

you wake up with a hatchet over your head

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you wake up with a hatchet over your head

by [jasminoides](#)

Summary

Everything hurts. Your sliced bicep screams with every movement and your battered chest throbs sharply each time you take a breath. Your entire back burns fiercely. There's a nasty bruise forming on your jaw, you can feel it.

Bro is standing a good few feet away, coolly assessing you. It's obvious that you're not doing too hot and you wonder when this fight will end. The answer is not now, because he's raising his sword and gearing up to swing.

OR

Dave sees absolutely nothing wrong with his home life. His friends do.

Notes

happy 4/13 guys

both the main title and chapter title are from exxus by glass animals

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

gone in the blink of my eye

Your life is pretty good.

The thick, hot, Texas air outside is hard to breathe, but that just makes you appreciate the cold, stale AC air all the more. Five o'clock light streams down in rays from the kitchen window, landing on scuffed linoleum tiles. Tiny pieces of kicked up dust float around as you walk past, making your way to the row of cabinets lining a small portion of the upper wall. You're feeling lucky today, so you set your sights on the middle cabinet, feet padding softly and slowly across the creaky floor, like an animal stalking prey. Or prey trying its hardest not to be seen.

The cabinet door is inches away from your face now, and you place your fingers softly on the handle, and steel yourself. Now or never. Yanking the door open, a soft and nearly inaudible click throws you back on instinct, and thankfully out of the line of fire. How completely unexpected. You don't even look back to see the shurikens buried in the wall, you snatch your prize from the cabinet and dart back into your room.

Yeah, things are going great.

The muted sounds of crows and city life drift in through your window. You sit on your bed eating, sheets tousled at your feet. The bag crinkles softly each time you reach in and grab another dorito between two fingers. You got lucky this time. Pre-set traps like today are child's play and predictable as hell. It's hard not to get used to living easy like you have been for the past week, but your Bro has to come back eventually. Unfortunately, eventually means today.

Your phone buzzes and you lean over to grab it, seeing that you're being pestered once you thumb the home button with slightly cheese-powdery fingers. John apparently has something to say.

--ectoBiologist [EB] began pestering turntechGodhead [TG] at ~17:23--

EB: so i have something really cool to tell you but i already know what you're going to say.

EB: "egbert i would rather die than watch one of your dumbass movies," or something super dramatic like that.

EB: but just hear me out!

TG: absolutely

TG: even kings give their jesters the time of day

EB: not appreciating the subtle clown dig! but anyways,

EB: rose, jade, and i are going to try and have a movie night over skype and talk to each other LIVE!!! and we really want you there!

EB: you gotta come, man! it'll be so fun and i've already got a great movie picked out!

TG: egbert you hit the nail on the head with your first message

TG: i would rather slowly cremate myself with a yankee candle than watch mac and me or any other dumbfuck movie you worship like religion

TG: that mcdonalds movie made me feel like id been roofied in my own home and i still havent recovered

TG: if youre wondering yes you should feel bad for showing me that movie and yes i am accepting reparations.

EB: ok fine. even i'll admit that mac and me was a little weird, but i promise this movie is like ten times better!

EB: come on man, you can't honestly say you've got anything better to do.

TG: damn you got me there

TG: what time

EB: YES!!!

EB: i don't know yet, actually.

TG: i cant believe this

TG: never organize anything ever again youre so goddamn bad at this

EB: it's because of the timezones, fuck off.

EB: im asking rose, hold on.

TG: ok

You were never not going to go. You wouldn't pass this up for the world and, like John said, it's not like you've got anything better to do. You can never pass up an opportunity to razz the poor fucker, though. While you wait for John, you crumple your empty chip bag into a ball with your fist and toss it across the room, aiming for the wastebasket near your desk. You miss, but not badly enough that you have to get up and fix it. As you stare down your own crippling failure, your phone buzzes.

EB: ok she said sometime around 12 for you, which is kind of late, sorry man!

EB: it's kind of the only time that works for all of us.

TG: yeah nah that works

TG: dont worry about it im a big boy i dont have a bedtime

EB: you sure, dude? by the time we're done it's gonna be like three in the morning over there!

TG: i dont care id probably stay up late anyways doing fuckall

TG: and even if bro gets home before twelve he will not give a shit i promise

EB: woah... you're home alone until twelve?

TG: yup

EB: my dad almost never goes out without me so i think the longest i've ever been home alone is like an hour, tops.

EB: and i used that hour to set up a devastating prank, which kinda discouraged him from ever leaving me by myself at home again. :(

EB: done anything crazy yet?

TG: its been kinda tame

TG: fucked around with some shurikens in the kitchen

TG: sliced the dick nose off a smuppet this morning

EB: ...

EB: i still don't think i believe you actually have deadly weapons and fight with them regularly.

TG: thats the beautiful thing about facts, egbert

TG: they're true regardless of whatever you think

TG: but fyi i absolutely am highly trained in swordsmanship and general weaponry

EB: i don't know hahaha! it kinda sounds like you're just saying that.

TG: how can you not believe me youve seen my sword

TG: thats what she said

TG: i am the fucking greatest, award for funniest man alive goes to me

TG: mail it in obama

TG: seal it with a little kiss for me

TG: off topic but what movie are we gonna watch tonight

EB: it's a surprise! :B

TG: god the secret is tantalizing

TG: the suspense will eat at me for hours until i collapse is that what you want egbert

EB: you just want to know what it is so you can bail if it has nic cage, fuckass, so no. i won't tell you.

TG: i cant believe you think so low of me

TG: id bail for way more reasons than just nic cage

TG: anyways just text me when you guys are ready i guess

EB: definitely! :B this is super exciting, see you then!

ectoBiologist [EB] began pestering turntechGodhead [TG] at ~19:46—

ectoBiologist [EB] began pestering turntechGodhead [TG] tentacleTherapist [TT]
gardenGnostic [GG] at ~23:39--

EB: okaaaaayyyyy! we're FINALLY all here for the movie night!!!

GG: yay!!!! this is going to be soooooo fun!

TT: Seconded. Personally, I look forward to seeing everyone's faces live for the first time. I have several theories pertaining to David's true appearance and I believe that tonight will prove them true.

TT: Somehow the "completely undoctored" images you sent me of your pro-wrestler physique don't sit quite right with me.

TG: nah this is all 100% fucking genuine shit right here

TG: anyone can confirm that this shit is as real as gossip at a 16 year old girls slumber party

TG: shits getting spread around about susan here and every single bit of its true no need to make things up about this bitch susan who kissed tommy behind the bleachers last tuesday can you believe that

TG: its almost as if shes asking the popular bitches to socially crucify her

TT: It amazes me how little effort is required for me to get you to prove my points. I wonder if you ever tire from making a fool of yourself.

EB: GUYS!!!! if you guys don't stop you're going to go on FOREVER! and don't bother trying to deny it because we all know you do.

GG: yeah, come on guys! :(

TT: That's fair.

TT: Believe me, I have no desire to try and rebuke the claim that our bullshit could and will go on forever with no intervention.

TG: me too

TG: hey what kind of weird ass movie did you pick anyways egbert

EB: hey!!! :(Little Monsters is a classic and one of the best movies ever!!!

TG: oh god i dont think i can take this

TG: i dont think i can handle watching that movie again it was so fucking heinous

TG: also you cant just call shit a classic cause you like it egbert that movie was atrocious in a bad way

TG: please i cant fucking watch fred savage and his extremely punchable face and all those other wretched fuckers a second time

GG: noooooo! dave you have to stay!

EB: you have to stay dave!!! don't bail on us now!

GG: we need your stupidly weird analysis for every scene in the movie!!!

TG: hahaha ok

TG: you got it boss

TG: i am on the motherfucking case

TG: no slightly suggestive detail in this g-rated movie can or will escape me

EB: by the way it's totally a classic!! fred savage was fucking awesome and i found out that jade hasn't seen it so we need to fix that RIGHT FUCKING NOW!!!!

GG: whos fred savage?

EB: see?!?

TT: Jade, I am so goddamn jealous.

TT: Little Monsters is what can only be described as the worst movie I have ever seen.

TG: rose youve seen it?

TT: Half of it.

TT: I did not watch long enough to see the infamous piss scene, which I was, lets say, “surprised” to hear that it entertained you both greatly.

TT: By the way, the call has started and I will be on in a second.

EB: okay maybe not me, but i can definitely see that in dave.

TG: oh my god what a crushing blow

TG: someone catch me and lower me down onto one of those fucking fainting couches from the 1800’s where i can lay dramatically until i take my final breath and all the bitches that worshiped me during my lifetime will be absolutely fucking bawling at my funeral

TG: itll be open casket and ill be laying ass up so they can admire my fine ass one last time

TG: itll be the death of a legend and the whole town will suffer the loss for years to come. the economy will never be the same without my genius behind the scenes

TG: children will weep with the sense of loss they got from never knowing me

GG: DAVE!!!! SHUT UP!!!

GG: you need to join the call! Everyone else already did while you were talking!

TG: damn ok then

You exit the chat and open up the call. It takes a few seconds to load, and you tilt your head to look at your closed door. He’s not here right now, but it makes you feel better to have the door tightly shut regardless. Today was an easy day so far, with Bro out of the house. He’ll be back to hassle you in a few hours without a doubt, but you get to talk to your friends uninterrupted right now and for that you can’t complain.

The audio on the call kicks in suddenly after what you feel was an ungodly amount of loading. John is talking animatedly about the main character of the movie, while Jade stares, taking in the information reverently, nodding every few seconds. You can see the top of Rose’s head as she sits cross legged on her bed, bent over her psychoanalysis journal and writing faster than you think you’ve written anything in your life. You can’t blame her though, John’s really giving her a lot to work with. Jade notices you pop up on screen and seems to break out of her trance.

“Dave’s here!” She exclaims, grinning at the camera. Rose whips her head up from nose-deep in her journal and smiles.

“Yes! It’s movie night go-time, guys!” John cheers, pumping his fist. You give your adoring fans an exaggerated wave to not leave them hanging. Jade is still smiling like its her birthday

as John pulls up the movie and Rose closes her notebook with a nearly inaudible thunk and sets it carefully aside. Like the man said, its go-time.

The movie lives up to everyone's expectations. Your expectations for it to be a coked up shitfest, Rose's expectations to give her a headache, John's to be a great fifth rewatch of a classic, and Jade— well, Jade just wanted everyone to have fun.

“Man am I tired!” John exclaims. You and Rose both look at him sort of incredulously. It's only about 1 a.m. for him over in Washington, but it's 3 a.m. for you and you know it's even later for Rose. You have no clue what time it is for Jade, but she looks about as tired as the rest of you. You struggle not to laugh as he gives you all a dramatic yawn and leans back in his desk chair.

“I don't know what you're talking about, John,” Rose says with a smirk in her voice. “I feel fine.” She's trolling him, obviously, because you can see how tired you all are. Rose has been pausing in her brutal analysis of the movie to yawn for the past hour or so, and at one point Jade fell asleep. Although that didn't necessarily mean she was tired. You've let your eyes rest periodically underneath your shades a couple minutes at a time without anyone noticing for almost the entire time.

“Wh—are you kidding? It's so late!” John exclaims, shooting up straight in his chair to look at Rose like she's lost her mind before seeming to realize something.

“Wait, that's not fair! We're in different timezones!” He says. You laugh silently as Rose goes for the throat.

“You're right, John. That means it's about 4 a.m. here in New York,” Her steely eyes glint with mischief as she looks at his dumbstruck face. “What time is it in Washington, John?”

You love your friends.

It kills you, but eventually everyone leaves to go to bed, one by one. You're the last to leave. You stare at the empty call where their faces used to be for a few moments before closing the program yourself and heading to bed. The apartment is still silent, but it's gone dark in the hours you spent chatting with your friends. You close your eyes and listen to the sounds of traffic and nightlife bustling far below your apartment as your exhaustion takes you over.

You ignore the noise you just heard in the hallway.

It's a few minutes before another, louder noise wakes you with a start.

Something is in the hall outside your door.

You feel your senses snap back to awareness and your heartbeat thumps fast and erratically in your chest. He's doing this again, then. You start to slowly reach your hand down the side of your bed and are relieved to feel the familiar handle of your sword, still where you stashed it for the night. Thank fuck he didn't take it this time. You hate those days.

You grip the handle of your sword and slowly open your eyes. The fucking puppet is laying down right next to you, staring you in the face with it's huge ass creepy blue eyeballs. You definitely do not jump, or shriek, or anything of the sort. Anyone that tells you differently would be lying through their teeth.

This is a summons for a strife. You wrestle your legs out from the twisted up blankets, jump up out of bed, away from the puppet, and grab your shades from the table beside your bed and silently slide up against the wall by your door.

You know this door was not open before you went to bed.

It is now.

The hallway is pitch black. You freeze, clutching the leathery grip of the sword handle with sweaty hands and stare at the darkness, eyes searching for movement. Seconds go by, then minutes, and nothing happens. Your grip loosens on your sword for a precious few seconds.

It's a mistake.

Something moves too quickly to see in your periphery. A suppressed flinch rolls across your shoulders as your sword jerks upwards involuntarily. You glance back at the bed.

Lil Cal is gone.

You mourn the loss of your sleep as you break your feet off the floor and step away from your bed. The floor creaks under your softly padding feet and you wish for the thousandth time that it wouldn't. You stop a few feet away from the door and take a deep breath. The handle of your sword is slick with sweat, so you roll your shoulders and adjust your grip. It would be the lamest fucking thing to drop your sword like a five-year-old during a fight and leave yourself completely open. Speaking of fights, he's going to be pissed if you make him wait too long.

You step out of the doorway. The hallway is dark and your senses fight to pick up anything other than darkness as you make your way slowly towards the living room. As you stumble your way through the dark, you feel your foot catch on something. There's a sudden click, and you barely dodge the throwing knife that flies out of the wall, slicing through the air, whizzing right by your head. That was so stupid of you. You'd already seen that trap earlier today, and managed to avoid it a couple times. Now you stupidly set it off in some kind of idiot shuffle down the hall. You don't get a free pass because you can't see shit and you know it. You both know it. You pray to gods you don't believe in that Bro didn't see you slip up.

The strife will be so much harder if he did.

Out of a sort of morbid curiosity, you turn your head and look at the knife embedded in the drywall behind you. It's by far not the biggest knife thrown at you through the years, but the sight of it fixed deeply in the wall makes it hard to swallow for some reason. You decide to shrug it off in true Strider fashion, but you hear the telltale swivel and zoom of one of the hallway cameras. God fucking dammit of course. He's been watching you act like some sort of shitheaded monkey about this trap the whole time and now you're going to pay.

You're not supposed to freeze up or fuck around in the hallway when you need to be on the roof.

Now.

With a renewed sense of urgency, you walk with purpose to the apartment stairwell through the dark apartment. You already have two strikes and you know he won't be happy about that. The door to the stairs seems shrouded in darkness with the light from the kitchen window not quite managing to reach it. You feel your feet freeze to the floor at the sight of it, your legs refusing to move. You cannot afford to freeze up again. You can feel your own heart pounding in your throat, faster and faster every second you can't move.

You needed to be up there yesterday.

You need to move.

Now.

Your urgency kicks your feet into motion, hauling your ass up the stairs to the roof.

The night air is warm, musky, and oppressive. The cool concrete scrapes your feet and— oh shit. You're wearing socks. This is fantastic. This is, without a doubt, the best thing that could happen to you in this situation. In fact, you would go so far as to say that this is the best thing that has ever happened to you.

Okay, no. This fucking sucks.

Your soon-to-be shredded feet are something to mope over later, though. You pause your internal lament to focus on the more important things at hand, namely, Bro.

He's standing on the edge of the roof, a silhouette with his back to you and what you can guess is Lil Cal slung over his shoulder as always. You try to examine the back of his head for a clue of how mad he is right now, but you get no answers. If he found that smuppet you brutalized this morning you can guess that he'd be pretty mad, but you also made him wait, which is arguably worse.

Before you can dive too deeply in the semantics of the back of his head, he breaks the silence.

“You’re late.” You almost flinch at the sudden, cold statement. Almost. He didn’t raise his voice, but his voice carries perfectly across the entire roof. It’s almost as if the atmosphere obeys him, in awe of how rad he is. Bro’s silent for a moment longer, and he turns to you. You can’t see them, but you can feel his eyes scanning you under his shades. His mouth seems to tick downwards into a disapproving frown, but it’s gone before you can even wonder whether or not you imagined it. Regardless, he raises his katana.

The freshly sharpened steel glinting in the pale moonlight makes your blood run cold.

He’s on you in a second. You’re not even sure you saw him move. One second he was standing on the edge of the roof and the next he was two feet in front of you, slashing his blade at you with deadly precision.

Years of training are the only thing stopping you from trying to run. Muscle memory and adrenaline take over in a familiar effort to keep you alive.

Swords clash together in a flurry of metal as you block your Bro’s aggressive hits. Each impact sends another vibration through your arms and you feel them getting more and more numb. The concrete rubs your feet raw as each hit pushes you back.

You are not going to be able to block him much longer.

Once he gets a hit in it’s over for you.

You’re shaking and you don’t quite know why.

Your luck, predictably, runs out. You see him gearing up to finish you off, leaving the smallest opening.

You take it.

He blocks your pitiful swipe and retaliates with a harsh, diagonal slice to your bicep. You stumble backwards, swallowing a scream from the sudden violent sting. That’s going to be a bitch to patch up later. It’s deep, you can tell. You would try to put pressure on it, but you need both hands to hold your sword. Honestly, it’s what you deserve for such a stupid, weak attack. Unluckily for you, though, Bro isn’t done.

He’s advancing on you now. You try to steady your shaking hands and raise your sword, but thick lines of blood run down your arm mixing with the sweat on your hands. No matter how hard you try, you can’t get a firm grip on the lubed-up handle. You can feel your heart pumping as your sword clashes with his, but this time your frictionless hands and stiff fingers are no match for the force behind his blow.

The sword hits the concrete with a clatter.

You almost try to make a run for it, but a fist hits the side of your chest and you stumble backwards, trying to steady yourself regardless of the intense throbbing in two different places. Bro doesn’t care, though. He comes at you swinging. He’s not aiming for your face, but his fist connects with your jaw at the same time he kicks out your knees.

It feels like you go flying across the roof. You yelp as you land half on your side. The concrete slams against the back of your shoulder and you can feel grit tearing up the back of your shirt, digging into the skin of your upper back.

You try to orient yourself, rolling onto your side and trying to push yourself up with weak arms, but Bro doesn't give you the chance to get up. Well, that's not fair to say. He gave you plenty of chances not to fall down in the first goddamn place, so you really have no one to blame but yourself.

His boot slams into your chest, pushing you down, and the back of your head thuds against the concrete. He grinds your back into the rough concrete, forcing a sharp gasp out of you as you feel a few well-placed rocks cut through what's left of your shirt and into your skin. Your shoulder blades beg for mercy, and you would too if you could breathe.

Just as the world starts to go dark and wavy around the edges, Bro's boot mercifully leaves your chest. You inhale raggedly, and though the world still looks kinda spinny, you can breathe again. Not for long though, apparently, because mere moments after Bro's boot leaves your chest, he punts you with Lil Cal, who slaps you with his floppy limbs and dances on you, sharp pains running through you each time he hits an injury.

You flail your arms around stupidly, trying to grab the accursed puppet and throw him off, but your scrambling hands never reach the damn thing. It's hard to think with puppet limbs all over you, but you manage to register the sword you dropped earlier in the fight only about a foot away. You throw your arm towards it and your fingers just barely close around the edge of the handle. The sweat and blood on the handle is less slimy and more tacky, so you're able to get a semi-firm grip. You don't know how the hell you managed it, but you swing your blade, flinging Lil Cal away, and you scramble back up to your feet.

Everything hurts. Your sliced bicep screams with every movement and your battered chest throbs sharply each time you take a breath. Your entire back burns fiercely. There's a nasty bruise forming on your jaw, you can feel it.

Bro is standing a good few feet away, coolly assessing you. It's obvious that you're not doing too hot and you wonder when this fight will end. The answer is not now, because he's raising his sword and gearing up to swing.

You try to raise your sword to block, but your weak arms don't quite manage in time. The cold metal blade meets the top of your shoulder and slices above your armpit to your chest. It's shallower than the cut on your bicep, but it stings like hell regardless. Bro sets aside his sword again and punches you in the gut, knocking the wind out of you and you gag a little as your weak knees give out. You try to brace yourself for the fall, but you don't manage to do more than twist a little to the side. Your sword clatters to the ground at your side and you can't quite manage to reach it. Bro is standing over you one moment, then a soft plush thing hits you with a good deal of force behind it and falls on the ground behind you.

You look up and he's gone.

A moment passes where you close your eyes and let the bustling sounds of the late-night city wash over you with short, gasping breaths. You have to get up eventually, but for now you try

to pretend nothing hurts. You twist to try and look at what Bro threw at you, the scratches on your back burning as you do.

Oh.

It's the smuppet you maimed.

You didn't think he'd be mad enough to bring it up. Or he might not give a shit. You have no fucking clue. It's best not to lose sleep over Bro's enigmatic ways, although considering it's probably now about four in the morning, you've already failed at that.

Staring up at the blank, foggy sky, you realize it's probably time to get up now. If you let these cuts go without treatment any longer it's gonna hurt worse. You peel yourself off of the cool concrete with no small amount of pain. Short puffs of breath come ragged and pained. You steady yourself on your hands and knees, trying to stop the world from swaying.

You're finally able to push yourself to your feet, wobbly and unsteadily, but standing nonetheless. The roof whirls around you and you feel a little nauseous, but you manage to put one foot in front of the other and stumble like an eighty-year-old grandpa without his walker towards the door. You're going to have to come back in the morning for your sword because you don't think you can bend down and grab it without passing out or falling over.

Walking down a flight of stairs proved to be a herculean effort, and by the time you're back in the apartment you're exhausted beyond belief. You stagger to the bathroom and hop in the shower.

You gasp as the water runs across your skin and burns the cuts fiercely. The water turns a rusty reddish-brown with a mix of dried and fresh blood as it flows to the shower floor and down the drain. You clench your teeth hard and start to wash the dirt and crusted blood off your back.

After you finish, you grab a towel and walk to your bedroom with your hand steadying you on the wall as you go. You step into your room, throw on a pair of sweatpants, grab the first aid kit under your bed, and get to work.

The deep cut on your bicep ended up needing stitches. You put them in, slapped some ointment on it, and bandaged it. You did something similar for everything else, put on the softest t-shirt you own, and crashed, laying on your bed staring up at the ceiling. Your eyes are blissfully slipping closed, but since the universe will never let rest, you realize something.

You have school in four hours.

Fuck.

staying up

Chapter Notes

hi.

here is chapter two.

it has been a little over three months and i now realize that i am one of THOSE fic writers that drop off the face of the earth accidentally.

enjoy

(chapter title is from staying up by the neighborhood, it fits both dave and this fic so well)

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

It would be best- you think to yourself as you grasp the handrail and pull yourself up each step of the stairs- if Bro is not waiting for you back at the apartment for a round two of last night.

Managing to go through an entire school day operating on only a couple hours of restless sleep and the shitty cafeteria lunch they give you for free is going to go down as one of your absolute greatest accomplishments. Once you get inside, you can shovel down some canned beans or whatever the fuck you find in the back of your closet that has any nutritional value, pass out on your bed, and call it a day.

Halfway up your fourth flight of stairs, your death-grip on the handrail slips under your sweaty hands. You feel yourself drop, and as you collide with the concrete you are reminded of your sword cascading out of your sweaty hands last night and think about investing in a nice pair of gloves to wear twenty four-fucking-seven, so this bullshit never happens again.

You allow yourself a moment to let yourself feel absolutely pathetic, lying diagonally and face-down in the dank, humid stairwell that always seems to smell of cigarette smoke. There are no cameras, security or otherwise, to see you here. The edge of one stair presses into your bruised chest, so you shift slightly to lighten the pressure and take a few deep breaths. As soon as the black dots fade from your vision, you push yourself off the ground, steady yourself on the handrail, and resume the climb.

Three more flights to go.

As you quietly slip in the door of the apartment, you notice the lights are switched off and the place seems cloaked in a muted silence. You carefully pull the door closed behind you and note the absence of... anything. It seems you are home alone again. Bro is probably out for

another gig or... whatever he does when he's not in the apartment. Out of habit you glance at the clock, but that's pointless as hell because it became a casualty of Bro's ironic tastes and now runs backwards. It's funny as hell, but sometimes you miss the convenience of having it work normally.

You pull your phone out of your pocket and the LED screen beams up at you, showing the time, almost five p.m, and a couple unread messages from your friends. It looks like John's texting you again, but you decide to get your room before getting back to him. Even if Bro's not here, it's always a safe bet that he set up some kind of cool, ironic puppet trap for you to stumble into like an idiot. You glance around the apartment one final time from the entryway before slowly making your way down the hall, lit only by the sunlight streaming in through the living room window and the light from your phone screen. Your eyes are heavy and your feet drag across the hardwood despite your best efforts to stay alert. You reach the door and pocket your phone as you carefully push the door open and step in.

You scan the room and freeze when your eyes reach your desk.

It's your sword, cleaned and freshly sharpened. You walk over and pick it up gingerly, examining the shiny blade and previously bloodied tsuka handle. This is... unexpected. Mind reeling, you carefully put the sword up on the wall in its rack. Bro must have gone up to the roof, gotten your sword from where you dropped it late last night and fixed it up for you while you were at school. You're infinitely grateful. You expected to have to fetch it yourself, and based on the pain lacing through your body, you weren't sure if you could manage a trip up even more goddamn stairs. Usually you're glad that he doesn't baby you like a useless parent who can't teach their kid to fend for themselves, but this occasional show of true broship is awesome, to say the least.

Your ruminations about Bro and his mind blowingly cool, ironic ways are interrupted by another buzz from your phone. You fish it out of your pocket as you limp over to your bed and collapse onto it, only to sit up immediately and wince when the action presses against your bruised shoulder blades and injured back.

Okay, you might have to take care of all this shit first. Whatever stupid things John has to say can probably wait five more minutes.

You slide out of your sneakers, wincing as you scrape the raw skin on the bottom of your feet from your fight in goddamn socks. The cool AC air hits the raw skin on your feet as you peel off your socks and the clumsy wrappings under them. Going to the roof without shoes was an idiot move, and you're paying for it today. This morning you bandaged your feet to try and make it hurt less to walk on, but because you were slightly rushed, you fucked it up and were walking stiffly all day. You can't blame that all on your feet, though. You really let yourself get fucked up last night. Your dizzy, stiff stumbling and sleeping on your desk throughout the day probably convinced ninety percent of the people there that you were on hard drugs. Not to mention the gigantic bruise on your jaw that made your already-pale face look like death. It was an ugly reddish purple when you woke up this morning, and it only got worse as the day progressed.

You bend down and reach under your bed for your bandages and other shit, wincing as the movement pulls on your fucked up chest. You grab the box and sit up too fast, making your

vision swim and head feel light as hell. Once you finish having a pseudo-drug trip from what you don't want to admit is a minor concussion, you plop the kit down on a blanket next to you and get to work.

Starting with what you have evaluated as the most serious injury, you carefully check under the bandages on your upper arm. Your skin feels hot to the touch, which is a familiar sign that the healing process is happening. It looks like the stitches you did last night are holding up, and while you can't say it looks miraculously better, it doesn't look any worse. It's red, watery, and slightly swollen, but the bleeding has stopped and the cut is mostly scabbed over already. You gingerly remove the bloodied bandages and set them aside before grabbing a new roll and wrapping it back up.

The cut on your chest is shallower, and is doing far better than the one on your arm. Once you see under the bandage you are greeted with a much longer cut, but halfway through it seems to taper off into a scratch that trails across your whole chest. Judging on the depth, if you were just a couple inches closer to Bro during that fight, your chest would have been sliced open. You quickly wrap it back up with new bandages and move on to the other injuries.

There really isn't much you can do for the bruises you got except for putting some ointment on them and hoping for the best. The worst one is the boot-shaped imprint on the middle of your chest. You're going to have to ice these bruises if you want them to go away as quickly as possible, but you're not sure you could stand back up if you tried. You do what you can for now, and slathering some bruise cream and wrapping them up is just going to have to work until you can do more. Your phone lights up again with another message from John. It looks like he's saying some stupid shit to himself like usual, so you might as well respond and put him out of his misery.

ectoBiologist [EB] began pestering turntechGodhead [TG]

EB: i don't understand how you walk home every day after school.

EB: by the time school's over for me my dad practically has to scrape my dead body off the ground and load me into the car!

EB: i couldn't imagine being like, "oh yeah, i'm so ready to walk 3 goddamn miles in the rain or whatever, because i'm a masochist!"

EB: ughhh you're not responding so i'm guessing you're still on your daily pilgrimage.

EB: or maybe you're still at school? i don't know how texas works.

TG: yeah no shit works completely different over here in the far and foreign lands of the deep south

TG: school ends at 3:45 like any god fearing southern establishment should

TG: im still pissed about how freakishly early you get off of school

TG: and maybe i am a masochist or something because i swear to god i felt like microwaved shit all day and i still had to walk 2 and a half miles to school in the morning and back home

TG: i was dragging my shit down the street like id just been a fatality in a three way collision and decided i still needed to get to my nine to five

TG: coroners trying to bag me and im like ah nah man i've got a mortgage

EB: haha!

EB: that sucks, dude!

EB: were you sick today or something?

TG: with all the shit the world has thrown at me today yeah i probably am

TG: why not add disease into this wretched goddamn mix

TG: my head hurts like a bitch

TG: im not going to stand up ever again because ill probably just pass the fuck out

TG: egbert please catch me and lower me gently into my coffin

EB: haha stfu dude webmd says you've probably got the flu.

TG: ...

TG: yeah maybe

TG: anyways have you talked to rose any today

EB: yeah, i was talking to her this morning! she said she wanted to message you about something after she gets home.

TG: oh goddamn

TG: did she say what about because this shits like getting called into the principals office

TG: dont even know what for youre just in there

TG: and

TG: ugh fuck this i cant even do one of my ironic metaphors of comedic genius

TG: you can get a refund at the front desk egbert because im not spitting my top fuckin game here

EB: no i think i've just been saved!

EB: if your business plan is centered around people paying you, then you should rethink it because i've only seen people pay you to stop!

TG: holy shit dude youve been talking to rose too much

TG: i've never seen this savage of a response from you or anyone other than her jesus christ im crushed

TG: you need to go have a nice wholesome conversation with jade with a shitload of dumbass smiley faces to get this out of your system

EB: yeah totally! that'd be WAYYY more fun than talking to you! :B

EB: jk lol!

TG: god you cant even say something slightly mean without immediately following it up with jk

TG: when you just shredded me within an inch of my life

TG: also i need you to know that the only reason im not utterly destroying you in a roast right now is because i am clinging onto life like a senior citizen with a priest waiting by his bedside to deliver a eulogy the second i drop dead

TG: its like life alert but the only emergency is getting me loaded up into a casket asap

EB: oh yeahhhhh... i wondered why you hadnt started rapping or some other awful shit yet.

TG: damn

EB: BUT!!! you should really take a nap! if youve got the flu you need to get lots of rest and drink lots of fluids to get better.

EB: at least thats what my dad says when i get sick.

TG: huh ok

TG: thanks for this sage imparted wisdom

TG: im going to go drink ten gallons of gasoline and black out in a parking lot for three weeks

EB: NOOOOOO!!!

TG: if i stop answering my phone for a couple weeks you know whats up

EB: absolutely not, fucker!!!

TG: absolutely yes, bitchboy

TG: its the strider cure for all ailments

EB: i swear to god im going to tell jade that you want to drink gasoline.

EB: shes gonna be VERY UPSET with you!

TG: youre probably gonna have to explain to she-tarzan what gasoline is first

EB: yeah, but then she'll do that thing where she uses a bunch of sad smiley faces and makes you feel like shit!

TG: i've been threatened

TG: ok pinky promise i will not drink gasoline and pass out in a parking lot

EB: okay, but seriously! you should sleep!

TG: uhhh... i guess

EB: what do you mean "i guess?"

EB: do i need to talk about my "dumbass" movies to get you to go to sleep? because thats a surefire way to knock you out, it seems!

TG: hahaa you called them dumbass

TG: your movies suck ass i win

EB: ughhhh noooo! i put it in quotes because its something you would say!

TG: excuses

EB: ugh... seriously though, whats the deal?

You hear a small tapping sound somewhere in your room. The limbs that you previously thought were sore and dying spring into a flailing motion, accidentally kicking your first aid kit off your bed and onto the floor in a mad scramble to push yourself up into an upright position.

Oh god.

You thought he wasn't home.

What the hell are you gonna do? You're too fucking weak to train today, you're not even sure if you can move.

It takes your vision starting to go out to realize that you aren't breathing. Actually, scratch that, you are breathing, but you're doing a real shit job of it. You take a few shaky breaths in and listen for noises.

As the fog of panic starts to dissipate slightly, you realize that the tapping never really stopped, and it's coming from your window, and it sounds like...

pecking?

You shift on your bed, untangling yourself from the sheets you threw around a few seconds ago like a dumbass- what even was that?- and try to get a good view of whatever is outside your window.

Oh.

It's a crow.

The brainless asshole perched on your window ledge is testing the strength of your window, pecking at the glass and waiting for you to open up so he can extort you for food. It's moments like these that make you regret your habit of feeding them.

Your phone buzzes in your hands and your attention snaps back to the conversation with John.

turntechGodhead [TG] is an idle chum!

EB: dave?

TG: shit sorry i got distracted by something

TG: well... umm

TG: my bro isnt home right now and i should really be... not asleep when he gets back

EB: oh! well i'm sure it wouldn't be that big of a deal, you are sick after all.

EB: hang on... didn't you say you were home alone last night? has he not come back yet?

TG: oh no he definitely came back last night

TG: i can tell you that for sure

EB: ?

TG: nevermind

TG: youre right i should probably go to sleep

TG: fantastic chat egbert but im signing off now

EB: uhhhh... alright?

EB: bye? i guess?

TG: ciao

turntechGodhead [TG] ceased pestering ectoBiologist [EB]

EB: >:/

ectoBiologist [EB] ceased pestering turntechGodhead [TG]

That wasn't smooth at all and you know it, but you just didn't feel like talking anymore. It's weird for you to just fuck off like that, so you at least tried to make it normal sounding. Based on John's dumbass "suspicious" face, or whatever the hell it's supposed to be, you didn't succeed at all. Oh well.

You look over at your closed bedroom door from the horizontal, slumped position on your bed you slid into.

He's not home.

He could come home any minute. You should be alert and ready for him to barge in for more training. Constant vigilance. John doesn't understand how serious your Bro takes training, because despite what he told you just now, it would be a gigantic fucking deal if Bro came home to you passed out like a dumbass.

Your eyelids are heavy and your bed feels soft underneath you. The sun is reaching a low point in the sky, sending warm light through your window that highlights tiny specks of dust floating in the air. The crow has deserted your window ledge, it's mission unsuccessful, and the tapping of its beak against the glass is long gone.

Maybe you can rest just for a second.

You let your eyes close behind your shades and fall asleep.

Chapter End Notes

so... not a whole lot happened this chapter, i know, but things are going to start picking up in the next two chapters.

i appreciate you guys sticking with me and i want you to know that i have every intention of finishing this fic. im going to try and have chapter three out by the end of the month or not too long after it.

also formatting pesterlogs is hell.

little dark age

Chapter Summary

chapter title from little dark age by mgmt

Chapter Notes

this chapter's a mess and so is my life. sorry its so short by the way.

anyways, hope you enjoy

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

You wake up to three things. The first thing you feel is the sharp pang of hunger in your empty stomach pulling you out of unconsciousness. The second thing is your phone buzzing in your hand. The third—and last—thing, is the loud thunk of a shuriken lodging itself in the wall inches away from your head.

You jerk your head up in a panic and almost fall right off the bed. It takes you a good few seconds to catch your breath and stop your heart from beating fast enough to rival a rabbit's. No other sharp objects come flying at you in the next few moments, and you don't hear any sounds from behind the door, so you figure you're probably in the clear. For now at least.

Your phone buzzes again and you open your messages.

tentacleTherapist [TT] began pestering turntechGodhead [TG]

TT: Hello.

TT: I am sure John has told you that I needed to talk to you.

TT: I had an idea last night about something and I figure that you're the best person to discuss with and gauge interest.

TT: It all depends, of course, if it would even be possible in the first place, because if I'm being honest it isn't all that realistic.

---turntechGodhead [TG] is an idle chum!----

TT: Hm...

TT: One moment.

TT: Okay. John is telling me that you signed off to take a nap. Pardon me for interrupting.

TT: Message me back when you wake up.

TG: sup

TG: ok what the hell are you on about

TT: Sup to you too, Sleeping Beauty, how was your nap?

TG: fantastic thank you for asking

TT: I'm sure your saintly contributions to humanity in the form of those new comics you posted have tired you greatly.

TG: haha yeah

TG: that one about stapling spaghetti to the wall was pretty fucking inspired i think

TG: anyways im 100% down to jab at each other for the next half hour but i really gotta know what the fuck you were talking to yourself about before i got on

TT: Request granted.

TT: So, I was saying that I had an idea and I'm not sure how plausible it could be in practice.

TG: yeah i got that part

TG: spit it out rose whats the idea

TT: Alright, fine.

TT: What if we organized a meetup?

TG: woah ok

TG: wh

TG: okay thats big

TT: What do you think?

TG: you gotta gimme a second hold on

TT: I figured that you'd freak out like this.

TT: Take your time.

TG: a meetup? like in fucking person?

TT: Yes, David. "In fucking person." That's what a meetup is, dumbass.

TT: So what do you think?

TG: hell yes it would be so fucking cool

TG: it'd be hard as fuck to pull off with jade living out in the middle of the goddamn ocean and us three scattered across the us

TG: have you asked jade or john about this yet

TT: I have not.

TG: what why not

TT: God knows, I'm regretting it already.

TT: Seriously though, I figure we can get some real scheming done between the two of us, and if it turns out to be a terrible, impossible to pull off, load of horseshit, we can let it go gently into that good night with none the wiser.

TT: Cut our losses and all that.

TG: huh ok

TG: rose if this shit doesnt work out im gonna cry myself to sleep and drown myself in the fucking toilet

TT: Make sure to close the lid on your head and put something heavy on top of it so your body can't instinctively come up for air.

TG: thanks dr phil i really needed this support

TT: Anyways, I think the biggest roadblock might be where we go to meet up and how we all get there.

TT: I am presumably free to meet anywhere we agree on, because I can ask my mother to fly me out. I am not sure if it is the same for you all, though.

TG: john and his dad can probably swing a plane ticket or something but i dont know how jade will make it off some remote island in the pacific

TT: You're right. We may need to ask Jade about that, but what about you?

TG: oh uh

TG: i dont know if my bro would really go for this

TG: im not sure i would be able to fly out anywhere

TT: Really? I didn't think it would be a problem with him, but that's probably fair.

TG: well maybe it wouldnt be? I dont know

TT: Hm.

TT: Ask him to be sure. We need to have a firm sense on what we can do to make this happen.

TG: fuck man thats just asking for a strife

TG: god im still tired from the last one

TT: I know. I had to ask my mother about plane tickets last night.

TG: damn howd that go

TT: It wasn't awful, shockingly. She's been trying to do better lately.

TG: huh

TG: you mean shes not getting blacked out every day

TT: Yes, that is exactly what I mean. Thank you for putting it in such crude terminology for me.

TT: But seriously, I am glad that she's making an effort. Even if this is an act just to psyche me out, she is drinking less.

TG: sick

TT: On another note, John and I wanted to know how you felt about having another movie night tomorrow.

TG: fuck yes thatd be awesome

TG: but um

TG: something might come up and i might dip out last minute

TG: just

TG: letting you know

TT: And what would that be? It sounds like you have your interruptions scheduled, David.

TT: You wouldn't dream of absconding the last minute on purpose so you don't have to make an appearance, would you?

TG: haha no no no its not like that

TG: i've probably got training tomorrow so i might be busy which fucking sucks

TT: What time are you training? We could plan around it.

TG: i have no fucking clue

TG: bro just fucking jumps me at any point in the day and boom we're training

TT: That sounds illogical.

TG: what do you mean i think its pretty clear

TT: Well, he's teaching you to fight with a sword, so I'm not sure how constructive it is to "jump you." Also, at "any point in the day?" Do you carry a sword around 24/7?

TG: oh

TG: i guess its more like self defense training because we do a whole bunch of shit not just swordfighting

TG: maybe i should carry a sword around though because i'm usually absolutely fucked when he jumps me

TG: thats besides the point though

TG: its so i'm constantly alert and vigilant so i can anticipate any attack and defend myself

TT: Alright, hold on. I can't presume to know what life in a large Texan city is like, but just how many fights does he expect you to get into?

TT: I understand the sword fighting as an ironic gesture or even as a joke, but you're making it sound as if he is actually preparing you for some huge threat looming over you.

TG: look i dont fucking know why hes doing it but he sure as hell has a good reason

TG: he wouldnt be doing all this for nothing rose

TG: just because its a little intense doesnt mean im gonna whine about it i just need to get stronger

TT: Does he have a sword?

TG: he has a fuck ton of them what kind of question is that

TT: Does he have a sword when he attacks you at random?

TG: yeah thats the fucking point

TT: So during these altercations he is armed and you are... not?

TG: no i just gotta grab something and fight back its not that serious

TT: No I think this actually sounds very serious.

TG: rose you are looking way to fucking far into this

TG: i dont know what you think youre going to find with your digging and needling but you need to stop right the fuck there

TG: stop taking notes this is just two awesome dudes who sword fight on occasion

TG: so drop it

TT: ... fine.

TT: I apologize for seeming insincere, I was simply curious and asking as a concerned friend.

TG: sure

TT: I wish you weren't so intent on disbelieving me.

TG: can we just fucking move on about this

TG: i know you cant resist the horseshit psychoanalysis and i dont want to talk about this any more

TT: If you insist.

TT: I understand that your schedule may be open to question, but please know that we hope you can find time to join us tomorrow night.

TT: We have not yet decided who will pick the movie, but it most likely will not be John again.

TG: i'll try but i cant make any promises

TT: Alright.

TG: i have to go i've got some stuff i need to do

TT: Fair enough. Talk to you later?

TG: sure

turntechGodhead [TG] ceased pestering tentacleTherapist [TT]

Chapter End Notes

okay im gonna be real. i have no clue when i'll be able to get the next chapter out. hopefully it will be soon, but knowing me it might also be a while. sorry. again, i still plan to finish this, because i'd really hate to just drop it and leave it unfinished.

thanks for sticking with me. :)

prey

Chapter Summary

title from prey by the neighborhood. happy one year.

Despite Rose having told you that she wanted to plan your potential meetup together, she ends up doing most of it by herself. You find yourself less and less privy to what exactly she's organizing as each barely survivable day passes, albeit quickly. It's hard not to feel a little bad, though, because it feels like you're leaving her with a huge amount of work and not helping in the least.

But if you're honest, you don't quite have the energy to be as guilty as you probably should be.

Spring break is difficult for you. It isn't as hard as winter break, but damn is it a close contest. You no longer get at least one meal every day from the cafeteria, which might be the only thing about school you're grateful for.

Other than not being in the apartment.

It's an odd thing to admit, especially when there obviously shouldn't be any problems with being at home, Bro is just doing his job as a guardian and training you. It's normal, and despite Rose's concern ringing in your ears every second of the day, grating like nails against stone, you're doing just fine. This may not be normal for Bro to be doing, but he's preparing you. He's protecting you.

Your muscles ache horribly, along with your injuries, old and relatively new. There isn't any food left in your closet, and there sure as hell isn't any in the apartment. You've checked, despite the ample traps. They guard absolutely nothing, and you got just as much from your desperate search.

Bro isn't here. He hasn't been for a while. A couple weeks, maybe, since before break started. You don't really know what to do.

You're a little scared that you might starve. He didn't leave you any money—he never does—and you don't have enough to get food. Besides, the injuries he left you with would make walking to the store unduly difficult, probably impossible.

You don't know what to do.

So you pull out your phone and text John, pretending that nothing is wrong at all, ignoring the nauseating pain in your stomach. Bro will be back soon, and he'll definitely bring back

food, because he wouldn't want you to starve. This is a test of will, probably—some kind of trust exercise so he'll know that you won't go running to the cops to cause issues.

Something like that.

turntechGodhead [TG] began pestering ectoBiologist [EB] at 16:22

TG: hey

TG: im trying to think of some ideas for sbhj and youre gonna be who i bounce them off of today

TG: thanks for your cooperation

TG: so for the next one im thinking that i take doorknobs and work from there

TG: or maybe some bullshit with smoke detectors

TG: actually why am i limiting myself like this

TG: i could do both

EB: ugh that sounds stupid.

EB: just do whatever.

TG: i knew i could count on you for support thanks egbert it means a lot

EB: sorry i didnt mean to be so snappy. :/

EB: im just not having the best day!

You let out a huff of breath. It makes your bruised chest twinge sharply.

TG: that makes two of us

TG: whats the problem lay it on me

TG: did the hot guy at school spurn your advances

EB: no! asshole. it's just my dad. he was kind of unbearable today.

TG: oh

TG: are you good

EB: i'm just pissed off. he got a new clown poster and he put it right in the hallway by my door. i fucking hate that thing and he won't move it!

TG: haha

TG: dont tell me you cant handle a little bit of clown

EB: i forgot you were an asshole so thanks for reminding me!

EB: seriously though, i could handle a little bit of the harlequin stuff if there WAS a little bit of it. the house is fucking full of it!

TG: yeah i bet you wish you lived with puppets everywhere instead

EB: that's not a good comparison because you actually LIKE those stupid fucking puppets!

EB: dinner is going to be awkward today because i'm not going to talk to him until he takes down the goddamn poster.

EB: he's making something i hate on purpose, i can feel it.

EB: maybe i should just not go to prove my point. :/

A pang of awful jealousy pierces your gut. Or it might be another hunger pain, you're not sure. It's completely irrational, and you don't even completely understand why, but you start to get a little angry. Maybe it's because right now, you'd kill to have any fucking food in the apartment, regardless of how you feel about it. You've never understood Rose, and now John, when they say they skip meals as some passive aggressive bullshit. The idea usually makes you uncomfortable, with insecurities about how different your lives surfacing each time it's brought up, but now it's just making you mad.

TG: john i swear to god just eat the fucking food

TG: dont be an idiot

EB: woah, uh, ok.

EB: i guess you're right, that might be a dumb idea.

TG: it is so dont fucking do it

EB: are you alright? you said you were having a bad day too.

This makes you pause.

You aren't, obviously. There's no question about it.

You haven't eaten an actual meal in almost a week, and your meagre rations from your closet ran out yesterday. Hunger pains have been ripping through you for days now, and your skin is littered with stinging wounds that refuse to heal quickly. It makes sense that they can't, of course, because you aren't eating, but there isn't a single fucking thing you can do about that except keep the wounds clean and hope they don't get infected. That would be the absolute last thing you need.

But John can't know that.

Nobody can.

You have to force your fingers to type out your placating, hopefully unconcerning response.

TG: nah im great

TG: everythings cool over here

TG: no bad days ever

EB: oookayyyy...

EB: are you SURE? because it sounds a little like somethings wrong!

Shit.

TG: absolutely not

TG: nothing would ever be less than top notch in this cool ass apartment

TG: the thought is ridiculous egbert your detective skills are nonexistent

EB: >:/

You're being suspicious. He isn't gonna let this go.

TG: okay fine i lost one of our beloved puppets and life isn't the same without it

TG: i keep looking at the empty space where he used to be but hes not there

TG: he'll never be there again because i lost him this is so fucking devastating

EB: lol.

TG: egbert are you fucking laughing at me

TG: this is serious

EB: yeah, SURE, it kinda just sounds like some of your classic bullshit!

TG: ugh ok fine

TG: im kinda sick

TG: like

TG: i feel like shit

EB: that sucks, man, i hope you feel better!

EB: i don't know why you were so cagey about that, though.

EB: is getting sick too uncool for you to even speak of?

TG: obviously

TG: unless its one of those dramatic old ass diseases like the plague

TG: just coughing up hella blood while still being cool as fuck

TG: except coughing up blood kinda sucks ass so maybe just the other stuff

EB: you've coughed up blood before?

TG: yes dont ask because im not gonna tell you shit

TG: it was a regular ass occurrence that happens to regular fucking people

EB: uhhhhh ok...?

EB: that kinda makes it sound like it wasn't...

TG: thats not my problem

TG: so for the sbhj comic i actually think something with a spoon might be funny

TG: maybe i can make one with a doorknob that IS a spoon and then the smoke detector goes off whenever you open the door for some fucking reason

TG: or maybe the spoon is the smoke detector and thats the bit

TG: whatever ill figure something out

TG: im gonna head out i've gotta start making a masterpiece of a comic

TG: eat your shitty dinner or ill kick your fucking ass egbert

turntechGodhead [TG] ceased pestering ectoBiologist [EB] at 17:39

You're not making a new comic. Instead, you shift slightly in your bed, trying not to aggravate any of your bandaged wounds, and curl in on yourself in a way that makes the pangs of hunger lessen just slightly.

No noises announce the return of your Bro as you lay in silence. The anger from before creeps up your chest and rises in your throat.

This isn't fucking fair.

You aren't sure when the thought first came to you—quietly, in between training sessions, or sneaking up behind you as your friends complain about the wrongdoings of their guardians.

But even with how good at lying to yourself you are, you can't pretend that the thought is a new one. *This isn't fair*, you thought to yourself when you were four, cutting your hand in the

deathtrap of a kitchen trying to feed yourself because Bro wasn't going to anymore, never really had. *This isn't fair*, you thought to yourself when you were six, a sword being put in your hand that was too big for you to hold and dragging yourself down from the roof after your first real training session, more injured than you had ever been up until then. Until the next session, which quickly beat that.

This isn't fair is what you thought when you went to school and saw kids with bright eyes, disgustingly transparent emotions, and skin completely clear of brutal scars from messily treated injuries. When they were sad, they cried; when they were happy, they smiled with a bright sort of joyfulness that was foreign to you. They didn't know how to do stitches. You did.

You told yourself that they were soft. They wouldn't end up surviving in the real world without knowing how to defend themselves, and Bro was the only guardian who actually cared enough to make sure you were capable. He fixed your sword, sometimes kept the kitchen stocked, and helped you be independent.

Even with you believing that with every fiber of your being didn't stop you from falling prey to the thought that something about this was wrong. That knowing how to use a sword at seven years old wasn't exactly essential for adult life in Texas.

But you needed it to be true.

If there wasn't a genuine reason behind why Bro was doing this, then why the hell was he? What was the point?

It's an uncomfortable question, one that you don't like to ask yourself.

There's an answer, of course, but not one you can bring yourself to confront.

So you don't, not even as you lay there, breaths quiet but with a ragged edge to them, listening to the muted sounds of the city.

The apartment is still quiet.

You don't often wish for Bro's return when he's away, off doing his own thing, but you find yourself feeling a little desperate to hear those small, threatening noises from outside your door, ready to jump at you with a sharp blade.

Well, not too desperately. Your feelings are mixed, mostly because you aren't sure how much of a fight you would be able to put up in this state, but Bro's return also might mean food.

Or he could come stumbling through the front door completely wasted and pass out like some pretty memorable instances you can recall. You're always scared that he's going to die one day; he'll pass out on the floor and never wake up.

You and Rose have always shared some level of understanding, even if she doesn't know much about your situation at all. At least you hope she doesn't. You've tried your hardest to

keep her from knowing this stuff, because you know it's not quite right. You don't really know how she—or any of your friends, for that matter—would react if they knew.

You don't want to find out.

Red words on a screen is who you are to them: cool, funny, and invulnerable. You don't know what would happen if they knew you weren't. They're friends with you because you lie to them, probably, and you aren't sure you could live with it if they realized you aren't exactly what was advertised.

Your phone buzzes with a message from somewhere on your bed, where you dropped it after smoothly ending your conversation with John. You don't move. Turning around and trying to look for it would hurt terribly and cost you energy you don't have enough of to spare.

Plus, trying to hold a normal sounding conversation—one where you try to ignore everything happening to you and pretend absolutely everything is fine—has already failed horribly once.

Honestly, you just want to sleep. The hunger pains have stopped, aside from the occasional twinge, but that doesn't mean you feel fine. At all. You mostly just feel numb, like it's all gotten to be too much.

You drift into unconsciousness surrounded by the soft sound of engines running and horns honking endlessly on the streets below. The fiery red sun burns the concrete buildings from above, glaring onto the dark streets and searing the pavement. It's business as usual for absolutely everyone else in the world, except you.

Because a tiny, anxious part of you whispers that there's a chance you might not wake back up if you fall asleep like this.

You do anyway. You've survived worse odds.

When you wake up, the T.V. is on.

It's playing some asinine, brainless action movie. The type that Bro watches, chilling on the couch and steeping in his own sweet irony. You hear the slightly muffled sounds of terrible acting and weapons clashing through the paper-thin walls, echoing down the hall to your closed door. The implications of this hit you like a truck on the freeway, nearly knocking the breath from your lungs.

He's home, then.

You take a deep, ragged breath and move to stand, gritting your teeth as your body screams at the movement. The ground meets your feet as you get upright and a wave of pain sweeps through you, and you almost flop back down onto your bed. You don't, though, so you brace your hands on either side of the bed and push yourself to your feet carefully. Unfortunately, your knees buckle, and you fight to catch yourself on the wall before you drop to the floor like a limp sack of flour.

You're standing. Clutching the wall for support and barely able to move, but you're standing nonetheless.

You hobble over to the door, gripping the wall the whole way, and you push it open.

Somehow, the trap waiting for you comes as a surprise. You absolutely should have expected the hunting knife that spins towards you, thrown from some sort of machine activated by the wire outside your door. If it weren't thrown a mere few inches off the target of your head, it would have hit you dead on. Your reaction time is nonexistent right now, and you didn't even register it coming for you until it was already buried in the wall behind you.

On the T.V., someone screams. A fake explosion rings out, audio poorly meshed together, the sound design complete garbage.

You want to let your body slide limply to the floor of the hallway, lay down like the knife actually did hit its target. It feels like you can't breathe. You know you can't let yourself fall, because you won't be able to stand back up. Especially not with your lungs acting like this. You're leaning completely against the wall, slumped against it and trying to calm down enough to manage to breathe.

It hurts. Your chest burns fiercely with breaths not taken, and your vision swims with dark spots that can't be blamed completely on the lack of oxygen. This feels like dying. You wonder if you are.

Something drips down your cheek and you lift a numb hand to your face. Dark blood glistens in the low light. The blade must have grazed you.

It's not a big deal.

You can hardly breathe.

A ragged gasp escapes you eventually, almost completely silent in the darkness of the hallway. The rush of air clears almost all the dark spots from your vision.

Another shaky breath brings air into your lungs. You put your bloodied hand on your chest, gripping your shirt like it'll help you calm down. Maybe it doesn, though, because the effort you make to even your breathing eventually starts to work.

In.

Out.

Repeat.

Like a pendulum, swinging lazily back and forth, back and forth, back and forth; over and over again. Your shuddered breaths calm your quickly beating heart and you almost fall limp again with the tension suddenly released from your body. The wall is, once again, the only thing that keeps you upright.

The telltale whirr of one of Bro's cameras, the one in the hallway that you hate desperately, tips you off. You whip your head around to face it, carefully schooling your features even though that hardly fucking matters now, after the glaring, red pinprick eye of the camera has caught every second of... that. The hallway is still shrouded in a gentle brush of shadow, the lights from the living room pouring in, but not enough to swallow the darkness. It might be your only saving grace, if the hallway was too dark to pick up video of you freaking the fuck out just now. You hope so. The curl of thick humiliation in your throat lessens its grip just barely enough for you to brace your hands on the wall and push yourself up a little.

Without letting go of the wall for a second, you stumble into the living room.

Bro is sitting on the couch, arms propped up behind him in a pretty classic "cool guy chilling on a couch" look. There's no acknowledgement as you enter, wobbling dangerously without the hallway walls to support you anymore. He doesn't shift his gaze at all from the ironically terrible movie blaring from the gritty T.V. speakers. You managed to calm your heart from beating out of your chest before, after freaking the fuck out in the hallway for no reason, but at the mere sight of Bro, the speed picks back up. Not as much as before, thankfully, but still enough to make you feel like a prey animal.

It isn't a good feeling.

"Don't tell me that got you," Bro speaks suddenly, and you barely suppress a violent flinch at the cold tone. His head is tilted towards you, towards the hall, not turning to face you at all. You know he's talking about the knife trap and the thick, red blood running down the side of your face. It gets harder to breathe as the tense silence between the both of you drags on, the T.V. still droning incessantly.

You don't reply, and Bro shifts his head minutely back to the shitty movie. The conversation is over.

You tear your eyes away from Bro, scanning the bit of the kitchen you can see through the door. There's a box of pizza on the counter, and your stomach swims with an empty, nauseous feeling that should probably be a little worrying. You haven't eaten in a while, but your diet has never been remotely stable for a day in your life. The injuries make it worse.

You step as carefully as possible into the kitchen, LED ceiling lights blaring down onto the linoleum, making you glad that you're somehow still wearing your shades. The pizza box sits innocently on the counter, light stains of grease soaking through the bottom of the cardboard.

It's absolutely rigged.

You grab a throwing knife from the fridge—opening it just a crack and closing it quickly to avoid an avalanche—and throw it as well as you can without fucking up the stitches in your arms. The knife sails through the air and lands home in the cheap cardboard, the impact of the hit sliding the box a couple of inches across the counter. A tripwire snaps and a heavy sword drops from somewhere in the fucking ceiling, blade slamming into the box and ripping it in half.

You count five seconds in your head, waiting tensely for more, before diving for the wrecked box. The pizza is absolutely fucked, toppings everywhere and mostly stuck to the lid, but you couldn't care less. You grab one of the least-smashed slices and practically shove it down your throat, purposefully turning away from the kitchen camera to eat. After you finish, you go back for a second slice. You don't dare to eat any more, though, because you know better than to stuff yourself after weeks like these; you'll just throw it all up and waste it. It's something that was especially hard for you to learn when you were years younger.

You step carefully out of the kitchen and back into the living room.

Nothing's changed since you left for the kitchen, except Bro now has his arms crossed over his chest, still sitting and watching the same movie (probably, you can't honestly tell if it's another, just as shitty action movie with bombs and guns. Maybe he switched it just to fuck with you, but somehow you doubt that he'd care enough to.) He doesn't acknowledge you, and you aren't going to push your luck.

You walk as quickly as you can down the hallway and slip back into your room. He's definitely going to call you for training later, but until then you're resigned to wait in tense silence in your room, not daring to sleep.

tongue tied

Chapter Summary

ayo happy 6/12 :)

Chapter Notes

chap title from tongue tied by grouplove

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

“Bro,” you start, chest tight with coils of anxiety. Here goes absolutely fucking nothing, you think as you stand near the couch, firmly out of the way of the TV.

“What,” he replies with a frigid tone, and you struggle to swallow the lump in your throat.

The last thing you wanted to do today was interrupt Bro’s peaceful staring at the TV, beer bottle in hand and mindless action movie droning incessantly.

Unfortunately, here you are, because Rose insisted.

“My friends are planning a meetup this week.” Bro doesn’t move. You can’t see his eyes past the dark, angular sunglasses.

“So?” is his reply. You take a deep, shaking breath.

“Can I go?”

“No.”

And that’s that.

One word, and it feels like your world has been ripped from you. Your face feels hot and you barely register the fact that you’re pushing your luck.

“Why not?” you force out through the tightness in your chest. Bro turns his head to face you directly, leveling you with a hard stare.

“Because I’m not driving you out to *fuck knows where* so you can go dance around with whoever the poor bastards are you call friends.”

His biting words feel like a knife to your chest. Actually, you know what that feels like. This might be worse.

“Now fuck off,” he tells you, waving a hand towards the hallway and turning back to the TV.

You don’t move. Part of you desperately wants to turn tail and run back to your room, give Rose the bad news and move on. But your feet remain rooted to the floor. A trembling whisper leaves you in a weak protest of its own accord.

“That’s not—“

“Did you hear me?” A dangerous edge laces Bro’s tone. “I said *fuck off*.”

You should leave.

This is the opposite of smart. You’re pushing, and you’re going to get hurt.

You take a stumbling step backwards towards the hallway, but the damage is long done. Bro pushes himself up off the couch in a smooth, single movement, slamming his beer down on the coffee table.

“Alright,” he snarls. “Since you aren’t following my damn orders, go get your fucking sword.”

turntechGodhead [TG] began pestering tentacleTherapist [TT] at 23:17

TG: he said no

TT: Damn.

TT: Why not?

TG: too much driving

TT: Did it really take nearly six hours for him to just say that? I thought you had forgotten to message me back.

TG: sorry

TT: It’s fine. Believe it or not, I had a contingency plan for that exact response.

TG: rose i dont think i can go

TT: If the issue is the amount of travel required, we can just move the location even closer to you. I’ve talked with John and Jade and they’re very flexible in terms of the places they can catch a flight to.

TT: John’s dad said “anywhere in the US,” so if we needed, we could all just plan to come to Texas, as close to you as needed.

TT: Maybe we could meet up somewhere within walking distance of your apartment so your brother doesn’t have to drive at all?

TG: look

TG: even if you guys are knocking on my apartment door i dont think i can fucking go so just do it without me

TG: bro is not going to let me and im not asking him again

TG: dont change your plans just write me out of them

TT: Did it really go that badly?

TG: yeah

TT: Oh.

TT: Are you alright?

TG: just tired

TG: i was just gonna message you that i couldnt go and then go to bed

TT: Do you want to talk about it? If you want to rant or just talk I'm here to listen.

TG: thanks but i think i kinda want to just forget it happened

TG: just move on with my fucking life

TT: Are you sure?

TG: i mean

TG: i guess i dont really know where to start if i even did want to talk about it

TT: Usually I just start with what's on my mind at that exact moment. Then the rest follows.

TG: i just think this shit might be a little bit unfair

TG: it doesnt matter how much you change the plans to work me in bro just absolutely does not want me to go

TT: That does sound unfair.

TG: and then i went and pushed him on it and look where we are now

TT: Where is that, exactly?

TG: nowhere because he said no

TT: Ah.

TG: rose im

TG: um

TG: im kinda tired of how things are around here

TT: How so?

TG: just in general

TT: Anything specific?

TG: i guess i just dont really like training

TT: Oh. Is that when your brother "jumps you" with a sword or am I thinking of something different?

TG: its only like that sometimes i usually go meet him up on the roof

TG: or like today where we just fought in the house

TT: That sounds hazardous.

TG: haha yeah i have a lot to clean up

TT: Is that what you don't like about training?

TG: no haha

TG: cleaning the shit up isnt fun but im not fucking whining about chores

TG: training is just really not fun

TG: i have to do it though so complaining is pointless

TT: If you don't want to do it, why are you?

TG: its not that fucking simple

TG: it doesnt matter what i want bro insists on training me and theres nothing i can do about it

TG: im absolutely never going to try to skip out on it either that shit does not go down well

TT: Dave, I'm kind of worried.

TG: thats stupid dont be

TT: I can't help it. John is worried too.

TG: what

TT: From what we've heard, things over there don't sound... good. To say the least.

TG: what are you saying

TG: so have you both just been talking shit about me behind my back

TT: No. None of what we've discussed has been out of anything but pure concern for you.

John messaged me a few days ago, worried about some things you said that had...

implications. He didn't know what to do.

TT: I'm being honest when I say I don't really know what to do either.

TT: Is your brother abusing you?

TT: Dave?

turntechGodhead [TG] is an idle chum!

TT: Are you there?

TT: Please respond.

turntechGodhead [TG] ceased pestering tentacleTherapist [TT] at 23:42

TT: Fuck.

Chapter End Notes

well that coulda gone better lmao

End Notes



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