

my little brother is twelve years older than me

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by [SamGoesBam](#)

Summary

Sixteen-year-old Tommy was forced to enter cryosleep to save himself from a sickness they couldn't cure yet. When he was finally pulled back out, twenty years had passed and his younger brothers were now older than him.

Whumptober prompt: fish out of water

Notes

This AU is NOT MINE!! It's from the lovely [@BehrJBehr](#) on twitter :)

The first few hundred words are a direct writing of [xeir comic](#) and you should follow and leave a like!

WARNINGS: panic, loss, burn wound, possibly minor derealization. Let me know if I missed any!

Please note that these prompts are NOT from the official Tumblr and are instead from [Anarchy_and_Piglins](#) on Twitter!!

ALSO please note that as I have to write 31 of these prompts I don't have the time to edit them, so there will be mistakes, and I don't mind if you point them out! (I'll go back and fix them usually). But I don't take criticism on my works. Ever :)

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

Tommy woke up cold. He pulled his eyelids apart and they fell instantly shut again. He blinked and fought to stay awake—his back hurt. Well, everything hurt. And his head was spinning, his stomach churning.

He sat up with panic in his veins and anxious energy in his muscles. He smacked his head on something. He reached an arm up—prime he was shaking so hard. He touched... glass? He pushed on it with a groan and his arm fell away.

Weren't his eyes open? His eyes were open but he couldn't see.

A whirring, wooshing sound started above him. Warm air engulfed him. He felt mist dance over his skin, pushed away by outside air.

He sat up dazedly, shaking, weak.

“Hello?” he asked. “Is someone here?”

He coughed and gasped at the way it shook his whole body. He blinked and blinked but it was all still dim and blurry. He touched the side ledge of whatever he was sitting in. He swung his legs over it and felt the ground. He stood and wobbled.

“Where am I?”

Tommy's knees buckled. He hit the hard floor on his elbows, kneeling there, pressing his forehead down to breathe.

“What's going on?” he tried to look up, breathing roughly. “I can't see.”

Heavy things were hung off his back. He was wearing... a thick body suit? With padded shoulders and built-in gloves that left his fingers free. What was attached to his back?

“Oh—holy shit,” someone said, startling him. “Tommy, look at me.”

They knelt in front of him. Something brushed his back and he flinched.

“What's happening?” he rasped. “Why can't I stand?”

“It's okay, just breathe.” The person cupped his cheek.

“Where's my family?” Tommy asked.

Someone was detaching the heavy things on his back. One by one. How many were there?

“You have cryosleep sickness,” the person said softly. Tommy reached up to grab their arm.

“Who are you?”

The person faltered. They swiped their thumb over his cheek and held his shoulder with their other hand.

“I’m... I’m family.” They rubbed his arm gently. “We’re going to get you somewhere comfortable to take care of this sickness, okay?”

Tommy’s trembling made his words shaky, “Why was I in cryosleep?”

The person sighed. “We’ll explain it all later. We’re going to lift you now, okay?”

Tommy nodded.

Two sets of hands lifted him under the armpits. Then they each slung one of his arms over their shoulders.

“Tech, get the blanket please?”

Tommy’s breath stopped short. “Tech? Is Techno here?”

“Uh, yeah, mate he’s here. So’s Wilbur, just hold on we’ll get everything sorted.”

They started walking him away from the cryosleep chamber. He could barely move his legs. A door slid open and closed behind them. It was even warmer wherever they were now. They kept walking down a hallway.

Tommy blinked his eyes the whole time, desperately trying to wash away the blur. Eventually, he started seeing shapes rather than fuzzy blobs. He would try to look at the people carrying him but he couldn’t lift his head that much.

They turned through another sliding door and in this room, the lights were dimmer. He was carried to a bed and they lifted him onto it. It was familiar, the facility’s medbay. Tommy had been in here a few times. But it was so quiet. It was usually full.

“Where is everyone?” he asked, lying back against the pillows as he shivered.

There was a spout of confused silence.

“Oh,” the main voice said. “We don’t use this space much anymore. There’s a, uh, better spot now.”

Tommy swallowed nervously. “Techno, Wilbur, are you here?”

Nobody answered.

“They’re... listen, you can talk to them in a minute. Let’s do a little check-up. And let me know as soon as you can see again.”

“Are my parents coming?”

“... No. They’re not around. But I’ll take good care of you. I’m going to touch your face now, okay?”

“Okay,” Tommy whispered.

His parents weren't usually around anyway.

The man touched Tommy's left cheek, then cupped it. "Just looking at your eyes."

"You said you were family?" Tommy asked.

"I am," he pulled his hand away, "think you can hold this cup of water?"

"I got the sippy cup," someone new said.

Their voice was vaguely familiar.

"Sippy cup," Tommy grumbled.

He took it carefully in his hands and shakily lifted it to his lips. Prime, his mouth was dry. His throat was sore. He only realized this first he took the first sip and cringed.

"You're gonna feel a quick prick in your arm, okay?" the man said as he unzipped Tommy's sleeve because... that was a thing.

"Uh, sure..."

It was a bit less than tiny. Tommy grimaced and the man whispered a short apology. Tommy realized that something was now hanging in his arm.

"An IV?" he asked.

"Drawing some blood," the man explained. "Just gonna make sure the cryosleep didn't fuck with you. We'll do an IV if we need to but the chamber you were in should have kept you nourished."

"Ah. Right. Sorry, I just... I don't remember much right now."

Tommy blinked. It was all starting to clear up a bit.

"That's okay mate. You starting to see?"

Tommy nodded, blinking more rapidly. For a second he saw the man's face but it went blurry again. He kept blinking, getting frustrated.

"It's okay," the man said. "Let it come back on its own."

"Who are you?" Tommy asked, half-groaning. "Where are my brothers—I want to see my brothers. Is Phil here?"

"... Yeah. Yeah, they're all here mate."

"Why won't they say anything? Please..."

"I don't know how to explain this to you until you can see for yourself."

Tommy's eyes stung. "What does that mean?"

"Oh, Tommy," the man sighed softly, "it's okay. I'm sorry, it's alright."

The man cupped his cheek again. Someone else was touching the thing in his arm. He leaned his cheek into the man's hand with a shaky, scared sigh.

The needle was tugged out. Tommy flinched. That seemed fast.

"We should get him out of this suit," another new voice said.

That one was distinctly unfamiliar. Deeper than any voice Tommy would know. And he agreed, this suit was uncomfortable as hell.

Tommy took a few sips from the stupid cup.

"Well, we'll at least unzip the top and get him a hoodie or something." The man moves his hand down to hold Tommy's shoulder. "Does that sound okay?"

Tommy nodded. They helped him get out of the top half of the suit then they helped him thread his weak arms through an already-warm hoodie.

Tommy blinked again, this time a few tears fell from his eyes. Someone made a sad sound but didn't say anything more about it.

And finally, he could see.

He could only see the main man that was right in front of him. The other two were too far away, still blurry.

And this guy definitely looked like family.

"I can see you now," Tommy whispered. "But everything around you's fuzzy."

The man froze. He looked into Tommy's eyes. "Do you recognize me?"

Hesitantly, wordlessly, Tommy shook his head. Something pained flashed through the man's eyes before he nodded.

"Wil, how's the blood lookin'?"

Tommy frowned. Where was Wilbur?

"He's okay. No malnutrition, we just have to treat the cryosickness."

That was not *his* Wilbur. This fuck's name was probably William. Or Wilburt. Or Willy.

Tommy blinked a few more times and reached up to rub his stinging eyes. Finally, he could see consistently.

The three people stood there watching him, trying to decide what to do next. Tommy did not see his brothers.

“Where are...?” he shook his head. “You said...”

One of the people, a man with brown curly hair, looked close to tears. The man, who Tommy assumed had the deep voice because he looked like that kind of guy, had pink hair.

“Okay,” the main guy said, looking up at the ceiling for a moment. He sat on a wheelie chair by Tommy’s bed. “This is going to be hard to say.”

The main guy was blond like Tommy, blue eyes like him too. Maybe an uncle he never met? And older cousin?

“What is it? I’m—I’m worried,” Tommy said.

“Tommy, you were in cryosleep for...” the man took a deep breath, “you were in cryosleep for twenty years.”

It didn’t register the first time.

“I’m... sorry? What?”

The man’s bottom lip wobbled into a deep frown but only for a second.

“Tommy,” he said sadly. “You were asleep for twenty years. I’m Phil, Wilbur and Techno are behind me.”

Tommy half-shook his head before stopping and looking back at *supposed* Wilbur and Techno.

“No,” he said. “No, no that’s not funny.”

“It’s not a joke. I’m Phil, I’m twenty-eight now. Wilbur and Techno just turned twenty-four. And you are still sixteen.”

Tommy was suddenly violently lightheaded.

The man reached forward to hold Tommy’s shoulders. “Breathe. I know, I know it’s a lot.”

Tommy shook his head again, chest clogging.

“Breathe Toms.”

Toms?

Toms...

"Toms."

"Yes, Phil?" Tommy said, voice light, amused.

"Are we having lunch?"

"You are watching me make mac and cheese."

"Shut."

"Hey, you only get to say that to adult men."

"You're an adult."

"Nuh-uh."

"Yuh-huh."

Tommy snorted. "Patience, child. If you try to eat this now it will be cheeseless and boiling hot."

"Worth it."

"Tommy, mate, look at me."

Tommy looked up. 'Phil' was cupping both sides of his face, basically holding his head up.

"You're not," Tommy choked. "No. No—twenty years? I wouldn't do that."

Phil swiped his thumbs over Tommy's cheeks. *"You didn't choose it. Nobody knew that it was going to happen."*

Tommy reached up to grab Phil's wrists. Not to push them away, just to hold them.

"Look, Tommy," supposed Techno said, holding up his arm. "Look, it's the scar I got from that dog."

Tommy looked at the raised pink marks in horror.

"Remember?" Techno urged, voice too deep. "Remember?"

"Techno! You're scaring him," supposed Wilbur cut in, pulling Techno's hand down.

"Get off," Techno spat.

"Let him take it in!"

Phil's hands fell to his shoulders again. *"Tommy?"*

Tommy couldn't breathe. Things were going blurry all over again. He wished he was still sleeping. He wished he'd stayed asleep. Oh Prime, oh fuck.

"Are you okay?"

Tommy gripped Phil's arm like a lifeline and squeezed.

"There's no way," he whispered. Tears fell into his lap. "No, it's wrong."

"I'm so sorry Toms—"

"Don't call me that," Tommy choked. "That's what my little brother called me—you—just don't call me that."

"Okay. Alright, Tommy. Please breathe."

Tommy shook his head but his body made him suck in a long, stuttering breath. Phil whispered soft assurances and praises. The twins had gone silent.

"I'm... I'm younger than you now?" he asked through weak sobs.

"I'm afraid so. I mean, you've been on this earth for thirty-six years, but you're brain and body are stuck at sixteen."

"And you just—you just had to take care of yourselves?" Tommy cried.

Phil nodded solemnly. "For the first few years, mum and dad were back but that uh, that didn't last long. I hit fourteen and they left again."

A more forceful sob escaped. "*No*. Phil I was supposed to stop—stop that from happening to you."

"It's okay," Phil urged, voice airy, "It's okay. It wasn't your fault, you didn't choose to enter cryosleep."

"What happened to me, Phil?" Tommy managed to look at the twins. "Wil? Tech? What happened to me?"

Techno took the lead, seeing Phil struggle to keep up his brave façade. "You got sick, remember? You got sick and... and they knew how to fix it but they didn't have the supplies yet."

Tommy shook his head, more tears falling into his lap. "I don't remember that."

Techno nodded, slowly coming closer. "They needed to freeze the sickness. It was only supposed to be a few weeks, a month at most. But there was trouble with the production of the medicine... and a month turned into two, turned into three, turned into a year and then a decade."

"But now?" Tommy asked, barely able to speak past his wheezing.

“Three weeks ago you were brought out of the chamber. They treated it, finally, and put you back in to recover.”

“Breathe,” Phil reminded. “In through your nose, out through your mouth.”

“And then we waited for you to wake back up,” Techno said. “We each got an alert to our phones and—and I’ll say I don’t think I’ve ever run that fast in my life.”

Techno was at Tommy’s other side. He was so close now that Tommy could see the features he had even as a kid. Bold eyebrows, thick hair, and their mother’s eyes.

“Your voice is so different,” Tommy whispered. “You used to be so squeaky.”

Techno smiled sadly.

Wilbur gingerly stepped forward. His hair was always thinner than Techno’s, naturally straight teeth—which was lucky considering Tommy would never have made enough money to get him braces—he was always expressive.

“Did you ever learn guitar?” Tommy asked, breathing slowing a bit.

Wilbur’s face lit up. “I did. I did, and I’m in a band and everything.”

“Really?” Tommy breathed, tears upon tears forming in his eyes. “You stuck with it?”

Wilbur nodded. “I told you I was going to write you a song someday.”

“You did,” Tommy sobbed, starting it all over again.

Phil rubbed his arm soothingly. “Okay. We’re going to take you home and get you settled again. I want you to have a full night’s rest, and then we’ll,” he choked on his next words, “catch up in the morning.”

Tommy nodded through his vicious sobs.

Tommy woke up and looked dazedly at his bedroom ceiling. What time was it? He turned his head toward his bedside table, the digital clock read 11:00 AM. With a curse, Tommy leaped to his feet and almost tripped over himself.

His legs felt like jelly but he didn’t have time to worry about it.

He barreled out of his room and down the hall to the kitchen. Why hadn’t his alarm gone off? Maybe it did and he slept through it.

Oh, fuck, how is he so awful at this?

Tommy barged into the kitchen already sputtering an apology. “Sorry boys I’m starting breakfast right now I prom—”

Twenty-four-year-old Technoblade was standing over the stove cooking something with his back to Tommy. He turned to Tommy with a concerned look on his face.

Tommy sharply looked away. Which meant his head was turned in the direction of Wilbur and Phil, sitting in their living room enjoying coffee. No TV on, no radio, just chatting in each other's presence.

Wilbur looked at him fondly and sad. Phil looked at him heartbroken.

Tommy didn't know what to say. He thought he might throw up.

"Good morning Tommy," Wilbur said. "Techno's making brunch if you wanna come sit until it's ready."

Tommy was choking on air.

Phil's frown deepened and he put his mug on the coffee table. "Are you alright mate? You sort of forgot what was happening here didn't you?"

Tommy nodded, two quick, small movements.

Tommy took in their house. It was the same one they always lived in. Their parents paid for the rent and everything like that so they could live here. Tommy just had to take care of the boys.

They had repainted. New furniture. Same old family photos.

Except for two new ones.

Tommy walked a little further into the kitchen. On the wall, visible from the dining table, there were two matching framed photos.

A picture of Phil's high school graduation.

And one of the twins.

Tommy covered his mouth with a sad sound. Phil stood up from the couch and came to Tommy by the photos.

"I received an award in physics. Wilbur got one in chemistry. Techno in biology," Phil said.

Tommy looked a little closer. They were each holding their diplomas and another certificate with their awarded subject.

"I'm currently studying cryotechniques. Techno is studying aeroillness." Phil hesitantly touched Tommy's shoulder. "Wilbur was studying medicine but he stopped to pursue music."

"His most popular song is about you," Techno said. "Almost at a hundred-thirty million streams."

“What?” Tommy squeaked, he looked over at Wilbur, standing now just in front of the couch.

“I can go get my guitar,” Wilbur said. “If you wanna hear it while we wait?”

Tommy nodded eagerly. Phil gently led him into the living room and sat them down on the couch. A new couch. Across from another new couch. Split apart by a new coffee table. A newer, more modern TV. But the ceiling light was the same. The bookshelf was the same. New books, but same shelf.

“What can I do for you right now?” Phil asked as Wilbur left to get his guitar.

“I don’t know,” Tommy whispered.

He should probably help with brunch. He needed to start making up for lost time.

“Techno do you want any help?” Tommy asked. “Or uh, I can take over for you...”

Techno thought for a minute. “Would that help you feel a bit more normal?”

Prime, yes, he needed to take care of his brothers.

“Yeah. It would.” Tommy looked quickly at Phil before standing again and going to Techno.

“It’s almost one but you can do the eggs if you want,” Techno said, taking some bacon off a pan and putting more on.

“Yeah... yeah but I can do the bacon too. It’s not a problem.”

Techno hummed. “You just got back and I can see your knees wobbling. I’ll do the bacon.”

Prick, Tommy thought.

Wait. No. That’s his little brother he can’t call him a prick. Fuck, they didn’t even seem like his brothers. Sure, they looked like them a little but they sounded different and dressed different and acted different and now they were all taller than him.

Tommy tried to focus on cooking some of the eggs runny how Wilbur liked them and made the others firmer how Techno and Phil liked. He promptly zoned out, thinking too hard about how this was way too many eggs for him and three little boys to eat. Why did he use so many eggs? That was such a waste.

Wait... did he put milk in them? Why the hell did he put milk in them? Phil and Techno didn’t like the eggs with milk in them and it was their turn to have eggs their way.

Fuck, did he put any toast in? Did he get new jam? He’d run out of raspberry not long ago and that was Techno’s favourite. Maybe he’d be okay with strawberry like Phil and Wilbur today.

Tommy briefly left the eggs to check the fridge and found it *stocked*.

He shook his head and stepped back. Then he looked over at the eggs and saw twenty-four-year-old Techno finishing off the bacon right next to them.

Don't cry don't cry don't cry.

“What were you looking for?” Techno asked, turning off his stovetop.

“Uh, nothing. Just curious.”

He came back to the eggs and took Wilbur's off, setting them on a plate. He kept cooking the rest of their eggs, feeling Techno's eyes on him. When he finished the eggs he turned to dish them out onto the other plates. The bacon was already distributed on them.

One plate had crispier bacon than the others. But the boys didn't like crispy bacon.

“That one's yours,” Techno said knowingly.

Tommy was the only one that liked crispy bacon. He usually just made them all the same way because it was more efficient.

“Oh,” he said. He recovered smoothly. “I'll get the drinks after.”

“That's okay mate, we already have coffee,” Phil said.

He didn't use to say mate so much. Also, fucking coffee? Tommy faltered at that, still holding the egg pan.

“Careful,” Techno said, catching Tommy's slowly falling egg-holding arm.

He was still weak from not having used his body in *twenty years*.

He finished scooping the eggs out and hastily put the pan in the sink to be cleaned when it cooled down. He hovered by the sink for an extra three seconds. Enough time to take a deep breath, blink back tears, and plaster on a neutral face.

He turned back and picked up two of the plates—now which had toast. He was about to tell them to come to the table when Techno picked up two of the plates and started toward the living room. He set his plate down and Wilbur's. On the coffee table.

“You don't... eat at the dinner table?” Tommy asked.

“Oh... we dropped that habit when mum and dad left again, but do you want to?”

Tommy shook his head. It was fine. He picked up his own plate and Phil's and came to the couch again.

“You made my eggs runny,” Wilbur said with a smile. “Techno never makes my eggs runny.”

“Because it's gross you heathen.”

They're so... they're brothers and their humour has evolved and their vocabulary has evolved and they're bantering instead of babbling uselessly at each other or fighting or crying about unshared toys—they're like *brothers brothers*.

Tommy didn't feel like eating. He just wanted to watch them.

"Where do we start?" Phil said. "How do we catch you up on twenty years?"

It hurt every time someone said it.

"How are mum and dad?" Tommy ended up asking.

Everything fell silent. No chewing, no utensil scrapes, no coffee sips. Silence and lack of movement. They shared terrifying looks between them.

Phil sighed. "We haven't spoken to them since they left fourteen years ago."

Tommy's face heated with anger. "They didn't check in?"

"They tried," Phil soothed. "We didn't answer."

"Oh. That's—that's good." He hesitated, "I'm proud of you then."

So Phil did the cooking and the cleaning and the homework help and the doctor's appointments and the weekend entertainment and the bandaids and the hair braiding—

"Aren't you guys angry?"

"At them?" Phil asked.

"At me?"

Phil was stunned.

"Tommy," Wilbur said softly. "I need you to ask that again but slower."

"Don't you wish I had just not gone to sleep? So I could have kept taking care of you? I had..." he was beginning to remember more and more. "I had ten more years to take care of you."

"No," Techno said. "No no no, we want you *alive*, Tommy. You're family, you're not some tool in our lives."

Tommy swallowed nervously. "I wish I didn't do it."

Wilbur made an awful, sad sound. "Oh, Tommy. We're okay. We're all okay and you're gonna be okay too."

"It'll be weird at first," Phil continued, "but this is your chance to be a kid. Because we're going to take care of *you*."

Tommy shook his head, squeezing his eyes shut. “No. I don’t want you to. You guys were—you were my life. That’s who I was. I was Toms and I took care of you.”

They fell back into silence.

“I know it’s hard,” Phil started again. “It’s going to be so hard for you, I know. But we have you back and we have the chance to give you everything you gave us.”

“I don’t want you to pay me back—that was just love Phil. You don’t,” he choked. “You don’t pay love back.”

Phil put his plate on the coffee table and scooted closer to Tommy.

“We aren’t ‘paying you back’ we’re *loving* you back.” Phil reached forward slowly, and Tommy didn’t pull away so Phil grabbed the hand that wasn’t holding Tommy’s plate. “We’re loving you back and we always were but... we’re adults now. We can do it in different ways.”

Tommy couldn’t answer so he kept shaking his head.

“Can I hug you?”

Guiltily, Tommy said, “No. No I can’t—I’m—I need some time alone.”

He stood with his plate.

“Okay, hey, that’s okay,” Phil soothed. “Please finish eating. Call us if you need anything.”

It’s not quite how Tommy used to comfort them. Phil was his own person now. Tommy hated it right now but he was so proud at the same time.

Tommy went back up to his room. And when he walked in he realized it hadn’t changed a bit. Like, at all. Same furniture, same clothes in the closet, same everything. Not a speck of dust in sight.

He set his food on his bedside table and collapsed onto his mattress, sobbing uncontrollably.

He didn’t sleep. He’d just lain there crying on and off for hours until someone finally knocked on his door. He wasn’t sure why they knocked, he left it open like always so they knew it was okay to come in if they needed anything—

They’re adults.

They are adults.

“Tommy?” Wilbur asked. “Think you can come down for supper?”

Oh fuck he didn’t plan supper—

They made supper. They were adults and they made supper. Tommy could smell it.

“I don’t think I can,” he whispered.

“Feel sick?” Wil asked, stepping into the room. “Too tired?”

“I just can’t.”

“Okay,” Wilbur relented. “I’m gonna bring you a plate for when you feel like it. Please try to eat.”

And Wilbur brought up a plate of roast beef, mashed potatoes, and carrots. Ten times better than what Tommy could have made. Wilbur put the plate on the bedside table and almost left Tommy to his tears.

“Do you want some company?”

“No,” Tommy said, voice overflowing with guilt and shame.

“It’s okay. I didn’t get to play you my song, so I have to make sure you hear it tomorrow, okay?”

He’s talking to Tommy like Tommy was a kid.

He was not.

“Okay,” Tommy answered.

And Wilbur left. But he closed the door. Because they didn’t need him anymore.

Tommy hadn’t exactly *forgotten* what was happening. He just decided he could pretend he forgot his brothers were adults now so he could try to feel normal by providing for them.

He had woken up bright and early to make breakfast for the boys. And eventually, even though he hadn’t at the start, he *did* end up forgetting his baby brothers were men now. The only thing that snapped him out of his exhausted haze was spotting the pictures on the walls.

And when he saw them there on the wall he dropped the pan of bacon he had lifted momentarily.

It clattered on the ground and he cursed, diving after it. Stupidly, full of adrenaline, he grabbed the pan with his bare hand.

With a strangled yelp and the familiar practice of holding back his cries, Tommy rushed to the sink and flushed his hand with cold water.

Fuck fuck fuck he ruined the bacon it all fell out and now he’s gonna have to cook more and clean that up and fuck it probably woke the boys up—

Tommy took his hand out from the cold water. It hurt so bad but he didn't have time for that so he started cleaning up the grease on the floor and put more bacon on the pan to be cooked. He was planning on doing pancakes too. Man, why was he being so slow this morning? They would be down any second.

Except Phil. He'd started sleeping in a bit later.

Tommy began mixing the pancake batter. It *really* hurt his hand. His solution was to pull his rolled-up sleeve down and use it as a barrier between the rough wooden spoon and his skin. It didn't help. He took a break for a few seconds to bite his cheek.

Oh, did they have any chocolate chips left? The boys loved chocolate chips in their pancakes

"Tommy?"

The maturity of the voice startled him and Tommy whirled around.

Adult Phil.

Tommy felt almost all of the strength in his knees seep out into the ground to draw him down. He leaned back against the counter, miraculously fighting off a cringe of pain from his hand.

"Did you forget again?" Phil asked softly. He came to the stove and looked at Tommy cooking. "Want some help?"

Tommy breathed. "No, no I'll finish it. Did I wake you?"

Phil nodded lightly. "It's okay though. I heard a loud bang... are you alright?"

"Yeah. Yeah, dropped a pan. Sorry."

"It's okay..." Phil moved to Tommy's other side and pulled a fork from the drawer. He then began flipping the cooking bacon. "I know you said you didn't need help, but it's nice to cook with other people too."

Reluctantly, Tommy nodded and turned back to continue trying to stir the pancake mix.

"Tommy, did you really forget? Or are you trying to make up for lost time?"

Tommy whipped his eyes over to Phil. "I'm—no?"

"Do you think you could let me take over then?"

Tommy blinked. "You... want me to stop cooking?"

"Mhm," Phil hummed. "I want you to relax. Let someone else do it this time."

Fuck, did he do something wrong? Since when did Phil talk with *authority* in his voice? And—oh wow, was he telling *Tommy* what to do?

“No, Phil, I want to do this for you guys.”

Phil finished flipping the bacon and gently took the spoon and bowl out of Tommy’s hand—ouch. He set the mix aside and put his hands on Tommy’s upper arms.

“Toms—sorry—Tommy... you took care of us for so long. And you did so well, you were perfect. And something terrible happened to you and you had to leave. That’s not your fault.”

Tommy looked down at his slippers. Phil lifted his chin with a careful hand. Tommy would never admit the warm feelings of affection that brought him.

“Now you’re back, and you’re just a kid. Not even out of high school yet. And we’re adults now.”

“Stop it,” Tommy mumbled. “I don’t want to be spoken to like a kid.”

“I know,” Phil sighed. “But I—we love you so much. And we’re so grateful for you, Tommy. You could have burnt our toast and spilled all of our jam and we would have thought you were perfect.”

Tommy turned his head slightly to avoid eye contact. Phil swiped his thumb over Tommy’s cheek and chin to get his attention again.

“We love you. We always loved you. And now you get a chance to be a kid, and to be loved the way you loved us.”

Tommy willed his tears to stay *inside* his tear ducts.

“No, that’s so wrong. You’re my little brothers. I’m supposed to take care of you.”

Phil held both sides of Tommy’s face.

“Not anymore.”

The affection was entirely overwhelming. His parents never held him like this. They never looked at him like Phil was right now.

Tommy barely shook his head. It was a tiny twitch, a minuscule protest.

“Mhm. I know it’s hard, but you’re *our* little brother now. And we’re gonna take care of you.”

“The bacon’s burning,” Tommy whispered.

Phil didn’t let go of his face.

“We’re gonna take care of *you*. Okay?”

Tommy wilted. His head fell heavy in Phil’s hands. He made a tired sound.

Phil snorted and gingerly let go of Tommy. “Go sit on the couch while I finish up.”

Tommy did no such thing. Instead, he sat at the table. Within range just in case Phil needed anything.

Techno came down, soon followed by Wilbur. They sat at the table too and greeted Phil and Tommy. As they sat around him, Tommy was reminded once again how tall their family was. And how he was now the shortest.

He zoned out a bit but thankfully they didn't force him to engage in conversation so early. They quipped to each other. Lots of yawns went around.

Tommy blinked. They had jobs and classes... right?

"Why are you guys home? Don't you have, like, lives?" Tommy asked.

Wilbur nodded. "We were given two weeks off each to make sure you were okay after cryosleep."

"Ah..."

Guilt. So much guilt. For no reason, really. He knew pretty logically that it wasn't *really super duper* his fault.

Phil began passing out plates. He set one in front of Techno, then he handed one to Tommy.

As Tommy raised his hands to take it with thanks, Wilbur gasped.

"Your hand!"

Tommy grimaced and put his plate down. He covered his palm with his sleeve and shrugged.

"Let me see," Techno said, slowly reaching for Tommy's hand.

Tommy shook his head. "It's fine."

"It's burnt," Wilbur stressed.

Phil opened the cupboard under the sink and brought out their first aid kit.

"Tommy, let me see please," Techno said.

Tommy tried not to scowl as Techno picked up his hand anyway. He pulled Tommy's sleeve down and hissed at the angry puffy skin. It covered most of his fingertips and the upper part of his palm.

"Did you flush it with cold water?" Wilbur asked.

Tommy nodded.

"For five to ten minutes?"

"No?"

Wilbur frowned. But to be fair, how was Tommy supposed to have guessed five to ten minutes?

“Is it hot to the touch?” Wilbur asked.

Techno touched his palm as lightly as he could. It hurt. But Tommy didn’t move his face a centimeter.

“Not super.”

“Flush it a bit more,” Wilbur said.

Techno nodded. “Alright, up you get.”

Tommy rolled his eyes and followed Techno to the sink to cool his skin with a light run of water from the tap.

“Please don’t hide these things from us,” Techno started. “The last thing we want is for you to be in pain.”

“It’s not that bad.”

“Debatable. But even then, we can always help you. It doesn’t make sense not to let someone know you’re hurt.”

Tommy let his head fall back, gritting his teeth at the water touching his sensitive skin. Techno was holding Tommy’s wrist in one hand and his shoulder in the other.

“We always told you when we got hurt. So you can do the same, right?”

“Guess so,” Tommy mumbled, barely listening.

Techno soon stopped the water. They patted his hand dry *very* carefully. Wilbur made Tommy sit in a chair across from him and give him his hand.

Tommy did. Wilbur cupped the back of Tommy’s hand and applied burn ointment. Tommy stayed thoroughly bothered the whole time. Wilbur efficiently dressed the burn and wrapped it breathably.

Tommy was finally free to eat. The bacon was cold now but it was still delicious. They chatted lightly while they ate, Tommy didn’t engage much. And When they finished, he finally agreed to listen to Wilbur’s song.

He tried so hard not to cry. He failed.

“Can I hug you?” Wilbur asked.

Tommy wanted to hug his brothers. He wanted to so badly. But now that they were bigger and taller and older and... wiser—it was weird. If they hugged, he wouldn’t be doing the comforting anymore. It would be too strange.

“Sorry...” he whispered, shaking his head.

Wilbur put in an honourable effort to not let his face fall. After that, Tommy went back up to his room to keep crying.

It’s been a few days. Every day he woke up to start breakfast. One of them would come to interrupt him and take over. Wilbur looked after his burns. It was aggravating. Nobody had ever looked after Tommy. Not *really*. Not that he could remember much of anyway.

And as it turns out, adults have an easier time reading people than kids do. Because Tommy used to be incredible at hiding his exhaustion or sadness. Now he was being called out.

“You haven’t been sleeping,” Techno said, watching Tommy come down the stairs one morning.

Did Techno get up even earlier so Tommy couldn’t even start breakfast?

“Yeah I have.”

Two hours a night or so.

“Come sit with me.”

Why would he sit on the couch when he could go make breakfast?

“But bre—”

“Nah, someone else will make it. Come sit with me.”

Tommy looked at the kitchen. Then at Techno on the couch. Tommy was so tired, and in his pajamas, and there was a warm dim light in the living room... he ended up sitting on the couch next to Techno.

“C’mere.”

Techno’s arm was up on the back of the couch, hand gesturing him forward.

“... Why?” Tommy asked, not moving an inch.

“Because I’ve been dying to hug my brother and I can’t wait anymore.”

When they were kids Tommy would immediately drop everything he was doing to give one of them a hug if they asked or looked like they needed it. But the thought of being on the receiving side of the affection was too much.

“It hurts to have you in the house but never close,” Techno said. “You have to get used to it eventually.”

“Techno,” Tommy whispered. “I’ve never... done that before.”

Techno's face twisted up in confusion. "Been hugged?"

Tommy shrugged and nodded. "Mum and Dad didn't do that. And I was always the one giving them out."

"So you're scared?" Techno asked. He sounded genuine. The question was stupid. "Or is it still guilt?"

It was both but Tommy didn't quite know how to explain either. He could barely handle Phil cupping his face or Wilbur fixing his burn.

"Both," Techno finished. "Don't you ever wonder what it feels like? To be wholly taken care of?"

"I wonder all the time," Tommy admitted. "But it wasn't in the realm of possibility for me."

That comment devastated Techno, it would seem.

"Prime, kid, please come here."

Tommy made an uneasy sound before shuffling over. He settled against Techno's side and Techno didn't move a muscle.

"You're really warm," Tommy noted.

"It's a talent," Techno said.

Then he brought his arm down. It rested on Tommy's shoulder and arm, securing him against Techno.

And it was nice.

"You should try to get some sleep," Techno said.

"Now?"

Tommy *just* worked up the courage to hug one of them.

"Yeah. Here. With me."

"Oh."

Tommy did not do that. But he stayed there and tried to relax. Eventually, Techno turned on the TV at low volume. Some new show Tommy had never seen of course.

Wilbur and Phil came down within minutes of each other and started breakfast together. By then Tommy was fighting off sleep. He managed to make it through breakfast. They ate on the couches.

Phil subtly took a picture of him and Techno.

Then they talked. Tommy slipped into the banter a few times. Wilbur played a few songs. They caught up. Tommy asked if the finale of his favourite show was any good, they all cringed and told him not even to bother watching.

Apparently, the abuser and abused had their memories wiped and became friends. The next season got cancelled because the fans and actors hated it so much. It was a sad thing to hear about his favourite show but he was glad he missed it at the same time.

They talked about Christmases and birthdays and Halloweens and friends they met. They talked about the worst and best days of their lives.

They talked through lunch.

And then Tommy went back to his room, feeling overwhelmed because he'd missed so much.

He didn't sleep again. He lay there for a while afraid to go online for fear of discovering anything devastating—dead celebrities he liked, discontinued foods, cancelled shows, new styles—he just didn't want to see any of it.

And eventually, it was time to sleep for real. He didn't. He cried. His covers were thrown down to the edge of the bed because he was hot from the exertion of sobbing.

Someone knocked on his door at two in the morning.

“Tommy?” Wilbur asked. “Can I come in?”

They had never seen him cry until he woke up after those twenty lonely years. He couldn't *take this*.

“Please? You need to sleep. You need some help.”

It all hurt so bad. And he was so tired. He wanted someone to make it better. He finally had someone that could do that for him right outside the door.

“Come in,” he said, masterfully steeling his voice.

Tommy started to sit up but Wilbur sat down and stopped him with a hand on his shoulder.

“Stay lying down, you gotta go to sleep kid.”

Tommy squinted with distaste.

“I know I know, you don't like us calling you that. But you are. Just be grateful I'm not calling you the names you called me.”

Tommy's eyes widened and he couldn't help but laugh. “True.”

Tommy was always a name guy. He names things. So nicknames were his specialty.

“But come on,” Tommy joked through the shake in his voice, “Wilby is good.”

Wilbur's whole face short-circuited and had to reboot itself. Then it softened and he looked like he was about to cry. "I didn't let anyone else call me that. Told them it was reserved for a very special guy."

"Oh..."

"You can still call me that, you know?"

Tommy shrugged. "I'm a bit old for that kind of thing—"

Wilbur deadpanned, "It's a nickname. And if you never use it again I'll put *myself* in cryosleep."

Tommy snorted. "One out of ten, I do not recommend."

Wilbur smiled. Fondly. Again. Could he stop that?

"Why can't you sleep?" he asked, ruining the banter they had going on.

Prick.

Wow, that still felt so wrong. He could not insult his former younger brother with such words.

"Can't stop thinking," Tommy said. "It's not a big deal Wil, I'll sleep."

Wilbur frowned and shook his head knowingly. "You won't. Not until you collapse. I know you."

Tommy felt a short-lived burst of anger. It turned into sadness.

"How could you know me? You were four when I was taking care of you. How do you even remember?"

Wilbur looked pleased that he asked. "How could I forget you? You were my everything, Tommy. You were safe. You were home. I never stopped thinking about you, there wasn't any time to forget."

"That's... that's nice to hear."

"Yeah?" Wilbur gestured for Tommy to move over and lay on his back next to him. "Well, you know what I *really* do remember?"

"What?" Tommy whispered.

"I remember what you did to help me fall asleep."

Tommy's heart squeezed. It was one of his favourite things in the world. Of course, he hated when Wilbur struggled to sleep or was scared of the monster in his closet... but those moments were endlessly special.

"Can I hug you, Tommy?"

He'd known the question was coming.

Tommy hesitated and Wilbur turned toward him. "I saw you with Techno. It was the most relaxed you'd been this whole week. I saw the way you melted into Phil's hands."

It was nice.

"You deserve affection and safety and love."

"Shut up," Tommy mumbled.

He threw an arm around Wilbur, expecting there to be a surprised delay. Wilbur wrapped his arms around Tommy and pulled him close.

"I was so worried we were never going to get you treated," Wilbur whispered. "We struggled to decide whether we should bring you out to be with us or let you stay in as long as you needed..."

Tommy was too busy trying to process the hug to listen well. Wilbur's warm arms were around him. One of his hands cupped the back of Tommy's neck. It was his first time being hugged by anyone older than him.

And the hugs he did get from his little brothers were piggyback rides and when they latched onto his legs and made him walk through the house.

"We decided it was too selfish of us to take you out of the sleep when you could have been cured years later." Wilbur sighed. "Thank Prime. Twenty years isn't as long as it could have been."

"Mhm."

Wilbur paused. Then he huffed. "Comfy?"

Tommy nodded, forehead resting on Wilbur's chest. Then the bastard—still weird—sat up. Tommy made a disappointed sound but he was only reaching for the covers. Wilbur lay back down, pulling the duvet over them.

His arms wrapped around Tommy again. This time one of his hands landed in Tommy's hair. He began playing with it.

"You always did this too," Wilbur said.

"Always wondered what it felt like," Tommy admitted.

"Does it live up to expectations?"

Tommy nodded.

They fell into a sweet silence for the next two minutes.

“Let yourself sleep. I’ll be here.”

“Fine.”

End Notes

As always I hope you enjoyed this fic, thanks for reading. If you're enjoying my whumptober series this year don't forget to read [the one from last year \(2022\)](#). And Consider checking out some of my other fics:

[SBI D&D AU](#)

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[Villain Tommy + SBI Rehabilitation](#)

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