

forget me not

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Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings , Major Character Death , Graphic Depictions Of Violence
Category:	Gen
Fandom:	Minecraft (Video Game) , Video Blogging RPF
Relationship:	Tommyinnit (Video Blogging RPF) & Michael the baby piglin , Tubbo & Tommyinnit , Ranboo & Tubbo , Ranboo & Tubbo & TommyInnit , Noah Brown & TommyInnit , Sam Awesamdude & TommyInnit , Noah Brown & Toby Smith Tubbo , Hannah Hannahxxrose & Noah Brown & Sam Awesamdude & Tommyinnit , Ponk DropsByPonk & TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF) , Alexis Quackity/Karl Jacobs/Sapnap , Ponk DropsByPonk/Sam Awesamdude , Ponk DropsByPonk & Karl Jacobs , Ghostbur & TommyInnit , Luke Punz & Sapnap , Hannah Hannahxxrose & TommyInnit
Character:	TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF) , Tubbo , Ranboo (Video Blogging RPF) , Michael The Baby Zombie Piglin , Technoblade (mentioned) , Michael (Dream SMP) , Foolish Gamer , Foolish Jr , Alexis Quackity , Sapnap (Video Blogging RPF) , Karl Jacobs , Cara CaptainPuffy , Hannah Hannahxxrose , Philza (mentioned) , Ponk DropsByPonk (Video Blogging RPF) , Eret (Video Blogging RPF) , Rudylmao , Wilbur Soot , Sam Awesamdude (Video Blogging RPF) , Badboyhalo - Character , Jack Manifold , Sam Nook , Luke Punz , Clay Dream (Video Blogging RPF) , Technoblade (Video Blogging RPF)
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forget me not

by [orphan_account](#)

Summary

"you'd thought being a ghost would have made it all easier. maybe you'd get to relax, or move on from the things that hurt you. maybe you'd stop being forced into the hero role.

you should know by now that naivety never leads to anything good."

the crown of alliums sits on the nightstand next to your bed. no matter how long it's been, the flowers don't wither or wilt.

(aka, tommy may be dead but he still has a family to look over, even if he can't quite remember how he died.)

no caps on purpose. other fics in this series can be seen as prequels of sorts

but i'll settle for a ghost

Chapter Notes

pls keep the tags in mind

this has evolved from "i'm gonna write phantommy-michael fluff bc :]" to "5k words of pure pain" and i'm not sure how to feel.

chapter title from 'the other side of paradise' from glass animals

trust me, this picks up after a few chapters. its visible, where this went from misc stuff to an actual plot is visible.

HELLO THERE! sorry for the caps, but i know this will grab some peoples attention. so if you're seeing this, good! according to youtube statistics- nope, but like. if you read this fic, and like it? right on, don't be shy to drop a kudos and sub for future updates. if you don't like it, please tell me what i could do better. i don't care how long or how short, literally any constructive criticism is welcome. ngl i feel like mt writing has changed as the chapters have progressed, so maybe give the future chapters a peak, but- yea. any help is appreciated.

i would also like to stress that this is **SECOND** person pov, not first, this is **NOT A SELF INSERT**, and no original characters will be involved in this story.

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

mimi places the crudely made flower crown across your head. you try not to twitch your ears and dislodge your crown, and smile up at mimi. mimi smiles down at you from where he hovers, idly clicking his claws together.

“there you go big man,” mimi says softly, “every king needs a crown.” he rests his hand on your head, careful not to jostle the flowers. his hand drops from your head and you go to grab it with both hands, snorting at him when yours slide through his. oh, that's how he didn't mess up your crown. you look up at mimi; how dare he not let you grab his hand. putting on the most offended face you can, you put up at mimi and he snickers. “sorry. ‘m kinda tired.”

you go for his hand again, and again yours go through his. “old.” you mumble at mimi in piglin. standing from where you were sat atop the hill, you pointedly snort at mimi once more and pat the damp grass from your overalls before waddling down the small hill and into the snow. something about the garden keeps snow from settling for long, and based on how often you can find mimi here, you don't doubt that it's his doing. as you leave you don't hear mimi follow, but mimi is always with you and he doesn't need to make noisy footsteps like everyone else, so you know he's not too far behind you. the thought fills you with warmth.

after a few steps, mimi floats to your side. despite knowing that you can't physically grip him, you put your hand up near his, and he places his near yours in the mimicry of a handhold.

the walk back home isn't very long. boo's garden is close, only a minute's walk, and you spend it in near silence. mimi hums a familiar tune, the same he always hums when lost in thought. you've asked him about it before, but despite your best attempts, you cannot recall its name. curt? shirt? english has too many vowels. when asked, though, mimi tells you that it reminds him of an astronaut and loneliness. you ask him what an astronaut is, and he points out your bedroom window to the crimson lit dusk and tells of explorers that journey into a place called space, into something far vaster than the oceans of the nether and overworld combined. you ask about the nighttime lights in the sky, something mimi tells you is called constellations, and next night he leaves before coming back with a dusty-looking book. you learn about the stars and their stories together.

the walk to the treeline is short. before you know it, boo is in front of you and grabbing your hands. "where have you been?" he asks gently, eyebrows furrowed. you open your mouth, think, and close your mouth. lacking words, you huff and wiggle your arms. boo understands after a moment's pause, and he gently squeezes your hands before releasing them.

'garden. with mimi. made me crown,' you sign, and boo's worry seems to fade the slightest bit. you beam at him, and responds with a smile of his own before scooping you up into his arms. boo gives you a big kiss on the cheek, careful of your purple crown, and rests you on his hip before turning back towards the house.

"i'm glad you had fun, michael," boo says as you rest your head on his shoulder, "but please be more careful next time. who knows what could've happened if you got hurt by yourself."

"not alone," you say before continuing in sign, 'mimi with me. mimi here.'

boo sighs and rubs a hand down your back. "right, sorry. i'm sure mimi would have looked out for you, but you still gotta be more careful bud--"

you turn your head to look over boo's shoulder, and mimi is gone. you aren't worried, though. mimi will always be there, even if you can't see him. boo carries you back into your home and bee is immediately there, feeling you for injuries. his prodding hands nearly make your crown fall, and you whine at him. bee pauses to fix your crown before continuing his pat down, and you start papping his hands in annoyance.

you can hear mimi's giggles from wherever he is, and grumble as he laughs at your misery.

you don't know when mimi showed up. one day it was just you and bee and boo, and then mimi was there, in the garden. and after weeks of coaxing he had finally come home with you, and even though bee and boo can't see him, you have no reason to believe that he might not be real. he brings you fruit and sweets stolen from the kitchen and pantry, and he checks under the bed at night when you're scared, and he hums you to sleep when bee and boo aren't home, and he protects you when no one else does. he's not bee or boo, but he's there when they aren't.

one day, you find mimi playing on bee's piano.

upon your questioning snort, mimi puffs up his chest with a smirk, "of course i know how to play!" he boasts, voice still soft despite his bravado. You sit on the seat next to him, and he pauses his playing to look down at you.

'play,' you sign up at him. mimi raises an eyebrow, and you huff before hastily adding on, 'please.' his smile ticks the slightest bit wider at that.

mimi slides closer and readies his hands above the keys. "o' course, big m. here, i'll show you my favourite." mimi's fingers dance over the piano, slower than before, and you watch with rapt attention. "f sharp, e, b. c sharp, b, g. f, e, b, b c b a." mimi instructs as he goes. he goes faster as the song progresses as if forgetting the piglin at his side. you don't mind though, happy to listen to the little tune content to lean into mimi's side. it reminds you of the song the green man had hummed the one time he was here. the man had seemed nice, his fur soft and his four legs leaving him towering over even boo. boo and bee had been quick to chase the man out, however.

"a b b, c d f-" mimi singsongs the notes as he plays, before stopping abruptly. "sorry, sorry, too fast-" mimi says with a nervous laugh. instead of replying, you put your hooved fingers on the piano and attempt to copy mimi's earlier notes. you get every key wrong, unable to remember with all the keys looking the same, and turn back to mimi.

mimi places his hands over yours, his phantom touch barely ruffling your fur but solid enough to move your hand and press your fingers. "f sharp, e, b." he instructs slowly, leading you to the correct keys. mimi plays you through the song, and when you finish he cheers and claps his hands softly. your chest swells with pride, and you poke his side until he helps you play once more.

he tells you that this song is called the able sisters and that it's his favourite. at the end of the day,

you can't play it nearly as well as mimi can, but mimi still voices his joy and hoists you up into his arms. he spins you around in his arm before gently placing you back onto the seat, and the rest of the night is spent listening to mimi play a multitude of songs.

bee and boo aren't back till late, but that's okay. bee kneels down and gives you a hug, and when he asks you how your day has been, you simply sign 'fun' before burying yourself into bee's chest.

you see mimi smiling at you from where he floats in the corner of the room. mimi isn't as *there* as he was earlier, but you can still see him. bee and boo don't, or won't, but mimi insists he doesn't mind whenever you ask. you're pretty sure he's lying because his smile doesn't seem as real, and his eyes lose a bit of their sparkle, but you don't push.

mimi flashes you the sign for 'love' with a soft smile, before fading from view once more. despite mimi fading, you sign it back from behind bee's back.

it's on a day when bee and boo are off doing what they call adult stuff, when a piglin approaches the house. you spot them through the window and can't help but stare. bee and boo and mimi all warn you of stranger danger, but you don't think too much of it; mimi himself had been a stranger not too long ago, and now he's with you all the time, so who's to say this stranger isn't a possible friend as well? you don't take note of much outside of their crown, and that's all you see before the piglins head begins to turn in your direction and the curtain is suddenly closed in front of you.

"hey-" you say in piglin. mimi looks worried, and you freeze in your tracks. as soon as you notice the worry it's gone, and mimi smiles down at you. he's quick to scoop you into his arms and float down the hall, pointedly straying from any windows "sorry mikey," he murmurs to you, and despite your confusion, you sign 'okay' before gently papping his chest. whatever tension that had remained nearly fades entirely as mimi looks upon you like you hung the moon and stars. "stop being such a sweet kid, it's gonna double kill me," mimi says. he brings you back to your bedroom and sets you down before pausing.

"you wanna read a story?" mimi asks, and you nod. he's clearly trying to distract you, and you don't know why, but if it can relieve mimi's worry, then you'll read with him. "okay. why don't you wait on your bed, and i'll grab a few books for you to choose from?" you nod once more. mimi goes to collect some books from the other side of the room, and you don't say anything when he locks the hatch leading out of your room.

after each story he reads, he floats up to the high windows in your room and glances down at the

front lawn. it's only after reading you a story about a frog and a toad (you've never heard of them before, but mimi promises to show you them some day; it's too cold, here at bee and boo's home, for frogs and toads to live here.) that mimi relaxes after checking the window. 'okay?' you sign at mimi as he floats back down, and mimi smiles at you before fingerspelling 'pog' and unlocking the hatch.

you open up your arms for a hug, and mimi doesn't hesitate before picking you up in a bear hug. "love you," he murmurs, planting a big kiss on your temple, and you squeeze him as much as you can in his semi-solid state before squirming to be let down. mimi plops you on the bed and returns to the slowly dwindling pile of books, no longer checking the window between stories, but you know he's still on alert, if his perked up ears say anything about it. you fall asleep while mimi reads to you about a rainbow fish who slowly gives her scales to those around her until she has none left.

you, being asleep, don't see the ghost smile something soft before put the books away, only fading after leaving yet another kiss against your head.

Chapter End Notes

thanku for reading

title from elsa's song by the amazing devil

wrote this while listening to tommy's chill mix. soft boy propoganda

in my defense, i wasn't supposed to be around this long

Chapter Notes

light depictions of a panic attack. kinda sucky but based on my own experiences, so. yknow.

starts at "your mind falls silent as your eyes linger on the ocean." and fully ends at "ranboo and tubbo exit the house and ranboo sets michael down on the ground."

chapter title from 'cigarette ahegao' by penelope scott

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

you reach for another slice of pie. bee lightly bats your hand away and you chirp at him in dismay, giving him your best strider-eyes, to which he is, unfortunately, unaffected. "no, you already had a slice, michael." he says sternly, "you need to eat your vegetables first."

"please," you ask in piglin. despite not knowing any of the language, it's not too hard for bee to guess what you asked.

"no." bee says again, shaking his head, and you know you won't be able to beg him like you could with boo. you huff at him and poke at your carrot slices in resignation, and boo chuckles from where he's seated, laughing when your glower grows. mimi's own giggles from his corner of the room don't help.

"aw, big man wants some more sweets?" mimi teases, and you only huff once more in reply.

"meanie." you say in piglin, and when mimi responds in kind, a quick "big baby," you can't help but stare. mimi knows piglin? since when? could he always understand you?

you see boo track your eyes to where mimi hovers, but you pay him no mind. "you speak piglin?" you ask mimi. mimi just nods and grins, one brow raised in appraisal. "that i do." mimi says. when you tilt your head in question, he simply says "you're not the only piglin i know- knew, big m."

"why didn't you tell me?" mimi shrugs, waving his hands in a dismissive motion. boo's ears twitch in curiosity and confusion, and he nudges bee's arm to get his attention. you don't notice when they both look between you and mimi in slight concern.

turning to bee and boo, you make grabby hands for one. boo is quick to pick you up from your seat and set you in his lap. “bee, boo,” you say to them before continuing in sign, ‘mimi knows piglin! mimi knows piglin, never told!’

the concern drains from their shoulders as quickly as it had appeared. “that’s so cool, baby!” boo says, “why don’t you chat with mimi later though? i’m sure he wouldn’t mind waiting for you to finish your veggies first.” and with that, you’re placed back into your seat.

ah. yea. you’d been so focused on the realization that at least one person has been able to understand you this entire time, that you completely forgot about your carrots. who eats carrots, anyways? they aren’t even gold. what’s the point of eating carrots if they aren’t gold? gold carrots are so much better.

you’re only a couple bites in when you feel a tap on your leg. when you glance down, mimi is under the table. a finger is pressed to his lips in the universal sign for ‘stay quiet,’ a cookie resting in his other hand. he passes it to you with a wink before drifting through the table and back towards the pantry as if floating in a lake. a water lake, of course, you’re pretty sure a normal lake would kill a human like mimi.

bee and boo are talking to each other. it would be so easy to just...

you bite into the cookie. the crunch is incredibly loud. you see mimi’s shoulders shoot up to his ears and tail fluff at the sudden noise, and bee and boo stop talking to look over at you in surprise. you meet their eyes as mimi turns around, cringes at the stare-down, and throws you a peace sign before fading from view, the traitor.

you chew on your bite of the cookie once, and bee sputters at you before standing from his seat.

“michael!?” bee says sternly but with an undercurrent of amused confusion, “how did you even-” he barely gets a step in before you’re shoving the rest of the cookie into your mouth and dashing from the table. bee gives chase, and you can hear boo lightly laugh from where he remains seated at the table, and mimi giggle from an indecipherable location.

it doesn’t take long for bee to catch you, but by then you’ve already finished your stolen cookie. he huffs when you don’t pay his scolding much mind, focused on brushing the crumbs from your fur. when you’re brought back to the table, boo helps clean your face with a napkin, and you’re once again faced with your yucky not-gold carrots. you don’t regret it.

it's midday when you hear a new voice outside. you peak out a window, and unlike last time, mimi peaks out with you. outside, you see bee talking with someone with bright yellow wings. not a gold yellow, but still eye-catching. they're loud, yet you can't hear what they're saying. looking up at mimi, mimi meets your eyes and smiles.

“you wanna go investigate?” he asks, and you nod enthusiastically before making grabby-hands for your floaty friend. “what, can't walk yourself?” mimi questions. you don't deign him with an answer, and he picks you up anyways, resting you on his hip.

you like being carried by mimi. being carried or hugged or papped by mimi feels like touching a water cloud, or what you imagine touching one would feel like; the ash clouds of the nether are something you don't think you'd mind never seeing again. they were always a bad sign, a promise of a burning throat and watery eyes. too bad water clouds are so far away, and mimi himself feels only partially there. if only you could actually grip mimi's tail, or his shirt, both the fur and the fabric look incredibly soft and well-loved.

mimi places you down after bringing you to the first floor, and you only huff at him a little bit. for some reason, mimi feels that bee and boo would freak out if they saw you floating. which wouldn't be a problem if *someone* would introduce himself to them. you don't push, though- you've tried your best to explain that bee and boo are nice and that they'd love to meet mimi and won't be mean to him. you think that someone might have been really mean to mimi before, and maybe that's why he doesn't want to show himself. whatever mimi's reasoning, you'll be there for him just as he is for you.

as you and mimi approach the front door, you hear their voices more clearly. you can't hear boo, but you can make out bee from the stranger's loud tongue.

“i'm sure ranboo would love to visit, but between the mansion and the inn and michael-”

“aw, c'mon tubbo, the inn can wait, the mansion will be fine, you can bring your kid!”

“i know, but-”

“kinoko isn't part of esempii. you don't have to worry about anyone getting hurt there. we

wouldn't let anything happen to you guys.”

“ ... ”

mimi speaks up during the moment of silence. “That’s quackity, but you should call him big q,” mimi tells you, whispering conspiratorially as if he doesn’t have control over who can or cannot hear him, “he’s a duck hybrid, got wings and all that. he’s a good dude, for the most part.”

“trust?” you whisper to mimi. he’s quick to mimic the word back to you, piglin only slightly accented.

you choose that moment to stick your head out the door. you see mimi in the edge of your vision do the same, floating above you within the doorway. you let out a chirp to get bee’s attention, and both he and the stranger turn towards you.

“oh, michael!” bee says, walking over and picking you up. bee rests you on his hip and you use your newfound vantage point to inspect the stranger some more. the only thing that stands out to you, other than the off-yellow wings, is a scar starting from the left side of his lip and cutting up into his eye, discoloring it. it’s kind of like yours, the more you look at it.

mimi is quick to notice where your gaze lingers, and he coos at you, more of a chittering sound than anything.

“yea big man, his eye is like yours!” mimi says.

before bee or the newly dubbed big q can say anything, you’re making grabby hands towards the duck hybrid. big q giggles and coos at you before looking to bee. “can i?” he asks, and after only a moment's pause, bee passes you into big q’s arms. “hey there little dude,” big q says. you put your hand up near his foggy eye, brushing your fingers across the edge of his eyelids, and he blinks at you. you take your other hand and press it against your eye, before signing ‘same’ at him.

he immediately starts tearing up. “yea! we are the same!” he says loudly, voice an octave higher.

“aww,” you hear bee and mimi coo together.

big q holds you close to his side and uses his now freed arm to wipe across his face. “holy shit, i would die for you, i’d fuckin’ die for this kid, i fuckin’ would-”

boo appears from nowhere, purple particles drifting from his form different from mimi’s particles, and grabs you from big q’s arms with a shout of “language!!” bee and mimi burst into laughter as big q sputters and makes grabby hands for you, not unlike you did for him only a few minutes before. you hear mimi say something about a ‘bad boy halo’ and you giggle from your spot in boo’s arms.

"sorry, sorry, instinct- but also, please don't swear around my child!"

"shit," bee says, and boo is quick to wrap his hands around your ears. "cock and balls-"

"shut *up* tubbo!"

“i heard there’s a surprise playdate happening today, big m.”

michael looks up from where he was playing with his plush mooshroom. it’s a ragged thing, stitching messy and looking like it could fall apart at a single tug. tubbo had gotten the cloth from puffy and ranboo stitched it together. if you weren’t a ghost, you’d probably yell at ranboo about how shit it is, and maybe offer to teach him how to better sew. but as it is, you simply offer to fix it for michael whenever something happens to it. which isn’t often, the little piglin treats it almost as gently as he does your allium crown.

“really?” the squirt asks you in piglin. he places his mooshroom down next to his pillow delicately and hops off his bed, running over to you and making grabby hands. you scoop him up the moment he’s close and he starts babbling at you in piglin.

“woah, woah, slow down buddy-” you say with a nervous giggle to your voice, “my brain-voice is still in english, you gotta slow down-”

you hear the hatch to michael’s room open and place the once zombified piglin down on the floor faster than you can blink. you feel your heart (*insert ghost with a heart joke here*, you think to yourself) beating a mile a minute, and struggle to flatten your puffed-up fur. you turn and see

ranboo climbing up, turning to beam at michael.

“hey buddy!” ranboo says, and michael is on him in a second, arms wrapped around ranboo’s neck.

“boo!” michael explains, “mimi said- mimi-” a huff as michael unlatches himself from ranboo’s neck to switch to sign and ranboo uses the opportunity to fully pull himself up into the room, ‘mimi said playdate!’

ranboo’s eyebrows raise, and he somehow portrays the vibes of someone blinking their eyes in shock despite his lack of eyelids. “did she, now?” he says, and michael nods.

“it’s ‘he’, dickhead.”

“he,” michael corrects.

ranboo nods, still looking a bit unsure but shrugs it off. “alright,” he says, “well, mimi was right, so-” and ranboo gets cut off with an *oomph* as michael is once again latched to his neck. the sight nearly makes you melt, and you feel kinda fuzzy, so you allow your visible form to fade.

michael is talking a mile a minute as he koala’s around ranboo’s chest, a mixture of both piglin, sign, and broken english. ranboo simply makes sure his child is secure with an arm before descending down the ladder. rather than following, you float up to one of the high windows in michael’s room, and take a minute to look out over snowchester.

it’s quite lovely. the sky is clear, no clouds in sight, and the sound of the ocean lapping at snowchester’s walls nearly lulls you into a dormant state. you lay your arms across the window sill and rest your head upon them, eyes half-lidded and tail swaying softly behind you.

your mind falls silent as your eyes linger on the ocean. you don’t need to breathe, but you do so anyways. a pit begins to form in your chest, tight and blocking your throat, feeling as though your ribs are constricting your heart. you don’t know why you feel like this, but you don’t have the energy to move or care. this feels rather sudden. you should probably be scared, but this isn’t the first time it’s happened, so you try not to pay it much mind. it is what it is. and if your vision starts to blur, and blood begins to drip from your temple, no one needs to know, because foolish arrives, totem son held in his arms as the child looks around almost frantically, most likely seeing snow for the first time since they live in the desert.

the new movement against the landscape knocks you out of whatever trance you had fallen into. the pit is smaller, you can breathe easier, you stop bleeding, and your hands stop shaking. you hadn't even noticed them shaking. you simply knock your fist against your head, a silent reprimand for having another little episode for no reason. your chat would do their best to calm you down, when they weren't scolding you for being rude or warning you of danger or chanting for you to kill someone, but you haven't heard the invasive little voices since you were m- died. since you died.

ranboo and tubbo exit the house and ranboo sets michael down on the ground. you watch him run up to foolish and hug the totem gods leg. you're pretty sure the god is actually over twenty feet tall, but who are you to judge for one changing their form as they wish?

you can't make out what they're saying as you float downwards, but freeze when foolish suddenly looks up in your direction after setting foolish jr. down to play with michael. your breath stutters, another habit you have yet to lose in death, and you glance over your shoulder to see if there's anything of interest that could have caught foolish's eye, but you see nothing. you shouldn't be visible to anyone, so you know he doesn't see you. right?

you look back down and foolish makes direct eye contact with you. you stop breathing entirely.

“foolish?” you hear tubbo ask, foolish not exactly being subtle with stopping mid-conversation to glance at you. “what's up?”

you glance between tubbo and ranboo and foolish. your hands start to draw in towards your chest, under your red poncho, and your tail draws inward. foolish glances at the two husbands, then back at you, and he looks... sad? his eyes almost carry an apology, if you were to guess. which you don't, you barely knew the guy, you mugged him once and he would pop up out of nowhere and scare you on occasion (not that you would admit it,) but you never really spoke.

you make a crossing motion under your chin, and foolish's eyes track it. whatever hope you had for foolish seeing you being a fluke has been squashed, and you desperately hope that foolish doesn't tell them.

they don't know yet. they can't know. you spend all your time either alone or with michael, but they don't care that you're gone, and they don't know you're dead. the thought of ruining everything, even after death through the news of said death, hurts your chest just thinking about it. you'd rather die again than ruin tubbo's new, perfect life.

thankfully, foolish simply looks back at ranboo and tubbo and hides the sorrow from his gaze. “nothing,” he tells them, and you feel yourself deflate. “i just thought i saw an owl.”

you should feel relieved. happy, even. but all you feel is numb. you feel as though you're on autopilot as you hover away from the group and into the spruce forest.

you don't come back to yourself until the moon is high in the sky, and you'd probably be lost if it weren't for your ability to simply float to the top of the forest and look for the ocean. you spend a second considering going for your communicator, but then you remember where it is, who it's with, and settle for finding your way back without coordinates to guide you.

Chapter End Notes

if you notice any capitalization or typos pls lmk in the comments

ty for reading <3 go hydrate and have a snack if you haven't eaten. mint helps with nausea if your stomach is too angy

i haven't had another episode, except last night but it's touch and go

Chapter Notes

me: fluff to counter the angst. fluff pog
also me, writing this: all i know is pain

in e ways, there's another panic attack. sorry. starts around "there's another bout of silence, before laughter rings out." and ends with the chapter. also, some possible derealization during it? pls be careful with reading stuff

OH ALSO shoutout to mikeythemage the looking over this chapter and encouraging me while i thought it was dog water. go read his shit, it's so good

chapter title from 'cigarette ahegao' by penelope scott

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

the overworld has never been so imposing. even the first time you were brought here, cradled in bee's arms, it never spooked you this much. the spruce trees tower higher than the ash-coated trees of the nether ever could, the layers of snow helping to block out the sun. each tree is tall and imposing, casting long shadows, and your eyes dart around at every noise. a single allium is held in your hands, petals fine but stem nearly crushed from your tight grip.

you need to find mimi. ever since foosh and tot had come to play, mimi had been missing. you asked bee and boo to go look for him, but they had insisted that your friend would be alright and come back eventually. after two days of waiting, you decided to go out and look on your own. you only slightly regret it.

another snap echoes from somewhere you can't see, and you hastily reach up to lift one of your floppy ears, trying to listen. but the wind keeps blowing, and the birds keep chirping. cracks echo from the trees, small woodland critters eating nuts, and you slowly lower your ear before returning your grip to the allium.

you're only slightly lost. it's okay. it's okay. despite the shadows, it's too bright for monsters to appear. it's okay.

you take a turn around a large spruce and stop in your tracks. it's mimi! you found mimi!

"mimi!" you shout and trot out into the small clearing. was mimi the one making those snaps? mimi kinda looks different... his red poncho has been replaced by a red and white shirt, his ears are

more like bee's; long and floppy on the side of his head, instead of white and rectangular and closer to the top. his puffy tail is gone too, replaced by a long and thin one, with a white puff at the end, like boo's.

mimi turns around to look at you, and you notice small horns as well. "oh. 'ello." mimi says.

'where you been, mimi?' you sign at him, and he looks confused.

"mimi?" he asks, "i dunno who mimi is, little man. are you lost?" and you feel your heart stop. what?

"what?" you echo your thoughts out loud.

mimi kneels down, a worried look in his eyes. "are you out here by yourself?" he asks. mimi fidgets with his fingers, and you notice that those also look more like bee's, the usual black claws gone.

tears fill your eyes. "mimi," you say, weakly pointing at him. "you m- you're mimi."

"i'm... what?" mimi murmurs, confusion flooding his expression.

the tears overflow and you stamp your hooves down on the dirt. "mimi!!" you shout at him, shoving the half-crushed flower towards his chest. he takes it slowly, confusion fading away into a blank look. with your hands freed, you sign 'come home, mimi,' before saying aloud, "missed you."

mimi blinks once. twice. his soft grip on the allium tightens, ruining the stem more than you did. and then mimi glitches, and he's *your* mimi again. his poncho and long fingerless gloves are back. he's covered in blood like when you first found him, but it's only there for a moment before he glitches again and is clean of the too-bright red. mimi gasps before dropping the flower and picking you up into a hug, and you cuddle into his fuzzy form

"oh, mikey, michael, i'm so sorry-" he says, peppering kisses onto the top of your head, and you're content to simply rest in his arms. you reach up to his ears, and when you feel them, they don't feel like bee's or mimi's. they feel like how big q's looked, and you gently pap them.

"what? what is it?" mimi asks, and you pat his ear again. "oh," he whispers, and in a moment his ear is once again furry. you see his usual grey and white tail appear behind him, (he's told you before that it's supposed to be yellow. he doesn't know why people like him lose their color. when you ask him about that, about the 'people like him' comment, he waves you off with a smile.) and you sigh in content as the familiar appearance.

"mimi," you say, "we lost."

"ah... yea. how did we..." he pauses, "well. let's get you home, huh? tubbo and ranboo are probably worried sick." another pause, this one longer, and you can feel mimi looking around, taking in his environment, before saying "hold on tight. or, y'know, as tightly as you can hold a gh-me."

and with that, mimi floats up high, higher than you've ever been. if you weren't in mimi's arms, you'd probably be terrified. mimi spins around a couple times, eyes squinting as he looks out in every direction, and sighs.

"how'd you even get out this far, bud..." you hear him say under his breath. you feel yourself start to doze, and you're happy to just rest in mimi's arms until he brings you home. you trust mimi. you think he forgot you, for a moment there, and consider asking boo a spare of that book he carries around, for mimi to have to help him remember. just in case that happens again.

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you must have fallen asleep, because when mimi pats your shoulder and you look up at him, you notice that the sun is much lower in the sky, casting an orange glow over the snow.

"time to get up, big man." mimi says, and if it weren't for his raccoon mask, you'd think his eyes had deep bags, his voice incredibly tired. mimi places you down, and you take a moment to stretch, letting out a little squeal as you do and ignoring mimi's whispered 'aw'.

"bee! boo! found mimi!" you shout, and laugh in joy as your dads quickly notice you and run towards you. you know that they're going to scold you the moment they ensure that you're alright, but you brought mimi home, so you're okay with this.

mimi huffs a laugh from where he floats behind you, and when you turn your beaming smile into

him, he smiles. it's a small thing, visibly tired, but genuine, eyes crinkling at the corner. mimi gives you a small two-fingered salute, whispers "see you soon." and fades from view.

the next day is quiet when you ask mimi about what had happened the previous day. he hadn't said anything about what happened, but it's all you've been thinking about. even your mooshroom, now named betty by mimi, was barely able to keep your attention for long.

mimi hums for a moment. he sits cross-legged in the air, hands in his lap and tail swaying slowly.

"you're gonna have to be more specific kiddo," he says. his ears don't twitch and his voice doesn't falter.

'in the forest,' you sign. he hums again.

'what about it?' mimi signs back.

you huff in annoyance. he's avoiding the topic. "the-" you begin to say out loud before mimi cuts you off.

"the shapeshifting?" mimi asks, looking off to the side and projecting a nonchalant air.

"you forg-"

"here big man, let me show you!" mimi cuts you off again, before stretching from his sitting position. in a moment, all his raccoon features are gone, replaced by blunt tusks, floppy ears, and a spiral tail. "pretty cool, huh?" mimi says in piglin.

your internal debate only lasts a moment. if mimi doesn't want to talk about it, you won't make him. you'll just be there for him, like he always is for you.

'yes!' you sign at the shapeshifter before making grabby hands. you go to grab onto his poncho, but your fingers slip right through. you let out a slightly frustrated sound and mimi's form flickers from

view for a split second.

"ah... sorry big m, i'm still kinda recharging from, uh, that thing." mimi says. he sits himself on your bed and you climb up to join him.

'okay,' you sign, 'other?'

mimi cocks his head at you. "other what?" ah... you give him a confused look and motion towards your ears and tusks before pointing at his own. "oh... oh. pfft, yea, sorry mate, lemme just-" and then the ears and tusks are gone, replaced by a single change; wings, with a multitude of colors. the bend of the wings are a glossy black that morph into a dark crimson by the tips. you see a splatter of white feathers at random more visible on the underside of the wings.

he only has the wings for a moment, grimace visible on his face, before swiftly continuing.

"and i can also-" he says, before the wings are gone, looking as though they folded into his back. he has has a tail like boo now, and horns to match, except they're both black instead of boo's black and white. a ring of purple-red appears in his grey eyes, only visible for a moment before a hand-with long dark claws, also like boo's- covers his eyes. "like your pops!" mimi explains.

you clap in delight, bouncing from where you sit. mimi can't pick you up, so in place of grabby hands, you wiggle your arms. mimi is starting to look a little winded, and you snort in concern, but he continues anyways.

"as well as-" you aren't even sure how to describe this one. his horns are gone, as well as his tail, but it's replaced with a fin. gills are visible from his neck, and the texture of his skin is visibly changed. his hair is gone, and he looks like foosh, except white and grey and red instead of yellow and green. the head-tail trails down to his lower back, and mimi presses a now-scaled hand to his cheek.

"ah, big ones like these are... always exhausting-" he gasps, before clapping once and continuing, "aaand-" mimi does a little spin as he morphs this time. as he twirls, he draws his knees to his chest and pulls his pants up from his ankles. he pulls it up to his knees, and where you expected to see human legs are long, lithe appendages with short fur tinted just the slightest bit green. his canines are more prominent, and while his scales and gills are gone, his ears are once again long and floppy, but this time without the fur. his head-tail is gone and his hair is back, and the usual tail is there once more, looking like boo's but now the faintest energy buzzes around it. you point towards the energy, and mimi quiets once more.

he seems to spend a moment to gather his thoughts, opening his mouth to speak, closing, before opening and saying, "i'm a bit... charged, in this form, one might say."

"charged?" you mimic back at mimi.

mimi nods. "yea. see, i got these-" suddenly, a spiderweb of crack-like scars appears, trailing up mimi's neck and up towards his left eye, "scars, 'cause ya man got struck by lightning, but- y- um, yea. makes me all spikey looking."

whatever energy mimi had gained during his morph-a-thon must be lost, because his form starts to fade once more.

"me?" you ask mimi.

"hmm?" mimi says, "you gotta use your words, bud."

"you look like me? please?" you ask.

"oh," is all mimi says before his appearance once again matches yours. you clap happily, and mimi smiles down at you. you reach for his floppy ears, and his expression only strains for a moment before leaning down so you can grasp them. When you put your other hand on his shoulder to keep your balance, your hand slips through, and mimi apologizes before taking your free hand in his. his ear is barely there, his hand even less so, but he does his best to hold you up while you try to feel the fuzzy fur, almost exactly like your own if it weren't for the discoloration. that's okay though, your own ear came back discolored, just as half your face and your eye did upon regrowth.

you can both be different together.

“this is the song that never ends, yes it goes on and on my friend ,”

you kick up your legs as you trail behind your three hauntees, letting your body lean until you're almost fully horizontal. hauntees? haunted? hauntlings? you don't know. is michael technically the

only one, since you only interact with him? who knows. not you, that's for sure. it's not like you've seen ghostbur around, or that weirdly intelligent blue sheep he drags around with him. creepy bastard with too-human eyes. someone needs to make it into lunch already.

“ some people started singing it, not knowing what it was,”

the god rays cast by the trees allow sparkles of light to shine off the morning dew, and you lift an arm to block the light from your eyes. you squint up at the clouds. it's quite a lovely day. you wonder how karl managed to pick the perfect day, or if it was pure chance.

a breeze ruffles the trees, but you can't feel it. water drips from the leaves, but when you reach a hand out, it doesn't burn you like it would ghostbur, no, it just slips through like you aren't even there. are you there? are you real? you pinch the fabric of your gloves and rub it between your padded fingers.

“but people kept singing it just because.”

you sigh. that was loop number... you lost track of them, but you know it was in the double digits. you need another time-passing loop song. nearly bending over backward, you look up at the two riders in front of you. michael is sat in tubbo's lap, betty held in his arms. another breeze brushes by, and it's visible in the way it pushes against michael's fur, the way it makes his long floppy ears sway to and fro. you flip yourself around so you're stretched across your stomach and cross your arms, resting your head. your tail idly sways, but the wind doesn't toy with it's fur, nor does it with your off-white bangs.

tubbo and ranboo ride on in comfortable silence, but for you, it's unbearable. even with the sounds of nature, something just feels off, and you aren't sure if something's going to happen, or if it's just you. you find yourself absently humming clair de lune, fingers twitching for a non-existent piano. maybe this is a dream? you feel like you're both getting too-much air and not enough at the same time. you don't even need to breathe.

you almost consider picking your song back up, before sighing in relief as a mushroom building finally appears, and float ahead of your self-appointed charge to take in the new community. most of the buildings are still empty, likely built more for decoration than use. it doesn't take you long to find a house with people, but the moment you see them, they're walking out, likely having spotted their guests.

karl and sarnap walk hand in hand, and if you were in someone's company, you'd likely make a show of gagging at the public display of affection, no matter how small. as it is, you simply sigh,

definitely *don't* smile, and float along after the duo, wondering idly where big q is.

ah, that answers that. big q is with tubbo and ranboo and michael, likely having messaged his fiancées upon noticing their visitors' arrival. you don't see george anywhere, but that's not much of a surprise. foolish and puffy are also with them, junior strapped to his father's chest.

you take your time floating over to the group, lightly bobbing in the air as you go. it sounds like karl and sarnap have already gotten acquainted to michael in the time it took you to arrive. michael calls karl 'honk' and sarnap 'pandas' and they melt under him. despite his english getting better, michael still calls foolish 'foosh' and junior 'tot,' but he's never had a problem with puffy.

foolish glances at you from the corner of his eyes, and you glare at him.

“oi, what're you lookin' at, dickhead?” you snap at him, and foolish tries his best to hide his smile. you ignore the sad look in his eyes, and he averts his gaze and pretends not to see you, to which you're secretly grateful. not that you'd tell the prick. motherfucker moves too quietly and has spooked you countless times. you don't even realize you've zoned out until you hear your name come from one of the others.

“have you guys seen tommy lately?” quackity asks, and you feel yourself tense.

the silence is telling, and you find a sour feeling building in your chest.

“has no one told you?” puffy questions, and you feel your heart drop into your stomach. you glance at foolish, and when he meets your eyes, he tries to give you a comforting smile. it only works a little bit.

“told us what?” ranboo asks a nervous undercurrent to his voice. His tail gently curls around tubbo's ankle, and you hate the jealousy that spikes at that.

puffy doesn't look *too* bothered, so you don't think she *knows* knows, but you still find yourself worrying. “he, uh, got locked in the prison.”

there's another bout of silence, before laughter rings out. you feel your shoulders drop and tail droop, ears flattening to your head. foolish, karl, and the kids are the only ones not laughing, though puffy lacks the energy the others hold, more lightly chuckling at their laughter than anything. foolish keeps side-eyeing you with concern, and if it didn't feel like dr- *he* had his hands

wrapped around your throat again, you'd tell him to fuck off. you don't need his pity.

“man, he must've done something bad if he got thrown in the same prison as dream!” quackity exclaims, and you feel yourself sink lower to the ground. tubbo's laughter seems to soften at the mention of him, but you don't notice.

“i'm not surprised,” you hear sarnap say, “he was gonna get thrown in there eventually! kid is too chaotic for his own good.”

karl looks sick. it's only for a moment, and you're not sure if anyone else notices, but his face drops and his eyes fill with horror and sorrow. it's gone in a moment however, karl masking his initial reaction and laughing lightly along with the others. you don't know why, but you find yourself lacking the energy to care as you hear the others continually make 'light-hearted' jabs at you. if you even are him. ghostbur insists that he isn't wilbur soot, so who's to say you aren't actually tommyinnit? how can you tell if you're you, or if you're just a cheap imitation? you can't. you can't tell, and it eats you up inside, and tears spring to your eyes.

“tommy?” you hear michael ask in confusion, and oh, yea, he never knew you, huh? michael only knows you as 'mimi' and while you wear that name with pride, it still stings. he's glancing around, idly signing 'mimi' as though looking for you. you don't answer his silent call.

foolish clears his throat in an attempt to gain the others' attention, before saying, “hey, why don't we save these jokes for once he gets out?” he tries to divert the attention off you- off tommy- off *you*, to little avail.

“it's not like dream can hurt him,” you hear someone say, and you tune out the rest of their conversation at his name, ignoring the single set of eyes you feel baring into your back.

it's okay, you tell yourself.

it's okay. it's okay.

they don't know. couldn't know. it's not their fault.

'then who's fault is it?' a nasty voice asks you in the back of your head. you miss chat. they'd drown the bad voices out with ease.

'well?' the voice questions, 'who's fault is it? is it wilbur's fault, for starting this all, to begin with? is it george's fault, for missing the election and not taking anything seriously? is it sam-'

“shut the fuck up,” you hiss vehemently, and you’re sure your palms would be bleeding, had you been alive, from how white-knuckled your grip is. you would know, your claws are sharp. you don’t know when, but your feet have touched the ground and you’re stalking through the trees, a loud static filling your ears and consuming the edges of your vision.

nevertheless, the voice continues, *'or, is, it, yours?'* it draws out.

your knees hit the dirt and you curl down in on yourself, pressing your face into the grass and clawing at your ears. “SHUT THE FUCK UP!” you shout at nothing, tears blurring whatever sight wasn’t overtaken by static. your body (ha!) feels numb, and the soft green beneath you steadily grows red and wet, and you have to squeeze your eyes shut before the red consumes your vision.

you need to run. he’s coming. he’ll be so upset that you left, how could you, after all that he’s done-

he’s going to hurt you. you need to run. he threatened to declaw you, you don’t know if you can grow back what was taken, you’ve never had to before, you don’t want to try it, he’s going to rip them from your hands you need to run-

Chapter End Notes

forms he took in order, in case it wasn't obvious:

piglin

avian

enderman

whatever tf foolish is, i kinda imagine him like a metallic-looking zora creeper, charged from when he got struck by lightning on doomsday

shapeshifters using their ability to hide their scars?? it's more likely than you think

pls yell at me if there's any capitalization or grammar mess-ups or typos pls. the middle part of this chapter brought me out back behind the barn to shoot me in the head

also sorry if i don't reply to any comments, y'all're so nice that i just end up curling up into a ball and holding my breathe lmao

that girl is gone but i still try

Chapter Summary

tommy: GHRHRKGRHRKRHK
zombie: GET YO FUCKIN RACCOON, BITCH
michael: it don't bite.
zombie: YES IT GO GET YO FUCKIN-

Chapter Notes

pls notice the rating changes and new tags!! stay safe yall

also big help from mikeythemage, mans wrote the [spoilers] tubbo yelling part for me.
thanks, big man

warnings for this chapter will be in the bottom notes!!!

chapter title from 'the other side of paradise' by glass animals

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

clementine sleepily chitters from where she's draped across your shoulders. you reply to her chitters with a nonsensical one of your own, and she quiets.

bee said that clementine is a flying squirrel. when asked why that's prefaced with 'flying,' boo explains that most common squirrels are grounded. clementine blinked at you with large, rounded eyes, and you couldn't help but coo. bee and boo had seemed apprehensive when you and tot had approached the small furry thing as if something this tiny could do as much damage as young hoglin. the adults had been surprised when she had taken a quick liking to you, settling on your shoulders with ease.

you heard someone murmur something about the squirrel having strangely human intelligence, but pay it no mind. why humans are the norm, you don't know, but you don't really care. you and tot have a new friend, and you're both happy.

foosh crouched down to pet the squirrel, and she let him. "maybe she's domesticated?" the totem god had said, looking back at the others, who shrugged at him. you don't know what that word means, and turned on instinct to ask mimi what it means. mimi wasn't there, and you blinked in surprise.

“mimi?” you called out, but mimi doesn’t reply.

“who’s mimi?” foosh had asked, but you paid him no mind, spinning in circles and looking around the mushrooms and trees for your sometimes-raccoon friend. you think someone coo’d at you, but you barely heard.

“mimi is his imaginary friend,” bee answered foosh in your stead, before kneeling down next to you. “mimi might just be tired,” he said, placing a hand on your head.

you pause to think about it. maybe mimi is just tired? but mimi usually tells you when he’s tired. he always does. the only other time he hadn’t was when foosh and tot visited, the first time they’d come by since you had befriended mimi. they live a bit away, so it takes a while for them to travel to and fro. he had vanished at the beginning of their visit without so much as a wave, and he’d been gone for a few days after that. and then you found mimi in the forest, but he didn’t recognize you, and you don’t think he was *your* mimi.

and then the squirrel chattered in your ear, bringing you back to the present. and then it had hit you-

“clementine,” you said suddenly, and bee, boo, puffy, and big q pause.

“what was that, bud?” bee asked.

“clementine,” you repeated before switching to sign, ‘mimi would have named her clementine. mimi not here, but i know mimi. clementine.’ you signed the last one while pointing to the squirrel, who had crawled onto tot while you were signing. big q and bee shared a look, one that you would have been unable to decipher if you had seen it.

“are we really gonna let him keep a squirrel?” boo asked, and oh, you hadn’t thought about that. you’d crank up your ‘puppy eyes’ as mimi had called them in the past, (“stop lookin’ at me with them big ol’ eyes,” mimi had said, cringing away from you. you’d been asking him to steal you more cookies, to little avail. until you’d turned on the forbidden puppy eyes.) and boo melted in an instant. “nevermind.” he said weakly.

“whipped,” pandas says, and the others start laughing again.

and then boo's communicator pinged. no one had paid it any mind until it pinged again, and boo excused himself to check it. boo had paled drastically before turning to bee, who had stood back up by that point.

"i think we need to leave early," he said to bee, and you, tot, and big q make noises of disappointment.

"but you just got here!" big q had said, and bee nodded, tilting his head in confusion.

"it's tommy," boo said, and bee had lit up like a glowing mushroom.

"is he finally out of the prison?" bee had asked, but despite your papa's excitement, your focus had been on foosh.

foosh looked sad again. he looked to honk, and you followed his gaze, and honk looked sick. something tells you that you missed another adult thing, and turn to mimi once more before remembering that he's still gone.

"uh... i think we should bring michael home, first," boo had said, and before anyone could object again, honk spoke up.

"ranboo probably has his reasons," honk soothed the others, foosh making a noise of agreement. bee quickly gave, and you had been taken home back to snowchester.

and that's why you're here, sitting on a swing that bee had made not too long before, clementine wrapped around your neck like a scarf. bee and boo had left not long after they'd made sure you'd be safe, boo still keeping the reasoning to himself but assuring bee that it was important. that had been hours ago, and books and betty could only keep you entertained for so long. you're sleepy, clementine is sleepy, and it's so boring without mimi to entertain you. you don't know what you did before mimi was here, when bee and boo were off doing adult stuff.

the adult stuff seems different this time, though. bee and boo were in a rush, instead of the usually sleepy-morning languidness. maybe it was because of your visit to the mushroom village? you reach a hooved hand up and start idly rubbing clementine's head, watching the bits of grass not being weighed down by snowchester's perpetual not-ash ('snow,' they tell you it's called. what a weird name.) sway in the wind.

you like snow. it's cold, but it's soft and tastes good when mixed with jam bee makes from the berries growing around your home, and before they had healed you and helped you get your eye and ear back, it had calmed the constant sting that seemed to thrum through your body, especially where soft flesh and fur gave way to bone. you think about your eye, how painful it had been to grow back, but the instant relief that had flooded your body once everything was back had been worth it. your eye is still a bit fuzzy, like trying to look through parchment paper, but it's better than nothing. your ear isn't quite as long as the other, the ends just a little bit frayed like a paper towel left out to dry after it's already been used, and your hearing isn't quite as good, feeling like cotton is blocking your ear, but it's yours and you're just happy to have it back.

you think you zoned out, because when you blink and look up at the sky, the sun has moved a sizable distance. It's still plenty bright, but there's an angry water cloud sitting on the horizon. it looks like it's the loud kind, and you really want to go inside but you've resolved yourself to wait until bee or boo or mimi get back.

as the cloud gets closer and closer, your trepidation grows. the scent in the air changes drastically. clementine seems to know what's going on, likely smelling the same thing as you, and she's quick to jump from your shoulders and glide over to a cracked open window. you'd been surprised the first time she'd done that, tot almost yelling as clem had jumped from your head onto the totem's back, much to the adults shock and amusement.

now she sits on the window sill, underneath the opening, but not fully inside. she looks to you, as though asking *'well? c'mon.'*

you shake your head at her. "can't." you say in piglin, "need to wait for them. they'll be back soon." looking away from clementine and back at the encroaching storm, clementine huffs from her spot in the window, but she waits still.

boo and bee will be back soon. you just know it. and maybe, this time, they'll actually help you look for mimi.

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the storm inches closer, and a small flurry of snow begins to fall from the darkening sky. it gets spun around in little spirals like the wind is toying with it like one would a small lock of hair. maybe mimi's hair, his hair is white. and grey, but mostly white. it's very pretty, and the only other person with white hair is puffy, but it's not the same. whereas puffy's hair reminds you of the 'sea foam' of the big-big water lakes, mimi's reminds you of snow left to rest on a flower petal or a tree branch.

by the time bee and boo finally get back, the snow has picked up and the cold bites at you through your fluffy sweater. boo has his jacket hanging from his horns like a hood, probably to protect himself from the snow. but bee is under the makeshift canopy with boo, looking significantly less happy than when they had left.

you jump up from the swing and run towards them with a shout of "papa! daddy!" and when you get close, boo picks you up with his free arm, the other wrapped around bee's shoulders.

"michael?" boo asks, his voice scratchy, "what are you doing outside?"

"waiting for you!" you tell boo, happy that your dads are home, but quickly notice red marks on boo's cheeks. you reach up to touch the new marks, and boo hisses when your fingers touch them. "daddy?"

boo smiles at you, but he still looks sad. "i'm okay baby," he says, gently bonking his temple into yours. it's something bee taught you both, a way that he uses to show love, and you trill and bump his head back. but you know something's wrong, despite boo trying to hide it from you. mimi does the same all the time.

'not okay.' you sign at boo, and he sighs.

"i'll... explain, inside," he says, and with that boo brings you both inside. boo goes to close the cracked window, and clementine jumps from the sill onto the enderman, climbing up boo's tall frame to rest between his duel-colored horns as he deposits your jackets into the entryway closet.

"... where do i even begin..." boo whispers as he sits you and bee in one of the many living rooms, "you remember that person we mentioned earlier, tommy?"

you look to bee upon hearing that name. he had been so happy, last time this tommy person had been brought up, but now he barely reacts. taking a moment to look at bee closely, you notice a

ring of red around his eyes and a wetness to his cheeks. you look back to boo and nod.

“well...” boo pauses before letting out a shaky breath, more of a huff than a sigh, and reaching a clawed hand up to rake it through his hair. with how much of a mess it looks, he’s likely done it a couple times now. “he’s... de-”

“he’s not dead.” bee interrupts. he doesn’t look up at either of you.

“tubbo...” boo says, reaching his hand over to grab bee's. bee yanks his hand away, and you make a noise of confusion. bee's never done that before, never refused to let boo comfort him. it makes you worry.

“no, no! he's not, okay! i... i won't believe that!”

“tub, sam said-”

“i don’t care!” bee says, standing up, “i don’t fucking care what sam said, ranboo! tommy isn't dead! he isn't allowed to be!”

boo furrows his brow, looking just the slightest bit annoyed, “you don't get to choose when tommy dies, tubbo. that's not your choice.”

“well, it shouldn't have been dr- his choice, either!”

“yeah, you're right, but can you stop being a dick about it? i’m not the one that killed him, tubbo, don't get mad at me!”

“he's not fucking dead!”

the yelling continues. an endless back and forth of screaming, and frantic movement, and pushing. at some point, boo had stood up, towering over bee so drastically that you think this is the first time he isn't slouching. he's losing the white on his skin, slowly, and it scares you. everything about this situation scares you. you don't like it at all. boo and bee have never fought before, at least not like this. it's usually so... (what had mimi said?) lighthearted. they're usually joking.

this isn't joking.

and against your better judgment, you speak up.

“who tommy? mimi wouldn't tell me.” you ask. it stops the yelling, but with how much bee tenses, you can't tell if it's a good thing or not. bee turns to you, and he looks furious.

for the first time ever, you're scared of him.

boo places a hand on his shoulder, seemingly noticing the fear in your eyes, but he's shoved off. “michael, shut the fuck up. just, stop talking for *once* . okay? no one fucking cares about 'mimi' or whoever the fuck you're always talking about. god, it is *exhausting* having to indulge you, sometimes. i don't even know why we took you in.”

boo pulls bee harshly by the arm into the other room, and the yelling starts again.

your heart is pounding in your ears. you think you hear clementine making a nervous chitter, but you don't pay her any mind. *can't* pay her any mind, it's like what bee said is playing on a loop in your head. he doesn't know why he took you in. he doesn't know why he took you in, he said, and that hurts so, so much. you feel choked, like you can't take in enough air.

you're out the door and running for the trees in seconds, your body moving on autopilot as you run from what you thought was your home. it's snowing hard, having picked up in the few minutes you spent inside. thankfully you have a sweater on, but it does little to protect you from the numbing cold, seeping in through your floppy ears and small tusks and the tears that have begun to fall.

you're lost, again, for the second time in two weeks. you don't think you mind this time, though; sure, your ears are numb, and your tears are frozen to your cheeks, and you can't feel your fingers, and- okay, that sounds bad, but you think you'd rather be out here than back there. you just wish you had the forethought to grab your jacket.

you run until you can't anymore. you run until the stabbing winds hurts your chest, until your

hooves ache with each step against the icy ground, until your vision blurs just a bit too much to see and a tree root trips you and you fall to the ground. you throw out your hands, but it does little to soften your fall. rocks and sticks dig into your palms and they shake as you lift them up your face to wipe at your tears. it stings, but the tears threaten to freeze your eyes shut, and something tells you that you should probably try to avoid that.

the sky is dark, the storm howls on, and your everything is either numb or stinging indescribably. you want to call out for mimi, but the last time you said his name, bee got mad at you. you're alone, so no one would hear you anyway, but the thought of bee getting mad again makes you curl in on yourself even more than before.

you don't know what to do. bee and boo lived in the coldest part of the overworld, and the rest of the overworld is nice but you want to go back to *your* home. where there is no rain, and the lakes warm you instead of freeze you, and the baby hoglins would give you rides. you don't think about how easily you could be zombified again, once again losing your ear and eye and probably more. you don't think about how nice the rain felt against your fur for the first time. you don't think about how kind all these new people have been, how kind mimi has been.

if you think about it, you'll cry. and crying is bad, crying is a waste of water, and you can only get so much of that. piglins are scared of their zombie kin; you're lucky you were able to look sentient enough to not be shot on sight, let alone allowed to trade for the cold blue liquid of the other, colder realm you thought you'd never see.

you begin to push yourself up, and then there's a sudden, sharp pain in your leg. you fall back down with a cry, face-planting into the snowy dirt. the pain is overwhelming, traveling up your leg and into your entire body. tears you had been trying to hold back (in vain) start to fall even faster, and on instinct, you let out a squeal of distress.

you hear stumbling footsteps and look up at the approaching person, struggling to open eyes you hadn't even realized you'd closed. but when they get close, they drop to their knees and reach for you. you lean into what you think is an embrace from a kind overworld dweller before cold hands grip your ear and neck, and blinding pain radiates from your shoulder.

another squeal is torn from you and you desperately try to bat the thing away. this only makes its teeth clench down harder, and, oh, this is an overworld zombie, huh? boo had told you how these things are a lot less passive than the zombies of the nether, despite being slower and typically without swords.

and then it starts to tug. jaw still clenched, it tries to wrench its head backward, and you realize it's trying to eat you. through the thought-numbing pain, it occurs to you that this creature is trying to rip a chunk out of your shoulder, and your thrashing increases tenfold. it likely doesn't help, and

you can feel your skin tearing as more and more blood gushes down your front, soaking your sweater a deep red and splattering onto your face.

it hurts, it hurts so much, please please please-

“michael!!” you think you hear someone shout, but you aren’t sure if it’s real or not. you can’t hear much besides the gurgling growl of the zombie and the blood pounding in your ears. you can’t think, you’re in so much pain that you don’t register when the zombie’s jaw has been ripped from your shoulder. you can’t tell if it took your shoulder with it.

what sounds like a mix between a guttural hiss and a piglin warcry sounds in front of you, and your eyes struggle open in surprise. the sight that greets you fills you with relief, almost enough to make you forget about your injuries.

through the insistent squall, stands mimi. his raccoon tail is puffed up, ears looking like a weird mix between raccoon and piglin; long and floppy like yours, but still fluffier; and tusks poking from his mouth. he holds the zombie up by the head, black raccoon claws digging into its temple and eyes. there’s a chunk ripped out of its neck, sluggishly oozing black, and the same black muck is visible around mimi’s mouth and chin. it tries to snap at mimi, but then mimi hisses at it again, and with another sharp squeeze, the zombie’s head gives out. it’s eyes pop under mimi’s claws, black and green gunk oozes from the punctures and the cracks between each chunk of the skull, and with another squeeze, the chunks of skull get pressed even further in. pink brain matter joins the green and black, and whatever struggle the zombie had left in it is gone. mimi opens his hands, and after a small shake to dislodge his claws from the skull, the rotten body falls to the ground with a wet-sounding thump.

you blink up at the gory sight, whatever just happened not quite registering through the numbness that has begun to overtake you. you feel light-headed, and your vision begins to sway. you see mimi growl again and move onto another monster, but your vision is glued to the overworld zombie. its brain matter kind of looks like rice pudding puffy tried to feed you one time, except the texture was horrendous. never again.

a rattling noise (one that you think would be ear-piercing, if it weren’t for the wind of the storm buffering sounds. or maybe the growing pounding in your head.) sounds from behind you, and mimi is back with you in seconds.

“michael, michael, michael-” mimi repeats your name, picking you up and inspecting your face. his thumb trails over your cheek, black blood from the zombie mingling with the red blood and tears coating your face, and he cringes. “okay, uh-” mimi picks you completely up off the cold ground, and you whimper then it jostles whatever’s in your leg. mimi is quick to grab and snap whatever it is, and it hurts a lot, but mimi whispers reassurances into your ears.

you feel something soft wrap around you, other than mimi's arms, and when you open your eyes (again, when had they closed?) you see red and black wings wrapped around you. mimi's wings. they don't do much to stop the cold, mimi's never been able to help with that, but the security of being blocked from the world brings you slight comfort. the fact that mimi took a form he openly isn't fond of, just to protect you, settles oddly in your chest.

"i got you michael, don't worry, everything's gonna be okay-" mimi begins to ramble as he carries you somewhere safer, "i used to be a medic back in my day, during the revolution, it'd patch everyone up after a long day, and then in p- in pogtopia, i'd patch up techie- technoblade when- when he got hurt," a shuddering inhale, "and wilbur, when he'd get a dusting of gunpowder on him, and accidentally light it, fucking dumbass, ah-"

mimi pauses, and from where your head sits in the crook of his neck, it feels like he's looking around frantically. you don't feel as cold anymore, but your shoulder and leg still throb.

"i-i guess he's your uncle wilby? since, since im kinda your uncle, or whatever- and i'd have to patch myself up while at log- at l- by myself, while i was by myself, far away from your dads and their friends and everything i'd built-"

you drift to sleep to mimi's nervous chatter.

when you wake up, the first thing you notice is the soft heat in your shoulder. the second thing you notice is a weird stiffness in the inside of your elbow, different from the stiffness that's overtaken the rest of your body. the third thing you notice is the soft sheet draped over you. opening your eyes is a struggle, but when you open them, you're in a white room. there's a thin tube connected to your elbow, where the stiffness was, and you trace it to a back full of soft pink, almost clear liquid.

a relieved sigh sounds from your left, and you turn to see two people standing there- or, one floating and one standing. mimi stands next to a human wearing a long white coat and a red and orange mask over his face, covering everything except his eyes. his very friendly eyes, actually, you almost can't look away.

"oh thank prime," mimi says, and the stranger goes to pat his shoulder. it goes right through mimi, and he flinches away just the slightest bit, but he still offers the kind person a nervous grin, and the

person's eyes crinkling, likely responding in kind.

"i'm glad you're awake kiddo, tom- mimi here got you to me just in time." he says, and wow, his voice is just as nice as his eyes. "my name is ponk, it's nice to finally meet you." you'd lift your arms to respond, but they feel so heavy, so you just nod at him. you tilt your head at mimi, and he seems to understand your silent question

"i brought you somewhere... relatively safe, to help patch you up. you've been out for a day or so, big m." he pauses, "you're uh... your shoulder wound- i was able to patch up your leg just fine, but the bite started turning green, so-"

before you're even aware, you're clawing at the bandages on your shoulder.

no. nope. nada. you refuse, you refuse to believe them. you refuse to get sick again, you don't want to rot again, losing your eye hurt so much, growing it back even more so. you remember the flesh getting soggy and falling off your ear, you remember the skin peeling from your skull-

mimi's hands wrap around your wrists, and a scared whine escapes your lips.

"nonono!" mimi sputters out, "you're okay! you're okay, i brought you to ponk because he has potions, he had weakness and i was able to grab a golden apple from my enderchest, and we had to snip away some rotten flesh but you're okay-" and then he's releasing your wrists and his hands cup your face. they're still black claws, but now they're black naturally and not because of zombie blood, and he's wiping away tears with his thumbs. you hadn't even noticed you'd started crying.

"you're okay, you're okay," mimi says like a mantra, and he leans his forehead into yours. it's the most solid he's ever felt.

ponk appears on your other side, checking the bag with the pink fluid. "i've got you on a regen drop, little guy, so you should be in better shape soon."

a while later, and you're cuddling an old-looking cow plushie. it's like betty, but instead of mushrooms, it's covered in yellow flowers. mimi calls him henry, says that it used to be his. he looks a bit sad upon saying that, so you don't question him further.

mimi and ponk chat in the corner, not paying you much mind, and you listen as you run your

hooved hands over henry's soft fabric.

"so you really are-?" ponk asks.

"yeah." mimi interrupts before he can finish his question, nudging his head towards you. something tells you they think you can't hear them. you aren't sure if you should be listening or not, but your curiosity gets the better of you.

"... thank you for helping him."

"of course, he's just a child."

"so are- so were we ."

a pause.

"sorry, sorry sorry-"

"no, no, it's okay. I understand."

another pause.

"i'm sorry that happened to you."

"... it is what it is, big man."

"i'm guessing you'd like me to keep quiet about this?"

"how'd you know?"

“tubbo and ranboo-”

“tubbo doesn’t need me anymore. tubbo is happy now.”

“...”

“michael needs me now. please don’t tell anyone i’m here. i don’t want to see them.”

“even sam?”

they fall quiet after that, murmurs you can’t decipher, and eventually, you hear ponk (you know it’s ponk because you hear his footsteps, mimi never bothers to walk) shuffle out of the room. mimi floats over to you, and you look up at him. you’re both silent as mimi searches your eyes before he speaks up.

“what happened, mikey?”

and then you burst into tears, and mimi does his best to wrap himself around you without disturbing the iv drip in your arm.

‘bee mad,’ you sign at mimi through your tears, ‘bee’s friend tommy died, i asked bee question, bee mad at me. bee said bee regrets adopting me. i ran.’

mimi’s arms tighten around you, and he gently pulls you to his chest.

“michael,” he whispers into your fur, “i am so, so sorry.”

when mimi carries you back later, henry returned to mimi’s safe hiding spot and a lemon lollipop (a parting gift from ponk, gifted to you with a pat on the head. it’s so bright and yellow, almost like gold but not quite, but it still set off that buzz in your brain. you almost feel bad for eating it.) you almost doze off on the shapeshifters back. you think you do drift off, actually, because it feels like one moment you’re leaving a lemon tree forest, and the next you’re in a snowy spruce forest.

mimi puts you down when you get near, but he still supports you as you stumble towards the house. all you want to do is to sleep in your own bed.

boo is there. he looks exhausted, and you hear mimi murmur “ranboo...” but pay your friend no mind. boo is quick to notice you, and he scoops you up into his arms, holding you close to his chest. tears bubble at the corners of his eyes, and despite the sting growing in your shoulders at getting jostled, you try to wipe away his tears. you don’t want boo to burn himself.

boo wants to ask you about your injuries, you can see it in his eyes, but seeing how well bandaged you are, he brings you to bed at your request. mimi sticks by your side the entire time, as boo tucks you in and leaves a kiss on your forehead. clementine curls into your side (she had waited for you in your bedroom, apparently. what a good girl.) and you’re out in seconds.

you stand in front of the ladder leading up to michael’s room. it occurs to you, at that moment, that this probably isn’t the best way in and out of a room for someone so young. you’ll bring it up to ranboo- ... you’ll fix it yourself later.

...

you don’t know why this is so hard.

....that’s a lie, you do. you fucked up, and now you’re having trouble admitting it. you’re having trouble *apologizing*. you hurt michael, and he had gone missing for days, you hurt ranboo, and he’s barely spoken to you, (only to explain that michael had found his way back (no thanks to you) and was covered in bandages. he had seemed fine, had just wanted to go to bed, and ranboo had wasted no time getting him tucked in and asleep. you hadn’t seen him yet. you passed ranboo on the way to michael’s room, and your husband gave you a long, silent look, before nodding and continuing on his way. you aren’t sure how to feel.) and now you have to own up to it. michael hasn’t spoken a word since his return, not to greet you, not to do anything other than sign a request to go to bed. he won’t tell you how he got injured, or who helped him, or how he survived out there for so long by himself. he’s silent, and it’s your fault. you’ve still yet to apologize to ranboo for the scathing back-and-forth you had instigated in your anger and... denial.

‘It’s just like when tommy got back from exile,’ something whispers in the back of your head, and you find your nerves jumping.

it is just like tommy's exile, huh? you had never really spoken about it with the younger boy, both of you dancing around the topic until the time came, weeks later, to fight dream. and even then, you both barely acknowledged it. you fought dream, dream tried to kill you, and you were willing to lay down and accept it. to leave tommy behind to get locked in an inescapable vault. you think that, if that had happened, no one would have known tommy was stuck in pandora's vault. no one would have thought that one of the boys would be left alive.

and then he gave up his disks for you. he hunched his shoulders and averted his eyes and bared his neck, all to protect you. he lost chekhov's gun because of you.

what happened after that? you barely spoke to him. you both did your own things, willing to let the crack between you grow into a ravine. you hadn't seen him for days, not walking around near the big innit hotel (that, when tommy's reasoning for building the hotel is explained to you, sounds less like a hotel and more of a possibly-safe neutral ground, a homeless shelter. and doesn't that hurt, the boy who'd had his home destroyed countless times, making a home for others?) or soaring through the air (with a trident he had gained from dream. maybe the one positive thing he got from the masked man. upon picking the trident from dreams dropped inventory, he had picked up nightmare with more care than any other item there, and gently brushed his hands over the prismatic weapon, as though saying hello to a long lost or forgotten friend. you find that, upon using the trident when returning to the greater esempii area, he flies through the air as though he'd been doing it all his life, as if he'd never been unwilling to use the wings that remind him a little too much of the absent father of his brother figure.) or simply fixing up the glowstone lamps, the last thing he had made before being exiled from his home. you know that it's not just your fault, that he has- had stuff to apologize for, too, but it's too late for that now, is it? looking back, you'd found that ever since exile, tommy had never taken up the form of a goat. your form. just as he'd stopped mimicking technoblade, he'd stopped mimicking you, and it hurts you so much more than you'd expected.

releasing a shaky sigh, you attempt to relax your shoulders and begin your climb up the ladder into michael's attic.

you might have ruined everything with tommy, but you won't ruin things with michael, with your son. you won't. you refuse.

you close the hatch behind you as softly as you can, careful to stop it from thumping closed. you take a moment to stand there, to collect your thoughts and reign in your emotions. with a deep breath, you steel yourself and turn around.

you feel as though ice has been poured down your back. a figure is standing over michael's bed. your crossbow is out before you blink, loaded and leveled at the intruder's head.

“step the fuck away from my son,” you hiss at the intruder. you hear them whisper a soft 'oops' and resist the urge to scoff. how did you not notice them? how did they not notice you? their hands raise, back still turned to you, and step away from michael's bed slowly. wait... no, that's not right. they *float* away. their feet don't even touch the ground. small particles break off from their being, floating up before dissipating a few inches away from their silhouette, and you take into account their appearance.

gray and white hair, tied back into the smallest ponytail. A short red cape or poncho of sorts, covering a barely visible black undershirt. dark grey pants, ripped and threadbare and- stained? at your voice, the figure glitches like a broken communicator, and it's like their wellbeing plummets. their pants are stained with blood, some fresh and some black and dried, cracking and flaking to the floor. their poncho is ripped and dirty. there's blood in their hair, wet and dripping and flattening half of it to their head. their hands, adorned by fingerless gloves reaching up to their elbow, look dreadful, fingers bruised and broken, arms snapped with shards of bone poking through the flesh. any skin visible beneath the poncho and gloves is bruised black. their tail looks jagged as if broken in multiple places. their ear,(where you think the other would be is nothing but a bloody hole, what was likely the other ear reduced to saturated fur and torn skin and muscle barely hanging onto the skull) white and pointed, swivel down and back as though in pain. you can't even begin to imagine the state that their chest and stomach could be in. blood drips onto the rug of michael's room, and you feel sick.

whatever chill had filled you earlier is quickly replaced with what feels like magma in your lungs, in your throat, threatening to suffocate you, to pour from your lips and char your skin and burn your home to the ground. it takes all you have not to double over and puke right then.

the figure turns. it's tommy.

there's blood dripping down his face, barely any skin visible. his nose is crooked, lip split, bruises under both eyes. wait, no, that's not right; under one eye. the other eye is gone, socket partially hidden by his hair, but nothing but a bloody, gaping hole. his neck is swollen and raised, with what looks like black handprints wrapping around it. another drop falls to the rug, another glitch happens, and it's as though all his injuries are gone. you can see through him. the crossbow drops to the floor, slipping from numb fingers, and you don't even notice.

your eyes meet. tommy's eyes are an ashy grey. it occurs to you, like an afterthought, that the only other ghost you know of is greyscale, just like whatever is standing in front of you, standing over your son, right now. your vision begins to blur.

“tommy?” you whisper. tommy- is this really tommy?- doesn't reply outside of a tightlipped smile. “What... how- are you... are you... real?” you say, voice barely above a breath. you can barely breathe.

“wouldn’t we all like to know,” it... he mutters under his breath, before pausing. his face displays a wide range of emotions, from pain, to confusion, to regret, to acceptance, to apathy. none of them look natural on his face.

“no.” the phantom answers, sounding so sure of his answer, before cocking his head and bringing a now unbroken finger up to his lips, as though contemplating. “i don’t think so.”

he- *it* smiles at you, softer than tommy ever had, and you feel your face forming into a scowl as you reach down for your fallen crossbow. you wipe your forearm across your face, furiously scrubbing away your tears, and blindly point your weapon at it.

“get the fuck out,” you hiss, throat feeling blocked, “i don’t know who or what you think you are, looking like that, but you better fucking-” and for the second time that hour, your voice dies in your throat.

he- tommy- it’s gone. the room is empty. the rug is clean of blood.

You release your white-knuckled grip on the crossbow and quietly step towards michael. you don’t want to wake him if he’s okay. gently untucking and lifting the blanket, you look him over. outside of the injuries he gained earlier, he looks fine. clementine blinks up at you sleepily, and you stroke her head with a single finger, silent encouragement to go back to sleep. she tucks her head back into michael's neck, and you tuck your son back in with a sigh. straightening your back, you raise a hand to your head and massage your temples.

“i must be seeing shit,” you breathe out. you feel numb. you don’t know when you put the crossbow away, but you can’t see it so it must be in your inventory. you sit beside your son, careful in lowering yourself to avoid waking him. your hands are shaking.

it wasn’t tommy. because if it was tommy, then you just ruined everything, again. but, there’s no way it was him, right? he might be different now, but he’s still tommy. tommy doesn’t wear his emotions on his sleeve like that, tommy doesn’t do *soft* like that. at least... he didn’t while you were close. you think about the last time you had a conversation with the shapeshifter that wasn’t stilted and awkward. you struggle. the thought that maybe you didn’t quite know tommy as much as you’d like’d to brag, bubbles to the surface of your mind. you block it out as much as you can.

despite the imaginary (was it really fake?) argument that just took place at his bedside, michael is still sound asleep. you brush a hand over his pink and grey fur and idly sit at his side.

tomorrow , you tell yourself. i'll talk to him tomorrow. when i'm not yelling at fake dead people.

the crown of alliums resting on the nightstand next to your son's bed catches your eyes. michael has had it for a while now, treats it as technoblade treats his own. you reach over and gently pick it up, inspecting the crown.

for the first time in however long michael has had it, the small petals of the poofy-looking flowers began to wilt.

Chapter End Notes

graphic descriptions of injury in multiple spots

-starting from "you begin to push yourself up, and then there's a sudden, sharp pain in your leg." and ending at "a rattling noise" (with some mention of blood after, and an arrow being partially broken while still in the wound, but that's not too graphic)

-starting around "gray and white hair, tied back into the smallest ponytail." and ending around "your eyes meet."

pls let me know if i missed any caps or if there are any typos!! ty for reading, pls remember to take care of yourself

someone wrote this song before, and i can't tell you where it's from

Chapter Summary

karl's interlude :]

Chapter Notes

sorry this one took a hot second, ya boi got hella writers block for like half of this. i hope it came out well, and ties up some stuff, even if people didn't notice. i started writing this before q's stream, i think? and ponk's stream helped get them juices flowing again, pog.

idk if this needs any warnings, tbh i barely remember writing half of it (i swear i'm not a c!ranboo kinnie) but pls lmk if you think some warnings should be added :]

chapter title from 'homage' by mild high club

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

you avoid entering esempii's main hud as best you can. not many linger around the crater that once was new l'manburg, the surviving builds around the edges of the pit having been abandoned after doomsday. it feels like a ghost town- fitting, seeing as the only ones near it are a ghost and a child moments from becoming one.

you only have a vague destination in mind; wherever the fuck ponk fucks off to. there is a small child bleeding out in your arms, and if it weren't for the fact that you've dealt with people dying in your lap before, you'd probably be panicking. you do your best to press a hand to the bite scarily close to michael's neck. ponk's a doctor. he'll have stuff you can use to help michael if he's there or not.

you can help michael. you know you can. you've carried a revolution and rebellion on your back before you turned 16. all you need are the supplies. which you didn't think to have on you. because you're a ghost. except you're looking over a small child. prime, you're so fucking stupid. idiotic raccoon. good-for-nothing changeling.

a pressure builds between your eyes, and you slow in confusion. it feels like getting submerged underwater (a feeling you know well from exile) except worse. what the fuck? what the fuck is wrong with you, you need to get michael somewhere safe, you need to help him, fucking FOCUS-

a pop. gravity suddenly grounds you, and pain jolts up your legs, but with a bounce, you're back up in the air. your environment has changed; you're in a white room, and you're not alone. ponk stands in front of you, looking shocked and surprised.

"what the heck?" he says, and that's when it registers that he's looking at michael and not you. he likely only sees a dying piglin, floating in the air. if michael's situation weren't so dire, you'd probably huff a laugh. as it is, you simply manifest, thoughts only on the dying child in your arms.

ponk's eyes shoot up to yours.

"what..."

"help him," you interrupt, "you're a doctor. i don't have anything on me, i can't help him or pay you back, but you *need* to help him please."

"put him here," ponk says, motioning towards an empty bed, and what are the chances that you'd not only appear in a room with the person you were looking for, but an infirmary as well? it's an odd coincidence, but you have more pressing matters at hand. ponk begins to snip away at michael's sweater with a sheer he was quick to grab from a nearby cabinet. he points you towards the same cabinet, and you understand immediately. you open it and it's full of medical supplies, from gloves to surgical string to an iv drip.

"he's got a zombie bite on his right shoulder, and an arrow in his bottom right calf," you say, and it's easier to fall into a calm, somewhat disconnected autopilot, now that you're with someone with actual medical supplies. you grab the stitches and gauze and quickly float back over to michael to inspect his leg.

ponk intercepts you, and gently takes the medical supplies from your hands. you growl at him, low and threatening, but he stands his ground. "tommy, you need to go clean up. i... can't tell what's you and what's not, but i'm not letting you near any open wounds until you clean yourself up."

"okay, fine, i'll clean the zombie guts off- but fuckin' focus on michael!"

"just- go clean up. check-check a mirror, too, you got a little... a little blood on your face."

ponk points you towards a bathroom, and you turn with an irritated hiss, but calm the slightest bit

when ponk is quick to return to michael's side. and then you enter the bathroom, and, oh. that's what ponk meant, when he said he couldn't tell what's yours- you'd fallen into your baseline form without even noticing.

trying to morph back leaves your head hurting and your vision speckled black for only a moment. a few drops of blood that had landed on the floor in your short float over vanish in small wispy particles, but your appearance stays the same.

it's always jarring for you to see. you avert your eyes (eye, only one eye, *he* took the other one, how is half of your vision not pitch black right now?) and focus on cleaning the black blood from your hands. your broken hands, fingers snapped in multiple places, a few even missing the last knuckle housing your claws. you're happy you died before he could rip out more than he did.

you do your best to scrub the zombie gore out of your hands, trying to ignore the breaks. water doesn't burn you like it does ghostbur, but it does make your weird ghost-blood sizzle and evaporate like water on a hot pan, making the small droplets poof into little particles that float up before shortly fading. you turn to leave, before remembering that you bit a chunk from the zombie's throat, and probably have to clean your face, too. you turn back to do so with a sigh.

the bright side of cleaning the black blood from your fangs (you hadn't had piglin features when you died, so you're not surprised that your tusks are gone) is that it cleans your face as well. granted, the blood that seems to perpetually flow from your broken nose and gaping eye socket quickly replaces the evaporated blood. after only a second's thought, you decide to shove your head under the water.

it fucking *hurts*. the water gets into your open socket, and it burns worse than lava ever could.

"what the fuck," you choke out, leaning your head over the sink in an attempt to dislodge the water. a sizzling glob of blackened blood falls into the sink, and with it out, the pain recedes. it's quick to dissolve into ghostly particles, and you grimace at it. "fuckin' gross. what the hell."

you know ponk isn't going to let you help with michael, looking like this. you aren't sure you want to either, who knows if ghost blood can contaminate someone. that black shit that came out of your head doesn't look very safe. you grab the end of the sink and close your eye as hard as you can, almost cracking the porcelain with your white-knuckled grip.

focus.

focus.

fucking *focus*, you worthless-

your eyes open, and you're you again. you're mimi again. you're okay.

"tommy?" ponk calls from the other room. he sounds worried.

"comin'!" you call back.

upon reentering the room, your eyes zero in on michael. your stomach rolls and you think the fact that you're a ghost is the only thing stopping you from throwing up.

the bleeding has slowed significantly, (you think about giving michael your blood, you are an o- after all, but quickly remember that not only is michael a piglin, but you're dead, and your body is likely rotting in an obsidian box or has been tossed into the lava waterfalls of the vault. you take a second to calm down your stomach, again.) but it's the area around the wound that worries you. the skin is a moldy green, slowly peeling off in small wet chunks, exposing wilting muscle underneath.

"sheers?" you ask ponk.

"way ahead of you. we can tackle the rot before anything else- ... i-" he pauses, sounding unsure, and it makes your anxiety spike, "i have a potion of weakness, but we need a golden apple. do you-?"

"i'll grab one," you cut him off, "i know where one is." you don't mention that it's in the one place you don't want to return to, ever. you don't mention that you'll likely have to sneak it past someone who was almost a father figure to you. you do, however, mention one thing.

"how the fuck did i get here?" you think that if the situation weren't so dire, ponk would have snorted.

"i don't know," he says, "someone had left before you arrived, and suddenly you appeared with a pop that almost hurt my ears."

“oh,” you say. okay. you think you teleported. you think ghostbur had mentioned that a few times, most noticeably right after doomsday. he had been missing for a while, before suddenly appearing at the edge of the pit. another moment that stands out to you was the botched revival. you had left after the first attempt, just he had mentioned being in some void with two others (schlatt and wilbur, if you were to guess. that’s the reason you think you aren’t you. but you remember being there, with wilbur and schlatt and md, you remember getting- okay, cutting off that train of thought before you get sick again-) before reappearing with pressure and a pop.

had you teleported? it sure sounds like it, to you. maybe you can ask ghostbur, if he ever shows up again. alright. okay. maybe this way, you can be in and out.

“alright,” you echo out loud and attempt to copy the feeling from earlier. it happened when you thought of ponk, and you were teleported to him, so maybe you need to think about sam? but... what if you think about... about *him*? just alluding to him makes your head spin. the pressure begins to build, and you immediately turn your thoughts back to sam. “i’m about to do what’s called a pro gamer mo-”

and with another pop, you’re gone.

a small body stands in front of you. vines are visible under their skin, twitching and jerking occasionally like a puppet being yanked by its strings.

there are not many of you left. you and fundy, are the last (relatively unhurt) ones standing. tubbo and ranboo are both down, tubbo with a deep slice in his side, and ranboo with cuts covering both legs. phil and puffy stand in front of the kids, weapons trained on the eggpire as ponk and foolish do their best to heal with the limited resources they have. sam and techno, despite being hurt almost as bad as ranboo and tubbo, stand strong.

“did you really think that would work?” bad asks, and no one answers. you try not to look at where sarnap stands further behind him. if you do, you’ll just think about what he did to alex, and you can’t risk that right now. you have to stay at attention.

bad puts his hands on the shoulder of the small figure, and you can hear ranboo growl from here. hannah raises her hand, and a thorned vine, a healthy green compared to the egg’s blood-red, raises from the ground, poised to slash.

“no!!” tubbo yells from behind you. ponk holds him down, struggling to keep tubbo from running to his son with only one arm. ranboo can’t move, whether from injury or shock, you don’t know. “don’t hurt him! don’t hurt my boy!” he sobs into ponk’s arm, and the doctor wraps him in a tight hug.

hannah hesitates, and in that moment a vine shoots towards her. you reach out, but you’re too slow, fundy is too slow, hannah is too slow, and it’s going to pierce her-

a different vine intercepts it. it’s not red, but it’s not vibrant like hannah’s either- whereas hannah’s is a bright emerald green, these are a soft, almost grayish mint. whereas hannah’s thorns are dark brown bordering on black, these are a soft milky white, almost silver. whereas hannah’s buds were a soft red that had slowly lost their color, these buds are a light purple.

you look to where the vine came from. tommy floats there, dripping blood, shoulders tense. he has one arm raised and held in front of him, palm up. his one eye visible is hardened and trained on bad. his legs look like sams, as do his ears and tail. the fur on the end is spiked up, and electricity visibly travels up and down his form, a bright contrast to the dark blood.

“tommy...?” you hear ranboo say, and glance back at him. he looks shocked, and tubbo looks like he’s in even more tears than before. sam looks pained, as does techno, but puffy and phil school their looks. foolish and hannah look relieved to see tommy, and entirely unsurprised. ponk doesn’t bat an eye. tommy pays you all no mind, outside of a quick look to hannah.

his gaze shifts from bad to the child and his eyes soften. he lowers his arm, but the silvery vine stays from where it’s wrapped around the offending bloodvine. he lowers himself to the ground before kneeling in front of them.

“hey mikey,” tommy says in a voice softer than you’ve ever heard “it’s me, mimi. do you remember me?”

tubbo’s sobbing gets louder, and ranboo gasps. michael doesn’t react. bad’s smile grows.

“what’re you doing here, michael?” tommy continues, and you’d think he’d be unperturbed if it weren’t for the quick flicks of his thin tail. when michael speaks, it’s like the entire room holds its breath. his voice sounds rough, not much of a surprise given his zombified state, but still, more than you would expect for a young child.

“she said i could be just like you, mimi.”

“oh, baby,” tommy chuckles, sounding close to tears, “you don’t wanna be like me. i-”

“why did you leave me?”

tommy freezes. his tail does a small twirl, and he’s visibly choosing his words carefully, setting himself down into a comfier position, hands placed palm down on the ground in a non-threatening manner. he’s silent for a moment, before slowly reaching into his inventory. “i’m sorry, bubba. i thought you were dead. the clearing was full of blood, and...” tommy pulls out a bottle filled with water, slowly holding it out to the child as he speaks.

a vine shoots forward, and you take an aborted step back. tommy’s form quickly starts to fade, likely intending for the vine to simply phase through him, but it doesn’t. it wraps around his throat, and tommy drops the flask in shock, hands rising up to grab the bloodvine, surprise evident in his face and his tucked-back ears and his thrashing tail. the water sizzles when it touches the red ground, and you realize that it was holy water from church prime. tommy’s body is almost entirely see-through, but the bloodvine touches tommy as if he weren’t a ghost. and then, with a yank, it starts to drag him towards the egg.

tommy doesn’t need to breathe, but his hands still scrabble at the bloodvine, short creeper claws doing little to stop the thick vine, green-furred legs kicking against the ground doing little to slow him. panic is evident on his face.

“tommy!” hannah shouts, lunging forward. bad meets her halfway, and even with sam being quick to try to put himself in between them despite his injuries, bad plunges his trident into her stomach. sam hisses at bad, guttural and low, and the faint scent of gunpowder fills the cavern.

that’s not supposed to happen. the vines shouldn’t be able to grab him like that. he’s literally a ghost, they were never able to touch ghostbur, how are they grabbing tommy?

in your shock, you fail to notice punz swing for your neck, but puffy grabs your hood and pulls you back. “focus, jacob!” she shouts at you, but your mind is going a mile a minute. the egg pulls tommy closer, bad avoids sam’s trident and leaves his lodged in hannah’s stomach, and you are just so confused.

tubbo is still struggling to get to michael. techno forces himself to his feet, grabbing the broken

halves of the axe of peace and charging for the nearest infested. phil blocks a swing from sapnap, pushing him back into niki. there's too much, too much happening, and you can't focus.

"karl," someone calls, and you turn to them without thinking. it's ranboo. except it's not. you've seen the boy's enderwalk state, when his black fur overtakes his white and his horns expand and he only talks in vwoops and chirps. now it's the opposite, with his white fur steadily overtaking the black. he looks at you with knowing eyes, and you blind in surprise.

"you need to go back," he says. with a bloodied hand, he reaches into his inventory and pulls out a book, handing it out to you. with every clang of netherite against netherite, you feel yourself jump, but ranboo(?) doesn't react. he motions the book towards you again and you hastily take it, mindful of the bloody handprint on it. "it's ranboo's memory book."

"are you not ranboo?" you find yourself asking, and he shrugs.

"maybe. i don't know. but you need to go back."

"go back where?"

"don't play dumb, karl, we both know i didn't mean 'where'."

"how do you-"

"don't trust the inbetween."

you search his eyes. they're blank. an explosion echoes behind you, shaking the cavern and you turn in surprise. it's not sam, he's too close to everyone and not, y'know, at the bottom of a crater. but sam looks devastated, and following his eyes across those still locked in combat (don't think about sapnap don't think about sapnap don't think about sapnap-) and you eventually find what made the explosion.

"no!" sam yells, but he stays rooted to his spot, hannah cradled in his arms and trident held up to ward off the infected. "tommy!"

and oh, yea, tommy was in a creeper form, huh. he's obviously a ghost, so you aren't that concerned over injuries; shapeshifters don't get the natural defenses that their forms do. those that explode like a creeper would usually end up with bad burns, internal bleeding, and broken bones. if it's a large explosion, it might even cause brain damage. you have no idea what a charged creeper form would do to the shapeshifter. but tommy's a ghost, he should be fine.

the dust from the explosion clears, and you hope, you pray that tommy's explosion has reached the egg.

it did- barely. barely. not enough for it to count, though. while the demonic screeches of the egg pierce your ears, the explosion had barely cracked the skull, and now tommy is laying in a crater, barely visible, with his limbs slowly fading. and then the bloodvines swarm him, dragging his body towards the egg, and his form gets more and more opaque, but the vines don't stop. he's limp in the vines tight grip, getting dragged through the dirt and magma, and you hear sam sob.

and then you're moving without thinking. you drop to your knees and pull out your book, the one that matches your iconic sweater, and you're flipping through the pages faster than you can read. you don't notice when multiple of the infected immediately turn to you, but you do notice when ranboo struggles to his feet and stands in front of you, one hand gripping his bicep and the other wrapped firmly around the axe of ender.

"hurry!" he hisses as the infected grow near, and- there, that's the page, you found it, now you just need to-

you're sucked into the book, and the last things you see before being launched months into the past (nothing compared to your previous travels,) leaves you sick.

an almost-fully-white furred ranboo swinging his axe into an infected niki nihachu's neck, as tubbo finally escaping ponk's grasp to rush towards his child. captain puffy, grabbed by her horns and her head slammed into the stone wall repeatedly. the bloodvines, despite burning up themselves, dragging tommy's ghost into soulfire, holding him down to the burning soul sand and incinerating him. hannah bleeding out in sam's arms as they're quickly swarmed by the infected.

it's all gone with a white flash, and you find yourself relaxing before ranboo's words hit.

don't trust the in-between.

you wake up in bed, quackity's head tucked under your chin, and sarnap's arm thrown around you both from quackity's other side. you stare at the ceiling for a moment, taking the time to feel your fiancée in your arms and breath. you're safe, for now. sarnap isn't infected and q is still alive. looking to the side, there on your dresser sits ranboo's book, bloody handprint still wet.

it's a few days before tubbo, ranboo, foolish, puffy, and the kids will be visiting. you vaguely remember it- someone had mentioned tommy, and everyone had been cracking jokes. you remember laughing along with them. you remember feeling sick.

you know you should get up, should start to set everything on track. reaching for ranboo's book, you pause when q starts to stir. he calms after a moment, nuzzling back into your neck, and you feel your heart speed up. it makes you want to cry, thinking about how much you love these men. but you need to focus, so you pull ranboo's book over to you and open it up. it's a memory book, you notice right away, and can't help but smile at ranboo's quick thinking. you elect to ignore how he knew about the inbetween, at least for now. you have more pressing concerns.

you need to save michael. you need to *help tommy* save michael. you need to find when he went missing. it doesn't take you long, you find when they had learned of tommy's murder and michael going missing happens right after it. it won't be for a few days, but that just means you have more time to prepare.

you turn another page of ranboo's book and pause when a small, crumpled note falls from the back.

'XX/XX/2021, foolish and his son will visit for a play date. tommy will leave. michael will look for him the next day. help michael find tommy.'

it looks like ranboo's handwriting, but also... not. there's something rushed about it, like the person writing it was running out of time. it makes a shudder nearly rake your frame, but you don't want to risk waking up sarnap or q, so you shove it down.

you place ranb- your book back down on the dresser, and rest your arm back down on quackity. you wish you could go back to sleep, but you're wide awake. quackity breathes, and you press your cheek to his head, feeling the soft puffs of air against your collarbone. this is real. you're back, and you haven't forgotten (yet.). quackity is alive, and you have him in your arms. sarnap is okay, and he has you both in his arms.

you're all okay, and the thought hits you like a freight train. they're *okay*, they're with you right now, and they're *safe*. tears bubble up in your eyes, and you can feel a sob build in your throat, but you do your best to swallow it down. that doesn't stop your tears though, and you press your lips to quackity's hair in a kiss. you reach up for sarnaps hand and wrap yours around his wrist, feeling for his pulse. it's a steady beat, and the veins under his skin aren't red, and you aren't sure you've ever been happier.

you don't think you'll be getting any more sleep tonight.

it's not hard to get the piglin child back on track. he's visibly scared, and you really want to help him, but you decide to keep an eye from a distance. your book sits heavy in your bag, and you focus on the feel of it gently hitting your hip with each step. And then you step on a branch, and your shoulders shoot up to your ears as a snap echoes through the forest. michael pauses and lifts a floppy ear up, looking around anxiously.

you don't actually know where tommy is. you can't see him easily like foolish and michael, and maybe hannah, but...

michael turns around a tree, seemingly excited, and you can only watch in confusion as he squeaks at thin air. you're guessing tommy is there. you go to turn away- your job here is done, you think. you don't feel like you did much, but. ah. michael found tommy, you assume, so you're counting it as a win.

tommy's voice sounds from behind you, almost as airy and echoey as ghostbur, and he sounds confused. you and him both, huh. memory bros.

you pull your book from your bag and open it to your bookmarks with only a little hesitance.

you know that quackity and sarnap wouldn't be laughing if they knew what happened, but it still leaves a sour taste in your mouth. quackity had been getting close to the kid, what with how close tommy had been getting to sam.

q had manifested his wings late, leaving them small and unable to support him for flight, but as one of the only people on the server who (sometimes) had wings, the kid had been there. despite his distaste for his own wings, tommy had pulled them out, all vibrant reds and yellows and orange

sticking out against an ashy black, and had helped them. he had taught you and sam and sarnap how to preen quackity's wings without hurting him, and q had turned to mush in your arms, much to his embarrassment. he had also taught q how to glide, and different exercises to do to help quackity gain the strength his wings lacked. he never flew, but he'd glide alongside your fiancee, careful to keep him safe. he'd been devastated, when hearing about the murder of someone he viewed as a little brother, last time. and then he was gone, every day, and you'd rarely see him. he'd come back covered in blood. you knew it wasn't his.

sarnap and tommy had a different relationship. often on opposite sides of the servers wars, yet always friendly. you remember how quiet sarnap had been when he'd shown you mars, once released but recaptured by the child, who had taken up a mixed form of a guardian and whatever foolish is (you honestly have no clue, and it feels rude to ask after all this time.). sarnap had blamed himself after learning of tommy's murder, believing that if he hadn't let dream spiral, he never would have hurt tommy. despite the pairs bickering, they cared for each other. it's a shame that the other adults of this server had beaten it into tommy that he can't show that he cares for anyone or anything, lest they get used as a bargaining chip.

not that you yourself aren't to blame. in your efforts to stay a neutral party, which failed the moment you fought alongside manberg, you had stood by while the children of the server had been mistreated time and time again.

foolish's lips are pursed, gaze trailing someone you can't see, leading out into the forest.

it's not until later, after your visitors leave, that you can do anything. you excuse yourself with a claim of going for a walk, waving your fiancees off with a smile and a kiss when they offer to come with you. and if you squeeze their hands just a bit harder than usual, that fact will stay between you and them.

it's hard to sit outside snowchester and just watch. michael is just sitting there, the flying squirrel that he'd gotten attached to wrapped around his neck, and it's a pitiful sight. it makes you want to bundle him up and steal the child away. even when a storm approached and michael's trepidation is visible, he still stays outside, waiting for his parents.

and then they're back. they're huddled together, ranboo attempting to shield them from the snow with his jacket acting as a canopy, and ranboo's face shows signs of new burn marks. he scoops michael up into his arms, and after a few words, they step inside.

and then there's yelling, loud enough to hear from the treeline.

and then there's a small child, running out the door without a jacket and tears streaming from his face.

you think back to the other note that your ranboo had left, coordinates and a time. as much as you want to run after the child, you listen. you got to them, and there you leave a book. despite ranboo's warning to leave the book be, you had peaked into it. it hadn't been pretty. but it can apparently wake tommy up from his 'dissociative state,' and that wording would scare you if you hadn't known that he can wake up from it, unlike ghostbur.

you sit in the clearing and watch. and you watch. and you watch. the anxiety bubbling in your chest grows, but your patients wins, and when something- someone you can't see lifts the book from the snow and brushes it off, you turn and leave.

as you're leaving, you hear someone gasp, and know that your effort hasn't been for nothing.

"ponk!" you yell, slamming open the door to his home. a weakness potion is held in a white-knuckled grip, hands shaking from the adrenaline. you're breathing heavy, having run here as fast as you could, and you only have a few minutes before they arrive.

the doctor jumps at your abrupt entrance, hands reaching for a weapon he doesn't have on instinct. "karl! what're you doing here? what's the rush?"

you shove the potion towards him, and he takes it without complaint, likely without even realizing.

"i was never here," you say as you turn to leave.

"w-what? karl-"

as you walk through the door, you spin around and squint at him, lifting up your index and middle finger to motion to your eyes and then to him. "never. here." you say to him, and then you trip over a root, stumbling and barely catching yourself before spinning around and sprinting away.

you run as fast as you can down the path, pandora's vault the only thing on your mind. your legs ache, you've been running for days at this point. there's no time to do anything else. there's never enough time. the familiar blackstone of the vault comes into view, and you almost let out a sigh of relief, but not yet. there's still time for this to go wrong, you can't celebrate just yet.

you skid into the front room, sam turning to you in confusion, likely at how you bypassed his nether portals. oops, hopefully he doesn't focus on that. you see the locker room behind him, keycard floating above where the hidden hopper is, likely scared of making too much noise.

pulling an anvil out, you hold it in your arms for only a moment- *holy honk, it's so heavy, what the f-* and before sam can so much as lift his hand, you slam it onto the ground. as the slam echoes down the halls, you see the keycard enter the hopper, and the blackstone covering the locker retracts. sam doesn't notice. he does, however, pull out *warden's will* and you nervously swallow before crossing your arms and leaning onto your anvil.

"karl, what- that's gonna take so long to mine-"

"have you ever heard the story about that time i ate an entire stick?"

sam blinks.

"what?"

an enchanted golden apple floats low to the ground, and you pointedly don't look at it.

"yea, like, i just kinda shoved it in, took a crunch-" the apple starts to inch out from behind sams boots, and you start towards- no, can't go that way, sam will notice the locker is open, you really hope tommy closes it before leaving- the side the apple is on, hoping he'll get the idea. sam takes a step towards you, raising his sword, but you slam down another anvil, and his ears twitch. the apple jumps, as though the sudden sound made tommy jump, and you shove down the guilt that begins to form.

"it's a kinda dry taste, but it was like, a stick from a tree, not a crafted stick, so there was still sap on it, y'know?"

the apple floats towards the portal, pauses for a moment, and then floats through. you sigh without

meaning to and stiffen when sam raises his sword to your neck, following your eyes to the portal.

“who came with you?” sam questions, demands more like, and yea, that’s a fair assumption. you raise your hands up in surrender and chuckle nervously when *warden’s will* presses closer. your blood starts pumping in your ears, and you can feel your adrenaline pumping again.

“no one! just me. just came to chat with my fiance's dad!”

you’re both silent for a moment, before you slap sam’s sword away. it slices through your palm, but barely gives you time to breathe before the fire aspect has it cauterizing. it cauterizes a bit too much, however, as the skin of your palm blackens and chars under it. it hurts, probably worse than anything else you’ve felt (that hasn’t killed you,) but you waste no time in darting away from sam, towards the portal. but to add insult to injury, you place a sandstone penis in the entryway, and the absurdity of it pauses sam in his pursuit.

you give him a two-fingered salute, a quick “sorry!” and then you’re ducking into the portal. there’s a block broken in the wall, likely tommy breaking out instead of waiting for the portal to switch, and you take a moment to block it up. wouldn’t want sam adding ‘breaking prison walls’ to the list of reasons he’s likely already made against you. your thoughts linger back to ponk’s arm, and you shiver.

the portal starts to whirl in the tell-tale chime of someone coming through, and you’re quick to open your book and get the honk out of dodge.

“hey! eret! long time no see!”

“karl? what are you doing here, i thought you were establishing kinoko-?”

“yea, yea i am- was- uh, it’s. happening.”

“...are you alright?”

“what’s your opinion on the egg? and, uh, do you happen to know where i could find purpled? or connor? either, really, i can’t remember, so-”

Chapter End Notes

so how we feelin bout that tubbo stream? i TOLD mikey and teddy that someone was gonna steal it, but they didn't believe me, they just wanted snowchester to nuke pandora-

n e ways. ty for reading, pls yell at me if there's any caps or typos, i slept for like 10 hours but i'm gonna go try to sleep for another 18

take me back to november

Chapter Summary

rudy and tommy dodge cps so well that they dodge each other in the process
:broken_heart:

Chapter Notes

here's a shorter chapter, because if i continue writing, it will get angsty. that is both a promise and a threat.

me? having tubbo and ranboo avoid talking about their problems because if i write this confrontation i will cry? it's more likely than you think.

tommy: i was born in a lab
me: :]

chapter title from 'november' by tyler, the creator
EDIT: WHY WAS THERE A BULLET POINT IN MY CHAPTER

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

you don't know why it's so hard for you to apologize.

whenever you enter a room with ranboo, all there is is silence or a few stilted words. the most you had spoken had been after michael had gone missing. (ran away, call it what is it, he ran away and it's *your fault*) you weren't sure how long he'd been gone for, as you and ranboo went back and forth for well over an hour before ranboo had almost burst into tears and excused himself. your anger had taken a backseat to make way for the budding guilt, but when you raised your hand to stop the tears from searing ranboo's cheeks, he ducked away from your hand.

you couldn't find it in yourself to help ranboo look for your missing son. you felt terrible, but the thought of seeing michael at the moment had felt unbearable.

and then he was home, barely in one piece, covered in bandages, and you realized that you had failed him again. maybe if you'd gone out looking for him, he wouldn't have gotten hurt, wouldn't have needed to get patched up by some mysterious person that michael won't tell to you. except, that's not quite right, is it? you haven't spoken to your son while he was awake, but you listened to ranboo speak with him. michael hadn't made a single noise, likely relying on sign, and for some reason that planted yet another seed of guilt in your stomach.

you don't want to think about what happened when you had tried to speak to michael that night. don't want to think about your mind playing cruel tricks, so soon after sams lies. (because of course, they were lies. if they weren't, then you'd have to acknowledge your thoughts from that night, have to acknowledge that, even if you don't want to say it, you're still emotionally dependent on the younger boy. that you had tried to break off from that dependency while he had almost nothing, and that he may have died because of it.) (but it's not your job to do that. you could have supported him a bit more, yes, but he had sam and puffy and quackity, he was getting better, and you didn't want him to fall back onto your not-so-healthy bond.) (is that true? or would you have been too weak not to jump into his waiting arms again, the moment he said your name?)

(you can't keep ignoring this.)

the thoughts are conflicting, and your mind can't come to a decision. every option makes your chest ache all the same. you may not be able to reconcile, but you need to remember to stay in the present, to go to those you still have. *he's not dead, he's not dead, sam's lying he's lying to you you can't trust the adults, tubbo, i thought you learned this already?*

"i'm sorry," you blurt out the following morning. ranboo had been making breakfast, chocolate chip pancakes. michael's favourite. he doesn't turn around at your voice, but his ears do twitch in silent acknowledgment.

the kitchen is silent again. it feels like, with you speaking, the tension has gotten even thicker. you know ranboo is waiting for you to continue, to be specific and show that you actually understand what you did wrong (how could you not?) but. you don't know why you can't say it.

you regret snapping at ranboo. you regret snapping at michael. *prime*, do you regret snapping at him. but you know that words only mean so much. if you don't show it, what's the point?

"we need to find who caused it."

(you can't keep ignoring this.)

your head snaps up at ranboo's statement. you don't ask what 'it' is; as much as you wish to deny it, you can't. tommy's dead, and if what sam told you is true, it was likely planned. a hit, of some sort. the vault is a deadzone, between the layers of obsidian and blackstone and lava, so tommy couldn't have messaged anyone for help. you hadn't even known tommy was stuck before sam had contacted you with news of his death, his murder.

but would tommy have even messaged you, if he could? he'd been so distant, leading up to everything, that you hadn't even noticed him missing for weeks.

he doesn't- didn't even know you're married. he hadn't even gotten to meet michael.

at your silence, ranboo turns his head to look at you out of the corner of his red eye. "you still need to apologize to michael. but..." he swallows thickly and turns back to the stove.

"okay." you finally respond to ranboo, "okay. no time to waste, i guess."

(do something about it.)

"y'know, you kinda remind me of my big brother."

michael tilts his head up at you from where he sits in your lap, with a fast-asleep clementine in his. you had been overjoyed when the little piglin had told you his choice in name, almost bursting into tears as michael gazed up at you as if seeking your approval. you almost hid your affection behind a cringe, before seeing michael's face drop and rushing to assure the child that yes, you absolutely loved clementines name, yes, it's okay that he picked something you 'came up with' first, and no, you aren't mad at him.

you almost froze when he had signed that last question at you. michael had been close to tears, and before you even noticed, you had shifted into your piglin form and scooped him into your arms. chuffing at him, you had sat him in your lap and idly but gently brushed his fur. the chuffing was something piglins do to reassure their young, you're pretty sure, as wilbur had done it for you, doing his best to mimic how techno would help him, on nights where storms would get a little bit too loud and overwhelm your senses. based on how michael is leaning back against you, likely feeling the rumble in your chest, and looking sleepy as all hell, you guess copying wilbur's own copy was the right decision after all.

you don't let yourself think of felicity or sally.

decision. as if that weren't instinctual. at least, of all the mannerisms you've picked up from the dead man, (that you've been able to notice and identify,) you haven't gotten any negative ones.

unless being dead counts. if being dead counts, then you're pretty sure that's a big ol' tic on the cons list.

your hand brushes down the back of his neck, likely tickling michael based on his small annoyed pap to your knee, and it pauses at the edge of the bandages wrapping his shoulder. he's been healing well, what with the food ranboo has been smothering the boy in, alongside the potions he had brought. as much as you'd like to fuss over the boy and check his bandages yourself, you know ranboo would get worried about how a toddler was able to change and clean his bandages so proficiently. it's not like tubbo could've done it; tubbo hasn't come back since that night, outside of standing at the boy's ladder before sighing and turning away. you know he'll build up the courage eventually, and you try not to feel bitter and angry that your best friend (don't think about it, don't think about it, don't think about it-) is neglecting his son, even if he's not feeling so pog.

and oh, yea, you'd almost forgotten about that. you don't know how you managed to push this back- likely focusing on michael's health. but still. you've ruined tubbo's life, again, while being dead. you weren't even there when it happened, had been in another dissociative state. there's so much going on. you feel like your mind is moving a mile a minute, drifting from self-hate at ruining tubbo, to your repeating lapses in memory, to the book.

there's not much too it; it's a neat little thing, well made and bound with good quality leather, but small and unassuming. you almost thought of writing *how to sex 4* on it, before realizing that that likely isn't the best book to keep around a child. (and not because you're afraid of ranboo or tubbo finding it.)

you don't know how it appeared in the middle of the forest, or who put it there, or why. (that's a lie, you do. but everything just feels like it's too much, and it's easier to ignore the bubbly man than acknowledge his startling foresite.) but it woke you up, and you got to help michael, so that's enough.

(you also pointedly don't think about how it woke up chat for a split second. it had been so loud, so overwhelming. many had been shouting for you to help michael, verbally leading you in the right direction, while others were laughing at your choked gasping (waking up is never the best feeling) and others greeted you like one would a child they hadn't seen in a while. if the situation weren't so dire, and if they weren't gone again as quickly as they came back, you would have told them off.)

(you didn't miss the mess of voices, even if they did act like a parent (parents?) sometimes. You *didn't*, and you *don't*.)

and *then*, because trains of thought are *fun*, (said in a fully derogatory sense,) that made you think of all the others you knew with voices like your chat. if you had an iron nugget for every person

you knew with voices in their heads, you'd have three nuggets, which isn't a lot, but it still seems weird that that many people have hivemind voices in their heads.

the first that comes to mind is techno "anarchy" blade-minecraft. you don't want to think about him.

the second is wilbur "fucking batshit crazy" soot-minecraft. you don't want to think about him either.

the third is rudy "lmao" innit. you don't want to think about them any more than the other two, but it feels like once her name pops up in your mind, you can't stop thinking about him.

which, finally, leads to now.

at your silence, michael taps your arm, head tilted sideways, and you continue your blurted thought.

"not brother as in wilbur, that fucker just found me in the streets and took me in while the cops were after me." thinking about the wilbur you knew back then hurts, but you try to fight down the pain in your chest. you pause again before adding, "acab, michael. all cops are bastards. never trust the fuckers."

he leans back into your chest, and you pause again to coo at him. "anyways, yea, i have a bio-brother. sibling? sister? i dunno, rudy is just rudy. i can't remember much, but we lived in some underground place- a lab, i'm pretty sure. we were test-tube babies, as some ass would probably call it. kinda like the rooms under my home, that place. didja know i had rooms under my home? started to design it like a labyrinth as a side project before i d- before, uh..."

you'd been rambling again. you kind of want to drop the topic, but michael looks intrigued, his eyes once again staring into yours as you pause, and he lightly takes one of your clawed hands into both of his, squeezing tightly (the best he can, considering your semi solid-state) in what you interpret as encouragement. who let the kid be this smart?

"yea. rudy. rudy is the only other person i know who's like me."

'like you?' michael signs, and you nod.

“yea. shapeshifter, and all that jazz.” another pause, another gentle squeeze. “some people raided the place one day, tried to take us. claimed they were trying to help, but adults never tell the truth, y’know?”

michael nods at that. your brows furrow and you think you should probably discourage that answer; just because you don’t trust adults, doesn’t mean michael should. but... adults truly can’t be trusted. except for maybe ponk. or karl, you won’t forget his strange distraction when you had gone back to ~~the place of your death, the vault, pandora’s vault, the place sam left you to die, locked you into with no remorse~~ the locker to get your gapple. you don’t even want to think about puffy. she hadn’t done anything against you, but she had promised to look out for you, and even she hadn’t known about your false imprisonment until late. but for michael, maybe it’s best that he learns this early on before someone can hurt him, so he doesn’t have to learn through blood and tears and death, like you did.

you continue, “so we ran. all the way from 2b2t, that’s the place rudy and i are from, all the way to this place called hypixel. we met some other homeless kids there... uh, deo, boffy, luke, wisp, and bitzel. called themselves ‘the bay,’ and invited us to join after we were there for a few weeks. guess they got impressed by our pickpocketing skills,” you say, chuckling at the last bit.

“we lived like kings, big m. there were other kids in the area we’d help, like eryl and freddy, and some older kids, like blocks, but it was just us for a while.”

you miss them. you don’t miss being cold, (not as if you and rudy couldn’t simply shift into avians to keep (what your avian hindbrain insists on calling) your flock warm with your wings) or having to steal for food every day, or being run-out of towns after a few weeks, or chased by police and some incompetent fuckers calling themselves ‘child protective services, or-

you miss the community they brought with them, the family. the security, that you and rudy wouldn’t have to sleep with one eye open at night, or take shifts. with the bay, you were both able to get full nights of sleep, and you miss it immensely.

you clear your throat. “wisp snitched on us, eventually. i think they... they told him they could help. dunno why he listened, after all that time, but he did.” and, man, doesn’t that betrayal hurt. “they managed to grab luke and boffy and bitzel, but i know deo got away.”

you don’t know what happened to rudy. you tried to find him, you really did, but you know her as well as you know yourself; if they didn’t want to be found, no one would find him. you can’t exactly blame her, because, for as much as you were looking for rudy as well, you kept your head down.

that's kind of stupid. why did you do that? yes, you were young, but that's... so fucking stupid. both of you, looking for each other but trying to not be found. man. isn't there a thing about that? self sabotage or something. snake eating its own tail. you'd take a second to ponder, but it reminds you of something techno would be interested in, and the ball of anger (it's not anger, it's sadness and regret and longing, but you're dead so you don't have to let those thoughts see the like of day. wahoo, as mario himself would put it.) makes you drop the thought entirely.

you sniffle once, not looking at michael. "and then your uncle wilby found me. he liked to call it a surprise adoption, despite not even legally adopting me. found me alongside some dude called charlie, same last name and all. i, uh, don't think i was ever actually part of that family. i know techno likely viewed me as a nuisance, and i rarely ever saw phil, but- hmm."

pause. take a breath. unclench your claws, unclench your jaw, relax your shoulders. you're venting to a child. you need to shut up.

michael seems confused when you change the topic, but he doesn't object. not that he would, verbally; the kid has been silent, ever since you found him with a zombie halfway into his neck. you push back those thoughts quicker than they came.

"did i ever mention that i made the uniforms for the old l'manburg boys, back during the revolution? took on a spider form and everything, had plenty of string- bet there's no one else on this prime forsaken server who could hem and sew like big man tom- mimi does!" you puff out your chest, careful to not knock michael out of your lap, and attempt to exude pride. you think it works, because michael beams up at you, head tilted all the way back, and he looks happy. amused, but not in a condescending way; in a legit, actual way. you don't know if you can get used to that.

suddenly, you feel a lightbulb go off in your head, and your overly-confident smirk turns into a more genuine smile.

"y'know what, big m?" you ask, and michael signs an inquiry at you, "one of these days, i'll take you to explore other servers. the esempii is cool and all, but it's kinda... how do i put this kindly..." you make a show of tapping your chin and looking up to the ceiling in thought before continuing, "it's kinda shit. no place for kids."

there are nukes in the next building over, for fucks sake. why tubbo thought this was a smart idea, you'll never ask and you'll never know.

but this is michael's home. so for however long michael enjoys your presence, it'll be your home, too. you don't think you could leave if michael wanted you to stay- he's done it before, who's to say the little piglin wouldn't go wandering off in the forest again, looking for you? with how many times he's stumbled across you this way, you have a feeling he'd do it again if he thought it would lead him to you. and then who would be there to save him from getting mauled to death?

not tubbo, that anger hisses in the back of your head, and, oh, you don't like that. that scalding hot anger and spite on michael's behalf doesn't make you feel very pog. another distraction, it is!

"say, big man," you say abruptly, not noticing then michael jumps. you had fallen silent, again, but this time michael had sat and waited. "wouldja like some hot coco?"

and then michael hops to his feet and runs towards the ladder, and with a shout of surprise, you lunge after him, trying to scoop up the energetic child to stop him from tearing his stitches. if you weren't a ghost, you think michael's recklessness would have single-handedly cured your low blood pressure.

an aggravated chittering sounds from behind you, and you turn back to see clementine curling up on the floor. she was likely knocked off by michael's abrupt movement, but she doesn't seem to care. she doesn't even bother trying to get back on the bed.

you take a moment to focus, before shifting into your half-raccoon half-piglin form, wanting to stay like michael. "goin' back to sleep already, huh? kinda lazy, innit?" you chitter at her. this animalistic language is mostly vague feelings. vibes, as one might put it. you basically taunt the poor squirrel, not expecting much. it's not like squirrels and raccoons are even of the same family, after all.

clementine yawns, smacks her lips once, twice, thrice- and then there's a crunch.

"what the fuck," you whisper as clementine continues to lick her lips as though her mouth hadn't produced that horrid sound. michael silently giggles at your reaction. it's like eating something soft and getting a sudden crunch. absolutely vile. you fake-gag in her direction in disgust and turn back towards the ladder. you promised the lad a hot cup of coco, after all.

and if you hear clementine vaguely chitter back "fuck off," then that's between you and her.

head hurty. pls lmk if there's any capitalization i missed or any typos. grammarly, my beloved, is a bit of a bitch because she doesn't like my lowercase.

your comments give me life btw, mwah mwah

i am so tired

edited this chapter to make wilbur an orca hybrid. i love technobur twins but i love orca wilbur even more. plus the poetic irony of an aquatic hybrid melting in water, F

you smile and i get sunburn

Chapter Summary

ghostbur? in MY fic? it's more likely than you think

Chapter Notes

sorry for the wait, i started building a big ass tree in Minecraft and got distracted for like, 2 days

chapter title from 'sunburn' by the living tombstone

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

mimi idly hums under his breath, absentmindedly slicing your golden apples for you. he lightly drizzles them in honey, and it takes all of your self-restraint not to dash back into the kitchen and snatch them from mimi's claws. he always shoos you into the living room, promising to bring you your food, so you sit and wait. you don't bother to listen for his footsteps.

with the silence comes a deafening static.

it's been quiet, lately. bee and boo have been leaving early in the morning and returning late at night. other than leaving food behind (that would be fine by itself, but mimi spruces up for you, to help give you a variety.) they just... aren't home. boo still tucks you in if you're still awake, and he checks your bandages, offering you regen potions, but other than that, it's been quiet. it's been days since bee yelled at you, and you're kind of glad they're gone because it means you don't have to worry about making bee angry again.

mimi keeps you company though. he makes you steak and pancakes and potatoes with roasted marshmallows on top. you try to offer mimi food because you're pretty sure that humans as tall as mimi shouldn't be that thin, but he never takes it. well, he does, but he pretends. he sneaks his food to clementine, and you don't know why, but when you push, mimi does his best to reassure you.

"i'm okay, big man!" mimi would tell you, "you don't gotta be worryin' about me, i can take care of myself. thank you, though, truly."

you don't tell mimi, but you think that bee and boo haven't been home because of you. you know

that boo isn't mad, but you've barely seen bee ever since that evening, so it's not too hard to connect the dots. but mimi does his best to distract you, telling you about people around the esempii and other places like hypixel, soulplex, and mineplex. he won't tell you about 2b2t outside of adventures with his brother, but he tells you about all the places he's been to and you listen with rapt attention. anything to get your mind off of bee.

"alright, big man!" mimi says loudly, startling you out of your thoughts and silencing the static, "here's your glazed gapples."

you clap in excitement, jumping up from the couch and running forward to launch yourself into mimi's legs. he bears your weight with a small 'oomph' and you jump back, small curly tail wagging so much that your body almost shakes with it. you sign 'please,' at mimi, and he hands you the plate with a smile.

you just. stare at the plate, for a solid thirty seconds.

mimi calls out to you from the kitchen- you hadn't even noticed him turn back- and you snap back to attention. "remember to *eat*, not just admire or hoard, mikey." he gently chides, and, with one longing look on your golden delights, you lift a slice to your snout and bite down with a small crunch.

heck is this good. oh my wither, this is so good. mimi makes such good food. if you weren't busy stuffing the grapple slices into your mouth and lipping the honey from your fingers, you would rush to mimi and bombard him without good these are. wow.

you also don't want to distract mimi. he always cleans up after himself immediately, cleaning and putting back everything where it was initially, leaving next to no evidence of him having ever been there.

and then you hear footsteps. they startle you enough that you almost choke on your bite, coughing. the footsteps pause for a moment, before coming closer down the hall. and then bee is standing in the hallway, and you don't know why he'd be here at this time when he's been gone for the last few days. your hands twitch, wanting to rise up and ask him, but you grab your wrists and rub your fur.

bee almost looks as nervous as you feel. you duck your head and look down at the honey-glazed gapples, wishing you had eaten in your room.

“m...michael, can we- um.”

“hey-” mimi says, floating back into the room from a connected kitchen, and he pauses at seeing tubbo there. you can see bee tense from the corner of your eyes, sending a quick glance towards your friend, and mimi falls silent. you feel your shoulders rise to your ears.

“mikey.” bee says, continuing despite mimi’s entrance. you don’t look up, and he continues after a moment, “i’m... i. i want to talk to you.”

‘it’s okay,’ you sign, before shoving the remaining apple slices into your snout. you hop up from the couch to leave to your room, leaving the apple juice and honey-covered plate behind.

“no, it’s not-” bee says, lifting up his hand, likely to scold you for stuffing too much in, but you duck around his arm and quicken your pace.

‘don’t want to talk,’ you sign in exaggerated movements, hoping he’ll see them despite being behind you. you hear bee take a couple steps after you before stopping, and mentally thank him for at least respecting your request.

you’re going to just leave, but you want to wait for mimi, so you crouch behind one of the plants in the hallway, waiting for him to follow like he usually would. but instead, you hear him speak up.

“you gonna go try again, or what?” he says, the obvious accusation clear in his tone, and you can almost imagine his arms crossed and his ears flicking in contained anger.

“shut up,” you hear bee reply to mimi, and you flinch despite it not being directed at you, “you’re not real. you’re not actually tommy.”

you’re surprised that mimi is finally talking to one of your dads, given his previous hesitance to do so, but you don’t focus on that. you don’t like that bee is talking to mimi like that. it’s not very nice.

“are you seriously still...? whatever. you need to be there for michael.” he pauses and sighs, “enough of this absent parent bullshit. you made a mistake, do something about it.”

“shut up.” bee repeats, and the knot in your throat swells.

mimi releases another staticky sigh before replying to bee’s remark, “you’re gonna turn into phil if you keep this up.”

bee doesn’t reply to that.

“...wait... uh, i’m sorry, i shouldn’t have-” mimi goes to apologize before you hear something slam and jolt in surprise and fear at the sudden noise.

“i said, *shut up*.” bee hisses, even more venom in his voice than that night he yelled at you, and mimi falls silent.

had you been in the room, you would have seen bee grab the nearest thing- a small potted tulip- and throw it at mimi. mimi would have full-body flinched and brought his arms up to protect him, cowering away from bee, forgetting that he can simply phase through it if he so desired.

had you been in the room, you would have seen tears burst to mimi’s eyes before he furiously scrubs them away, arms shaking. you would have seen him whisper “okay,” a breath barely soft enough that bee could only just hear him.

it’s probably a good thing you had left the room.

mimi is suddenly apparating beside you, but you don’t jump; you’re used to his sudden appearances. his eyes look red and glossy, and you can see his fangs digging into his lip, his ears pinned back to his head. the effort to unclench his claws looks as though it takes conscious effort, and his tail looks like he’s barely keeping it from tucking between his legs.

but you only see it for a moment. mimi is quick to school his face when he catches you looking. despite mimi’s condition, he’s trying to smile, and he takes your hand in his before gently pulling you down the hall, back towards your room. there’s a scared urgency to his movements, almost like when that other piglin came by once, so you don’t hesitate to match mimi’s speed and softly squeeze his hand.

"you know, i've been thinking." you say, "do you want to fix up that big hole where l'manburg used to be?"

puffy turns to you from where she's making more tea, poofy white blouse swaying as she moves. the white half of her hair is partially blue, stained from ghostbur's hands while he had braided it for her. he had said that the length was the same as his brother's, but thicker and softer, compared to his thinner hair. her face darkens at the mention of techno, but she doesn't object to the hybrid ghost doing her hair for her. puffy knows how close the orca was to the piglin in life, proclaiming them twins despite the obvious, and does her best to change the topic to avoid upsetting both herself and the ghost. and if you slipped the ghost a few roses to weave in, that's between you, ghostbur, and whoever else sees puffy before she eventually sees a mirror.

ghostbur perks up from where he's sitting next to you, unable to eat or drink, but enjoying the ambiance and companionship. despite this, he holds a teacup in his hand, daintily spinning his spoon in the soft blue drink.

"ohh that sounds like a lovely idea, hannah!" the ghost explains, almost dropping his cup in his excitement. you reach over and gently pry the teacup from his blue-stained hands and he doesn't object, simply clapping in puffys direction as she turns to face you, "we should, we should, captain! i think it would be quite fun!"

"i don't see why not..." puffy answers as she turns around and hands you your cup. you thank her with a smile and a nod, and she smiles in return. "we could invite sam. it could help get him out of... y'know."

"the hotel? he and tommy have been awfully busy lately." ghostbur guesses, and you turn away from him to hide your grimace. ever since news of tommy's murder had gotten out, ghostbur has been unable to accept it. you tell him, he breaks down in a staticky mess of particles and blue, he forgets. you think everyone's given up on telling him.

"yea, the hotel," puffy replies. she slips into her therapuffy voice, and you wonder if she's aware of herself when she does that.

ghostbur lifts his cup once more and taps a finger to his lip in thought before asking, "maybe we can invite sam nook as well! even androids deserve breaks." he says as though it's obvious. he perks up again and you, again, gently pry the teacup from his fingers. "and sam nook can bring tommy!"

again, you hide your grimace. you wait a moment to see if puffy will speak up again, but when she stays silent, you speak up.

“but wouldn’t he be working in the ruins as well?” you question him. he pauses at this, before shrugging and returning to his cup of tea. puffy chuckles at the ghost as she sits down beside you with her own cup.

ghostbur fiddles with his teacup for a moment, before opening his mouth and reaching down towards his pockets.

“no, thank you, ghostbur.” “thanks but, i’m good,” you and puffy say at the same time respectfully, turning down ghostbur’s offer of blue before he can even offer, and he looks unsure before nodding.

the three of you fall into a comfortable silence for a few minutes, listening to the sounds of life outside of puffy’s mushroom home. if you were to peek out the window, you’d see the encroaching bloodvines slowly worming their way outwards, almost brushing against the giant mushroom. you offer puffy help in her weed whacking, but all she does is smirk and flash you a glimpse of an enchanted netherite hoe.

“we’ll need to get rid of the blood vines in the crater, first.” puffy speaks up, and this time you don’t hide your grimace. puffy matches it, while ghostbur tilts his head in thought.

“i don’t know if badboyhalo or antfrost would appreciate that,” the spectre says, “but i’m sure they wouldn’t mind if we simply relocate the vines!”

“alright, ghostbur.” puffy reassures ghostbur, and he happily goes back to fake-sipping his butterfly-pea tea. puffy flashes you a glimpse of her flint and steel and gives you a wink.

you and puffy finish your tea, ghostbur leaving his cup on the table, and head towards the crater. with how decimated the landscape is, you’re going to have to do a lot of terraforming before it can sustain life once again. except maybe the bloodvines, but you refer to those as ‘life’ very loosely.

ghostbur floats beside you, puffy leading your little trio from the front. it’s why she doesn’t see it. as you approach the crater, ghostbur glitches for the smallest second, a trenchcoat covering his blue-stained yellow sweater, a dark red beanie over his hair. but it’s only for a split second, and when you turn to the ghost, it’s as though he had never changed. you don’t know how ghosts

change their clothes, but you are curious as to why ghostbur would want to wear something so heavy-looking during the beginning of spring. it's a little chilly, yes, but not enough to warrant a tailcoat and hat.

it's *deep*. you know dream and techno had blown it to bedrock, but it's still surreal to see. the old l'manburg flag that puffy had erected stands tall in the center of the pit, but bloodvines now wrap up and around it, spreading in a radius around the flag.

"...maybe we can get rid of the bloodvines, after all." ghostbur says with a frown, and you snort at that. puffy flat-out laughs, patting ghostbur's shoulder. (more like hovering her hand over it-ghostbur feels fuzzy and staticky, like activated redstone. not the most pleasant feeling.)

"glad you agree, buddy!" the captain says, handing the ghost an extra flint-and-steel and bag of soul sand.

"ranboo."

ranboo looks down at you where you rest in his arms, meeting your upwards gaze.

"yea, tubbo?"

"have you seen tommy, lately?"

ranboo's brows furrow and his lips tilt down in a frown. he almost moves to stand from where you're both sitting on the sand, the two of you taking a moment to rest on the shores of pandora's vault. ignoring the water surrounding the prison, ranboo isn't even allowed within ten blocks of the vault, so he's mostly waiting here and compiling information while you use your trident to launch yourself up and inspect the prison.

it's been spotless, with no signs of explosions or pickaxe marks. there's not even any gunpowder residue, or creeper remains, or even wither residue or soul sand particles to indicate a wither.

it's completely spotless, and it's driving you crazy.

but ranboo does his best to stomp your growing frustration, a rumbly-purr coming from his throat as he holds you close to your chest and gently pets your hair. the frustration brings tears to your eyes, but it's the soft, non-hostile touches that make them fall. where his arms are wrapped around you, despite the layer of clothing, your skin almost tingles. his pets nearly lull you to sleep on the spot, and you bleat and push your head under his chin, careful of your horns.

"tubbo," ranboo says, voice full of sadness and regret, (and disappointment) "i thought you already accepted-?"

"no, no-" you say, leaning back a bit to meet his heterochromatic eyes once more, and beg him to understand what you mean with your look alone.

you don't know exactly what he sees, you aren't even sure of exactly what you're trying to portray, but he seems to understand. his eyes soften even more, something you didn't think possible.

ranboo swallows, a nervous look growing on his face- likely from the anxiety of his interpretation possibly being wrong, fear of upsetting you if he voices it- but you give him a small and shaky smile and he exhales.

"do you mean like... like ghostbur?"

you don't reply, opting to set your head back onto ranboo's chest with a shaky exhale, and he nods to himself.

"okay. alright. have you, uh, have you spoken to him?"

you nod.

"does he... does he remember?"

another nod, followed by a shrug. he at least remembers phil's absent parenting from after wilbur had (surprise-adopted) kidnapped him off the streets. tommy had told you he stayed because

wilbur had given him sanctuary from people chasing him, but you know it's because he got attached. wilbur fed him, taught him how to read, loved him, and tommy had grown to love him in return. tommy had appeared mostly human back then, an instinct to hide his shapeshifter status, but he'd eventually started imprinting on wilbur in the form of small small, barely-visible splotches of grey, miscolored skin the same texture as wilbur's black and white splotches.

“what did you say? to tommy?” ranboo continues his questions, dragging you back to the present. and, ha, that question hurts.

you yelled at him, is what you did. you yelled at your dead best friend, your dead little brother. told him that he wasn't real, pointed your crossbow at him, threw a potted flower at him. and he had flinched, and you had felt terrible, and you reached for him but in an instant, he was just- gone. he was gone. you keep scaring him off.

why do you keep hurting him?

“breathe, tubbo,” ranboo whispers, petting your hair once again to calm you, and tears you hadn't even noticed had begun to fall from a damp mark in ranboo's suit. you pull away, not wanting to risk hurting him with your tears, but his arms tighten around you.

“ranboo,” you say, voice shaky and barely there, “i think i hurt tommy. i think i hurt tommy, i-”

your sentence cuts off with a sob. ranboo doesn't release his gentle hold, and you think the feeling of his arms around you, the beat of his heart, and the gentle lapping of the water against the shore is the only thing keeping you present.

“but i- i see things,” you continue after a few gasps for breath between sobs, “how can i know that's really him?”

you know how. he's caring for your son. you remember how each time you saw him, he was with michael. first, tucking him into bed, then making him food- michael isn't tall enough to reach the knives or the honey, and you know ranboo wasn't there to make the gapple slices for michael. there's no one it could have been, other than your best friend. tommy is looking out for your own kid more than you are at the moment, and you hurt him for it.

but despite everything, despite you spitting venom at the boy and making him flinch, he still smiled at you before vanishing.

why do you keep hurting tommy?

if michael can see him, he's not a hallucination. but why hasn't anyone else seen him? *how* hasn't anyone else seen him? surely, foolish or puffy would have seen him, would have told you. surely they would.

it feels like all you've been doing lately is making mistakes. you hate this.

"it's okay, it's okay," ranboo murmurs into your hair, and no, it's not okay, but you don't object. he rocks you in his arms, softly shushing your sobs, and your heart feels like the deepest depths of the ocean. you're sinking fast, you're drowning, and you don't know how much longer you can hold your breath, how long until the pressure caves in your skull and forces you to submit.

Chapter End Notes

other ppl: if you saw any typos, no you didn't :heart:

me: if you see any typo or capitalization, i want you to SUPLEX ME

also tysm for all the kind comments!! remember to hydrate and take your meds if you have any. never realized how useful that reminder was until i had my own to take.

shoutout to SwordSoup. mostly bc their fic, Arsonist's Lullaby, sometimes has chapters that are 2~3k and others that are 7~9k, because i feel bad for not writing consistently long chapters and actively seeing others not worry about their word count helps me not to worry. also you should defo read their stuff, it's hella good.

edit: pls why is this chapter so scuffed,, so many typos,,,,,

edit2: just realized 2nd segment is lowkey vague, made some changes to make it obvious that its hannah

somebody's gonna get hurt, hope it's not me

Chapter Summary

tommy come get your fucking dad he's feral

Chapter Notes

chapter title from "black pear tree" by the mountain goats and kaki king

warnings will be in the bottom notes. please make sure to check, this is another dark chapter.

ngl this chapter feels like dogwater- im sorry for the lack of michael and tommy, they'll be back soon :]

ALSO this fic inspired a comic!!!! go check it out, it's so cool!

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CNQRSYYFiiA/?igshid=1g98fqox22as4>

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

okay. this is it. you're gonna do it.

you're gonna try to talk to probably-tommy.

you step into the hallway, lifting your foot to take another step, and freeze. you don't know why, your anxiety just spikes. it's overwhelming, like sludge is rising from your stomach and clogging your airways. so you do the logical thing; you spin on your heel, foot still raised, and step out of that hall with a resounding "nope."

"tommy?" you softly call out into the open hallway. there's a slight echo, but you don't hear anything in reply.

everything tubbo told you makes more sense than you'd like. not that it isn't amazing, knowing that tommy (probably) isn't gone-gone, but the possibility that he's been in your own home (how long had he been dead for? weeks? months? does he stay here all the time? is the one one who's been helping michael practice sign while you and tubbo have been gone?) and apparently overlooking michael is... a weird feeling.

“tommy,” you call again, nervously ringing your hands together. still no reply.

can he even hear you? you're quiet, trying not to wake up michael, but you're in the hallway connected to his room. this is likely the best place to catch the ghost, or at least attempt to talk to him. considering how long it's been, you doubt he'd show himself willingly. tubbo's recounts make both encounters sound like mistakes on his part.

but why is tommy hiding? did you do something while he was alive that left him with a negative opinion of you? does he remember something you don't? what if he doesn't remember something correctly? what if *you're* not remembering something correctly?

the sludge is back. you hadn't even noticed it leave, but it's back, and you swallow a few times in a vain attempt to regain your breath.

(what you don't know is that tommy is right in front of you. he's floating just a few feet in front of you, hands behind his back. he's leaning forwards, squinting his eyes at you. he knew that tubbo would mention him to you eventually, but he didn't expect you this early.

he wants to talk to you. he wants to manifest himself and throw an arm around your shoulder and call you ranboob. he wants to take your face in his hands and thank you for looking over tubbo, for bringing someone like michael into tubbo's life and his own unlife.)

quick, small talk, think of some small talk. you're speaking to yourself, but there's a possibility of someone being there with you, and if they are, you just left them in an awkward silence-

“this weather, huh?”

wow, that was shit. you're shit.

“wow, i'm shit at this,” you echo out loud.

you want to spin on your heel once more and leave. but you don't. because as much as you wish to believe that you're doing this for tubbo, you aren't. tubbo is a factor, without a doubt, but you owe this to yourself, just as much as you owe it to tommy.

so, with a deep breath and a rub of your thumb over your smooth fingertips, you speak.

“you gave up so much for me. when you were held on trial for burning george’s home, it... would have been so easy for you to throw me under the bus. i was a newbie, and no one knew me, and you could have probably gotten away scot-free-”

(no, he wouldn't have. dream would have singled out and villainized the teen eventually, would have burned down his home and destroyed what he loved and locked him up. it's not your fault, but you don't know that, and you can't help but feel that it is.)

“-but you protected me. you... you said that-that the only thing you cared about were those discs, and-” your thoughts grow to a crescendo, much too many and much too loud for you to translate and speak in a way for anyone not in your mind to understand. you take a moment to breathe and collect your thoughts. the sludge doesn't rise.

“i know you were probably talking about tubbo, but you turned in my direction, and you said- you said, ‘well, not everything i care about,’ and i just- i just-”

tommy had told you some of his deepest secrets. from wilbur scaring him even after death, to his fear of the growing rift between himself and tubbo. he had trusted you, once, and you wonder how you let something so... so precious, slip from your grasp.

your eyes are beginning to sting. you reach into your pocket and pull out a neckerchief, pressing it to your eyes to catch the tears, before releasing a shaky sigh.

“listen. i. if you ever need help, or if michael needs help, please don't be afraid to ping me. i know- i know you were probably the one to help michael, that day he came back covered in bandages. thank you so much for helping him.

“but if you- you can- please, don't be afraid to ping tubbo or me. actually, scratch that, just ping me, tubbo would probably throw his communicator- *not in a bad way!* in a good way, like, like he's... you know what i mean. he would probably get distracted or...”

you're talking to an empty hallway. you're totally talking to an empty hallway right now. you just spilt your heart out to a barren hallway.

you think that if tommy was here right now, he'd be laughing at you.

(he's not.)

“well...” you say before clearing your throat, “it was... nice... talking to you? tubbo, he, he feels really bad and wants to apologize, so maybe...”

you don't know what to say after that. you guess you never actually knew what to say to tommy, even when he was alive. you don't know how you managed to say what you did. even when you were his only companion (other than *him*) during exile, when he would tell you of the abuse he suffered but wave it off, citing *him* as his friend, and you'd offer words of comfort, you wonder how much tommy actually took your words to heart.

and then the idea hits you so hard you almost fall over in your excitement.

“book!” blurt out loud, index finger pointed up, and you imagine a little glowing lightbulb above it, “like during ex- during back when- new l'ma- heck, you know what i mean! probably.”

your tail is twirling in happy spirals, and you clap your dual-colored hands together. it feels like a candle-once-drowned has finally been relit.

“i can leave a book for you, here. remember when we would write to each other, tommy?”

the hallway, of course, doesn't answer, as it is only a hallway. undeterred by the lack of response, you spin on your heel, this time with a plan to return instead of running again.

“it's okay if you don't want to show yourself, you don't have to. talk to you soon, tommy.”

you don't remember now, but later on, you'll see an allium. you'll see an allium and it'll remind you of the one you had given tommy when you had first met, the one you had found in the chest where you had kept your loot from george's house. and then your mind will drift to the allium crown michael still holds close to his chest, still healthy despite the slight wilting at the edges of the petals, and you'll decide to plant some allium bushes closer to the house, just so that tommy and michael won't have to go so far out for more of the purple flower.

but that's something for later, so for now, your mind is set on getting a spare book and quill, pointedly not thinking of the grim relations to the dead boy's exile.

you smile down the hallway, casting around your gaze, and hope that if tommy truly was in the hall with you, that he matches your smile.

(he doesn't. but he doesn't frown, either. his lips are a thinly-pursed line, but his ears are perked forward and his tail gently sways in the non-existent wind. an allium is held in his claws, and he's slowly twining the stem around a padded finger, careful of his sharp end. raccoons don't typically sign their emotions through their tails like other animals, but if tommy's tail speeds up just the slightest bit, and his lips eventually upturn just the smallest tick-

"okay, ranboob. talk to you soon."

-that's between him and the void.)

(tubbo greets you silently as you exit the hallway. he's not smiling, and his eyes are still full of guilt and sorrow, but he takes your hand in both of his and gives your knuckles a soft kiss.

"thank you," he mouths to you, and you lightly bonk your horns to his before continuing on your way to your spare books chest, tubbo's and your fingers interlocked. he's pressed to your side, so you end up having to slow down a bit, but it's worth it.

tubbo feels like he belongs at your side, so you'll let him stay there for as long as he'd like and as long as he'd let you hold him there. the only thing missing is tommy on your other side.)

"sam- sam, please--"

everything hurts. your thin jacket does little to stop the harming potion from seeping into your skin. you know you should take it off, all it does is soak up the potion and make it last longer, but you can't. the splashes of lava sam had released seared the material into your back in bloody patches, and you know that if you try to take it off, you'll likely take chunks of skin with it.

the creeper's gas mask sits over his scales and fur, hiding his facial features sans his eyes. you don't want to look into his eyes, though. they're cold and hard, nothing like the green orbs of warmth and softness that they used to hold.

"give me the last book, ponk."

another click from above you and a vial of poison shatters over your head. you fall to your knees, hands bloodied from the glass shards on the floor of the cell, and can't hold back your pained gag against the horrendous pain it causes in your stomach. you scramble to rip off your red and orange ski mask and get it off just in time for your stomach to empty itself out on the floor- not that there's anything *to* empty. all that comes up is bile and blood.

"please," you gasp between pants and poison-induced gags, "i don't, i don't have it, sam, sammy-"

sam slams his fist into the glass barrier, and you jolt back in fear, nearly landing ass-first in a small puddle of lava leftover from the earlier splashes.

"i know how many books were taken, ponk," he says, and his voice is still monotone, and you think that if the nausea hadn't already jerked tears to your eyes, sam's still-monotone voice would have already, "you still have one. *give it to me.*"

"i don't have it!!"

another splash of lava against your back, another choked scream that leaves your throat even rawer. you hug yourself, trying to reach back and smack the lava off. it sears your hands, but it's better than having more of your jacket melted into your skin.

as you gasp for pain on the floor of your cell, sam stands tall, posture still straight and rigid, and part of you want to hate him for this, wants to hate sam for hurting you so much and not showing an ounce of care. another part of you would rather he just tell you he doesn't love you anymore instead of acting like this.

sam takes another breath, audible through his gas mask, and it sounds too much like a disappointed sigh for your heart to handle.

"ponk." sam says.

you don't answer.

“ponk, you know what happens to thieves.”

you don't, actually. most acts of thievery on this server aren't caught, and the only other notable time you stole from sam was when you took sam nook's tridents, from before the plucky android had been built. you had stripped them of their enchantments, and sam had been so disappointed in you. you tried to enchant them again, but your enchantments were garbage compared to the redstone engineers. then you made the woo station for him the next day, and he agreed to be your valentine, and you had been happy.

he doesn't look happy now. his black creeper eyes stare down at you with nothing but cold righteousness, his hand reaching for his sword, and when you shake your head, indicating that no, you indeed don't know what sam apparently does now to thieves, all he does is narrow his eyes at you.

you thought you were out of words, but then your mouth opens and you whisper, “just kill me, it would hurt less.”

faster than your eyes can catch, sam is drawing *warden's will* from its scabbard and slamming it against the glass barrier. it shatters with ease, and you scramble back from sam until your back hits the still-hot dispenser behind you. between the heat of the lava it holds and the burns it's already caused to your back, you arch away from it with a pained cry- right into sam, who had wasted no time in closing the short distance between you.

he grabs your wrist, and for a moment, the touch is soft. that alone makes you want to melt into sam's embrace, grab his dark green sweater and sob into his chest, beg for forgiveness and simply *rest* with the one person you thought you could truly trust.

but then his grip is tightening, so hard that you think the ends of his netherite gauntlet might break skin. you try to jerk away from the creeper, but his grip on your arm is unbreaking, and he raises his sword above his head. you can't look away.

“i didn't want to do this; remember that you brought this upon yourself.”

and then sam's swinging his sword down, and your breath catches in your throat. he's doing it, he's

actually doing it, your sammy is going to kill you and there's nothing you can do about it-

it hurts. it hurts so much. the lava burns and harming potion rashes pale in comparison to sam's sword. it digs into your arm, slicing through muscle and vein like butter, but lodges into the bone just below your elbow. blood splurts out in gushes as sam yanks *warden's will* from your arm, splattering onto both you and sam, and it feels like cotton has filled your head.

'he's doing it, he's doing it,' your mind chants on repeat, and you want to ask sam why, why doesn't he believe you, how could he do this with no remorse, but all that leaves your lips are pained gasps and sobs.

you can see your bone. he cut a major artery. you're going to bleed out, or you're going to have to take an instant healing potion, but those hurt so much. you think you'd rather bleed out in sams arms than live in a world where the pain in your chest (did the poison get into your blood? is that why your heart hurts so much? did sam poison your heart?) drowned out everything else.

sam brings down his sword again and again and again until it messily breaks through your ulna and radius, shards breaking off and falling into the steadily growing puddle of blood and gore beneath you.

the cut is messy. sam's sword doesn't have fire aspect, so the wound is left to gush blood. eventually, after he's done ripping through the remaining muscle and flesh, throwing your arm across the room where it hits the wall with a wet splat, he breaks a health pot over your uneven stump. you watch as the ligament and tissue grow before your very eyes, stretching out and wrapping around the sharp ends of the bone. you grip your stump, unable to look away from your still bleeding arm in the corner of the room.

you don't notice when sam leaves.

the spruce door behind sam opens with a slam and something small and white flies through the air. and then a *fish hook*, of all things, is snagging sams arm and yanking him back, protecting your limb from another swing you hadn't even noticed sam rear back to deal, pulling him away from you with it.

“*stop stop stop- what the fuck, sam, what the actual fuck, what are you- karl said you'd- but, but i didn't want to believe him, you- pa, what the hell-*”

you don't know who interrupted, but you don't pay them any mind, can't, your eyes still locked onto the rapidly bleeding wound and the white of wet bone, but if you were in the right state of mind to take in your surroundings, you would have seen sam nearly drop his sword in shock.

he's quick to right himself, yanking the hook from his sleeve with a yank and hardening his eyes once more.

"he still has a keycard, q," sam says, sounding as though he's trying to calm an unruly child, and quackity's feathers ruffle in both fear and anger.

"no he fucking doesn't!" quackity yells, taking a bold step forward.

it's quiet for a moment before sam matches q's step. "and how would you know that, alex?"

quackity sputters for a moment, tripping over his words, and sam's grip on *warden's will* tightens, knuckles going white.

"alex-"

"are you seriously trying to turn this on me? didja ever thing the fucking eggheads coulda taken it!?" quackity finally yells, and it's in that moment that two sets of footsteps come running near. but he continues yelling at sam, "you literally have two of them as your guards! two people who trapped you in an obsidian box with a fucking huevo demoníaco, y te pudrió los brazos-"

"big q-"

"¿por qué... qué... cómo pensaste que era una buena idea? y luego haces esto!? como pudiste-"

but, of course, you don't hear any of this. your right hand is pressed to the deep cut, fruitlessly trying to press down with what little energy, quickly leaving you, you have left.

radial and ulnar vein, both severed. the brachioradialis is definitely fucked. so is the pronator teres, and the flexor carpi radialis, and the extensor carpi radialis longus might have been nicked as well-

you need to take your bpm. your bloodied hand strays to your left wrist, and you fumble with the sleeve before stopping. considering where the cut is, the neck would probably be easier. you reach up for your neck, but you miss. you accidentally smack your face, and if you weren't so lightheaded and your limbs weren't so heavy, you'd laugh.

someone rests their hand on your shoulder, and you jerk away. "ponk?" the same person asks, and their voice is light and nasally. you think you know who it is, but also you feel like you stuck your head inside a guardian's mouth, so you just blink up at the newcomer. you're greeted with a golden bronze face, bright green eyes, sharp teeth, and gills.

"ponk, hey, can i take a look at your arm, please?" foolish- you think this is foolish- asks, and you stare at him dumbly for a moment, opening and closing your mouth (like a fish out of water, and in your delirious blood loss-induced state, you almost say this out loud. you wonder if foolish would be offended.) before simply nodding once.

and then someone's handing foolish a potion, and wow, isn't that convenient? you look up at the person who handed the guardian (or whatever it is foolish is, you don't think he's ever told you) the health pot, and you see the purple and teal eyesore that is karl jacobs hoodie.

"hey ponk," he says, "this is gonna hurt a bit. do you- do you want something to bite down on?"

you stare at him. he stares back. you raise your good arm and give him a little wave. "hi karl," you mumble, "i'm pretty sure sammy cut like, three arteries."

karl breathes out a little chuckle, smile strained, "yea, i'm pretty sure too. here, bite down on this," he says, and he presses a piece of leather to your mouth. with no energy left to object, you lightly bite down on the leather. and then karl is nodding to foolish, and suddenly your arm is in so much pain that you wish sam had just chopped it off.

you think you scream before the pain knocks you out, karl wrapping his arms around you to hold you still. but, as stated prior, you pass the fuck out, so you wouldn't know either way.

time whispers softly, with

if you weren't a dryad, you'd probably find the unrelentingly sunny day overbearing. as it is, you don't think you've ever felt more energized; it feels like the energy is settling into the l'manburg crater like a pool, and you don't know why, but you don't complain. neither does ghostbur, to him, any weather is better than rain.

puffy, however, hates it. despite ghostbur once again offering to make her a braid when you all had met up mid-morning, even putting it into a bun, she's still sweating buckets under her fur, despite her light clothes and sunhat.

the first thing you tackle is the bloodvines, starting from the edges and moving in towards the infested flag. it's not too hard to slice away at the edges and hand the scraps to ghostbur to burn, which he does, at first.

"...these vines are incredibly rude," ghostbur says, and you look at him in confusion. you know sam and puffy mentioned hearing it speak, telling you that others such as ponk and tubbo have heard it before, but you had summed it up to horror-induced adrenaline making them hear stuff, or misinterpreting someone's voice.

"really?" you ask him, ripping another chunk of the red vines from the ground. you can feel your own rose vines quiver in disgust at you touching the bloodvines, even with protective gloves on, at puffy's insistence. "what're they saying?"

he's quiet after that. his face is blank like he's so focused on something that anything outside of his head just isn't as important. you see puffy stop from the corner of your eye, looking at ghostbur in concern.

"bad things. very, very bad things," he whispers. puffy gets him his own protective gloves after that.

it's not a few hours later, until you're nearing the center of the crater, that something happens.

the bloodvines start to move. nothing extreme, just a shiver or twitch here and there, sometimes even a jerk when you or puffy slice your hoes through them, but it's unnerving. as ghostbur carries them to the small blue campfire puffy had set up, he needs to shake the vines off, little veins

spreading from the cuts and trying to wrap around his fingers. the orca simply sticks his blue tongue out at the vines, ripping them from his hands with more vigor.

and then someone speaks and breaks your companionable silence, and it's like the vines burst to life.

“what do you think you're doing!?” you hear someone hiss, and a large bloodvine- branching out far, far past where you and puffy had cleared, *you didn't think it went that deep*, rips from the ground and shoots for your trio's ghost.

you turn to look at the new arrival- ghostbur will be fine, he can phase through the vines with ease- and grimace when you see badboyhalo, dressed in full netherite armor with his trident in one hand and sword in the other. he's sat on one of the rocks jutting from the craters jagged walls, wings pulled close to his body and tail lashing with barely contained rage.

puffy is quick to pull her own sword, and you hear her curse both yours and her own lack of armor.

“uh- guys?” ghostbur calls, sounding muffled, but you don't turn your back on bad to check on the ghost.

when in doubt, play innocent. “we're just doing a little weed whacking? would you like to join us, we're planning on building a community-”

“no.” bad says, and your jaw snaps shut.

“what do you want, bad?” puffy says, sword still raised, but bad doesn't pay her any mind. his eyes stay glued to you, and you can feel your vines rising to the surface, ready to pierce.

“i just wanted to invite my friend hannah to come visit the egg, but...” he says with a sneer on his face, and despite your growing anxiety, you match his sneer with a smile. puffy grimaces from her spot, inching in front of you as a form of protection between you and the demonic infected.

you make a show of thinking about it, before answering bad's question with his earlier answer, and clipped and resounding “no.”

as curious as you are, you've seen what the egg had done to sam. you've seen what it's tried to do to puffy, to tommy, to ranboo, to tubbo- the list goes on. ponk would have likely been infected had sam not broken him out of their obsidian cages, despite how much the doctor had been trying to play double agent.

bad's scowl grows, and he stands from his seat.

"okay," he says, and after a moment of glancing between you and puffy and ghostbur, (you assume he's looking at ghostbur, surely the ghost, no matter how naive, would mention another infected approaching,) he smiles.

"hey, uh, hannah? puffy?" ghostbur says, sounding further off and more nervous (scared, he sounds scared, what could possibly scare a ghost?) and you see puffy quickly glance behind her. her eyes shoot open and she rushes towards ghostbur with a panicked shout of his name.

your heart jumps into your throat, and at the captain's reaction, you spin on your heel. you only see ghostbur for a moment- there are two vines wrapped around him, one around his neck and one around his wrist- he's not phasing through them, why isn't he phasing through them- and then he's plunged into the soul fire pit, dragged in and held down by the rapidly-shriveling vines.

ghostbur *screams*. it's visceral and full of agony, and if he was alive, you think it would tear his throat to shreds. it freezes you where you stand, but puffy is quick to exchange her sword for her hoe and sever the bloodvines holding him in the fire, and ghostbur falls to the ground beside the pit. his legs and tail are still in the fire, and he scrabbles at the dirt and gravel in an attempt to pull himself away, blue tears staining his face and bangs and the earth beneath him.

puffy tries to pull him from the fire, but he's not corporeal enough to be touched. he manages to slowly drag himself from the fire, still sobbing, and you're *still* frozen, and bad is laughing behind you, and you can't hear much besides the roaring in your ears and cries from ghostbur and anger from your vines-

you feel when bad glides to the ground, his hooved feet gently landing on the uneven terrain, and you turn on him with nothing but retribution on your mind.

he's smiling at you. ghostbur is writing on the ground, getting incinerated, and bad is *smiling*.

you raise your hand, and a rose vine shoots from the ground, straight for bad's throat. he's quick to

slice it down with his sword, and you wince at the tingling feeling that echoes down your roses.

“it’ll be fine,” bad says, voice soft as if consoling a child throwing a tantrum, and you bristle. “it’s a ghost. it’s not real, it can’t actually feel anything. the egg knows what’s best, hannah-”

you raise your other hand and another vine shoots towards the demon, this time at his legs. bad barely reacts, simply raising a hooved foot high and stomping the vine to the ground, heedless of the thorns that you can feel digging into his sole, and stabbing his trident down on it, pinning the writhing vine to the ground.

when he speaks up again, he sounds like a disappointed parent, smile replaced by a soft frown, and you hate how bad it makes you feel. “the egg wanted you, hannah, but...” he pauses and shakes his head, “it’s too late now, i guess.”

and then another bloodvine shoots from the ground, faster than you can react, and slashes across your face.

you’re on the ground in seconds. you can hear puffy shout your name, but all you’re focused on is the warm wetness covering your face. you press your hands to your eyes, and *holy shit* does it hurt, what the fuck, what the fuck happened-

a hand lands on your shoulder, and you jerk back in fear.

“hey, hey! it’s okay,” a new voice says in your ear, deep and calming, and you find yourself relaxing immediately. they scoop you into their arms, talking in an attempt to distract you. “my name is eret. a friend told me you might need help, so i came as fast as i could. have you met sam nook? quite the charming fellow,”

you hear a chittering sound that’s followed by the distinct clang of prismatic-against-prismatic, and your head shoots up.

“ghostbur- puffy-” you struggle to say, a metallic taste entering your mouth, and you try to spit out the blood (what else could it be?) without spitting on this eret person. and that’s when you remember that puffy is literally a knight, and that eret is the one she works under, meaning that the king of the esempii currently holding you in his arms.

“no-no, none of that, it’s okay, it’s okay,” the king soothes, “sam nook is helping them. is it alright if i wrap a bandage around your face? it’s... bleeding, quite heavily.”

you give them a shaky nod, and a cloth is placed over your face- specifically, your eyes. eret picks you up in her arms and carries you away from the fighting, and you attempt to object before realizing that hey, you’re bleeding a lot, and it feels like it’s not showing signs of slowing down. your skin not yet slick from the blood feels cold and clammy, your stomach is curdling, and you can barely lift your arms.

“i think i’m bleeding out,” you say into eret’s neck.

“w-wait, don’t close your eyes-”

you pass out.

somewhere else, karl sits beside an unconscious and heavily bandaged ponk residing in eret’s castle. the king had been kind enough to offer his castle to you for when you needed it, and you readily took her up on the offer.

q and sam’s argument can be heard even through the castle walls, and you can’t help but cringe in anticipation. sam had looked ready to gut you when you had entered his little torture chamber behind quackity. he likely thinks you have the missing keycard he was interrogating ponk for. and if he was willing to do this to his boyfriend, (ex-boyfriend?) you don’t want to know what he’d do to you.

foolish rests a hand on your shoulder in silent reassurance, and you shoot the totem god a small smile. despite your companion trying to lighten your mood, you can’t help but fidget, rubbing your fingers together and rapidly tapping your foot.

you know you can’t get away with this. you can’t keep saving people, because eventually it’s going to blow up in your face, and it’s gonna hurt *bad*.

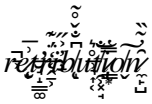
and then eret bursts into the infirmary, covered in blood with a limp hannah in his arms. foolish shoots up from his seat, knocking it to the floor, and rushes to get the necessary medical supplies.

thank god he's here, because other than foolish, the only people with sufficient medical knowledge are currently either possessed, passed out from a combination of blood loss and shock, or literally dead.

but you're just... frozen. this definitely didn't happen last time. hannah never had any large scar across her face, never had a wound this bad up until those last moments.

something in your chest tells you that this is your fault. that same feeling that came about around that white-furred ranboo, the same feeling that nags at your chest during your short bouts within the inbetween.

is this



for your actions?

you never considered that the backlash would affect others instead of yourself.

“what the fuck?” you whisper, voice strained and choked, as eret and foolish rush to stabilize hannah.

Chapter End Notes

pretty much the entirety of ponk's segment is Not Very Pleasant. starts at "sam- sam, please-" and ends at "you think you scream before the pain knocks you out,"

also, injury warnings, starting at "your heart jumps into your throat," ending at "you feel when bad glides to the ground," as well as "and then another bloodvine shoots from the ground," ending at "a hand lands on your shoulder,"

lmk if i should expand on that second warning- it should be fine tho?? also pls lmk if any other warnings should be added!

ponk didn't actually have the last keycard in this, fun fact. he was telling the truth! awesamdad will be back, i just kinda wrote myself into a corner here- i don't want to make him an antagonist (although i think he was already heading that route with karl,) but he will come back around, eventually!

thanks again for reading, drink your fucking water, this is a threat

edit: ALSO PLEASE EXCUSE MY GOOGLE TRANSLATE SPANISH PLS IM;;

edit2: would you guys wanna see some little doodled of tommy i drew. + a michael

edit again: aha orca wilbur pog,,?

and now I am somewhere to safety, and its awkward

Chapter Summary

'that's fate, i pray- i pray for paranoia to go away'

Chapter Notes

chapter title from "go away paranoia" by jane reynolds/virtual bird

thanks for waiting! and for all the kind comments on the note, they really all meant a lot to me.

my migraines are a problem that's linked to how far above sea level i am- don't ask why, i don't know either- and im currently staying somewhere only 15ft above sea level, so i can't guarantee this won't happen again, and time between chapters might get a little bit longer, but;; yea

no warnings, as far as im aware, so please enjoy!

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

the overworld water clouds scare you. bee and boo tell you that it's okay, that they won't hurt your lungs, but part of you doesn't believe them.

this is the warmest it's ever been in 'ssno-chess-terr,' according to bee; instead of frozen water flowy falling from the sky like ash, it's taken a form called 'mist.' it's dark out, and the mist prevents you from seeing too far out. you can't even see the flowers that boo had planted from here.

you know it's not safe, but gazing out your high-up windows, (you had to stack tons of books to be able to reach it,) you're filled with an undeniable wanderlust. it takes you a couple tries to sneak out. the overworld is much more quiet than the nether, no lava column nor smacks of ghastrs to drown out all smaller noises.

it caused quite an issue in the beginning. you were wary of waking bee and boo on days that you couldn't sleep. the overworld cycle is weird, following a mini-nether that's so far away, it doesn't even look like a nether. how does that even work? what would the outside of the nether even look like? you wouldn't think such a thing could exist if you hadn't seen a portal made right before your eyes and then subsequently lead into another realm.

back home, the best way to tell the cycle had been through the mushrooms; their color within that moment, combined with how far they crawl up the trees. normal cycles are nearly triple the length of an overworld cycle, so you can't use any overworld plants or fungi to tell (except 'sun-flowers', a plant boo told you about, but none grow near your new home) like you would with the nether's mushrooms.

it's dark out, but you can't tell if that's because the water clouds are blocking out the mini-nether or if the mini-nether is asleep right now. or maybe the overworld actually does have a roof, and the mini-nether is hiding behind it. you think you understand- being so bright must get you a lot of attention, the mini-nether is understandably shy. but it's still dark, and you can still barely see.

but you're a big boy! so after learning of all the creaks within the cabin ("we're getting a mansion soon!" bee had exclaimed, and you don't know what that is, but bee and boo are both excited, so you're excited too.) it wasn't hard to make your way outside.

it's warmer than usual but still cold overall. you think the overworld is just colder than the nether in general, so you got to get used to it eventually. the mist almost makes you feel dirty, clinging to your fur and weighing you down, and you're almost tempted to turn back around and return to bed. almost.

you don't know if you'll ever get used to the way it feels, but you do your best to ignore it as your run through the snow. you've yet to try it with jam bee makes, but boo tells you that you'll enjoy it.

surely the overworld isn't too big. it wasn't too hard to not get lost in the nether, just stick to a netherrack wall and hug it. but you're pretty sure there isn't any naturally netherrack in the overworld, the trees are much thicker and taller and harder to see past, and the nearest wall you see is so high and far away, you think it would take you ages to reach it.

then you remember pathways. things that overworld visitors would come and build out of not-basalt and the same purple rock used to make their portals, things that would lead them to their destination instead of sticking close to the netherrack overhangs. so you look for a pathway, and it's not hard to find one.

there's one big pathway connecting your new home to other homes, a brown lined with deep green (lighter than the rotting flesh of you and your zombified kin, but darker than the wood and leaves of your realms forests) that's quickly covered by white. to the right, leads to the other homes, and the building that bee said to stay away from. to the left, leads into the overworld forest.

you head left.

the trees are taller than any you've seen in the nether. the trunk is thicker, rather than vines and blue mushrooms growing up the sides, they've got soft green stuff and the occasional brown mushroom.

you aren't sure how long you walk for. you think you stick to the path, but if you're being honest with yourself, you don't quite care. little balls of yellow light are floating around in the mist and casting a soft glow over the area, and you can't help but chase after them. they swerve around your grasping hands, dancing out of touch before floating back, and you giggle as you play with them.

how can such small creatures show so much personality? a few land on your shoulders and snout, and when you go cross-eyed you can focus on them. they look like tiny... things, with frail membranes and antennae.

and then you go to touch one, and its glow goes out under your finger. the ones sitting on you startle away, and you look after them with a confused chirp before returning your attention to the light that had gone out beneath your touch.

the little thing is crushed. its wings are bent, legs broke, and it's twitching weakly in your finger. an odd feeling fills your chest, and you feel a distressed chuff build in your throat.

did you do this? did you hurt this pretty light?

and then someone is kneeling in front of you, a hand on your shoulder, and speaking before you even have a chance to look up. they chuff back at you in an attempt at reassurance before speaking in the overworld tongue.

"hey, you're okay. it's alright. what's... what's wrong, little man?"

you look up expecting to see a piglin- you've never met another species that could chuff like yours- but instead, all you see is red. a grey overworld dweller, covered in red, dripping onto the ground. it's blood.

you know you should make sure they're okay, but you can't help the petrified squeal that leaves your snout. you fling yourself backward, dead friend forgotten, and stare up at the person in front of you.

they had flinched back at your initial reaction, arms raised as though to protest their chest, but when you look into their eyes- eye, they only have one (are they like you?)- you see a flash of fear and confusion.

“zombie!?” you blurt out in piglin, and they tilt their head in what you assume is confusion. you aren't surprised, you've yet to meet anyone from this realm who speaks piglin.

“oh,” they breathe out, before their entire silhouette shifts and the blood is gone. while that alone was weird to look at, you now notice other things; for starters, their other eye is back, they have fluffy ears like yours (but short and standing up, rather than long and floppy like yours or bee's) and an incredibly fluffy-looking tail. “sorry about that, bud-”

they move forward slowly, reaching a hand out to likely help you up, but then their head and ears snap up, tail freezing from where it was gently swaying, looking at something over your head. you follow their gaze, and- oh, looks like you weren't as sneaky as you thought.

bee is running towards you, both a scared and relieved look on his face, and you begin to stand up to meet him halfway. when you look back towards (your new friend?) the stranger who had heard your chuffs and responded, they're gone.

you go out to that spot every day. after a few fruitless visits, your new friend appears again.

He absentmindedly lifts a hand in greeting, giving you a lackluster “ayup,” before doing a double-take.

“you again? what's a tiny thing like you doin' out here by yourself?”

'home.'

“snowchester's your home?”

'yes.'

“how do you keep getting out here?”

‘legs.’

“okay, smartass-”

and then you visit again. then again, and then again. bee and boo keep having to come grab you, much to your new friend’s amusement.

one day, while your friend is twining a small purple flower through their claws (you sneak out there so often that instead of attempting to bring you back, bee had eventually caved and made the path more open and safe, while boo had planted some flowers there.) you ask them about meeting bee and boo.

well, you less ask, and more so demand ‘come back with me,’ and then it occurs to you that you’ve yet to give them your name, so you tack on ‘my name is michael,’

you take their hand in yours to pull them forward, but pause. they’re very... tingly. your pause at this foreign feeling is distracting enough that you miss what your new friend says.

“...mmy.”

“hmm?” you tilt your head up at them, and they feign annoyance (you can see them try to hide their smile) at your lapse in attention.

“my name, litt- big man, you got cotton in your ears or somethin’?”

“mimi,” you say, nodding, and continue to pull mimi along. mimi floats like a ghost behind you, maybe they’re (he’s? ze’s? she’s? overworld ‘pro-nuns’ are confusing, but you’ll ask later.) a hybrid? nether-the-less, [lmao] you continue to pull them along.

mimi sputters, but doesn’t resist your tugging. “what? no, no i’m-”

“mimi.”

“...that’s not-”

“mimi.”

“...alright, mimi it is.”

and then you bring mimi home. he’s shy, and he vanishes when bee and boo come by, but he sneaks you sweets and teaches you new words (“don’t repeat this in front of your fathers, they’ll extra kill me-” whatever that means.) and brings you flowers. sometimes he doesn’t vanish, he just dims a bit, but that seems to do the trick as well. you like it better when he does this because he doesn’t leave you.

whenever he’s not with you, he’s hanging out with the cows or staying by the seeds that boo had planted.

“i’m making sure they grow big and strong,” mimi tells you one day. you hadn’t been able to find him around the cottage or the cows the big building that foosh comes to build, so you knew he would be at the seedlings. “ranboob put them under too much shade. you’d think someone with as much flower knowledge as him would know better, huh?” you don’t know what that means, but you nod. mimi continues to encourage the baby flowers, brushing his claws through the cold dirt as though petting someone’s fur and whispering sweet nothings. sometimes you bring him eggshells to feed the babies, a trick you overheard bee mention, and he gives you an ever-softening smile each time.

and that’s where you find him now. the alliums are fully grown and in bloom, despite all of mimi’s complaints about their placements. he’s sat next to the bush, gently dragging his claws through the dirt underneath the low-hanging leaves. a leatherbound book rests next to him, a freshly picked allium, resting between the strips that hold the book closed.

“mimi,” you whisper. his head snaps up, eyes looking you over before giving the surrounding area a scan. not finding whatever he was looking for, he turns his gaze back to you, a soft smile crinkling the edges of his dark-furred mask.

“hey bubba,” he says, and he pats the ground in front of him, crossing his legs. you trot over and plop down onto him without a second thought, used to the almost-beanbag-esque feeling. his

hands, now free of claws and looking more like q's or ponk's, gently brush over your bandages. boo says you're mostly better, and that it's more of a precaution, but mimi still worries.

you're not facing the shifter so you can't see him, but you can feel his guilt as he looks over your bandages and new scars. no matter how often you try to reassure him that he has nothing to feel guilty over, he never listens. he doesn't tell you, but you know he blames himself for not finding you quicker. you ask him where he had been in the first place, but he's never able to answer you.

operation 'distract mimi' is a go.

'book?' you sign towards said object, and mimi picks it up in his once-again clawed hands, careful not to scratch the leather.

he hesitates a moment before answering, "boo left it for me. to write in, like we used to. i still don't know what to write to him, though. i don't think i ever did."

you immediately forget about your operation, leaning back and looking up at mimi with sparkling eyes.

'you knew boo?'

a chuckle, "that's what you pick up from that? yea, i used to know your daddy. papa, too."

'past?'

"yea, i guess you could say that. your dads, mikey, they're very kind people. too kind for me. i know... i know that bee has been prickly lately, but he really wants to apologize."

'bee is right.'

"i don't know exactly what he said, but i can bet you *nightmare* that he didn't mean what he said. not that that excuses his actions, because it doesn't, and feeling this way is hella valid big man-but- hmm." he covers his mouth, elbows resting on his knees and making a mini alcove over you. "he says things. when he's upset. it's not your fault baby, i promise."

when you don't answer, mimi picks some alliums from the bush and starts to weave them together; another flower crown.

“if it helps, we can- there's this thing i do- did- i'd like, compile food. i know you already kinda do that with your gapples, but like... all foods. i could get you bread, and steak, and more gapples, and we could make a little pack and hide it. so that if you're uncomfy, you won't have to leave your room for food, or if you need to leave in a rush, you won't have to worry about going hungry.

“i used to have a pack- multiple, actually- maybe we could take a day to go grab one of them? it'll- no wait you're just a baby, we can't go through the highway...”

'not baby!'

“right right, sorry, big man. maybe i can ask ranboo...”

mimi suddenly has his hands under your arm, the nearly finished crown left forgotten on the ground beside you, and lifts you off his lap before plopping you down next to it. you turn back to him with your arms raised, ready to question him, but he's looking past you. you go to grab his fingers, but your hand slides right through. he's gone extra-fuzzy again.

and then you hear footsteps, and face forward. bee is there, and his eyes flicker between the disturbed grass behind you and the almost-completed crown to your right. and then he's looking at you, and mimi is looking at him, and you wish you didn't have eyes so that you wouldn't have to be in this situation right now. except that's not true, because you've lost your eye before, and you wouldn't recommend it. so.

“michael,” he says, using your full name, and you get up to leave without even thinking. your chest feels weird, feels bad, and you don't like that, and both mimi and bee and boo told you to leave when you don't like that, so that's exactly what you do. you're short and your legs aren't that long so you aren't very fast, but-

mimi solidifies just enough to grab the back of your sweater. you stumble as his grip stays strong, holding you up when you almost fall, and he rights you with a small 'sorry,' ignoring your betrayed look when you turn back to look at him. you see bee startle when you almost fall back from nothing, and startle more when mimi catches you.

“are you-” bee begins, but you ignore him to turn on mimi with an angry huff.

‘why?’ you sign, quite aggressively, stomping a hoof in frustration.

‘talk with your father.’ mimi signs back.

‘no.’

‘yes.’

‘fuck off.’

“why you little-”

“um-”

mimi nudges you again, physically turning you towards bee, and in one act of defiance, you turn your gaze to the snowy ground. mimi puts a hand on your shoulder, probably to keep you from running again. bee continues walking up, stopping in front of you, but you don’t meet his eyes.

“mikey,” bee asks after the solid minute of silence, “can i hug you?”

huh.

you want to say no. you want to say no and run back to the house and find clementine and beloved (the squirrel and chicken get along like a trash fire. that is to say; not very much.) and stay in your room until boo or mimi tuck you in. you don’t want to stick around and wait for bee to say more nasty things, no matter how truthful.

but. you miss him. he hurt you, but you miss him so much. your eyes start to sting, and you want to turn around and bury yourself into mimi’s tail or wings- he’d take them out if you ask, but you don’t ask often- but you know how much energy it takes for mimi to truly be there with you.

you want to say no. but you nod, and you put your arms out, and bee is cradling you close to his chest in moments, brushing his hands through the fur on your head and holding you tight. you grip him back just as tightly, burying your head into his chest.

“mikey,” bee says again, voice choked, “i am so, *so* sorry.”

and then you’re sobbing, loud and messy, and you try to quiet down because bee told you to stop talking, but instead, he says “it’s okay, it’s okay, you’re allowed to cry. it’s okay. you do not, will not, and will *never* need permission to speak or show your emotions.”

you don’t know how much time you spent in bee’s arms. as much as you wish this would, you know this won’t undo everything. bee will definitely want to talk about this later, when you aren’t at risk of ‘dehydration,’ as if that hadn’t been your base state of living in your old home. you aren’t sure if your throat will take kindly to your over-a-week long silence, but you know this is a step in the right direction.

when your tears finally dry (you use your own long ears to pap the fur under your eyes and on your cheeks, much to both bee and mimi’s amusement) and you make grabby-hands for bee, a silent demand to be picked up, he obliges with a smile and a kiss to the top of your head. you know he’ll want to talk more later. he turns to return home, and you’re content to rest in your papa’s arms before remembering mimi’s book.

you pap his shoulder to get his attention before signing ‘papa, mimi left book.’

“oh?” bee says, turning around, and lo and behold, the book that boo had left for mimi remains; mimi himself is gone, to little surprise.

‘boo left book for mimi. mimi shy. doesn’t know what to write.’ papai had always been on the flightier side, ever since you met him, but he’s always been good at bringing his stuff with him.

“oh.” bee repeats, and he stares at the book until you make grabby hands for it. he picks it up, careful of the allium tucked between the leather flaps, and hands it to you. “why don’t you return the book to t- mimi later? i’m sure he’d appreciate it a bunch.”

you nod. you’d think that would be that, but bee stands there for a moment longer. his gaze wanders over the little garden, but instead of looking with suspicion and distrust, his eyes hold

fondness and guilt. you leave him be, content to wait. after another minute more, he pats your head, thanks you for waiting, and brings you home.

Chapter End Notes

JUST REALIZED I LEFT MY OWN LITTLE [lmao] IN THERE BUT IM LEAVING IT AND NO ONE CAN STOP ME (unless its annoying, if it is pls lmk and ill thanos snap it)

THAT APOLOGY WILL NOT BE IT. its COLD, and michael is SMALL, and CRYING. give the baby water!! but, yea, that's not the end of that apology. its not gonna be some small cope-out like that. :]

as usual, if you saw any typos please suplex me. don't be shy, do it. also @ those comments that said to treat myself, i got my nose pierced :] i used to have a stud and a naval, lost them for Reasons, and i went in for a septum but they weren't doing those at the time, so. shrug emogi. thinkin bout doing a little attached fic for deleted scenes and what-ifs though. this fic really has gone off track from what i initially planned.

go hydrate!! eat some bread!! take your meds!!!! wash your face too if you want, it helps a surprising amount

i also. just remembered. 'pai' (what michael refers to tommy as) is like, an endearing name to call your father in portuguese, and yes, michael starts seeing tommy as a friend, then a dad. i should probably change the fic summary, but i'm not. maybe. probably not. for ease- tubbo=papa, ranboo=daddy, tommy=pai (PApai)

i could even learn how to love

Chapter Summary

tommy: GRGHRGHRKGRHRGHRHHGHRHH
michael: [forehead bonk]
tommy: [kimi no toriko-]

Chapter Notes

sorry for the wait, yall. i don't really have much to say rn, but i hope y'all's days are going well. mikey wrote tommy's letter, which is very pog, you should go read his stuff like, rn. unless you came from him, which is even more pog, because it means your subbed to him and his writing is so fuckin good and its what he deserves

no warnings as far as im aware, but pls lmk if i should add anything!

chapter title from 'love like you' by rebecca sugar

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

you brush your hand over the book, fingers lingering on the allium tucked within the folds. small nail indents are visible on the back, as though it was gripped too hard. there were other flowers too, bound together and left with a note saying that he won't be able to keep them as fresh as he does the alliums. 'he' being tommy.

he left a flower for you both. for you, he left an agrimony and a white orchid. for tubbo, a purple hyacinth. you'll have to ask niki what they mean, next time you see her.

michael is sound asleep, curled up into a little ball next to you, pressed into your hip with his head on your lap. your own legs are folded beneath you. you absentmindedly card a hand through his fur and it's nearly impossible to hold back a coo when he snuffles in his sleep and presses himself closer to you.

it's quiet. the tv is off, and the lights are dim, and you find your head is completely empty. you think you would have lost time if it wasn't for the feel of michael's fur under one hand and the book's soft leather under the other.

you read tommy's letter. you can tell he tried to keep things light despite the not-so-light topics, and he even managed to get a chuckle out of you once or twice. he clearly tried his best to scribble

out certain bits, but it's still mostly legible, despite the chicken-scratch handwriting. but you're pretty sure tommy has- had- *gosh this is confusing*- dysgraphia, so you try not to pay it much mind.

you must have zoned out for longer than you thought because suddenly tubbo is pressed up against your other side. you startle at the sudden presence, and he mumbles a soft 'sorry,' pressing his face into your shoulder. and then he just breathes. you lift your black-furred hand to cart it through his hair, careful of his horns, and you sit in silence.

this is your family. your cluster. it's kind of strained right now, and you've yet to drag home your last boy, but this is home. you remember when tommy had first shifted into an enderman form, baring thin but tall horns, limbs just the slightest bit elongated and tail thin and whip-like. his horns had been of equal length though, unlike your shorter white horn. your full-enderman hindbrain had immediately claimed him as part of your cluster, dubbing him a runt despite his above human average height, and you're so glad you hadn't voiced this as the younger would have likely tried to stab you.

tubbo's hand reaches for tommy's book, but lingers before contact. "has he..."

"yea."

"ah."

you don't know if this is just supposed to be between you and tommy. like during his exile. but he didn't tell you not to, and you think tubbo could get some good out of seeing this.

"he left you a flower. uh, a hyacinth. would you... wanna read his letter?"

tubbo pauses at that. you wish you could see his face from this angle. and then he snorts and turns to you, eyes watery but smiling wide. "a flower? i thought big man tommyinnit said he'd never touch flowers, willingly."

"he did, huh?" you laugh quietly, trying not to wake michael, "wasn't he the flower boy at fundy and dream's scuffed wedding? he showered ponk and george in cobble and daisies."

tubbo doesn't laugh at that. and then you remember that you mentioned *him*, and you hadn't even noticed. your throat feels like it's trying to close up, and you struggle to swallow past it.

“sorry, sorry-” distraction, distract him, now- “do you- you didn’t answer, uh, do you wanna read the letter? sorry if you- if i’m pushing and you not answering was a no, i just w-”

he snorts, and you feel the building anxiety ease the slightest bit. “ranboo, i can’t read.”

oh... oh, “oh.” oh, gosh-

“it’s okay, it’s okay, i can see you blue-screening from here. i was just poking fun.”

you reach up and fiddle with the ring around your horn. it’s silent for a moment, both of you waiting for the other to speak.

“could you read it for me? please.” tubbo breaks the silence. he’s looking forward again, simply staring at the wall, and after a moment’s hesitation, you open the book to the first page and read.

dear ranboob mr. _beloved ranboo

DEAR FUCK FACE,

that was rude, i apologize, but i didn't know how else to start this... i don't really know how to talk to you in general, if i'm being honest. you're not intimidating per se, but something about you just makes me feel like i can't say anything right. not in like, a weird way, though. you're just kinda hard to talk to.

i'm sorry for causing so much trouble for you guys these days. i really don't mean to, i'm just trying to help michael. i guess a part of me is doing it for some kind of selfish reason, to stay closer to my best friend even in death. tubbo did say i was selfish, didn't he? guess he was right. ~~he hates me now, doesn't he?~~ i wouldn't be surprised.

you hesitate at the last sentence, but read it anyways. tubbo makes a choked noise, but when you put the book down to comfort him, he waves you away. “keep going, keep going...”

you ought to get better with planting flowers, by the way. my ghost won't always be around to make sure your poor placement still goes well. less shade, sir boo b , less shade. onions were starving out there.

you can't help but chuckle again, reading that. tubbo stay's silent.

to get to the point now, i need your help with something.

well, not really me, but michael. you see, he's not too keen on leaving his room these days and he isn't planning on going too far out into the woods after what happened last time, but we've made a plan. i have some stashes of food, good food that'll keep you full for days, and i was thinking you could get him one of those packs. i've got them hidden all around the server for if i ever felt like i needed to leave on short notice, due to some life-threatening scenario i was just too tired to deal with. you know how it is. ~~when i really stop to think about that, it sounds terrible. what a shame we have to fear for our lives so young, wouldn't you say?~~

the closest one to snowchester is probably in my old house l'manburg embassy home base. it's tucked away somewhere underneath all my chests in a small hole. once you figure out what i'm talking about you'll understand. try not to get lost down there.

if you wouldn't mind getting it quickly, i'm sure michael would really appreciate it. and thank you. for taking care of tubbo. i really appreciate it.

*until we speak again, your friend in arms and tragedy, what a fucking wilbur thing to say-
big man tommy "trusty careful danger kraken" lmao- ~~soot~~-innit*

you turn to tubbo. he has a hand over his eyes, but he chuckles at how tommy signed off.

“yea, that's- i still. i still didn't want to believe it, but that's tommy. I...”

“he has quite a few middle and last names,” you chuckle, and tubbo softly laughs at that.

“yea, i almost forgot about the ‘lmao’ bit. he got it from rudy, his brother. phil never actually

adopted him, so. i don't think tommy would appreciate me going on about his scuffed family tree, though..."

"it's technically your family tree too, right? you *are* like brothers, after all."

"you're my husband, you're technically part of it too- but don't say that, i will cr- er. bleugh."

"wh-" you turn to him again, raising an eyebrow at his off-put expression, "what was that?"

he turns to you, and, oh, there's grief in there, too. you shouldn't be surprised, given the topic. but he simply shakes his head at you, and that's that. you put the book down, and tubbo reaches over to gently pluck the allium from the binds.

when tubbo speaks again, his voice is nearly a whisper. "you know, i don't think tommy had even touched this kinda flower before you gave him one."

"he kept it, you know." you blurt out the first thing that comes to mind, and tubbo hums in question so you continue, "when i first met him, i gave him an allium, just like this one. he kept it."

"oh."

"yea."

then, again, it's silent. tubbo leans across you to pet michael, and you drape your arm around him. you're still missing a member of your cluster, your scatter, and you aren't sure if you can ever get him back in a way that truly matters, but for now, you are content.

until someone starts pounding on your front door.

tubbo is up in a flash, hands reaching for an axe that's not there. michael startles awake, blinking up at tubbo in confusion before sleepily rubbing his eyes with his ears, and you'd coo at that in a normal situation. as it is, you gently move michael from your lap before jumping up to tubbo's side.

whoever's knocking is relentless, almost desperate-sounding. tubbo glances at you, a silent *what do we do?* before you square your shoulders and go to answer the door. when the door swings open, you immediately have to duck back to avoid getting hit in the chest.

you hiss and vwoop-scream at the intruder, and you *really* hope tubbo grabbed michael and maybe a weapon, because you are not equipped for a fight right now-

“hey hey hey my bad! my bad, i'm sorry- sorry, i was in a rush, i didn't mean to-”

karl stumbles back at your vwoop scream, raising his hands as though an enderman's claws can't tear through flesh like butter. and then you notice how bad he looks; his sweater has a multitude of bloodstains, twigs are in his hair, and he looks to be covered in dirt.

“karl- what- i'm sorry, are, are you okay? why are you covered in-”

“not my blood!” karl interrupts with a nervous giggle and a little-too-wide smile, like that's supposed to be reassuring, and your emotions must be showing on your face because his smile is quick to drop. “can i come in?”

“i... sure. yea, sure, come on in, i guess.”

you open the door wider, and karl is quick to slip past you. that's when you notice he's shivering, and if it weren't freezing cold outside, you'd think it's possibly due to adrenaline or shock.

and then tubbo comes out of nowhere, (literally, he used a pearl) and *bane o' bees* is swinging towards karl's neck. you jolt forward to grab him, trying to pull him from tubbo's swing, but then he just. steps out of the way. he steps out of the way with a small yawn, and if it weren't for tubbo going for another swing- one that karl avoids again, this time due both to him moving and you yanking him back by the hood- you'd probably frozen in shock at the effortless dodge.

“tubbo! tubbo stop, it's okay!”

“but i heard you vwoop, loudly, you vwooped-” tubbo nearly shouts in his panic, axe raised to swing down for another blow, but stays there, ready. karl rubs the back of his neck with another

nervous giggle, and that's when tubbo's eyes, that you hadn't even noticed were unfocused, how could you miss that- finally focus on karl.

“hi! hello. hi. sorry for the late visit.”

tubbo cocks his head at karl, eyes flickering between him, and then you, and then karl again, and then his sweater, and then finally back up to karl. his axe slowly drops, blade hitting the floor with a light thump, fingers still curled around the handle.

“why are you covered in blood?”

“not mine.”

“that doesn't-”

“listen,” karl interrupts, and he looks past tubbo. you follow his gaze, and you see michael peering out from one of the hallways, gripping the sill and watching karl with a calm gaze. karl lights up at the toddler piglin's entrance. “michael! just the lad i wanted to see!”

tubbo's fingers clench around the handle of his axe, and you're tempted to just grab michael and teleport out of there.

“what do you want with michael? you still haven't answered-”

karl strides towards your son, and when you reach out to grab his hood once more, he dodges, *again*, prime that's annoying- he slides past tubbo with another mumbled apology, dodging his grab as well, *what the hell*, and crouches before michael.

michael blinks at karl.

karl blinks back.

“what's poppin'?”

you can't help but bark out a startled laugh despite your nerves at a blood-stained karl approaching your son, and you see tubbo raise a brow at you, as though to say *'don't laugh, this isn't funny, why are you laughing.'*

and then karl says "can you bring me to mimi, please?" and tubbo nearly drops *bane o' bees*.

michael only breaks their mutual gaze once to give his blood-stained sweater a quick once over before he nods.

you tilt your head at honk, taking him into consideration. mimi is shy, and no one's asked to see him before, so you won't think anyone would blame you for wanting to make sure there's nothing strange going on. but honk meets your gaze and smiles something soft, so you nod.

'okay. we look together.' you sign. honk's eyes scrunch together, likely trying to understand what you said, but then he just smiles again and nods.

"okay."

"wait, wait, wait- hold on-" bee says, heaving his axe up and pointing it at honk, "step away from michael, and tell us what you want with him and-"

"mimi." honk interrupts. you peer up at him at mimi's name.

"wha-?"

"call him mimi," honk says.

boo nervously looks between you, but you're pretty sure bee won't let him go anywhere, so you decide to take the initiative. you step forward and grab the hem of honk's sweater and tug, in a silent demand to be picked up, and he obliges. bee looks like he swallowed one of ponk's lemons.

'if not bedroom, try flowers.' you sign.

"i have no idea what you just said."

bee sighs at honk but puts his weapon away with a huff. boo's shoulders immediately drop. "he said that if tom- if mimi isn't in his bedroom, the garden is a good shot." he sighs, longsuffering, and despite the painful feeling it makes curdle in your chest, you give him a tuskly grin. the one he gives in return is strained and tired, but a smile nonetheless.

"oh! his bedroom? mimi has his own bedroom?" honk asks.

"no, i- i don't think so? i don't think ghosts even need to sleep-? i'm pretty sure michael meant his own bedroom."

ghost?

"alright," boo say's with a sigh. he looks super tired, and honestly, you wish you could take a nap right now, but honk asked you to bring him to mimi, so you will. "guess we're looking for- for mimi, now. okay. *what a soft name...*" boo mumbles the last part, as if he hadn't known of mimi's name for a while now.

you want to ask them what a ghost is, but then honk is walking down the hall, yelling back to bee and boo about getting lost if someone doesn't come show him where your bedroom is. he's smiling as he says it, and you take another moment to observe him before reaching up and plucking a twig from his hair.

"oh, thanks." he says. you nod in reply.

bee and boo are quick to catch up, and then it's silent. it's not a comfy one though, like the one you fell asleep next to boo in. it makes you increasingly uncomfortable, and you can see boo fidgeting to the side.

"so, michael," honk breaks the silence, and you let out a soft huff in question, "how do you like the overworld? i know it's been a hot second, but i thought i might as well ask, anyways."

you give him another nod, eyes closed in thought, before raising your hands to reply, ‘nice. friendly. cold.’

“yea, i bet it is kinda chilly, huh?” honk says, and you nod at him again. you’ve been nodding quite a bit in the last few minutes.

a hand places itself onto honk’s shoulder, and if you weren’t currently in his arms, you wouldn’t have felt him jolt at the sudden contact. you chuff at him, that same comforting one mimi gives to you, and he meows back, for some reason. humans are weird. but that meow seems to sap even more of the tension from bee’s frame, and boo’s fidgeting calms the slightest bit as he smiles at you and honk, so you don’t mind one bit. maybe honk will show you how he made that sound?

it’s not long before you’re stopping before your room. you pap honk on the cheek and point up towards it, and to his credit, he understands after only a few seconds and lifts you up, completely ignoring the ladder. pog, as mimi would say.

you stick your head through the hatch and look around. nothing- no mimi, no floating book, or needle and thread. (mimi keeps it in the rafters, ever since you almost pricked yourself)

“is he there? honk asks, and you look down to shake your head at him.

now. you *could* go all the way to the garden. but you’re still tired, and your crown is right there, and you *know* that mimi will come if he feels you toy with it. so you pull yourself up, ignoring boo’s inquisitive vrrp, and trot over to your nightstand.

“mikey?” bee calls, peeking his head up next to honk- boo just teleports up into the room and gives a cheeky smile to bee and honk- but your focus lays on your crown. other than just the smallest bit of wrinkly gray at the edge of the leaves, your crown is in perfect condition.

“rush?” you ask honk. he gives you a crooked smile and runs a hand through his hair, almost hitting bee in the face with his elbow.

“yea, kinda. i could really use his help right now.”

you nod at him again, before picking up your allium crown as gently as you can, and turn back around to look at honk and your dads. and then you tear off a small chunk of one of the allium's petals, and bee and boo gasp.

“michael, why would you-” boo says, reaching out, a slightly pained expression on his face, but before he can finish or you can reply, mimi is there, hoisting you into his arms.

“what's wrong? are you okay? are you hurt!? what happened-” mimi gushes as he's holding you to his side and running his hands over you, careful of his claws. you pap mimi's nose with your free hand, and he flinches before looking up and meeting your gaze. you point behind him, and he turns around to follow your finger.

“oh,” mimi says.

boo's mouth is wide open, eyes darting over where mimi ruffled your sweater in his assessment before looking around you, but never settling on mimi himself. bee looks shocked, and his eyes are too bright. honk just smiles, a small nervous tilt to his expression when he looks to bee and boo.

mimi turns back to you with a nonchalant sniff, “not very pog of you, big m.”

‘honk needs help,’ michael signs, and you can't help your ears perking up in surprise. you turn to look at the three of them, and nearly wince. ranboo stands stock-still, glancing around michael in shock, which isn't that surprising since it likely looks like his piglin son is levitating. you wish you knew just what was going on inside his head.

you don't let yourself look at tubbo, no matter how much it makes your heart physically hurt.

karl looks fine, and your mind immediately reminds you of him distracting d- distracting *sam* when you went to retrieve your enchanted gapple for michael. like he knew, and was there to help. you can't help but glare at him, suspicion drowning out any gratitude you had felt for the man.

at michael's sign, karl nods and pulls himself up fully into the room. he offers a hand to tubbo, who takes it without saying anything, his face blank.

“yea. ah, hello, mimi.”

maybe he doesn't know. you look back down at michael, ignoring karl's greeting, and ask “what, exactly, does big dubs need from me?”

and then, before michael can relay the message, (you don't know why you don't just solidify. the jig is up, they know now, but you can feel tubbo looking through you, and the thought of facing him again makes your eyes sting and your throat feel like it's swelling up so much it hurts. so you do what you do best, you act and you act and you act without a director to call cut.) karl answers as if he heard you.

“bbh is kinda bat-sh- uh, a little off his rockers at the moment, as one might say, and ponk is... incapacitated, at the moment, so we kinda need some medical help?”

your ears flatten and you can feel your tail puff up. your arms tighten around michael, pulling him closer to your chest, and you can't help the guttural chitter-hiss, both at karl's apparent foresight and ranboo taking a small step forward at seeing his get smooched by nothing, however harmless. (you feel bad for hissing at ranboo, your hindbrain scolding you for threatening your gaze, your round, your scatter, but you're sure he'd understand if he could suddenly develop empathic abilities and could feel your panic. but ranboob is lame, so of course he hasn't.)

and then michael bonks your face, right on your nose, and you jolt back with a squeak.

“bad,” the piglin says, reaching up to pat down on your ears, and you jolt back again. “calm down.”

karl giggles at that, a note of hysteria to his laugh, and if michael weren't still in bonking range, you'd probably hiss again.

“was that a- was that a no?” he asks between giggles. ranboo is very clearly trying to hide a smile, and tubbo- michael lifts his arms to bonk you again, and you grab him from under the arms and hold him away from you.

“okay, okay, stop, i'll stop, stop fuckin' hittin' me-”

“michael-” ranboo says, stepping forwards, and in a moment you’re several feet back, the piglin held tightly to your chest. the room is silent, karl looks pained, ranboo looks struck, and you still can’t find it in yourself to look at tubbo.

karl claps his hands, and you see ranboo flinch with you, *why are you flinching so much*, before lifting his foot to take a step forward and immediately rethinking. “... we could really use your help, kid. toms. mimi. doctor mimi. doctor mimi, phd-”

“prime, shut the hell up- no, don’t hit me again, you little fuckin’- fine! fine, i’ll hear him out! please stop hittin’ me, i-”

michael turns to karl with a beaming smile, and karl’s shoulders sag in relief, and you can’t stop the heavy sigh this causes. it’s honestly the most relaxing sigh you’ve ever had, long and chest-deep and almost making your eyelids droop. almost enough to make you forget about the panic you had felt at your flowers- at michael’s crown- getting partially destroyed. you’ll have to finish that other one you left in the garden.

“was that a yes?” karl asks, and you almost snort at his hopeful tone. michael shakes his head no, and karl sags before michael can explain.

‘explain,’ michael signs.

“oh. oh, okay. *kinda wish i brought foolish right now...* uh, so, ponk and hannah are hurt, and-”

mmm okay. okay, he has you hooked. as a medic, you want to help them. karl doesn’t even need to explain, you’re immediately hooked, but you know-

“-the eggpire maybe kinda attacked hannah and puffy and ghostbur-”

there it is.

“-and sam attacked ponk-”

oh.

“-and foolish’s knowledge mostly lies in the death part of all this, y’know, so we could really use some help, and ghostbur is kinda... burnt-”

“oh,” you hear tubbo say, and yea, same.

hmm. okay. a little less hooked now. you want to help them, you do, but. but, but, but. the eggpire- you know they didn’t like you. would helping ponk and hannah (and puffy?) put you back under their radar? you’re so tired of fighting. but you understand what it’s like, to be struggling and have people stand to the side and watch. but you’re so *tired*. but ghostbur is- what, injured? they need help. but if you help, and people do notice you again, will you have to leave michael? you don’t want to leave michael. but ghostbur. but *michael*.

you’re dead, so why are you so *tired*?

“i don’t...” michael reaches for your face again, and you choke out a small “please stop,” more of a plea than anything. but michael doesn’t relent, and he gently grabs your face before lightly bonking your foreheads together, rather than his earlier, more forceful bonks.

‘sorry for hitting you,’ he signs.

‘it’s okay.’ you sign back.

you want to say no, to just take michael (and ranboo, and tubbo) and make a blanket nest and sleep for a couple of years. you want to say no, and keep your family safe, and recover.

“okay.”

michael claps his hands together, before turning to karl and nodding quickly.

karl, again, sags. ranboo sighs and loses like, a solid half-foot of height, the fucking weirdo doesn’t even slouch like you *what the hell*, and you still can’t find it in yourself to look to tubbo. you want to. you kind of want to cry, too.

it's almost like michael can feel your anxiety. 'sorry,' he signs again, before offering a softly-spoken "i'll hold your hand the entire time."

the next sigh that escapes you is shakier, and you try to match his smile with your own. you know it's lackluster, but michael seems to appreciate it anyways. you are so soft for this boy, your boy, so so much.

"thanks, big m."

Chapter End Notes

flower symbolism go brrrrrrrrrr. if youve yet to pick up on it, yup, ghost tommys power is flower shit. wilbur and schlatt have powers too, but idk if im gonna include them just yet. lmk if yall wanna know the meanings, if i should just pop them in here or something.

next chapter will be from a new characters pov, and its gonna be written in a formal that i'm lowkey struggling with- not format as in like, 1st for 3rd person pov, but like... a storytelling style. might take me a hot second.

also tommy has dysgraphia bc i have dysgraphia and his handwriting truly is shit. it just makes sense

keep an eye out for other connected works, i may be posting some soon :]

pls eat, drink some water, and take your meds if you haven't. maybe stretch a little too, if you want. love you all, your comments are so nice, and i love the little notes in the bookmarks <3

programmed to work and not to feel

Chapter Summary

sam nook be like "HAVE YOU SEEN MY SON? HE'S ABOUT THIS TALL, CLEARLY BI BUT WE HAVEN'T HAD THE TALK"

Chapter Notes

there's another panic attack this chapter, from the pov of the person calming them down. it's not too bad, and my friend teddy (Squidge_06) helped with it a bit because i've only ever used the 5 steps thing on myself once and that was like, two or three years ago. the lines it starts at will be at the top of the bottom notes!

chapter title is from 'hello world' by louie zong. but i'd like it to be known that I listened to "prison toys" from little nightmares for the majority of this chapter, as well as "lost in transmission" and "old friends anew" from little nightmares 2, as well as "burn" from hamilton (specifically during ponk's panic attack.)

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

《 ... PLEASE REMEMBER TO EAT TODAY, TOMMYINNIT ... GOLDEN APPLES ARE NOT A RELIABLE LONG-TERM MEAL REPLACEMENT ... 》

“aw, i’ll be fine, sam nook. you know me, nothin’ can keep me down for long! ... unless my blood pressure drops- but that won’t happen, sam nook, i’ll be fine!”

a pair of ears and a tail, not unlike your own, adorn your boy. you had thought tommy was a human, as he looked so the first time you met him, but awesamdude was quick to inform you of his changeling nature.

“he kinda... imprints on whoever he feels safest with.” sam informed you one day, unsure why this wasn’t in your database in the first place, “like, say, at one point he used to have horns that looked like tubbo’s. morphing is kinda painful for him though, if he tries to make big changes like wings from nowhere or hooves from feet, so i don’t think he does it often.”

you don’t think your creator knows of the boy's hooved creeper legs underneath his too-big, baggy cargo pants. you think he would be flattered, just as you are with tommy copying you; it means he trusts you, you make him feel safe, and that makes your valves and pacemaker heat up in a way

that should probably worry you but just fills you with that you think organics would call unbridled joy.

you run a hand through your boy's hair, careful of his white and yellow ears, chittering happily when he giggles and lightly bats your hand away before turning towards the prime path. always on the move, your boy is.

(he always brings you gapples. you tell him that you cannot physically eat it, but he refuses to return it to his hoodie pocket, pressing it to your hands. you keep it, if only to reassure your boy. you wish he would keep it though, you know how expensive they are, and how much they help with his hypotension.)

he's only there at the moment because you called him in, claiming you had another quest for him, only to suddenly forget. you just wanted to see your boy. and, you hope he wanted to see you too, if the sparkle in his glaucous-colored eyes says anything, but you know he'd never voice it. you know your creator wants to restore his icy blue, but all you've known tommy as is this shade, so as long as your boy is happy, you're happy.

"well, i'll be off, sam nook! take good care of the hotel for me, big man! might wanna get your memory drive looked at too, while you're at it!"

《 ... WILL DO, TOMMYINNIT ... ENJOY THE REST OF YOUR DAY ... 》

you want to give your nookling a hug, but he's already at the gate separating the hotel from the prime path. he waves to you before bounding down the steps and off down the path. your optics follow him until he is out of sight, before settling in front of the hotel doors. you stand, and you guard, and you wait.

a day passes. it rains, and the water soaks you from where you stand under the awning. it's uneventful. no tommy, no jack manifold, no guests.

you wait.

a week passes. dirt is slowly building on your chassis, and the most you move is to blink your optic lenses. your nookling has yet to return, but that's okay, he's gone for a couple days sometimes. soon, he'll be back, bright-eyed and loud and giving you a large hug. you'll go about your hotel duties, and tommy will follow you around, making idle chatter until he's off once again.

you wait.

three weeks. rust is building in your joints and opening ports, and you know your movements will be choppy due to your lack of significant movement. people walk by, but they never enter the hotel premises. until jack manifold returns.

“ayup, nook.” jack says in greeting, lazily raising his hand, and you give him a stuttery nod. it takes a second for your vocals to start up.

《 ... HELLO JACKMANIFOLD ... TOMMYINNIT IS NOT HERE RIGHT NOW ... HOW CAN I HELP YOU? 》

his small smile sours for a moment, before he strains to hide it. you are no fool to jack manifold’s animosity towards your nookling, but he asked you to not hurt jack, to protect him as well, even. you don’t know why tommy would consider giving his hotel to someone attempting to kill him, but you don’t ask, and resolve to protect him the best you can. so you do not point his maliciousness out.

“ah, haven’t seen that bloke anywhere lately.” he is quiet for a moment, giving you a once-over. worry fills his expression, but he once again cools his face. “you ain’t lookin’ so hot there, sam nook.”

《 ... I AM LACKING PROPER MAINTENANCE, YES ... 》

“...why haven’t you... i dunno, buffed yourself? why are you...”

《 ... I AM WAITING FOR AWESAMDUDE OR TOMMYINNIT ... I AM TO STAND AND WAIT FOR TOMMYINNIT TO RETURN ... I DO NOT WISH TO MISS HIM ... 》

“... well, whatever, i’m here to take the big innit hotel. he’s been gone a hot minute, so i don’t think he’d mind, y’know?”

《 ... I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU HAVEN’T SEEN TOMMYINNIT, LATELY? 》

“...no? i haven’t? what’s this got to do with anything-”

《 ... TOMMYINNIT MENTIONED TO ME THAT HE IS CONSIDERING HANDING THE HOTEL OWNERSHIP OVER TO YOU, JACKMANIFOLD ... 》

and then jack makes a sound like he’s been choked, and he starts coughing. you move to assist him, but your joints lock up at their lack of use, and you almost fall. jack catches you, struggles to push you up (you aren’t surprised; your chassis is a heavy material.) and then takes a couple jittery steps back.

“i... will return tomorrow...” he says, voice heavy and wobbly, before dashing away.

when jack returns the next day, he scowls at you, stomping towards you with no greeting, and you’re idly aware of your phalange nodes clenching around your trident. but then jack puts his hand on your shoulder and goes to tug you inside. you stand your ground, much to jack’s annoyance, and his scowl intensifies.

“fine, wait there then.” and then he’s storming inside, and you watch for a moment before trailing after him.

《 ... I’LL HAVE TO ASK THAT YOU LEAVE THE PREMISE WHILE TOMMYINNIT IS NOT HERE ... UNTIL YOU ARE TRANSFERRED OWNERSHIP ... 》

“oh, shut it.” jack says, throwing over the maintenance closet and pulling miscellaneous supplies into his arms before dumping the pile onto a nearby couch. he looks at you expectantly, and you meet his gaze silently. it takes a solid fifty-seven seconds before he lets out a large sigh and motions for you to stand next to the pile.

“well? are you gonna let me clean you up, or what?”

《 ... I MUST WAIT OUTSIDE FOR TOMMYINNIT ... 》

another sigh, longsuffering, and manifold drags a hand down his face, nearly dislodging his red and blue glasses. “do you really think the brat would like seein’ you in such shitty condition? stop

being stubborn and let me help you.”

...

you move next to the couch. jack manifold scrubs you of rust, polishes your chassis, and oils your joints. you don't allow him to access anything intrusive to check the plating that keeps your redstone wires in working condition, but it's enough.

he leaves without saying much, after that. you return to your vigil.

you wait.

another month passes. tubbo and ranboo begin the construction of a motel on the other side of the prime path. you don't talk with them, but you think your boy will appreciate the competition, once he comes back.

jack manifold visits sometimes, cleans up the building rust and dirt, and you allow him. he still hasn't seen your nookling anywhere. at some point, he cracks a 'joke' about tommy being hurt somewhere. you can tell he misses your boy, as much as he tries to hide it, and you know he likely means it in a teasing way.

you tell him to leave the premises. he leaves. as he walks out, he tells you "...i hope he comes back to you, soon." and then he throws his arms up and attempts to backtrack, "not that i care about the brat! but... but i'm sure he'd be back, if he knew the condition you've been left in. he's a selfish asshole, but he cares about you, nook."

《 ... HE CARES ABOUT YOU TOO ... 》

jack scoffs. "yea, sure he does. he only cares about my labor, the dumb kid." you go to tell him that that's not true, that tommy cares for jack and misses their friendship. that he knows about manifolds anger towards him, but ignores it and pretends that the other child doesn't hate him because he doesn't know what he'd do if he had to face that both jack and niki hated him. that tommy truly cherishes jack manifolds presence. but all you can find yourself saying is-

《 ... YOU ARE JUST A CHILD, TOO, JACKMANIFOLD ... YOU SHOULDN'T BE SO HARD ON YOURSELF ... 》

-but he's already left.

a few days later, badboyhalo and antifrost visit as well. they claim to be looking for tommy, but their armor glows and their weapons are sharpened and you don't let them enter hotel grounds. they leave, and you hope your boy is safe from them, wherever he is, and that he'll return safe.

you wait.

and then a new person approaches you.

“hello! are you sam nook, by any chance?”

your head jerks up and your optics stutter for a moment. you don't recall your head lowering or your optics going into sleep mode. your ram drive must need maintenance. your software must need more upkeep than you thought.

the person in front of you is easy to identify from your files. but others tended to be uncomfortable when they knew that you *knew*, so you stay quiet on that front. eret looks unsure despite the confidence she forces to the front, back straight, and shoulders square.

《 ... HELLO ... MY NAME IS SAM NOOK ... WELCOME TO THE BIG INNIT HOTEL ... 》

eret beams at you, taking a few steps forward. she offers her hand to you, and you shake it.

“hello, sam nook! my name is eret- would you mind coming with me?”

you tilt your head at her. it causes a slight creek, and you notice a layer of dirt fall from the movement. it must have been longer than you thought, since jack's last visit.

《 ... I MUST WATCH OVER THE BIG INNIT HOTEL WHILE TOMMYINNIT IS AWAY ...
》

her expression falters. you take the moment to flex your smaller appendages. some stutter, but they all seem to be in working condition. “he might not... he... his friends need help. he needs you to help me help them.”

you miss him.

《 ... WILL THEY BE ABLE TO HELP ME FIND TOMMYINNIT? 》

eret takes a sharp breath. breathes for a couple seconds. nods.

“yes, i think w- they can help you. but we really should hurry, sam nook.”

she’s not telling you something. you miss your boy. if you go with the monarch, your boy could come back while you’re gone. but she’ll lead you to his friends; he could be with them. but you’re to stay with the hotel and wait for tommyinnit or awesamdude. but when’s the last time awesamdude has given or asked you for an update? something just does not compute.

you give a full-body shift, testing your joints and nodes, before nodding to eret.

《 ... LEAD THE WAY, THE_ERET ... 》

you jab your trident forward, intercepting badboyhalo’s own and locking the prongs together. the abnormally tall demon snarls at you, wings flared, but you don’t relent.

“sam nook!” puffy exclaims in surprise, using your intervention to catch her breath and right her footing. eret is quick to pick up an injured hannah rose, carrying her away from the lashing bloodvines and infected demon.

《 ... HELLO, CAPTAINPUFFY, BADBOYHALO ... I WAS TOLD YOU NEEDED SOME ASSISTANCE ... I HOPE I WILL SUFFICE ... 》

bad twists his trident, dislodging your forced stand-still with a sharp clang, and you jump back

before he can spear you through your cricoid function. you're quick to summon your netherite sword from your inventory, pointing it at bad when he moves towards puffy's form; puffy, who had moved to put out the soul fire, and is now... dragging something away from the scorched remains.

you know there's something there, as you can see the indent the dragged item (or person) leaves in the dirt, but you can't see them. not with your current optic setting, and with bad making another jab, this time for your patella plate, which you swiftly evade. or, it would be swift, if your joints weren't still locked the slightest bit. as it is, his trident grazes your calf plates, causing a screech of metal-on-prismarine that must be exceedingly horrible, if bad's grimace is to go by.

bad jumps back with a push of his wings before speaking, completely ignoring your presence.

"okay, puffy," bad sneers at the sheep hybrid, "take your little ghost-"

"he's actually six foot five-"

"-and hide behind this rotting, glorified iron golem! the vines are spreading, sam is slipping, and tommy is out of the equation! you're losing allies! you better *watch your back.*"

what?

《 ... WHAT DO YOU MEAN, HE IS "OUT OF THE EQUATION," BADBOYHALO? 》

that means he's no longer involved. does that mean your boy is safe? is your nookling somewhere the infected can't hurt him?

bad's up in the air with one large beat of his wings. he looks down at you for a moment, and you see a myriad of emotions cross his face. neutrality, glee, sadness, guilt, mourning, vindictiveness- before he simply scoffs at you.

"i don't answer to things like you," he spits, and you wish your trident was loyalty instead of riptide right now. he's obviously aware of himself being outgunned, despite puffy not having any of her netherite armor with her. but you've fought off bad before, when he trapped your boy in a small obsidian box near the egg. he knows what you can do, even if he views you as nothing more than a mindless golem.

“what did you even hope to gain from this!?” puffy shouts after him, ears flattened back in anger, “did you plan on just killing hannah and leaving? killing me? what the hell, bad, what would skeppy think-”

bad’s flight stutters at skeppy’s name. he doesn’t turn around.

you watch after him for a moment, phalange nodes gripping your trident in a way that almost has you in fear of cracking the prismatic, before turning to puffy.

《 ... ARE YOU OKAY, CAPTAINPUFFY ... YOU APPEAR TO BE WITHOUT YOUR USUAL ARMOR ... ARE YOU IN NEED OF MEDICAL ASSISTANCE? 》

a sigh. “no, no- i’m fine, thank you, sam nook. uh, ghostbur is kinda crispy though-”

she’s lying about the injury part, you can see blood staining her white blouse, but, oh, that makes sense. awesamdude had told you about the server’s resident ghost orca. he wasn’t able to figure out or test a way to allow you to see the undead, however, but he assured you that ghostbur was friendly and that it wouldn’t be needed.

《 ... I AM UNABLE TO SEE UNDEAD ENTITIES ... BUT IF I CAN HELP YOU IN ANY WAY ... PLEASE LET ME KNOW ... 》

she huffs out a laugh, arms held behind her as though holding up someone resting on her lap. “thanks, sam nook. do you wanna come with me, to... uh...”

《 ... THE_ERET’S CASTLE ... THE_ERET LIKELY BROUGHT HANNAHXXROSE THERE FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT ... 》

“can you help me carry ghostbur there? i know you can’t see him- but like, he’s six-five without the tail, and it’s kinda dragging, and it doesn’t look very comfortable-”

《 ... OF COURSE, CAPTAIN ... 》

you can't see him, but you can feel him; a light tingling against your capacitive layer, almost threatening to short circuit your sensors, but you attempt to lift up the tail you can't see. you think it works, because the drag marks in the dirt disappear, and you do your best to help the captain carry the ghost to eret's castle.

maybe your boy will be there.

you almost drop ghostbur upon seeing quackityhq in a shouting with awesamdude right outside of the castle entrance, sam covered in still-wet blood. you chitter out an apology to puffy as she falters, both at the sudden loss of support and at her friend being covered in blood,

“sam!?! are you okay?”

“it's not his!” quackity calls back before sam can answer, anger evident in his voice and his fluffed up wings.

“i thought hannah was the only one hurt?”

《 ... CAPTAINPUFFY ... YOU YOURSELF ARE SPORTING AT LEAST ONE LACERATION ... 》

“not the time, nook!”

sam spins to look at puffy, eyebrows drawn in worry. “you were hurt? oh, man, what happened to ghostbur-”

“oh, shut up sam!” quackity hisses, taking a step forward and grabbing sam's wrist. you almost drop ghostbur again to reach for your trident, making puffy stumble again and let out a frustrated bleat. “you can't just fucking maim ponk and then turn around and act like-”

“you fucking *what?*” puffy hisses, before squeezing her eyes shut, scrunching her face, and continuing to the door of the castle. “you know what, no, tell me later, we have a crispy ghost to try and help, i can't deal with this right now-”

you glance closely at awesamdude's attire. his usual dark green sweater looks almost black, with what you realize to be blood, not just the splatter going up the creeper hybrid's gas mask. you wonder what ponk did to cause sam to retaliate and cause that much blood loss.

ponk flinches back when you enter the room. he's squinting his eyes at you, pupils blown, and you can see a weakness and regen potion iv drip leading into the arm not wrapped in what must be at least twenty layers of gauze. he looks soft without his normal mask, dark freckles splashed across his cheeks and the bridge of his nose. you hear karl murmur "how are you awake-" before ponk's breathing increases drastically upon seeing you. he pushes himself back, nearly falling off the bed if it weren't for karl gently grabbing him.

"hey, hey, it's okay, it's only nook-" karl tries to soothe, to little avail.

"no- n-no, i don't have the b-" a shuttering cough, rough and painful sounding, "i don't have it, i swear, please don't-" tears spring to ponk's eyes, and you can't help but take a step back in shock. ponk's breathing picks up even more than you thought possible, and that's when it occurs to you that he's having a panic attack.

ailment identified, this shouldn't be too bad. you know from your data that these are different for everyone, but you've helped your boy through plenty. as much as you want to just turn and leave, because maybe removing yourself will help him calm, you know you can help.

《 ... DO NOT FRET, DROPSBYPONK ... I WILL NOT HURT YOU ... 》

ponk pauses at your chattering, clearly not expecting a voice so drastically different from awesamdude, and tries to take in gulps of air. you look to karl. he's since removed his hands from ponk- good, who knows if the doctor is okay with touch- and nods to you in encouragement. you move to take a step closer, but ponk flinches. alright, different plan.

it takes you a moment, and the creaking of your limbs isn't the best sound, but you sit on the floor, legs crossed, and slide your sword and trident away from you, into the corner of the room.

《 ... DROPSBYPONK, CAN YOU TELL US FIVE THINGS YOU CAN SEE? 》

ponk takes a few more stuttering gulps of air, coughing a few times, and you're about to repeat the question when he answers. his voice is scratchy and wrecked, and you file away 'make ponk tea' for later, once he's calmed down.

"i can- i can see, uhm... i can see..."

"it's alright, take your time." karl says softly, and after a quiet moment, ponk tries again.

"i can see m-my hands, and karl's sweater... i can s- i can see an iv in my arm... your brown tail, and-and some prismatic in the corner..."

you clap your hands together, careful to only allow a soft papping noise.

《 ... VERY GOOD, DROPSBYPONK ... CAN YOU TELL US FOUR THINGS YOU CAN HEAR, PLEASE? 》

he takes another moment before answering, and you strain your diaphragm coil to hear him from where you sit. "i can hear your... your chittering. and i-" another gasp, leading into a shaky swallow, "i can hear karl's breathing, and someone yelling outside-" karl's expression sours, and you have a feeling that if ponk wasn't in such a state, he'd storm out to stop the father and son still arguing outside. "and... and my, my heart. i can hear it beating."

"can you tell us three things you can feel?" karl asks softly, before pausing and tacking on, "it's okay if you can't, i understand how weakness potions can sometimes make people numb..."

another moment of silence before ponk answers. "i can feel the sheet inbetween my fingers... does- can my heartbeat count again?"

"of course."

"and..."

"it's okay if you can't think of a third, ponk."

“...”

“...ponk?”

“i’m... i’m good now.”

“...good, good. ... is it okay if i touch you?”

“i- ... yea, sure. please.”

and then karl is twining his arm with ponk’s, careful of the iv, and leaning into his side. ponk rests his head on karl’s shoulder, letting out another shaky sigh, and the room falls silent once more. ponk’s eyes are trained onto his iv, his eyelids dropping by the second, and karl looks to him before turning to you.

“i’m... hi, nook. i’m surprised you aren’t off helping with hannah.”

you know he doesn’t mean it in an accusatory manner, but if you weren’t a robot, you think you’d flush in- what, shame? embarrassment? you don’t stand from where you sit, but you feel your ears swivel to face the door. you can’t hear them, them being foolish and eret as they try to help hannah the best they can, but maybe it’s better, so that you don’t try to rush in and help anyways

《 ... HANNAHXXROSE IS SEVERELY HURT ... I DO NOT TRUST MY MECHANISMS TO NOT STUTTER OR JOLT WHILE HELPING HER ... NOR AM I STERILE OR CLEAN ENOUGH TO HELP WITHOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF CAUSING FUTURE INFECTION OR EXTENDING THE RECOVERY PROCESS ... MY PRESENCE WOULD DO MORE HARM THAN GOOD ... 》

another bout of silence. ponk’s eyes, still red from his earlier tears, droop closed, and his breathing softens even more. “just get tommy,” he breathes out, and you feel yourself perk up, ears swivelling forward and tail going straight. karl winces. “he’s trained well enough... i’m sure he-” a yawn. “-would be willing... to help her...” and then he’s out.

before you can even ask, karl speaks up, voice soft as to not wake ponk.

“i’ll tell you later, nook. i promise.”

you want to tell him, no. you want him to ‘tell you’ now- you’ve gone almost two months without your boy, your nookling, ~~your son~~, and you want him to tell you *now*. but... he’s so clearly tired. he looks almost as exhausted as ponk, and he’s not even the one with a weakness potion in his system.

you think, if you had tear ducts, you’d probably be crying right now.

《 ... OKAY, KARLJACOBS ... I WILL HOLD YOU TO THAT PROMISE ... 》

Chapter End Notes

panic attack starts at "ponk flinches back when you enter the room." and ends around "it’s okay if you can’t think of a third, ponk."

PARTIALLY MADE UP ROBOT-MUMBO JUMBO:

valves and pacemaker: heart

phalange nodes: fingers

cricoid function: neck

patella plate: kneecap

diaphragm coil: ears

Capacitive layer: think the screen of a smartphone, how it knows you're touching it and shit. that, but it's used with a second layer to understand pressure- smartphones don't have second layers, and rely on electricity that your body like, sucks away from the screen where you touch? but not enough to zap you. whereas, say, a dsi has two layers, with the top layer touching the second one having the same effect as the single-layer electric one, but works with anything- the plastic of a stylus, the keratin of a nail, etc. sam nook doesn't have this over his entire body, but in places such as his hands, ears, tail, and face defo have them. and other places, like the inside of his elbows and knees and armpits, to make sure the soft areas, exposed for movement, are in good condition.

so, yea. smartphone mixed with ds. wires and shit in minecraft, at least here, are just tiny tiny tiny plastic lines stuffed with redstone and water sealed, but it can crack and shit.

so, yea x2. morphing isn't so fun when ones alive. that kinda thing hurts, yknow? just busting wings outta nowhere, or a tail, or horns. any extra things, basically. yes, tommy tried to copy the tanuki features sam nook has, but the closest he could get was raccoon, and of course his raccoon form is albino so it can be blond. i like to think rudys just chillin in an enderdragon hybrid form somewhere.

if you read this, from here on out, whenever you see that i've updated, you're legally

obligated to take a sip of water and maybe eat a pita cracker or saltine or something.
sorry, i don't make the rules.

loving humanity while they can't see the evidence

Chapter Summary

tommy punz
people holding them against their will

Chapter Notes

warnings: nothing, as far as im aware. there's not much in a lot of details, except maybe some slight eye trauma, cuts, and mention of stitches from an observers pov. i don't think it warrants a warning, but if you're concerned, don't be shy to ask for the warning in the comments- either just for yourself, or if you think i should add it to the end notes. same for some zalgo text!

ayo peek the new summary? :flushed: thanks @ mikeythemage bestie you're so good at writing. mans wrote the rant too. mf has no right being so good, hand over the brain worms

i'd like it to be known that, while i did some research on stitches and sutures, my knowledge is still severely limited. i try my best to be accurate in a world with instant health and regen potions and golden apples, but there's only so much i can randomly find online without getting put on some kinda watchlist, yknow?

i'm writing this all down and having the chapter draft ready before the chapter itself is done, so. my apologies if this takes a while, chronic migraines are a bitch. i also don't know if it'll be posted by then, but i have a pre-story oneshot planned and partially written. it's almost done, and it has business bay and boffy and rudy and cyberonix and badlinu, and i really like how it's come out so far, so go read that if you want! mikey is also working on one following wilbur traveling around with sally and felicity (friend) after leaving home (featuring smpive's schlatt & co (at least alluded to), a scrappy nine y/o tommy, and a newborn fundy :]

chapter title from "never" by mag.lo

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

sam nook opted to wait with ponk, while sam stays with puffy, ensuring the captain doesn't attempt to move and reopen her stitches. you know they'll have to be cut and redone by whoever karl is going to get, but with the captain's insistence on getting back out and confronting bad, properly equipped, you're glad sam is there to keep her in check, however questionable his actions have been lately.

when karl had told you that he knew who could help, given that the servers' medical personnel were either injured, possessed, or dead, you were openly confused and disbelieving. foolish had

just nodded to the man, like he knew who karl was talking about, and then karl had been off running, sweater still covered in ponk's blood.

"...do you really think we should let sam stay here?" foolish breaks the silence, and you shrug before answering.

"as long as he stays away from ponk, i don't see why not. he's prioritized with captain no-self-preservation, and nook is with ponk. he should be fine."

"but didn't sam *make* sam nook? y'know, hence the name *sam nook*?"

"mm. maybe-"

"no, not maybe, eret he literally built sam nook from nothing-"

"- *maybe so*, but, have you even sat and talked with sam nook yet? that man has far surpassed his original programming."

foolish throws up his arms, long elbow fins almost smacking you in the face, and goes "i guess! what about- i dunno, quackity? aren't you afraid about him causing more shit with sam?"

"he's off waiting for sarnap, he won't cause trouble. quackity may seem..."

"impulsive? hard headed? inconsiderate? highkey kind of scary?"

"i mean? i guess? from afar. but he's a lot more considerate than he lets on. he'll at least drag sam outside first, as to not wake the injured."

foolish slumps into his chair, solid green eyes dimming, massaging his temples. "at least."

"i understand you haven't really met him yet, but give him a little credit, foolish-"

the doors open with a slam, a barely audible ‘oops’ sounding underneath the jolting noise. foolish jumps up from his seat, trident already summoned from his inventory, and you’re quick to gently grab foolish’s wrist.

“listen i know i just said big q is considerate so this probably isn’t reflecting that well on him or me, but-”

then karl strolls in, sheepishly grinning and rubbing the back of his head, tubbo, ranboo, tommy, and a small piglin in tow.

wait-

“tommy?” you call. you see tubbo and ranboo look at you in shock, karl’s expression that of tired resignation poorly hidden underneath surprise. tommy is apparently content to brush you off and dote on the piglin in his arms until you manage to catch his eyes. maybe he assumes you’re just lagging behind, not yet aware of his current predicament.

foolish returns his trident to his inventory space and runs a hand over his head and down his head-tail, pulling it over his shoulder like one would a ponytail, before sighing. you see his eyes dart to tommy, and then you, then karl, then the piglin, back to you, and then back to tommy.

“to- mimi is the doctor you brought?”

“yea, i, there’s not many on the server, so-”

“tommy?” you say again, stepping closer to the floating boy.

that’s when tommy meets your eyes. you expect him to scowl or hiss at you, curse you out and insult you and spin on his floating heel and leave, but he just sighs. “can just about fuckin’ anyone see me now, for prime’s sake-”

foolish grimaces, looking to ranboo and tubbo, and you have a feeling you’re missing something, but what else is new? “tommy-”

“foolish,” tommy replies, sounding like he’d rather be sleeping than here.

“foosh!” the piglin calls out, rapidly waving a little hand at the totem god.

“michael!” foolish replies, waving back just as quickly and beaming at the child.

“eret?” tubbo asks, eyes rapidly shifting between you three but never settling on tommy. ranboo also looks torn, face seconds from crumbling, but before you can ask karl speaks up.

“okay, wait, so, i know foolish can see tommy-”

“foolish can see tommy!?” tubbo says, turning on foolish with a betrayed look. in the same moment, tommy turns a suspecting gaze onto karl, and you have a feeling you’re missing something important.

“can- can you not see him?” you ask, and ranboo lets out a tired-sounding laugh, dragging a hand down his face. touchy topic? what’re you saying, of course it is, their best friend and pseudo-little brother is dead. you’d probably be less talkative as well.

“-but eret, you can see him too?” karl finishes.

you hum and reach up to take off your glasses. you see tommy shift in discomfort and ranboo inch back in shock, but no one else seems to react. “i don’t know why i can see him, but,” you idly wave a hand towards your face, and upon getting oddly understanding (foolish) and hesitant (ranboo) nods, you slide the sunglasses back on.

the room falls silent. you can’t take your eyes off tommy. he matches your stare head-on, arms crossed and glowering.

“take a fuckin’ picture, it’ll last longer.”

“...so he’s not just a shared hallucination?”

karl snorts at that, running a hand through his hair. “no, eret, i’m pretty sure foolish can see him. ‘dunno if you missed that earlier, i understand if you did, it was- still is- kinda... y’know-”

“holy shit, shut up!” tommy snaps, and you see foolish jolt in time with you. it’s enough that you see the other three pause, and tommy sighs before putting michael down on the floor. “go on, m’sure your dads will introduce you to eret later.” and then tommy claps, and you find yourself jolting again. “aight big liege, who needs help?”

“big liege?” you find yourself asking incredulously, eyebrows shooting up. “you’re just gonna-gonna be dead for a month and act like nothing happened?”

tubbo visibly stiffens. michael, who had trotted to his father’s side, tilts his head in what you can’t tell if is confusion or observation. his eyes are trained on tommy, you note, so he can likely see tommy just as you (and foolish, apparently) can. tommy just tsks, as though you’re an annoyance, and lifts a hand to his face as though to inspect his nails- no, his claws.

“months, actually, plural. but, yea, that’s the plan.”

what does that even *mean*?

“you- you realize they mourned for you, right? puffy and sam and quackity, and- and me, but you’re just-”

“eret,” ranboo says, stepping forward to lay a hand on your shoulder, but you brush him off, pushing his hand away, (with a little more force than necessary, you’ll admit,) and you can see tommy visibly bristle at the action.

“if it was up to me, i wouldn’t even be here. you wouldn’t even know that i- that my ghost- whatever the fuck i am? you wouldn’t know, i can guarantee you that.” tommy hisses at you before turning his burning gaze to foolish. “did you tell him?”

foolish blinks before hesitantly lifting his hand and pointing to himself, “uh, me?”

“no, not you, the fuckin’ piglin toddler- yes, you! how the hell did karl know?”

“i- i don’t know, i didn’t tell him,” foolish says, raising his hands in surrender, and you find yourself taking a step forward. you don’t know if you can touch ghosts, but you move without thinking, and when you reach for tommy, you find your hand wrapping around his wrist. it’s an odd feeling, like gripping solid static, and that paired with the fact that you could even (semi) solidly touch tommy in the first place has you almost release him in shock.

that being said, when the boy flinches and his ears flatten against his head, lips curling to reveal sharp canines in a clear threat, you straighten to your full height and match his growing glare and tight-lipped frown.

“tommy. you’re being selfish.”

“hey,” tubbo says, hints of anger in his voice, but you don’t relent. your grip tightens, and you see tommy’s hand twitch. tommy breaks eye contact, looking at his hand in what you think may be shock, but all it does is further encourage you to squeeze the boy’s wrist.

he meets your eyes again. whatever emotion you could see earlier is gone, a tight wall in place. however strong his walls are, he can’t hide the growing tremble in his limbs, the twitching in his wrist. “let me go.”

“no. i know you have a problem with recognizing when you hurt others-”

“*excuse me?*”

“-but you need to own up to your actions-”

“let me go!”

“-you really hurt multiple people, people who care about you and sacrificed for you-”

“let me *go!*”

“-and you just let them think you’re *gone!*? tommy, you’re being so incredibly selfish! more than i’d ever expected from you, and that’s saying something! you’re breaking their hearts!”

“*eret!*” you hear someone snap, but the damage is done.

you don't notice when everyone's gazes turn to tommy. the first thing you notice is that he's biting his lip and his eyes look wet. it's a small bite, one inside the lip that someone would do to try to *hide* the fact that they're biting their lip, but he has little fangs peeking out. you think that if he was alive, it'd likely pierce the skin.

the second thing you notice is the scales. his claws are longer, shiner than before, and scales are going down his arms (barely visible up near his elbow, where his stupidly long fingerless gloves end,) and cheeks. you can even see shiny horns peeking from his hair, a jet black in stark contrast to his hair's white. his tail, a once-bright line of fluff, is now sharp and scaled, whipping back in forth in clear agitation.

when tommy wrenches his hand out of your grip, you let him. his glove is burnt away, wrist burnt black and raw, looking oddly similar to ghostbur the few times the orca hybrid had taken refuge in your castle when he was unable to find friendly shelter during a storm. the sight of it makes you feel sick.

tommy cradles his burnt arm to his chest. he's breathing in shuddering gasps, face a blotchy grey and red like watercolors, with red-tinted tears bubbling up in his too-grey eyes.

"prime, can you fuckin' stop making me the villain for five minutes!? i can't even die without you lot blaming me for all your issues! i am *so* sorry that me dying made issues for all of you, i can't even imagine how hard it must be! how fucking *selfish* of me, right? because that's what i am, isn't it? 'oh, there goes tommy, only ever thinking about himself! tommy obsessing over his stupid discs! tommy always making himself other people's problems! maybe he should just *stop!* maybe if he wasn't around this wouldn't have gone to shit!"

"yeah, i heard you talking about that in manberg. i fucking *heard* you. don't act like you didn't, and don't act like it was out of context because i was there for the whole *fucking* conversation! everything that went wrong with me is because *you lot* wouldn't take even the slightest effort to make sure that the *children* around you were okay! you stood there and you *watched us* get pulled into your shit, and you *didn't give a damn!*

"you left fundy waiting to be adopted, and you let him get his hopes up, and you blamed him for wanting to be happy. you blamed tubbo for being a bad president when he was being manipulated into doing the things he did. you blamed me for wanting my *freedom*, for wanting to be *happy*, and when i lashed out you called me *irrational* and *terrible* and you told me that i was overreacting.

"don't fucking try to speak to me of selfishness, eret, because i have given up *everything* i had and everything that i *was* for you all! i put my life out on the line over and *over* again, i got exiled *twice*, i was abused *both times*, i was murdered for trying to move on. don't you fucking dare tell me i'm breaking hearts, because you *never* cared about me in the first place! stay in your *fucking lane*."

the longer he goes on for, the closer he stepped, shoulders drawn, tail lashing, tears leaving red-stained streaks down his face. he's curled in on himself, nearly cowering, probably scared of you burning him again, yet unrelenting in his advance. but then he's flinching away, shoulders somehow curling in on himself even more, snarling at whatever had touched him-

(a drop of blood falls from the boy's face, from a large gaping wound where his eye once was, and you don't look away, can't look away. not until his face is overcome with what can only be described a glitch, and the wound is gone. if it wasn't for that drop of blood, fading to static before it can soil the flooring, you'd have thought it was only your morbid imagination.)

-and then just stopping. it's like he pulls a one-eighty, kneeling down and cupping michael's cheek with gentle hands. he whispers to the toddler, and your ears strain to hear him.

"hey, i'm sorry, i'm sorry you were here for that, you shouldn'ta had to see that, i didn't mean to-"

michael reaches up, cupping both of tommy's cheeks with his own tiny hooved hands, and tommy quiets. he smooths his thumbs over tommy's face, wiping away already gone tears, dark blood and red stains likely hidden by whatever power allows tommy to hide his injuries in the first place.

you remember ghostbur from his first few weeks. his wound was visible and dripping, face a watercolored mess like tommy's is now- was just a moment ago, except with blues and small specks of purple. his tears would burn him, leaving wispy curls of blue-grey smoke languidly twirling through the air like ribbons. how ironic, that an aquatic mammal hybrid would be sentenced to an undeath where water was unforgiving and cruel, a forced-upon blockade, a threat upon a nonexistent life.

you can't help but wonder what tommy's weakness is. your hands tingle from where they rest at your side.

"you okay, mimi?" the little piglin asks, and it's like tommy melts in his hands. he swallows, stays quiet for a moment, and then nods.

michael beams at him, giving his cheeks a light pap, before reaching up to feel tommy's spiraling horns. tommy blinks, leaning his head to give the small piglin an easier reach, and it's in that moment when he seems to become aware of his current spiky appearance.

"oh," he mumbles, and before you can even blink, his earlier features have returned; small rounded ears, a less prehensile and fluffier tail, and a dark mask across his face. there's no trace of the earlier scales, shiny black keratin gone completely. the burn is still on his forearm, but the glove is visibly regenerating and covering the charred areas. if it hurts, tommy's good at hiding it. he leans forward and presses a kiss to michael's forehead, and you *really* feel like you're imposing on a private moment right now.

"uh, tom-mimi? are you- is he still here? um," ranboo asks. you look up at the boys, and you don't know ranboo well but it's easy to see the sadness and anger in his eyes. tubbo, however, looks both conflicted and livid, brows pinched and hands white-knuckled. he's rigid at ranboo's side, his tear-filled eyes boring into yours, silently promising a later talk. you don't look forward to it.

tommy looks to ranboo, frozen in what you assume thought. he looks ranboo straight in the eyes, and despite having apparently faded from their view, the eye contact visibly makes ranboo uncomfortable. michael paps tommy's cheek again, and it seems to snap him out of whatever trance he was in, ears twitching and tail flicking once, before shooting ranboo an apologetic look, gazing over the taller boy's shoulder- not that the enderman hybrid can see it, but likely on instinct; everyone knows how the taller boy hates eye contact.

tommy taps michael's shoulder, motioning towards ranboo, and the piglin nods before darting over to the enderman. ranboo reaches for his son, meeting him halfway, and the piglin is quick to hug his legs. ranboo gulps and mutters "oh, i guess he is..." before taking a small step back to return to tubbo's side.

tommy sighs again.

"okay, who's in the worst condition?" he asks, standing turning to face you, apparently content in brushing over what just happened. his voice is quiet. you hurt him, and yet he's still going to help.

"you're... still going to help?" you ask, and tommy scoffs at you.

"i learned all this shit to help people. pretty shitty of me to withhold medical help just because i'm pissed at one person. i'm not *heartless*." you're frozen for a moment before nodding. swallowing

down the chunk of ice you can feel in your chest, you lead the ghost out of the room. you can feel eyes follow you as you leave, but you do your best to keep your back straight and head high.

tubbo bleats and takes a step towards you, limbs jittery with nerves, “hey, *no*, he can’t just- tom- eret- that can’t just happen and be immediately ignored! he was- you were- tommy got burnt! this is why things are never- are never talked about! he can’t-” ranboo put’s his hand on tubbo’s shoulder and the goat hybrid falls silent. you pause when he meets your eyes, seeing nothing but sadness and anger, but tommy pokes your shoulder and you continue on.

you hear michael ask as you leave, “is mimi goin’ to help them, now? I pw- promised i’d hold his hand, though...”

... you’ll ask about that oddly adorable nickname later. no time to waste.

“hannah is definitely in the worst condition. she got a bloodvine slashed across her eyes.”

you’d expect tommy to react in some way, a wince or a pained hiss, but all he does is nod. “how deep is it?”

“deep enough to save her eyes, i think, but i... i don’t think she’ll be seeing, anytime soon.”

tommy hums in reply, idly clicking his claws together, and your mind drifts to his current appearance. it’s clear he’s copied this appearance from sam nook, and you find yourself wondering where the creeper aspects of his form are hidden. it’s different from what you’re used to; a whale, different from wilbur’s own orca appearance, (if you recall correctly, he took the form of a fin whale hybrid, unable to choose the variant of the species he took. you aren’t surprised he’d get the speediest one.) and sometimes a goat, after tubbo. (a nubian to the other boy’s british alpine. this one still surprises you sometimes, seeing how independent the young omni-shapeshifter tries to be, but then he’d cling to wilbur and tubbo. he’d cling but he’d try to hide it. he used to cling to you, too. the others would poke fun at him, but you’d only lay your arm over his shoulders and hug him closer. you wonder if, if you tried that now, he would burn.)

when tommy speaks up, his voice is scratchy, clearly trying his best to swallow down his emotions, “is, is sam here?”

you manage to hold back a wince, barely. you think he would likely rather go netherite mining than talk to either sam or puffy, given his earlier reaction to your (insensitive, call it what it was, you let

your emotions get ahead of you and you hurt him.) probing, but you can't help but ask, "yes, he's with puffy. do you want to see her first?"

"no. i don't want to see her if sam's there."

"what?"

"i don't want to see him."

it takes every fiber of your being not to question the boy again. it takes even more to not go straight to your room and get him a long fluffy cape to bundle him up in, despite the (cloak? poncho?) cape he's already wearing. you know he wouldn't accept it though, even without the rift caused by the earlier incident.

okay. back on track. you're a monarch with injured people underneath your roof, and they're your top priority, first and foremost.

"okay. ghostbur is- i'm gonna be honest, we have no clue where he is."

tommy turns to you, raising his eyebrow in judgment, and again, you barely hold back a wince. "soon after puffy got him inside, he just kind of... faded? i'm sure foolish is willing to help you look, though, what with his 'god of the dead' thing going on. or something."

"or something." tommy shrugs. "nah, i'll handle the living first. he's already dead, not much i can do for him."

and then the hallway is silent, sans the click of your heels. you look to tommy again, opening your mouth to attempt small talk, and stop. the silence isn't comfortable. but it isn't bad, either. it's probably better you let the tension rest than attempt to stir the waters. but. you know you should apologize.

it takes you a few tries; it feels like your throat simply doesn't want to open. you stop walking. tommy drifts a few feet ahead of you, bobbing back and idly spinning to face you as though moving through water. he cocks his head at you, and you swallow before speaking.

“i’m... i’m sorry about earlier, tommy. truly. i shouldn’t have pushed you like that.”

tommy scoffs, and whatever nerves you had built up nearly collapsed. “yea, you shouldn’t have. and, uh- someone’s about to open that door.”

tommy motions with his head to the door behind you, and as you turn to face it, it creaks open, sam nook poking his head into the hallway.

《 ... HELLO, THE_ERET ... SORRY TO INTERRUPT YOUR ROUTE ... BUT I HEARD YOUR APPROACHING FOOTSTEPS AND WAS WONDERING IF YOU HAD ANY NEWS OF TOMMYINNIT FOR ME, YET ... 》

you hear tommy draw in a sharp breath and do your best to smile at the android.

“he doesn’t know...?”

your smile strains. “ah, no, not yet, nook. i’m sorry. we were just on our way to check on hannah for a moment.”

《 ... WE? ... YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE MY OPTICS REGISTER, THE_ERET ... 》

right, yea. nook couldn’t see ghostbur. he likely can’t see tommy either. he definitely wouldn’t have asked about tommy if he could see him, too. you turn to look at the ghost but his eyes are trained on nook, ears down and lip bitten. his hands twitch and he leans forward, like he wants to grab nook’s hand, before he’s leaning back and crossing his arms once more. his eyes are averted, and your sympathy for the boy nearly makes you lose your breath.

“he can’t see me, can he.”

it’s not a question. you don’t answer.

“don’t tell him.”

what?

“if he- if he can’t see me, and no one’s told him already, there’s really no point. i’d just be getting my hopes up. i, i doubt he’d wanna see me anyways, considering i haven’t even *tried* to visit him in months. so, just- i’m not here.”

there that word is again. months. you didn’t want to think about it earlier, and with how quickly the changeling had passed over it, you had found it easy to ignore. but, prime, you wish he would elaborate, because you’re really hoping the conclusion you’re drawing is incorrect.

surely he’s just counting his time trapped with dream, as well. tommy is the kind of person who’d blame himself for that, despite it being out of his control, and never voice his guilt. surely he just means his time trapped with the tyrant. surely you’re just reading too far into the ghost’s words. prime, you hope that’s the case.

《 ... THE_ERET ... ARE YOU OKAY? 》

you can feel when tommy turns his gaze to you. he’s not glaring, but it’s not exactly a soft look, either.

“i’m fine, nook. sorry, that was just a little slip up. i’m gonna check on ponk, do you mind waiting out here?”

“you could send him off to michael,” tommy whispers.

“or- more people arrived. more friends of tommy. one of them, michael, is very young. think you’d want to meet him?”

《 ... IF YOU WOULD LIKE ... I SHALL GIVE YOU AND YOUR FRIEND WHO IS DEFINITELY NOT HERE SOME PRIVACY WITH DROPSBYPONK ... IF I AM NOT RECALLED, I SHALL RETURN WITHIN THE HOUR ... 》

you chuckle nervously, but if sam nook is willing to play along, so are you. “thanks, nook. i’ll be sure to call you back when i’m done.”

and then nook is walking down the hall, and you step into the room. tommy stays floating out in the hallway, looking after nook with a blank face, before turning and floating into the room after you.

“well, alright then. i guess i’ll just...?” tommy motions his arms towards ponk, and you nod. ponk is still asleep at the moment, weakness potions keeping him in a sleepy state, so it’s easy enough for tommy to undo the wrappings and check ponk’s stitches. you get him the necessary supplies while he checks the stitching; sterilized needles, surgical scissors, forceps, silk sutures, and, of course, gloves.

his blank mask cracks the slightest bit, lips pursed and eyebrows drawn. “...is this silk?”

“uh, yea.”

“this kind of suture needs to be nylon.”

“oh.”

“...this stitch job is shit, big liege.”

the nickname and comment startles a laugh out of you, but before you can reply, tommy is already slipping the gloves on and cutting through your hastily-done stitching. “get me some nylon, please.”

by the time you’ve found and handed over the nylon sutures, tommy removed the silk sutures and is dabbing at the cut with a small square of gauze, likely splashed with a disinfectant. he’s quick to situate the needle into the holder and leans in close to focus on his work. not wanting to stare over his shoulder, you lean back and move to sit in the one chair in the entire room.

it’s silent. you know you should let the kid work, so you keep your mouth shut, but it’s the deafening kind of quiet. the kind that makes your ears buzz and feel like they’re seconds from popping, and you wouldn’t say you hate it, hate is a strong word, but you greatly dislike it.

“...thank you for coming, tommy, really.”

tommy's ears swivel towards you, but he doesn't look up. you don't expect him to speak again, either, but today is just full of surprises.

“did you really not know that karl knew?” he asks, voice softer than you've ever heard, and you stare for a moment before nodding your head- and then remembering that tommy's eyes are glued to his work, and answer “no, i didn't.”

a dismissive sniff, followed by him leaning back and re-wrapping ponk's arm. “alright.”

“wh- you're done already?”

“what, did you expect anything else? underestimate me? me? big man tommyinnit? if chat were here right now, they'd call you a wrongen. they'd fuckin' eat you alive”

the casual way he speaks makes your heart clench. you don't know why; you should be happy that he's acting normal around you. but who's to say what tommy's normal is, other than himself?
“who?”

“don't worry about it. but if your sutures were that shit, i should probably move onto hannah, huh?”

you stand from your seat and walk to the door. tommy floats behind you, absentmindedly flinging his red-stained gloves in the nearby trash.

“yes, lets. she's right down there, just five doors-”

“wait,” tommy says, ears swivelling in every direction. he spins to look behind you, then again to look down the hall. “i'm like, ninety percent sure i just heard glass breaking. yea, like, a solid ninety-eight percent,”

and then a door gets slammed open, puffy and punz rolling across the floor. puffy has a hand pressed to her bleeding side, head getting pulled around by punz, who has one of puffy's horns held in their white-knuckled grip.

“oh, shit-”

and then sam is there, grabbing punz by the hood and throwing them back into the room. puffy almost gets yanked with them, but with a kick to punz’s chest, she’s released.

without blinking, tommy turns to you and says “i don’t get paid enough for this. you said five doors down, right?” and then doesn’t wait for an answer.

let her fall/let the captain see too far/gone she cannot be helped you need to kill her/make her bleed

it’s not hard to break into the castle. a quick pearl up to the window, grabbing onto the sill before you can drop, breaking it with the handle of your axe, and jumping inside. easy enough. and then you notice two things; one, you won’t have to look for puffy, as she’s right in front of you. two, she’s not alone, awesamdude at her side with his weapon already raised.

“punz?” the captain asks. her ears are perked in surprise, but you can see her fingers reaching for a weapon she doesn’t have.

“sup.” you say before lunging for her. sam is quick to step in the way, all netherite armor and polished prismatic, and you duck and roll under his dominant arm, swiftly avoiding his trident and easily slipping past the warden.

let her/dry so that may feed

getting up from your roll, you’re met with a swift kick to the face from puffy, which likely would have been enough to knock you out had you not downed a strength potion before pearling up. you heave up your axe, only for sam to interlock the prongs of his trident with the head from behind. you’d tug, but you know how strong sam is, so instead you let it fall backwards, going with the trident, and likely almost hitting sam if his surprised yelp is anything to go by.

when puffy kicks again, it’s easy to see it coming. when the hoof goes for your head, you press your palm to the side and push with her momentum, ducking your head in the opposite direction, and before she can react- before sam can react- you jab your hand into the growing bloodstain in

puffy's side. she immediately doubles over with a choked bleat, instinctively curling around her wound.

you hear a guttural creeper hiss behind you, the scent of gunpowder filling the room, and you grab puffy by the horns, yanking her around so she's between you and the creeper hybrid. you don't see it but you feel when something hits puffy's back, (ha, friendly fire, sucks to suck!) and the power behind the hit sends you both slamming into the door, likely breaking the handle. you both roll for a moment, grip still tight on the ram's horns, but before you can regain your bearings sam grabs your hood.

he yanks you away from puffy, and you're *almost* able to drag her with you. almost. she kicks out again, hoof hitting the center of your chest right below your breastbone and you almost throw up right then and there. you think you hear a crack, but that's a concern for later. that being said, it feels like your lungs collapse, and you lose whatever grip you had on puffy's horn.

and then sam throws you clear over his shoulder, right back out the window you entered from.

the jagged glass still in the sill slices down your sides and legs when you fall through, almost able to catch yourself by hooking your calf around the sill, but all that it does is cause an even deeper gouge on said calf. if you didn't know your regenerate abilities were extreme enough to heal your muscles, nevermind regenerate limbs, you'd be worried of your achilles tendon getting sliced.

still out of breath, your entire body feeling like some patches are on fire and others are numb, you struggle to right yourself mid-air, barely managing to tuck yourself and prepare for a roll. your intention is to shoot up, grab a pearl, and get the hell out of there. there's no way the rest of the castle isn't aware of your presence, and you know karl brought that enderman boy and the goat kid with the nukes. but your vision dances with black splotches, and your head feels light. before you can even regain your footing you get thrown sideways, arms locking around your midsection and landing in a heap of limbs on the ground.

someone just fucking tackled you.

let him kill him, escape, come back to me

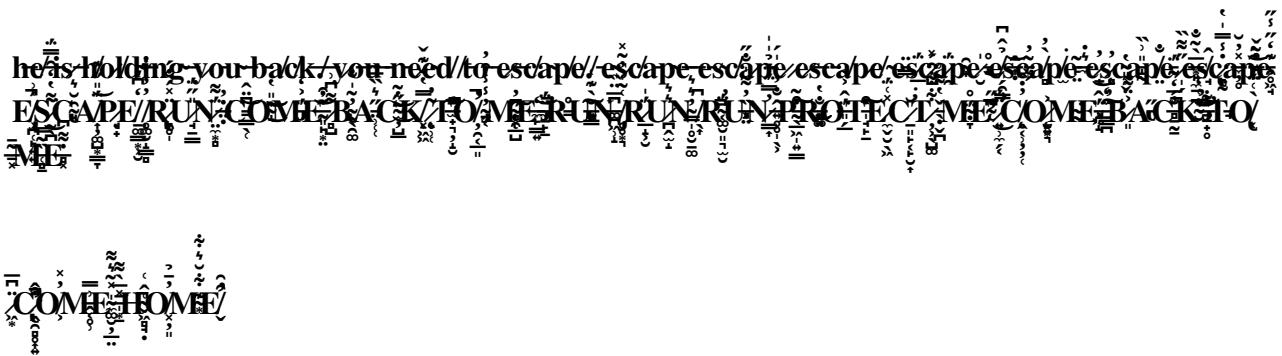
you try to push yourself up, straining against the weight of the person clinging to your chest like a squid. you can feel something sharp pressing into your hip, but your body is in so much pain, you can't identify it. you look back at them- at him.

sapnap. sapnap just tackled you. *the hell did he come from-*

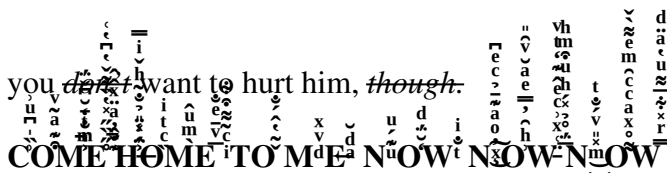
“where the fuck do you think you’re going, asshole!?”

“let me *go-*”

“you think you and dad and pops can just- just get possessed by some soft-boiled *bitch* and leave me!? fuck no! you’re fucking staying right here-”



you don’t think. you swing your hand down towards your brother, hitting him across the head, but his grip tightens. so you hit him again. and again. and again. you need to kill puffy. you need to escape. you need to run. you want to hug nick. you want to kill him. you need to *run*.



you hit him again. you don’t know if the blood on your knuckles is his or yours. you think he says something, but you can’t hear him over the static in your head, the egg screeching for your return. “i’m trying, i’m *trying-*”

then someone has their hands wrapped around your gills, and you know it’s not sapnap because his arms are still locked in an iron grip around your torso. but this person grabs them, all three frills, and *squeezes*.

it hurts so much. you can’t breathe. you feel your head jerk, like someone’s shaking you, and you think the person who grabbed you is ripping you away from sapnap. by your gills. it hurts. you wonder if this is how it felt when you grabbed puffy’s horns.

DO/LE/DO/IT/ESCAPE/GOME/BACK/DO/IT/COME/HOME/PROTECT/ME/COME
BACK/GOME/BACK/USE/THE/KNIFE

you don't think. you grab the knife from your sleeve- why didn't you use it to escape from sarnap? why didn't you use it when you were in close combat range with puffy? why can't you remember it being there in the first place?- and slice it through your gills like butter.

the pain is blinding, but they'll grow back. they will, they always do, there's no reason for them not to now. you grab your enderpearl, going to throw it without aim, when an arrow pierces through your hand, and it must go all the way through because the pearl shatters in your palm. if you had the energy and situational awareness, you would have noticed sam taking careful aim from the window.

you're grabbed again, pushed to the ground with a knee digging into your back. you think you hear someone say "stop it! stop hurting them!" but you can't tell. you reverse your grip on the knife and swing it backwards, only for what feels like a metal clamp to close around your wrist. it squeezes, and your bones feel like they're grinding together, and you have no other choice than to drop your knife.

you try to buck out of their grip, but whoever has you pinned is insanely strong. your remaining potions, shattered likely from sarnaps tackle if the pain that happened during that is anything to go by, are useless to you. you barely register the sound of approaching footsteps.

I/can't/protect/you/where/you/are/going

stay/strong/my/child

"someone knock them out!" you definitely hear someone say, and try to twist around to throw them off or break their grip, to little avail. all it gets you is your arm twisted painfully. you barely manage to slide your not-grabbed arm out from under yourself, trying to ignore the arrow (partially snapped, likely from the second time you were grabbed,) still sticking through your hand, before something heavy is dropped down on your head.

you barely have time to think, 'prime, this went to shit,' before you're out cold.

karl's arms wrap around your own, preventing you from running forward, but your eyes are glued to the unconscious form of your brother. you know you could fight karl off easily, but you could never knowingly hurt karl or q. punz's gills are already beginning to grow back, a slow process that you do *not* want to watch. sam nook lifts himself from punz's form, nodding to quackity in thanks. quackity, who had used the blunt side of his axe to knock punz out, scaring you half to death when you saw the weapon lifted above punz's form.

quackity turns to you. he's breathing heavy, eyes wide, and he opens his mouth to speak.

"where the *hell* did you come from?"

karl releases your arms with a wheeze, doubling over with a tired groan, and you sputter.

"what? what do you mean? you're the one who called me-"

"yea, like two hours ago! sarnap! you just came outta nowhere and tackled punz, dude! ahaha, that- i thought they were gonna get away, but then you just jump down and snatch them like a football player-"

"quackity, i love you, but can we *please* help punz before they heal around the glass in their side?"

"what, what?"

"yea, i'm pretty sure some potions broke in that fall," you say, kneeling down at punz's side and just... looking. most of their white sweater is stained red. you think hate this server.

"no no, wait, you *love* me?"

"quackity, he's literally engaged to us."

"he *loves* me! karl he loves me, i'm gonna cry, i love you both so much-"

you don't notice eret sticking his head out the window (holy shit, did punz jump from three stories up?) until sam nook waves to the monarch and you follow his robotic gaze.

“what the fuck happened!?” eret shouts, sam barely visible behind the monarch, (likely helping puffy with whatever injuries she may have sustained in what looks to be her assassination attempt,) and you resolve to just flop down on the ground next to your passed-out brother.

Chapter End Notes

did eret burn tommy? is this linked to her herobrine eyes? will it happen in the future? who knows. i do. will i tell? no.

punz making a baller fucking mercenary bc they're an axolotl and dont need as many regen/health potions bc axolotls can regrow shit. axolotl punz i just thought of you today but i love you so much.

mmm thinkin bout osmp. thinkin bout how avians used to be able to fly like elytrans but something forced them out of the skies. what forced the avians from the skies but left the apians and elytrans alone? how long have they been grounded, to be able to thrive on land (with that speed they got) but still need the sky (the 86+ block high sleep requirement) to survive?? is it still around?? please i'm so curious.

also not too important to the story, but wilbur is trans and had a one night stand with seapeekay that lead to fundy. don't think about how this is the fic equivalent to a wailord and skitty making an egg

mm yall im finding it really hard to sympathize with sam after today's (4/29) stream. i am both livid and void. not pog.

i am SLAMMING MY DESK, WHY DOES AO3 KEEP PUTTING BULLETPPOINTS IN MY CHAPTERS

time and time, i play the empath

Chapter Summary

foolish, trying desperately not to give a touch-starved & repulsed tommy a hug:
HERES A PICKLE

tommy, tired, after getting one (1) second of positive touch and nearly collapsing at the seams: hhng

Chapter Notes

WARNINGS ARE IN BOTTOM NOTES. CHECK THAT SHIT, I ALMOST THREW UP WRITING THIS.

v v sorry for the wait, i got fuckin whammied by a migraine and the dreaded menstrual cycle and the vaccine, and i didn't touch my docs for a week and this was practically written in a few days, so i hope it's up to par. gosh, this is a run on sentence but it's literally just my thoughts so. who cares, not me. that's a lie i do care, help- if this seems like it's kinda hoping around, that's bc it is. bad memory + having to take long breaks between each bout of writing bc of shit, this is probably inconsistent as hell

not happy with this, but im also indifferent. and i feel bad about taking so long, sorry yall :[you can SEE when i stopped giving a shit about the gloves. like holy SHIT, garbage chapter. wheres ghostbur? i want ghostbur back. ghostbur please give phantommy a hug please im beg- [gunshots]

chapter title from "one day" by lovejoy :]

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

eret doesn't follow you when you continue down the hall. and while part of you wants to hunch your shoulders and stick by someone you know, but you don't trust yourself not to snap at her. your wrist burns from where she had grabbed it, and despite your glove having- what, regenerated?- you still feel like her hand is locked in an iron grip.

it's not hard to find hannah's room. you slip inside, sparing hannah a glance (three bags are connected to her iv; one with what looks to be clear water, likely a saline solution or sugar solution. another is filled with a light magenta, the telltale color of regeneration potions, and the last is an inky purple, a weakness potion. they're likely both watered down, as to not harm or overdose hannah.) before heading to the cabinets on the walls to check for tools and gloves.

boxes of gloves, clean forceps, and untouched gauze greet you. you don't know why or how eret

has (what you're guessing to be) each room so well stocked, but you're not going to complain.

dragging a chair from the side of the room, you set it beside hannah's bedside and sit, looking down at the stained bandages wrapping the upper half of her face. you clench your fists, careful not to puncture the gloves, and, after a moment of hesitation, you gently peel the bandages from hannah's eyes, trying your best not to stick your tongue out and cringe childishly.

the first thing you notice is how messy it is; clearly, whoever was on medic duty before karl was sent to fetch you had no clue what to do. but, to give them credit, neither do you. tala and felicity could only teach you so much, and you *cannot* let yourself think about felicity right now, lest you lose focus (you can't let yourself think about the past, whether it be four minutes ago or four years ago.) on your work and accidentally hurt hannah further.

it doesn't take you too long to notice that, as it turns out, you can't quite blame the castle's medics for the mess, because it almost seems like hannah just won't stop bleeding. you bite your tongue and continue to attempt to clean her up enough to see what exactly is wrong because there's *literally* no way she's been endlessly bleeding for days on end without anyone noticing, let alone her bleeding out.

you don't think hannah has hemophilia, because eret likely would have rushed you to hannah's bedside immediately, rather than allow you to look over ponk. you also don't think that she could be bleeding because her immune system is doing its best to eject something.

your arms start to shiver, and you're quick to move the forceps away from hannah's face before you're wracked with a full-body shiver.

deep breaths. in, hold, out.

you shouldn't have snapped at eret like that. you shouldn't have let such a large crack show, in front of so many people, in front of *michael*, shouldn't have let yourself snap about fundy, you were yelling at them about staying in their own lane, so soon after stepping out of yours.

but, should fundy not count as 'your lane'? you may not be related by blood or by law, but he's wilbur's son, you helped felicity deliver fundy and you were there as wilbur screamed in pain, as he bled, as he held his newborn son, unaware that he would discover himself and want to be a son and not a daughter just as wilbur had discovered himself.

but! you were never close to him. you have no say. you may have been brothers in arms, but not family, never uncle and nephew, wilbur may have almost been a brother to you, and sally and felicity sisters, but the only family you could ever rely on was lost years ago. maybe they left you on purpose. you were a drain on the resources, deo and wisp struggling to get food and drink and medicine to help with your low blood pressure, all you ever were was selfish-

you're selfish. just as eret said. just as tubbo said. just as *dream* said.

your wrist *burns* .

you hear someone yell outside and your entire body jumps, heart shooting up into your throat and heart rushing in your ears. you open your eyes and almost expect to see crying obsidian and lava. it's not; it's just cream walls and a white floor and a red hannah- she's still bleeding.

you don't know what the people outside are yelling about now, (prime knows you're too tired to get involved anymore, past putting your experience as a healer into practice) just something about punz and chains and glass. but you use the sound of their yelling and the colors of the room to ground yourself through the overbearing static. you want to dig your claws into the burnt-in handprint on your wrist, but you refrain. your roots are, thankfully, silent.

you're not going to tell yourself that you're okay, because that's stupid. people only talk aloud like that to themselves in movies or books in a manufactured way for other characters to learn what's going on, or get them on the steps to learning. but you're built different, and despite your chronic protagonist syndrome, this is real like; it's not a book, it's not a movie, it's not a game despite what the communicators say. you don't want to be the protagonist, or the deuteragonist, but you think you might be the antagonist, don't you? or whatever else there is. you're just *you*.

so, being just you and (just barely) redoing the ever-rusting chain secured tightly around your heart, you ignore the pain in your wrist and replace the gloves you hadn't even realized you'd thrown off. giving a glance around the room, you notice the bloody latex slumped against the far wall, a splat and smear on the wall accompanying it.

give another look around the room, looking for your lost forceps, and find them in a completely different corner of the room, accompanied by another scatter of blood drops. you ignore them with a disgruntled sigh; disinfecting those can wait for later, a replacement will do fine, hannah is still bleeding and you've wasted enough time.

as you grab clean forceps and snap the new gloves over your hands (fully human hands, to avoid your claws from piercing the fingertips,) a little voice in the back of your head- not chat, however

much you miss them- reminds you of something ranboo had once said.

'i'll keep all my emotions right here, and then one day i'll die.'

you can't help but snort, lips upturning into a small smile, and shove down the bitter feeling trying to claw its way to the surface of your chest. you wonder if ranboo would come back as a ghost as you have, before remembering that he has a surplus of totems. you kinda wish you could have just died and stayed dead. like, yea, you're technically dead right now, but you're still aware. you know he killed you. but the memory around it is fuzzy, and you're pretty sure you lost a bit of time, but you also wish *everything* was fuzzy. maybe then it'd be easier. but at least you're more aware than ghostbur.

you sit back down in front of hannah. give your limbs a little wiggle, telling yourself it's to check for any shivers or jolts but knowing it really does nothing. you gently wipe at hannah's face, trying to clean the oozing blood, trying to clear her cheeks and hair of the red, before gently tabbing at the ineffective clots on her eyes.

except, they aren't clots. you pause in confusion, gently pressing at them once more, and, yup- too solid. worryingly solid. swallowing down the urge to empty your stomach in the nearest bin, you grab the new forceps and attempt to pull the not-clot from the mess on hannah's face. despite being so far from the ground, you can feel your own allium roots begin to writhe in warning and irritation. it's distracting, so you do your best to hush them, but they aren't like chat; no solid voices, just a projection of simple vibes.

the definitely-not-a-blood clot doesn't budge. you give it a small tug, eyebrows drawing together as disgust and worry fills in your chest, and then it breaks off with a small *snap*. your roots recoil and hiss in disgust, and you find yourself doing the same. your anxiety spikes to an almost suffocating amount, and you do your best to swallow down the nausea once more.

it was a seed. a budding bloodvine, once latched onto- *into*, it was *inside of her*- hannah, curling in on itself like a hermit crab attempting to curl into its shell. it's dragging something with it, and upon noticing a light pink, almost dirty-looking viscous liquid joins the blood on her wound, you realize that it has ripped off a piece of hannah's sclera.

"holy fuck-"

your body moves on instinct, flinging it across the room, forceps and all. it hits the wall, leaving yet another blood splatter and falling to the floor with a clatter. you, having rushed to the trash bin near the door the moment the forceps went flying, dash for the bin before your stomach can empty

on the tiles.

except there isn't anything *to* empty, you're dead and you've been dead for a while, so there's not much for you to cough up besides starchy saliva, bile, and what you think may be blood. it's painful, stealing your breath from your throat and making you curl in on yourself, nearly warping the frame of the bin as you grip it and hold it close.

you're left taking deep breaths, wiping the tears from your eyes and bile from the edges of your mouth. the air stings. you really wish this stuff would just pixelate away like your blood seems to nearly always do, but you guess you aren't so lucky this time.

you straighten your back, cool your face, and spin on your heels and walk over to the cabinet once more to grab yet another pair of forceps. (you don't even notice that you're *walking* and not floating, boots sounding as though you're walking on pillows and blankets rather than the room's tile.)

grabbing another piece of gauze and wiping more blood from hannah's face, you try your best not to look at her pierced eye (you are not equipped for this. you are not equipped for this in the slightest, holy *shit*,) and, lo and behold, more red clumps sit in her wound.

“hoo, okay. let's, uh, let's hope these other ones aren't... attached...”

so much for not talking aloud.

you sit back down. you hold the new forceps over her eyes, slowly moving to grab another seed. then you pull away, standing up with a shaky exhale. you stride towards the cabinets *again* to grab a metal tray.

you stand there for a moment before sitting down again. your hands don't shake, but they feel like they should be. you pinch another seed, pulling it from hannah's face and dropping it into the tray, cringing as it curls into itself just like the other one had. this time, thankfully, it doesn't take anything with it.

doing this feels like it's physically hurting you. like you're hypersensitive but it's in your bones, starting from your fingertips and arching down your arms, spreading through your entire body.

you look back down at hannah. and then you just stare for a moment, and then a vine starts wiggling, and you have to put the forceps down (don't throw them, you can't just keep throwing everything-) before quickly pacing to the trash bin and, once again, throw up.

“hey, t- tommy?”

this might as well happen.

you don't see who enters, what with your head in a bin, but you feel a large hand settle on your back and jerk away from the touch, however soft it was. it leaves an uncomfortable tingle down your back, like getting goosebumps while your skin is hypersensitive.

“my bad, sorry- are, are you okay?”

peeking up through your hair, you see gold and grey skin and brilliant green eyes.

“ow do.” you greet foolish. your voice is shot, and you do your best to swallow down the bile you can still feel trying to push its way up your throat. he's just crouching there, beside you, staring.
“...whaddaya want?”

“um, puffy and punz- they just got here, dunno if you knew-”

“yea, i saw them.”

“they reopened puffy's wound. and healed over some glass in their side.”

that sounds much easier. you'd much rather be there than here, picking glass out of someone's side than seeds from someone's eyes. and then that thought makes you gag again, and you dry heave into the bin.

“sorry, sorry, karl shouldn't have gotten you if you were gonna react like this-”

“excuse me?” he doesn't mean it like that. obviously he doesn't, his eyes are filled with concern

and his fins are curled in worry, but you can feel your hackles raise at his unintentional jab at your medical skills. “it’s not my fault those fuckin’ blood bitch seeds stab her eyes with they vines! i don’t know how to stitch a fuckin’ eyeball, what the shit, the fuckin’- why’s the liquid inside eyes called a humor? it’s not very humorous to me, when it’s threatening to gush everywhere and take the lense with it-”

you’re rambling. when foolish jumps to his feet, you feel your body jolt back on instinct, feeling like ice is rushing through your veins, *people don’t like it when you ramble because you get loud and you’re annoying and no one cares*, but he rushes to hannah’s side instead of turning and hitting you, so after being frozen for a moment, you slowly push yourself up to follow him. standing makes the corners of your vision darken and you’re vividly (and irritatingly) reminded of your blood pressure. you’re literally dead. you shouldn’t have blood. not pog.

“oh,” foolish says, poking at one of the visible seeds, and you hiss and swat away his hands. (now you’ll have to replace your gloves again. great.) he only looks at you for a second before once again going to poke the seeds- maybe to pull them out with his own claws?- but that shit is *so* unsanitary, you thought this dude would know better, and you don’t hesitate to echo these thoughts out loud while repeatedly smacking foolish away with your gloves.

“don’t just fuckin’ touch debris in an open wound, dumbass, i thought you were a totem of undying, you should *know* better-”

“okay, okay, sorry-” he raises his hands in surrender, backing a few feet away when you swing for him again, “i just- i used to be more on the ‘death’ side of this all- yea, puffy isn’t doing so great, and we should really get that glass out of her would-be assassin’s side, yknow, but we can’t just leave those seeds in her eyes-”

you’re not gonna ask about the ‘death’ thing. you cross your arms and tap your foot on the ground, tail swaying in poorly concealed annoyance with whatever patience you have left. foolish cuts himself off, looking at you with wide eyes.

“what?”

“are you forgettin’ somethin’?”

he tilts his head, hands coming together to tap at his nails. “um?”

you sigh. “the gloves, foolish, you need gloves.”

“oh,” he says, and upon you pointing to the cabinet holding the supplies, he freezes with another “oh!” and pulls out his communicator.

“what’re you doin’?” you ask him, standing on your tippy-toes (you can literally float. why are you not just floating?) to peek over the freakishly tall totem demigod (he’s even taller than techno and ghostbur and ranboo and sam. you’d make a comment about the men of the server being too tall, but at six foot three yourself, you have no room to speak.)

“just check your communicator dude, i just added you to the group chat.”

“what- a group chat?”

“well, yea, we can’t just send messages to the public channel where the eggpire people could see them, y’know.”

you give up trying to see over the totem’s shoulders, falling back and bouncing on your heels, “just show me, man.”

foolish put’s his communicator away without turning around and opens the cabinets for gloves. you hiss in frustration, stomping past him to get yourself new gloves as well, and throw the old ones into the bin without looking. you return to your seat by hannah’s side but pause; you can float. you should let foolish have the chair. but he just stands on hannah’s other side, leaning down and squinting at the mess of blood, careful not to disrupt her drip.

“ew,” he says, and yea, that’s true. “but no, really, why don’t you just check your communicator?”

you grab the forceps and bend over hannah as well, prodding at what could only be another seed and trying to see if its budding vines have latched onto anything. the thought of causing hannah even *more* damage, after the fuck-up that was you discovering the first seed, physically pains you, and you can feel your tail tingle as if it got goosebumps. “don’t got it.”

if you weren’t digging around someone’s open wound right now, you’d flee from the room *so* fast. you can feel foolish looking at you, and it makes you feel like house spiders are crawling up your back. you gently tug another seed from hannah, the third one so far, and drop it in the tray with the

other.

it's easier, almost, with someone watching you. your movement is jerky, but jerkiness is better than an insistent shaking.

"hey," you say abruptly. foolish had his mouth open, and you think you just cut him off by accident, but you just remembered the seed you had thrown across the room (which is something you don't think should be easily forgotten,) and you don't think it would be smart to leave the seed of a seemingly carnivorous demon plant sitting in a pile of blood. "i threw a seed earlier. it's over there, mind grabbing it?" you say, pointing it out with a nod of your head. you don't see his eyes follow your motion, but you do see his face twist in disgust. he gets up to retrieve it without replying.

it's silent. foolish works to stem the bleeding, careful of the woman's eyes, but in the quietness, your shakiness returns. you pull three more from hannah's face, one of them seemingly attempting to swing its vines at you. the vine, being the plant equivalent of a baby, doesn't reach very far, but if your roots had a mouth they'd be hissing and spitting (metaphorical) venom at the seeds.

you want to shove your head in your hands and tousle your hair until it's nothing but a frizzy mess. you want to drag your claws over your scalp in a poor imitation of a non-hostile touch and calm your shot nerves. but you also don't want to have to get new gloves, again. you resolve to looking down at your lap, fingers clenching with a plastic scrunch from the gloves, trying to just breathe.

and then something green is being shoved into your face. it's too matte to be dreams scales, the man having kept them clean and shining even in prison, but you still flinch back, heart hammering in your ears. your hands snap up to cover your face, almost smacking the object away, but it's pulled from your face rather quickly. you don't drop your hands.

foolish holds the object close to his chest- a sea pickle, it's literally just a *pickle*- giving you a nervous yet understanding smile. you want to bristle, to hiss at him and curse him for scaring you like that, but-

"oh, ah, i'm sorry, i shouldn't have-"

you lunge for the bin again. foolish cringes, gently squeezing the pickle but careful not to crush it, and following you to kneel by your side. he doesn't touch you. you know that you'd flinch if he tried. it *stung* earlier. part of you wishes he would try anyways.

“sorry,” foolish says, voice subdued, and you tiredly wave your hand at him.

“not your fault.”

“still-”

“shut up, it’s not your fault. what, you want me to go all ‘oh, i’m tommyinnit, you’re a bitch, memememe, fuck you’ mode? literally die, i’m *tired*.”

foolish snorts, pickle-squeezing slowing down, and you find yourself smiling in return, resting your temple on the brim of the bin and taking a moment to breathe. foolish hesitates before slowly extending his hand, offering you the pickle again. you lift your head from the brim and take the offered sea pickle, careful to not graze foolish’s fingers, (he lifts his hands to drop the pickle down into yours. he beams at you when you extend your hands to take it, and his smile alone is almost as bright as michael’s. almost.) and hold the sea pickle yourself. (after taking off your gloves, of course. you didn’t even notice the man take his off.)

it’s weird. you’d expect it to be dried out, and it kind of is, but it’s got a solid yet malleable feel to it. you want to just smush it in your hands, squeeze it and let it gush out between your fingers, and it’s just *so* tempting- but this is foolish’s pickle, not yours, so you refrain and just trace the pickle with your fingertip, careful of your claws.

“... why’re you just carryin’ ‘round a pickle, big man?”

foolish giggles at that, shrugging. “i don’t know. but it’s helping, right?”

it is. it feels like it should be wet, and you’re just idly playing with it. it’s almost like it steals all your focus, and the rolling nausea that was previously overwhelming fades like an afterthought.

“i guess.” you end up saying. foolish, again, beams at you, and it’s so bright you have to look away. then foolish stands, walking back to hannah’s bedside, and your face almost crumples. but foolish just shoots you another reassuring smile, and even though the thought of having to extract more seeds from hannah’s eyes makes you want to jump out the window, you take a moment to breathe before following the man.

ten minutes later, full of bloody gauze and endless encouragement from foolish, you extract two

more seeds from hannah's wound. unable to find anymore despite your hesitant probing, (hannah's eye is *right there*, you're so scared of causing her even more damage than the egg had done. how do you stitch an eye?) you rebandage hannah's face and sit back with a cheek-puffing sigh, glaring at the seeds in the bloody tin.

the room is silent. foolish raises his hands to clap, and you slouch further back in the chair, before lightly releasing your form to slip through it and lay on the floor instead. your eyes fall shut, and you'd like to imagine that the tiles beneath you are cool to the touch. you hear a few footsteps approach, and then foolish is leaning over you.

"hey," he says. you flop your hand at him. "i'm sorry."

guilt bubbles in your chest, and you push yourself up with a roll of your eyes.

"already said it's not your fault, big man."

"no no, not about earlier, about what eret said. i should have stopped her, and i'm sorry."

"oh." you say eloquently, and when foolish smiles at you again, it's nervous. "no, it's okay. i mean, i shouldn't have snapped back at her like that, i said some stuff i shouldn't have, and what she said was right, and i'm obviously in the wrong, because someone like *eret* doesn't just snap at people for no reason-"

foolish takes your hand in his. it stings, and it's uncomfortable, but it doesn't burn like eret's touch did. it *feels*, but it doesn't hurt.

foolish says, "she's wrong." with such conviction and understanding that it leaves you feeling lightheaded and floaty.

you wish you could believe him. foolish, with his big kind emerald eyes, with his forgiving naivety, but who are you to berate or comment on one for that? pot, meet kettle. mm, but you don't want to think about that right now. so you focus on the pins-and-needles feeling that foolish gives you, and let him pull you to your feet.

when you get upright, your feet settle on the ground rather than float, and if foolish notices, he doesn't say anything. he releases your hand, and much to your mortification, you almost whine at

the loss of contact. that being said, you swallow down the noise as best you can and rub your hand over the burn eret left, focusing on that sting instead of the lack thereof leftover from foolish.

you must not have swallowed it down as well as you hoped, because foolish is immediately raising his hands and leaning towards you. he looks devastated, like he just accidentally kicked a puppy, and you would bristle at the implications if it weren't your own thoughts jumping to conclusions. chat would have chastised you like a disappointed parent the moment that thought even crossed your mind.

but then the door is opening behind you, and you jump away from foolish whilst spinning on your heels and bobbing back into the air to face the door. it's only cracked open, with long, sharp fingers curled around the doorframe.

“uh, um-”

it's ranboo. your chest loosens (you hadn't even noticed it tighten) upon hearing his nervous mumbles, and you have to physically restrain yourself from ripping the door open and throwing yourself into his arms. that'd be pretty weird, and you don't want to put the guy on the spot like that. however, that needy whine happens again, and this time it's even *harder* to hold in, and based on foolish's face falling even more and ranboo throwing the door open, you think you failed yet again.

man, one person touches you and suddenly you're all soft and. you don't know. you can't really describe it; it's like you want ranboo or foolish or anyone (that's a lie, not anyone, you have two very specific people in mind, those being tubbo and michael) to hug you, and you want to feel their arms around you. you want to feel the pressure that comes with contact, and you want to be held, but the thought of being held makes your chest hurt and your brain turn to jelly.

you don't like this feeling. it's sudden and it's stupid and it *sucks* .

“m gonna go help ponk,” you mumble, turning tail and ducking into the walls before foolish or ranboo can say anything.

Chapter End Notes

k so. EYE TRAUMA AND BLOOD AND DEBRIS INSIDE WOUNDS. starts around "the first thing you notice is how messy it is" and pretty much continues till ranboo shows up. it's just. the search i did for this. i hate it here

me, writing foolish stimming with the sea pickle and feeling my own palms and fingertips tingle: gosh i wish that was me
also me, at tommy, looking up videos of eye dissections and trying not to throw up myself: nausea be upon ye

this chapter was gonna be longer, and the second part was gonna be a sarnap & punz focused segment (with a side of karlnapity, and maybe ranboo) but i don't wanna leave yall hanging, so here's this. the hugs are gonna happen soon, i promise. i want foolish to hug tommy, but i also want his first hug to go to ranboo. help

let me know what you think about tommy's apparent problems with touch, your comments feed my soul, even if i take some time to respond. deadass i see long comments and i almost burst into tears on the spot; embarrassing for when im in public lmao

try not to mistake what you have with what you hate

Chapter Summary

tommyinnit and the mortifying ordeal of people knowing he exists

Chapter Notes

dogwater? this is actual dogwater? i despise this chapter but its been like two weeks without an update??? disjointed dogwater that misses things because i choose to go from the pov of an actual baby??

ayo so this chapter is like, only a third of what i planned it to be? it was gonna stay on michael's pov for longer and end at callahan's pov, so like. callahan chapter soon, pog?

little explanation for the layout of the medbay: an entire segment of eret's castle is dedicated to it, with the bottom floor being where people are first treated and where the most emergency medical equipment lays. second and third are where the patients are moved once their injuries have been dealt with, because it's safer; in a sense that it's harder to breach. until punz lmao. did i think this through? no. it's very scuffed.

i didn't run this through grammarly. i've barely so much as glanced at whats already been written. i am so sorry for those of yall that read this

chapter title from "c'mon" by panic! at the disco

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

“*sam!*” panda glowers, stomping after the tall green man as they enter, honk and big q on their trail, “there’s literally glass in their side! at least fucking be careful, you-”

“punz is literally an axolotl. they’ll be fine.”

panda throws his hands up, sparks flying from his mouth as he bares his teeth, “that doesn’t mean they don’t feel pain, you inconsiderate douchebag!”

the person thrown over sam’s shoulders moans in pain, and sam's eyes soften the slightest bit. but then his eyes dart to the red stains on the person’s white sweater, and he turns away, glare from the lights hiding his eyes once more.

you don't like it when his eyes aren't visible. it makes him look intimidating, adding even more to his already imposing height. at least when you can see his eyes, his emotions are more clear, however much he tries to hide them. you don't remember what other time you might have seen him before, but you must have, if you can already read his eyes.

“they tried to kill puffy.”

“they're possessed!”

“that's an explanation, not an excuse.”

big q scoffs and crosses his arms, glaring at sam. “funny coming from *you*, after what you did to ponk-”

it's like watching a game of catch, your gaze jumping from person to person. when a hand places itself upon your shoulder, you barely hold back a jolt, looking up to see bee and boo whispering to each other. after a moment they detach from one another, and bee's hand slides down to curl around yours. he gives you a reassuring squeeze and you press yourself against his leg.

“where's sam nook...?” boo murmurs to honk.

“i sent him off to try and find someone to help..”

boo tilts his head, ears perked up in confusion, but just shrugs. “okay. alright. keep your secrets.” he turns with a shake of his head, sighing at karls nervous giggle. “i'm gonna go check on tommy-er...”

panda, big q, and sam's heads all snap towards boo. bee sighs and tugs you back, placing himself between you and the other occupants of the room.

“good going, boo.”

“i didn't mean to-”

honk sighs a long-suffering and long-winded sigh, and claps to get everyone's attention. Interrupting the two soon-to-be bickering hybrids. "i can explain *lay-ter* ," he stresses, "sam, please bring punz somewhere secure. *but not just a cell*, it doesn't matter if they can heal almost anything, they still need medical help."

sam doesn't move. the tension in the room rises, feeling thick enough to split with a dull butterknife. panda moves to stand in front of honk despite his shorter frame, facing sam head on, and in your humble opinion, the man is not that intimidating compared to the green guy. but he matches sam's stare, hands clenching and a fire (not a metaphor, you don't know how else to describe it,) behind his eyes.

after a moment, sam carries punz out of the room. when panda tries to follow, lips curled, big q and honk both grab one of his hands. he stays by their side, and the fire shrinks just the smallest bit.

"...how did sam even get out there?" boo asks.

honk snorts and waves him off, turning to big q and pandas, but he's interrupted before he can even speak.

a ping rings through the room. everyone glances at the small metal orb in their possessions, but honk is the only one to keep his out.. after taking a moment to read, in which the rest of the room's occupants (barely) stay silent and watch honk with varying levels of confusion and suspicion, he taps a few buttons and the notification is projected for the others in the room to see.

/FoolishG: can someone go to the holy land and get some water? kinda urgent. bring it to hannahs room.

you, being a smallun, can't read.

"sappnap-" honk says, but upon panda's tired glower, honk clears his throat and turns to big q. "alex, could you run to the holy land and get the water?"

"are we just not gonna talk about what ranboo just said?" big q yells, throwing his hands up and scowling.

honk reaches out and grabs his hand. “please.”

big q visibly melts. but then his eyes narrow, and he nods, and before leaving he says “we’re gonna talk about all this later.”

boo leaves in the same direction as foosh and mimi, speeding like a hoglin is on his heels, and accidentally slams the door behind him. a soft ‘sorry!’ sounds from the other side, followed by quieting footsteps.

and then, again, the room is silent. this time you choose to ignore the awkward silence, pulling your hand from bee’s to grab your overall straps and bounce back on your heels.

“karl,” bee says with a barely-there calm, and you cringe on honk’s behalf. “the only reason i’m not interrogating you at axe-point is because there’s much larger stuff going on.” panda scoffs at this, muttering about being serperior at ‘pee-vee-pee’ but honk and bee pay him no mind.

“yea, totally. i’ve been, uh, i’ve been getting that a lot lately, so you all should probably make a line-” honk says, both a nervous and dismissive tilt to his voice, and bee’s eyes narrow.

“you *know* you’ve been acting very sus lately, right?”

honk snorts and says “amongus,” but upon bee’s unimpressed glare and panda’s silence, he clears his throat and mumbles an apology.

panda’s head drops into his hands with a slap. “what the *fuck* is going on? tubbo? tubbo what the hell is happening, i-”

you’re kind of bored now. like, yea, you understand stuff is going on, the adults are stressed, all that mumbo jumbo, but you kinda... don’t want to be here. you want to take a nap. you consider your options; bee is here, talking with panda and honk. theoretically, boo and mimi should be in the same place. so if you look for mimi, you’ll find boo, and both can teleport, so surely they can bring you and bee back home for naps.

your plan is foolproof.

everyone's turned away from you. one of the doors, leading opposite of where mimi left with the white-eyed human and boo later followed, is now closed. the door leading in the opposite direction, away from mimi and boo, is cracked open, and everyone is facing away from it. you aren't too worried about not finding mimi; between his ability to float through walls, and the tiny dark passageways that you can see in the walls, you should be able to find each other quickly. how nice of whoever made this place, to leave shortcuts for tiny people like you!

you slip through the door unnoticed. as for the tunnel, it's easy enough to jiggle the screws loose, leaving a corner screw in so that you can lift it up the grate like a trapdoor.

"wait," bee says, voice muffled from where you're crawling into the much too dark space, "where's michael?"

you're off and down the corner before anyone can even peek into the hallway.

ponk's room is quiet when you slip through the wall. he's still asleep, lips parted and breathing softly. you've never seen the doctor without his mask before now, and he looks younger than you had imagined him in your head.

you just end up floating there for five minutes, listening to his breathing. you know you should help puffy, or help punz, or maybe even look for ghostbur, but the thought of going anywhere, of talking to anyone, makes your chest constrict almost as much as throwing up had.

you don't want to see sam; you know he's with puffy. you don't think you could keep your mouth in check if you were to encounter the man, almost a father-figure, fearful of whatever venom would pour from your lips before you can think. you want to blame him, to curse him out and cry and make sure he comprehends the fate he had left you to. (but how can you, when you yourself barely remember? you can't remember forgetting something if you were the only one to experience it. if there's no one there to remember it, did it ever truly happen?) but you also want him to wrap his arms around you, a solid and heavy wall against everything, a wall that you hadn't had since wisp betrayed you and rudy and deo were lost to the thick city crowds. you wonder if his touch would burn.

you don't want to see puffy, the guilt of not attempting to contact her making your stomach roll and your claws ache. she was so kind to you, both during your exile (bringing you gifts and resources, a christmas tree and even an odd tubbo statue. you couldn't bear to keep the statue, phantom aches where your own horns once lay pounding through your head. the same happened during pogtopia,

a feeling of loss over losing your tail. it was too painful to take on wilbur's form after what had happened. you don't want to think about the resources she wasted trying to help you.) and after. you never took her up on her offer of therapy, but just knowing that she was there for you and was someone you could trust to watch your back, all the way back before doomsday, had been such an unfamiliar feeling after going so long without. your stomach curdles at the fact that she's hurt and you're just floating here, doing nothing, but however much you want to move, you can't.

prime knows you'd rather die again than see foolish and ranboo. just thinking of slinking back to them after that mortifying ordeal makes your tail curl and face heat up. you think they might be (worried) annoyed when they find out you didn't go to puffy like you said you would, but you'd rather sit by ponk's side than have to face their (concern) scorn at not helping like you said, just because you got a little anxious.

you want michael. but you said you'd help, and you're not, so you don't deserve michael right now, do you?

ponk's face is slowly shifting in discomfort. you think it may be his arm; it literally got chopped into, and you're still not one hundred percent sure he'll even have motion in said limb once recovered, but it's better to wait and see than rush into amputation.

ponk's arm. said arm getting amputated. amputation. ponk's legs are prosthetics.

(another cause-and-effect, courtesy of technoblade, which he'll likely never acknowledge or apologize for, the prick. the piglin was silent when ponk had come to assist pogtopia, sporting two new legs. he didn't say anything, and neither did techno. this time, you stayed quiet alongside niki and tubbo.

one part of you believes it was the right thing to do. without a distraction of that caliber, you and wilbur and techno himself likely wouldn't have escaped. but the rest of you screams about deafening fireworks, of blood-covered grass, of soot-stained concrete, and you find any sympathy that had started to drag its way to the surface swiftly buried beneath your fear and anger.)

you are *so* smart. you lift the blanket from ponk's feet, resting the cloth above his knees, and lo and behold, his prosthetics are still on, shoes and all. you don't know too much about prosthetics (despite almost losing a leg yourself to hypothermia and injury during your exile,) but you know that stumps need air. you think. that might just be when the amputation is fresh, but it's better safe than sorry.

it's easy enough to find the pin, right above where ponk's ankle would be, and you gently press it

in. hearing a soft click, you slide the leg out of the socket, setting the fiberglass shell to the side of the bed. from there, it's easy enough to slide off the liner, separating it from the stump with a little *pop*, and draping it over the prosthesis for easy access for ponk.

you glance up at ponk's exposed face. his eyebrows, formerly pinched, have relaxed a bit, looking less tense. your assumption was right. you turn to ponk's other leg, nodding to yourself. it slips off just as easily as the other one, and you set it aside. and then you take a second to think.

you scratch your thumb claw against your pinkie claw, eyes glued to the stumps. should you massage them a little? could that hurt the nerve ends? could not massaging them lead to hypersensitivity? you should have thought about this the moment you were done with his arm, you mentally scold yourself.

"hey, none of that."

his voice is soft and scratchy, yet ponk's sudden words still startle you back. the man's not used to having his face visible and it shows, smile just the slightest bit awkward but still real, if his crinkled eyes have anything to say. unless ponk knows that, and is doing it to make you think it's real. except he has no reason to do that, stop being so paranoid-

"hey," ponk says again, and you raise your head, not having noticed it lower in the first place, "i *just said*, 'none of that,' and there you go again!" he says it with a teasing note to his voice. you cock your head.

"pardon?"

"the overthinking. i can see your cogs turnin' from here. chillax, kid."

"'m not a fuckin' kid-" leaves your mouth on instinct, and ponk's smile becomes the slightest bit less awkward.

"yea, okay kid." and before you can protest again, ponk asks, "how're you holdin' up?"

and with the eloquence of a rock, all you can say is "huh?"

“well,” ponk starts, “ you’re here. and mikey isn’t with you. did you sneak in here? is someone going to walk by and think i’ve gone coo-coo because i’m talking to nothin’?”

well. you technically *did* sneak into ponk’s room.

you do what you do best; you deflect. “i’m the one who patched up your arm, big man. i don’t know who did it-”

“it was eret, i think.”

“-but they did an absolutely rubbish job. complete shit, innit. they did ‘em with *silk*. ”

ponk gasps, only half exaggerated, “no!”

“ *yea!* nothin’ goin’ on in anyone’s heads, i swear. they’d’ve probably stitched you together with duct tape, given the chance, the idiots- you’d think a *totem god* or whatever would know better, but no-”

“you’d think,” ponk agrees.

and then you both fall silent. your eyes dart from the iv drip, to the window, to ponk’s stumps, to the sink at the fairside of the room.

“are you sure you-”

“do you want some-”

ponk giggles, reaching up to cover his mouth but wincing when the movement tugs on the iv. in contrast to ponk’s reaction, you find yourself tapping your claws together, the soft clack of keratin-on-keratin and the small jolt it sends down your fingers soothing. without even attempting to ask your question again, you spin around and float to the sink, getting a small plastic cup from the cupboard and bringing it to ponk. he takes it with a small nod.

you can feel your throat trying to close again. you don't think there's any outward sign of your small struggle, and any visibly breathes are likely hidden by your attire. it takes you a few times to get your throat to work, like your brain just doesn't want to put in the effort, but after a few attempts you manage to plow through whatever block you had.

“can i- do you-”

on the bright side, it doesn't sound pinched, or like you were struggling to speak. on the down side, you have no idea how to word this. the words are floating in your head, resting on the tip of your tongue, but out of reach.

you settle for motioning towards ponk's stumps, and his eyebrows draw in confusion before realization hits with a small 'oh!' he meets your eyes for a moment, searching, and part of you wants to cringe and repeat your earlier statement of telling him to take a picture. and, wow, isn't that a weird thought? you've only been here for a couple hours, three or four at most, and yet it feels like it's been days. you suppose that's for the best, given clementine was left by herself at snowchester. not that the prickly squirrel (you have suspicions that she may be more than just that, but keep your theory to yourself.) would need any help. you don't doubt that she's probably raiding the pantry at this very moment.

(she is. within the small time that the commune has been empty, clementine eats through a solid fifth of tubbo's supply of harvested sweet berries. and if she indulges in some steak as well, there's no one around to question her questionable diet.)

“if you want,” ponk ends up answering, and you scoff.

“i wouldn't offer if i didn't want to, dumbass.”

you aren't sure how solid you feel to ponk, but you're careful to be light against his stump. you know he's likely healed, given how long he's been without, and he's likely healed well, given he's a doctor, but the thought of massaging it wrong or rubbing the wrong spot and causing the man more pain makes you want to rip your hands away and hide once more. so, you keep your eyes on your hands, and you focus on your work.

but as time passes and ponk shows no sign of pain (other than the obvious, there's nothing you can do about his arm past what you've already done,) you find that the silence is a lot less stifling than before. and then ponk breaks it.

“sam would do this for me.”

you don't look up, but you swivel your ears towards him as a sign of you listening. you really don't want to think about sam right now, but if the doctor wants to talk about his boyfriend, you won't object.

“he helped me, after techno blew them offa me at the red festival, you know.”

you give him a noncommittal hum. you're not surprised he had help, even the most seasoned and experienced medic likely couldn't field-dress their own wound when it's that severe. he likely would have lost his first life, had sam not been there to help him.

“and then he goes and tortures me over something that not only doesn't work, but i never had in the first place. talk about dates gone wrong, amiright? lmao.”

your hands freeze.

“he what?”

“ahaha, yea, he thought i stole his key cards. which, to be fair, i had, but like- when i gave them back? he didn't much believe me. but karl and foolish got there in time- dunno how, no one else knew we were there- but uhh. yea. he, sam tried to cut off my arm. even after everything that happened.”

ponk's voice is shaky. your brain feels like it's bluescreening, and it feels like a spike gets driven through your chest.

your eyes flicker to ponk's heavily bandaged arm; he'll likely be able to keep it if he wants, but until it's fully healed, you won't know the true extent of the damage inflicted. but it's *deep*, so while there is a chance that physical therapy could help, you doubt ponk will have the same range that he used to.

sam did this to him.

“s’t that so?” you mumble in response.

“he’s obsessed.”

you don’t know why, but a curdling feeling in your gut screams that that is your fault. you feel like you’re missing something important. *again*.

you clench your fists, squeezing a few times to center yourself, and it’s a good thing you did so before returning to ponk’s stumps; your claws came back without you even noticing, pricking your palm, and you take a moment to tap your claws again. first, pointer to thumb, then pinkie to thumb, then all four fingers.

you need to confront karl. but then you immediately think ‘this is literally none of my business.’ but did they not make it your business the moment you were brought in to help? but you know better than to stick your nose in when people have come to you in the past. but karl brought tubbo and ranboo and *michael* into this, so it should be your business. right?

when you stop, your hands feel tingly, like it’s wrong to stop. you take a second to rub at your knuckles in a vain attempt at removing the sensation, before you sigh and continue the massage, claws once again replaced by small human nails.

you should probably say something. is it too late to say something? you’ve just been sat here doing nothing but wasting time, and it’d be weird to say something now, but not saying anything feels like a dick move, so you don’t. but then that makes you feel even worse, and it’s a vicious circle.

you blurt the first thing that comes to mind.

“that’s rough, big man.”

if it weren’t for ponk snorting, you’d have cringed so hard your entire face would have cramped.

“yea, it is.”

and then the silence returns. it’s not as comfy as before, but still enough to not feel cringe, as one

would say. no, scratch that, thinking that makes you feel old. you can't hold in your dramatized sigh at the thought, which turns into a jaw-cracking yawn halfway through. you take a moment to stretch, reaching your arms above your head and arching your back in a way that causes a multitude of loud cracks.

you just want to scoop up michael and leave. it's late enough in the day that the boy should have taken a nap by now, but you doubt he has, in all the excitement. it's not that you don't trust tubbo and ranboo to take care of michael, as absent as they've been, busy in their own projects- you just worry a bit too much.

"hey," ponk says again, he should really add some variety to his vocabulary, "you look tired. i can, uh, scoot over, if you wanna take a nap?"

ponk rises on his elbow, scooting himself to the side and patting the small open space beside him. the offer alone makes your heart swell, not that you'd ever admit it.

ghosts can't sleep. at least, you don't think so; you, nor anyone else, have ever seen ghostbur sleep. no matter how tired you get, you've never been able to sleep, either. your eyelids can feel heavy, and your head can go fuzzy, and your limbs can weigh you down, but you can never truly sleep.

you don't tell him this.

"nah," you say, "too much to do."

too much to do, so little time. you don't quite know what that means, but you just know, deep in your chest, that you're only here on borrowed time.

you wonder who you borrowed it from. you wonder if they'd be willing to take it back.

you wouldn't mind some sleep.

"thanks, though."

for anyone wondering where eret is, he's still with puffy.

was anyone gonna tell me that foolish also has a daughter /rp called finley or was i supposed to find that out while digging up his ign myself. and also michelle. why was i not informed that michael isn't the only adopted piglin

i, nor does anyone i know, have a prosthetic/prosthesis, so if i got anything wrong people don't be shy about telling me! any and all criticism will be welcome, even if it's literally a copy-paste from the chapter showing mistakes or ways to fix stuff. all feedback is appreciated!!

i also just found out that i actually WAS diagnosed with ADD, and my mother hid it from me. and ive spent this fic projecting onto michael and tommy and lowkey ranboo and foolish. should i add some tags? idk.

LOVE YOU /parasocial (/j)

double bubble disco queen

Chapter Summary

c!puffy said "ima villain arc bc yall killed my son but then immediately accept your apology"

fmn!puffy says "touch shit, get hit" SHE IS NOT TAKIN YALLS BULLSHIT TODAY BABEY

Chapter Notes

mwah! small chapter for you! i am once again getting bodied by the vaccine (second shot bayblade!) so im not feeling too spicy but i wanted to do this

what do yall think about a revision of the first 2 or 3 chapters? bc like. i could totally expand those now. this shits got PLOT now. chapters 1 and 2 were intended to be mindless snippets of mimi and michael's adventures; im sure you can see how it's not quite that now, huh?

chapter title from "victorious" by panic! at the disco

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

with each tug of thread through your side, you feel your anger growing.

between sam's hit (luckily with the blunt side of his sword,) and punz' hits, your stitches had to be redone. sam had jumped out the window in pursuit of the mercenary (after punz had gotten tackled by sarnap, apparently?) shortly after throwing them, but eret had stuck by your side. he said that they had a doctor on hand, other than ponk, but after refusing to tell you their name and coming back empty-handed after having gone to look for them, they attempted to redo your stitches themselves.

so now you're here; eret fingertip deep in your side and a bottle of sugarcane moonshine held firmly in your hands. eret, of course, objected.

"puffy," he strained, "i understand- i get why you wouldn't want to take a weakness potion after that. but is being inhibited, not to mention the incoming hangover, worth it?"

your response had been to take another swig. he stopped trying to take the moonshine after that.

your fingers drum against your bouncing leg, full of restless energy that you can't release lest you want to reopen your stitches. you open your mouth, scathing words on your lips, only to fall silent with a bleating huff.

“why are we just sitting here?”

eret glances up at you through their glasses. “what do you mean?”

you throw your hands up, wincing when it tugs at your stitches, but continue before eret can reprimand you, “we should be doing something! i know, i know i've been chill about this, but- but we can't just wait for them to act first anymore!”

“calm yourself puffy, you need to recover-”

“they almost killed me! they almost killed *hannah!* they tried to kill tommy! they hurt sam, have you seen how scarred his arms are underneath his hoodie!? they tried to hurt tubbo, tried to hurt ponk, and i *know* they're our friends and they're possessed, but they're *hurting people!* we can't just- we might as well be hurting each other ourselves, with how often we let them get away with their violence!

“fucking hell, we already are hurting each other! ponk might lose his arm! they're fighting us and we're infighting over the stupidest shit, and how am i supposed to protect everyone, protect my son and my daughter and my grandchildren, when i can't even protect *one child!?* ”

eret's lips are pursed. “puffy,” he says, voice soft and consoling, and part of you wants to bristle at his tone, “you can't blame yourself for what happened.”

“i stood by and didn't do anything when dream hurt him. through the entirety of his exile, i didn't do a thing.”

“that's not true... you brought him gifts and music, you brought him a whole christmas tree when he spent the holiday alone-”

“but why did he have to spend it alone? why was no one there with him?”

“we all thought he was alright, puffy, you can’t blame yourself for this-”

your anger leaves you so suddenly that you feel cold. the tension leaves you suddenly, sagging back into the pillow on the cot, and you drag your hand down your face, leaving it covering your nose and mouth.

“he was gonna come to therapy, you know. he had an appointment, even through his claiming to be alright. he was opening up to me. and then he got trapped in pandora’s vault from some fruitless attack with no persecutor in sight, and sam kept tommy in there until he could find out what caused it but he never *did*. no one found anything. i could have helped more-”

eret cuts you off, placing his hand on your shoulder, “do you blame sam for what happened?”

your immediate answer is ‘of course not!’ because you know that sam was trying his best. he was distraught, looking for the source of the explosions, restless to get his boy out of the vault and away from his abuser. you know tommy likely wouldn’t want any chance of dream escaping, either.

but sam left him in there. would it really have been that hard to send himself across and personally escort tommy out? he told you about how at the beginning of the month-long lockdown that tommy had been bouncing between yelling for him and doing his damned best to annoy the absolute shit out of dream. but as the teasing lessened and the period of silence grew longer and longer, the boys’ yells for sam to get him out had turned to heartbreaking pleas, wet and rushed and scared. and then one day, he just stopped altogether.

he was still there, but he was quiet. dream would speak for him, voice too-cheerful and purposely obtuse, and tommy would let him.

and then dream beat him to death in an apparent fit of boredom. acting as though the murder of a child was just a casual weekly occurrence, like it’d happened before. which, you suppose it had- the man had taken the boys’ other two lives, of course. (oh, how little you know.)

and doesn’t that just hurt even more? the youngest of the server, the baby, losing all three of his lives to the same man before his seventeenth birthday. while others get to grow old, his corpse is- actually, you don’t know what happened to tommy’s body. sam never mentioned taking him from dream’s cell. the thought of his body still being in there, rotting with his abuser, makes you sick with anger.

sam is doing what he thinks is best to protect the server. tommy's murder had devastated him, almost to the point of relinquishing his title of warden of pandora's vault and secluding himself on an island even smaller than logsted, thousands of blocks out.

he did his best to protect tommy and he failed. just like you did. and now he's trying to make amends by protecting everyone else. but in doing so, he's hurting even more people he loves. you haven't seen ponk in the days you've been here, but you remember hearing foolish talk to eret about his condition; how the doctor had been on the verge of bleeding out, mumbling about nerves and veins and arteries like he was instinctively trying to assess his own damage through the pain, voice soft and slurred. the man had had a panic attack merely at the sight of sam nook- granted, he was high on thinned potions, but just the sight of the kindly android sent him spiraling.

"...i don't know."

eret's frozen for a moment, and if he didn't have sunglasses on you think you'd be able to see his thoughts clear as day.

"then maybe hold that same consideration for yourself, yea? you're clearly conflicted about sam. meaning part of you doesn't blame him. maybe focus a little of that on yourself."

you don't want to, if you're being completely honest. "i thought *i* was supposed to be the therapist?"

"puffy."

you can tell he's not going to drop it, so for now, you relent. "fine. maybe. but back to the issue at hand- we still can't be passive anymore. we can't let more people get hurt."

"so, what do you suggest?"

"well... you're the monarch, so in the end the decision is up to you- but..."

"no, you know your input is always welcome."

“we need allies, eret.”

“...alright. who do you suggest?”

you set the bottle of moonshine down with a clink and take a moment to think.

“well. first, we need to properly rally whoever we have on our side. sam is definitely still with us, and now that we have punz, sarnap probably wants to free his dads as well. and with him, there’s no way quackity and karl aren’t gonna want to help, too. if- when hannah wakes up, she’ll- she’s from hypixel, she’s not just gonna take this attack sitting down.”

there’s also purpled. as much as you loath to let another child get involved in this conflict, (you remember tommy’s nervous tics and chitters when you had saved sam from the egg’s chamber. he’d been on high alert, ears twitching at every noise. while you’d been glad to have someone there, watching your back, you felt guilty at letting the boy get involved. but despite your efforts to talk him down, he’d been determined to come with you to free his- what, his dad? guardian? they were close, and he cared, and when he demanded that you take him along, you caved.) you know that you ultimately hold very little power. it’s better that purpled at least knows that there are people on his side, because who knows how he’ll react upon hearing one friend’s major and gruesome injury and the other’s murder, even if said murderer is currently untouchable.

and then there’s technoblade.

you don’t trust the piglin as far as you could throw him. he blew up l’manburg, twice from what you’ve heard, and has shown no remorse either times. you’ve overheard foolish complaining about techno visiting snowchester, threatening the commune as a whole despite it being exactly that; an anarchist commune. you’d think the man would enjoy that, yet he seems to have it out for the short, goat-horned boy.

but as much as you dislike technoblade, there’s no way he would decline. the egg’s forces are expanding across the esempii, eating away at the land with no admins to keep them in check, and it just seems obvious that the piglin would want to put a stop to the growing power. a tyrannical empire nether-bent on killing those who oppose it? the anarchists up north would have a field day.

except, they aren’t just a threat to the kids. they’re also a threat eret. everyone knows what happened when george was appointed king over eret; techno had been there in a moment, not only stealing a life from george, but from karl as well.

you know that, should you recommend contacting technoblade, eret would likely agree. he's selfless like that, however much the old l'manburgians seem to think otherwise after his betrayal. from what he's told you, he didn't think dream would kill them. he expected a swift capture and surrender, followed by gaining the crown and subsequently the ability to protect his friends, his brothers in arms. eret had been riddled with guilt ever since, even as his old comrades had slowly forgiven him over time.

eret would do anything to make it up to them, to protect those that are still around to protect. wilbur's dead. tommy was killed. fundy left months ago, dropping contact with everyone. all eret has left is tubbo, and you don't doubt that he would do anything to protect the boy.

(you don't think about how, upon eret asking if you blamed sam, he likely blamed himself as well. the monarch had been quiet all day, his frame sagging with an emotion you can't identify. it would make sense; he gave up everything to protect his boys, and now they're nearly all gone. but no one has the gift of foresight, no matter how much they wished, and what's done is done. eret couldn't have done anything, had he been there at the time and not visiting one of the further-out neighboring esempii counties.)

if contacting technoblade for help countering the eggpire could lead to yet another life lost, you know that eret wouldn't hesitate.

part of you finds it oddly amusing- eret betraying two of the brothers and getting killed by the third. you tell yourself that you wouldn't let it happen, and then you remember- oh yea! brothers! maybe that can help; you don't think technoblade cared much for his baby brother in his final moments (or even knows that tommy was murdered, who knows how news gets out to the anarchists,) but you *know* he has a soft spot for his older brother's ghost. most people do.

“puffy?” eret says, and you blink back to yourself.

you don't want to hurt the ghost. you *won't* hurt the ghost, he's too kind for you to do so without feeling like trash- but technoblade doesn't know that. ghostbur doesn't even have to know about it- and on that thought, neither does eret. he'd shoot it down in a heartbeat. if everything works out, he won't even have to know.

“eret, where's ghostbur?”

don't got much to say. happy pride month! black lives matter, trans lives matter, palestinian lives matter, if anyone reading this is a transphobe or racist or sides with china's treatment of muslims or israel's treatment of palestan, kindly leave, please.

better safe than sorry lmao

oh and acab. acab now and always. nothing happened to make me go on this tangent, it's just been a tidbit i've been meaning to add for awhile now.

mwah x2 im gonna go throw up now, have a wonder day!

edit: reworked both ch1 & 2 a bit

don't be a stranger

Chapter Notes

not me having to reread my own fic to remember what the fuck i was doing

anyways. here's my attempt. i didn't start writing this until december 25th, (hi its me from the 26th. im posting the chapter now and short as it is because i dont think my hyperfix on orv will let me shift povs as i please, and i really dont wanna write more medical shit from tommys pov bc that means putting in details and while i could, i am lazy) because the moment i was like "i'm kinda in a rottmnt mood but i'll try to write this again-" but then i got sucked SO deep into omniscient reader's viewpoint.

absolutely amazing novel and webtoon, would highly recommend. it also made me appreciate dimensional travel fics more. which made me look up dsmp dimensional travel fics. which lead to me finally getting off my ass to try to continue this. bc i forgot how easy it was for me to slip into c!tommys headspace, kinda

can anyone tell me what the theta-gamma-zeta-delta nicknames came from? i wasn't joking when i say i havent ingested any dsmp content since. outside of techno's passing.

I WOULD ALSOOOO like to apologize for some of my formatting. i write on my computer but i read on my phone, and i can tell when its written on computer FOR computer readers bc the paragraphs will be SO FUCKIN BIG (or small for the other side of this) and personally, i find that hard to read. so, while this is written on my computer, i'm gonna try to make the general paragraph sizes smaller, so it's easier for myself and other phone readers to digest. sorry computer peeps. actually, i'm not sorry. (that's a lie i am) skill issue

ALSOOOO AGAIN- i am very sorry for the long opening notes- please let me know how this chapter feels, in terms of how it picks up from the last one. please. let me know if i forgot anything. you'd think, as the author, i'd have this organized, but i don't

ahem... chapter title from 'scott street' by pheobe bridgers.

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

you leave shortly after, much to ponk's chagrin. he's too tired, between today's events and the drugs steadily pumped into him through his iv drip, and you have no idea how he's even awake still.

you kind of regret turning down his previous offer. like, yeah it'd be fruitless and all, and you know it won't work and you'll just be getting your hopes up, but it's a nice thought. you don't think you'd mind a cuddle session with your boys.

(yes you would. you're getting better, and michael helps, but corporeal touch is still a concept full

of unknowns for you, now. you don't think a probably-immortal ancient being, half-undead child, and whatever the fuck eret is, count as properly testing the limits of your bodies ability to touch and be touched. but it still feels... off.)

so much has happened in a very short span of time. *too* much. It's exhausting, in a bone deep way that just never seems to leave.

it's easy to take that weight and slip out of your more corporeal form, slipping through the walls towards your destination.

you'd rather not run into anyone at the moment, and what's more 'don't talk to me' than quite literally moving through the walls? imagine that. exposing your existence so that you can make 'i'm in your walls' jokes. you're fucking hilarious.

wait. fucking focus, dipshit. puffy needs help still. and punz. maybe? probably. you took so long with hannah and ponk, puffy and punz have likely already received treatment.

"probably mediocre as fuck treatment, these fuckers wish they were me." you mumble to yourself.

"ghostbur, is that you?"

you stop. "hah?"

oh, you've made it to puffy's room. you hadn't even truly known where she was, content to wander until you either felt better (doubtful) or stumbled across her. (selfish, wasting time when you should be helping the injured. but you can't expect much from *you*.)

her eyes shift around the room. they never stay on you.

she can't see you. you try to get yourself to step forward, to phase back into visibility, but you feel choked. it feels like there's a claw buried in your chest, wrapped around your heart and throat, and it makes you feel like you can't do *anything*.

you don't understand. you were fine and speaking just a moment ago.

“ghostbur, if you could maybe say something, that’d be amazing. i kind of, uh, i’m kind of... why are you invisible? did you leave to get more potions? i asked eret to keep an eye out for you, i’m guessing she told you i was here?” puffy says. she has a light tone to her voice, but based on the oddly focused and honestly a little bit concerning look in her eyes, it’s clearly forced.

not that ghostbur would notice, the naïve bastard.

you open your mouth a few times, trying to force sound from your lips. you probably look like a gaping fish. you’re supposed to be better than this, what happened to your quick wit, huh? you have *tons* of ghost jokes on the tip of your tongue, you could totally call her something-ist for assuming the first ghost she sees is ghostbur. (you don’t want to think about ghostbur.)

...no, no, that’s... probably in poor taste. but you have something. anything. you’re a big man. you’re the biggest man. you established a country. you fought for l’manburg and won. you beat-

your chest aches. you drop your head with a self-depreciating chuckle and a scoff. you can see that your fists are clenched. if you were alive, your claws would have definitely punctured through your gloves and skin by now.

puffy gasps, and you don’t feel yourself fade into view but you must have, because when you look up, you can see the ram’s eyes looking directly at you.

1. well. at least the grip in your chest has lessened. but you don’t know what to do with your hands. or your tail.

“hey. uh.” it’s said so lightly it sounds like a whisper. you don’t think you can get much more out at the moment.

puffy moves to sit up, eyes wide and mouth dropped in shock. she’s gaping for a moment before visibly rearing up, most likely to yell in shock, and you don’t blame her, you think. but if you were feeling more like yourself, you’d probably make a joke about her being pasmaphobic.

phasmaphobic? what’s the stuff ghosts are made of again? ectophobic? wait fucking *focus* tommy, puffy is about to fucking scream-

you dart forward and cover her mouth before she can do so. you don’t know where anyone else is, you don’t feel anyone nearby, but if sam- if *anyone* hears and comes running, you think you’ll just

evaporate on the spot. directly into the void you shall go. you are so tired.

at least the urgency allows you to push your words out, however much it feels like a punch to the chest. “no no hey no SHUSH. shush. shhh. fuckin’ don’t, maybe, thanks,”

you’re so close to her, you don’t see her hands raise. before you can flinch back in surprise, her hands are cupping your face. she squeezes your cheeks, and her eyes are darting around, and she looks like she’s about to cry.

your hand drops from where it was covering her mouth and you reach up, ready to pull her hands off from where she’s touching you. her hands burn, her hands feel like lightning, her hands feel like ice, and it’s simply too much.

her touch is so much worse than foolish.

“tommy, tommy, is- are you really here? it’s been so long, tommy, you-”

it’s too much. you rip your head back, batting her hands away, and can’t hold back the guttural hiss in the back of your throat. you choke it down halfway through, turning it into a chuckle that’s a little too much like an animalistic whimper.

“don’t touch me. didn’t your mum ever tell you touching people is rude? you should know better, you- wait wait don’t cry, i’m sorry-”

puffy laughs. you pause. your hands, still raised from batting hers away and raising instinctively to placate her tears, drop to your sides at the noise. she continues to laugh, and you continue to stand there, face slowly twisting in discomfort.

“... captain?”

puffy covers her face with her hands. “sorry, sorry, i shouldn’t... it’s only logical you’d come back as a ghost. like your brother. it’s just- you- it’s- it’s been so... you never-” a shaky inhale, “showed up. like- like ghostbur. i know not everyone does, but you’re so- you’re you, i should’ve known it would only take time, i...

“i didn’t think you’d... show up, like this. i didn’t... i thought you were...”

of course. of course.

“of course,” you say aloud. “yeah. i... i’m tired, captain, could we... do this after?”

you’re such an asshole. you are such a selfish asshole. you fucking-

puffy chokes, rubs her eyes, and nods. and she doesn’t stop nodding.

“ok. ok. yeah, sorry, i-”

you’re fucking terrible. “no, it’s- it’s, uh... sorry. i’m just. tired.”

she keeps nodding “yeah, yeah no, i get it.” she lowers her hands from her face, the skin around her eyes red and the fur damp. slaps her cheeks with both hands once, twice, and then opens her will wet eyes with a smile, and looks at you like you’re a star.

“i’m... glad to see you again. i’m really glad. but... why are you here?” puffy says, head tilted the slightest bit in confusion.

ignoring the way your heart twists at her words, you’re relieved to move past all of *that* . there’s been way too many emotions and tears and *blaugh* happening lately, you almost prefer when the people around you would look at you like a pest.

(you don’t. you’re a liar. you’re a lying liar who learned how to accept it once, and then forgot, and for some reason learning it again is harder than the first time. it’s so much harder. it’s fucking stupid. it’s not fair.)

but it’s something solid, something clinical to focus on, so you nod your head and meet puffy’s eyes. “well, apparently i’m the only fucker around with steady enough hands to sew clothes *and* skin, who’d’ve thunk?”

“you? you have medical training?”

you huff. “don’t sound so surprised. someone had to patch everyone up all the fuckin time way back when.”

“oh. i would’ve thought it’d been niki.”

man. how long had it been since you’ve heard that name? niki is definitely someone you’ve missed, even before all this, but it’s been so long since you’ve seen her. she’s likely left the esempi. you haven’t seen her anywhere.

not that you’ve gone anywhere. this is the farthest you’ve moved in awhile. you can’t even recall how you found your way to snowchester.

“she helped. we taught each other what we knew. we were, like, partners, kind of. but uh. i don’t know where she is. and granted that *i* was the one approached-” you actually don’t know the details behind this, who knows what goes on in karl jacobs head, “i’m guessing no one else does, either. at least, not compared to me!” you attempt to boast. it’s half-hearted and it shows.

puffy huffs a small laugh. less of a laugh and more of an exhale, but you’ll take it. her eyes almost seem to dim at the mention of niki, but you don’t say anything about it, and she doesn’t offer any words of it herself.

but her mood is quick to return, and she looks up at you with another soft smile. “but that’s okay. i trust you with my medical needs. but, also, eret already redid my stitches, so...”

she lifts up her shirt and gently peels back the gauze. it’s not bad, per say, but it clearly isn’t done by someone with the steadiest hand.

you grimace. puffy chuckles.

“yeah. she did her best. think you could fix me up a bit, nurse innit?”

“never call me that again.”

“tommy trusty?”

hmm. you shouldn't. they're not... bad. and redoing them will just aggravate it more and increase the risk of infection.

“of fucking course i can! lemme grab what i need, i may as well fuckin' bedazzle your stitches, they'll be so clean and straight.”

“haha, like antfrost?”

that gets a chuckle (a *chuckle*, you hear? a chuckle! not a giggle! you do not giggle!) out of you.

“nah, like tubbo.”

Chapter End Notes

so was anyone gonna tell me that puffy joined the egg or was i supposed to find that out when i checked the dsmp wiki to look up her nicknames myself (dw this wont affect fmn, whatever the fuck i had planned for it)

id also like everyone to know that fmn tommy? short mf. hes a shapeshifter so ofc he gives himself height. but when ppl see his true form in this fic? homeboys small. i kinda remember what old me was going for with his design, but for a better visualization, think that little shapeshifter thing from the owl house, kinda? only a little. just to get an idea of how animalistic a shapeshifters natural form is.

i also plan on cleaning up the tags a bit. i don't know if i will have, by the time this is posted, so? idk they're just kinda messy.

oh man what the FUCK was i doing with karl and ranboo???? can someone summarize it to me man i'm not rereading more of this bc i'll get embarrassed and delete the fic

also i take back my statement about not allowing collections. but if one of yall pulls that trick and gets this hidden i WILL cry

AHAHAHA uh oh UWU *orphans cutely*

if you know how to contact me or smthin feel free to adopt this

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