

for you are dust and to dust you shall return

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for you are dust and to dust you shall return

by [heyimflamel](#)

Summary

When he rises from the lava, from the ash, wings sprout from his back and cracks decorate his face and brimstone clings—melts, really—into his skin until it becomes one in the same. TommyInnit dies trying to fly, jumping off a ledge in the unforgiving hellscape of the Nether, and he is revived as a phoenix which cannot die and is only reborn and reborn and reborn.

Notes

this fic got away from me yall it was only supposed to be like 3-4k words LMFAO ik its been like two weeks since this stream but,, this idea came to me and i couldnt let it go

alternate summary:

There's soot on his face and blood smeared on his lips and in his hair. He wishes time would stop, rewind back to bee watching and baking and a time when their family was still a father and three sons instead of a father, a ghost, an outlaw and a child playing hero. Time does not stop, and fate is not merciful.

Looking at the destroyed remains of Logstedshire, Tommy wondered what the fucking point of any of this was anymore. The only person who seemed to give a shit about him had just blown up all of his things, every last one. His tent? Blown up. His items, half of his pictures, his ender chest? Gone. His 'secret room', which he had privately applauded himself for making only days before? Destroyed. Logstedshire, especially, was blown to smithereens, with only a massive crater to show for it. Dream had left and broken his portal, forbidding him from going into the Nether and forbidding anyone from visiting.

It's not like they were going to visit you anyway, a treacherous voice whispered.

As Tommy gazed upon the bare-bones of this beach-side, one-man village he created for himself, he thought about L'manburg. He thought about his eldest brother, driven to insanity and armed with TNT given to him by the same man who destroyed Logstedshire. He thought about L'manburg's death at the hands of one of its founding fathers and allowed himself to grieve.

He thought more intently about Dream, about his exile and the reluctant friendship the two fostered between them. He thought about the fun times, like Dream letting him keep his things and Dream letting him borrow his trident to get a small taste of flight. He thought about Dream's always smiling mask, his glinting netherite armour and how he had borderline yelled at Tommy for breaking his trust.

Why would you do that? The little voice asked. Why would you betray your only friend when you know what it feels like to be betrayed?

"I don't know," Tommy whispered in response.

Because Dream *was* his friend. He had been until then, at least. Why did he do that anyway? Did he think he could revolt against Dream, godly, immortal Dream, again and come out unscathed?

Alone? Did he think that he could win against the man who had taken two out of three of his lives? He had already lost to the green man before. Twice. This time, he would not have anybody's support. At least the first two times, he had his friends. Ex-friends, he corrected as an afterthought.

'I'm completely alone,' he realised, blinking away the mistiness in his eyes. *'I... have no one, now.'*

Part of him wanted to contest that—the part of him that was still loud and passionate and rambunctious, the part that still screamed out for Tubbo and Nikki and Big Q, for L'manburg—but it's been a long time since that part has been at the forefront of his mind. It's been a long time since Tommy has been loud and passionate and rambunctious. It's been a while since Tommy has allowed himself to be his annoying self. With a heavy heart and scenes of L'manburg's demise blurring with scenes of Logstedshire blowing up in front of his eyes, he climbed down into the crater.

Tommy gathered what little supplies are left behind. Most were no longer there, not even scraps left. The ender pearls, the tools, and even the armour had been obliterated by the blast. There were stacks of dirt and some cobblestone, a couple of stripped logs and less than a handful of pictures that had somehow missed the explosion. Barely useable flint and steel and a dented bucket also remained, and Tommy carefully pocketed them as well. He left the remains of a bell, now covered in black soot and scratches, untouched at the bottom of the pit.

He sniffled. What would he do now? He was still exiled from L'manburg, by his ex-best friend no less, and the Dream SMP grounds were also off-bounds. There was no way he could go to Tubbo or Quackity. Ranboo had already been dragged in to too many of Tommy's bad ideas. The Badlands might not be a good idea, considering Dream has them under his thumb somewhat and they're all unpredictable and rabid on the best days. Dream... Were they still friends? Maybe if he rebuilt Logstedshire and promised to be better, then Dream would take him back. God, why did he hide things from Dream? Dream was his *friend!* The only one who showed up to his beach party.

Even his family couldn't stand him any longer. Ghostbur seemed much happier whenever he went to L'manburg, and Tommy hadn't seen his ghostly brother since he was tasked to send out invitations to the beach party. Phil had chosen Technoblade over him many times before. This definitely wouldn't be any different, especially seeing as the man—his *father*—had not visited him even once since his exile.

Technoblade was a dick. The last time they spoke, the piglin hybrid only came over to make fun of Tommy and his sorry state. Besides. Technoblade has never been the type to offer a helping hand for nothing in return. When Pogtopia was its own thing, Technoblade joined Tommy and Wilbur to bring down the government. Oh, Tommy could see it now. Him, starving and desperate, asking Techno for help while the man laughed and jeered, calling him 'Theseus' and asking him how he liked being a hero.

There's a memory, somewhere. It was so old it seemed like a distant dream. A warm summer day, his clumsy grip on a wooden sword as Technoblade stood in front of him with another. Days of sparring and play battles out next to Phil's fenced-off farmlands. Days of sitting next to his older brother on a patchwork quilt, eating jerky and watching wheat sway in the breeze with his oldest brother's guitar in the background. Tommy swallowed and shook his head, dismissing it.

He looked out over the ocean to the other side of the island where another shore stood. Beach tables and chairs and umbrellas were set out along with a long table for a party that never was. No one bothered to show up. No one bothered to even tell him if they would come. Well, except Dream. *Dream* showed up to his party. *Dream* was the only one he could trust, his only friend, even if he burned all of his armour. Dream knew what was best, after all. He was just trying to help

Tommy. He had been ungrateful. No wonder Dream didn't want anything to do with him.

Tommy turned to stare at the Nether portal, one obsidian block away from being complete, and began to plan.

It only took him a day to find lava. He had looked at his communicator for the coordinates and went through pickaxe after pickaxe to find it. Tommy spent all day and night mining. His efforts were not fruitless, and he left with a dented bucket full of the sluggishly bubbling magma for his troubles.

He was thankful for it, in a way. It was a source of light and warmth, seeing as most of his torches were threadbare at best and the majority of them had been blown up. His hands were sweating, a sliding vice-grip on the handle of the bucket and tiny sizzles almost hitting his fingers. They strayed close enough to feel the heat and Tommy could swear that his skin was burning just from the proximity.

He curled his fingers tighter around the thin handle, lubricated with his sweat. He winced as a droplet fell into the lava and the surface crackled, then shook his head. There was no time. He had to get back up to Logstedshire—what's left of it, anyway—and he had to remake the Nether portal. Then...

Then he could stop making people miserable.

So, Tommy continued to travel upward. The groans and moans of mobs, rattling bones and low hissing played as background noise for his journey from some place behind the walls either side of him. It was faster to get back up than it was to go down, thankfully. Wood and misshapen rocks crunched beneath his battered shoes as he walked, remnants of tools he'd burned through.

'At least they weren't made of anything valuable,' he supposed.

Part of Tommy is glad for the warmth from the lava. It's searing hot, no doubt, and touching the sides of the bucket would probably feel like touching a hot pan but worse. At least it wasn't cold. Cold, like his tent. Cold, like the nights at Logstedshire. Cold, like the beachside breeze. Cold, like the ocean waters he found himself waking up in, farther and farther from the shore each passing day.

Cold, like the pearly snow beneath his fingertips as he made snowmen with his brothers and watched them walk around with coal smiles and button eyes. Cold, like Techno's weapons and Phil's hands and Wilbur's varnished guitar. Cold, like the snowy winters back at Phil's farm with Techno's hot chocolate and Wilbur's Christmas songs, a live pine decorated in the corner of the living room and Phil's mix-and-match quilts arranged in blanket forts by the fireplace.

Tommy shook his head. He wasn't a kid anymore, Wilbur wasn't here, Techno wasn't his "cool older brother" and Phil wasn't just a humble farmer with three brats to clothe and feed. He wasn't at his childhood home. He was in Logstedshire, in the Dream SMP.

He wondered if he could turn back time for just one measly day—

It took around half a day, maybe more, to get back up to the surface. The handle hurt and he stopped many times in fear of the bucket slipping out of his grip and melting through the floor. His feet were bruised and his legs had been cramped for so long he was almost numb to the feeling. Almost. When he made it up to the surface again, it was just past sunrise. Thank Notch for small

mercies.

'Even if I don't deserve them,' Tommy added as an afterthought, looking over to the Nether portal.

He wondered if he should have crafted another bucket for water. Oh well. It was too late now. Besides, it wasn't like he would need it for long. It didn't matter anyway. He only needed to fill half of the bottom and strike up a flame to activate the damn thing. Then, Tommy could return to the Nether. The Hellscape that was never cool, always sweltering hot like summers at the farm—

Tommy wrinkled his nose. Why were all these memories resurfacing now? *No distractions. No friends to keep him company. No one to make new, happy memories with. It was never this bad before. He had never considered those memories to be 'just memories' until now.* His mind kept throwing answers at him, leading him back to snapshots and videos, moving pictures of life before the SMP painted in sepia and fading around the edges.

Ah, well. There was no use dwelling on things that had come to pass. He'd never be able to go back, not really. Not with one brother dead and buried, another dancing the line between stability and instability, and a father who felt less and less like his dad with each passing day.

~~*Was I a source of misery even back then? Had they been looking for an excuse—*~~

Tommy crouched and put the bucket down, wiping his forehead. He looked out to the horizon line hopefully, desperately, like a miserable mutt. He saw nothing. No netherite clad green man in a boat, or spinning through the air. No trident soaring in the skies. Not even a dolphin leaping above the surface of the ocean. Only the calm, soft ripples of the water broke the serenity of the beachside. Tommy *hated* it.

The lava splashed against the ground and poured out of the bucket like sludge, filling the space sloppily. The blonde boy sniffed, angry tears streaming down his face. Angry like the bubbling lava, spitting at him from the frame at the base of the portal. Notch dammit, he didn't even know *why* he was angry! He just *was*.

Angry at himself, for being so stupid. Angry at Dream, for leaving him alone again. Angry at himself again, for betraying Dream's trust. Angry at Tubbo, for betraying him and throwing away their friendship like it meant nothing. Angry at Wilbur, for going insane and dying and leaving him alone in life and in death. Angry at Quackity and Fundy and Ranboo, for standing there and watching him be exiled, doing nothing. Angry at Techno, for turning on them and destroying L'manburg, for killing Tubbo, for watching as their own fucking *father* killed Wilbur. Angry at his dad, Phil, for killing Wilbur, for choosing Techno over Tommy again and again, for letting him and Wilbur join this damn SMP in the first place.

He was angry at the world, and the only way he could show it was through tears. What was there to be angry at? The trees? The crater, marking Logstedshire's resting place? The inverted dome where his tent, his 'home' in this stupid exile, used to be? The sight of the beach party that never was? The Nether portal?

Tommy all-but threw the bucket into the shallow water, waiting for it to fill and then hauling it up and out. His arms hurt, his head hurt, his fingers ached terribly with phantom burns from the lava, there was an odd throbbing centred around his ankle and there was a gaping hole at the bottom of his left shoe where his heel was now scraped and bruised. He wasn't certain when it had escaped his notice, but he was covered in soot and dust.

Seeing the lava solidify into obsidian, completing the portal, was a sweet relief. He wouldn't have to go back to get more. It was a short-lived relief.

Are you sure you want to do this? What about your friends?

Tommy hesitated, flint and steel in hand as he looked at the portal.

What friends? Ranboo? Tubbo? Big Q? Another voice mocked. The ones who betrayed you? Who left you for dead, at Dream's mercy? They don't care about you!

The compasses, Tommy.

You mean the compass that Tubbo got rid of and that Tubbo didn't give a shit about?

Do you really want Phil to lose another son?

The blonde gasped like the air had been punched out of him, staring shakily at the flint and steel in his hands. The jagged edges cut his palms.

Do you really want Techno to lose another brother so soon? Just after losing his twin?

Tommy took a step back from the portal. He looked to the ocean, as if expecting Dream to suddenly swoop in and see what he's been doing. The very thought made his face burn with shame. He looked to the tree line, gaze darting around, searching for someone. Technoblade, in full netherite to laugh at him again, or Ghostbur, babbling about something or the other and offering Tommy some more blue, or even Phil.

They never cared about you, Tommy. Don't kid yourself. All you were was a nuisance that they had to deal with when they were too soft-hearted to kick you back out to the streets where you belonged. Raccoon boy. Digging for scraps of food and affection. Pathetic.

He pursed his lips and looked back at the portal, his face switching expression every split-second. His focus seemed to shift from the portal to the remains of Logstedshire, to the forest and back again.

Think about all the people you'd never see again, Tommy.

The teen sighed and closed his eyes. There was Tubbo with his endearing smile and his bees, his never-ending well of kind thoughts and words for everyone he came across. There was Ghostbur, of course, who was not quite Wilbur at any stage of his life, but a clueless and happy ghost. Quackity, with his quirky personality and boundless good cheer. Niki, who was kind and sweet but as fierce as the best of them. There was also Fundy, Wilbur's son, and Ranboo, whose memory was as flaky as Phil's appearance on the server. Sam and Jack Manifold, too, were fun, and SapNap and George were alright when you got them on their own.

If it was Tubbo who was exiled, you know every single last one of them would be here every day. Where does that leave you, racoon boy? So desperate for a crumb of affection that you'd let them throw you away as long as they took a passing glance in your general direction?

The strike of flint and steel against obsidian did nothing to quell the sudden gushing anger in Tommy, as if a dam had broken to make his vision bleed red. The blood tinted world became purple and swirled as he stepped through the portal, the tool breaking in his grasp.

He had forgotten how warm the Nether was. It was strange, because he swore he had been to the Nether recently, but he really had forgotten the dry heat against his skin. The noises of snuffling snouts, cries and popping bubbles created a symphony fit for the hellish landscape. It was very

different from the cool, moist breeze of the seaside, with the sounds of the ocean and wind to keep him company.

Tommy found he preferred it to the seaside. He had always preferred the summer, even when the heat got a tad too overbearing and there didn't seem to be a second of reprieve before another wave hit, it was always better than the colder seasons. Even as a child, Tommy hated the cold. It was weird because some of his fondest memories were from the winter months.

Ice-skating on lakes with Wilbur, skinning animals with Techno-snowmen and hot chocolate and crocheting by the fireplace with Phil

The netherrack was hot. Tommy could feel the heat through his soles, and where the sole had fallen away, his calloused heel took the brunt of it. It felt like walking barefoot on cobble pathways in the middle of summer. He rolled his heel on the ground and stepped out more. It was just as it always was, really.

The portal was on a high ledge with a slight overhang. His two bridges, the newest unfinished and narrow toward the portal, were seemingly untouched with ash sticking to them much like dust would in the overworld. Tommy could make out the base for L'manburg's portal, made of blackstone, from here as well, only a few blocks within the fog at the far limit of his sight. Another few crudely made paths wound upward and downward from the main base, and there was even a portal on a separate, solitary island off to the right.

Tommy's head lolled to the side, where he built his screaming station. He bit the inside of his cheek, fingers twitching with nervous energy as he considered both paths. He let the noises of the creatures unique to this plane fade away into dull background noise. Some passed him by without a second thought, ignoring him while they went about their day. Pigmen stumbled around with golden swords, some blunted and beaten while others were shiny and sharp, and ghosts dominated the skies with their formidable size and projectiles.

Without thinking, he walked along the cobble path he had made, with green arrows spanning only half of it. The cobble burned his feet and his hands as he sat. The heat seeped through his torn clothing. Even this far up from the lava below, the blocks and air were feverish. Tommy's lungs burned with it, like the air transformed into fire in his body and licked through the flesh in his chest.

There's soot on his face and blood smeared on his lips and in his hair. He wishes time would stop, rewind back to bee watching and baking and a time when their family was still a father and three sons instead of a father, a ghost, an outlaw and a child playing hero.

Time does not stop, and fate is not merciful.

Strangely, he felt liberated in that moment, when he stood and watched the lava bubble and burst, shifting colours so far below the platform he created. Last time Tommy had stared into the warm lava, just like this, Dream had pulled him away from the ledge and told him it wasn't his time to die. This time, no one was here to stop him.

No one is ever here.

He swallowed thickly. His mind raced with thoughts and half-thoughts, words barely strung together and layered over one another to form something incomprehensible. There were some who told him to 'do a flip', make it interesting if he was going to jump. Others told him to stop and reconsider, to talk to Tubbo or Ranboo or Technoblade through his cracked communicator. Sentences from his past mingled and blurred, voices overlapping and bringing him back to

memories he'd rather forget. Memories that made him scared, and hurt, and sad, but most of all, memories that made him angry.

"Tommy, are we the bad guys?"

"...The only universal language is violence..."

"THE DISCS DON'T MATTER!"

"White flags! Outside your base at dawn, tomorrow, or you are dead!"

"The Greeks knew the score."

"It was never meant to be."

"You just wanted power!"

"My first decree, as the President of L'manburg... The Emperor of this great country, is to REVOKE THE CITIZENSHIP OF WILBUR SOOT AND TOMMYINNIT!"

Tommy gulped, watching the texture of the lava dance between shades of orange and red, squeezing his eyes shut painfully as the memories flooded his mind. The Dream SMP really was... quite a hectic chapter in his life, in the end.

"Am I the bad guy in your history, Tommy...?"

"They're just. Music discs. They shouldn't dictate the future of an entire nation!"

"Revolution waits for no man."

"...We were fucked the minute we were thrown out."

"Let me tell you a story, Tommy. A story of a man called Theseus."

"Everyone who is claiming to be on our side, they're lying to us, Tommy!"

"PHIL, KILL ME!"

"Don't do this, Techno, don't—"

A dry sob escaped his lips. He was ashamed to admit how many wishes he wasted on the hope of Wilbur coming back, of one day waking up to Wilbur finishing the L'manburg anthem at his bedside only to berate Tommy for sleeping for so long. He was ashamed to admit how many tears he wasted on it when he woke up in his tent instead of at home.

"...I will build these walls until they reach the BLOCK LIMIT!"

"The most logical thing to do. For Tommy to be... exiled. From L'manburg."

"Good things don't happen to heroes."

"It's not your time to die yet, Tommy."

"IF WE CAN'T HAVE MANBURG, NO ONE CAN HAVE MANBURG!"

"Let's be the bad guys."

"Dream, please detain and escort Tommy out of my country."

"Do you want to be a hero, Tommy? THEN DIE LIKE ONE!"

Tommy opened his mouth slightly, and then shut it again. He swallowed, throat suddenly dry like the air surrounding him. No one was here to stop him. No one. With one last cursory look around, Tommy smiled. His cheeks hurt just from that. It's been a while, he supposed.

When he jumped, Tommy swore he flew for a split-second, before sinking into the Nether's hellish depths.

The thing with the Dream SMP is that its respawn system is—finicky. There are only three lives per person. Three strikes and you're out for good. However, there are also a million other lives which you can respawn with. Tubbo falls and dies time after time and respawns fine, but fireworks blasted off into his chest take one of three lives. Wilbur falls and dies or gets killed by a zombie and respawns fine, but a sword through the chest from his father kills him for good.

When everyone sees the death message on their communicators, they let it float away like sand between their fingertips, because there are hundreds of death messages which you can respawn from and that don't take one of three lives. There are few others which let you respawn at the cost of one life. Even fewer death messages can teeter the edge between accidental death and costly respawn. So, when they see this message, they don't so much as blink and they move on.

[TommyInnit tried to swim in lava]

It was a week after Tommy's permadeath that something happened. Ranboo was mining in the nether, just passing by on a bridge, when he saw it. Something was rising up from the lava. The thing was coated in a thick, viscous layer of the fiery slag. Its back was hunched and big, irregular, with a broad upper back tapering off into a small waist, giving it an odd silhouette.

The creature grabbed onto some molten rock, pushing itself up out of the oozing, bubbling ocean. Ranboo ran straight back to the portal to L'manburg, not eager to stick around to see what weird thing had spawned in from the lava.

The liquid flames drip off of the creature, sliding off its—his—frame like oil. It seemed to almost fall through it, revealing the person underneath. Revealing the ghost underneath. It had taken so long. So, so long. It was as if the world itself was stuck deciding whether to bring the famed "hero" back from the dead as a spectre, cursed to roam the plane with barely any memories at all. Or, at least, ones that truly mattered, in the end.

The creature—TommyInnit, or rather, his ghost—pulled itself up further to rest on the magma blocks and blackstone at the base of a netherrack pillar.

When he rises from the lava, from the ash, wings sprout from his back and cracks decorate his face and brimstone clings—melts, really—into his skin until it becomes one in the same. TommyInnit dies trying to fly, jumping off a ledge in the unforgiving hellscape of the Nether, and he is revived as a phoenix which cannot die and is only reborn and reborn and reborn.

The skin of his jaw is black and matted, like igneous rock, with cracks splitting it and revealing bright burning orange and red and yellow, pulsing beneath it. His temples, too, have been plagued with cracks, though instead of splitting blackstone and basalt they rupture his soot-covered skin.

Even his blood had been turned into flames of the brightest variety, displaying garish colours that glow like dying embers.

With this new transformation, Tommy's skin looked to be made of ash, as grey as it was. His clothes lost all saturation and colour, highlighting the intensity of black, orange and red coursing through his veins and fighting for a moment of glory. The rips and tears followed Tommy into the afterlife, showcasing his poor condition in life in the way that his shirt looked almost shredded and his pants left much to be desired. He was barefoot, with the same rock and soot curling around his ankles and the tops of his feet, though less severe than his jaw.

Phoenixes are seen as beautiful birds with long, fiery feathers, soft as spun silk. Tommy is a phoenix born of lava, blistering and bubbling lava, and molten rock that danced the edge between smooth, spitting heat and hard, ashy rock. His wings are burned into him. The melting brimstone and basalt, deep and dark like obsidian, fused with his skin at his shoulder blades and extended out into rocky bones outlining the shape of wings like a bat's or dragon's. The rocks splintered, cracked and split to form valleys of pulsing heat beneath the outer shell smelling of ash and sulphur and basalt, like fire and heat, like burning flesh.

Instead of layers upon layers of fluffy feathers in shades of sunrise, there was magma that dripped from the lesions on the leading edge. It was thick, bright orange and yellow and deep red with black flakes. It left a trail on the ground as he walked. Large drops of lava left trails like breadcrumbs that didn't last long on the ground before they disappeared, as if they had never been there. Tommy is a ghost, after all. He may be a phoenix now, but he is, at best, a phantom. His time to make a mark on the world is over.

Eyes blue like the centre of a scorching flame opened, and with a shaky gasp, TommyInnit's ghost took its first breath.

There are few things that shock Technoblade anymore. Being known across servers as the Blood God, being a master of his craft (*of killing hurting make them bleed until the blood is all that's left*) has made him exposed to the worst of the worst. Creating his own little Arctic Empire, even more so. He had to admit that he did not expect Phil to be put on house arrest, and he did not expect to get Dream's aid in escaping L'manburg and its crazy citizens.

All he could do was try to get some of it back, and if not, replenish his supply. The voices screamed for blood, and really, who was he to deny them at this point? L'manburg could have left him alone in his retirement, and instead they sought him out. A terrible mistake on their part, one which Technoblade would ensure they would regret.

The Nether was no more or less pleasant than the last time he was here. Luckily, the heat was bearable. Being a piglin hybrid had its advantages. His particular portal was in an air pocket in the netherrack. It was convenient for finding debris. If everything went right, he'd have a full set of netherite equipment again.

'It's a good thing Ranboo brought back some of my stuff,' Technoblade thought, twirling his sword in one hand while the other held his pickaxe in a firm grip.

The grunts and snarls of other piglins and the groans of the pigmen soothed him as he traversed the plane. He dug strip mines, exploded beds to find debris and mined any ore that would end up useful in the future. Ash clings to the fine fur lining of his cloak, turning the strands off-white. The fur at the bottom of the red cloak was especially dirtied as it dragged on the netherrack behind him.

Ghasts cried out above him in the sky. He broke through a wall that took him directly to a place next to the L'manburg portal, surrounded by blackstone bricks and hosting a small group of piglins. Technoblade sniffed. He looked around warily as he advanced, tightening his hold on his pick and sword. If Quackity or any one else was going to pop out and ambush him, he'd be more than happy to show them why he was known as the unkillable Blood God.

Technoblade never dies! The voices agreed. *Blood for the Blood God!*

A whoosh caught his keen ear. His head snapped toward the five block wide path Tommy had made. Techno knew Tommy made it—the kid loved cobblestone. It was his favourite block, and he always seemed to have a massive supply of it. Cobblestone paths, cobblestone towers... Hell, he'd probably make an entire nation out of cobblestone if he could. Cautiously, the piglin hybrid moved forward.

Was there a new mob in the Nether that he wasn't aware of? Is there a new variation of a ghast, perhaps? The large beings don't fly quickly enough to make such a sharp sound. A blaze? No, no. Blazes hover, but they can't maintain flight for long periods of time. Their abilities align more with feather falling than a speedy attack or retreat. So, what was it?

He made it about halfway down the cobbled road when he spotted something. Technoblade managed to catch globs of lava sizzling on the ledge of the path, but in the next blink, they were gone completely. The only thing that hinted to their existence was a small puff of steam. Naturally, he blanked. Had he imagined it? No, not possible. His senses were sharp, and he was immune to heatstroke within the Nether as a hybrid. He hadn't used any potions which could have caused hallucination either.

Another whoosh passed by, much closer to his ear this time. Techno's head flicked 'round. His gaze darted to and fro his surroundings behind his mask. He sniffed and turned his head another direction, eyes narrowed. He could see ghasts, piglins and pigmen as usual. He dismissed them. The poorly constructed pathways were still around with nothing but the mobs of this plane roaming them. Not another player, then.

Techno looked up by chance. He blinked in surprise. A winged... Thing, descended upon the platform, its bare feet touching down. The wings looked to be made of stone, but most interestingly, where feathers or webbing should have filled out the body of each wing, there was dripping lava. The colours shifted like a multi-chrome painting from yellow to orange to red from fissures in the main (and seemingly only) bone in the wings.

The thing was definitely humanoid. It had ripped clothes and no shoes, showing soot-covered skin and cracks that glowed even from a few feet away. Its hair was pale, very pale and grey in tone, but Techno could almost make out some sort of blond shade if he squinted his eyes and focused on it. He swore he could feel the heat from the thing from where he stood, even so far away.

The creature turned, and Technoblade's whole world tilted on its axis.

Time was suspended in that single second. Technoblade, near-horrified though not showing it, stared at the ghost of his younger brother, cataloguing the changes like a man starved. Tommy, or rather, GhostInnit, stared back indifferently. His tools clatter to the ground. Then, and only then, time resumed at double speed.

"Tommy...?" Techno muttered, more an escaped thought than anything else.

GhostInnit—Tommy, it's Tommy, isn't it?—blinked at the piglin hybrid. His eyes were bright blue, inhumanly bright (*not human not like this not human*), like soul lamps had replaced them. His

youthful face was framed with igneous rock, with basalt sprouting from his jaw and brimstone steadily creeping up from the tears in his clothing.

Tommy was young. So, so young. How did he die? *When* did he die? When? Who killed him, was it Dream? Tubbo? Who the hell did this to his little brother, dammit?!

"Techie...? Your hair is... shorter than I remember," GhostInnit—Tommy—said, a pout so Tommy-like on his face that Technoblade had to take in a deep breath.

Notch, when was the last time he had called him 'Techie'? It must have been four or five years ago, now. He'd stopped calling Technoblade 'Techie' at the same time he stopped calling Wilbur 'Wilby'. Techno wasn't sure when Tommy had stopped calling Philza 'Dad', but it was a much more recent development.

"It's tucked into my cloak," Technoblade answered, "Tommy, what... What happened to you?"

"Oh, well, I'm not sure. All of my memories are quite... well... You could say my memories are the lukewarm type," GhostInnit—Tommy—replied, his voice level.

'This isn't right. Why isn't he loud? Tommy is always loud,' the piglin hybrid thought, almost frantic.

"Lukewarm?"

"No happiness, no sadness. There's no anger. Only the content, okay memories are ones I remember. Like Christmas. Hey, we should make a quilt together this Christmas, Techie," Tommy—Ghost—Tommy requested.

"You... but... Wilbur doesn't look like this," Techno whispered.

He tried to think back to a time when Tommy could have died. A single death message is all he needed, anything to know just how his little brother could have—

[TommyInnit tried to swim in lava]

That... A week ago? A full *week* went by and no one, not a single fucking person, knew that Tommy died? Not a single person knew that Tommy's been dead for a whole week? Not Dream, not Quackity or Fundy, certainly not Tubbo! No one? No one really...?

Tommy was... forgotten? Just like that? No one noticed that he was gone, or that he had lost his last life? Was Technoblade the first person to find out? Technoblade, who had been in exile for longer than Tommy, and who had only checked up on the young blond (~~dead young blond~~) once? The only person who knew Tommy was dead was the one person who didn't, who couldn't really come in to contact with him.

Blood rushed through Technoblade's ears. He thought he might have vaguely heard a soft thump, heard Tommy say something in a somewhat concerned voice, but it was quieted by the cotton surrounding his head. There was a ghostly hand on his shoulder. He could feel the unnatural warmth of it through the thick cloak and Arctic Empire uniform he wore, a direct contrast to Wilbur's—Ghostbur's—Atlantic chill.

Nobody cared enough to visit Tommy in exile, and Tommy had to pay the price.

You can play God all you want, but you cannot become that which is not mortal. They call you the Blood God but when the world is purged and your loved ones are dead, what is that title worth, in the end? Will you bleed for it, die for it? Will you feed the voices, give up your person for it? Will you let yourself become a caricature of yourself, Blood God only with no Technoblade in sight? Will you strike down the opposition, give in to blood-lust and insanity for it?

Will you let your brothers bleed for your title, hold up the myth, kneeling and praying for salvation from a God that does not exist?

"Keep up, Toms," Technoblade murmured, pulling his cloak closer around his neck.

The arctic was an unforgiving place to live in, and the taiga forests were particularly tricky to manoeuvre in the daylight. The snow sizzled and spat furiously as Tommy walked through it, though it didn't melt or show any signs of deformation where magma blobs fell unto it. Ultimately, Tommy could not affect much at all in the material world.

"I'm surprised that you live out here, Techie. You always liked spring more than winter, remember?" Tommy commented behind him.

Technoblade huffed, his breath swirling in the air. "No one bothers me out here."

"But that's quite not-you too, isn't it? Don't you want Wilby and Dad and I to come visit?"

"They do come and visit me."

"Hm. Dad and Wilby did quite like the cold," Tommy conceded.

The young ghost ran forward to walk side-by-side with Technoblade. Immediately, the piglin hybrid began to feel much warmer, despite the icy weather. Tommy's ghostly influence clearly did include other people and heat transfer.

"We're children of the warmth," Technoblade said.

"Right!" Tommy agreed readily, though his tone was much too normal and flat to be Tommy's.

From before he could even remember, Tommy has always been loud. Tommy was always passionate and caring, and put his all into everything that he did. He was rarely ever truly angered, but his voice carried conversations and filled stadiums with exuberance. When they were younger and Tommy was still new to the family, Techno had often wondered if Tommy's default setting was to be loud and annoying.

He wished that Tommy would be loud and annoying again and start cracking jokes, asking stupid questions and yelling out of nowhere. Ghost Tommy is quieter and less curious. A shell of his alive self, just like Ghostbur—Wilbur, dammit.

"Are we going to see dad?" Tommy asked.

"No, Toms. He's on house arrest in L'manburg."

"What's L'manburg."

Techno paused. He looked to his side and scanned Tommy's face, which only shone with genuine curiosity.

"It's a nation you created with Wilbur. Don't you remember, Toms?"

"No... No I..." The curiosity slid away into mild indifference, a blank mask in place of the emotive teenager he was in life. "I don't remember."

A few days later, with food in his inventory and a sword in his grip, Technoblade stood in the ruins of Logstedshire. Tommy padded around, poking and prodding at everything and jumping into craters with his magma wings furled tightly at his back. Carefully, Techno followed the podzol path down to where the official Logstedshire had sat with Tommy's stupid prime log and mushroom Henry. All that was left of it now was a concave hole and a few toppled logs.

He followed the path from there, doing his best to ignore the puzzling additions of various pictures of Tommy and his friends and the half-destroyed wooden home farther down with a cross standing guard over it all. The bottom of the Nether portal was lopsided, clearly done in haste. It must have been rebuilt at the base then, but why?

Techno's gaze flicked to his ghostly companion, looking at the dripping wings and thin glowing lines spiderwebbing across rock and skin (~~where does one end where does the other begin~~). He clenched his jaw and continued up the path.

It was a wonder that anyone assumed Tommy was still alive out there somewhere, seeing as his tent had also been exploded. Nothing remained of Tommy's possessions from the tent. The Ender chest was gone, presumably destroyed in the blast, and his bed had suffered much the same fate. Tatters flew in the wind, suspended in mid-air out of the TNT's reach. A lone jukebox sat at the edge of the ruins. It was empty.

'Tommy's discs must be in his Ender chest. At least, the ones he still had on him,' Technoblade thought.

Logstedshire's Christmas tree was fairly pretty, though much shorter than the one in L'manburg. The podzol kept going until it hit another shoreline where chairs have been set out with a crafting table and a jukebox, as well as a long dining table. Technoblade pursed his lips. Why did he set up so much stuff for the beach? Did he have a party or something? And why was there a church behind it?

Nothing there seemed to jog Tommy's memory at all. He had been curious about the massive holes and the tree, the beachside furniture and the jukebox. There was little else that interested him, and whatever he was interested in was short-lived. Technoblade could only assume that the same thing that blocked Ghostbur from remembering memories that are anything other than happy is at play here; any memories that are not "lukewarm" are forgotten.

Technoblade sighed. "Let's go, Toms."

"Where are we going?" Tommy asked.

"Home."

"Can I braid your hair when we get there?"

"...Sure."

Tommy's death was an ill-kept secret for a couple of days. Christmas had passed with little festivities in Technoblade's household, though Tommy ended up making a small carved ornament

of a pig that was now displayed on the windowsill. As it turned out, Tommy was able to pick up and keep items in some sort of inventory like Wilbur could. The pig was a bit misshapen with unequal ears on its head and slightly odd-looking eyes. Technoblade will protect it with his life.

No matter how much he may have tried, there was no way he could keep Tommy a secret for long. He didn't expect Dream to come to his house, though. That was certainly a surprise.

"Technoblade, my friend, have you seen—" Dream stopped, frozen at Techno's doorstep. "—Tommy...?"

The ghost turned around, paying no mind to the plop of lava on the floorboards. He squinted at the newcomer before deciding to wave meekly. He went back to fiddling with the dagger Techno had given him, running his fingers along the flat end and toying with the grip.

"What happened to him?" Dream asked, clearing his throat.

"I was hoping you could tell me. I found him like this," Techno replied, gesturing to the ghost.

"And you found him, where?"

"The Nether. Flying, landed on the new path he built before..." Techno trailed off, pursing his lips.

Dream clenched his fists at his side before relaxing them again. His mask gave nothing away as always. He stepped inside of the humble home, walking closer to Tommy's ghost. He knew it was a ghost by the greyscale outfit and skin, and the way his hair had lost some of its colour. The cracks, though? The wings? The feverish heat, the opposite of Ghostbur's deathly chill? It was wrong. All wrong. This... This was not the plan.

"Are you Techie's friend?" Tommy asked, not looking up from the knife.

"Something like that." Dream crouched down to the ground about a foot away from Tommy. "Can you tell me how you got like this, Tommy?"

"What does it look like, big man? I died."

"How did you die?"

Tommy held the knife between his fingertips gently. He furrowed his eyebrows and stared down at the blade, lips pressed tightly into a thin line. The room got hotter and hotter, and Tommy's wings sputtered like a waterfall of thick lava. The cracks in his skin widened, with more cuts opening up as his skin split and magma burst over the edges.

"Woah! Hey, hey, uh, Toms, it's okay! It's okay if you can't remember," Techno exclaimed awkwardly, shuffling closer to the ghost but not close enough to step into the firing range of the spitting sludge.

It didn't affect anything, of course. It hit the walls and chests, sizzled on the wooden floorboards and dripped onto the knife in Tommy's grip, but it dissipated within seconds only to be replaced by more of the fiery substance. With a deep breath, the lava receded back to its normal form and the cracks closed up somewhat. Their warm, bright glow read like a threat.

"I can't remember. I guess there were too many feelings for me to remember," Tommy told them flippantly, as if he was talking about something as mundane as the weather.

Dream's fingers clawed at his knees. Techno dropped to one knee in front of Tommy and raised his

hand to wipe away the streaks left behind on his cheek. It felt like dunking his hand into a pot of boiling water, but Technoblade knew it was much cooler than the lakes of liquid fire that swallowed the Nether.

"You can consider both of your exiles annulled," Dream said, his voice tight and curt.

"Do you have the authority to do that, Dream?" Technoblade asked, raising an eyebrow beneath his piglin mask.

"It's my SMP, of course I do."

"Isn't L'manburg an independent nation?"

"Trust me." Dream chuckled humourlessly. "I don't think anyone will argue when they see him like this."

Techno closed his eyes and nodded, absently stroking Tommy's cheek. On the other hand, Tommy paid the two no mind as he went back to mindlessly playing with the dagger. Techno dropped his hand down and stood up.

"I'll go and break the news, then, seeing as you're not on the best of terms with the rest of them. Especially Quackity. He's quite angry with you, you know," Dream offered, something cutting and sharp beneath the polite facade.

"You do that," Techno bit back, turning his body just so to show the sword strapped to his hip.

With one final nod and a sarcastic two-fingered salute, Dream stood up and left. Techno closed the doors behind him, keeping out the arctic winds and snow. He didn't bother lighting the fireplace; Tommy kept the house toasty 24/7, even at night. Unlike Wilbur's ghost, Tommy's did not feel the need to wander.

"Techie, will your friend be coming back?" Tommy questioned.

The piglin hybrid sat on the ground next to him and sighed, propping his arm up on one knee.

"No, I don't think he'll be coming back for a long time," Techno responded, "Not if he knows what's good for him."

"Okay."

All they could do now was wait. Technoblade was under no illusion. He knew he could not keep Tommy's death a secret for long, but he didn't expect Dream to be the first other person to find out.

'It'll be interesting to see how this plays out,' he thought, watching Tommy pick up a thin log to carve, 'What will you do, Mr President?'

"You're lying," Tubbo said, his voice hollow, "You're lying."

"I saw his ghost myself, Tubbo. Tommy's dead," Dream repeated firmly.

"No, you're—you're lying, Tommy can't be—" Tubbo choked, arms limp at his sides. "We didn't even get a message—"

"He jumped in the Nether," Dream informed him, crossing his arms over his chest.

The clink of his netherite armour was the only sound in the room. Tubbo, wearing his suit as always, looked devastated on the opposite side of the round table. Quackity and Ranboo flanked him, with Punz off to the side and Phil staring into space blankly farther from the group. Niki had both hands over her mouth, tears welling in her eyes. Fundy's tail drooped low to the ground, ears flattened to his head.

"That—No, Tommy wouldn't—Surely not. Surely..." Tubbo muttered, taking a small step back, "Surely not..."

"Hey, if you don't believe me, you can go to Techno's place. He's been... hosting, you could say, Tommy's ghost."

"You're sure that he jumped? In the Nether?" Ranboo asked, stepping up beside Tubbo.

Dream tapped his fingers on the arm plate of his armour and tilted his head.

"Well, it's not like he can remember how he died, but... Seeing what his ghost looks like, and the fact I had to pull him away from the edge of the Nether once already... Well. It was a pretty big clue," Dream described coolly.

Ranboo clenched his fists at his sides. A quiet, warped sound filled the room as Ranboo shook in place.

"He's staying with *Technoblade*? Seriously?" Quackity asked in disbelief. "Tommy hates him!"

"Tommy didn't remember me, but he remembered 'Techie'," Dream explained, his tone mocking over the childish nickname, "I suppose it would make sense, considering the circumstances."

"What are you talking about? What circumstances?" Fundy interjected.

"It seems like Tommy can't remember anything that made him feel, just like Ghostbur only remembers happy memories."

Dream shifted his weight to one leg and shrugged. Tubbo looked down at the table. He swallowed and opened his mouth as if to say something before closing it. He shook his head. Quackity put his hand on Tubbo's shoulder, but his eyes never strayed from Dream's mask.

"What *does* he remember, then?" Ranboo questioned.

Dream snorted, putting a hand on his hip and letting the other one hang limp at his side. He turned his head so that his mask's beady black eyes looked at Ranboo directly.

"You think I stayed long enough for that? Hell no. The only one who knows is Technoblade, who is in exile, by the way. Tommy probably won't leave his side, and he is technically still in exile as well."

"This is your fault," Tubbo exclaimed suddenly, looking up to glare at the admin, "If it wasn't for you, Tommy wouldn't have been exiled at all!"

"Oh, I may have suggested it, but you're the one who did the exiling, Mr President. All I did was make sure he stayed in exile," Dream argued with a light scoff, as if Tubbo blaming him was hilarious.

"Bullshit! You've been telling Tommy things—making him doubt that we were his friends! I visited him and he was talking about a, a beach party, but *I* certainly never got an invitation!"

Ranboo accused, slamming his fist down onto the table.

"It's true, isn't it? None of you really visited Tommy because you missed him as a friend. I saw him almost every day, and no one ever showed up except to make fun of him or to cause some sort of chaos for their own amusement. Even his best friend couldn't take the time to make sure he was alright," Dream stated, the smile on his mask unnerving as it settled on Tubbo's stock still form.

Phil closed his eyes tightly and turned his head towards the wall. Nikki began to sob quietly into Fundy's shoulder, whose ears flattened against his head. He wrapped his arms around her shoulders and pulled her in closer as if to shield her from the world. Punz remained impassive in the corner with a crossbow in hand. Quackity squeezed Tubbo's shoulder and moved to stand next to him. Ranboo lay his hand flat against the table and stared at Dream as if he was trying to figure the man out.

"That's not true—" Quackity protested with a deep frown on his face.

"You know, I really do pity Tommy. The only time anyone gave a shit was after he was dead," the admin continued, ignoring Quackity entirely.

"You bastard, that was uncalled-for!" Ranboo shouted, the corrupt sounds of an angry enderman filling the room.

"Well, anyway, I figured you would want to know." Dream made a short, quick gesture that summoned Punz to his side in seconds.

L'manburg's inhabitants could only watch as Dream and Punz walked to leave the room, all in varying stages of grief and devastation over the news. The blonde admin stopped just short of the door and turned his head to show his profile.

"By the way, it might take you a while to get used to, uh, 'GhostInnit's' new appearance. It's nothing like you're used to seeing, and definitely a lot different from Ghostbur," Dream told them. They could practically hear the smirk in his voice.

"Go to hell," Ranboo spat as they finally left the room.

The respawn system in the Dream SMP is finicky. You only have three lives, three shots at life. Three strikes and you're out for good, to either die and stay dead like Schlatt, or to die and come back as a ghost; a shell of your living self with only a small selection of memories to base your identity off of. However, there are millions of other lives which are throwaways. You fall from a high place, you respawn, you move on. You get shot by a skeleton, you respawn, you move on.

Sometimes, the difference between a meaningful death and a minor inconvenience is intent. The members of the Dream SMP scabbled for an answer as to why Tommy's last life was taken by lava instead of by Dream, again, like almost everyone assumed it would be, or by Technoblade, who almost did take his life in the fighting ring, or by anything other than suicide, by the Nether's oceans of molten rock.

They forget that all you need for a death to be permanent, to be costly, is for it to be purposeful; to have intent behind it, like Wilbur's murder and Tubbo's firework death, like the two lives Tommy had lost to Dream.

Perhaps it is not the person or thing that does the act of killing, but in fact, the intent of that act and the belief or expectation behind that act which makes it permanent. Technoblade wanted to kill

Tubbo, so his death took one life. Dream wanted to kill Tommy, twice, and so his actions had taken his life, twice. Wilbur had wanted, expected, truly believed that he was to die that day, so he did.

Tommy had expected and believed, truly hoped with his heart, that he would die by that lava, and that lava swallowed him whole, the blistering magma like a brand against his skin.

New Year's Day was not a day of celebration in L'manburg. Everything halted with the news of Tommy's death, and though it brought a lot of paperwork and a lot of arguing, Tubbo had lifted both Technoblade's and Tommy's exiles. Surprisingly, it was Technoblade's which caused the most trouble, particularly with Quackity. Phil's house arrest was nullified the same day that Dream broke the news, and they hadn't seen the man since.

Tommy's first step in New L'manburg is bright and early in the morning, when the sun has yet to rise, with Technoblade and Philza bracketing him. When Tubbo first saw Tommy's ghostly form and its new additions, he fell to his knees and sobbed.

"Why is he crying, dad?" Tommy asked.

"He's very, very sad, Toms. That's all," Phil replied, setting a comforting hand on his other ghost son's shoulder.

"Aw, Tubbo, would you like some blue? Here, it'll make you feel better!" Ghostbur offered, crouching slightly next to the crying boy.

It was something completely different to see physical proof of his dead friend, rather than just trying to swallow the news of his death. Tubbo was inconsolable, kneeling on the prime path with tears streaming down his face. Ghostbur tried to help, though his naturally peppy and oblivious nature didn't help the situation much.

Techno and Phil steered Tommy away to see the other residents, leaving behind globs of lava on the wood. They stayed for a while, giving light to the dark path, and then faded away to nothing, leaving behind not even a scuff.

Meeting the others garnered an array of results. Nikki teared up a little, but was mostly in shock about Tommy's wings and cracks and the blackstone lining his jaw and creeping down his neck. Fundy, who was with her, had much the same reaction but did try to talk to the ghost as normally as he could.

Quackity was in tatters, stuttering and fumbling over his words. He had asked Tommy general questions about what he could remember and if he could remember Quackity, who was familiar and who wasn't familiar at all.

"I remember blurred things," Tommy answered, "You're one of the blurriest. You made me feel too much, I guess."

Sapnap and George, who had heard about the news through word of mouth and wanted to check it out themselves, had been cordial and polite but otherwise didn't know what to say or do. They stared a lot, at his temples and wings and the basalt and brimstone seared in to his skin. Tommy remembered them somewhat, with chill moments of companionable silence and something that hurt to remember, something red and white going up in flames. They didn't want to comment on it.

Every interaction was tinged with guilt and remorse that Tommy either couldn't feel or chose to ignore. The ghost wasn't much for conversation and gave short, often uninterested responses. It

was a complete 180 from the loud, emotional teen who lead a revolution against Dream and then regained L'manburg from Schlatt's power-hungry hands. It was a complete 180 from the teen who inspired his friends and allies to stand against Dream.

If Ghostbur was a shell of his former self, GhostInnit was like Tommy's shadow. The opposite of him, in some ways. Where Tommy was full of life, GhostInnit was hollow and cold. Where Tommy had been passionate and cared too much, cared about his discs and his friends and cared about preserving memories and causing chaos, GhostInnit was listless. Tired. He was apathetic about everything he used to care about.

Tubbo was sniffing when he walked to their bench. He paused in his step when he saw Tommy—GhostInnit, and Notch, was that going to rip his heart out every time he used it—already there, sitting on it. His wings were draped along the back. The shifting texture played with his eyes so much that Tubbo had to look away for a moment.

"Oh, Tubbo," To—GhostInnit said, turning to look at him, "Come sit."

The ghost patted the seat next to him on the bench, shifting over a bit to the side to make room. Tubbo sniffed and sat down. It was obvious to him that Tommy had died in the Nether, judged solely by the intense heat radiating off of him.

For one terrible moment, Tubbo wondered if Ghostbur was so cold because all of his blood had drained out of him, leaving his body lacking its natural warmth, while GhostInnit, who died sinking into the Nether's hellish depths, ended up as his own portable campfire. He squashed the thought.

"We used to sit and watch the sunset with music playing in the background," GhostInnit noted.

"You remember that?" Tubbo asked, allowing himself to relax against the bench.

"It made me feel calm. Calm is okay to remember," the ghost explained, without explaining anything at all.

Still, Tubbo chuckled lightly, as if his heart wasn't shattered in his chest, and said, "Whatever you say, big man."

When the sun rises over the horizon, the colours of the sky remind Tubbo of the colours in GhostInnit's wings and in the cracks on his face, of warm nights huddled together eating Nikki's cookies and pastries. It looked like the colour of Tommy's shirt, the colour of his passion. It reminded him of Tommy's hotheadedness, his stubbornness and his determination.

Tubbo sat there with Tommy's ghost at his side in silence watching the colours change, burning his retinas by the sun, and he couldn't help but think it felt like acceptance.

Tommy would argue that anger is the height of passion—passionate in emotion, in action, and in reaction. Passion and anger seemed one in the same to him, interchangeable like warmth and family and family and love. Then again, there is little else for an inexperienced child to understand about anger and passion.

Tommy was the height of passion, always. Passionate about his family, his loyalty, and his friends. Passionate about fighting and adventuring. Passionate about L'manburg, Pogtopia, and his cobblestone towers rising high above other builds. Passionate about his discs.

That passion was what ended up killing him.

What is passion good for when you can't find anything to be passionate about? What is passion good for when it turns on you, consumes you, swallows you whole the second your passions slip past you? What happens to that spark when it runs dry?

"I had so many plans in place for you, you know," Dream said from his place leaning against the wall.

He had forgone armour completely and was just wearing his signature green hoodie, utility belts, pants and leather boots. His hands were in his pockets. These days, it was rare to see GhostInnit without some sort of chaperone leading him everywhere, but Dream had managed to catch him alone for once.

"What type of plans?" GhostInnit asked.

Every once in a while, there would be a spark of something. Curiosity, amusement, frustration, maybe even indignation depending on the context. It didn't last long, of course, but it lasted long enough for a reaction to happen. This gave some people (Tubbo) hope that, maybe, GhostInnit would remember everything and the old Tommy would come back, even if it was as a ghostly and more immortal companion.

"The type of plans that kept you away from the others so I could fix my SMP," Dream replied, cocking his head to the side.

"Ah. A united server," the ghost concluded with a nod.

"You remember that much, then?" Dream pushed off of the wall and walked to stand next to where GhostInnit was sitting. "You had me in quite a tight place for a long time, Tommy. Leading a revolution against me as soon as you joined the server? Now that took guts."

Predictably, GhostInnit didn't react. He only blinked up at the admin, his bright eyes glittering like soul lamps.

"Succeeded, too. You know, you were the only one out of *everyone* who did not listen to me. You're the only one who spoke out. The discs, when they came in to play, I finally thought I'd have something to hold over you, to keep you in line. But, you're just full of surprises," Dream continued.

He might as well have been speaking at a wall, because GhostInnit only stared and stared impassively. Then, his eyebrows furrowed in confusion, a slight pout to his lip. Dream raised an eyebrow beneath his mask.

"What discs? What are you talking about?"

A startled, barked out laugh left the admin's lips. He continued to laugh, and laugh, dancing along the sharp edge of hysteria. He ran a hand through his hair, combing back to the nape of his neck.

"Of course. Of fucking course—Why would you remember? They made you feel a lot of things, didn't they?" Dream shook his head, looking back down at GhostInnit. "You don't even know how much trouble you've caused me, do you?"

The ghost blinked in response. The dagger Techno had given him weeks ago was in his hands,

being tossed back and forth as the conversation continued.

"The revolution? Creating L'manburg with Wilbur? The election, Pogtopia? Getting the stupid nation back, setting George's house on fire, getting exiled?" the blonde listed as GhostInnit watched on in disinterest. "Building Logstedshire, your stupid beach party, Mexican Dream—all of that unnecessary chaos, that destruction... You don't remember any of it."

"No, I don't think so," GhostInnit replied truthfully, caressing the guard of the dagger gingerly.

Dream chuckled humourlessly. "You don't think so, huh?"

The ghost shook his head decisively. Lava splattered on the floor beneath his wings. His jaw and temples glowed warm orange, tinting strands of his hair. Dream crossed his arms, putting the heel of one gloved hand on the mask where his nose should be.

"All that planning, all those hours spent breaking you down and moulding you to get a grab at those stupid discs, from whatever hole you hid them in, all for nothing. All those hours, putting you at the centre of my plans for uniting this server... All for nought," Dream said bitterly.

"You can have the discs," GhostInnit told him listlessly.

The blonde admin pursed his lips and shook his head. "No one cares about the discs but you. Without you fighting for them, they're worth less than dirt."

"Okay."

"Even in death, you're causing me problems," Dream muttered.

GhostInnit spun the dagger around his hand and between his fingers. Then, he placed it carefully on the table, as if too much force would shatter it. He kicked out under the table and his wings fluffed up a bit.

"You should sit down and make calm memories with me, big D," he said.

"I don't have the time to amuse a ghost, Tommy," Dream huffed.

"But you're still here," the ghost pointed out, tilting his head to the side.

"I should be making new plans," Dream insisted, shifting his weight to one leg.

"Whenever I try to think of you, a lot of confusing feelings come up, so I don't try to remember," GhostInnit explained, "I want to make calm memories with you, so then I remember them later."

Dream stood there for another few seconds as if in disbelief. Then, he laughed. He slid into the chair opposite GhostInnit and leaned forward on his forearms, hands clasped. The ghost smiled, and he looked so much like Tommy that something small and hurt throbbed in his chest.

"Alright. Let's make some memories, Tommy."

"I will do my best to remember them, boss."

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