

## I Still Bleed When I Fall Down

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## I Still Bleed When I Fall Down

by [Paranoid Pug](#)

### Summary

It was no secret among the Hermits that Grian was a Watcher.

It was simply a fact of life. Jevin was a humanoid slime with blue skin. Doc broke physics on the regular. Grian was some sort of Eldritch being. The Hermits were never the sort to judge.

Grian could have been an alien from outer space, for all they cared. He was a Hermit, and he was their friend, and that was all that mattered.

Even if not everyone thought the same.

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Or: Grian attends an MCC afterparty with his team-mates, only for things to go very, very wrong.

After all: Even Watchers can bleed.

## Notes

Hello! Pug here, back with another fic that turned out way longer than I intended. No, really, this was meant to be a Oneshot, and I have had to break it into 2 chapters.

(Fic title from the song 'Human' by Christina Perri.)

You may have seen this fic says it is inspired by Dog At The Door, and that is because the characters of Rendog and the Red King are directly inspired by that fic. Basically, consider DATD cannon to this fic. If you haven't read it, all you need to know is that Ren is sharing his body with a Blood God called the Red King and that he and Martyn have a history from Third Life.

Now, for content warnings: There will be more at the start of chapter 2, but for now these are the ones relevant to chapter 1:

CW: Violence, lots of blood, temporary character death, discrimination against hybrid characters.

Stay safe, and enjoy!

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

- Inspired by [dog at the door](#) by [fluffy\\_papaya](#), [iamsolarflare](#)

# Watchers

## Chapter Notes

Edit: Upon re-reading this a million times, I've decided to make some small edits to some of Jared's dialogue. This shouldn't change much of the overall story, but I have slightly edited his motivations and a lot of his dialogue because I wasn't really happy with it.

Another edit: OH MY GOSH THERE'S FANART!!!

From NightshadeOwl on tumblr:

<https://www.tumblr.com/paranoidpug/717063147099471872/oh-my-gosh-oh-my-gosh-oh-my-gooooosh-max-this?source=share>

I am screaming :D :D :D :D

It was no secret among the Hermits that Grian was a Watcher.

It was simply a fact of life. Jevin was a humanoid slime with blue skin. Doc broke physics on the regular. Grian was some sort of Eldritch being. The Hermits were never the sort to judge.

So what if his appearance occasionally changed, flickering between his avian form and something *else* with far too many eyes and far too many feathers? Grian just must be having a bad day, too out of it to keep a leash on his physical form. On days like those, the Hermits would give him his space, all too aware of how he would panic if anyone brought it up.

There were also days, however, when Grian would seem weighed down by problems he refused to share, days when his pranks got more vicious, when he seemed afraid of every pair of eyes directed his way.

It was no secret among the Hermits that Grian had issues with the Watchers. It was part of the reason Xisuma had offered him a place among their band of misfits; a safe haven for him to escape to, a place where he could hide from the eyes pursuing him ever since he had run. A place where he would be accepted regardless of who or *what* he was.

But there were things the Hermits could not help him with. Grian refused to talk about the Watchers with his friends, panicked whenever his form flickered - however briefly - in front of the others. The best they could do was pretend they didn't notice his slips, and be there with hugs and hot chocolate whenever the nightmares got bad.

Things changed when Xisuma brought in Pearlescent Moon for season 8.

Nothing was said, but the Hermits had been around one Watcher long enough to recognise another. Pearl had that same air of being distinctly *non-human*, and her and Grian seemed to share a history and trust that hadn't yet been reached between them and the other Hermits. It seemed Grian finally had someone he could open up to, and the change was quickly noticeable. Though he was still more comfortable keeping his regular avian form, he seemed gradually less self-conscious about how his appearance would occasionally flicker when he hadn't slept.

All this to say: The Hermits were an accepting bunch. Grian could have been an alien from outer space, for all they cared. He was a Hermit, and he was their friend, and that was all that mattered.

Even if not everyone thought the same.

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Grian turned on the tap, letting it run as he splashed his face with the cool water and tried his best to tame his messy blonde hair into something vaguely socially acceptable.

MCC had gone well that day. His team hadn't won, but they'd scored highly in most of the events, and Grian had even managed to add another notch to his 'Lord Dreamslayer' belt, having taken out the masked man once again in Sky Battle.

"You good in there, dude?" Ren chuckled from outside the bathroom, giving the open door frame a quick knock. Grian pouted from where he was trying to flatten a particularly uncooperative strand of hair, looking up to find the werewolf grinning at his failure. "We're going to be late at this rate," he joked as Grian gave up on trying to tame his hair.

"Yeah, yeah, I'm coming," Grian griped lightheartedly, turning off the tap and making sure his white dress-shirt collar was visible over his favourite red sweater before following his team mate out to the common area.

Contrary to Ren's complaints, the other members of their team were not waiting either, and the pair collapsed into the hotel couches, Grian taking the opportunity to have a look at what Ren had chosen to wear to that night's event.

The other Hermit had ditched his usual red button-up and suspenders, which through hanging around Doc for most of the season had become habitually stained with machine grease and redstone dust, instead opting for a clean shirt and a long red coat, his long hair styled back in a simple neat ponytail. Personally, Grian thought he looked pretty regal.

False was the next to emerge from her room, wearing a crisp cyan suit in reference to their team colour as the Cyan Creepers. Last was Martyn, who for whatever inexplicable reason, was wearing a mint-green maid dress.

False raised an eyebrow. "Is that from the Christmas MCC?" she asked.

A blush crept up Martyn's cheeks and he smoothed a crease in the frilly white smock.

"It's for the internet memes," he chuckled.

The MCC Night party was a monthly event held after each MCC, where the winners could be celebrated and the teams could mingle with the audience guests. More often than not, it was a fun, casual event and a great opportunity for Grian and the other MCC Hermits to catch up with friends from different worlds. Grian himself was looking forward to seeing a few of the Dream SMP members - Technoblade had been fun to team with a few MCCs back, and Philza was, well... Philza.

The party venue was a roomy event hall on a modern-style server, just a short walk from the hotels the MCC contestants had been situated in. Grian found himself staring at the intricate buildings as their team wandered down the pavement, admiring the details of the skyscrapers and apartment buildings.

Coloured lanterns in the shape of the different team mascots lined the garden path towards the venue, casting the area in a rainbow of light. Grian waved to one of the other Hermits who was also entering the venue with their team, giving his own teammates a friendly shoulder bump as they travelled up the worn stones.

They had to deposit their weapons at the door, though with the way the place was lit up, there was little doubt they'd be safe from mob spawns. Mostly it was just a safety concern - any venue where alcohol and sharp objects were present in the same building would always run the risk of accidents.

Speaking of alcohol...

“Course I’m an adult, what do I look like?” The voice of a particular rowdy British teen drifted over from the bar. “A Big Man, of course, the biggest of men.”

The bartender simply raised one eyebrow in a display of deadpan disbelief before turning around to serve someone else, much to the teen’s indignation.

“Do you think we should let Philza know his child’s trying to swindle the bar again?” False grinned, wincing as the 17-year-old’s squawks reached them from across the room.

“I’ll give him the heads up,” Grian snorted. “I wanted to catch up with him at some point tonight anyway.”

The party went on like that through the night. Grian went around and caught up with his friends and past teammates, mingling with the guests and even taking a few photos which were sure to end up on the internet by the morning.

It was about two hours into the night, as he was relaxing at the snack table with Pearl - whom he’d met up with earlier - that Grian finally voiced something that had been on his mind for a while.

“Is it just me or does there seem to be a few more unfamiliar faces around this time?” Grian hummed.

Pearl shrugged, though he caught her eyeing a few of the guests more closely from that moment onward.

“You’re right,” she said, a slight crease forming between her eyebrows. “Normally the guests are pretty regular to these sorts of things. You start to see the same people pop up month after month, the same media organisations or friends of the competition Mods or whatever. I don’t think I’ve seen this many strangers at one of these parties before.”

“Huh. So it’s not just me, then.”

Pearl straightened from where she leant against the wall, brushing a few crumbs from her glittery dress.

“I think I’m gonna duck out and get some air, enjoy the garden trail and get away from the crowds for a bit. Message me if anything interesting happens, will you?”

“Will do,” Grian smiled, giving her a nod. He understood her desire to get out of there for a bit. He too was beginning to get a little twitchy under the gazes of so many strangers. The familiar sensation of being watched began to creep up the back of his neck, but he shoved it away, knowing it was just the old paranoia from escaping the Watchers and the subsequent fear of being discovered.

Still, Grian found himself seeking out his teammates, hoping the familiar faces might calm his nerves.

He spotted Ren and Martyn across the room and gave a wave, beginning his trek through the crowd.

That was another thing: There seemed to be more people here than usual as well. If the way Technoblade was holed up in the corner of the room - almost hiding behind Phil’s large black wings - was any indication, Grian was not the only one uncomfortable with the increased party capacity.

In fact, it almost seemed as though the crowd was growing by the minute, and Grian found himself shouldering past more and more people he didn’t recognise. As he reached the middle of the floor, the sound of microphone feedback screeched through the speakers, startling both Grian and a good number of the guests. Around the room, heads turned towards the small stage at the front of the room, where a man fiddled with the mic stand. A hush fell amongst the crowd as the man tapped the mic, sending another sharp burst of static through the system.

“Is that one of the competition mods?” Grian heard Tubbo murmur a short way away.

“Good, good, this thing’s working,” the man cleared his throat into the mic. “Hello!”

A few half-hearted ‘hellos’ echoed around the room, but mostly there was just an awkward silence as people stared in confusion up at the stage. Grian glanced over at his teammates to see if they had any idea what was happening, but they too had no spark of recognition in their eyes.

“So first of all,” continued the stranger, “I wanted to congratulate the Red Rabbits on their win today, there were some spectacular plays out there. Secondly, I wanted to congratulate NoxCrew for organising this event month after month. You really do put in so much effort every time and create such a diverse and accepting environment for the players.”

The man continued, giving congratulations and thanks like any normal post-event speech, but Grian couldn't help but feel something was off. For starters, Scott Major, the event's main organiser, seemed as perplexed as everyone else by the impromptu speech, and was attempting to push his way to the front of the crowd, possibly to commandeer the stage. Unfortunately, the crowd was making that quite difficult, and almost seemed to be getting purposely in his way.

*' Message me if anything interesting happens '* , Pearl had said. Well, Grian thought this seemed to count as... interesting.

Only, when he pulled out his communicator, the screen showed nothing but a 'no connection available' message.

Grian felt his feathers puff up as that feeling of being watched crept up his neck again. Something wasn't right. Something *really* wasn't right.

“And now,” said the stranger, an unnerving smile creeping onto his face. “You might be wondering why I'm making this speech. You see, MCC is one of the biggest upcoming events around, so many eyes on you, it's really quite incredible. All of you, really, are practically celebrities in your own right at this point, everyone from from bird boy over here,” - the man gestured to Grian in the middle of the floor and Grian's wings moved to wrap around himself as if it could shield him from the sudden attention - “to... what's that, a slime in a hoodie?”

“Hey,” Jevin muttered indignantly from a back corner.

“Oh, a talking slime in a hoodie, my mistake,” the man laughed, his condescending tone sending many glares his way.

“Right, I think we've had enough of this,” growled Philza, joining Scott in trying to make his way up to the stage. Several other people tried to move as well, but they soon found their paths blocked by the unfamiliar 'guests', who at this stage were definitely deliberately hindering their progress.



“You see,” the stranger continued, “When we heard the esteemed MCC was hosting a party in our little district, well. What an opportunity. To meet such icons. To have some fun. To see what makes you... tick. Personally, I find that fear tends to reveal rather a lot about a person. They say you’re all dangerous. Hunters, fighters, skilled and powerful. Let’s see how you react to having the tables turned.”

The room no longer sat in confused silence, outbursts and scuffles breaking out across the venue as people tried to shove their way towards the stage, but were blocked by the intruders hidden among the crowd. The man seemed unfazed at the microphone, pulling some sort of button device from his pocket.

“I’m Jared, by the way,” he grinned, raising the device and hovering his thumb over the switch. “Figured you might want to know my name before my men and I start our hunt.”

Jared planted his finger on the button and all Hell broke loose.

A sound like static screeching dialled to 1000 burst through the speakers, piercing through Grian’s ears like a dagger. Around the room, hybrids doubled over in pain, and Grian slammed his hands over his ears in an attempt to dim the agonising sound. Vaguely he noticed various strangers drawing blades and holding those unaffected by the barrage of noise at swordpoint.

The sound didn’t dissipate, instead only increasing in intensity, like a thousand claws on a chalkboard. Pain lanced through Grian’s skull, his fingers tangling themselves in his hair as he tried desperately to block it out. Something warm and wet trickled down his palms from his ears, and Grian let out a scream.

There was nothing but noise, nothing but pain, and Grian...

Grian could feel his control slipping.

Panic was the next feeling to spike through Grian’s chest as he sensed the air glitching around him, his control running through his fingers like the blood from his ears. All he could think was *‘not here, please no, not here,’* but there was nothing he could do.

Feathers, too many feathers, all the same dull purple. Eyes, shimmering in the air around him like an aura. A second pair of wings unfurled from his back as his clothes faded into his purple robes and his eyes took on an unnatural glow.

Grian's knees hit the floor as he gasped for breath that wouldn't come.





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It was no secret among the Evo survivors that Grian was a Watcher. They had been there when he was taken, when the Watchers decided ten should become nine and that Grian was their chosen tribute.

Even so, after he heard Grian had somehow escaped the Watchers, Martyn had only ever seen him look like... well... Grian. He thought that even after everything, that was how he would always look. Like himself.

He didn't look much like himself at the moment though. Two pairs of purple wings flared out behind him, a ring of shimmering eyes floating around his head like a halo. His iconic red jumper had been replaced by purple robes, a pin emblazoned with the Watchers' symbol fastening a shawl over his shoulders.

Looking at Grian now, it hit Martyn just what exactly the Watchers had done to his friend. They had taken him away, changed him, tried to turn him into something he's not. Because despite their best efforts, Grian was not one of them. He would always be Grian.

On the stage, Jared finally cut off the dreadful noise machine, leaving Martyn's elfin ears ringing. He stumbled, finding a sword at his throat, and straightened to take in the scene around him.

Grian was on his knees on the floor, gasping in panicked breaths, his glowing eyes wide and his hands dripping blood from where they clutched at his ears. Behind him, a man held him at swordpoint, like every other MCC participant around the room.

In the corner, Technoblade was restrained and snarling, held at bay only by the blade pressed against Philza's neck. Several hybrids were unconscious on the floor twitching, the barrage of noise having overwhelmed them to the point of collapse. Ranboo was curled in the foetal position, warbling quietly in distressed Enderman tongue.

And others? Others were staring at Grian, a mixture of responses ranging from surprise to outright fear. A sobering thought quickly hit Martyn, and he couldn't help the pit of dread that formed in his stomach: The Evo players were not the only ones to hold a hatred for the Watchers and their death games.

Martyn didn't like the way Jared's eyes were also set on the runaway Watcher, something predatory in his gaze.

"My, my," the hybrid hunter crooned, slowly descending from the stage. "And so the secrets begin to come out. I must say, I was not expecting this. A Watcher, on its knees before me. This must be new to you - kneeling before... what is it you creatures call us? A mere mortal?" His gaze wandered the room, taking in the stares from the other players. "It seems this reveal is a surprise to many of you as well."

The gang leader inhaled deeply, as if savouring the tension in the room, raising his hands and spinning slowly to take in the scene around him. "I must say; I do enjoy this sense of power."

Ren growled softly from where he was restrained beside Martyn as the hunter circled around to face Grian, the tip of his sword hovering dangerously close to their friend's skin.

"You know, I always wondered, do Watchers bleed?" Jared mused and Martyn had never wanted to punch the grin off someone's face so much in his life. The hunter holding Grian at swordpoint from behind wrestled the Watcher's hands away from his ears, revealing the smear of red trickling down his palms. "It seems the answer to that is yes."

Jared shifted his sword so that the tip of his blade was pressed under Grian's chin, lifting it slightly so that his terrified eyes met those of the hunter.

"But tell me," the hunter leered, "can Watchers *die*?"

For a moment it felt as though the room refused to breathe as Jared's sword drew beads of blood from Grian's neck. But then he lowered his blade and turned to face the room, stance relaxed and smug as though he didn't just threaten to kill one of them in front of everyone.

"Just so you know, everyone here, my men excluded, will find that their 'gamemode' has been set to Hardcore the second you stepped foot in this venue. Any deaths tonight will be permanent."

"That's impossible!" Scott burst, "You're bluffing!"

Jared chuckled darkly, that smug grin refusing to budge. "I'm bluffing you say? Well, maybe a demonstration would help convince you." His eyes quickly roved the room, finally settling on Ren, who was still growling besides Martyn.

"You. Dog Boy. You'll make a fine example."

Ren barely had time for his eyes to widen before a blade was slashed across his throat and he stumbled, choking on his own blood. A shaking hand was raised to cover his neck, but it could do nothing to stem the waterfall of blood that gushed from between his fingers. Vaguely, Martyn could hear screams, but to him they seemed so far away, the world around him narrowed to just the sight of Ren in front of him, collapsing as though in slow motion. Blood pooled against his shoes, splattered against his apron, and Ren lay unmoving at his feet. His body did not disappear. He did not respawn.

"REN!" screamed False, and Martyn felt that he too should be screaming, should be crying himself hoarse, but he couldn't make a sound. Ren's eyes were closed, and there was blood soaking into his socks. Everything just seemed cold.

"Now that I have your attention," Jared said, as though they hadn't all just watched their friend die, as though his body wasn't still lying at Martyn's feet. "Let me tell you what's going to happen."

Jared reeled off his list of demands, but Martyn wasn't really hearing any of it. Something about broadcasting a message from the MCC event channel, something about killing a bunch of competitors on live TV, something about keeping others for ransom, about seeing how easily they *break*. It was all just background noise. False was sobbing nearby, Grian was still on his knees on the floor, Ren was *dead*, and... And Martyn had forgotten to hand in the knife strapped to his garter when they'd submitted their weapons at the door.

Jared was back to examining Grian, prowling around the Watcher like a predator stalking its prey. His back was turned to Martyn, and most of the hunters around the room had somewhat relaxed their grip on their prisoners, confident the prior display of force would dissuade any further action.

Martyn found himself staring down at Ren's body. If this went wrong, that might be him too. Cold, unmoving... *wait, did his finger just twitch?*

Martyn shivered. It couldn't have. It must have been a trick of his imagination. Even so, he couldn't quite bring himself to avert his eyes just yet, watching, hoping for any flicker of movement that could indicate his friend wasn't truly gone.

There was something spreading beneath his body besides blood. Patterns of some sort, subtle but there, the swirling, ice-cold fractals of... frost.

Oh. *Oh.*

Martyn knew what was happening.

He wasn't sure whether to be relieved or even more afraid.

As the icy patterns spread across the floor, Martyn slowly reached for the blade hidden beneath his skirt, his eyes never moving from the 'corpse' of his friend. Another twitch, and another. The hunter whose sword was held at Martyn's throat didn't seem to notice.

Ren's eyes snapped open, glowing a bright, unnatural red, and Martyn struck.

—

Martyn had a knife, Grian realised, a split second before he plunged it into his own captor's neck, twisting around so that the sword once at his throat was now in his hand.

Ren was alive, Grian realised, a split second before he leapt to his feet and tore a man's throat out with his teeth, blood red eyes reflecting eerily off the dark pools on the floor as he began swiping at the hunters with his claws.

Jared was distracted, Grian realised, and in that split second he too jumped into action, twisting around to disarm the swordsman at his back. A quick slash with the stolen sword sent the man to respawn and Grian was able to block the incoming blow from the Head Hunter as he recovered from his momentary lapse of concentration. All around him, chaos broke out as the contestants and legitimate guests began fighting back.

Scott was spearing people with ice, though Grian had no clue since when he'd been able to do that, and Gem had summoned some sort of crystal staff, using it to wack hunters over the head. Tommy Innit appeared to have bitten someone, and a hunter was running around the room screaming that he had rabies. False was a whirlwind as always, single-handedly tackling three men at once while Martyn swung himself around someone's shoulders, snapping their neck with his thighs. Technoblade had apparently teamed up with Ren while Phil went to help his kids, and the pair were carving a bloody path through the sea of hunters that had tried to stop them.

And in the midst of it all, Grian traded blows with Jared, the clash of their swords shuddering up Grian's arms.

Fighting in his Watcher form was not as easy as it should have been. Already disoriented from the noise attack, Grian was also unbalanced from his second pair of wings, and it showed. Blows he would normally be able to dodge found their mark, his Watcher senses working too fast to be able to pick up and process everything at once. Grian hissed as a slash split open his arm, another opening up a gash in his leg.

"You know, I never expected to come face to face with a creature like you tonight. You make me oh so curious," said Jared, his face still split with that unsettling grin. A lucky slash from Grian's sword was enough to wipe it from his face, though, replacing it with a long score across the bridge of his nose. Jared flinched back, raising a finger to the stinging wound and staring at the red that came away. His eyes burned with anger.

"You're going to regret that," he hissed.

Jared pulled out the button again, slamming his thumb down onto the trigger right before Grian managed to kick it out of his hand. That sound pierced through the room again for all of 2 seconds before Ren and Technoblade ripped through the speakers, quickly cutting it off. Even so, it was enough to throw Grian off balance, and a vicious swing sent his sword flying from his hand. Before he could blink the pommel of Jared's sword slammed against his temple, and he crumpled to the floor.

Stars flew before his vision and flashes of red swam before his eyes. Oh, those were his feathers and sweater.

Apparently his body decided if he was going to pass the heck out, he might as well do it as himself. Lovely.

Grian blinked, trying to clear the blur from his vision and felt Jared crouch down beside his prone form.

“We’re leaving,” he heard him hiss to one of the nearby hunters. “Pack it up, get who you can out, and cover me. We’re taking this one with us. Might as well get something out of this night.”

A hand tangled itself harshly in the back of Grian’s hair, lifting his head up from the floor. He scrambled weakly, trying uselessly to free himself from the grip, but could ultimately do nothing to stop his head from being brutally slammed into the ground. And then again. And again. And again, until consciousness left him completely and he fell limp in Jared’s grasp.

—

Ren was splattered from head to toe in blood by the time Martyn found him when the battle was over. His eyes still shone with that unnatural glow, and the wound at his neck was still open and weeping. Martyn couldn’t help but be reminded of another occasion where Ren’s body had lain in a pool of blood across the ground, only to rise again, different. It was the subtle things, the way he stood taller and straighter, the way the air around him felt like a cold winter chill.

The person standing before Martyn wore Ren’s body, but it wasn’t Ren.

“Oh my gosh, are you ok?” False cried as she sprinted towards them. A nasty gash painted her hair-line red, and her goggles were smashed. “Ren, I thought for a moment you were dead, I thought they had killed you!”

The thing wearing Ren’s face opened his mouth to say something, but Martyn cut him off.

“Where is he, Red King,” he said flatly. “Where’s Ren?”



The Blood God in Ren's body turned to face his former Hand, glowing eyes crinkling in a way one might even call affectionate.

*"He's here, Martyn,"* The Red King assured. *"He's in what we call the 'passenger seat'."*

False blinked, her gaze shifting back and forth between the pair.

"Wha.... what? What are you guys talking about?" she said, confusion colouring her tone.

"This isn't Ren right now, False," Martyn sighed.

"I... what? What are you talking about? Martyn, that doesn't make any sense!"

*"What Martyn is trying to say,"* the entity began to clarify, surprisingly gently, *"is that Ren is not currently in control of this body. That would be me, The Red King. Or, as your friend Doc calls me, RK."* RK gave a small, somewhat awkward wave, his clawed hand still heavily stained in blood.

False stared. Opened her mouth. Closed it again. Turned to Martyn.

"Ren got possessed again, didn't he?" she deadpanned.

"Ah, yep."

*"Yes, that is... the easiest way to describe it."*

The battle was over, the hunters having retreated, but the partygoers were not out of the woods yet. Around the room, people were checking on the unconscious and injured, and a makeshift triage had been set up at the base of the stage.

Miraculously, no one had been killed. There had been some close shaves, but the hunters had suffered far greater losses. Several hybrids were still unconscious from the noise attack, whilst others had been injured in the fight. A group of people were attempting to open the hall doors, but they seemed to have been barricaded from the outside, any attempts to escape via the windows hindered by some invisible force.

“You should go get that checked out.” False gestured to the slash across RK’s neck, nodding towards the hastily-constructed medical station by the stage.

*“I’m afraid there’s not much they could do for it,” he replied solemnly. “This wound requires a respawn. Until we can get out of here, the best I can do is keep this body running.”*

“Wait, so you’re saying you’re all that’s keeping Ren alive right now?” Martyn turned sharply to face the Blood God, barely managing to conceal the panic in his voice.

RK didn’t respond verbally, his slight nod all the answer Martyn needed.

Martyn closed his eyes, taking several deep, steady breaths. This was fine. They could deal with this. Ren could still be saved, they just had to get out of the building and find a place he could respawn. It would be fine.

“Ok,” Martyn said, opening his eyes and pushing down the panic. “Ok, this is fine. We just need to get out of here. Where’s Grian? We should check on him, too.”

There was no response. The others scanned the crowd, looking for any sign of red or purple feathers, but coming up empty.

“Guys?” Martyn repeated, unable to keep the panic from his voice this time. “Where’s Grian?”

“I...” False stuttered, her eyes wide. “I don’t...”

“CAN ANYONE SEE GRIAN?” Martyn yelled, gaining the attention of most of the hall.

No definitive answer came, as a moment later the doors slammed open and everyone swung to face them, drawing whatever weapons they had managed to scavenge from the hunters.

Standing in the doorway, eyes alight with fury and with a sword at the throat of the server Admin, was Pearl.

Everything was silent as she scanned the room, taking in the pools of blood smeared and splattered across the floorboards and the triage station by the stage.

“What happened here?” Pearl asked. “Is everyone OK?”

“We were attacked. A gang calling themselves ‘hunters’ targeted the event,” Scott explained briefly, still eyeing the man she held at swordpoint. “Is that this server’s admin?”

Pearl nodded sharply, glaring at the man she had restrained.

“I went out for some air and when I tried to come back, I couldn’t get through the doors,” she explained. “When I went to message, nothing would go through, and that’s when I saw that my gamemode was somehow set to Hardcore. Between that, the downed communications and the barrier blocks that were blocking the doors and windows, I figured there was only one person who could manage all of that.”

“The hunters were working with an Admin,” Scott concluded.

Pearl nodded, shoving the cowering man forward to where the captured hunters were tied up for Scott to deal with later.

“So is everyone here OK?”

“Grian’s missing,” Martyn cut in frantically.

“*What?*” Pearl turned harshly.

“Grian’s missing, I can’t see him, and no one can tell me where he is. If he were...” Martyn swallowed. “If he were dead, we would find his body. Which means...”

“He’s been taken by the hunters,” Scott finished with an expression of dread. “Oh gosh.”

—

Grian woke slowly.

The first sensation to come back was pain, a constant throbbing in his temple that radiated all the way down the side of his face and neck. His arm and leg were stinging, and his brain felt as though it had been through a blender.

Opening his eyes was a chore. One of his eyes was crusted over, his lashes stuck together, and it took a great deal of effort to pry them apart. Grian went to rub at his eye to try and clear whatever it was away, but his hand came away sticky and wet. His eyes still refused to clear, but through the blur he could see his fingers were stained red.

It took a while for everything to come into focus, but eventually he was able to make out his surroundings.

Grian was in a cage, tall, long bars fencing him in like an animal. His red sweater and jeans were torn and bloodstained, and he could feel a mess of gashes above his eyebrow that had spilled blood down the side of his face.

Memories flooded back in a rush; the party, the attack, having his head slammed into the floor. It took every ounce of self control Grian had not to break down and panic then and there. Instead he forced himself to take some long breaths, and began looking around for some way to break free.

There was an unfamiliar weight on his wrist. Grian glanced down to find a harsh band of metal wrapped around it, some sort of enchantments inscribed into the iron. Attached to the shackle was a long chain, which appeared to be loosely fastened to a bolt in the corner of the cage. Climbing shakily to his feet, Grian tested its length, discovering it stopped him just short of reaching the cage’s door.

There was a padlock on the door too, Grian observed, but it was a cheap, simple thing. Jamming something long and thin up the mechanism - like, say, the shaft of a long feather - would break it open quite easily. If only he could reach it.

Glancing around to make sure there were no guards about, Grian eyed the chain again. It really was quite poorly fastened. A couple of good tugs should rip the bolt from the ground, and then he would be free to break the lock.

Confident there was no one around to stop him, Grian took a deep breath and gave the chain an almighty yank.

And all he knew was pain.

Agony ripped through him like an electric shock as the enchanted engravings on the cuff lit up. It was like molten lava was burning through his veins, travelling up his arm from where the cuff dug into his skin and reverberating throughout his entire body. He couldn't think, couldn't breathe, so Grian did the only thing he could.

He screamed.

# Wings

## Chapter Summary

Grian has a bad time, Jared has a bad time, and well-deserved hugs are delivered.

## Chapter Notes

Hi, Pug again!

I just want to say thanks to all the people who commented on chapter 1, I read all your comments this morning and was squealing, I'm so glad you're enjoying it.

Anyway, here is the final chapter, I hope you enjoy!

CW: Torture, blood, violence, descriptions of injuries, hybrid discrimination.

Edit: Edits have been made to this chapter as well. Again, nothing major, just some dialogue I wasn't entirely happy with. :D

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

With the doors opened, the partygoers could finally move the injured out to where they could be cared for. Groups of volunteers began ferrying the injured to the World Hub so they could be transported to safety, whilst the rest of the MCC participants gathered back at one of the hotel conference rooms.

“So what happens now?” asked Joel Smallishbeans from the couch he’d commandeered. Lizzie was gently prodding at a cut on his shoulder, and Martyn could see her affectionately roll her eyes as her husband let out an exaggerated ‘ouch’.

“Iskall and I are taking any injured Hermits back to Hermitcraft to patch them up and raise the alarm,” Jevin chipped in. “We’ll let Xisuma know about what’s going on and see if there’s anything we can do to help.”

“We’re staying here to find Grian,” Martyn announced firmly, referring to the remaining members of the Cyan Creepers. They had tried to convince RK to head back with the other Hermits, but apparently both him and Ren were adamant they wanted to stay and help with the search. The most they could convince him to do was let False bandage his neck, although that was more for the comfort of everyone who had to look at the fatal wound than for RK himself.

*(“ I’m not letting anyone get left behind,” RK had growled when they suggested he join the*

evacuation. “Ren’s deal with me was to protect the people he cares about. I don’t intend to fail again.”)

“Oh yes, Grian,” someone else chimed in, and Martyn narrowed his eyes at the speaker’s tone. “Was anyone going to inform us that he was a Watcher?”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” asked Pearl, raising an eyebrow, an underlying warning in her voice.

“I’m just saying,” the man continued - he was a fairly new competitor, and Martyn hadn’t yet got around to learning his name - “Surely there’s somebody here that knew what he was. He can’t have kept us *all* in the dark, right?”

“I fail to see how him being a Watcher is relevant to this conversation,” Philza cut in. “Or why you would need to know such a thing if he wasn’t comfortable telling us.”

“Of course it’s important! We have a right to know if we’re competing alongside something like that!” the idiot continued, seemingly unaware of the hole he was digging himself. “Do you have any idea how dangerous the Watchers are?”

“I’m about to show you how dangerous *I* can be if you don’t shut your mouth,” Technoblade growled, standing from his chair. The competitor’s eyes widened as the realisation finally hit him that he had very much messed up. “Everybody here is dangerous in the right circumstances, Watcher or not. If Grian being having a few extra eyes bothers you that much, then I suggest you leave right now.”

“But -”

“Get out,” Technoblade interrupted, and the player went scurrying. “For anyone else who feels like bad-mouthing my friend, I’ll have you know that I take my loyalties and friendships very seriously. If you have a problem with Grian, you will also have a problem with me. If you don’t want that, the door is right there.”

There was a moment of uncomfortable silence as Techno stared down the other players, before several Martyn was not particularly close to rose from their seats and left.

“Well,” Scott said calmly. “I know who not to invite back next month.”

“Awww, Techno,” Phill cooed, giving his adopted son’s shoulder a friendly shove. “Look at you, admitting you have friends.”

“He called me ‘Tech’, Phil! And cheered for me that one time in Dodgebolt! Of course I consider him a friend!”

“*I’m assuming you’re coming with us, then,*” RK inclined his head towards the other bloodstained warrior.

“Wouldn’t miss it for the world.”

“Why do I feel like it’s a terrible idea to let these two work together?” Martyn sighed.

“*Awww, Martyn. It’s been so long since I’ve had the honour of fighting side by side with someone blessed by another Blood God,*” RK grinned, showing off sharpened teeth.

Martyn found himself tuning out most of the other arrangements, instead picking absently at the blood under his nails. It had been... a *long* day. Martyn was getting to the stage where things were beginning to dip in and out of focus around the edges, but he forced himself to keep his eyes open. Grian was still out there, and he couldn’t afford to rest until their friend was safe.

“You look like you could use some sleep, Martyn,” Scott said a while into the meeting, concern lacing his tone.

“What?” Martyn jerked his attention back into place, ignoring the way the room was beginning to spin slightly. “No, I can’t, I can’t sleep, we have to find Grian!”

“Martyn,” Gem pitched in gently, gripping her staff with bloodied knuckles. “The location spell I’m preparing will take a few hours, at minimum. You won’t be able to help anyone if you pass out the second you stand up.”



“But-”

“No, that’s it,” Scott interrupted. “I’m calling this meeting to a close right now. Gem’s right, we should try and get some rest while she works her magic, and Martyn’s clearly not the only one feeling the strain of today. I understand we’re all anxious to find Grian as quickly as possible, but until we know where the hunters have taken him, there’s nothing we can do but make sure we’re all able to go after him when we do.”

“*I can keep an eye on things and wake you up if anything happens*” offered RK, sensing Martyn’s continued reluctance. Sighing, Martyn gave a nod, and everyone still present in the conference room began commandeering couches and corners. Martyn took a couch next to False, and was almost out like a light the second his head hit the arm-rest. Right before consciousness left him, he felt a pair of clawed hands carefully draw a blanket up over his shoulders, and then he knew nothing but the blackness of a dreamless sleep.

---

“Wakey, wakey, little birdie.”

The harsh ringing of someone banging on the bars of his cage made Grian flinch, his ears still sensitive from the noise attack at the party. He shifted his wing from where it was wrapped around himself like a blanket, just enough to send a glare towards the Head Hunter outside his cage.

“I heard you discovered what happens if you pull on that chain,” Jared smirked, leaning casually against the bars. “It also serves double duty as a power dampener, just in case you were thinking of trying anything with whatever powers you Watchers have.”

Grian remained silent, instead staring at the newly healed scar crossing his captor’s nose, not without a small amount of dark satisfaction. Jared noticed his gaze, and though his smirk stayed in place, his expression darkened.

“Admiring your work?” he sneered. Pulling a basic-looking key from his pocket, Jared unlatched the lock, opening the cage with an ear-piercing squeak. Grian scrambled upright into a sitting position, pressing himself as far back in the cage as he could as the hunter strolled on in. His wings puffed up around him, some deep-seated instinct screaming that he should not be letting this man get anywhere near him. If only he had a choice in the matter.

“As I said before, I never expected to come across a creature like you tonight. I have so many questions about your kind. I wonder if you can answer any of them?”

The hunter stalked slowly towards him and Grian scarcely made a sound, even as the man began drawing a selection of tools from his belt, setting them out on a small rolling table at the side of the cage. A pair of pliers, some wicked looking shears, a knife.

He could reach them, just, if he were to stretch the chain to its limits.

Grian stayed where he was.

“Not very talkative, are you?” Jared hummed. Outside the cage, several other men began to gather. A man in a lab coat, another preparing a table of what looked like potion stands and medical equipment. Grian pressed himself further into the wall.

“I think we’ve established you can bleed. And it certainly sounds as though you feel pain. What else can we investigate?”

“What do you *want*,” Grian hissed, managing to maintain his glare despite the way his feathers puffed up anxiously around him.

“Oh, you *can* talk.” Jared’s vicious smile pulled harshly at his new scar. “What do I want? Well, some blood samples would be a good start. Then, I think we’ll see how far we get with my original goal; seeing what it takes to *break* one of you little upstarts. A shame you were the only one I could get my hands on, but oh well. We’ll make do.”

Jared grabbed at Grian’s arm, trying to push up his sleeve, but Grian jerked away sharply. The hunter simply huffed, signalling the two men outside the cage, and before he knew it, Grian was in a headlock. He scrambled, his mind falling blank save for the instinct screaming at him to get away. There was an arm around his throat, hands grabbing at him trying to keep him still, and he was kicking and clawing to no avail. The arm pinning him in a headlock tightened around his neck and in his panic he sank his teeth into Jared’s wrist, slamming his head back into the man’s nose and hearing it crack. The grip fell away and for a moment, Grian could breathe.

Then the chain was given a sharp yank and Grian was on the floor again, gasping.

He didn't try to fight the headlock when he was once again restrained. When the man in the lab coat pulled back his sleeve and jabbed a needle none-too-gently into the crook of his elbow, the most he did was flinch.

"See, that didn't need to be so hard," Jared snarled, roughly releasing him once the blood had been drawn and rubbing at the teeth marks Grian had left in his arm. There was a trail of red dripping down his chin from his nose, which was very clearly broken. Grian couldn't bring himself to regret it.

The hunter snapped his nose back into place, giving his face a wipe with a cloth offered by one of his men before discarding it carelessly to the side. Hovering his hand over the tray of tools, he selected a pair of shears and weighed them in his grip, the grin gone from his face and replaced with an unsettling scowl.

"How about we have a look at those wings next?"

Grian's eyes widened, his breath catching in his throat. A calloused hand latched onto his wing, dragging it open from where it was tucked in around himself, and fingers were run uncomfortably through his feathers. Jared tilted his head curiously as he stared at the array of colourful feathers in his grip, even as Grian tried feebly to tug his wing away.

"These wings aren't the same as when you appear as a Watcher, are they?" he mused. "These are avian wings, or at least a very convincing imitation of them. Tell me, why choose an avian to disguise yourself as? Why not a human, if you were so determined to go undetected?"

"Let go," Grian managed to force out in place of a reply. His chest felt tight, like someone was sitting on it, and breath didn't seem to want to come.

"I wonder," Jared continued, ignoring Grian's quiet plea. "If what is done to this form affects your Watcher form? Those cuts on your arm, they were made on your true self, and yet they appear here. Does it work the other way around?" His grip tightened painfully on Grian's feathers before a sharp tug sent a burst of pain throughout Grian's wing. A handful of colourful feathers floated to the ground around Jared's feet.

The uncomfortable heat of the hunter's hand in his feathers was replaced by the grating snip of shears as his flight feathers were cut, the hunter uncaring whether he over-clipped as he hacked at

the avian's primaries. A sharp burst of pain shot through his wing as a blood feather was severed and Grian heard himself let out a distressed chirp.

Jared snorted at the sound, pausing his shears. "Don't like the scissors, little birdie? Don't worry, I have other things we can use." He replaced the shears on the tray, instead picking up the pliers and switching over to the other side. Grian let out a choked cry as a flight feather was ripped directly from his wing, fluttering softly down to rest on the cold concrete floor. The hunter smiled.

"Oh, this will be fun."

---

A gentle shake of Martyn's shoulder drew him from his sleep, and he woke to see those around him beginning to don their armour.

"*Gem has finished her spell,*" RK informed him. "*We're preparing to leave.*"

Martyn nodded wordlessly, accepting the sword the Red King handed him.

He hadn't slept well by any means, but even the short respite had left him feeling more alert and coherent. He hadn't realised just how close he was to collapsing before until he no longer felt as though the world was spinning.

"Alright, everybody," Scott announced, gaining the room's attention. "Gem has got a location. Grab your teams, get your gear on, we're moving out in 10 minutes. Be aware that the place is probably swarming with hunters, and we are all still stuck in Hardcore mode. It's important to stay with your groups and watch each others' backs. Is everyone ready?"

A wave of acknowledgements went around the room, and Martyn busied himself with fastening his armour. They were getting Grian back. That was the only outcome any of them would accept.

"Let's give 'em Hell," Martyn nodded, and together they headed towards battle.

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Grian was shaking. He didn't know how long Jared had stayed for, how long he himself had been here. When Jared had left, leaving bloodied feathers strewn across the concrete, Grian had forced his attention towards his damaged pin feathers, which were still dripping a steady stream of blood. Steeling himself, he grasped the shaft and pulled, plucking the first feather out at the base, and then doing the same for the others.

If left unattended, he would have bled to death slowly. It wasn't a way he particularly wanted to go out.

Grian found himself curled in the corner of his cage, his ruined wings wrapped tightly around him like a blanket. Partially this was to keep him warm from the chill of the unheated cell, partially it was to conceal what he was doing, should anyone decide to return. Underneath the cover of his wings, Grian worked at the bolt securing his chain to the floor, twisting and pulling at the poorly screwed fitting in an attempt to free it from the concrete. It was slow going without the leverage of being able to tug on the chain, but the bolt was shifting.

He wasn't sure how long he worked for, just as he wasn't sure how long it had been since Jared left. His nails were torn and blisters were forming on his hands, but finally, *finally*, the bolt came free. Right as Jared slammed the lab door open.

"It looks as though our time is running short," he announced, strolling forward and plucking the knife from the tray of tools now outside the cage door. "Your *'friends'* are here to rescue you. Freaks supporting freaks, it seems."

Silently, Grian began wrapping the now loose length of chain around his arm so that it wouldn't drag, preparing to move the second the opportunity came. A part of him purred at the thought that his friends came after him, but he pushed the noise down. Now was not the time to start chirping.

"It's a shame," Jared approached the cage, slipping the key into the lock, "I had hoped to run some more tests. I didn't get to play nearly as much as I'd hoped. It seems I'll only have time for one more question."

The lock clicked open and fell away, letting the cage door open with a screech.

Grian lunged.

Jared let out an inelegant squeak as the tiny, battered form of Grian went barrelling into him, sending them both stumbling out of the cage and into the lab. The knife in his hand went clattering to the floor as Grian slammed his elbow into his chin, a kick to the shin causing his knee to buckle. Every inch of Grian ached but he kept going, intercepting every attempt to grab and restrain with a series of vicious blows that sent the hunter stumbling, until a lucky shot sent the avian sprawling into the lab bench.

Grian pulled himself to his feet, panting. The door was so close, he just had to reach it.

Jared let out a roar and Grian snapped back to attention just in time to dodge the knife swung his way. He must have picked it up again in the time it took Grian to get back to his feet. Jared jabbed again and Grian just managed to redirect the swing, and the next, before a savage kick to the chest knocked him flat against a wall.

A hand clamped around his throat, pinning him to the wall. Grian couldn't move.

“Do you remember what I asked, all the way back at that doomed MCC party?” Jared hissed, tightening his grip around Grian's neck. Grian clawed at his hand uselessly, panic quickly rising in his chest.

“I said I'd always wondered if Watchers could die. I guess we're about to find out,” he said, and white hot pain spiked through Grian's body.

There was a knife buried under his ribs, he quickly realised. Then there wasn't, and Grian was collapsing to the floor, a dark stain spreading across the front of his sweater. The blade glinted red in Jared's hand and he tossed it aside, letting it clatter to the ground a short way away.

“How long do you think it will take for you to bleed out?” he asked nonchalantly, kneeling so he could lift the front of Grian's shirt and peer at the wound he had inflicted. “I'm pretty sure I didn't hit anything vital.” Grian slapped his hand away and clutched at his midsection, hissing at the searing pain. Blood pooled through his fingers and his chest heaved, but he still had the energy to scramble backwards away from his captor.

His palm landed on something sharp and he found the hilt of Jared's knife in his hand. Jared didn't seem to notice. In the distance, he could have sworn he heard an explosion, shouts echoing down the hallway.

His friends were on their way. He just had to hold out until then.

His body screamed at him, but Grian dragged himself to his feet, using the lab bench as support. Jared just rolled his eyes, tangling a hand in Grian's hair and yanking him upright, ignoring his pained gasps as his wound burned.

"Still fighting?" Jared snorted condescendingly.

"Yeah," Grian huffed, and jammed the knife into the hunter's throat.

Jared's eyes widened, almost in slow motion, as the realisation hit him. He opened his mouth to say something, but no sound came out, and his body crumpled and dissolved before Grian's eyes. The hunter's belongings scattered across the ground and Grian dropped the knife from trembling fingers.

The door was right there. Right *there*, and his friends were somewhere behind it, but Grian couldn't seem to make his legs move. Blood was dripping from his fingers where he clutched his midsection, and the room was beginning to swim slightly, but he had to move, had to get out of this dreaded lab.

One step, that's it, he could make it one step. Then another, he could do this. The door was right there.

But so was the ground. The ground was so much closer than the door. In fact, it was rising up to meet him.

Or maybe his legs just gave out. Yeah, that's probably what happened.

Pain arced through his torso as he hit the floor. He knew the second he fell, he wouldn't be able to pull himself up again. Rolling himself over onto his back, Grian did his best to put pressure on his wound, but there was little he could do to stop the blood from seeping through his fingers.

The glint of metal beside his head caught his attention and he turned to find his communicator, dropped among the inventory of the fallen hunter. He reached for it, fumbling with the on switch, a sliver of hope blooming in his chest.

But the screen still read 'No Connection', a single red Hardcore heart glaring up at him mockingly.

A sob ripped itself from his throat and he let the communicator fall from his fingers. He was shaking, a cold settling into his limbs, and the front of his sweater was heavily soaked through.

If he died here, what would happen? Would he fade from existence, float forever in the void, move onto another world? Or would he end up back *there*, in the Down Side Up, forever forced to *watch* as the world moved on around him?

There was a commotion outside, but it all seemed so far away, the sounds indistinct. Yelling, he thought, swords clashing. A door being slammed open.

"GRIAN!"

Someone screamed his name, and Grian couldn't help the chirp that escaped him at the sound of a familiar voice. It was like a floodgate opened and the noises poured out, a mixture of distressed and affectionate chirps and trills that echoed throughout the room. The person ran to his side, scooping him into their lap, and Grian was met with the bright, worried eyes of Pearl.

Others flooded into the room, Martyn, Ren, False, even Technoblade. A cry of "Where's the baby bird!" signalled the arrival of Philza and soon Grian's distressed chittering was matched by the other avian's own soothing trills.

There was a hand softly stroking his hair, voices murmuring assurances and comfort. Someone pressed a cloth to his wound and though he gasped at the sudden pressure, he let them do it, knowing they were trying to help. A potion bottle was pushed into his hands and he stared dazedly at the glowing pink liquid inside.



“You should try to drink,” someone - he thought it was Martyn - said. “Doesn’t have to be the whole thing, just enough to slow the bleeding so we can get you out of here.”

A healing potion then, his mind supplied groggily. He managed several sips before he began to cough, and Martyn gently removed the bottle before he could spill it.

“Let’s get you home, shall we?” he said. Grian nodded weakly, curling closer to Pearl’s warmth as she swept him easily into a bridal carry.

“You won’t have to worry about any of the hunters on our way out either,” he heard Technoblade grin.

“Scott’s team spawn trapped the heck out of their barracks,” False chipped in, laughing. “They won’t be getting out of there until the authorities arrive to pick them up.”

They continued on like that, each member of the group filling the silence of their trip with their accounts of the raid, a steady reminder that they were there, that he wasn’t alone.

It had been a long day. Grian was tired. He didn’t try to fight it when his eyes began to slip closed, knowing that he would wake up again somewhere safe and warm, surrounded by his friends.

---

“So,” Martyn began, leaning against a support pillar in the World Hub lobby. He was aware of how strange he looked, wearing a blood-spattered maid’s dress and probably looking as though he just crawled out of a bush. People were giving their group a wide berth as they travelled through the Hub, and he couldn’t really blame them, what with them all looking like bad extras from a zombie-slasher film.

“So,” RK replied, raising an eyebrow as a gesture for him to continue.

“You and Ren are going to be alright, right?” Martyn asked, adjusting the strap of his duffle-bag

over his shoulder. They had made a short trip back to the hotel rooms to grab their stuff, but no one had wanted to stay in that world for any longer than necessary.

*“We’ll be fine,”* the entity assured. *“I just have to find a bed and pass out, and then hand over the controls back to Ren.”*

“Ok,” Martyn nodded, more to himself than anyone else. Ren would be fine. “Ok.”

*“I’ll make sure he gets in contact with you once he wakes up.”*

“Thanks,” he said sincerely. “You guys should probably head off before Philza tries to adopt another son.”

Sure enough, the older avian was warbling softly to the unconscious Hermit, his flock of crows gathering curiously around Grian as Philza gently stroked his hair. They had managed to stop the bleeding from his wound, and though their friend wasn’t in the best of shape, he probably wouldn’t need to respawn once they got him home.

“He’s a baby bird!” Philza grinned up at his eldest, and Technoblade rolled his eyes with an affectionate huff.

“Come on, old man,” the piglin hybrid said, giving his arm a tug. “He’s in good hands.”

After a few more brief goodbyes, the groups parted ways. Martyn sent one more wave to the Hermits before they disappeared into their portal and he headed off to find his own.

*It had been a long, long day,* he thought, as the rays of early morning sunlight greeted his return home. His bed had never looked so inviting.

“Tomorrow I’m burning this dress,” he mumbled to himself, and face-planted into his pillow. As the sun rose over the horizon of his world, Martyn was out like a light in seconds.

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“Here you go, Love, a nice cuppa hot chocolate,” Stress smiled, handing Grian the steaming mug. He chirped his thanks, savouring the warmth of the cup on his hands and snuggled deeper into the blanket nest his friends had built. Every Hermit had at some point come to visit since he had woken up, some bringing blankets to add to the nest, others bringing home-cooked food. Most hadn’t stayed for long, not wanting to crowd him too much, but he’d enjoyed their visits nonetheless.

Soft hands combed gently through his feathers, preening the blood and dirt from his wings. Grian found himself nuzzling at Pearl’s shoulder and she giggled, pausing in her cleaning to give his head a pat.

“Awwwwwww, he’s still in Baby Bird Mode,” Mumbo laughed. The Boatem Crew had set up for a sleepover in Grian’s base, keeping him company whilst he recovered from his injuries.

“You should have seen him when I was preening his wings after Third Life,” Scar chuckled. “He was chirping non-stop like a little chick. It was very adorable.”

Grian chittered indignantly, but that sound quickly turned into a relieved trill as Pearl fixed a particularly painful crooked feather.

At some point he must have dozed off again, because the next thing he knew, he was blearily blinking his eyes open to the sound of someone knocking on his door.

“Oh, hey X,” he yawned at the sight of their Admin.

“What, no butchering my name today?” Xisuma chuckled, referring to Grian’s regular habit of coming up with increasingly frustrating ways of mispronouncing things.

“Tell you what, I’ll come up with something particularly bad once my thoughts don’t consist solely of random bird noises.” He rubbed at his eyes, wincing slightly at the still-healing cuts above his eyebrow.

“I’ve been in contact with a few other servers,” Xisuma said, offering Grian a blanket which was quickly added to his growing nest. “I thought you might like to know that everyone affected by the MCC Party attack is recovering well and that there were no lasting injuries from the night.”

“Oh, that’s good to hear,” Grian nodded, snuggling into his new throw rug.

“Also, Philza was complaining that his crows have been screaming something about adoption at him for 3 days straight.”

“Oh yes,” Pearl snorted. “We barely got you out of there in time, I swear that guy carries adoption papers on his person.”

“Wait! Are you telling me that Philza Minecraft was trying to adopt me,” Grian squawked, “AND YOU DIDN’T LET HIM?!”

“Ok yes but have you considered,” Pearl countered, “that it would mean you’d have Tommy Innit as your *brother*?”

Grian paused, blinked, opened his mouth.

“Oh my gosh you’re *right*. Gee, I really dodged a bullet there, didn’t I?”

There was laughter, and Grian let himself enjoy it, the joyous sounds washing over him and warming him from the inside out. But the moment soon ended, and Grian was faced with the sobering realisation that there were questions he would have to ask sooner or later.

“Xisuma,” he said quietly, “Did anyone say anything about...”

He trailed off, but the Admin thankfully picked up where he was headed.

“You being a Watcher?” X clarified. “I won’t lie to you, there were a few complaints,”

Grian shrank in on himself.

“And those players have since been notified that they will not be welcomed back to the MCC competition next month.”

“Wait, what?” Grian’s head shot up fast enough to give him whiplash.

“If this attack has demonstrated anything,” Xisuma continued, “It’s that intolerance has no place at MCC. Scott and his Mods are willing to support you and every other hybrid and supernatural being in his community and he has made it clear that if anyone has any complaints about that, he has no qualms showing them the door.”

“Also, Technoblade may have gone and threatened a few of the guys bad-mouthing you after you were taken,” Pearl chipped in. “So they probably won’t be coming back out of fear of getting their butts kicked by the Blade.”

Grian found himself giggling, but halfway through it turned into a sob as his throat seemed to close up, his exhaustion and cocktail of messy emotions finally catching up to him. Tears streamed down his face and his shoulders heaved, and Grian was too tired to even try to stop it.

“Ohhhhhh Grian,” Mumbo said and suddenly the arms of his Boatem friends were around his shoulders, holding him as he cried. “We’re here for you, buddy, let it out.”

“I need you to know, Grian,” X assured, “You being a Watcher changes nothing for the people that care about you. You will always be welcome here at Hermitcraft and so long as Scott has a say you will always be welcome at MCC. We love you as you are, whether that’s as Grian the avian prankster, or Grian the Eldritch creature with a dozen eyes. Either way, you’re still Grian.”

Grian’s breath hitched and he threw his arms around his group of friends, crying into Impulse’s shoulder. The other Hermit didn’t complain, even as he got tears all over his T-Shirt.

“You guys are the best,” Grian sobbed, smiling despite the tears on his cheeks. “You really don’t mind me being a Watcher?”

“Of course not, you spoon,” Mumbo said, nudging his arm affectionately.

Grian giggled wetly, wiping his tears away with one of his sleeves. Taking a deep breath, he let his form flicker and glitch, until he was sitting before his friends in his purple robes, a halo of eyes circling his head.

An expression of surprise flickered across several of the Hermits' faces, but they remained silent. He had never purposely changed in front of them before, it was always quick accidental flickers, followed by a panic. And sure, some of that anxiety was still there, that tiny voice screaming at him to hide, that he can't let them see, but he pushed it down. He trusted them.

Pearl gave him a gentle smile, her own purple feathers unfurling to match his.

"I'm still... more comfortable as an avian, but..." he said quietly, spreading his purple feathers. "Two sets of wings has got to be good for hugging, right?"

Pearl snorted, hiding her face in her feathers.

"I don't know," she giggled, "Why don't we test it?"

"Yeah, let's."

The answer was yes, two pairs of wings *were* very good for hugging friends. Grian knew exactly what he would be doing with this vital piece of information.

After he woke up from a particularly feathery Boatem Cuddle Pile the next morning, that is.

## Chapter End Notes

Grian: \*has wings\*

Also Grian: I am going to hug so many friends with these.  
(Can you tell I love wing hugs?)

It is done! I hope you enjoyed the fic, I had a lot of fun writing it.

Also, this fic is now part of a series called Of Wings and Watchers. I hope to be writing some more fics as I get ideas.

Just quickly, I wanted to say thanks to Raccoon, who had to suffer through reading this on my Google Doc in its various incomplete stages. May the never-ending cliff-hanger finally be resolved.

I have a tumblr, if anyone is intersted, where I go by paranoidpug, and I am currently working on some art to go with this fic, so that should be up on there soon.

- Pug

## End Notes

>:)

The bird boi is not having a good time.

I have the next chapter written already, and I plan on posting it tomorrow. Fear not, there will be hugs.

Also, in case anyone was interested, I have a tumblr and go by paranoidpug. I post art and stuff on there.

Works inspired by this ~~one~~ [weird things happen during MCC, like learning about gods!](#) by [deepslatetiles](#)

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