's throat, and he lay back down on Wilbur's coat and stuck his hands out towards the fire. The heat gave him minimal comfort. Wilbur looked very tired in the gentle light.

Tommy scooted himself into a seated position and motioned for Wilbur to come sit beside him. Wilbur chuckled, then slotted in beside him under the coat.

"It's just us for now, Tommy. We have to stick together," Wilbur said. "I'll protect you if you protect me."

Tommy rested his head on Wilbur's shoulder. He smelled like home. "Okay, big man. You can count on me."

He fell asleep within minutes, and dreamed of his dad swooping down with his gleaming wings and taking them back home.

~

Wilbur stared into the crackling flames with bitter eyes until they were no more than embers, then watched the embers fade until the sun had risen. But Tommy didn't need to know that.

Chapter End Notes

HAHA YOINK

can y'all tell I play Wynncraft lmao

I'm happy you guys liked the way I brought in Manburg! I was nervous about the canon change 😊 sadly, I've had to exclude the lore between fundy and Wilbur bc that is WAY too much to get into

thank you Schlatt for playing a good villain now I can make you mean and abusive
hehe

-Ophelia

Tunnels And Takeovers

Chapter Summary

Wilbur and Tommy discover an abandoned ravine beneath their new home.

Chapter Notes

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

“Wilbur! Holy shit! Look at this!”

Wilbur darted to Tommy’s side and inspected the person-sized opening that had just crumbled away in the rock. Below them, the expanse of a ravine stretched far into the darkness. Wilbur’s eyes widened.

The first few nights in their new makeshift home had been tough. Without any tools, there wasn’t much they could do to better their situation. They remained cooped up in their dark little cave, scrounging by on berries. Nobody came looking for them. Tommy began to lose what little hope he still had.

On the dawn of the fourth day, Tommy woke to find a drawstring bag laid by his head. It contained two pickaxes, some bandages, and an axe. Wilbur refused to tell him who had brought it to them, and his expression relayed nothing, but Tommy was too preoccupied with joy to focus on the gift’s origins. Wilbur spent the rest of the day hacking at the surrounding trees, and Tommy busied himself with chipping away at the stone interior of their little cave, feeling a spark of hope for the first time in days.

He’d been chipping away for about an hour when the rock suddenly gave way beneath his pickaxe and crumbled to the ravine floor with a smash.

Wilbur’s face broke into a wide grin. “This is so fucking cool! We can build our base in here!”

He grabbed the lit torch off the wall and stuck it into the hole, waving it around to get a better view of the darkened space. “It’s huge down there! It must be an abandoned mine or something.”

Tommy pushed his head under Wilbur’s arm. The ravine wasn’t all that wide, only about two or three metres, but seemed to go on forever in every other direction. If Tommy squinted, he swore he could see the openings of tunnels near the bottom.

“Come on,” Wilbur grabbed his pickaxe from the wall. “Let’s make a little staircase down.”

The walls of the ravine cracked easily, allowing for them to make rudimentary steps in the stone in only a couple hours. Wilbur lit several more torches and brightened up the main area, while Tommy took a torch in hand and explored farther along. He was right — there were tunnels carved into the walls, obviously man-made given their uniformity. He stretched his arm out into one of them, watching the torch light illuminate the seemingly-endless passage, and felt curiosity bloom in the pit of his chest.

By the end of the day, they’d made enough torches to light the ravine floor. Wilbur had even found a couple ancient lanterns still strung up at the entrances of the tunnels.

“What do we do now?” Said Tommy. “We’ve got a cool base, but Dad’s still in Manburg.”

Wilbur passed him one of the small wild carrots he’d collected for dinner. “We’re going to lay low for a little bit. Gather supplies, stuff like that. Then we’re going to take Schlatt down and get Dad back.”

Tommy raised an eyebrow. “Take Schlatt down? Like kill him?”

“No!” Wilbur laughed. “We’ll just take him out of power. Everyone I’ve talked to in town hates him. He’s corrupt. He deserves it.”

“We can’t do that!” Tommy exclaimed. “We’re kids!”

“That doesn’t matter! Next time I see Dream, I’ll ask him to send a letter. I know he knows where Techno is.”

The thought of his oldest brother returning made Tommy’s heart jump. Wilbur continued enthusiastically.

“We’ll get Techno on our side, then when Dad wakes up, we’ll all be back together. We can go home, Tommy.” Wilbur placed his hands on Tommy’s shoulders. “But we can’t do that unless Schlatt is out of power. He wants us to stay here so we can keep giving him money. This is the right thing to do; for Nikki, for Dad, for Tubbo, and for everyone else Schlatt is taking advantage of.”

“And Dad will be on our side?”

“I’m sure of it. He hates corruption!”

Tommy took a deep breath. “Okay. I’m with you.”

Wilbur pulled him into a tight hug. “I’ll protect you, Tommy. No matter what. I love you, man.”

Tommy hadn’t been aware of how much he’d needed to hear those words until then. He draws in a shaky breath, blinking back tears. “Wilby, I—“

“Did you just call me Wilby?” Wilbur interrupted.

Tommy flushed. “No!”

Wilbur grinned widely. “You just called me Wilby!”

He held him tighter, fighting Tommy’s attempts to break free of his hug. Tommy felt him press a kiss to the top of his head. “You can call me Wilby if you’d like. I’m so happy you’re my brother.”

For the first time in days, Tommy was warm.

~

“Tommy!”

Tommy opened his bleary eyes. Wilbur crouched over him, looking nervous. In the hours they’d slept, many of their torches had gone out, and Wilbur’s face was cast in deep orange shadows. His hand was cold on Tommy’s side.

“What?” Tommy mumbled.

“I hear shit in the tunnels. Something’s moving.”

Tommy snapped awake, suddenly aware of quiet noises coming from the tunnel at the end of the ravine. Wilbur held his axe tightly in his hand. “Stay there,” he ordered. “If this is a creeper, I want you as far away as possible.”

Tommy nodded, gulping, but grabbed the pickaxe that lay beside him. Wilbur picked up a torch with his free hand and began tip-toeing closer to the tunnel’s entrance, careful to keep his footsteps as silent as he could. Tommy rose to his feet and followed a couple feet back, unable to stave off his curiosity. Wilbur disappeared into the tunnel entrance, his flame going dark as he turned a corner, and Tommy heard nothing except his quiet footsteps for several long moments.

“Wha— hey!” Wilbur’s torch clattered to the floor, plunging the tunnel into darkness, and someone came sprinting out faster than Tommy had ever seen run before.

“Tubbo!” Tommy exclaimed. Tubbo stopped so quickly in his tracks that he stumbled into the ravine wall, winding himself. He was hyperventilating, tears streaming down his face. He looked to be in a set of striped pyjamas.

“Tommy?” Tubbo said in shock. Then he lunged at him, wrapping him in a tight hug that squeezed the air from Tommy’s lungs. “Aether above, Tommy! I thought I’d never see you again!”

Tommy hugged his friend back with all his might. “I missed you so much! How did you find us?”

Tubbo pulled back and pointed towards the darkened tunnel, wiping tears from his cheeks. “I didn’t,” he said. “Wilbur found me.”

As if on cue, Wilbur stumbled out of the tunnel, holding his gut. “Shit, Tubbo,” he grumbled. “I think you ruptured my spleen or something. That fucking hurt.”

“You scared me!” Tubbo chuckled shakily, rubbing one of his horns. “I thought you were a crazed murderer or something.”

Wilbur collapsed beside them, murmuring in pain. Tommy turned his attention to Tubbo’s swollen eyes. “Why are you crying?”

Tubbo closed his eyes and leaned his head on the ravine wall. “I had a fight with my dad. It’s no big deal.”

“Did he hit you?”

“No!” Tubbo exclaimed. “He wasn’t *that* mad. He just yelled at me lots this morning and he’s been ignoring me all day. Typical stuff.”

Wilbur opened his arms. “Want a hug?” He said gently.

Tubbo nodded silently, and shuffled over into Wilbur’s arms. “It’s fine, really —“ he cut off abruptly, his voice quavering. “He says mean shit when he gets mad. It’s just a dad thing.”

“No, not really,” Wilbur replied, rubbing Tubbo’s head. “Phil never says mean shit when he’s mad.”

“He’s just stressed right now,” said Tubbo. “Techno’s not responding to his letters and Dream’s apparently being a brat and he just put me in charge of all this paperwork I have no idea what to do with so I keep messing up.”

“Sounds like he’s setting you up for failure.” Tommy curled his lip.

“He’s just trying to help me,” Tubbo murmured. “It’s not his fault I’m so damn stupid when it comes to all of this.”

Tommy punched his friend’s arm. “Don’t say that!”

Tubbo rolled his eyes, but a smile had snuck onto his face. “I found this place while exploring one year and it’s been my safe haven ever since,” He said. “Did you guys find my stuff?”

“No! What do you have down here?” Tommy said excitedly.

Tubbo pointed down a tunnel they hadn’t yet explored. “There’s a chest down there with some blankets and lanterns and stuff. I come here to read and feel safe when I’m sad.”

Wilbur jogged down the tunnel and came back a moment later with a chest in his arms. “You’re a lifesaver, Tubbo. It’s fucking freezing down here at night.”

“It’s no problem, guys. I’m glad you guys were here. I thought you guys were going to be gone forever.”

Tubbo rose to his feet and dusted the dirt off his pants. “I should be heading back home,” he said reluctantly. “I don’t want my dad getting suspicious. He doesn’t know about this place.”

“Thank you, Tubbo.” Wilbur gave him a hug. “When you see Dream next, tell him to send a letter to Techno about what’s happening if he hasn’t already. Don’t tell your dad.”

Tubbo nodded. “I can do that. I’ll see you guys later.”

With that, he disappeared back into the darkened tunnel. Wilbur pulled out the blankets from Tubbo’s chest and threw them onto Tommy’s lap. “Sweet warmth! We won’t freeze to death.”

Tommy bundled up under the warm fleece blanket. He smelt horrible; he’d have to ask Tubbo to bring him a change of clothes next time he saw him. Wilbur wrapped his blanket around his shoulders and closed his eyes.

“Wilbur?” Tommy said.

“Yes?” His brother replied.

“Schlatt wouldn’t hurt Dad, right?”

Wilbur took a moment to respond. “I don’t think so. He may be corrupt but I doubt he’d do something to him. Especially because he’s Techno’s dad.”

Tommy tried to let Wilbur’s answer be enough to soothe his anxiety. It wasn’t working. “When he wakes up, I’m never leaving his side. I miss him so much.”

Wilbur reached out and squeezed Tommy’s hand. “It will be alright, Tommy. I promise. I’ll fix this.”

That was something Tommy believed. Wilbur seemed so wise for his age, filled with so much more knowledge than Tommy thought he could ever have. He’d find a way to fix this. Tommy trusted him. “I trust you, Wilbur,” he mumbled.

Wilbur poked his side jokingly. “Don’t you mean Wilby?”

“Shut up, Dickhead.”

Chapter End Notes

ya girl had three classes today so she's dead! A gentle chapter today. Can't always be action ;)

Tubbo is back! That's my favourite white boy!

Y'all have given me so many good ideas,, hung my brain is working so hard to fit them all in jgfjdhjdjh

I'm excited for this new arc!

-Ophelia

Two Evils

Chapter Summary

Tommy and Wilbur encounter problems with their plan.

Chapter Notes

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

“Hurry up, little man,” said Wilbur. “You’re falling behind.”

Tommy’s arms were killing him. “This is fucking heavy!” He whined, shifting the heavy logs of wood onto his shoulders. Wilbur strolled a couple feet ahead of him, acting as if the wood in his arms weighed nothing at all.

“Come on, noodle arms!” He called back to him. “How are you going to take Schlatt down if you can’t even carry some wood?”

Tommy groaned. “This is child abuse.”

“Up your pace, soldier.”

Tommy forced his shaking legs to walk faster. Wilbur had been helping him train for days while they waited for Techno to reply to Dream’s letter. Wilbur wasn’t the best with a sword or a bow, but he had a knack for explaining the ins and outs of fighting to Tommy in a way that made him understand. Tubbo came to visit them almost everyday, always bringing them an old tool or piece of equipment he thought his dad wouldn’t miss. Iron wouldn’t do much against Schlatt’s gleaming netherite, but it was better than nothing.

Tommy’s anxiety towards his oldest brother grew with every passing day. Would he come back? Had Dream even sent a letter? How did he know where he was? He was angry with Techno for leaving them in the first place, but he couldn’t ignore the overpowering desperation to just have his brothers back by his side. Without Phil, he needed them more than ever.

“Help me move this rock.” Wilbur let his logs clatter to the ground and began pushing the large rock they used to hide the cave entrance. Tommy followed suit, taking a moment to stretch his sore arms while Wilbur looked on impatiently. “You’re a baby.”

“I’m like, thirteen! That’s basically a man.” Tommy replied, miffed. They pushed the rock to the side until the cave entrance was just wide enough to fit a person, then slipped in with their wood. While Tommy piled the logs in the corner, Wilbur dragged the rock back into its original position.

“That should be enough wood to keep us warm for a couple days,” said Wilbur, cracking his back. “I should make you bench-press those for an hour or two. Your upper body strength could use some work.”

They descended down into the ravine, bickering, before stopping in their tracks. Dream sat cross-legged on one of their chests in the middle of the ravine floor, mask pulled to the side to reveal his face. He smiled. “Hey guys.”

“Dream,” Wilbur said stiffly.

The young folk hero rose to his feet and hopped onto one of the wooden support pillars with feline grace. “Nice place you’ve got here,” he said, stretching backwards until he was nearly folded in half. “I wasn’t expecting you guys to find a base so quickly after you guys got kicked out. Schlatt’s still mad about Quackity actually letting you guys leave, by the way. He just wanted to rough you guys up a little and then raise your taxes.”

“Dick,” Tommy muttered. He thought he’d grown used to Dream’s presence, but seeing him in their ravine made his heart skip a beat. Dream chuckled.

“He’s annoying the shit out of me these last few days.” Dream rolled off the support pillar and inspected some of their old tools. “He keeps trying to send me all over the world to duel people so he can trick people into betting money on my rivals. Sapnap and I have been wanting to fight an ender dragon now for over a year but he never gives me a break to do anything.”

Dream crossed his arms. “I turn eighteen in a couple days but he’s found some legal bullshit that won’t let me leave my contract until I’m twenty.”

“Tired of being Schlatt’s little cash cow, are you?” Wilbur said with a hint of bitterness.

Dream narrowed his eyes. “Do you want my help or not, kid?” He snapped. Wilbur averted his eyes. “That’s what I thought. Now, I can’t really get involved, but I’ll help from the sidelines.”

“What about your friends? George and Schlatt seem to be quite close.” Said Wilbur.

“George and Sapnap listen to me. Nobody else. If I tell them to back off, they will. Fundy and Quackity are wildcards, so be suspicious. Eret’ll side with whatever’s in their best interest, and Bad and Skeppy are your enemies until further notice since they’re the ones hired to come find you guys.” Dream walked to the entrance of Tubbo’s tunnel and turned, staring at them for a long moment. “I came to tell you guys that Technoblade sent my letter back to me without an answer. There’s not much more I can do. I’m sorry.”

He vanished into the tunnel’s darkness, leaving them both in silence. Wilbur stamped his foot. “Damn it, Techno. Piece of shit.”

“Techno wouldn’t abandon us!” Tommy said. “Maybe it was a miscommunication.”

“Really? Because that seems like a very clear message to me!” Wilbur buried his face in his hands, fingers pulling on his hair. “He only fucking cares about Dad. We’re being treated like shit by some tyrant and he couldn’t care less!”

Tommy felt a lump rising in his throat. “That’s not true! We don’t know that!”

“Stop being so damn optimistic, Tommy. We’re fucked!”

“Dad’s going to wake up soon and he’ll help us if Techno won’t. He won’t stand for this!”

“Shut up about Dad!” Wilbur grabbed Tommy by the cuff of his shirt, yanking him close until their noses were nearly touching. “We don’t know when or if Dad will ever wake up, you hear me? So start preparing for life without him!”

“George told me he’d be okay!”

“You think you can trust anything those guys say?” Wilbur’s hands gripped him so tightly it hurt.

“They’re lying to you, Tommy. They’re going to keep him just alive enough to bleed us dry of all we have, then they’ll let him fade away. It won’t be murder. It’ll be a ‘natural’ death that even the best healers couldn’t stop.”

Tommy pushed himself out of Wilbur’s grip, fighting back tears. Wilbur glared back at him, steely-eyed. “We have to make our team and stage this coup quick before Schlatt decides to use Dad as collateral to get us back.”

“Fuck off,” Tommy whispered. “I’m going outside for a bit.”

Wilbur watched him leave, not saying a word. Though it took a minute, Tommy pushed the rock back far enough for him to slip through and took off into the forest, running until he’d found a patch of field concealed enough for him to sit down and cry. Aether above, it wasn’t fair. Nothing was fair. He’d been brought into a family to keep him safe, only for them all to be thrown back into chaos. He tried to think of what Phil would tell him, but Phil’s face and voice were faded in his mind and only served to make him more upset. The thought of losing him was so painful that Tommy’s mind couldn’t wrap around it.

“Hi there.”

Tommy jumped, reaching for a sword that wasn’t there. A young man appeared from behind a tree, dressed in netherite armour. Well, Tommy assumed it was a man. Its skin was jet black, eyes a piercing white. Whatever hair it had was tucked up beneath a black hood. The creature crouched in front of him. “I’m Bad.”

“Badboyhalo,” Tommy whispered. “You work for Schlatt.”

Bad nodded calmly. “That I do.” He extended a gloved hand. “Come on, let’s get you back home.”

Tommy shot to his feet. “I’m not going back to Schlatt,” he spat. “Now fuck off.”

“Language.” Bad’s eyes narrowed. Tommy noticed the bow at his side and felt an icy spear of fear shoot down his spine. “You’re still official citizens of Manburg, which means Schlatt still has legal control over you. If you want to leave, you have to come and get your citizenship nullified properly.”

“Bullshit! He’s the one who chased us out!”

Bad pursed his lips. “Yes, and I’m sure he will apologize for the misunderstanding when you and your brother return.”

Tommy felt a presence behind him and whirled around. Another young man wearing netherite armour stood behind him, pointing a bow at his head. Bad raised a hand. “Skeppy, don’t spook him—“

Tommy took off in the other direction, fear coursing through his veins. He wasn’t familiar with the forest beyond what little he and Wilbur had explored, and he quickly found himself venturing deeper and deeper into unfamiliar territory. He couldn’t turn back — if Skeppy and Bad found out where the ravine was, they were done for. So he kept running, even as his lungs screamed and every breath felt like he was swallowing nails. He just needed to lose them.

He entered a clearing, Manburg’s walls only a couple feet to the left of him. Just as he was desperately trying to plan how he’d be able to sneak in and seek refuge with Nikki, Skeppy materialized from the tree line and bashed into him. They slammed into the wall, Tommy’s cheek

exploding in pain as he hit it face first. “Bad!” Skeppy screamed. “I got him!”

“Don’t hurt him!” Bad came running out from the trees, bow slung over his back. “He’s a kid!”

“Fuck you!” Tommy smashed his aching head into Skeppy’s nose, stunning him long enough to break free. He practically dove back into the forest, pushing on the nearby trees to propel him forward.

An arrow whizzed by him. “If you don’t stop, I will have to shoot you!” Came Bad’s voice from behind him. “I don’t want to, Tommy, so stop running!”

“Fuck off!” Tommy took a hard right, narrowly avoiding a jutting root that threatened to trip him. Years of running from guards and orphanage workers had made him nimble and slippery, though Bad seemed to be his near match. Several more arrows shot by him, narrowly missing his ankles or wrists. Bad wasn’t shooting to kill him — only incapacitate. An arrow to the ankle wouldn’t be fatal, but it would hurt like a bitch. Tommy had had enough of pain for the next long while.

Tommy made another hard right, but Skeppy was already there waiting for him. He caught him in a tight bear hug, pinning Tommy’s wrists to his chest. Tommy tried to kick, but Skeppy looped a leg around Tommy’s abdomen and twisted him to the ground. “Bad!” He grunted. His nose was bloody, purple bruises blooming beneath his eyes. “Come here before he escapes again!”

Tommy spat into the dirt, hearing footsteps run up behind him. “Thank goodness I don’t have to shoot him,” Bad said happily. He knelt by Tommy’s side and put an infuriatingly gentle hand on the small of his back. “Come on, Tommy. Let’s get you back in the village with a hot cup of tea. You need a rest in a proper bed.”

“Aether above,” Skeppy complained. “He’s filthy!”

Bad smacked Skeppy’s arm, making him whine. “Don’t be mean! He’s been living out in the forest for days. Have you eaten at all since you left, Tommy?”

“Eat my shit!” Tommy struggled helplessly. Now that his adrenaline was fading, Tommy felt exhaustion creeping up the back of his neck.

“Language!” Bad tutted. “We’ll get you a good hearty meal and a bath back at the village, okay? Then we can talk about finding Wilbur.”

His voice sounded so warm, and Tommy was so tired. He went limp, throat closing. He hated this. He hated it so much. He’d had enough of running away in his life.

“Poor boy,” Bad murmured. “Let’s stand you up, okay?”

Tommy obliged, standing on shaking legs as Bad took Skeppy’s place in holding his arms behind his back. He was so tired. He hated Bad and Skeppy and all they stood for, but they were the lesser of two evils compared to the cold, unforgiving forest that loomed around them and the hopeless suicide mission that awaited him back at the ravine.

“Will you let me see my dad?” Tommy whispered.

“Of course, Tommy. He’s safe back home. You can see him tonight if you’d like.”

Guilt clung to Tommy’s back in sticky tendrils as Bad nudged him forward, Skeppy supervising suspiciously. Wilbur. He’d betrayed him. He’d been weak. His own damned fragility would bring upon the downfall of their whole operation before it even got off the ground.

Bad placed a warm hand on Tommy's shoulder. "Everything is alright now, Tommy. You're safe."

"I think he broke my nose," Skeppy moaned.

"I'll get you some ice and a healing potion when we get back too. Stop complaining."

~

Tommy didn't feel as terrified at being back in Manburg as he thought he should have been. That only made him feel worse.

It was an odd loop to be in.

Bad had kept his promise; Tommy was bathed, given a pair of clean clothes, and the best meal of bread and pork and potatoes Tommy had ever had. Though he was warm, he couldn't stop his shivering. What would Wilbur say when he found out?

What would Wilbur say if he found out Tommy felt better here than he had there with him?

The door to his modest cell opened. Tommy's heart leaped. "Tubbo!"

They ran into each other's arms. Tubbo put a hand on the back of Tommy's head and held him tightly. "Aether above, man. What happened?"

"I couldn't do it," Tommy whispered in his ear. "I can't do it. The plan was crazy from the beginning."

Tubbo pulled back and kicked the cell door closed with his foot. Now alone, he motioned for Tommy to sit on the bed and sat down next to him. "We can find some other way to take my dad down, Tommy. It's okay."

"No it's not," Tommy buried his face in his hands. He couldn't cry in front of his best friend. "Techno's gone, Tubbo. He won't help us."

"But Dream—"

"He sent Dream's letter back with no answer. It's hopeless." Tommy's voice broke. "We're screwed."

The tears came to quickly for Tommy to stop. Tubbo hugged him as he cried, his hand tracing long, slow circles on his back.

"I don't know what to believe anymore, Tubbo," Tommy sobbed. "Wilbur says Dad will never wake up and your dad's a lying asshole and Techno abandoned me when I needed him the most. He's supposed to be the dad if Dad goes away. But he up and left."

"I'll tell Wilbur you're safe tonight," Tubbo said softly. "You focus on resting. Don't tell anyone about the tunnels or the ravine. If anyone asks, you and Wilbur have been living in the woods."

"Okay."

"And your dad will be okay. I feel it in my gut. With or without my dad's help, Phil will be fine."

Tommy collapsed back into his friend's arms. "I love you, man. You're the only one who I can trust."

“You and me, together forever. No matter how this turns out.”

Tubbo stood and opened the door, motioning for Tommy to follow him. “My dad wanted me to come get you so you could see your dad. Wanna go?”

Tommy nodded. “More than anything.”

~

Tommy’s blood soured when he saw Schlatt sitting by his father’s bed, staring off out the window. Tubbo cleared his throat. “Dad? It’s us.”

Schlatt gave them a warm smile. “Hey, kids. Come on in.”

Tommy immediately took a seat beside his father’s bed and pressed his face into his dad’s shoulder. He was warm. He was alive.

“Tubbo, dear,” Schlatt said. “I think it’s best if you leave the two of us alone. I think Tommy needs a moment.”

“Oh, I—“ A pause. “Okay. I’ll see you outside.”

Tommy heard the door close. There was silence for a moment.

“You can get into the bed with him if you need it. I won’t judge.”

Tommy lifted his head to see Schlatt rising to his feet and walking to the window. Slowly, he climbed into bed beside Phil, careful not to disturb any of the blankets, and laid his head beside his dad’s. His breathing was slow but even. In, out. In, out.

“I apologize for my second-in-command; he can be obtuse,” Schlatt sighed. “I never meant for you two to actually disappear into the woods. You’ve given my poor Tubbo quite a fright with all this mess. He’s too delicate for chaos.”

Tommy didn’t respond, fearing anything he said would be used against him. Schlatt continued calmly, “However, I don’t believe you’re at fault. You’re only a child, Tommy. I don’t blame you for being overwhelmed with all this change and heartbreak. Nearly losing one’s father is hard to handle. Having one brother disappear and another brother go wild with grief? Downright traumatizing.”

Tommy wished he could be alone with his father, but he didn’t have the courage to tell Schlatt to leave. He felt like he was in a small cave with a creeper that hadn’t yet noticed him.

Schlatt crossed the room and sat down in Tommy’s chair beside the bed. Tommy instinctively shied away as one of Schlatt’s cold, smooth hands came to rest on his shoulder. “We need to find Wilbur, Tommy. He’s not stable. He can’t be out on his own in the woods. It’s dangerous.” He leaned in close. He smelled like mint. “Where is he, Tommy? Where has he been keeping you?”

“Why are you being so nice to me?” Tommy hissed quietly. “I don’t like you. I’m not telling you anything.”

Schlatt sighed. Tommy felt his hand retreat. “Well, I technically have to keep you as a prisoner until we find him. You’re a flight risk, and you broke one of my men’s noses, which is a crime. They were not going to cause you danger. So until further notice, you’ll be kept in a cell under supervision.”

“Please, go away,” Tommy said. “Just let me be alone with my dad. Keep me prisoner; I’m still not telling you shit.”

He closed his eyes, breathing in Phil’s familiar scent. The door to the room opened. “There are guards standing watch outside that window and outside this door. Just letting you know.”

“I’m not running. Fuck off.”

The door closed, and Tommy let a sob free against his father’s collarbone. “I miss you, Dad. Please wake up soon.”

Phil’s breathing continued methodically.

In, out. In, out.

Chapter End Notes

lol just realized this is basically a NaNoWriMo project whoops

I have general plans for this fic but 90% of it is just me making shit up as I go along
lmao but I LOVE IT

also today in Ophie Is An Idiot I scalded my ass cheek on my microwaveable hot pack shaped like a hedgehog that I use to warm my bed up because it’s freezing in my apartment so I’m in Pain but at least im warm hehe

- Ophelia

Little Ram Boy

Chapter Summary

Tubbo gets a mission.

Chapter Notes

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

Thirteen years had not been kind to his dear friend.

Tubbo's father tried several times over the next couple days to talk to Tommy and get some information out of him, but Tommy held fast to his silence, even when banned from seeing his father again until they knew where Wilbur was. He stayed in his cell for most of the time, pacing back and forth like a caged animal. From what Bad told him over lunches, Tommy barely slept.

Wilbur wasn't happy when he found out Tommy had been captured. His hand had tightened on the axe at his side, mouth thinning to a tight angry line. Tubbo had feared he was going to hit him. But Wilbur had only grabbed him by the shoulders and begged him to keep an eye on Tommy.

"Don't let him break. No matter what your dad does."

Tubbo stirred his oatmeal absentmindedly, watching people walk in and out of the dining room. Across the table from him, his father sipped at a cup of coffee and nibbled on a pastry.

"Tubbo?" He said.

Tubbo straightened his back. "Yes, dad?"

"Tommy hasn't told you anything about where Wilbur is, right?"

He swallowed. "No, sir. Nothing. I'd tell you if he did."

His father leaned back in his chair, nodding slowly. "Good boy. You know I don't like secrets."

Tubbo turned back to his oatmeal, ignoring how it tasted like glue in his dry mouth. Schlatt rose, leaving his meal on the table, and came to sit down by Tubbo's side. He smelled of cologne and coffee. "You know I love you, right?"

Tubbo smiled. "Yeah."

"You're becoming more and more of a little me every day. It's hard to tell you're not even biologically mine." Schlatt wiggled one of Tubbo's horns playfully, making him giggle. "I know I can be tough on you sometimes, but I do it for your own good. Strict dads make talented sons, right?"

"I want to be like you," Tubbo said. He wasn't really sure what it meant, but he liked the way it lit his father's face up when he said it. Schlatt cupped his face with one hand, rubbing Tubbo's cheek with his thumb.

“I know it must be hard with all this drama going on. Your little friend is in a tough situation. I couldn’t imagine you having to go through such trauma. That’s why I need you to help me. You need to find out where Wilbur is. He’s a danger to himself and Tommy the way he is currently.”

Tubbo looked away, focusing his eyes on the gentle rain outside. His father sighed. “Now, I know Tommy’s holding information from us, and there’s no way he’ll talk to me. I need *you to get into his head, Tubbo. He’ll talk to you.*”

“Okay,” Tubbo said quietly. He wanted this conversation to be over.

Schlatt smiled gently and gave him a pat on the back. “Make me proud, son. I’m putting my faith in you.”

Quackity knocked on the doorframe, waving papers. Schlatt rolled his eyes. “Clean up my dishes for me, would you? Work never waits.”

Alone in the dining room, Tubbo let out a long breath through his nose. Keeping secrets from his father never ended well. With the stakes so high, his father finding out his secret would blow right up in his face.

His oatmeal was cold.

~

The rain made the air outside misty and cold, biting at Tubbo’s ears. He held the bag of bread close to his chest, careful not to crush it. He hadn’t been back to visit Wilbur since he’d told him of Tommy’s capture, and the thought of returning to the ravine with just Wilbur made his stomach drop. But Wilbur needed food, and the last thing Tubbo would want was for Wilbur to think he’d abandoned him.

He found the abandoned entrance dug into a jutting part of the hill and pulled the old, rickety circular door open with a loud whine that echoed down the tunnel. Tucked away behind some thorny bushes, the entrance was hidden enough for Tubbo to slip in and out without being seen. A chill spread through him as he entered the dim tunnel, and he pulled his coat tighter around him.

Wilbur sat up against the ravine wall when Tubbo entered, eyes closed. Tubbo nearly thought he was asleep. But then his eyes opened, wide and unblinking, and Tubbo fought the urge to turn tail and run back.

“Hi.”

“I brought you bread,” Tubbo tried to smile. Wilbur reached out for it and immediately tore off a chunk. While he ate, Tubbo glanced around and noticed several of the chests had been moved around. Wilbur had obviously been busy.

“I have a plan to get Tommy out, don’t worry,” Wilbur said. “I need to gather more supplies, though. Can’t risk not having enough.”

Tubbo perked at the sound of that. “Do you need anything I could get?”

“No,” Wilbur said a little too quickly. “Dream’s already helping me. I’ll tell you what to do when it’s time.”

“Planning a break-in, boys?”

Wilbur shot to his feet, axe at the ready. Someone walked out of the tunnel, hands raised defensively. "Whoa, whoa!" A familiar deep voice said. "I'm on your side. Chill out."

Tubbo's eyes widened. "Eret!"

Eret smiled. "You really should be watching your surroundings, Tubbo. I followed you right down here without you noticing."

Tubbo felt a spike of panic. Wilbur growled. "Get out of here. You work for Schlatt."

"Technically, everyone who lives in Manburg works for Schlatt. But I'm not one of his cronies, if that's what you mean." Eret fixed his sunglasses. "I hear there's a plan in the works?"

"None of your business!" Wilbur snapped.

Eret cocked his head, casually sitting down on the nearby barrel. "Really? You don't want my help at all?"

"Not really."

"I know a way to get into Manburg without anyone noticing."

Wilbur rolled his eyes. "We have the tunnel, idiot."

"That'll get you into Manburg, sure, but it'll also lead baddies smack-dab into your base. Good luck to you guys if Schlatt finds this place out."

Tubbo turned back to Wilbur. "Let's see what they have to say."

"Fine." Wilbur did not let go of his axe.

"Thank you, Tubbo." Eret said. "There's a weak patch in the wall along the west side. From there, you can slip into the mansion's basement basically unnoticed though an old power control room. If stuff goes haywire, they'll have no idea you came from the ravine."

"How do you know all this?" Wilbur said, raising an eyebrow.

"I may have been eavesdropping on some conversations with Tommy."

Tubbo wanted to smack himself for his own stupidity. Of course they were being watched! Leave it to him to nearly blow the whole operation.

If Wilbur was angry at Tubbo's crudeness, he hid it. "So... what do you propose, then?"

"Depends. How much stuff do you have?"

Wilbur pointed to a chest leaned up against the far wall. "See for yourself. Mostly just iron, but Dream donated some of his old diamond stuff. We'd be fucked fighting hand-to-hand, but we'd have a chance at sneaking in and getting him that way."

"Tonight, then?"

Wilbur smiled. "Tonight."

"Wait!" Tubbo said. "I thought you said you already had a plan, Wilbur. What about that?"

Wilbur's face dropped slightly. "If I don't have to use that plan, I'm fine with that. This one's better and we can do it now."

Tubbo felt anxiety bubble in his gut. He wasn't ready. This couldn't happen tonight. "Wilbur, I—" "Don't be scared, Tubbo. I got this. All you need to do is make sure we get the cell keys. We'll do it at night once everyone's gone back home."

A light seemed to have been lit behind Wilbur's eyes. He beckoned Eret to the chest of equipment, the two of them falling into a quiet conversation. Tubbo left with a pit of ice in his stomach, returning home without a word. Knowing that Wilbur and Eret and who knows who else would be breaking into his home that night and setting Tommy free terrified him to no end. And he had to be the one to get the keys from his father's room. If his father caught him...

Quackity laid on the couch when he returned home, an arm thrown over his eyes. "Listen, kid. I love your dad, but he's an ass."

Tubbo pouted. "You guys had a fight?"

"Yeah, but nothing out of the ordinary. Don't you worry."

Tubbo moved to Quackity's side and crouched down to give him a hug. Quackity chuckled. "You're a funny kid, Tubbo."

Tubbo pressed his face farther into Quackity's arm. "I'm scared, Quackity."

"Don't worry," Quackity pulled him in tighter and rocked him side to side. "We'll get your friends back. I'm sure your dad will figure something out."

Tubbo wanted so desperately to tell him. But he couldn't.

"Okay," was all he said. It was all he could say, really. "I'm going to see Tommy."

"Alright, bud." Quackity sent him off with a pat on the back and threw him the cell keys. "Tell him I say hi."

Tubbo made sure to check every nook and cranny of the hallway to the cells for any signs of someone following him. He opened the door to Tommy's cell, seeing his friend asleep, and banged on the doorway with his foot until Tommy turned and looked at him with bleary eyes.

"Wilbur's coming tonight. With Eret. Be prepared."

Tommy jolted as if he'd been shocked. "What?" He whispered.

"Tonight. Be prepared. They're sneaking in."

Tommy's mouth opened, but no words came out. Tubbo slipped in, letting the door slam behind him, and gave Tommy a tight hug. "I'm fucking terrified, man. I'm so fucking scared."

"Me too. Me too," Tommy murmured into his shoulder.

"Promise me that you'll be on my side, no matter what happens. No matter what my dad or Wilbur says."

Tommy's arms were right around his neck. "Of course. I love you, man."

“I love you too. You’re my best friend.”

The cell keys jangled at Tubbo’s side. The sound made him sick.

~

There were two sets of cell keys for Tubbo’s house. The main set belonged to Quackity, who took them home every night. Tommy may have had the guts to sneak in to Quackity’s cottage and steal them, but the idea was inconceivable to Tubbo. Not a chance.

The other set (well, it wasn’t really a set; it was only a single enchanted key which would open any of the cell doors in emergencies) belonged to Tubbo’s father, kept in a small vase by the side of his bed. Tubbo had found it while cleaning one day. As far as he knew, his father didn’t know he knew where it was. His father was secretive, bordering on paranoid, but Tubbo had never been a threat in his eyes. He was always someone who could be worn down and bullied into telling any secret.

Until now.

Tubbo had always been good at seeing in the dark. He liked the dark; it made him feel safe. It felt like a thick blanket upon his shoulders as he tip-toed through the darkened halls, passing by paintings lit up by strips of silver moonlight. He could do this — he could move in silence, without catching anyone’s attention. He could make himself small and unassuming and slip by unnoticed.

What he wasn’t sure he could do happened to be the most important part of his task. Lucky him.

The door to his father’s room was slightly ajar, the sound of his snoring a gentle hum in the air. Tubbo remembered crawling into bed with his father after nightmares, seeking the comfort. His father had banned him from doing such a thing when he’d turned ten, eventually locking his doors when Tubbo would sneak in just to sit beside his bed and listen to him breathe. He’d needed to learn to be tough, his father had said.

Well, now he was being tough. Or at least he thought he was.

The small vase on his father’s bedside table held two fake cornflowers, both dull with dust. Tubbo’s hands shook as he pulled one, then both of them out. His father’s snoring continued, nearly melodic in its own boarish way.

The small key glittered iridescently at the bottom of the vase, taunting him. Tubbo turned the vase slowly, hyper-aware of every small noise the key made as it slid down towards his hand. The key had just touched his palm when his father’s snoring abruptly stopped.

“Tubbo? What are you doing?”

Tubbo could see well in the dark, but his father couldn’t. Tubbo began slowly moving the vase back into its original position, careful to not let it clunk against the marble countertop.

“I had a nightmare. About Wilbur.”

“I thought you were over this shit, Tubbo!” His father’s voice was thick with annoyance. He turned his back to him, giving Tubbo enough time to set the vase back down and tuck the key into his pocket. “You’re too old for this. It’s embarrassing.”

“I’m sorry, Dad,” he said quickly.

“Don’t make me lock my fucking doors again, kid. Go back to sleep.”

Tubbo had to hold himself back from running out of his father's room. The moment he'd descended back down the staircase, he broke into a sprint. The night guards didn't even turn their heads. The stairs to the basement were cool against his feet, filling him with a giddy energy. He did it. They were going to succeed.

Tommy was waiting for him, illuminated gently by the moonlight pouring in from his cell window. He looked like a ghost. With a shaking hand, Tubbo passed him the small key. No words were said.

Tubbo arrived back in his bedroom, feeling like a fire had been lit inside him. He wanted to laugh, to scream, to throw himself around his room to release some of the pent-up energy inside him. They'd done it. The consequences of his father finding the key meant nothing to his happiness-addled brain. Tubbo crawled into bed, distantly thinking of the day ahead of him.

The sounds of distant screaming jolted him awake.

Chapter End Notes

sorry this chap is late! I had a v bad tic and anxiety day and my brain is filled with cotton balls. Apologies for any typos n shit lmao

in today's episode of Ophie's Brain Is Stupid, I've recently developed motor/verbal tics, possibly from medication, and they're mf EXHAUSTING. they make me yip like a dog which is NOT FUN at dinner with my boyfriend's parents

i am a mess

- Ophelia

Betrayal

Chapter Summary

betrayal.

Chapter Notes

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

Tommy had a crossbow arrow through his shoulder.

“Eret!” He screamed. “You bastard!”

Eret vanished behind Quackity and Fundy. “Sorry boys,” he said. “They gave me the better deal.”

“Get on the ground!” Quackity bellowed. “On your knees!”

Tommy couldn’t feel his arm. He collapsed to the floor, gasping for air that never seemed to enter his lungs. Fundy smashed the butt of his crossbow onto the top of Wilbur’s head, sending him crumpling. “Wilbur!” Tommy shrieked. He reached for him, spraying blood over the floor.

A sharp pain in his temple sent him plunging into darkness.

~

“Tubbo.”

Tubbo wouldn’t meet his father’s eye.

“Tubbo!”

Schlatt grabbed him by the chin and forced his head up. “You think this shit is funny, kid?”

Fear was a heavy weight upon Tubbo’s shoulders, wrapping its tendrils around his neck. Schlatt cracked a hand across his cheek, leaving an icy burn in its wake.

“You are an ungrateful little shit,” he hissed. “I’m the one who raised you, loved you, and you betrayed me for your crazy fucking friends.”

Tubbo’s throat tightened. “Dad, I—“

“You were going to steal that key from me and let my citizens escape when I had them rightfully imprisoned! Are you trying to undermine my leadership, Tubbo? Do you think I’m an idiot?” Schlatt leaned in close, breath hot and heavy against Tubbo’s face. “And *don’t* call me Dad, you little fuck-up.”

“You paid Eret to bait us,” Tubbo choked.

“I paid Eret to bait *Wilbur*. Imagine my shock when they came back telling me that you were sitting there all buddy-buddy with him over a loaf of stolen bread!”

He grabbed one of Tubbo's horns and forced his head into the desk. "You aren't coming back from this, kid. I have had enough of you and your bullshit —"

"Schlatt?" Came Quackity's voice. "You've got a—"

"Shut up!" Schlatt pulled on Tubbo's horn and held his face in the air. "Everyone, shut up!"

Tubbo lifted his arm to his face, expecting another slap, but the force that hit him seemed otherworldly in its brutality. The pain didn't hit him at first. "Whoa, whoa!" Quackity's voice was distant and warped in Tubbo's ringing ears. "What the fuck!"

His arm was was numb, his face a minefield of agony. Quackity leaned over him, jaw agape, and his fingers came back bloody when they touched Tubbo's forehead. "Your horns are fucking sharp! That could have killed him!"

"He is *my* ward, Quackity, and I will do with him as I please," his father hissed. "Now get away from him before I give you the same treatment."

"What the hell is happening, Schlatt?"

The voice was familiar, but not recognizable to him in his haze of pain. Schlatt raised his head and sneered in the direction of the door. "The prodigal son returns! Finally decide to come back, huh? I've been sending letters for months."

"Where the hell are my brothers? Dream said they were in trouble."

A shadow loomed over Tubbo, fuzzy around the edges. Technoblade. Tubbo's heart stopped in his chest. His father's barking laugh rang out, sending a jolt of pain through his skull.

"I have great news for you, Technoblade! They're right here!" Schlatt's voice rose in manic excitement, then dropped abruptly to an ominous hum. "And we're all going to have a little festival to celebrate your return!"

Techno crouched down beside him and placed a hand on Tubbo's side. "Are you okay?" He whispered urgently. He was kneeling in blood. Tubbo's blood. What an odd thing to wrap his head around.

"Fundy, go get the boys for me and bring them upstairs. I want them to see this," Said Schlatt, eyes glittering. "Technoblade, stay there. You're right where I want you to be."

"I—" Tubbo's voice sounded alien in his own ears. "I need to sit up. Tommy. Wilbur."

He pushed himself up until he was leaning on his elbow. Aether above, there was so much *blood*. It was all down his shirt and the back of his neck and in his hair, seemingly endless. Techno put a hand beneath his armpit and maneuvered him to his knees. Three formless blobs appeared in Tubbo's peripheral vision, but he couldn't make them out before his vision began fading, and he was consumed once again by darkness.

~

Aether above.

Someone had torn open Tubbo's face.

Schlatt looked to them as they entered, baring his teeth in a demented grin. "Boys!" He cried.

“Look who I found!”

Tommy felt a rush of terror seize him. “Techno!” He screamed. His brother stared back at him, shocked. His hands were covered in blood, Tubbo awkwardly half-slumped in his arms. An enormous gash had ripped its way up the side of Tubbo’s face, painting every inch of his skin from his forehead to his shaking hands a dark crimson. The air smelled like metal. Tommy’s shoulder hurt so badly he wanted to cry but he struggled against his bonds anyway, desperate to get to his dying friend.

“A happy family reunion!” Schlatt cackled. “If they and my idiot ward hadn’t tried to betray me, I’d have been happy for you all!”

Technoblade pulled his crossbow off his back and loaded something into it. Tommy’s eyes widened. *Where did he get fireworks?*

“Give me my brothers, now,” Techno commanded. “Don’t make me light this place up with all of us inside.”

Schlatt cocked his head, grin firm on his face. “Oooh, I’m scared! Little pig boy going to hurt me, huh?”

Quackity darted to his side and pulled on his sleeve. “Those are fireworks, Schlatt. They can do a lot of—“

“I don’t give a shit! He won’t shoot. Not here.” Schlatt gestured around the room wildly. “Not with his precious brothers watching.”

Techno raised the crossbow to his eye, causing Quackity and the rest of his guards to scatter. “Try me. I’ve done and said worse in front of them.”

Schlatt took a running start around his desk, head bent low. Techno fired, and an explosion of blue and red filled the room with a bang so loud it left Tommy fighting to stay conscious. The lanterns all flickered. Schlatt’s desk was aflame. Acrid smoke filled Tommy’s lungs and he doubled over, hacking.

Techno loaded another firework from the bag hanging from his belt, crossbow at the ready as the smoke and dust faded. Schlatt crouched mere feet away from him, smiling widely. He had one arm looped around Tubbo’s abdomen, the other one around his throat in a chokehold, holding him to his chest like a human shield. “Want to shoot at me now, pig boy?”

“No!” Tommy’s voice burned his throat. Techno turned his head, mouth set in a small line. Schlatt danced from side to side, dragging Tubbo along with him. Tommy saw his friend’s hands pull at Schlatt’s arms desperately, mouth opening and closing wordlessly. Technoblade stared at them for a long moment, then at Tommy and Wilbur.

“Don’t fucking do it!” Tommy cried. “I will never forgive you!”

Time seemed to slow. Techno took a step forward, then another, catching the arm around Tubbo’s neck with the butt of his crossbow. The arm loosened, then gave way. Tubbo’s upper body fell sideways, making Schlatt stumble. Techno raised the crossbow to his eye and fired.

“No!” Tommy broke loose of his bonds in the shock that followed, ripping free of Fundy’s hands. He dove into the black, putrid smoke, weaponless, eyes stinging. His hands found Techno’s neck and he squeezed, hard, his screams distant in his own ears. Tubbo collapsed to the ground, flames eating away at his jacket. Schlatt stared at the torn-up remains of his hand in abject shock.

Hands grabbed Tommy by the shirt, lifting him into the air as he writhed. “Follow me!” Wilbur screamed. “Grab Tubbo and run!”

Tommy’s brain was a whirlwind of pain and grief and the smell of gunpowder in his nose was thick enough to choke him. Wilbur carried him out of the mansion, out of Manburg. “Tubbo! Tubbo!” Tommy screamed to the sky. Rain fell on his cheeks and chest, mingling with the tears that poured down his chin. “Dad! Help me!”

He was dropped unceremoniously into the mud, eyes still stinging. Wilbur commanded Techno to help him move something. The rock. They were at their ravine. Tommy dragged himself forward, hands grappling at the soft earth below him. He needed to find Tubbo.

And he found him.

Tubbo’s figure laid curled on the ground a foot or so away from him, the remains of his clothes smoking and falling away from his mangled body in rags. Tommy’s arm burned worse than it ever had before, but he reached for his friend anyway, even as the stitches in his shoulder stretched and spilled more blood onto the ground.

Techno and Wilbur carried them inside, down into the ravine, where they laid Tubbo out on blanket-covered chests. Nikki was there, somehow, hair tied back behind her face as she pulled bandages and potions from her bag. “George can kiss my ass if he yells at me for stealing this shit. I don’t care,” she said. Her voice was powerful in a way Tommy had never heard.

“How did you get here so quickly?” Tommy murmured as she poured a regen potion into a small glass and handed it to him.

“I’ve been here for a while,” she said. “You’ve been falling in and out of consciousness.”

The regen potion tingled on his tongue. “No, I haven’t. We just got here.”

“Techno, take Tommy into the tunnels where it’s quiet and let him rest,” Nikki said sternly. “I can’t have him in here while I work.”

“You’re a baker! You can’t heal people!”

Nikki’s jaw tightened. “Well I’m the best you’ve got!”

Techno picked him up by the waist and carried him into the dark tunnel, murmuring comforts in his ear. “Fuck you,” Tommy spat. His body felt so heavy. “Fuck you, fuck you, you killed him, *you killed my friend* —“

“I had no choice but to shoot,” Techno said quietly, laying him down on the cool stone. “I’m sorry, Tommy.”

“You’re a murderer, I hate you. I hate you. I hate you so much.”

He reached up to punch his brother, but Techno caught his fist easily. “I’m not a murderer. Tubbo is going to survive. I made sure of it.”

“You set him on fire!”

“I had no other choice! Schlatt forced me!”

Tears dribbled down Tommy’s face and Techno wiped them away with a calloused thumb. “You

can hate me, Tommy. It's okay."

Tommy's whole body hurt so badly. "I want dad, Techno."

Techno wiped some of the grime off his cheek. "He'll come back, Tommy. I promise."

Sleep clawed at every part of him, dragging him down. Techno petted his hair.

"I'll get dad back. I promise you that."

Chapter End Notes

dun dun DUN

I'm critical of this chapter, but I found out how to make italics work hee hee hee

I rly hope everyone is okay with how the story is going. The story is starting to get really serious, and I want to make everyone happy! Everyone is so kind on this site :)

-Ophelia

Phil.

Chapter Summary

it's time to wake up now

Chapter Notes

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

Heaviness. That's what Phil felt first. It wasn't a weight on his chest; he *was* the weight, rather, sinking lower and lower into an endless blue. He had no body, no form. He felt no pain.

Then, a prick. Right in the middle of his palm. He had a palm now, a hand, a wrist. Phil curled his fingers. Another prick, then pressure. Someone was holding his hand. No. They were *pulling* on his hand. Pulling him up. Phil now had an arm, a shoulder, a leg. There was pain in his leg, pain that stretched to the end of every limb he had.

The hand pulled him farther upwards; out of his peace he rose, out of the endless blue. *No*, Phil thought. *I want to stay. I don't want to be in pain.*

But the hand was unrelenting, gentle but stern. Phil rose, his body becoming heavier and more concrete. The pain increased, increased, and hit a crescendo. He couldn't see. He needed to see. He needed to.

Phil opened his eyes.

The first thing he saw was his elytra, hung up on the wall. It looked so pretty in the sunlight, but so very dusty. Who had let it get so dusty?

"Hey," a quiet voice said.

Phil turned his head, feeling his stiff bones crack. Techno sat on the edge of his bed, a hand on his ankle. Or rather, where the space his ankle *should* have been. Phil jolted, trying to reach for the empty space, but his muscles felt like lead. Techno pushed him back down to his bed, murmuring softly. He held a needle connected to a drip line in one hand.

"I didn't want to have to wake you up, Dad. I'm sorry," he said. "But I need your help. Everyone needs your help."

"Techno." Phil's voice was hoarse, his throat drier than it had ever been. He raised his heavy arms and Techno flew into them.

"Gods," Techno whispered. "Dad, I hurt a kid. I hurt him badly."

They sat there for a while, Techno explaining everything. How he'd left. How Tommy and Wilbur had been kicked out and re-captured. How he'd set a young boy aflame just to get the chance to save them.

How Wilbur had changed since Eret's betrayal.

“Manburg’s in pieces; Wilbur’s been gone for a week, Dream and his friends are nowhere to be found, and Schlatt and his cronies are all cooped up in the mansion. He’s kind of lost his mind since I blew his hand to pieces.” Techno ran a hand through his hair. It had grown to his collarbones. “Wilbur’s angry about being betrayed. Really, *really* angry. I’m afraid he’s going to do something wild and drag Tommy into it. He’s not right, Dad. He’s not Wilbur.”

“Get me my elytra,” Phil grunted. “I want to see Tommy.”

He forced himself into a sitting position and swung his existing leg off the bed. He ached like he had never ached before, but the thought of seeing his sons drove him to try to stand up. Techno caught him when he inevitably fell, his leg too weak to stand alone, and handed him a whittled wooden cane. “I thought I’d have a couple more weeks to work on this, so sorry for any splinters.”

“I love it how it is,” Phil said. “Now help me get my elytra so I can see what mess you’ve all gotten yourselves into.”

The moment Phil slipped into his metal wings and felt them come alive upon his back, every ache and pain in his body seemed to disappear. His chest felt light. His missing leg meant nothing.

“Oh, I feel great,” Phil chuckled. “Now, where is this—“

Techno pushed himself into Phil’s arms, shuddering. “Dad, Dad, I—“ his voice broke— “I missed you so much. I’m so sorry.”

“It’s alright, Techno. We both said things we regretted.” Phil felt his wings encase them both. “I love you, Techno.”

“I thought I’d never get to hear you say that again,” Techno choked. “I thought I’d never get to apologize.”

“It’s behind us now. We need to go find the boys.”

Techno wiped at his eyes and grabbed his trident from the bed. “Are you sure you can fly? You’ve been in a coma for like, two months.”

Phil stretched out his wings and felt his back muscles pull. It felt refreshing. “All I’m hearing is that I got a year’s worth of sleep in two months. I feel great.”

Techno chuckled. “Alright, then. Let’s go.”

~

It felt so good to fly.

Techno soared just ahead of him, propelled through the air by his trident. Phil held his cane in one hand, letting the other one stretch out and feel the air rushing beneath his fingers. He felt himself coming alive.

They landed in a small clearing, where a large rock stood propped up against a hill. Techno pushed it out of the way in a single shove. “Come on. I didn’t tell them I was going to wake you up. They’ll want to see you.”

Moving was quite a bit harder when he wasn’t flying, but his cane helped him limp awkwardly to the hill’s entrance, then down the narrow, rudimentary staircase that opened into a massive ravine.

Tommy appeared out of a tunnel and sprinted into Techno's arms. "Where have you been?" He said shrilly. "I thought you'd left—"

His voice cut off abruptly when he noticed Phil standing behind him, leaning awkwardly on his cane. "Dad?" His voice came barely above a whisper.

"Hey, Tommy," Phil smiled.

"*Dad!*" Tommy nearly knocked Techno to the ground as he ran to hug him. Though it had only been two months, Tommy had grown to be nearly taller than him. He was frightfully thin beneath his clothes, and Phil felt his heart ache. He should have been there to protect him. He should have been there to protect them all.

Phil eventually sat down with Tommy in his arms, holding a hand against the back of his head. Tommy smelt like sweat and ash and regeneration potions. Aether above, he was only thirteen, but his hands were covered in scars and his face was gaunt with fear. The pressure of keeping Wilbur's psyche intact for the last couple weeks had eaten away at him, and now he was barely recognizable to Phil.

But he was still his boy, and Phil could protect him now. And he would.

"Where's Wilbur?" He asked.

Tommy stiffened in his arms. "He left after the big...thing that happened. Said he was going out into the tunnels to reorganize some chests and disappeared. Didn't take anything with him as far as I know."

Techno sat down next to them, fiddling absentmindedly with his trident. "I've looked everywhere for him, even in Manburg. He's nowhere to be found. Nowhere on the surface, that is."

"Oh, Wilbur." Phil leaned his head against the cool ravine wall. "I wish I'd have been there to help you all."

"Don't start guiltting yourself," said Techno sternly. "We made the choice to keep you asleep so you wouldn't have to feel the pain of having your leg heal."

"Yeah," Tommy added. "You're here now. That's all that matters."

"Tommy?" A familiar girl's voice echoed from the tunnels. "Tubbo wants you."

"I'm coming!" Tommy cried. "Dad, come and meet Tubbo. He's my best friend."

Tommy got to his feet and hopped down the staircase before disappearing into one of the ravine's tunnels. Techno stared at the floor. Phil left him there alone, giving him a small smile which he did not return.

I hurt a kid, Dad. I hurt him badly.

The ravine's tunnels had obviously not been made by his sons, since they were squat and wide and supported by lines of wooden posts. It took a moment to figure out why they were so familiar.

"This ravine must have been an old military hideout," Phil said in wonder, passing beneath two lit lanterns that emitted a gentle warmth. "These are travel tunnels. We used to use them to get around without any mobs seeing us."

Along one side, several blankets had been laid out on disconnected chest lids as a makeshift cot. Several lanterns, empty potion bottles, and strewn-out clothing surrounded the odd little room. A girl sat on her knees beside the cot, crushing something between her palms.

“Tubbo!” Tommy exclaimed, taking a seat at the head of the cot. “What’s the matter, man?”

Phil’s blood froze. A young boy, no older than Tommy, lay on his back on top of the blankets. He was shirtless, and for good reason — the entirety of his left arm and shoulder were covered in hideous burns, ones that snaked up onto the side of his face and down his torso in dark, twisting lines. He had stitches all up one side of his face that paralyzed one side of his mouth. He tried to smile up at Tommy. “I heard you scream and I wanted to see what was happening. It seemed interesting.”

Tommy perked visibly. “Tubbo! You can meet my dad!”

“Oh!” Phil’s heart broke at how weak the boy’s voice sounded. “He’s awake?”

Phil limped father into the tunnel, allowing himself to be lit by the nearby lanterns. As he approached, Tubbo watched him with wide eyes and gave him a lopsided smile. “Hi! I’m Tubbo. I’d shake your hand, but…” he nodded towards his mangled arm. “I like your missing leg. That’s cool.”

“Phil!” Nikki jumped up and wrapped her arms around his neck. Her hair was cut short around her face, framing the set lines of her cheeks and smile. She was a woman now, forged of fire. “I missed you, Phil. I’m so happy to see you.”

“I didn’t even recognize you, Nikki. You’re all grown up, now.” Phil pressed a kiss to the top of her head. She smelled of herbs.

Tubbo’s head lolled to the side, as they talked, eyes blinking slowly. Phil noticed he had ram’s horns, poking backwards into the pile of blankets that served as his pillow. “I’m itchy, Tommy. My arm.”

“It’s the skin healing, Tubbo. You can’t scratch it,” Tommy replied softly. Phil was surprised at his tenderness; it seemed so unlike him, but also completely natural. Tubbo frowned, but lulled back into his half-asleep state pretty much immediately. Tommy rose to his feet and dusted off his knees. “Tell me if he starts getting antsy, okay?” He told Nikki. “I want to talk to my dad outside.”

“Alright. Stay within earshot so I can scream for you if needed.”

“We’ll be up the second tunnel by the entrance.” Tommy beckoned him with a hand. “Come on.”

They walked in silence, Tommy dragging one hand against the stone wall. They turned a corner and saw light spilling out of the tunnel’s entrance. “It’s not in Manburg, don’t worry,” said Tommy. “I like to come sit out here when I need space from it all.”

He sat down in a patch of grass, and Phil followed suit. Sitting down with one leg was more like doing a very complicated squat. It made Tommy giggle.

“That boy,” Phil started. “Is he—“

“He’s Schlatt’s son. Ward, I guess.” Tommy scratched at his head. “Techno nearly blew the both of them up with a firework.”

There was an edge to his voice that Phil was not used to. Tommy’s anger was loud, abrasive; the

calmness of his voice made Phil shiver. “He told me,” He replied. “He feels awful.”

“He still did it.”

Tommy cracked his knuckles and chucked a nearby pebble into the trees. “He could have killed him. Fuck, *look* at him! He’s half-dead already.”

Phil wrapped an arm around him and pulled him close. “I’m proud of you, Tommy. You know that?”

Tommy looked at him with big blue eyes. “What?”

“You’re brave. Far too brave for your age. I’m proud of you.”

“Oh, gods—” Tommy pressed his face into Phil’s shoulder and let out a sob. “You can’t just make me cry all the time, Dad. I’m a man now.”

“You know how many times I’ve cried before? More than you have. It’s normal.”

Tommy chuckled tearfully. “I hate you.” Then he wrapped his arms around Phil’s neck and pressed his face into his shoulder. “I missed you. Wilbur told me you’d never wake up.”

Phil fought the urge to be mad. “I think Wilbur’s sick, Tommy. He’s not right.”

“Will you help him?”

“I will try my absolute hardest.”

~

“You killed Herobrine, didn’t you?”

Phil looked up from his tinkering. Tubbo shuffled himself a couple inches closer, watching him with his wide, spacey eyes.

Phil cleared his throat. “Yes, many years ago.”

Tubbo gave him another lopsided smile. “That’s fucking awesome. Tommy’s told me so much about you.”

Phil rolled his eyes with a smile and went back to crushing herbs. They didn’t have a brewery stand down in the tunnels, so making more health potions for Tubbo was a challenge. “I’m just an old fart who happened to do a couple interesting things in his life. You’ve probably got more stories to tell than me, kid.”

Tubbo giggled weakly. “My dad tried to gore me with his horns and then Techno blew up his hand and accidentally set me on fire.” His good hand reached up and patted his own horns. “These boys are sharp! I can’t do any goring until they start poking forwards, though. I’d have to gore someone backwards if I did it now, and that would just look stupid.”

What an odd child this was. Phil understood why Tommy had taken a liking to him.

“Nikki saved my life. She knew to put regen potions directly on my skin instead of making me drink them — the shock would have killed me before they’d set in if I’d have drank them. Isn’t that interesting?”

“Very,” Phil said. “Though a little morbid.”

Tubbo nodded. “Morbid. I like that word.”

They fell into a comfortable silence, Phil crushing away at his herbs until they were a thin greyish paste. “Alright, let’s try this.” Phil scooped himself closer to Tubbo’s side and scooped a dollop of the paste onto his finger. “I’m going to try a little bit of this on your wrist, okay? It’s an old burn remedy from ye olde days in the military.”

Tubbo turned his head, grimacing. “Do it.”

He squeaked in pain as Phil’s fingers touched his burns and turned his face to the wall. “Ow! That burns!”

“It’ll cool down once it settles, I promise.” Phil reached instinctively to pet Tubbo’s hair, only to have him flinch away.

“Are you a good dad?”

Phil was startled at the odd question. “Uh, I think so? I’m not the best, though.”

Tubbo turned his head back to face him. “Tommy says you’re the best.”

“Tommy doesn’t have much to compare me to.”

“Are you proud of me?”

Once again, Phil was taken aback. “Why, yes. You’ve been through quite a lot and you still manage to make jokes. That’s admirable.”

“Have you ever been to the Nivlan forest?”

“Been there?” Phil laughed. “I lived there for years! It’s where I settled down before the war began.”

Tubbo’s eyes shone. “Did you see the bees? Eat the honey?”

“I packed on about fifteen pounds of honey-weight over those years, Tubbo. That shit’s addictive.”

Tubbo’s grin was so large it made the paralyzed corner of his mouth twitch. “One day, I’m going to get an apiary of Nivlan bees and sell the honeycomb up here.”

Phil patted his gut and smiled. “Well, I’d keep you in business myself. I haven’t had Nivlan honeycomb since before I had Techno.”

Tubbo sighed softly, burnt arm twitching. “Can I stay with you guys when I heal? I can’t really go back with my dad.”

“Of course. I could use another orphan in my home; the other three are getting a little boring these days.” Phil gave him a little wink, which made him giggle. “Maybe I’ll convince Nikki’s parents to let me adopt her so I can get a girl in the house to even out all this testosterone.”

“Tommy will be my brother, then. Sort of. And Wilbur and Techno too.”

“They can be whatever you’d like them to be. Friends, brothers. Anything.”

Tubbo closed his eyes and yawned. “Anything. I like that.”

Four sons, now. Phil had four sons. One missing, one mangled, one a fighter, and one who fought to keep his world in one piece as the other three tore it to shreds in front of him.

Tommy, Nikki, and Techno slept in the ravine’s main room, Nikki using Techno’s legs as pillows. Tommy had curled up against his brother’s side, facing away but still pressed up against his warmth. Peaceful.

Phil wondered where Wilbur was.

Chapter End Notes

GUESS WHOS BACK

BACK AGAIN

come to collect his idiot traumatized sons

ze therapy papa is BACK

chap is mostly fluff because my brain is dying thanks to tics. Luckily writing makes me focus and therefore avoid them! woohoo who needs neurologists when you have Phil Watson And His Gaggle Of Idiots

-Ophelia

Another Plan

Chapter Summary

Wilbur is missing; those in the ravine begin to form a new plan.

Chapter Notes

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

“Can I ask you a question?”

Phil rested his hoe in the grass and leaned on it to rest his leg. “Ask away, Techno.”

Techno furrowed his brow, pulling a handful of potatoes from the ground. “You wouldn’t hurt Wilbur, right?”

Phil stopped. “The hell kind of question is that? Of course I wouldn’t hurt Wilbur. He’s my son.”

Techno did not seem satisfied. He placed the potatoes in his basket, then returned to digging in the soft earth with a sort of aggravated intensity. “I have a bad feeling, Dad. I think Wilbur’s planning something.”

“Being betrayed by Eret threw him for a loop. He’s scared, Techno,” Phil said. “I wouldn’t ever hurt him.”

“What if he was going to hurt Tommy?”

Phil frowned. “Are you not telling me something? These are concerning questions, Techno.”

Techno shook his head, leaving a stripe of dirt along his cheek as he rubbed at his eyes. “I just— I can’t lose him, Dad. I can’t lose Tommy either. I’m afraid Wilbur’s going to drag him into some stupid plan. Tommy trusts him too much.”

“Come here,” Phil knelt in the dirt and allowed Techno to shuffle in his arms. “I promise that I will never hurt Wilbur. Ever. I’m going to protect you guys now.”

Techno sighed. “Wilbur hates me for leaving. Tommy told me. Maybe he’d still be okay if I hadn’t been a coward and fucked off without a word for months.”

Techno deflated and allowed Phil to hold him in silence. He had always been tactile, even as a child. Where Wilbur needed words and reassurance, Techno needed to be held.

“I think this is all my fault, Dad. I’m the one who brought all of us to Manburg, I’m the one who left, I’m the one who nearly burnt Tommy’s only friend alive. I just get so angry and can’t even control the choices I make before it’s too late.”

Phil petted the top of Techno’s head. “Oh, my boy,” he hummed. “All this shall pass. We’ll get back to normal. All of us, Wilbur included.”

“I want so badly for that to be true,” Techno’s voice was soft. “But I just don’t think it is.”

He pulled himself out of Phil's arms and grabbed his basket of potatoes. "I'll go in and clean these. We'll have them for dinner."

"Sounds delicious," Phil smiled. The forest around their small farm rustled in the wind, reminding him of home. He pulled his coat tighter around him and shivered. Wherever Wilbur was, he hoped he was warm.

"Excuse me?"

A young man stood behind him, sword outstretched. He was smaller than Phil's boys, tanned but somewhat sallow with fear. "Where's Tubbo?"

Phil raised a hand defensively. "Whoa! Sword down, man. I'm not going to hurt you."

"You're not answering my question. Where is Tubbo?" The young man took a step closer, snarling. "I know you have him."

"What the hell are *you* doing here?" Tommy pushed past Phil with his bow in his hand, finger pointed accusatorially. "How did you find us?"

"None of your business!" The young man replied. "Tell me where Tubbo is before this turns violent!"

Tommy reached into his quiver, but Phil stopped him with a stern hand. "Whoa, boys. Let's slow down." He turned to the unfamiliar young man, who was now flush with anger. "Who are you?"

"He's Schlatt's right-hand man!" Tommy cried. "We can't trust him!"

"My name is Quackity," the young man said with a scowl. "And I'm *not* Schlatt's right-hand man anymore. Now, if you guys have killed Tubbo, you're all dead. I *swear*—"

Phil took a step towards Quackity, who jabbed his sword at him defensively. "Tubbo's alive, Quackity. He's down in the ravine."

Tommy smacked him. "Don't tell him that!"

Quackity visibly relaxed, though his posture remained wary. "I'm not Schlatt's right-hand man anymore. He's lost his fucking mind."

"Let's let him see Tubbo," Phil said to Tommy. "Manburg is in no position to attack us right now."

"Technoblade blew his fucking hand to smithereens; of course we're not in a position to attack." Quackity adjusted his beanie. "I just want to see Tubbo. Please."

Phil looked to Tommy, who scrunched his face. "Fine. But you're under strict supervision."

They led Quackity down into the ravine, Tommy holding an arrow at the ready. Upon seeing Technoblade, Quackity's body tensed so hard he ended up throwing himself back against Phil's chest. Technoblade only glowered and disappeared into one of the tunnels with his potatoes.

"Technoblade isn't going to hurt you," Phil tried to say gently, "He was just protecting his brothers."

Quackity inhaled shakily. "He just freaks me out. I don't like piglins."

Tubbo was asleep when they entered, burnt arm stretched out and covered in poultices. Quackity

dropped to his knees and placed gentle hands on either side of Tubbo's face. "Aether above," his voice quavered. "What happened to you, little man?"

Tubbo's eyes opened blearily, but he stiffened upon seeing Quackity. "Tommy!" He shrieked. Quackity fell back, startled by Tubbo's fear, and Tommy rushed to his friend's side immediately.

"It's okay, man. He's not with Schlatt, apparently."

Quackity nodded, hands shaking. "I didn't know if you were alive or dead, Tubbo. I was so worried."

Tubbo relaxed, blowing out a sigh of relief. "And dad?"

"Out of his fucking mind," Quackity pulled on what little hair he had visible. "Drinking night and day, exploding on people, tearing shit off the walls — it's horrible. I had to leave."

"Have they found Dream and his friends yet?"

"Nope," Quackity chuckled. "That's what's grinding Schlatt's gears the most. I wouldn't be surprised if they're in Detlas partying away like normal eighteen-year-olds."

He placed a hand in Tubbo's hair, which was choppy from being half burnt away. "I want to take you to Detlas and get you an actual doctor. We should get out of here."

Tubbo looked away. "I— I can't. I need to stay here with Tommy."

"Man," Tommy started. "You don't need to—"

"I won't leave them behind until I know my dad isn't a danger anymore. Wilbur is still missing, too. I'm sorry, Quackity. I won't leave."

Quackity's face fell. "Are you serious?"

Tubbo nodded. "I won't leave these guys behind."

"Then I'm staying here too. There's no future for me in Manburg," Quackity said. "I'll help you guys do... whatever it is you're doing."

"Finding Wilbur," Phil added.

"Finding Wilbur, yeah." Quackity nodded.

Tubbo's face lit up. A drop of blood seeped from a stretched-out stitch. "Awesome." He closed his eyes, "Awesome."

~

"Do you think they're looking for you?"

Dream sipped at a cup of coffee. Wilbur envied his calmness. "Fuck if I know," he said. "I haven't been out on the surface in days."

Across the room of their small bunker, Sapnap fiddled with the barrels of dynamite. "Get away from that," Wilbur said sternly. "It's dangerous."

"Dude, I *made* it." Sapnap rolled his eyes. "Don't get so territorial over your little stash."

“You’re sure this is a good idea?” Dream placed his empty mug on the table and leaned back in his chair, stretching out like a cat.

“It’s what I want,” Wilbur said quietly. “I fucking hate Manburg and all it stands for. I want it in pieces.”

“But your poor old daddy is still in there!” Sappap’s voice dripped with faux-concern. “You’re going to blow him up too?”

Wilbur curled his lip. “No, actually. I’m going to wake him up first. He’ll be on my side once he sees what’s been done to us. Same with Tommy. If I could just explain it all to them, they’d understand why I’m doing this.”

Dream quirked a smile, rising to his feet. He made his slow way to the fireplace, where George sat immersed in a book, and plucked it from his hands. “I think it would be fun to blow the whole thing up,” he said, ignoring George’s indignant squawks. “It would stick it to Schlatt real nice.”

“I’d like to blow him to pieces too,” Wilbur grumbled. “And Eret. Quackity and Fundy don’t really matter, but I wouldn’t mind them being casualties.”

“You’re trying to *kill* them?” George peeked over the couch and raised an eyebrow. “Sheesh.”

“You saw what they did to my family! They deserve it.” Wilbur sunk deeper into his chair. His head hurt. He wanted his dad. “I’d kill them gladly.”

Dream materialized behind him and put his hands on Wilbur’s shoulders. “I gave you the dynamite to try and get Tommy out originally, but I do have to say I like this plan better. It’s spicy, and will be a riot to watch.” His hands squeezed Wilbur’s skin. “Tell nobody where you got them dynamite. I can’t be involved.”

Wilbur felt a spark of excitement. “You have my word.”

Over in the corner, the stacks of dynamite glinted in the firelight.

I’m going to make you proud, Dad, Wilbur thought. I’m going to get you justice.

Chapter End Notes

YEEHAWW I LOVE MY LITTLE INSANE MAN

god the smp lore keeps growing and there’s so much I want to add to this mf fic but I CANT aaaaa the Tommy and Tubbo angst??? perfection I love those little drama kids

I’m happy you guys like Tubbo! I find his character super interesting and he’s rarely explored. funky lil crispy ram boi

-Ophelia

Too Far, Part One

Chapter Summary

Phil finds Wilbur. Someone leaves the group a gruesome message.

Chapter Notes

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

Phil went out every single day to look for Wilbur, no matter the weather. As the days bled into a week, Phil became more and more desperate to find his middle son. Did Wilbur even know he was awake?

He landed on an outstretched branch, using his hands for balance. He really should be looking into a prosthetic leg for himself, but finding Wilbur felt more important at that moment. He could hop for the time being.

Manburg stretched out below him, desolate and empty. Phil watched for any movement, but the town was eerily still except for the few animals wandering around their pens, munching on grass. He was just about to turn back to the ravine when a flash of green caught his eye. A figure darted in between trees along Manburg's border, trying their best to remain hidden. Had Phil not had a bird's-eye view of the whole village, it probably would have worked.

He swooped down and landed just in front of them, causing them to jump back and shriek. "Aether almighty!" Dream said, holding a hand to his chest. "You nearly made me shit myself."

"Where's Wilbur?" Phil snarled.

Dream's mouth went slack. "I didn't know you were—"

Phil took a step forward and jabbed a finger into Dream's chest. "I have a very strong feeling that you know where he is, young man. Tell me, now."

Dream shrunk back a little, pressing his lips together. "He's been staying in the bunker with me and my friends. He's fine, okay? Chill."

"I won't—" Phil clenched his fists— "I will not *chill*, thank you very much. I've been looking for all of you for two weeks now!"

"We decided to lay low," said Dream. "Wilbur didn't want to be questioned by any of Schlatt's cronies if they found the ravine."

"And he couldn't have told us any of that?"

Dream shrugged, irritably nonchalant. "He wanted to have his plan in motion before he dragged Tommy or any of you into it."

Oh no.

"Plan? What do you mean plan?"

Phil did not like the smile that spread across Dream's face. "I can't tell you," he said. "Wilbur would be pissed. You'll have to ask him yourself; he's off looking for you right now, in fact."

He sprinted off, scaling the border wall as if he were weightless. Phil would have followed him and bullied more information out of the little brat if Wilbur wasn't actively out looking for him. The gears in Phil's head began turning. Where would he be? He had to be in Manburg or the ravine. Phil looked around him as if he'd see Wilbur walk out from behind a tree and felt anxiety grip his chest.

The medic centre. Wilbur didn't know he was awake yet. Phil jolted with the realization and nearly opened his wings into the pile of bramble behind him. Using his cane to gain speed, Phil took a sloppy running start and soared into the air. Despite having slept there for the past eight weeks, he wasn't exactly sure which building was the medic centre. He did several large loops of the town before seeing someone move in a nearby window. The brown trench coat was immediately familiar.

Wilbur was facing the door when Phil landed in the full-length open window, sat on the side of Phil's old bed with his hands tangled in his hair.

"Wilbur!" Phil cried.

Wilbur turned his head slowly and looked Phil up and down as if he weren't sure he was real. Wilbur's hair had grown, nearly long enough to cover his eyes, and dark bags were etched into the soft skin of his cheeks.

"Dad?" He said softly.

"Oh, Wilbur—" Phil nearly fell flat on his face hopping down from the windowsill, but managed to keep his balance long enough for him to wrap his arms around Wilbur. "I've been looking for you for ages! Where have you been?"

"Around. How long have you been awake for?" Wilbur replied. He was tense, standoffish.

"A week or so now," Phil petted down his tangled hair and cupped his face in his hand. "You've been gone for weeks now, Wilbur. Techno and Tommy have been worried sick!"

"Techno needed a taste of his own medicine," Wilbur snapped. "And I needed space to plan. I didn't want to involve Tommy until I had to."

Phil sat down next to him as he fiddled with his sleeves. "Dream mentioned a plan but refused to tell me anything. What's going on?"

"If I tell you, you have to promise to have an open mind." Wilbur cracked his knuckles.

"That doesn't really comfort me, but go ahead."

Wilbur breathed a long sigh through his nose as if preparing himself. "I want to blow Manburg up."

Phil stopped. "*What?*"

"Dream and his friends have been getting me TNT for the last couple weeks. We were originally going to blow up the mansion to get Tommy out, but the plan was... rewired."

"You're going to blow it up?"

Wilbur stood abruptly and whirled to face Phil, eyes pleading. “You saw what Schlatt did to all of us! He deserves it!”

“Holy shit, Wilbur! *This* is what you’ve been planning for weeks? What’s essentially a mass murder?”

Wilbur put his hands in his hair. “Dad, I thought you of all people would— you’re a soldier! You should know that bad people deserve to be blown to bits!”

“There are innocent people in Manburg!” Phil said. “You were going to blow them up too?”

“Nobody in Manburg is innocent! They were complicit in all of this!”

Phil put his face in his hands. This was so much worse than he imagined. “Where is the dynamite, Wilbur?”

Wilbur’s face twisted as if he were about to cry. “I’m not telling you. You’re going to take it away.”

“Wilbur,” Phil growled. “Tell me where that dynamite is.”

“*No!*”

“Tell me where that dynamite is or I will find it myself!”

“I thought you would understand!” Wilbur wiped at a tear that fell down his face. “I thought I could trust you!”

Phil rose, arms outstretched to hug him, but Wilbur stumbled back until he hit the wall, weeping into his hands. “Wilbur,” Phil said. “I think you’re sick. You’re scared, and you need to come and be with your family for a while.”

“I don’t want fuck all to do with Technoblade! He left us! He betrayed us just like Eret did!”

Wilbur slid down the wall until his face was buried in his knees. “I want this whole place blown to smithereens. So does Dream. You’d understand if your darling Technoblade wanted to do this.”

Phil frowned. “I do not favour Technoblade over you. I love you all equally.”

“That’s what you tell me,” a strained grin spread into Wilbur’s face. “But why should I believe you? I’ve already been lied to lots before.”

Phil took a tentative step forward, and when Wilbur didn’t move, Phil maneuvered himself into a sitting position beside him against the wall. “Come on and sit in my lap.”

“I’m too old for that,” Wilbur murmured.

Phil tried to smile. “I think they’re special circumstances. And I haven’t gotten my first hug from you since I woke up.”

Wilbur leaned into his arms, throwing his long legs over Phil’s lap and placing his head in the crook of Phil’s shoulder. “You’re on my side, right?”

“I always am and I always will be. But you can’t go ahead with this plan.” Phil leaned his cheek into Wilbur’s curls. Wilbur’s hand clenched. “I know you’re angry. Rightfully so. But this is not the answer.”

“Alright,” Wilbur closed his eyes. His voice was soft, defeated. “I just want to go home.”

“Good. I’ll take you home. Everyone misses you.” Phil pressed a kiss to Wilbur’s head, making him sigh. “Now, where is the dynamite?”

“It’s in Dream’s bunker,” Wilbur murmured. “It’s safe there. I promise.”

“Fine. Let’s get you home to your brothers. I want us out of here and on our way home by tomorrow evening.”

Wilbur nodded silently. He looked so very small, despite towering over Phil in height. Phil wanted to wrap him in a blanket and hold him until he was okay again. He reached to put his hand on the small of Wilbur's back as they exited the medic centre's doors, but he dodged sideways continued walking, eyes staring ahead. There was tension, still; a rope being stretched from both ends. Wilbur was fraying, but he hadn't yet unravelled.

I can work with this, Phil told himself with as much confidence as he could muster. I can bring him back.

~

Phil opted to not tell the boys of Wilbur’s potential plan. After all, it wasn’t important. They would be on their way home by the next evening, far away from Manburg and the damned TNT that had not left Phil’s mind in the hours that had passed since he’d brought Wilbur home. Wilbur had remained quiet as the evening went on, breaking only from his jaded disposition to pick Tommy up in a massive bear hug when they saw each other for the first time. Techno attempted to make conversation as well, but Wilbur made his bitterness towards his older brother quite clear. Phil tried to not let that bother him. Brothers fought, and Wilbur was in a vulnerable position. Everything would improve when they got home, away from Schlatt and Manburg and Dream.

Tommy fell into Phil’s arms at the end of the day, looking happier than he’d had in a long time. “It feels so nice to have everyone around again. I don’t even care that Wilbur’s mad at Techno. I have my family back.”

“You do,” Phil smiled. “Go to sleep. We’ll have a long day of travel tomorrow.”

Tommy looked to where his brothers slept on opposite walls of the ravine, curled up in blankets. “Wilbur’s alright?”

Phil nodded. “Of course he is. We’re all alright.”

Maybe if he said it enough times, it would become true.

~

Phil woke to abrupt chaos. Tommy was in hysterics, running wildly up and down the ravine with his head in his hands. Wilbur followed closely behind him, trying to calm him down, and Technoblade stood at the entrance to one of the tunnels, looking into the darkness with wide eyes. Nikki and Tubbo were awake as well, fluttering nervously. Tubbo had enough energy to stand, but he still couldn’t move all that quickly. Certainly not as fast as Tommy, even as he tripped and collapsed to the ravine floor in a sobbing heap.

“Dad!” Techno cried. “It’s Tommy!”

Phil grabbed his cane and limped to his son’s side, panic growing in his gut. “What’s the matter?”

“Henry!” Tommy wailed. “Someone killed Henry!”

“What?” It took a moment for Phil to remember. “The cow?”

Tommy only cried harder, gasping in air between gut-wrenching sobs. Wilbur pointed to where Technoblade was standing. “It’s a fucking massacre.”

Technoblade stopped him from looking into the tunnel with a stern hand. “It’s about as bad as you can imagine. Someone did this purposefully.”

“It was probably Schlatt!” Tommy seethed. “He killed my fucking cow!”

He fell back into Wilbur’s arms, shuddering, and Phil felt himself grow tense. “We can’t leave now!” Wilbur said. “Schlatt went too far with this!”

“I want fucking revenge!” Tommy screamed. His face was beet-red, nearly purple with rage and grief. “I wanna smash that place to bits!”

Phil caught Wilbur’s eye just as the ghost of a smile brushed his face. Phil felt a pit of ice in his stomach.

Chapter End Notes

hehehe short chappy for you all!!! I like ze suspense

I wonder who that horrible message is from?

-Ophelia

Too Far, Part Two

Chapter Summary

Wilbur and Tommy make a plan.

Chapter Notes

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

Things had almost been alright for Tommy. He should have expected for it to not last.

Wilbur remained by his side while Phil and Techno cleaned up the massacre in the tunnel, letting him cry out his sorrow. He seemed to be the only one who understood Tommy's rage towards the awful situation; his father and brother wanted simply to pack up and leave, but Tommy would sooner gnaw his own foot off than let himself be chased out without a fight. Schlatt had taken it too far for too long, and Tommy wasn't about to let him get away with it.

"Want to go for a walk?" Wilbur said. Tommy sniffled, feeling somewhat pitiful, and nodded. Wilbur gave him a warm smile.

"I want you boys to stay in," Phil popped his head out of the tunnel. Tommy tried to ignore the speckles of blood on his clothes. "No going out."

Wilbur frowned, but relented when Phil gave him a stern glare. "Let's go for a walk in the tunnels, then," he whispered. The tunnels were long enough to walk up and down when someone needed a break, so Tommy agreed. He liked looking at all the scratch marks and engraved initials in the stone walls. Any distraction would be fine, though. Any way to forget what he'd seen that morning.

"Who do you think did it?" Wilbur asked.

Tommy clenched his jaw. "One of Schlatt's cronies, I bet. Maybe they're mad Quackity is on our side now."

"Monsters." Wilbur curled his lip. "All of them."

Tommy felt a lump rise in his throat again. "Henry didn't deserve that. He wasn't a part of all this."

"That doesn't matter to them," Wilbur wrapped an arm around Tommy's shoulders. "They just wanted to cause you pain."

He stopped, forcing Tommy to as well. "If you want, we could get revenge on them."

"What do you mean?" Tommy said.

Wilbur bit his cheek, looking around them as if to make sure nobody else could hear. "Dream gave me some dynamite when you were captured. We were going to use it as a distraction."

Tommy widened his eyes. "*Dynamite*? You were going to blow shit up?"

"It's only a stack or two; nothing that would have caused lasting damage. It was only to scare

them.” Wilbur leaned in closer. “I have it hidden in this ravine. I say we plant it right outside the mansion and give them a piece of our minds.”

Tommy bit his tongue. The idea was equal parts terrifying and alluring. “What would Dad say?”

“Dad doesn’t need to know. You know he won’t like it,” Wilbur said. “But Schlatt killed Henry. Are you just going to let him get away with that?”

“No,” Tommy said. “I won’t. It’s not fair.”

“It isn’t. It really isn’t.”

“But you promise it won’t hurt anyone?”

Wilbur chuckled. “It’s one stack of dynamite. Won’t be any bigger than a creeper’s blast. I promise. At most, it’ll fuck up those pretentious little bushes out front.”

He jabbed Tommy in the side, making him giggle. “Come on. Let’s leave some nice holes in his front yard.”

“He’ll—“ Tommy paused to laugh. “He’ll have a bit of trouble scraping dirt off his windows with only one hand!”

Wilbur leaned back and tipped his head to the ceiling, his cackles echoing off the walls. “Gods, I missed you so much, Tommy. You’re like the funniest kid ever.”

Tommy felt a blush creep up his cheeks. “I am the funniest kid ever. It’s a talent of mine.”

Wilbur smiled. “It’s a plan, then. Once everyone’s asleep, meet me by this tunnel. Let’s give them a nice spook. For Henry.”

Excitement coursed through Tommy’s veins. “Hell yeah,” he said. “This is going to be awesome.”

“Go distract Dad while I go tell Dream. They’ll want to see this too.” Wilbur sent him off with a pat on the shoulder. “This is going to be awesome, Tommy. You’re going to love it.”

Tommy hopped back down the tunnel with a newfound fire in his veins. He and Wilbur were going to stick it to Schlatt. He wouldn’t even know it was coming! Tommy wanted to tell Tubbo so badly. If anyone deserved to see Schlatt shit his pants over having his front lawn blown up, it was Tubbo.

“Where’s Wilbur?” Phil was bent over their small fireplace, tending to some soup with Nikki.

“He went for a piss,” Tommy lied smoothly.

Phil’s mouth tightened. “I told you guys not to go outside.”

Tommy wasn’t expecting Phil to be so sharp. His confidence wobbled. “Is he supposed to piss inside or something?” He said with a nervous laugh.

Phil handed the soup spoon to Nikki, who stared down the tunnel Wilbur had disappeared down with worried eyes. “I’m going to go find him. I’d rather not have anyone outside when a cow-killer is on the loose.”

“Whoa!” Tommy blocked him as he moved to walk up the tunnel. “Leave the man to piss in peace!”

“Tommy!” Phil snapped. “You know your brother is sick. I don’t want him wandering out alone!”

Sick. Tommy didn’t like that word. “Wilbur’s the only one who seems to be reacting properly to this situation! Schlatt killed my cow!”

Nikki coughed awkwardly. “I think I will go help Techno with the potatoes.”

She scurried away, leaving Tommy and Phil alone with the pot of bubbling soup. Phil pinched the bridge of his nose and gestured quite sharply for Tommy to sit down. “Stir the soup, please.”

Tommy plopped down and grabbed the wooden spoon. “This better not be Henry,” he mumbled.

“Of course it’s not—“ Phil groaned. “Tommy, Wilbur’s having a hard time right now. What happened with Eret really shook him up. You can’t be enabling him.”

“Enabling him? I’m not enabling anything!” A stray drop of soup landed on Tommy’s hand, making him wince. “He’s the only one who wants to get back at Schlatt for killing Henry. The rest of you just want to leave with our tails between our legs!”

Phil let out a quiet breath. “Tommy, we don’t know if it was Schlatt.”

“Of course it was Schlatt? Who else could it be?”

“I’m not sure, but until we have proof we can’t—“

Tommy scowled. “Are you saying it was Wilbur, Dad? You think Wilbur killed my cow?”

“No!” Phil rubbed his hands together. “I’m just saying that Wilbur may not be the one to listen to right now.”

“How would you know? Wilbur’s raised me for longer than you have! He was the only one there for me when Techno fucked off for two months!”

Phil’s face dropped. Tommy tried not to regret what he’d said. It was the truth.

“Wilbur is only sixteen. He’s not your father and never will be.” Phil’s voice was alarmingly gentle. “I’m sorry I couldn’t be there for you. I am now, and that’s what matters. Just because Wilbur’s saying what you want to hear doesn’t mean what he’s saying is right.”

“What I’m saying? You mean getting our deserved revenge for the slaughter of Tommy’s pet isn’t right?”

Wilbur stood half-shadowed in the tunnel’s entrance. He narrowed his eyes at Phil. “Just because I care more about Tommy than you do doesn’t mean you can put me down in the dirt.”

“Wilbur!” Phil’s voice raised. Tommy could have sworn he got taller. “Cut that out. Stop manipulating your brother right now.”

“*I’m* manipulating him?” Wilbur laughed, but the sound had no humour. “He agrees with me in the first place! It’s you who’s trying to wear him down so he agrees with your cowardice!”

“We have no proof Schlatt did this! None at all!”

Wilbur snarled. “Who else would it be? Who else, Dad? Nikki? Techno? Me?”

Phil turned to Tommy, eyes blazing. “Go see Techno. Now.”

“No!” Tommy said. “I’m staying with Wilbur!”

“See?” Wilbur stretched out an arm and Tommy ran to him, hiding behind Wilbur’s side as Phil took an aggressive step forward. “Tommy wants to stay with me. I’m not the one manipulating him here.”

Phil looked from Tommy to Wilbur with steely eyes. “Did you tell him your plan? About Dream’s dynamite?”

“Yeah!” Tommy piped in. “He did!”

“And you agree with that? To blow up all of Manburg and everyone inside it?” Phil’s metal wings began to bristle.

“That wasn’t my plan!” Wilbur said with a snarl. “Stop lying to him!”

“That’s what you told me you wanted!”

“I only wanted to set a couple stacks off in the front yard to scare them! Stop trying to make me a murderer!”

Phil put his hands in his hair. His eyes were wide with... fear? “Tommy, please just stay here. Do not go with Wilbur. He’s lying to you.”

Wilbur grabbed Tommy’s shoulder with surprising force, making him jump. “I’ve raised you for longer than he has. You don’t have to listen to him.”

“Tommy,” Phil pleaded. “He’s got barrels of dynamite, not just a couple of stacks. He wants to blow all of Manburg up with everyone inside.”

Tommy wrenched out from under Wilbur’s hand and stumbled a few steps back. “I’m going—“ his throat closed. “I’m going to see Techno.”

He took off before either of them could stop him, before either of them could see the tears beginning to fall. It felt like someone had taken a sledgehammer to his world, and it was crumbling beneath him with every step he took.

One of them had to be lying to him. That was what was hardest to swallow.

~

“Who the fuck are you?”

Wilbur tilted his chin down, staring at Phil with darkened eyes. “I’m your son.”

“My son wouldn’t manipulate his younger brother into taking part in a mass murder. He wouldn’t lie to my face and try to turn my youngest son against me!”

“He’ll agree with me once I explain it to him!” Wilbur cried. “I don’t have to manipulate him!”

“Did you kill Henry? Did you pay someone to do it for you?”

A flash of guilt crossed Wilbur’s face. “We have to make sacrifices for the greater good. Tommy needed drive to do what’s right. Now he has it.”

“You—“ Phil’s palm met the soft skin of Wilbur’s cheek with a resounding crack before he had

even processed that he'd crossed the room. "You're a monster, Wilbur! Tommy loved that animal!"

Wilbur raised his hand to his split lip and wiped at the beads of blood beginning to form. "You slapped me. You actually slapped me."

Phil wanted to cry. "Do you not see how messed up this is, Wilbur? You murdered your own brother's pet! You were supposed to protect him!"

"And *you* were supposed to protect *me*!" Wilbur screamed. "But you're just like all the rest! You're going to betray me just like Eret and Techno and everyone else did!"

His face twisted grotesquely; Phil could barely even recognize him. "Fuck you! Fuck all of you! I'm blowing this whole town and this ravine to fucking pieces and you all can be vaporized for all I care!"

"No you will not!" Phil cried. "Wilbur, I don't want to have to hurt you. But I will not let you hurt your brothers or anyone else. You've done enough."

Wilbur smiled, his skin stretched tight along his bones. "I've already got it all rigged up, Dad. Every piece." He began to gesture wildly around him, laughing so hard he was spitting. "We are standing in the middle of a fucking time bomb! With one press of a button, I could turn this place into a crater. Every damned piece of this awful village!"

Phil's hand drifted to the sword at his belt. Wilbur's eyes shot upwards, reflecting the lamplight like an animal's reflected moonlight. "I'm sorry, Dad. I thought you'd be proud of me for this. For doing what's right."

"Proud of you for trying to murder your brothers? Your friends? Becoming a terrorist?" Phil felt phantom pains in his missing leg. "Wilbur, please—"

"You're just as blind as the rest of them." Wilbur's voice dropped to a gentle whisper, as if he were helping a child drift off to sleep. "You'll see when this is over and done. I don't want to have to hurt Tommy or Nikki. If you know what's good for you, you'll get them out quick." He turned slowly. "Don't bother following me; I'm going to press that button no matter what. You should spend your last couple minutes helping everyone get out."

He sprinted off into the darkness. Phil felt the heavy blanket of panic land on his shoulders all at once. He was outside before he knew it, babbling half-incoherently into Techno's arms while Nikki and Tubbo watched from a distance with wide eyes.

Phil felt a jab of terror. "Where the fuck is Tommy?"

"He saw Wilbur running into the forest and followed him," Techno stammered. "What the fuck happened?"

"Wilbur's rigged the whole town with dynamite!" Phil grabbed Techno's arm and started dragging him. "We have to get out! Now!"

Nikki helped Tubbo climb up onto her back and the four of them sprinted into the forest, Phil gliding alongside them as they ran. His fear grew with every passing second; when would he hear the blasts? Would they be far enough?

They reached a clearing, and Phil made them stop there. Techno had his tools and his sword on him. Phil hands drifted once more to his sword. "I have to go find them. You all stay here. Do *not*,

under any circumstances, return to Manburg. I'll come get you guys."

Nikki nodded, her eyes blown wide. She tightened her hold on Tubbo. Techno grabbed his hand and squeezed. "Do not hurt him, okay?"

Phil hated how easily the lie passed from his lips. "I won't."

Alone, he flew back into Manburg, the sword at his side both a comfort and a crushing weight.

I'm coming for you, Wilbur. For better or for worse.

Chapter End Notes

OOOOOOH ITS GETTING SPICY

y'all, I'm not usually one to write romantic RPF because I find it potentially invasiv, but Dream do b giving me so many ideas for a king/knight story and I can't help but consider also he has made it clear that it doesn't make him uncomfy. Would y read it if maybe that was what I wrote after this fic? (also feel free to comment ideas of what u would like to see me write as well :))

anyways enjoy Wilbur being a horrible asshole

- Ophelia

Up In Flames

Chapter Summary

goodbye, Manburg.

Chapter Notes

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

“Wilbur!” Tommy cried. “Wilbur, wait!”

Wilbur didn't seem to hear him. He wove in between trees, trench coat flapping at his heels. What had Phil said to him? Why was he running away?

Wilbur took a sharp left, disappearing into the Manburg walls. Tommy followed at his heels, ducking into a small opening in a hill and into a long, narrow hall. *A bunker!* Tommy darted down the passage way, heart beating in his chest. “Wilbur!” He called again. His voice echoed in his ear. “Wilbur! It's me!”

The hallway opened into a single room, windowless and dim. Tommy stopped in his tracks. Something was carved into the stone wall in front of him, choppy and rough but legible nonetheless.

WILBUR WAS HERE

Tommy ran his fingers along the rudimentary writing. Then, with a chill down his spine, he turned around.

“Wilbur.”

Wilbur stood in the doorway, blocking Tommy in. “Hi, Tommy.”

“Why did you run away?” Tommy asked. “What is this place?”

Wilbur had his arms wrapped around himself. He was shivering. “This,” he said. “Is the final control room.”

“Final control room for what?”

“For everything!” Wilbur's voice broke. “Manburg is going up in flames tonight. The ravine too. Everything.”

He pointed to something on the wall Tommy had not noticed yet. A single button. All the air in Tommy's lungs seemed to disappear. “Wilbur,” he choked. “You don't have to do this.”

“I do, Tommy, I do.” The words seemed like a weight on Wilbur's shoulders. “There is no reason why it should exist. All it does is cause suffering. Schlatt deserves to be the president of a crater.”

“You could kill people!”

“Everyone who doesn't deserve to die is already out. Dad knows.” Wilbur kept his eyes on the

floor. “It’ll all be okay, Tommy. It’ll all make sense.”

Tommy backed up a couple steps, blocking the button from Wilbur’s point of view. “I won’t let you do this. We’re going to go find Phil and forget about this shit.”

“You know that can’t happen, Tommy.” Wilbur took a single step forward. “It’s already gone too far.”

“Wilbur, we can change this!” Tommy stretched out his arms in a pitiful attempt to block Wilbur from the button. “You don’t have to do this!”

“Yes I do, Tommy.”

“We were going to be roommates! Dad was going to move me into your loft so Techno could have his room back,” tears formed in Tommy’s eyes and he didn’t have the strength to wipe them away. “I was going to make you play the guitar for me every night, even if you really didn’t want to.”

Wilbur buried his face in his hands. “Don’t say shit like that! Don’t make this harder than it has to be!”

“I’ll make it so fucking hard you can’t do it!” Tommy cried. Wilbur took another step forward and reached for Tommy’s hand, but he smacked them away. “Stay back! I will not let you do this!”

“Get out of my fucking way!” Wilbur sobbed. “Right now!”

“Wilbur!”

Wilbur turned around. He said nothing for a moment. “Dad?”

Phil’s wings took up the rest of the space in the small hallway, blocking the gentle glow of sunlight. Wilbur backed up, shrinking into himself. “Dad,” he breathed.

Phil did not say a word. He walked through the doorway and his wings seemed to explode outwards, stretching to either side of the room. He looked like a demented, terrifying angel.

“Wilbur,” he said. “Step away from the button.”

“No!” Wilbur cried. “I have to do this!”

“Why?” Said Phil. Tommy wanted so desperately to run to him; the button behind him burned into his back. But he couldn’t risk it.

“Because I’ve already gone too far!” Wilbur pulled at his hair. “Manburg doesn’t deserve to exist. All it does is cause suffering!”

“Blowing it up won’t fix anything.” Phil stretched out his hand. “We’ll fix this, Wilbur. All together. You, me, and your brothers. Nikki and Tubbo too. All of us.”

Wilbur dropped to his knees, making a sort of strange, strangled noise in the back of his throat. Silently, Phil beckoned Tommy nearer. Tommy took a tentative step away from the button, watching Wilbur’s every move. Two steps, three steps — Phil dropped to his knees as well and wrapped his arms around Wilbur, murmuring quietly. His wings came in, in, closing around Wilbur until Tommy couldn’t see him anymore.

“Oh, Dad—“ Wilbur gasped in a shuddering breath. “I’m sorry, I’m so sorry, I’m sorry—“

“It’s okay, my boy,” Phil replied softly. “I love you, I do.”

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m *sorry*—“ Wilbur jerked once, twice, then collapsed back into himself. “I have to, I have to — I’m sorry!”

He shot to his feet, face buried in his hands, and took a running leap backwards. “No!” Phil screamed.

Click.

“Tommy!” Phil grabbed Tommy by the arm and began dragging him back out the hall. “Wilbur! Get out of there!”

Wilbur slumped back against the wall beneath his button, limp and seemingly lifeless. Every fibre in Tommy’s body screamed run but he ripped himself from Phil’s arms and ran for his brother. Wilbur looked up, eyes wide, and reached for him. Tommy fell into his arms.

The world exploded around them.

~

Phil’s back hurt. His head hurt. Every part of his body hurt. A rumble filled the air; delayed dynamite, perhaps. The air smelt of dust and smoke and broken stone.

“Wil—“ Phil’s throat burned. “Wilbur! Tommy!”

He opened his stinging eyes. The front part of the room was gone, blown open into a massive crater. Gods, help him — Schlatt’s mansion was *gone*. Every piece of it. The crater stretched long and wide. It had ripped through half a pond, spilling dirty water down into its depths.

There was a small pile at the front of the room, having barely missed the pieces of floor that had fallen away. Half of it moved; half of it stayed eerily still.

“Wilbur!” Phil cried.

Wilbur stumbled to his feet, ruffled and covered in dust. He looked down at his hands, at the sunlight that covered the back of his coat and ankles, then turned and stared out at his carnage. Silent.

Then, a laugh. It was small at first; a cough more than anything. Then it grew, spiking to a maniacal high. Wilbur raised his hands to his head and punched the air. “Holy fuck!”

“What the fuck did you do?” Phil’s voice echoed in his ears.

“I did it! It’s gone!” Wilbur whooped. He whirled around, eyes blown wide. He was grinning so widely all his teeth were showing.

Phil’s eyes drifted to the heap at his feet. “Tommy!”

He scrambled forward and flipped Tommy over onto his back. He was covered in so much dust that it came off on Phil’s fingers like Tommy’s skin itself was peeling. “Tommy, Tommy!”

He was limp in Phil’s hands, blood pouring down a slice in his forehead. Phil lifted his ear to Tommy’s mouth and listened with his heart in his throat. He was breathing, thank the gods, but only just.

“What the fuck did you do?” Phil screamed. Wilbur looked at him and Tommy with owl-like eyes. He did not seem to see his unconscious brother crumpled in Phil’s arms.

“I did it, Dad! Manburg can’t hurt anyone or anything anymore!”

“You could have killed somebody!” Phil scanned the area for bodies but saw nothing. He wasn’t sure if that was a good thing or not.

“Good! Good!” Wilbur tipped his head back and cackled gleefully at the dust-laden sky. “Fuck everyone who betrayed me!”

Phil could not find any words to say. Tommy remained limp in his arms. “Wilbur,” he said weakly. “Please, Wilbur—“

“What the fuck happened?”

Techno stood behind him, trident clutched in one hand. Wilbur cocked his head and smiled. “I did what I had to do, Technoblade. If you hadn’t fucked off for two months, maybe you would have seen how shitty this place was too!”

“Are Nikki and Tubbo okay?” Phil asked through a closing throat.

“Yes; terrified, but okay.” Techno slid by him, eyes trained on Wilbur. “What the fuck is wrong with you?”

“I got tired of getting fucked in the ass by the world!” Wilbur hissed. “You brought us to this hellhole and then fucked off!”

“I knew you two would be safe here!”

“Safe?” Wilbur gestured to the crater in front of them with a wry smile. “Sure. Super safe. Great job, big bro. How very superb.”

“You’ll be arrested for this,” Techno said in a low voice. “You’ll be in prison for the rest of your life.”

Wilbur’s face softened to an eerily neutral expression. “No, actually.”

“Everyone knows it was you, Wilbur—“

“That’s not what I’m talking about. I’m not going to prison for the rest of my life.” Wilbur moved forward, towards Tommy. Something glinted in his hand. “Because—“ his arm came flying over his head in a clean arc— “My—“ Phil’s hands moved on their own— “Life—“ the handle of his sword was cool beneath his fingers— “Ends—“ A knife. Wilbur held Phil’s dear hunting knife in his hands.

“*Here.*”

Phil’s knife clattered to the floor. Techno made a horrible, strangled gasp. Wilbur... just looked at him. Eyes wide, mouth slightly agape.

Phil let go of the handle of his sword, buried to the hilt in Wilbur’s abdomen, and tried not to scream.

“Wilbur!” Techno caught him as he fell, collapsing to the floor with him. “Wilbur! Stay with me, man!”

Wilbur's mouth moved, but no sound came from his lips. He coughed, and a trail of blood dribbled down the side of his face. "Go get a health potion!" Techno screamed at Phil. Phil's legs wouldn't move. His body was made of stone.

"No—" Wilbur's hand reached for him and Phil took it in both of his, pressing it to his cheek. "Stay," he whispered. "Stay, Dad."

"Why the fuck did you do that, Wilbur?" Techno wiped the blood from Wilbur's lips and gritted his teeth, holding back sobs. "What the fuck is wrong with you?"

"I knew Dad would stop me," Wilbur's eyes closed. Techno shook him roughly, choking on his tears, but Phil stopped him with a gentle hand.

There is no saving him. Let him pass in peace.

"Tommy," Wilbur murmured, suddenly animated. He hoisted himself up on his elbows and dragged himself closer to Phil's lap, leaving a trail of blood on the dusty floor.

Phil picked Tommy up into his arms and allowed Wilbur to rest his head on Tommy's stomach. "I'll make sure he's safe, Wil. I promise."

Wilbur reached up with one bloody hand and wiped some dust off of Tommy's cheek. "I'm sorry," he said. "I'm sorry, Dad. I'm sorry, Techn—"

Blood spewed forth from his lips and he felt limply to the floor, gasping. The end of Phil's sword clanked on the ground as Wilbur's body began to jerk erratically, trying desperately to remain alive. Techno knelt over him, squeezing his paling hands. "Fuck you, man. I love you. Why did you have to *do* this—"

Wilbur murmured beneath his breath, vocalizing with no words. Phil held Tommy close to his chest. He won't watch him die, but he won't get to say goodbye either.

Phil began to count the seconds. *One, two, three.* He counted to the tune of his heartbeat, which was surprisingly slow. *Four, five, six.*

Between seconds eighty-five and eighty-six, Wilbur took his last breath.

On second ninety, his heart stopped.

On second ninety-one, Phil lost his middle son.

Chapter End Notes

ooh... this chapter HURT hurt.

I made an... update to the tags. I didn't want to give spoilers ;p

I still consider this story to have a happy ending. It will be a proper one.

o7, Wilbur Soot.

-Ophelia

What Now?

Chapter Summary

what now?

Chapter Notes

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

The only casualty of the Manburg explosion was Wilbur himself. Techno had managed to warn Fundy of the incoming danger, and everyone in Schlatt's mansion managed to escape safely before the explosions were set off. Unable to convince Tubbo to go with him, Quackity had returned to Schlatt's side to aid with his failing health. Heart problems, they were told, from a mix of shock and alcoholism.

Upon hearing the news that his father was dying, Tubbo maintained his refusal to say goodbye.

Dream and his friends bought the ravaged Manburg land off of Schlatt in the days following the explosion. They did not specify what they wanted to do with it, but seemed happy enough with their purchase. Crater and all.

"I told everyone that the explosion was caused by faulty pipes," Dream told him as he hefted a saddle over Percy's back. "Nobody will know what Wilbur did."

Phil nodded silently.

Phil dropped Nikki off at her parents' house as they passed through the village. She grabbed his hand and squeezed it before she left, her eyes ringed with darkness. Slung over her back was Wilbur's guitar.

She watched them as they trotted away into the distance, her parents flanking her sides. She was safe with them. Safe, forever.

Would you still be alive if you'd grown up with her?

Telling Tommy of Wilbur's death had been the hardest moment of his life. The first thing Tommy had asked to do was see his body, which was easy to oblige, given how they hadn't moved it from the cave. He sat with him for hours, curled up against his side, holding one of Wilbur's cold hands.

"He sat with you, in his last moments," Phil told him quietly. "He knew you were safe. He loved you."

Tommy sat leaned up against the window, holding one of Wilbur's shirts in his hands. "I hate him. I hate him for dying."

Phil moved across the room and wrapped Tommy in a hug. "I get it. I get it."

I hate him for making me do it .

Tommy closed his eyes and rested his head against the window. "It hurts so bad, Dad. It hurts so

fucking bad.”

His face twisted, and within moments he was sobbing into Phil’s arms. “This isn’t fucking fair! It’s not fair!”

There was a hole in Phil’s chest, lined with cauterized flesh. There was a part of him, a horrible part of him, that hated Wilbur too. He didn’t have to die. He didn’t have to make Phil do it, either.

He didn’t have to put his brothers through the trauma of losing him.

The cottage felt cold and empty their first few nights. Tommy refused to sleep in Wilbur’s old room and slept curled up under Techno’s bed. Techno himself barely slept at all. He stayed up all night, patrolling up and down the halls outside their rooms with his trident. When he did sleep, he was fraught with powerful nightmares from which nobody could wake him. Those nights, Phil would pick him up, gangly limbs and all, and hold him in his arms until his screams had stopped.

Days passed. Phil found ways to busy himself. He helped Tubbo change his bandages every second day, helped Tommy with the cows. He sat on the porch with Techno and piled every piece of gold and iron and armour he had around him because that was the only thing that helped him sleep. Sometimes he snuck up to Wilbur’s room and cried himself to exhaustion.

They buried Wilbur under a tree in the backyard. Tubbo planted flowers. Nikki visited every week, riding in on her new pony, Sootie. Tommy laughed for the first time in weeks because of that horse, and only because it shit on Tubbo’s foot out in the paddock. Tubbo didn’t find it nearly as entertaining.

“Phil?”

Tubbo stood in the doorway of Phil’s bedroom, holding a letter in his hands. “Schlatt died of a heart attack this morning.”

Tubbo hadn’t called Schlatt his father since they left Manburg. He didn’t call Phil his father, either. Said it was better not to. For who, Phil wasn’t sure.

“Oh, gods—“ Phil reached out his hand and Tubbo sat down next to him on the bed, reading the letter over and over with furrowed eyebrows. “I’m so sorry, Tubbo.”

Phil had taken out Tubbo’s stitches over a week ago, but they hadn’t been enough to stop the white scar that ran straight up the side of his face. Through the help of regeneration potions, Tubbo’s burns had healed as well, though it had left him with mottled, spiderweb-like scars all up his arm and chest. The couple tendrils that stretched towards the side of his mouth pulled on his skin as Tubbo frowned. “I don’t really know how to feel. I don’t really feel anything.”

“That’s normal. It’s shocking news,” Phil said.

Tubbo rubbed at his eyes. “It’s just weird. I’m going to go to sleep early before I get the chance to freak myself out.”

“Alright,” Phil said with a frown. “You come to me or Tommy if you need anything, okay? You know where we are.”

“Across the hall and under my bed; got it,” Tubbo gave him a small smile. “I’m fine, I promise.”

He jolted slightly as if remembering something. “Techno’s out by the water. He wanted you to come see him.”

Phil felt a mix of fondness and anxiety in his stomach. "Is he okay?"

"Yeah," Tubbo said. "Pensive, but peaceful. I think he was meditating or something."

"Techno doesn't meditate," Phil chuckled. "But thank you. I'll go out and see him. Tommy's asleep too?"

"Yeah. Snoring like a blaze."

"Poor you. Learn to sleep with your ears plugged!"

~

The evening was clear, cloudless, the moon a sliver of light high in the sky. Techno sat on the small beach, facing the endless indigo waves. Phil sat down next to him, but Techno didn't seem to notice his presence until Phil placed a gentle hand on his knee. "Meditating?" He said gently.

"No, just thinking," Techno replied. He stretched his leg out until the toe of his boot reached the rolling waves. "Can you tell me a story?"

"A story?" Phil hadn't told him a story since he was a child. "Which one?"

"How you found me. You never told me before."

Phil leaned back and smiled. "Gods, you never asked. I always assumed it was something you remembered."

Techno shook his head. "Not one bit. The first memory I have of you is... the hoglin that came through the portal. Before you fenced it off."

"That was the first time you scared the shit out of me, you know that?"

"First time of many," Techno leaned back on his elbows and stared up at the sky.

"You would have been... five, maybe. Or six. In human years, at least. I'd just gotten the shit kicked out of me by some piglins because my gold helmet had broken," Phil said. "I thought I was a goner for sure. You bastards are nasty!"

Techno poked his side and bared his tusks. "Snork. I'm a piglin brute. Give me your gold."

Phil laughed for the first time in weeks. "Then, out of nowhere, this little piglin no higher than my thigh comes along and starts stealing my golden carrots. You were dressed in rags and had the biggest white eyes I'd ever seen. And they *saw* me. No other piglins had ever *seen* me before."

Techno smiled warmly. "I bet I was an ugly little shithead."

"You were the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen in that whole dimension."

There was a moment of silence. Techno's breath hitched.

"I got you to give me the gold helmet you had in exchange for my bag of gold. It was nearly as tall as you were and probably weighed just as much." Phil wiped a tear from his eye. "I thought you'd leave me once you got your helmet back, but you just followed me out of that portal and I could never get rid of you after that. You were my little man. And now look at you! Now you're taller than me."

“It’s not my fault you’re short,” Techno giggled.

“Oh, shut it.”

“How did you find me?” Tommy’s voice was quiet, unsure. He and a sleepy Tubbo walked out of the shadows, blankets wrapped around their shoulders.

“That was less than a year ago!” Phil laughed. “You were there!”

“I don’t care! I want to hear it from your perspective.” Tommy sat down by Phil’s side and leaned his head on his shoulder. Tubbo plopped down next to him, holding a lantern between his hands.

“Fine. Wilbur and I had been going crazy over the last couple days thinking we had rats because someone decided to steal from us,” Phil rubbed his knuckles on Tommy’s head, making him squawk, “And I woke up one morning to Wilbur standing over my bed with an axe like he was going to kill me.”

Speaking his name aloud lifted a weight off his chest, and Phil felt emotion rush up his throat and up into his eyes. He paused for a moment, swallowing the lump in his throat. He’d have given anything to have him sitting here with them.

“And—“ Phil chuckled tearfully— “And he looks at me and goes ‘There’s something in this fucking house! It’s on all fours!’ and then tears straight out of the house so quickly I thought he was going to kill whatever was outside.”

Tommy leaned into Tubbo, wiping his tears on Tubbo’s shoulder. “I used to do that and scare people. It was awesome.”

“Not when it was the middle of the night and I was half-naked and half-asleep trying to catch your stupid ass as you went on a suicide trip into the nether,” Phil said with a smile. The tears flowed freely; Phil made no move to stop them. Techno had his hand on Phil’s arm, clutching it tightly.

“I wanted to adopt you right away, but Wilbur made me tell you that you were only being hired on; he was terrified of you taking me away.” Phil leaned his head to the sky and looked up at the moon. “But you wormed your way into his heart, Tommy. I think you could make anyone like you.”

“You really think that?” Tommy said.

Phil pulled him close and hugged him tightly, pressing his nose into his hair. “Absolutely.”

He pulled back and pointed a finger at Tubbo, who giggled and stuck out his tongue. “I knew why Tommy became friends with you from the moment I saw you. It was one of the first things I thought about you.”

Tubbo laughed. “Was it because I was crazy and looked like a zombie?”

“Bingo!”

Their laughter spilt into the air like a thick, unseen fog, rising up into the stars.

Phil could work with this. He could heal.

Chapter End Notes

I love writing grief, and I love writing healing. I'm sorry I couldn't write in Techno and his withers, but those boys needed a break!

I think I may write a DNF Royal au after this fic ends. I'll update you guys abt it!

-Ophelia

Half a Nest, Part Two

Chapter Summary

Epilogue.

Chapter Notes

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

“You’re leaving. Finally.”

Tommy punched Phil’s arm. “I got enough of your bullshit, old man! I have to get out of here before I turn into Techno and grow my hair out to my ass crack.”

Techno, sat on the rocking chair on the porch, raised his middle finger in the air. “It’s in style!”

“Maybe among cultists!”

Phil brushed a stray piece of hair off Tommy’s forehead. “Are you sure you’ve got everything? I’m going to kill you if I have to pay to send your toothbrush to the Nivlan forest through the mail.”

“I double-checked everything, Phil.” Tubbo sat backwards on Percy’s back, swinging his legs back and forth. “Plus, Ragni is only a couple hours’ ride! We can buy whatever we need.”

“I’m going to tell everyone there I’m Technoblade’s brother,” Tommy said proudly. “I will get so many women. It will be awesome.”

Techno let out a high, cackling laugh. “Brother of a retired swordsman! It’s less awesome now that I’ve been out of commission for the last five years.”

“You still beat Dream!”

“We were seventeen! Have you seen that guy now? He’s jacked!”

“I’ll tell people you are, too!”

Phil secured the lantern to Percy’s saddle and gave the chestnut horse a pat on the flank. “I’ll miss you, bud. Be good to my boys.”

The horse nickered quietly and tossed his head, making Tubbo giggle. Over the years, his scars had smoothed, the colour of his burns evening out into a light purple. His horns had grown out, pointing downwards just behind his ears, and his cheeks had smoothed out with age and lost their childish roundness. He was a young man now, so different from the mutilated child he’d met in an old army tunnel so many years ago. Handsome, sure of himself, the constant calm to even out Tommy’s energy. He’d never gotten used to calling Phil his father, but he’d crawled in beside him in bed when he had nightmares until he was sixteen. He didn’t really have to say it.

Tommy opened his arms for a hug. “Come visit us soon, Dad,” he said with a smile. “I’ll show you off to all the Ragnian ladies. It’ll be great.”

Phil rolled his eyes and moved into his son's arms. Gods, he was tall. So tall he could nearly rest his chin on Phil's head. He'd never put on much weight either, despite eating like a starving hoglin, so he was lithe and long and so Wilbur-like it brought a lump into Phil's throat. The pain of losing him had passed, turning into a gentle ache in the pit of his chest, but his presence was everywhere. It was like Tommy and Techno had taken on pieces of him to keep him alive. Wilbur existed in every brick and log in that house. Sometimes, his presence was so it was almost as if he were still there.

"Be safe, Tommy. No running off to Ragni until Tubbo has his apiary up and going. Whatever money I send you two must be split equally, excluding birthday money, and I expect frequent letters. I doubt either of you will enjoy me swooping down from the skies and kicking your asses in front of all those ladies you'll surely have over."

"I'll send you honeycombs back whenever I can!" Tubbo exclaimed. "I hope they'll mail well."

"I bet they will." Phil pulled Tubbo down by the arm and pressed a kiss to his forehead. "You be safe too. Take care of Tommy for me. Ground him if he gets nutty."

"He's *always* nutty," Tubbo dodged a swipe to the leg from Tommy. "But I'll try my best."

"I'll always be here if you need to come back and be taken care of for a bit. There are always chores to be done here!"

Tommy threw himself over Percy's back behind Tubbo and kicked at his friend's heels. "Let's go before he makes us rake the leaves. I don't want to have to camp out in the middle of the woods because we left late!"

Tubbo grabbed ahold of Percy's reins. "Walk us to the gate?"

Phil nodded. He strode alongside them as Percy ambled to the path that broke through the wheat fields, stopping as they reached the gate. He leaned his cane on the fence. "I love you both. Be safe. Make me proud."

"We will," They answered in unison, then exploded into a fit of laughter. With a kick to the flanks, Percy carried them off into the golden fields, kicking dust up into the air as he went. Phil watched them go, waving though he knew they couldn't see him.

"Feeling like an empty-nester, Dad?"

Techno really could be quiet when he wanted to be. His long hair sat unbraided down his back. He looked relaxed, happy, staring off at his brothers' minuscule figures as they crested over the hill and disappeared.

Phil lifted his arm and Techno ducked beneath it, keeping it around his shoulders as he leaned into Phil's side. "The last time I only had one son at home was before Tommy came. The house will feel empty without him taking up all the space."

"The house will also be a lot quieter."

"A lot," Phil murmured. "You boys make a lot of noise."

Techno handed him back his cane, and they made their slow way back into the house. Techno hummed a quiet melody under his breath. Phil didn't know what it was, but it sounded nice. He'd probably have a nice cry in his bed when he went to sleep, but for now, the silence and the knowledge that Tommy and Tubbo were off to be normal seventeen-year olds filled him with a

gentle contentment.

“You think you’ll ever go back to being a swordsman? Maybe become somebody’s bodyguard?” Phil asked over dinner. Techno laughed into his potatoes and flicked a pea at him. “What? It’s a genuine question! You’re quite talented.”

“Maybe someday.” Techno untied the bun on top of his head and let his hair spill down his back before going to braid it. “But I’ve had enough of the chaos for a while. Holding a sword doesn’t feel like it used to.”

“I know the feeling,” Phil said quietly. “It all seems so fickle after a while.”

“Plus,” Techno stabbed a piece of potato with his fork and waved it around, “I grow the best potatoes. Quick, plentiful, and delicious. I’m not about to give up my true calling just to go whack somebody with a metal stick for money.”

“Oh, gods!” Phil wheezed. “That was the most uncool thing you have ever said.”

“Tommy’s gone!” Techno replied with a grin. “I don’t have to pretend to be cool anymore!”

“If I had two feet, they’d both be up your ass right now. Have some dignity!”

Techno snorted, choking on his potatoes, and within moments he and Phil were nearly on the floor with laughter. In every moment of joy for the last five years, Phil felt Wilbur’s presence there with them. Every birthday, every game of cards that turned into an insult contest between Tubbo and Techno; Wilbur was always there. But as Phil wiped a tear from his eye and caught his breath before he passed out, he realized that he could not feel Wilbur anywhere. Not in the bricks, not in the logs. Not even in Techno, mere inches away.

Making sure Tommy is okay, are you? Phil thought. Keep them both safe for me.

I love you, Wilbur.

Chapter End Notes

LE FIN BITCHES

I loved writing this fic. I loved every comment and every kudos and all the people I’ve met on here. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart. You all have reawakened my love of writing ♥

so, what next? Well, I’ll definitely be trying to write more fics! Like I said, maybe a DNF royalty au? No promises, and it won’t be daily updates bc WOW that was fun but hard! It all depends on what my little monkey brain wants to write :)

Stay cheesin, everyone! And merry Christmas!

EDIT: People made fanart of this fic??? hfkshfkfhf I am the luckiest gal on eARTH

I don’t currently have social media so if you made art, send it to me on my discord @opheliabloo#2640! I’d be more than happy to see everyone’s art ♥ tysm I love you all

-Ophelia

NEW FIC ALERT

Chapter Summary

IM BACK BITCHES

Chapter Notes

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

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY HOLIDAYS MY FELLOW CLOUT WHORES

I have a new fic coming out! It is a royalty au enemies-to-lovers DNF fic that im excited to send out into the world! Expect updates once or twice a week. :)

Want a little teaser? Yes you do!

The boy did not know how long he had been running, but he knew he could not stop now.

The sounds of the king's horses behind them pounded in the boy's ears, becoming a garbled roar that sounded like a massive wave was cresting behind him, ready to swallow him whole. But the boy was nimble, and the boy was smart. He dove to the side, scraping the bottoms of his feet on the hardened frost that sat in a thick blanket upon the grass, then shot back in the direction from whence he'd came. The king's horses spooked and squealed, buying the boy precious seconds as the knights fought to regain control of their mounts. One of them, a well-dressed man upon a hulking black monster of an animal, raised his arm and shot his crossbow. The boy ducked, feeling an arrow graze his cheek and leave it stinging in the biting night air. His lungs were full of fire and he tasted blood in his mouth. The forest was thick, unforgiving to even the most experienced of woodspeople, and the boy knew that he could not match the stamina of a dozen massive horses.

So he did the one thing horses could not: climb.

Who's the boy??? Why is he running?? How does he become the bodyguard of the young king he barely likes??? Why does Tommy have cockatiel wings in this fic??? FIND OUT SOON!

I look forward to seeing you all soon ;)

-Ophelia

Chapter End Notes

once again, if u have art or questions for me, find me on discord @opheliabloo#2640 !
I love you all and I hope this next fic makes you guys as happy as this one did ♥

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

