

Ranboo Gets Adopted

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Ranboo Gets Adopted

by [a little hazy](#)

Summary

It was supposed to be a quiet night when Phil got the call. Dinner was being made, Techno and Wilbur were home from school, and Tubbo's dad was home for once. But damn Phil and his heart.

Ranboo's family dies in a fire. With no items, lots of trauma, and \$255 dollars slapped into his hands, he's dumped on Philza Minecraft's doorstep with three screaming kids already filling the house. Hopefully, he'll feel right at home.

Notes

I ONLY SKIMMED THIS AND I DO NOT PLAN ON GOING BACK LET'S GO

small modern au that I've been thinking about!

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

It was supposed to be a quiet night when Phil got the call. Dinner was being made, Techno and Wilbur were home from school, and Tubbo's dad was home for once. Phil had excused himself to talk privately, about to gently let the worker down, saying he doesn't foster anymore now that he has already adopted three kids.

But damn Phil and his heart. Damn him for being known for taking in "problem kids." Damn his inability to say no. When the woman had hurriedly explained the kid's story, not even giving him a chance to speak before she started reading out the kid's file. His house had burned down, killing his parents and leaving him a newly made orphan and homeless.

Nervously, Phil looked over to Techno was giving him a concerned look. Quickly, before he could let himself linger on the thought, he agreed and quietly worked out the details of fostering the kid and getting his files sent over.

Once the call was over, Phil rubbed at his face. Damn his stupid fucking heart.

"Alright, kids?" Phil called, making his way into the living room.

Techno and Wilbur shot up, catching onto the tense energy as Tommy only glanced his way, probably texting Tubbo.

"We're going to be getting another addition to the house," he started slowly, cringing as Tommy groaned loudly. "It's an emergency, and I have no clue how long it'll last. But I need your help. Please."

His kids shared a look and nodded. They all remember what it's like. They can be bitter about sharing the house with a fifth person, can groan and complain all they want as long as they keep it to themselves. They would never hold it against a kid who had no home, no family, not when they so vividly remembered being in the same shoes.

They spent the rest of the day converting the last spare room in the house into a bedroom. Techno helped Phil go over papers, sorting through files, and finding whatever they needed. Wilbur and Tommy cleaned up the house, decorating the spare room to make it feel a little homier. They all took time to think. *What would've made coming into a new house easier for them?* Phil spends a bit more time talking over dinner. Calling back to ask for further details once all of his kids are asleep.

The next day is stressful. Phil's hands are shaky, and he grips his steering wheel far too tight. He had to calm down. If *he* was stressed, then everyone else would become *more* stressed, and Phil desperately doesn't want that. Before he left, he looked his kids in the eyes, sighing and patting Tommy's tense shoulders.

"Look, we're getting a new kid, alright? I don't want to hear *anything*. Not to me, not to him. His parents died in a fire. Watch your words, watch your actions."

Tommy nodded stiffly, and Phil shot Techno and Wilbur a look that said *you too*. They nodded as

well.

Alright. *Alright*. Time to go. Damn Phil's heart.

--

It's terrifying, coming into a house with three other kids. Ranboo sat in the back, gripping his bag for the entire way home. He didn't say much outside of general pleasantries, and Phil couldn't help the worried glances he kept throwing into the rear-view mirror. Ranboo was a tall, lanky thing, and Phil knew he would fit right in with all of his outrageously tall kids. It's not fair; Phil even isn't that short, but he looks fucking *tiny* compared to his kids. He gives the mirror one more anxious glance (Ranboo is staring out the window) and turns onto the driveway.

A figure disappears from the window when Phil gets out, and it makes him chuckle. Of course, they'd be waiting by the door. He walks around and lets Ranboo out, who shuffles awkwardly to the door with a little guidance from Phil. When they step into the doorway, everyone is lounging in the living room, like they hadn't been waiting by the door for Phil to arrive.

"Alright, Ranboo, this is everyone," Phil says gently, introducing all his kids to Ranboo and praying none of them try to say anything smart. Thankfully, they just smile and give a small greeting, and Phil is left to show Ranboo around the house with a little help from Techno.

Phil shows Ranboo his room last, afraid that the kid might disappear into it before actually learning where anything important in the house is. Apparently, he was correct in doing so because Ranboo retreats into the room, and no one sees him for the rest of the night.

It sets Phil on edge. Techno did that, Wilbur too, hell, even Tommy hid in his room and made himself scare around the house until he started to feel more comfortable. The doesn't quell the ache in his chest when he leaves dinner outside of Ranboo's door, though. He's always scared of the kids isolating themselves. He doesn't want to mess this up.

"It'll be fine," Wilbur says, chewing on the inside of his cheek. *God, he needs a haircut.* "I'm pretty sure anyway. We all grew out of it; he'll probably be the same."

"I know," Phil groans and rubs at his face. "I know... boys, I hate to ask this of you, but will you help me? Anything he mentions, anything at all, any anxieties or things he wants to do... please tell me?"

"Course," Techno says, deftly weaving string over his fingers. Phil thinks he's probably halfway through with the bracelet, judging by the length of it. "We get it, it's hard, it'll be no problem."

Wilbur joins in with his own confirmation, and Phil's chest feels a little less tight.

--

Phil doesn't see Ranboo a lot. Ranboo doesn't see much of anyone, really. He comes out sometimes, once to ask Phil how to work the shower, once to ask Wilbur how to work the

microwave. He's skittish, Phil can tell that much, but he really hopes it's just the nerves of a new house. The kids has got to go to therapy, that much is also clear, but Phil doesn't want to send him off without a strong bond to fall back on. It doesn't help that Ranboo is overly polite and clearly has things to say that he's just *not* .

It makes Ranboo feel bad. Everyone is so eager to help, so keen on talking to him, and here he is... hiding in a room that isn't even his and venturing out only at night. He's run out of clothes, stuff that only sort of fit him that he packed into his bag, and he is *not* about to ask someone how the washing machine works. So he takes a deep breath, hands shaking as he grips his door handle. Slowly, he opens it, peeking down the hallway. Everyone else's door is closed, which means they're either out or don't want to be bothered, which works for him. Carefully, he makes his way down the stairs, finding Phil working on his computer in the living room.

"Uh, Phil...?" He asks, wringing his fingers together anxiously.

Phil snaps up, looking over to Ranboo. "Yeah, mate?"

Ranboo opens his mouth to speak until he remembers that he doesn't have any money. Well, not really, because whatever is going on with his parent's bank is a mess that he knows nothing about. But that means Phil has to spend money on *him* . For stupid shirts and for stupidly long legs. *I'm not worth that kind of money* , Ranboo worries.

"What's up?" Phil tries again, softer. "I can see something on the tip of your tongue."

Ranboo feels very, very small. "Can we-I-" Ranboo takes a deep breath. "I need some clothes."

Phil blinks at him as the words process. "Oh! Oh my god, how did I not think of that? Do you have anything of yours?" Ranboo shakes his head. "Ah, foster places are shit at finding stuff that fits. Yeah, of course, we can get you some clothes. I'll be done in about twenty minutes. Do you want to head out then?"

Ranboo picked at the skin on his hands, mulling over the thought before nodding and scurrying off before he could embarrass himself even more.

Soon, sooner than Ranboo thought, Phil was finished with his work, and he and Ranboo piled into the car and drove off to a store Ranboo didn't catch the name of. Finding pants were a nightmare. Some were too short, some slipped down his hips and refused to stay on even with a belt, and every time Ranboo had to come back to Phil with the bad news, a little part of him died. Despite everything, Phil was patient and helpful, finding brands that Wil likes and checking them with Ranboo. The shirts were... far less horrible. Just some simple t-shirts, Ranboo had insisted. Nothing too expensive, or he thinks he might just start crying. But... there's a really nice Hawaiian shirt across the aisle that's black and ugly as sin, and he *wants* it. He can't help the longing looks he gives it. Phil follows his line of sight and happily drops the shirt into his cart.

"So, how've you been doing, mate?" Phil asks, sorting through some shirts for him since Ranboo was getting visibly uncomfortable. He hopes the question is broad enough for Ranboo to avoid anything he doesn't really want to talk about.

"Um, I've been okay..." Ranboo stops to look at a shirt, glancing at Phil before moving on. "My lack of any personal possessions makes moving around super easy."

"Any...?"

"Yep, all destroyed."

Phil looks at this stupid, stupid sixteen-year-old and remembers he lost his family to a fire.

"God, Ranboo, that sucks, I'm-"

"It's fine," Ranboo bits out, a little quicker than he intended, keeping himself focused on the shirts.

An uncomfortable silence falls between them. Phil sighs, glancing at the cart. "I'm not finding anything; you wanna head out?"

Ranboo gives a quiet "yeah," and they both head to check out. Phil tries to make it so that Ranboo doesn't see the total price, and he's pretty sure it works because they bag all of the clothes without trouble and hop back in the car. The uncomfortable silence continues until they get home, where Ranboo grabs his bags and retreats back to his room. Wilbur and Techno, who were playing *some* sort of card game in the living room, glanced between the stairs and Phil. Phil sighed, the tension sagging from his shoulders.

"I dunno, guys," he says, and that's all the information he gives before joining the oddly competitive game of Go Fish.

Ranboo hides in his room. What the fuck? *What the fuck???* Why can't he just be normal? He slides down his door and groans, dropping his head in his hands. He hears Tommy loudly leave his room, moving downstairs and shouting something incoherent. *Go buy yourself some clothes*, Ranboo told himself. *It'll be fun! You don't have to talk about your dead parents!* Why did he talk about his dead parents!?

Slowly, Ranboo relaxed and let his hands fall to the floor. Gingerly, he crawled over and pulled his journal out from under the bed he'd been sleeping in. He flipped to a new page, skimming over past entries, pulling over his bag, and grabbing out his favorite mechanical pencil. He clicks it a few more times than necessary because it sounds *oh so satisfying* and writes a small entry about his day. He's been keeping this journal since the fire. It helped him sort things out and remember things. His memory has gotten worse since the fire, which sucks, but at least he can journal.

Once he's done, once he's written down his little thoughts, he begins to sort through his bags. Faint muffled screaming from downstairs finds its way to Ranboo's room, but he's too busy hanging up his new pants to care. He traces his fingers over the stupid Hawaiian shirt Phil got him, glancing at his closed door, before shaking his head and hanging it up.

The next time Phil sees Ranboo, which is surprisingly the next day, he's wearing the Hawaiian button-up he was eyeing at the store. Phil tries to not let it shock him too much, but the way he pauses in the middle of eating doesn't go unnoticed. It was takeout night; Wilbur had wanted some really shitty Chinese from the only place that delivers, and Ranboo had finally come out for dinner wearing the clothes Phil bought for him.

Phil's kids quickly followed his line of sight, all freezing when they saw Ranboo standing awkwardly from across the table. Wilbur was the first to pick back up his chopsticks, conversing loudly with Techno.

"Hey, Ranboo," Phil started. "What can we do for you?" he asked, desperately hoping that Ranboo was actually here to eat and not just about to ask for something. He would've made this a whole thing and probably stressed the poor kid out.

"Uh... do you mind if I join you guys?"

The question made Phil pause again, his brain rebooting quickly before snapping into action. "Uh, no, not at all! There's a chair over here if you'd like-"

And that's how Ranboo found himself seated at the table, quickly beginning to regret his decision. He came down because he felt terrible about being so absent; Ranboo was fucked up but not *so* fucked up that he could actively hide from everyone in the house forever. But... he hated Chinese food. Not all of it, but this kind... definitely. The textures just felt wrong in his mouth, but he couldn't say anything about it because he'd just be making it harder on everyone else. They were all enjoying themselves, he couldn't ruin that! Instead, he just picked around and ate some of the rice, hoping no one would notice.

Someone noticed.

"Something wrong, mate?" Phil asked quietly. Ranboo cringed.

"I... I don't like Chinese," he confessed, just as quiet as Phil.

"What!?" Tommy screeched across the table, slamming his hands down on the wood. Techno and Wil both stopped their conversation, looking over.

"I just-I just don't like it-"

"Hey, it's alright, it's not for everyone," Phil defused quickly, sending a quick glance to Tommy. "We have leftover spaghetti. Would you like some of that?"

...Phil's spaghetti was very good.

"Yeah, Techno always makes way too much," Wilbur chided.

"Wh- I do *not*, I make enough for leftovers!"

Correction, Techno's spaghetti was very good.

"Yeah, I'll uh, I'll have some of that."

-- panic attack tw

Ranboo woke up gasping, gripping at his chest as sweat covered his skin. His body shivered violently from the cold and the fear gripping at his throat. Shakily, he clambered out of bed, dropping down and pulling out his journal. His eyes were too full of tears to read, hands too shaky to write, and a defiant, pained sob ripped itself from Ranboo's throat. His fingers dug into the small burn scars dotting his skin, curling into a tight ball as if it would help.

Distantly, he hears his door creak open and then strong, solid hands grasping his own and pulling them away from his body. Something soft and warm is draped over his shoulders, and through his tears, Ranboo can make out the blurry silhouette of Technoblade.

"T-Techno?" He asks, moving his hands once Techno releases them to pull the blanket tighter around him. "Wh...?"

"The walls aren't very thick," Techno explains, voice rumbly with tiredness but not sleep.

Ranboo nods jerkily, a strong shiver wracking his body as he feels a new wave of tears crash over him.

Techno grips his shoulders, speaking calmly, and while Ranboo can't tell what he's saying, it's the most grounding thing that's happened to him in *weeks*. Techno watched Ranboo break down in his grasp, looking over his shoulder when the door opens more. Tommy is standing in the doorway, looking exhausted but worried all the same.

"Could you get Phil?" Techno asked, voice firm but not harsh. Tommy nodded and then disappeared from view.

"Ranboo," Techno calls softly. "Can I touch you?"

Ranboo shakes his head harshly, gasping for breath. Techno nods and doesn't move in any closer, gently adjusting the blanket around Ranboo, so he doesn't have to grip it so tight.

Phil comes in moments later, his shawl trailing after him, nearly looking like a pair of wings. Techno backs off and moves away when Phil kneels beside him, letting his dad handle the situation. He was the best out of all of them. Wilbur was in the doorway now, too, woken up by the commotion, and Techno quickly ushered them out of the way. Crowding the room wouldn't help.

Soon, Ranboo was seated on the living room couch, a steaming cup of hot cocoa gently wetting his chin. He was idle skimming through things to watch on Netflix, Phil giving him permission to stay up and get his mind off things. Techno was seated on the other side of the couch from him, occasionally throwing worried glances his way.

"What was it... what was it about?" Techno asks quietly as if he's afraid to disrupt the already somber moment. "Was it a nightmare?"

Ranboo's eyes dragged themselves from the TV to Techno, who was avoiding eye contact.

"I get nightmares about foster care," Techno supplies softly.

Ranboo looks at him for a little bit. Normally, Techno was well put together. Borderline professional. But right now, his hair was falling out of a messy bun, and his glasses were sliding down his nose. He looked tired, like any other nineteen-year-old. He looked real, and the anxiety he felt for Ranboo tinged the air.

"My parents," is all Ranboo said, and Techno understood.

They didn't talk for the rest of the night, but Techno was a grounding presence for his otherwise drifting mind.

--

It's been a few months, and all things considered, it's gone pretty okay. Ranboo has met the family friends, Eret, Niki, and Tubbo, and regularly joins everyone for meals. Phil has managed to buy

him a total of three ugly Hawaiian shirts, which seem to be a favorite in his small wardrobe. He had even begun to agree to do activities with the rest of the family.

Which brought them to here, a temperature-controlled inside pool with very fun slides that Phil denies even going down.

Wilbur and Tommy were doing... something in the water. Phil thinks they're trying to establish dominance over the shallow area of the pool, judging by the expression of the twelve-year-old they just chased away. Techno is helping Phil keep an eye on them, just in case they get *too* physical.

Techno was sitting off to the side, nose buried in some book Phil *thinks* is required by school, but Techno seems to be enjoying it, so he won't pry. Ranboo was sitting on the edge of one of the deeper ends, feet dangling in the water.

It was fun, getting out with everyone, Ranboo thinks. It gets his mind off of social security and monthly payments and the fact he doesn't have a phone. He watches Wilbur and Tommy take over the pool, slowly expanding their territory until all of the other kids get too scared and retreat to the smaller pools on the other side of the building. He wishes he could join them, it looks fun, but unfortunately, Ranboo can't swim. He's perfectly content with swinging his feet back and forth in the water, though.

Wilbur and Tommy make their way over, cheering with Ranboo about their chaotic victory. Ranboo thinks it will be a chill day until Tommy gets a look in his eyes and starts begging Ranboo to join them in the pool. He declines, about to explain himself when he feels a hand grip his ankle.

"Tommy, no, no, no!! I can't swim!" Is all Phil hears before it's followed by a large splash. He shoots up, eyes honing in on where Ranboo had been seated, with Wilbur and Tommy now taking up residence in the water and Ranboo breaking the surface, gasping for breath. He grips the side of the pool, looking like a drowned cat, and Tommy is laughing. Wilbur looks very anxious but unable to help because this is an area he actually needs to tread water to stay afloat in. Quickly, trying not to let his Mother Bear instincts show, Phil moves to the trio.

"Hey, mate, don't worry," he says quickly, dropping to his knees and offering a hand to Ranboo. Quickly, the teen takes it, and Phil hoists him out of the water. "You okay?"

"I can't swim," Ranboo repeats, voice much more firm than before.

Phil grips Ranboo's head and begins to subconsciously check the boy over for injuries. He's soaking wet but otherwise unharmed, and he gives a sigh of relief.

"Alright, come back to where me and Techno were sitting, and we'll dry you off."

Ranboo sits, wrapped up in a fluffy towel, Phil fluffing Ranboo's hair and huffing like some sort of mother hen.

"Sorry about Tommy; he's stupid and impulsive," Techno says, glancing up from his book.

"It's fine," Ranboo drawls, squinting as Phil goes back to drying his hair. "It was *kind of* funny."

"You did look a little like a drowned cat," Phil says helpfully, a laugh playing on the end of his statement.

Ranboo snorts quietly and spends the rest of his time at the pool watching Wilbur and Tommy dominate from the sidelines.

--

More time passes. Phil figures things out with Social Security and finally gets Ranboo his long-deserved survivor benefits. Ranboo is relieved to have that mess sorted out, and as a treat, Phil takes him out to buy some decorations for his room. Wilbur tags along, claiming he needed to pick up some arts and crafts supplies. He spends more time trying to get Ranboo is put atrocious decorations up in his room. It only sometimes works.

It's been a joy watching Ranboo come out of his shell. He's figured out every appliance in the house and joins them for every meal. He's still closed off in ways. Phil highly doubts he sees any of them as family, but that's okay. Ranboo is special; he hasn't been in the system his whole life like the rest of his kids. He had a family who he loved and was a part of. Having that suddenly ripped away and then some random woman expecting you to call the next group of people you're dropped on the doorstep of *family* feels next to impossible.

But he smiles a lot more, and Phil thinks that is a beautiful thing.

Wilbur buys a suspiciously tiny amount of glue sticks before claiming he's ready to go, and Phil and Ranboo share a look the next time Wilbur gets distracted by something.

Slowly, the room Ranboo has been staying in turns into Ranboo's room.

--

"Do you feel more comfortable talking with men or women?" Phil asked. He finally felt like it was time to approach Ranboo about going to therapy, and much to his relief, Ranboo agreed.

"Uh... men, I guess?"

They try a male therapist. It doesn't work out. Ranboo changes his decision to a woman.

Ranboo had an appointment today. Phil was busy with work earlier, so he decided to sit in his room and write in his journal a little. Much to his surprise, however, Techno knocked on his door frame and jingled his keys.

"Cmon, let's go," he says, disappearing into the hall.

Phil struck gold when he found Ranboo a therapist in the same building as Techno's, and Ranboo guesses Phil got caught up with work because now he's sitting in the passenger seat of Techno's car, driving to therapy. The ride is relatively silent, anxiety bubbling up under Ranboo's skin. This was his first... appointment? Meeting? This is his first time with the new lady, and memories of Ranboo's last therapist cling to his mind.

Techno pulls up to the building and parks with practiced ease, quickly checking his mirrors before hopping out. Techno guides Ranboo inside, walking past a small rock garden that looks very cute

in Ranboo's opinion. Techno checks them both in, leaning on the counter comfortably, and then takes a seat on one of the many couches by the front desk. Ranboo follows Techno awkwardly, sitting on the other side of Techno's couch. He'd never been here before, but Techno certainly knows his way around.

Soon enough, they're both pulled away, and Ranboo steps into a warm, quaint office. He sits down on a plush couch, glancing around the office. There are plants, small conversation items, and plenty of books. The woman sitting across from him introduces herself, but he doesn't catch it, so he settles with praying she doesn't notice that he doesn't know her name.

She's kind, and she speaks gently. It reminds Ranboo a lot of Phil. She's easy to talk to, which is kind of the point, but sometimes it's harder than it has to be. Instead of throwing Ranboo into tough conversations like his last therapist, she nudges him in the right direction, waiting patiently for him to take the bait and talk about what he wants. It's a nice change.

Ranboo starts by explaining his history. Orphaned at the ripe old age of sixteen, with \$255 slapped in his hands, and he's sent on his way. He's pulled around by various social workers for the next few months, making his way through the foster system, celebrating his birthday alone, before ending up on Phil's door.

He slips into a tangent about how he feels like he doesn't know what he's doing most of the time. He feels so lost, and everyone in Phil's family is so helpful and nice, but he just feels so *disconnected*. He misses his parents and his house. They were his *family*, and he doesn't know if he could ever settle into a new one.

The woman is kind and gentle when she tells him he doesn't need to make these people his new family. They're here to help him, not replace what he lost. Most likely, they just want him to be able to trust them. Ranboo hates how surprised he feels when she tells him this.

She talks about how losing family members is hard, especially at such a rough point in life, *especially* on this scale. Having nothing to fall back on certainly doesn't help his need for stability. Ranboo talks about his recent memory problems, and then he talks about his journal when his therapist prompts it. He doesn't know precisely when the tears start, but he really does feel bad for the number of tissues he goes through. She's probably going to have to get another box. Time flies with Ranboo spilling his guts to a woman he barely knows (and doesn't remember the name of), answering questions, and explaining all the intricacies about himself. Before he knows it, the hour is up, and a gentle hold is put on their talk.

"Uh, where is your bathroom?" Ranboo asks. He wants to know exactly how horrible he looks before facing Techno.

The woman points him down the hall, and he scurries away, shutting the door quickly behind him. He looks like he's just been crying, really. Red eyes, splotchy skin, and the hint of a runny nose. Ranboo tries to calm himself, taking several deep breaths until his breathing evens out and dabbing at his still wet cheeks. He doesn't look much better by the end of it, but he's definitely backed off the edge of another crying fit.

When Ranboo sees Technoblade, he doesn't look much better. Same splotchy skin and red eyes from tears. Techno lets out a small laugh when he sees Ranboo.

"We're both in the same boat, huh?" He asks, and they leave the building together. "Not a word to Wilbur or Tommy."

"I won't if you won't."

"Deal."

--

It's been nearly half a year since Phil has started fostering Ranboo. Since then, he's put his Social Security Administration government one-time payment to use in buying himself a new phone. It's been a journey. Countless panic attacks, even more therapy, and a brand new prescription that finally allows him to sleep easy. Ranboo lost a bet with Tommy and now has black and white hair, and is now the proud owner of a small collection of (ugly) Hawaiian shirts and nail polish. He gets along well with the family friends, and Phil has seen more and more of him throughout the months.

Wilbur is trying a new recipe (with Techno's supervision) one day, with Ranboo sleeping on the couch. Wilbur messes something up and burns the dish beyond salvation. Ranboo shifts and then shoots up, panic filling his throat and startling Phil out of his book. Ranboo's eyes dark around, and his hands shake. *Why do I smell smoke?* Memories of a burning house fill his mind.

Phil glances between Ranboo and the kitchen, where Wilbur was clambering about loudly, and Techno was speaking over him, trying to get him to listen, then back to the growing panic in the teen.

"What the fuck did you burn?" Tommy asks, stomping down the stairs.

"Wilbur, open the window, please," Phil calls, moving towards Ranboo, whose attention snaps towards him.

"It's okay," Phil says, placing his hand over Ranboo's. "Wilbur just burnt something in the kitchen, didn't even start a fire. Do you want to sit outside while we air out the house?"

Plenty of time with kids of various traumas makes situations like this easier to deal with. It hurts his heart all the same, but a part of him is comforted, knowing he can help. Ranboo has trouble focusing on him for a good few seconds, so he repeats the question, cupping the kid's cheek, and he finally gets some results.

Ranboo nods shakily, and Phil gently pulls him up, draping his shawl over the poor kid as they shuffle outside. Phil waves his hands at the rest of his kids in the kitchen, and hopefully, they catch on.

Phil makes himself comfortable on the steps next to Ranboo, sighing into the cold air. Ranboo has wrapped the shawl around himself, looking quite cozy, but Phil couldn't bring himself to feel jealous.

"My therapist says that I should talk to you more," Ranboo drawls. "About stuff like this. Triggers and stuff."

"...Do you want to?" Phil asks hesitantly.

"No," Ranboo huffs. "But I should."

Phil nods but doesn't press. Another time, then. When they feel a little better about being alive.

"Hey, dad?" Ranboo asks tiredly.

"Yeah?" Phil responds naturally. Instinctually.

"Can you grab my phone? It's charging on the floor by the couch."

Phil nods and grabs Ranboo's phone.

--

Techno has a fencing tournament, and as much as Tommy complains about going, it is a *whole family* ordeal. Which means everyone piles in the car, Techno taking his own and sticking his tongue out at Wilbur through the window, and driving to the gym.

The car ride was long and loud, and Ranboo was really wishing Techno had let him come along in the other car. Wilbur and Tommy started fighting even though Wilbur was in the passenger seat. He used his stupid long arms to reach back to smack at Tommy, who screeched in retaliation. Ranboo all but scrambled out of the car as soon as it was parked, running to Techno, who was laughing at the noise coming from the vehicle. After a firm scolding from Phil, everyone calmed down and headed inside.

Ranboo knew that Techno was at least vaguely cool. He'd hear Techno talk about projects, personal or school-related, with far too many details for any sane person to come up with. His meticulous planning bordered on obsession. He also knew Techno was strong and good at cooking, but... In his gear, face hidden behind the protective mask, Techno was *terrifying*. *And it was really cool*. He basically went unrivaled the entire time. He looked so calm and collected, swinging his sword around casually while his opponents got ready. A stark contrast to the shaking hands he caught a glimpse of on the way in.

Ranboo glanced at Phil to gauge his reaction, and he looked at Techno the way Ranboo's dad used to. Proud. Relaxed. Happy. Ranboo's heart ached a little, but he wouldn't let it tinge the moment, not when he got to go out to eat in celebration. It was a special occasion, and nothing would get in the way.

He wouldn't let his heartache tinge the way Tommy tells dumb jokes that really aren't that funny but makes him laugh anyway or the way Wilbur eagerly talks with him about music. Instead, he would let himself melt into the moment just like the butter and cheese on his baked potato and tell Techno how cool he is and see his usually stoic face melt into a small blush. He'd sip on his strawberry lemonade and take his meds and write an entry in his journal when he gets home.

He would quietly confess that he really wants to do what Techno does later that week, and Techno would smile and welcome him on board. Techno would nearly slip up and call Ranboo his brother, and his fencing friends would all greet Ranboo with an enthusiasm that makes him want to hide behind Techno.

He'd spill his secrets to Phil one quiet night, crying about his parents and every stress that's been building up in his chest. He'd confess the things that would make him anxious, the things that terrified him more than he could think. All through it, Phil would be a stable weight for him to cling to, never speaking when it wasn't his place and giving Ranboo the space he needed to compose himself.

Phil would drive him to therapy, then Techno, then Wilbur, and he'd talk and cry and reflect and mourn. He'd lean on Phil's shoulder when things got hard, then Techno, then Wilbur, and then Tommy. His roots would grow out, and he'd decide he wanted to dye his hair again. Phil would laugh but take him to the salon anyway. He'd tease Techno for his roots showing, and Techno would chase him around the house, making empty threats that no one believed.

Occasionally, Ranboo would slip up. My brother Wilbur, my dad Phil, and he wouldn't think about it long. Seven months, two weeks, and five days, he'd been keeping track with his journal. He misses his family and his house, but every day Phil's house starts to feel a little more like his, and his room turned into *his* room. Eight months. They celebrate his birthday, and Tommy sulks about still being the youngest. Eight months and a week. Phil approaches him late at night.

"How've you been doing, mate?" Phil asks, quiet and hushed as the night is still.

"I've been... I've been doing pretty good," Ranboo confesses, clicking his pencil.

"Good, that's... Do you like it here, Ranboo?"

"Yeah," Ranboo says. "I like it here a lot."

"Good, good. I... I talked with Techno, and Wilbur, and Tommy, and... we're all okay if... ugh." Phil puts his head in his hands. "This conversation never gets easier. Can I adopt you, Ranboo?"

Ranboo blinks, and his eyes are *not* wet. "You sure you want a fourth kid in the house?"

Phil laughs. "If I didn't, I would've said *no* eight fucking months ago. It's a little late for that now."

Ranboo chuckles and presses a sleeve to his eye. He's not crying. "A little late, yeah," he laughs wetly. "Yeah. Yeah. I'd... that'd be cool. Yeah."

Phil wheezes out a small laugh, dropping his head again. Ranboo laughs along with him because this conversation could've gone *a lot* better, but here they are. Phil puts him to bed and ruffles his hair, casting one last look over his shoulder before turning off the light.

"Phil?" Ranboo calls softly.

Phil turns around, poking his head back in the room. "Yeah?"

"Is this just because you want my government benefits?"

Phil snorts. "You caught me. Sleep well, Ranboo."

"Oh no," Ranboo says lightly. "Night."

Phil's hand lingers on the door handle, taking a deep, shaky breath before returning to his room.

Damn Phil and his heart.

End Notes

i was not self projecting i was not yall i was-

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